

# RESPONSIBLE FUTURES FEEDBACK REPORT

A confidential report the University of Strathclyde and  
Strath Union

July 2023

*Responsible  
Futures*



STUDENTS  
ORGANISING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
UNITED KINGDOM

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# OVERVIEW

**Education for Sustainable Development requires constructively aligned teaching, learning and assessment activities designed to meet key Sustainable Development competencies and learning outcomes. It should provide learning experiences that transform the ways of thinking and practising, empowering students to become informed advocates of Sustainable Development.**

*Advance HE & QAA ESD guidance  
2021*

## 1.0 Introduction

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#### Responsible Futures

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The logo for Responsible Futures is a blue rectangular box with a black shadow underneath. The words "Responsible" and "Futures" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, stacked vertically. The box is slightly tilted to the right.

**Responsible  
Futures**

**Responsible Futures is certification of a whole institution's commitment to holistic sustainability, and ensuring an enabling environment for it to thrive, rather than an endpoint.**

## 1.1 Responsible Futures

Responsible Futures is a whole-institution approach to embedding holistic sustainability across the formal, informal, and subliminal curriculum across both HE and FE. It is a supported change programme and accreditation mark that works to put sustainability at the heart of education.

The framework facilitates a close working partnership between students' unions and their institutions and was developed with significant guidance from an advisory group made up of representatives from NUS Sustainability Direction and Oversight board, the EAUC, People and Planet, UCU, SOCENV, HEA (Advance HE), AOC, Learning for Sustainability Scotland, and the Knowledge Transfer Network, as well as individual institutions and students' unions. The criteria represent best practice not only within the UK, but internationally. The programme is delivered by SOS-UK.

Responsible Futures was created in response to over ten years of SOS-UK research finding that c60% of students have either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Sustainable development is something which I would like to learn more about', and c85% with the statement 'Sustainable development is something which Universities

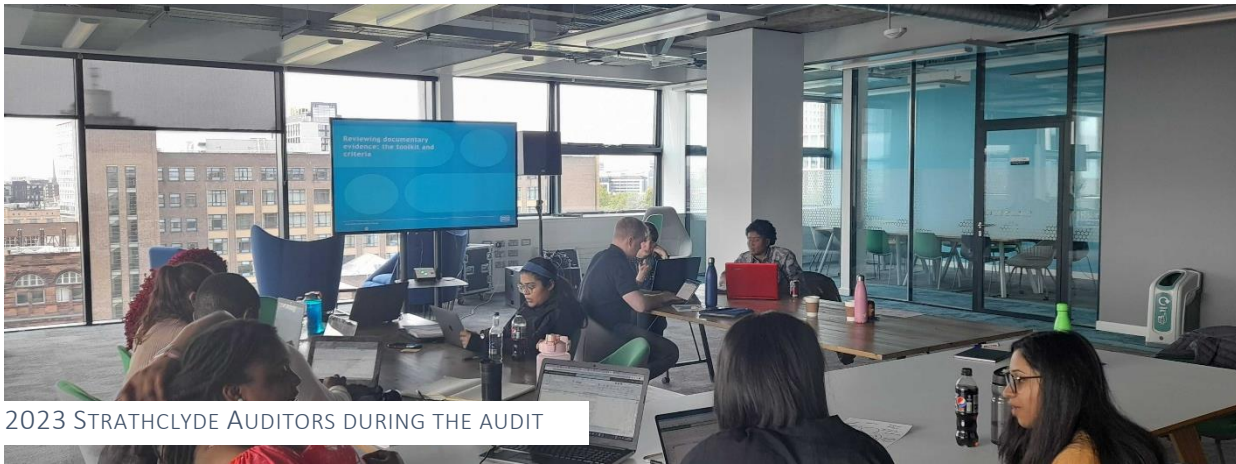
should actively incorporate and promote' (base c15k students)<sup>1</sup>.

Responsible Futures was piloted in 2014-15 by 13 institutions, including five Further Education institutions and eight Higher Education across England and Scotland. Following feedback from the pilot cohort, significant developments were made to the programme, and it was launched in 2015.

To date, 35 partnerships across the UK have joined Responsible Futures and collectively, they represent over 600,000 students.

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<sup>1</sup> Survey results can be found here:  
<https://www.sos-uk.org/research/sustainability-skills-survey>



2023 STRATHCLYDE AUDITORS DURING THE AUDIT

## 1.2 Overview of the Audit

As part of the accreditation process, each Responsible Futures partnership (institution and students) must undergo a two-day student-led audit. The purpose of the audit is to determine the partnership's score, accreditation level, and conduct in-depth research on the impact of Responsible Futures through:

- A documentary review of evidence to verify score,
- Interviews with key individuals,
- And student focus groups.

There are 50 total criteria, of which 9 are mandatory and must be completed to achieve accreditation and 41 are optional. Three criteria are self-defined meaning that the partnership can highlight unique actions they have taken which are not discussed through other criteria.

To achieve the Responsible Futures Accreditation Mark, the Partnership must meet or exceed the score threshold of **220 points**, out of the maximum 355 points.

If the partnership does not meet the threshold of 200 points but their score exceeds 120 points, they will be awarded the "Working Towards" Accreditation.

Prior to the audit, each Partnership submits documentary evidence through the online workbook tool<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.2.1 Documentary Evidence Review

In keeping with the student-centred nature of the scheme, SOS-UK train teams of student auditors at each institution to lead the audit. This begins with a documentary review of evidence. Through this process, students determine scores for each criterion, with support from the SOS-UK facilitator.

### 1.2.2 Interviews

A key component of the audit is student-led interviews with key individuals, which may include: one interview with representative(s) from the students' union, one with staff from the institution, and one interview with staff who are less actively involved in the partnership working group.

<sup>2</sup> [www.responsiblefutures.uk](http://www.responsiblefutures.uk)

These interviews inform the audit process as well as provide insights which have contributed to this report and the broader research conducted on the programme.

### 1.2.3 Focus Groups

The third component of the audit is two student focus groups. One focus group is with an intervention focus group, made up of students who have been actively involved in sustainability within the formal or the informal curriculum. The other is the non-intervention group, made up of students who, to the best of the partnership's knowledge, had not been involved in sustainability initiatives.

The student focus groups are for the purpose of research relating to Responsible Futures and therefore their results do not determine the partnership's accreditation. The summary findings can be found in this report.



# Results and Feedback

“I’m leaving [the audit] with much more than just new skills - the [partnership] is doing so much around sustainability that I didn’t know about. I’m more motivated to share what I know with my colleagues.”

**Student auditor**

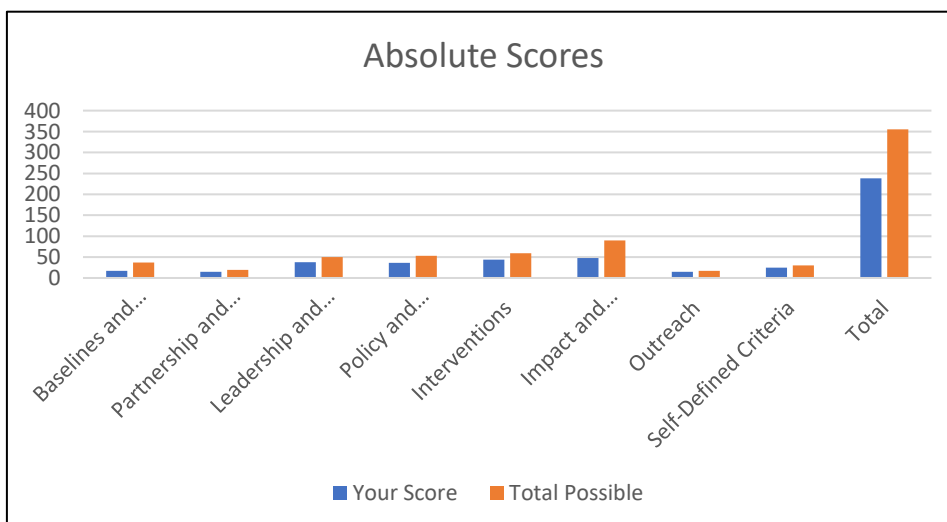
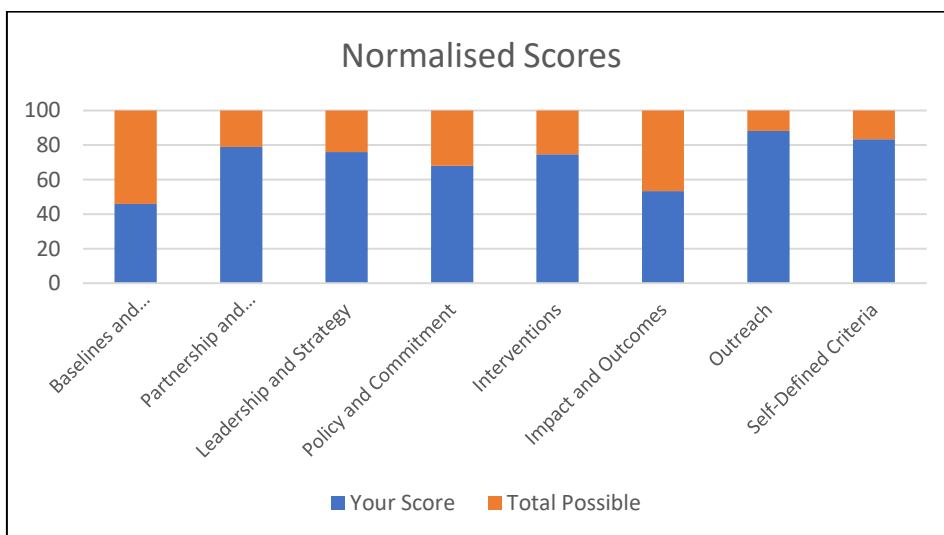
## Your results

### 2.1 Your Accreditation

University of Strathclyde and Strath Union gained the Responsible Futures Accreditation with a score of 238.

Section	Your Score	Total Possible
Baselines and Benchmarks	17	37
Partnership and Planning	15	19
Leadership and Strategy	38	50
Policy and Commitment	36	53
Interventions	44	59
Impact and Outcomes	48	90
Outreach	15	17
Self-Defined Criteria	25	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>355*</b>

*\*Scoring threshold for accreditation is 220*



## **2.3 Explaining Your Accreditation**

As your partnership was awarded the “Responsible Futures Accreditation” you have been awarded the full accreditation. This means that you have exceeded the score threshold of 220 points and have demonstrated and evidenced your partnership’s commitment and progress for embedding holistic sustainability across the whole institution. This accreditation will be valid for two years, until July 2025 at which time another audit will be required to re-validate your accreditation.

**Congratulations to University of Strathclyde and Strath Union on this fantastic achievement! Thank you for your commitment to empowering students to access the skills and knowledge they need to forge a more sustainable education system and more sustainable and just world.**

Larissa Kennedy  
*SOS-UK Trustee and 2020- 2022 NUS National President*

## 2.4 Key Findings

On 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023, 10 students audited the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union's work on embedding sustainability in all student learning. Through documentary evidence reviews, interviews and focus groups students determined whether the partnership should obtain Responsible Futures accreditation and provided feedback and recommendations on continuing to progress this work.

The following points are auditors' overarching feedback:

- "I think there has been a really commendable effort put in to compile evidence on sustainably initiatives at Strathclyde. I would love to see this effort continue."
- "The partnership has made huge strides judging from where the journey started, there are a lot of sustainable plans and programmes already gaining traction in the University, yet a lot is still unclear and ambiguously broad. Hence the disconnect. But I'll recommend crediting their effort with accreditation."
- "I am proud that the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union are aiming to get Responsible Futures accreditation and that they are undertaking a lot of work to achieve this. There is still lots to be done but starting the process shows what has been done so far and what still needs to be done and therefore assists in laying out plans for the path forward."
- "I realize the accreditation is really important to the partnership and they are keen on doing more programs aimed at achieving sustainability."
- "I think it is commendable that the institution has actively taken up the challenge to entrench sustainability into its processes and has invested the required resources for same. It was also inspiring to observe that each team of representatives that was interviewed as part of the audit exhibited an obvious excitement in participating in the programme and a hope of success of not just the accreditation but also the institution's sustainability goal."
- "The University of Strathclyde and Strath Union undergoing this audit is a very good step and also ensures accountability for this work."
- "I think [the partnership's] efforts to attain the accreditation shows that they are taking the right steps into including sustainability into the everyday lives of the students and they are aware this is something the students are passionate about and are trying to better the institution."

## 2.5 Feedback

### 2.5.1 Baselines and benchmarks (BB01 to BB07)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
BB001	Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has completed an institution-wide survey of students on their attitudes towards, expectations on, and awareness of [sustainability] and published the findings.	2	3	<p>Positives: Data from the survey has been used to inform University work.</p> <p>Recommendations: Although the partnership has received a good number of responses in relation to other institutions, it is important to still explore how to improve the response rate from students for next year.</p> <p>How does Strath Union intend to use this survey data? As mentioned, the full survey report is to be finalised - ensure it is published and shared with the student and staff.</p>
BB002	The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up to the survey conducted in BB001 and published the findings.	2	1	<p>Positives: There is an intention to follow-up with further surveys and create in-house questions.</p> <p>Recommendations: While there is the intention to do follow-up survey there is no timeline, plan of action, or deadline (etc) for actioning this. Draft of internal questions could be presented. Consider consulting with students or Strath Union on the design and dissemination of the survey, if possible.</p>
BB003	Within the last five years, the [Partnership] has carried out a thorough baseline curriculum review or audit on [sustainability] and published the findings.	5	5	<p>Positives: Initial work mapping the extent to which the SDGs are represented in programmes using keywords in collaboration with students. Work was shared with students who were able to compare methodologies and used alternative methods There is a plan of action to continue work in this area.</p>

				<p>Recommendations: The proposed mapping tool can be used to collect reflections from both the staff (module leaders) and the student body. Continuation of this overall trajectory through time will result in good progress. Ensure student involvement is maintained - across both undergraduate and post-graduate bodies. Consider how Strath Union can be involved to support student participation. Consider how findings can be shared through relevant channels.</p> <p>There is also work done to understand ESD in faculties through the Learner Experience Framework - how might these two processes align?</p>
BB004	The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up curriculum review or audit conducted in BB003 on [sustainability] and published the findings.	2	2	<p>Positives: Progress on the mapping pilot to occur this summer. Partnership has identified where the results of future work will be reported which is excellent and contributes to accountability and transparency.</p> <p>Recommendations: Auditors need more detail on how the mapping will be rolled-out, including timelines, uses, end-user (etc). Continuation of this early work through time should result in progress.</p>
BB005	The [Partnership] routinely asks students about [sustainability] in evaluation surveys.	2	2	<p>Positives: There is evidence of a well-thought-out plan to ask students questions on sustainability in routine surveys and there is active progress toward implementing.</p> <p>Recommendations: Continue with the planned activity and incorporate surveys, ensure that the generated data is being used and shared through relevant channels.</p>
BB006	Within the last two years, the [Partnership]	4	4	<p>Positives: Comprehensive set of surveys piloted through the</p>

	has developed an understanding of teaching staff's knowledge and confidence with [sustainability] at the institution and informed their practices with these findings.			Business School, which have been revised and shared across 3 additional faculties. Great that the pilot surveys were designed by students.  Recommendations: The survey (from the uploaded evidence) is from April 2021; this will need to be updated as the criterion asks for data from the last two years. Consider how these findings can be shared with relevant channels to progress ESD into teaching and learning.
BB007	The [Partnership] has completed a follow-up survey to the survey conducted in BB006 and published the findings.	0	0	<i>Not completed.</i>  Build on the work evidenced in BB006 - good foundations and time should ensure progress in this area.

#### Summarised positives

- Improved response rate from Sustainability Skills survey
- Students' involvement in developing curriculum mapping tools and surveys for staff on sustainability
- Plans to progress this work and compare findings

#### Summarised recommendations

- Plans to be implemented
- Survey responses and mapping data shared through relevant channels in an accessible way

#### 2.5.2 Partnership and Plan (PPL001 to PPL003)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
PPL001	The [Partnership] has a working or coordinating group that leads on [sustainability].	4	3	Positives: There are two key groups that oversee sustainability work, and a number of subgroups. This includes the ESD Working Group which is a group formed of representatives from each faculty and a range of departments. The working group also includes stakeholders from outside the University which form the Advisory group to which the working group

				<p>reports. ESD Working Group terms of reference 2022-23 explicitly states engagement with Responsible Futures as part of remit - supporting capacity and continuity of work.</p> <p>Recommendations: The ESD working group, and other groups with responsibility for sustainability, although having a broad range across the University, could work towards ensuring student leadership, for example through chairing, or co-chairing responsibilities.</p> <p>While many of the representatives also belong to other working groups, it may be difficult for them to represent multiple perspectives and interests in the group. Explore how to include trade union representatives, communications and marketing representatives, liberation officers who are able to directly represent these groups for holistic sustainability.</p>
PPL002	The [Partnership] has a [SMART action plan] progressing actions for [issues related to Responsible Futures].	5	5	<p>Positives: A well laid out SMART action plan which is clearly evidenced. The action plan is focused on specific goals and its progress is accountable to advisory boards and with high-level commitment. Group members are made responsible for actions, ensuring the work is shared amongst the working group.</p> <p>Recommendations: Consider how these plans can be communicated to relevant channels outside of the working group for transparency and accountability and for others to understand the intended streamlined, collaborative approach to this work.</p>
PPL003	Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has proactively engaged key stakeholder groups in the [issues	9	7	<p>Positives: Range of engagement with students and staff across faculties.</p> <p>Recommendations: The criterion is looking for focused, and proactive engagement with specific groups through formal structures, including</p>



	related to Responsible Futures].			course or faculty reps and trade unions, to ensure collaboration and whole-institution approach to issues related to Responsible Futures.
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### Summarised positives

- SMART Action Plan supports partnership working for issues related to Responsible Futures
- A number of working groups with responsibility for sustainability, feeding into the work of two key groups, the Centre for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Strathclyde

### Summarised recommendations

- Broader representation on ESD working group
- Proactive and formal engagement with key stakeholder groups for partnership working

### 2.5.3 Leadership and Strategy (LS001 to LS007)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
LS001	The [Partnership] has gained the support of a high-level champion within both the students' union and institution for their efforts to attain Responsible Futures.	7	6	<p>Positives: There is active support for Responsible Futures accreditation from high-level champions, including Manish Joshi, the CEO of Strath Union and Dr Tracy Morse, the Head of the Centre for Sustainable Development.</p> <p>Recommendations: The criterion asks for efforts to attain Responsible Futures accreditation to be embedded in a full-time officer's role, in addition to a senior staff member. Please provide evidence of this.</p>
LS002	The [Partnership] has gained the support of their trustees and/or governors within both the students' union and institution on the [issues related to Responsible Futures] and their efforts to achieve accreditation.	5	5	<p>Positives: Evidence of engaging the University Court on the new Sustainability and Social Impact Policy.</p> <p>Recommendations: Criterion asks for engagement of trustees or equivalent on issues related to Responsible Futures and on efforts to achieve Responsible Futures accreditation. Auditors would like</p>

				to see specific conversations with trustees/University court on education for sustainable development (ESD), as well as Responsible Futures.
LS003	The [Partnership] has developed a statement on [sustainability] through a consultative process that defines what it means to the institution in relation to its educational purpose and values.	5	4	<p>Positives: ESD Working Group has developed a specific ESD statement, referring to the educational purpose of the institution and its values, to ensure consistent understanding of ESD across the institution. The statement is shared during staff training and resources shared.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how the statement can be developed through consultative processes with a broader range of stakeholders, including students, to ensure it is representing the values and perspectives of key stakeholders. Explore how this statement can inform institutional strategies and processes as well as being shared as a resource.</p>
LS004	The institution's overall strategic plan and/or the publicly-stated learning outcomes include supportive references to [sustainability].	9	8	<p>Positives: The partnership's 2020-2025 strategy, "Vision 2025" includes reference to sustainability in Goal 1: Outstanding education and student experience. ESD is referenced in Strategic aim 1.2</p> <p>Recommendations: Consider how sustainability and issues related to Responsible Futures can be embedded in KPIs. Please share evidence of implementation of the strategy by departments or faculties. Preparation for the partnership's next audit will take place as the strategy is being revised, providing opportunity to further embed sustainability and ESD.</p>
LS005	The institution's learning and teaching strategy, academic strategy, or equivalent, includes supportive references to [issues related to Responsible Futures], or	8	6	<p>Positives: Issues related to Responsible Futures are referenced in Strategic Framework particularly in Goal 1 and strategic aim 1.3.</p> <p>Recommendations: Is there a</p>

	it will do after the next review.			<p>learning and teaching strategy, or equivalent document, that guides learning and teaching at the institution? How might issues related to Responsible Futures be embedded into this?</p> <p>How has the 2020-2025 Strategic Framework contributed to work on embedding sustainability in teaching and learning?</p>
LS006	The institution and students' union have whole institution/SU holistic sustainability strategies (or equivalent).	5	5	<p>Positives: Both the University and Strath Union have sustainability strategies/plans to help guide work relating to sustainability. Sustainability in these documents is seen as holistic encompassing social as well as environmental aims.</p> <p>Recommendations: Whilst the student executive had the opportunity to feed into the upcoming Sustainability and Social Impact Policy draft during the university-wide consultation effort, consider how the wider student body can be supported to feed in as well.</p>
LS007	The institution and students' union's marketing and communications teams (or equivalent) are fully engaged with and supportive of the [partnership]s [sustainability] work.	4	4	<p>Positives: Range of ways marketing and communications staff are engaged on sustainability.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how these efforts can become coordinated and formalised - role profile, training etc.</p>

#### Summarised positives

- Substantive reference to sustainability in strategic framework
- Buy-in from executive team and senior leadership for broad sustainability work

#### Summarised recommendations

- Broader engagement with stakeholders, including students, on creating ESD definition for partnership as well as feeding into upcoming Sustainability and Social Impact Policy draft

#### 2.5.4 Policy and Commitment (POC001 to POC008)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
POC001	The institution has provided professional development and dedicated support for relevant personnel on the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	5	5	<p>Positives: Broad range of learning opportunities - many around holistic sustainability, as well as issues related to Responsible Futures like ESD. Great that there are formal, as well as informal opportunities.</p> <p>Recommendations: Continue to ensure that these opportunities are regularly offered for wide-reaching, but also impactful learning.</p> <p>Explore how more bespoke training can be delivered, specifically tailored to roles.</p> <p>Explore how opportunities are communicated to staff - auditors recommend providing more information on the University website.</p>
POC002	The students' union has formally passed and publicised a policy commitment to embedding [sustainability] in the formal and informal curriculum.	5	4	<p>Positives: Some great policies to support embedding sustainability in informal learning, including divestment, ethical clothing and sustainable diets.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how these policies can be updated and maintained, as some are a bit older. Also explore whether there is scope for the Union to also pass a policy on embedding sustainability in the formal curriculum, which can be supported by course reps and teaching awards.</p>
POC003	One or more named elected student officer has agreed to lead on [sustainability] issues for the students' union this academic year.	4	4	<p>Positives: VP Community is an elected officer with responsibility for sustainability as strategic lead for sustainability.</p> <p>Recommendations: consider how responsibility for sustainability can be handed over to the next</p>

				team of sabbatical officers to ensure continuity.
POC004	At least one member of staff in the students' union has responsibility for SRS.	3	2	<p>Positives: A couple of staff at the Union have responsibility for, or actively champion sustainability.</p> <p>Recommendations: Please provide evidence of collaboration between the sustainability coordinator/CEO and VP Community on sustainability work.</p>
POC005	The [Partnership] has made sufficient staff or student resource available to substantively progress the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	8	9	<p>Positives: There is good level of staffing work related to Responsible Futures. The posts are also well resourced and supported by the student union and the institution.</p> <p>Recommendations: Maintain continuity. Explore this work can continue to be progressed amid any potential staff turnover.</p>
POC006	The [Partnership] has made effective use of the relevant quality framework and/or outcome agreements to progress the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	2	3	<p>Positives: The partnership utilises the QAA Advance HE ESD Framework in training and guidance.</p> <p>Policies refer to QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements which include ESD as a cross-cutting theme.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how to communicate changes made by utilising these frameworks, particularly work around academic quality processes, to other colleagues and for the next Responsible Futures audit.</p>
POC007	The [Partnership] has embedded the [issues related to Responsible Futures] into their human resource, induction, and training processes for all types of new starters	2	2	<p>Positives: Some work underway, particularly through the sustainability passport, which is commendable.</p> <p>Recommendations: Consider further how to embed issues</p>

	(students, sabbatical officers, staff, governors, etc.).			related to Responsible Futures in existing induction processes, rather than only creating new ones. Monitor the impact of sustainability passport.
POC008	The [Partnership] has worked with the institution's student recruitment and/or widening participation department(s) to incorporate issues relating to [sustainability] into their work.	4	4	<p>Positives: The Young Strathclyde programme and other initiatives to widen participation at the University are commendable.</p> <p>Recommendations: Consider how to further embed sustainability into general student recruitment, in partnership with the Strath Union.</p> <p>Consider how widening participation programmes can support students to access education beyond healthcare and business, as well as postgraduate students.</p>
POC009	The partnership's careers team have committed to promoting careers, internships and placements that incorporate sustainability, and/or supporting and encouraging students to take sustainability values into any future career or career decisions.	2	2	<p>Positives: Some work on promoting opportunities to access sustainability careers. Work progressing to create an online portal to access sustainability opportunities.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how to ensure these opportunities are meaningful for students. Look at opportunities to also support students to embed sustainability values in any career, not just sustainability-focused roles.</p>
POC010	The partnership's careers team have committed to disengaging with harmful industries (e.g., fossil fuel companies and arms companies), for example through job fairs at the institution.	1	1	<p>Positives: Some plans in place to progress divestment.</p> <p>Recommendations: Implement plan.</p>

### Summarised positives

- Good resourcing for work related to Responsible Futures and sustainability
- Excellent work on widening participation

## Summarised recommendations

- Progressing career services engagement with sustainability and disengagement with harmful industries
- Ensuring tailor induction content around sustainability for incoming staff

### 2.5.5 Interventions (IN001 to IN009)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
IN001	Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has run one or more internal event bringing together staff and students on the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	4	4	<p>Positives: Good range of activities have been evidenced, with the ESD conference getting good attendance. These events have been aimed at both students and staff.</p> <p>Recommendations: Consider how these events can tangibly contribute to a whole-institution approach to embedding sustainability in learning.</p>
IN002	Within the last five years, the [Partnership] has taken part in, or is booked onto, an external change programme on the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	2	2	<p>Positives: The ESD bootcamp has participation from both staff and students and works to progress ESD in the formal curriculum.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how faculty (and cross-faculty) representation is included in future participation or in the resources developed or changes made due to this programme. Although this is evidence of one, further participation in other external events would be encouraged.</p>
IN003	Within the current academic year, the institution has made funding, or related resources, available to staff and students so that they can develop their own projects that support the aims of Responsible Futures.	5	5	<p>Positives: A number of funding available for students. Some funding pots are allocated specifically for work related to sustainability.</p> <p>Recommendations: Further clarity needed on how these projects have students and staff working together rather</p>

				<p>than funding student projects with academic supervision. How do these projects support grassroots action from student ideas, as opposed to students being given opportunities that are already designed and not necessarily from their own ideas (i.e., jobs, societies etc.).</p>
IN004	<p>During the last 12 months, four or more schools or departments have integrated innovative pedagogical approaches to their [sustainability] teaching, learning, and assessment.</p>	6	5	<p>Positives: Evidence that four departments have engaged in innovative pedagogical approaches to sustainability teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>Recommendations: Are the innovative approaches optional for students, or available to all students? How can these opportunities be made available to more student within these disciplines. Auditors would like to see evidence more explicitly mentioning these pedagogical changes. Additionally, explore how to develop external or more publicly facing communications promoting this work.</p>
IN005	<p>The institution's non-academic and research/academic teams routinely collaborate to create educational and/or research opportunities through their [sustainability] -related work. Some institutions would call this a Living Lab approach.</p>	5	4	<p>Positives: There is a good example of collaboration between academic and non-academic staff to engage students, particularly with the EV-charging project. Centre for Sustainable Development provides a good base from which these collaborations can grow.</p> <p>Recommendations: Auditors would like to see more evidence of collaboration between academic and non-academic working (e.g., Centre for Sustainable Development sandpit example references academic staff numbers, but</p>



				not non-academic). Auditors would like more information on the number of students involved through these activities, as well as courses and year of study to better understand the impact of this work and whether these opportunities are wide reaching and routinely offered.
IN006	Within the current academic year, the [Partnership] has actively made use of student coursework and/or dissertations.	4	4	<p>Positives: Excellent range of examples of student coursework being used to progress issues related to Responsible Futures, particularly from Business, Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Education.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how to celebrate and share these examples of collaboration.</p> <p>Consider how more students can access opportunities to tangibly contribute to progressing work related to Responsible Futures at the partnership.</p>
IN007	There are wide reaching structured interdisciplinary experiences, linked to the [issues related to Responsible Futures], through the formal curriculum for students across the institution.	6	5	<p>Positives: Great to see a few interdisciplinary experiences students can access through the formal curriculum.</p> <p>Recommendations: The criterion asks for these experiences to be wide-reaching relative to the size of the institution. How are students encouraged to participate in the multidisciplinary perspectives of Sustainable Development module and VIP4SD, to ensure it is not only engaging students with an interest in sustainability?</p> <p>Auditors note that the evidence indicates these opportunities are available to undergraduate students - explore how</p>

				postgraduate students can also access interdisciplinary learning in more formal capacity.
IN008	There are good levels of informal curriculum activity that support the aims of Responsible Futures.	7	6	Positives: Good levels of activity touching on holistic sustainability in informal learning.  Recommendations: To achieve the top score, this criterion asks to evidence reach and impact of the work, as well as a positive news stories to celebrate and promote the work.
IN009	There is demonstrable positive progress in embedding [sustainability] across the subliminal curriculum.	6	5	Positives: Range of activity that can contribute to subliminal learning for the partnership. Recommendations: Auditors would like to understand how these activities actively contribute to higher level messaging around sustainability. While SCAN includes members from academic and professional services, auditors would like to know more about collaborations between a range of departments and teams and how this collaboration actively contributes to or enhances SCAN and delivery of its work.
IN010	Within the last 1-3 years, there have been opportunities for students to co-create teaching, learning and/or assessment approaches or content in the formal curriculum with their educators.	3	4	Positives: Number of examples of students co-creating teaching, learning and assessment approaches or content with their educators.  Recommendations: Explore how to formalise a process for students to suggest projects (i.e., through VIP4SD) so that more students can access these opportunities. Exciting plans for a climate justice tool developed in collaboration with a student and staff member.

### Summarised positives

- Broad range of formal, informal and subliminal activity around issues related to Responsible Futures

## Summarised recommendations

- Ensuring activity is wide-reaching and impactful through monitoring and evaluation
- Formalising some activity to ensure continuity and scalability

### 2.5.6 Impact and Outcomes (IO001 to IO004)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
IO001	The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified demonstrable positive progress in embedding [sustainability] across the formal curriculum.	15	16	<p>Positives: There is an increase of engagement with ESD in each faculty over the past few years as evidenced by the Learner Experience Framework and comparison of findings over the year. There is also an increase in the number VIP4SD projects taking place. The introduction of Spring Courses which is an interdisciplinary course is a good one.</p> <p>Recommendations: Continue on building the VIP4SD Programme and making it more accessible for every faculty as some have very low accessibility.</p> <p>VIP4SD is optional and not an opportunity all students will access - how can this be explored?</p> <p>Some faculties have lower than average data for ESD which can be improved upon on the next coming years.</p> <p>Although more content is being added, which is a positive, there isn't much evidence to support how it is being meaningfully embedded and how this will improve course curriculum - perhaps looking at more qualitative data can support this understanding.</p>
IO002	The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified demonstrable positive progress in	20	18	<p>Positives: A significant number of collaborations between staff and students.</p> <p>Recommend: Some more evidence</p>

	relation to its institution-wide collaborative approach.			around reflection on how these partnerships have achieved measurable outcomes for ESD, for example, comparison with previous years can help the partnership understand what is working well. Excellent work - consider how to ensure all these partnerships are embedded into formal processes for continuity and so they are not simply reliant on interest staff and students.
IO003	The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified their short-term impacts and outcomes in relation to positive outcomes for students.	5	5	Positives: Plans in place to further understand students' engagement with sustainability, including date for publishing report with findings.  Sustainability Passport pilot will provide more insight as well.  Recommendations: Implement plans. Ensure work around understanding students' engagement with sustainability considers positive outcomes for students.
IO004	The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified their long-term impacts and outcomes in relation to positive outcomes for students.	5	5	Positives: Plans to better understand long-term impacts on VIP4SD alumni through case studies. Strategic plans for 2030 are anticipated to centre sustainable development.  Recommendations: Can case studies also be collected from students who engage with ESD through other opportunities, for example, the interdisciplinary module?  Ensure that in strategic plans for 2030, there are mechanisms and processes in place to better understand long term impacts on students around work related to Responsible Futures.
IO005	The [Partnership] has reflected on and identified their impacts and outcomes in relation to positive outcomes for staff.	5	4	Positives: Learning opportunities offered to staff to engage with ESD regardless of research/teaching area. Teaching Excellence Awards run by Strath Union now has an ESD category to celebrate staff for engagement with ESD.  Recommendations: Monitor positive outcomes for staff from engaging

				<p>with learning opportunities, including increased confidence, fulfilment etc. or adapt programmes based on feedback to ensure positive outcomes.</p> <p>Monitor how the new teaching award for ESD can contribute to positive outcomes for staff.</p>
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### Summarised positives

- Excellent reflection on progress to embed sustainability into the curriculum
- Excellent progress on partnership working for issues related to Responsible Futures

### Summarised recommendations

- Understanding both short and long term positive outcomes for students and positive outcomes for staff

### 2.5.7 Outreach (OU001 to OU004)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
OU001	The [Partnership] has embedded the [issues related to Responsible Futures] into their community outreach activities.	3	3	<p>Positives: Good range of outreach.</p> <p>Recommendations: Are institutional staff, alongside students and Strath Union, involved as well as widely? How do you ensure these activities are routinely offered?</p>
OU002	Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has proactively engaged one or more students' union or educational institution on the [issues related to Responsible Futures].	3	3	<p>Positive: Good examples of engagement with other educational institutions.</p> <p>Recommendations: Monitor and capture how other institutions progressed sustainability agenda as part of the partnership's engagement.</p>
OU003	Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has presented on their work relating to the Responsible Futures agenda at a sector event.	3	3	<p>Positive: Lots of activity in past two years on presenting work related to the Responsible Futures agenda at sector events.</p> <p>Recommendations: Explore how to continue presenting events, and to different audiences, as</p>

				the partnership's work progresses.
OU004	The [Partnership] has published case studies highlighting [sustainability] -related achievements, impacts and outcomes.	4	5	Positives: Communications published for a wide range of work on formal, informal, and subliminal learning.  Recommendations: Continue to ensure these communications are accessible to interested external and internal contacts.
OU005	Within the last two years, the [Partnership] has sought out opportunities to learn from a range of educational institutions on how to progress sustainability in learning.	2	1	Positives: The partnership actively engages with other institutions to learn from them on progressing work related to Responsible Futures. Strath Union engage in conferences featuring sustainability alongside other student unions.  Recommendations: How does this engagement tangibly contribute to progression?

#### Summarised positives

- Good level of activity in sharing work on issues related to Responsible Futures with other educational institutions

#### Summarised recommendations

- Monitor and understand how work is progressed through outreach

#### 2.5.8 Self-defined criteria (SD001 to SD003)

Criteria Number	Criteria	Estimated Score	Student Auditors' Score	Student Auditors' Comments
SD001	Self-defined	8	8	Positives: The first adoption of a formal partnership agreement between Strath Union. Progress is reported to both the institution and Strath Union executive teams. Sustainability and responsible investment listed as a strategic objective.  Recommendations: Scoring is in line with similar criteria in the Leadership and Strategy section of the toolkit.

				<p>Explore how the partnership agreement can continue to be shared with students and staff and how to ensure that all students can use the agreement to progress ideas - engaging all kinds of students including students not necessarily engaged in this area of work.</p> <p>Ensure that the partnership agreement continues to ensure sustainability stays a priority in Vision 2030, and conversations around decarbonising and decolonising continue and progress into tangible outcomes.</p>
SD002	Self-defined	8	9	<p>Positives: ESD@Strath, which includes VIP4SD is a creative approach to providing students with opportunity for interdisciplinary learning grounded in real-life challenges, aligned with ESD principles. The partnership works to support the programme to be replicable by sharing good practice in the form of resources and talks.</p> <p>Evidence for other criteria also demonstrates increasing participation in the ESD@Strath conference.</p> <p>Recommendations: Continue to work to provide ESD learning for all students and staff through a range of formal and informal learning opportunities.</p>
SD003	Self-defined	10	8	<p>Positives: Development of Strath CEKO programme following LCOY discussions. The partnership has noted that innovative aspects include that it is student-centred, scalable and utilises a peer-to-peer approach. A large number of students and staff have taken</p>

				<p>part in the workshops through the programme and other workshops including Climate Fresk.</p> <p>Recommendations: While there is a lot of evidence of the large number of students and staff accessing climate education through these workshops, auditors would like to understand the impact of these workshops on participants in terms of positive outcomes to understand more in-depth the benefit of these workshops.</p> <p>Auditors would also like to know more about how these workshops are promoted to and accessed by students and staff.</p>
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Summarised positives

- Replicable and scalable work

Summarised recommendations

- Understanding of impact on students and staff

**2.6 Student Focus Group Summary**

Focus groups were conducted with an intervention group of six students who have been involved with sustainability initiatives, including Responsible Futures auditors and a non-intervention group made up of four students who have not engaged with sustainability at the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union. The majority of focus group participants were also student auditors involved in the other part of the Responsible Futures audit.

The purpose of these focus groups is to provide the partnership with an understanding of how their work related to Responsible Futures is experienced by students. The groups included students from a range of disciplines, including Education Studies, International Relations, Finance and Engineering.

Non-intervention Group

**Highlights of the year so far**

“Compared to my previous University, Strathclyde has a lot of events, the environment is very welcoming. There is a

lot of support for students - for example, assessment for our course was good - they ask you to write something then the professor helps edit then you hand it in again. We’re being offered that support and



encouragement.”

“Lecturers are welcoming and approachable - they help you right to the end near your exam. I wrote to a lecturer with a question, and I didn’t think they’d respond but they did. It’s comforting being an international student when you see things are open for everyone and there’s always someone ready to help and approach you.”

“There’s an open-door policy where you can walk in and ask a question to your lecturer - I’ve enjoyed this support. There’s a number of free resources for students, free training - I did one on unconscious bias through Strath Union. The infrastructure is helpful for students, like accessing the buildings easily and Wi-Fi - this is an improvement from our home country. There’s also room for freedom of expression. It’s welcoming, no restrictions. I’ve also enjoyed meeting people from different cultures.”

“There’ve been a number of opportunities I’ve had to volunteer around the University and the city as well - I’ve been very meticulous in trying to gain bit more knowledge and experience.”

### **Challenges encountered this year**

“Nothing comes up.”

“For every assessment, there’s a timeframe to deliver so there are some stresses, but it’s not a bad thing because you can request for more time. There’s also something in place in case a student is unwell.”

### **Understanding of sustainability**

“Meeting my needs with whatever is available in the environment without destroying it for future generations - maybe even improved for future generations.”

“For me, I’ve tried to get updated on sustainability issues and get some basic information, like what are the issues for young people and through the union. In some sense, when I think of sustainability, I think of organisations like Just Stop Oil and what they do to advocate for issues like this. The details of what sustainability can be is something I’m being more exposed to and I’m learning it cuts across a lot of topics and sectors.”

“It’s all about the continuity of life.”

“Continuity and improvement, including maximising the resources we have and leaving behind a legacy for the next generation to enjoy. Not just living selfishly but leaving behind a trail of goodness.”

### **Importance of sustainability to the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union**

“I think it’s very important to Strathclyde - especially being here today [for the audit]. I’ve come to see how much effort they’ve put into processes and strategies. Prior, I wasn’t very conscious of the efforts or how important sustainability was to the University - I haven’t had the visibility. I’ve passed an SDG banner twice, and that’s me thinking about it consciously so other students may not even notice.”

“It should be important to Strathclyde - it is educating people about sustainability through courses, through estates. It should be important because the University is providing services to people. Something that stood out for me, when you get food on campus, if you don’t have a spoon they give you a wooden spoon, but they charge you for it, so you are conscious while you are using.”

“The University needs to be conscious of improving their services around

sustainability to their students. Before now, I didn't know it was important to the University - I didn't know much."

**"I saw some of the sustainability initiatives sent to my email, I could see some physical things around campus like recycling. I would say it seems fairly important to the University, but I can't see mass student engagement - even from local students."**

#### **Importance of sustainability to friends and course mates**

"The demographics of students on my course are from Asia and Africa and I would say maybe not so much. It's a bit difficult to say how it's been talked about in my course - it's not been a separate thing - it's not been explicit, it's not conspicuous enough for me as a person, to see it as a choice I could make."

"The awareness level is fairly low, through my interactions with course mates, there hasn't been much influence on them concerning sustainability. You can easily get influenced by word of mouth or people's behaviour in class, and your friends, but I haven't really heard anyone have these conversations. People just come for the lecture and the lecturers don't really speak about sustainability.

"No, I don't feel like it is important to my course mates."

"In my course, the department has come up with a sustainable finance course. This year we took a small model on a valuation aspect to see whether for a company if sustainability is important, but we didn't learn what we as individuals can do for sustainability, we didn't learn where we apply that. Overall, when I interact with my course mates, they're not really aware, you know it's an upcoming field, but we don't

know the pathways to applying sustainability."

#### **Inclusion of sustainability in formal learning**

"In one of our assignments, we had to consider ESG factor in a company as an assignment - limited extent - it was an optional module."

"Nothing about sustainability in my course - we discuss realism, liberalism, policies, and schools of thought and international relations. Maybe next semester it will be covered but I'm not sure."

**"It's a bit strange to hear that there are supposed to be pilot programmes around sustainability - but it's not been clearly visible in our subject."**

"There's not much - it's not been incorporated in our modules. I'm just getting to know about it now."

#### **Sustainability in informal learning**

"They have a club society - I can't remember the name, but it's around sustainability. They do stuff like poster painting and creating awareness. That's all I know."

"If I remember correctly there was a small one-hour course to create more awareness on sustainability, but it had very limited options - if you have classes that clash you can't go - maybe the University can record this?"

**"You need to join the society to know more, because you don't get emails without being a part of the society."**

"I've come across the a sustainability society- they sent an email once to participate in a survey."

"I noticed that we are charged to print, so it discourages us from printing."

“The University uses paper cups and wooden spoons instead of plastic.”

“In the bathrooms water is rationed to limit wastage electricity is automated - this is commendable - there are a few small things. I wouldn't have linked it to sustainability before the Responsible Futures audit however.”

### **Ideas for change**

“Personally I'd like them to change the approach to engage students. I think there should be engagement specifically for international students and not just generic conversations through faculties.”

“There should be more incentives for certain courses to engage with sustainability and more engaging media for students.”

**“For inductions during the first week of school - sustainability should be a part of the programme. The programme can share sustainability goals and once you register as a student, you play a part in these goals.”**

“Creating awareness during induction - good point. Freshers' week people had society stalls but its crowded and you can try hard to hear what they are saying about their society but its noisy - so maybe reps can come to classrooms and do a mini presentation, also because a lot of people don't come during fresher week but come to Glasgow afterward.”

“I try to read emails that are sent to us. Maybe something fun and make it fun and engaging like with quizzes in the email-free coffee if you get the questions right. People like freebies.”

“Freebies should be tied to the café, or something you can use while you're studying.”

“For new students there should be flexibility - they are new and don't know buildings, I have a friend who was late and wasn't allowed into class because of that. There should be more accommodation for new students and getting students to lectures.”

### **Intervention group**

#### **Highlights of the year so far**

“Working on a yearlong project to build a motorised model plane - first time we've done anything practical plane - it flew and took off.”

“Interested in hospitality, trying to open an Indian restaurant here so learning about hospitality through my job has been interesting.”

“Started my PhD remotely, moved only last year, enjoyed being at the University here.”

“My opinion might be biased, but I've enjoyed seeing how the University has tried to get students more involved in its work, for example getting student faculty reps talking to students.”

“I started a K-pop club - it was fun after that to make friends through the club.”

**“Being a part of Responsible Futures has been a highlight of my year.”**

#### **Challenges encountered this year**

“Exams!”

“Information overload - so much info on the website, it's not funnelled. You want information but you don't know how to find it.”

“Exams and marks. Also finding interests and societies to take part in has been tricky

- I need more guidance on to get involved in societies.”

“Coming back onto campus has been a challenge - they figured on online, it started working, and now no one has a clue how to get back onto campus. Nothing is record, it is almost like re-teaching yourself how to study.”

“I don’t like doing exams in class - we’re not getting personal feedback, just group feedback.”

“Strath Union societies and sports societies are treated completely different. For example, if I want to have K-pop dance classes they won’t give us space.”

### **Understanding of sustainability**

“It’s about opportunity and equal access. It means equality between countries and societies to resources. You can see stark contrasts between different areas and communities.”

“How an individual can be their own leader in contributing a little every day. Not just about governance and law, it should be a household thing. On the high street here, lights aren’t off in the shops, it’s a waste of energy and resources.”

“Our actions need to make a positive impact.”

“Sustainability is about long-term impact - sometimes in sustainability there is a push on fixing things fast, but in 5 years will it still have impact?”

“Sustainability is about development and trying to ensure it is achieved at the grassroots level, and that policies and strategies are in place to ensure everyone is benefitting from development.”

### **Importance of sustainability to the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union**

“I think it’s up and coming. Before there wasn’t a focus, but now there is a focus and

they are trying to put things in place to get there, but there is room for improvement.”

**“A bit important to the University and the union. It’s good that they recognise you can’t do sustainability without getting involved with students.”**

“On the first day of inductions, there should be some kind of introduction on what sustainability is - 10 credits on compulsory on sustainability, it should be compulsory otherwise students won’t do it.”

“Yes, compulsory. It will help with making student experiences around sustainability consistent.”

“My faculty has a lot about ground sustainability, but I’m a postgrad and don’t know about undergrads. But there’s a lot of MScs that look at sustainability as part of the coursework.”

### **Importance of sustainability to friends and course mates**

“My friends and I noticed the high street shops lights are left on. We are international students from India, and we see difference between here and back home. For example, our mothers are so bothered about using resources and turning off the lights, I’ve brought that habit here to Glasgow. I noticed in student accommodation, people aren’t bothered by the bills and turning off lights.”

“As an international student too, you switch off the tap because water is a scarce resource back home, and same with electricity. I don’t live on accommodation; I live with students in private there’s difference in behaviour. I’ve noticed a lot of food waste amongst students.”

“I’ve also noticed food waste. In India we used to distribute food waste, this can be done here too.”

“Sometimes it’s hard to quantify how important sustainability is to people. Sometimes it depends on your upbringing or your economic status. If you are interested, it’s easy to find opportunities, but if you haven’t been brought up to care, it can be hard to find opportunities. In my course, a lot of people just aren’t aware, they aren’t being malicious, they just aren’t aware.”

“I work in the SU and lot of people don’t understand the level of waste, it’s sad to see. People waste food that can be eaten - there needs to be more knowledge about sustainability and how it reflects our day-to-day life.”

#### **Inclusion of sustainability in formal learning**

“It’s been optional, if you want sustainability to be included, it can be. If you didn’t want to take the module, you wouldn’t have to.”

“We cover accounts and finance, it’s what we read in a company’s annual report - that is what’s covered in class.”

“It’s covered in economics - it’s often about climate and its impact on the economy.”

“We have some modules where we briefly reflect on it in education.”

#### **Improving inclusion of sustainability in formal learning**

“Compulsory modules with actual credits, this will make people engage more.”

“In engineering we need to be aware of ethics; embedding sustainability into discussions on ethics would be an easy way to do talk about sustainability. For example, we had compulsory modules on skills and

presentations -this was mandatory and now everyone has the skills; the same thing can be done with sustainability.”

“My undergrad in civil engineering was at another University. We had a compulsory course on engineering for the environment, but for postgrad researchers, we had a postgrad certificate which is compulsory - they should embed volunteering and sustainability in this PGCert.”

#### **Ideas for change**

“I’ve noticed the recycling at the University - we have all these bins but there’s no consensus on what goes where. It would be great to get more information on this.”

“I’d like for there to be some work understanding the impact of students’ wellbeing on their studies. There’s a support line, but it doesn’t feel enough. I want to do a mental health event and be purely student based, it feels like staff know what we want, but don’t fully understand the nuance. They are doing good work, but more improvement can be done.”

“I’m really passionate about SDG 1 - would love to see the University engage more in charitable ventures to help with hunger - like running a food hub.”

“They do a lot, but all of it is under promoted. If you take the time to look into it, they do a lot sustainability-wise, but finding all of it is really difficult. During exam season they had free breakfasts on at the library, but you have to know about it. I think more promotion would be great.”

“I only know about things because I read every single email. But there’s a lot of links - maybe streamline the information sent out to students?”

“Instagram isn’t publicity. You need to engage with students all the time - it needs to be consistent otherwise we

won't remember. We're struggling with so much; how can we remember everything?"

"More flyers and posters might help. Also, I noticed there are advertisements in the elevators. Maybe we can change that share more news, like around sustainability?"

"Can the school engage the student body more? Its effective to solve problems with the student body more as student are on the ground. It would be great to figure out ways to help students get involved in coming up with the solutions to challenges."

## 2.7 Staff Interviews Summary

On the second day of the audit, auditors prepared for and conducted 45-minute interviews with staff from the partnership who have been involved in embedding sustainability in student learning. The purpose of the interviews is to give auditors a chance to learn more about the narrative and the stories behind the partnership's work related to Responsible Futures.

Interview One – Student Union Representatives: Manish Joshi (Strath Union Chief Executive Officer) and Justyna Kardasz (Strath Union Vice President Community)

### The auditors were impressed by...

"The way Justyna spoke, she seems to be passionate about sustainability and definitely knows what her role requires and how to excel in it. Also, Manish seems to have a great working relationship with the SU governance and sounds like he has begun to have a passion for sustainability."

"The passion that both interviewees demonstrated for the work that they undertake. It was also shown that a lot of what they do has come about through their own passions and not something that the University implemented."

"There are the shoots of progress and development - large events, like COP26 being held in Glasgow, helped to raise the sustainability agenda in profile. The University has begun to make progress with respect to sustainability."

"I was impressed by Justyna's passionate reflection about sustainability. It shows that there are people who are keen on seeing more engagement on sustainability within the institution."

"The action taken by the Student Union and the VP Community appear much more led through motivation due to passion compared to the University itself, which seems more driven by facts and figures. The commitment the VP Community representative has for sustainability as a whole and within the student union is to be applauded."

"I was impressed by the dedication of the Student Union CEO and the VP Community representative. Manish has been in the system for about 7 years and undertakes an active role, which shows commitment. Both



displayed sound knowledge on sustainability, the efforts of the University and the importance of Responsible Future's programme to the school's agenda."

#### **The auditors were surprised by...**

"That sustainability is not more clearly present in Strath Union policy and strategy. It is largely implied, implicit, and assumed to fall within other activities - but it is not foregrounded as an issue or specific topic."

"How reliant sustainability initiatives are on individuals and passion projects rather than on strategic initiatives or directed programmes."

"How initial interest and momentum from events like COP26 has been largely lost within the University community."

"How informal the intra-University partnerships are."

"The enthusiasm shown by Justyna. she also highlighted that students have towards sustainability and their interest in volunteering and being a part of the process. I do think however that there needs to be more publicity so that more students can be involved and also informed on what is happening. Maybe more social media posts and perhaps email newsletters."

"How there appears to be a lack of formal support from the University for the work that is undertaken for sustainability and that it relies on the motivation and passion of those involved in the Union and student held positions. Through all the interviews it was shown that there is a lot of work going on throughout the University, in the centres, faculties and estates, however, there appears to be some disconnect between all of these. There should be established channels of communication and support so that all those involved in sustainability for the University and for the students can assist each other and work

together in creating a cohesive body that can be used to petition change and allow that to occur for all."

"How much work the University had done over the last five years to demonstrate its adoption of sustainability, in its programmes, events, modules and infrastructure. All of these which have financial and manhour implications. However, much traction had been lost from the aftermath of COVID. It was also observed in the interview, that there is no formal structure or assigned responsibility on the leadership of sustainability within the Strath Union. Everyone has a part to play but there isn't a particular person responsible. This then translates to not having a particular strategy, no documentation and formal process."

#### **In the future the auditors would like to see...**

"There is a clear need to have a standalone 'sustainability' role or job within the Union. Someone needs to be a lead on this. The University should see this as a mutually beneficial investment - the importance of working closely between Strath Union and University of Strathclyde has been demonstrated elsewhere."

"Is the VP Community role one that should more explicitly include sustainability? Would need to know more about the union roles - but it is clear that there should be a named role."

"More effort towards making systemic change at the University - rather than relying on individual projects or initiatives."

"Foregrounding of sustainability issues on campus - not just forming a part of other initiatives."

"More proof of sustainability, let us see proof of the minutes or memorandums."

“A clear cohesive plan for sustainability education and implementation that all those currently involved in can have a say. This can then be used as a guide for implementing the changes and actions that need to be taken. I would also like for there to be a better link between all the interviewees that allows for a top down and bottom-up approach to be implemented where all feel that they are heard and that their contributions are acknowledged.”

“More visibility on sustainability. It should almost be a tangible feeling once you walk into the University.”

“Going forward the Strath Union should probably rethink how to communicate the sustainable agenda to international students through more creative mediums.”

“I’d like to see more strategic fundings to the Strath Union for sustainability projects.”

#### **Further comments from the student auditors**

“Without a concerted institutional effort to foreground sustainability initiatives, and champion projects, there is a risk that students who are passionate about sustainability issues become disillusioned and frustrated or, concerningly, don’t know where to take their energy and passions.”

“There is an upcoming opportunity within Strath Union to mainstream sustainability within their strategy and longer-term plan. This will require strong interaction with the student body, something that has been a challenge for the Union and the University. Purposeful targeting of students, and facilitation of student participation.”

“The centres and pockets of excellence within the University and Strath Union need to be championed and publicised much more widely. We need to celebrate and advertise where things are working - this

needs to be physical, on campus celebration and foregrounding.”

“Do we reward and support staff (& students) who start and lead good projects? Or do we just expect them to continue it on their own steam? If the latter... sustainability will never be sustainable.”

“There needs to be more support given to those who run sustainability projects within the University. This needs to be in many forms, such as financial, administrative, social etc. And that the work that is put in is acknowledged and those that dedicate their time are thanked or rewarded in a more noticeable manner, so that they feel that they have the backing of the University at all levels to continue the work that they do.”

“There appears to be a lot of “half-formed” initiatives and ideas, such as the sustainability hub in the student union, which interaction with was lower than anticipated, and the Next Bike initiative to give students an alternative sustainable transportation model. However, it feels like these, albeit good and viable ideas and plans, are all being run and organised simultaneously and not under the one branch or system. This gives into the recurring issue of students not engaging or being aware of different happenings within the University under sustainability as there isn’t one clear thing being fully promoted with all effort. Schemes and ideas are being half spoken about to a handful of students and nothing is truly being promoted enough to make the desired impact. This also lowers morale within the staff and students alike who are passionate and trying their best as there seems a lot of effort with very little reward.”

“Manish and Justyna have shown a good level of their involvements in the sustainability development agenda which is quite impressive. They know what the agenda is all about and how to go about



achieving the goals and objectives of the sustainability development agenda. Justyna is very much passionate about her roles.”

Interview Two – ESD Leads: Dr Scott Strachan, Dr Debbie Willison (Vice Dean Academic Science) and Dr Lizann Bonnar (Vice Dean Academic Science)

### **Auditors were impressed by...**

“The depth of their involvement showcased in projects initiated or supported by the ESD team. They also showed group work and support towards each other.”

“There is individual passion in the establishment of action plans and course programmes that is leading/lead to institution buy-in.”

“I think there are good examples of individuals that see a long-term vision and benefit to engaging with ESD and sustainability issues. What needs to happen is that these people are facilitated, supported, and invested in.”

### **Auditors were surprised by...**

“The amount of work and dedication put in by the ESD leads, they talked about projects and commitment that required them to attend consistent meetings and that to me is effort. Also, they seemed to very keen on working with the student staff and volunteers towards the ESD modules.”

“The ESD group described a number of initiatives and projects, courses (etc.) ... it strikes me that these are confusing, and it is hard to see how they all align? What is the high-level strategy here? It seems like a lot of singular initiatives without much connection and holistic vision. For example, there isn't a 'well to deliver on our strategic plan we have started project X to deliver on target Y.”

“That there is cooperation and work between the University/faculties and the student union. However, this does seem to be more informal. An established means of

communication and cooperation would be of benefit so that there is a cohesion of work and initiatives across the University that then fully benefits and involves students in sustainability.”

### **In the future, auditors would like to see...**

“More strategy, they are on a right track but having a set out strategy will have more impact.”

“The focus of activities appears to be aimed mainly at undergraduate level and taught courses. There needs to be communication and outreach to PGR, particularly with them having start dates at the University throughout the year, and not having particular intake dates. Ensuring that these groups are reached and engaged would be of benefit.”

“More VIP4SD projects accessible for more students, as these projects need to be aligned with the student's course, there is still an opportunity for growth to add more projects and therefore increase the number of students who are able to apply. There is limited use in an effort to promote projects like these if it is not accessible to all students.”

“There is a large postgraduate community at the University - they seem to not be included in a number of the initiatives mentioned. Is there training just left to chance?”

“Recommendation - maybe there needs to be a sustainability committee at departmental level for both staff and PGR students to sit on. They look at activities (e.g., fundraising) but also accreditation, ESD, teaching standards, promoting ESD related work and examples.”

### Further comments from student auditors

“There is reference made to things like “the centre” (as in Centre for Sustainable Development) ... do those ‘in the know’ realise that most people at the University have no awareness of the centre? There-in lies an important reflection, there is a small ‘in the know’ group of staff and students and a large group where these issues simply pass them by.”

“I think it is clear that engagement is a challenge across the University student population. Clearly there needs to be an approach shift - it feels like a ‘create an event and they will come’ approach has been taken. I would think purposive targeting of students, through groups and study courses, would help develop an initial core of attendees... which may then grow and spread.”

“Following on from above, students already having intense modules and courses, and

many with part time employment also during term time, and already engaged with many other “extras” such as sports and societies, assuming students have a vast amount of “free time” to turn up to events which aren’t fully planned and promoted, is contributing to the low initial attendance of these events. This should be addressed in future.”

“I think some 1-1 champion of students would be a good way to develop leaders and boost engagement. There was a mention of the ‘trainer of trainers’ philosophy... don’t rely on volunteers, seek the key people out to start this pyramid.”

“Debbie, Scott, and Lizann have a good start on the sustainability development agenda considering the strategies they have on ground. They need funding to carry out the plans and strategies outlined in the interview. I believe with good support both financially and otherwise they are going to achieve great results!”

Interview Three: Sustainable Strathclyde Representatives: Fiona Doyle (Operations Manager at Centre for Sustainable Development) and Amy Ritchie (Head of Sustainable Resources and Social Responsibility)

### Auditors were impressed by...

“The new building has helped focus on-campus engagement. The importance of physical place and space was noted, Strathclyde has some of this already but can do more. Also, they know the real threat which is the awareness amongst the students.”

“The number of projects that are being undertaken by the Centre for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Strathclyde. These cover an array of actions from educational to operational. It is good to hear how the University has plans and actions that they are implementing to reach net zero through building use, heating, transport etc. And that they are looking further afield than just the environmental but taking into consideration social aspects

as well as the surrounding community in these developments.”

“Amy speaks about the growth in staff strength in the sustainability Strathclyde team as compared to 2018 - there is more resourcing.”

“There has been recent improvement in the institutional level interest in sustainability issues. Room to progress, but a change in the last 5 years has been noticed.”

“I was impressed when Amy listed all the projects Sustainable Strathclyde is pursuing and their recent drive towards social representations. The plan to include internship opportunities within the team is really impressive. Fiona mentioned the influence of stakeholders which serve as external advisory bodies to the Centre for

Sustainability Development; having representatives from industries and the United Nations is quite an interesting aspect of the Centre for Sustainable Development.”

“The fact that they both have backgrounds in sustainability and also the extra incentives they have to motivate students is really commendable.”

#### **Auditors were surprised by...**

“There seem to be a general consensus that COP 26 momentum has waned but, yet there is considerable progress with the sustainability hub building.”

“That they are also struggling with student participation and reaching out to students. Also they have direct access to the principal which is good in implementing change.”

“From what Amy said, the University is really funded to carry out capital projects which is quite evident and pretty much of what Sustainability Strathclyde oversees to ensure Sustainability compliance which to me is actually just the realization of one of the SDG goals.”

“There is communication between the head of the Centre for Sustainable Development and the principle to help imbed sustainability in the institution. The Centre for Sustainable Development is the only group that seems to have this direct link to the higher executive level, and this highlights the need for communication and sharing of information of the groups in sustainability so that real and quick change can be implemented. There is a climate and biodiversity emergency, and seeing slow and halted growth over time is frustrating for those that are trying to create meaningful and actionable changes within the institution.”

#### **In the future auditors would like to see...**

“COP26 is a recurring theme brought up in the interviews as an almost catalyst of student engagement with sustainability. However, this interest lost momentum and eventually fell off. Moving forward, when there is a notable surge of interest, important to capitalise on this and keep interest and movement within students.”

“Although there are good programmes in the works there might be need for more vivid action and clear action plans to achieve these plans.”

“The need for students to have a sustainability hub in the students’ unions building. This will help with student experience.”

“Need a continuing/permanent post within Strath Union to focus specifically on sustainability issues and offer a student voice/input into University programmes and initiatives e.g., to sit on board for Centre for Sustainable Development.”

“It will really be commendable if the bulk of the internship opportunities and job placements within the Centre for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Strathclyde are given to students to encourage more participation instead of recruiting external persons.”

#### **Further comments from student auditors**

“Both Amy and Fiona agree for more student leadership in sustainability is needed.”

“It is clear that having direct access to the University leadership equates to feeling like sustainability is higher on the agenda and increases the opportunity to influence University direction. Some areas of the University don’t seem to have this access and feel instead like sustainability is treated like other ‘everyday’ business, without the urgency that it deserves. When engaging with the bureaucracy, there is a certain degree of inertia when it comes to sustainability. Recommendation idea: Have a shortened path for sustainability issues/initiatives to make its way through

the University bureaucracy/hierarchy. Perhaps it can be a more frequent agenda item at senior management meetings?”

There has been mention about how some ESD/sustainability initiatives are devolved to the faculty level for implementation. Does this faculty level devolution mean that all departments engage with the initiatives effectively? I see very little discussion of Sustainability in my department. I think having a ‘sustainability champion(s)’ within the staff/PGR community might help foreground sustainability issues.

“I was aware/been part or utilise of a lot of the projects that were mentioned such as

the combined heat and power district energy schemes, the Climate Connect project and the Next Bike for students and staff. There however seems to be a disconnect in getting this information out to most of the students, even those that are interested in sustainability and are involved elsewhere. There seems to be a lack of reach in creating awareness of these projects and marketing them. Continuous advertisement and reminder marketing needs to be applied for the long-term projects. This will also ensure that new students and staff as well as existing students and staff, who are not aware of the projects are reached.”

## 2.8 Key Recommendations

The following recommendations summarise key themes that auditors noted during the three components of the audit.

### **Formalise more processes and activities around issues related to Responsible Futures**

Through the evidence review, and especially interviews with staff, auditors noticed a wide range of activity around sustainability and issues related to Responsible Futures exist, or are progressed informally, or without clear processes that can be replicated yearly or on a larger scale. Auditors feel that progressing this level of activity informally can become difficult for a number of reasons: firstly, the informal nature of the work relies on a few very engaged staff to progress the work through “individual priorities” or “inherited passion projects.” This can pose a challenge if these staff members leave their role or are unable to continue the work. Secondly, if the work isn’t replicable or scalable through formal processes, it may not reach all students.

Auditors would like to see work on embedding this work into existing structures and processes; creating mechanisms to handover work easily between colleagues and to replicate the work more widely. For example, for opportunities for students and staff to co-create teaching and learning, how can these opportunities be embedded formally into programmes like VIP4SD so more students can access this approach to learning? Another example is how the marketing and communications colleagues share sustainability information, can this be formalised by offering sustainability-related training to all new starters in marketing and communication, or by adding actions around marketing and communications into action plans or including relevant staff in the ESD working group?

Auditors recommend the partnership explore how certain ad hoc, or informal activities can be formalised through the plethora of existing, and upcoming, strategies and tools.

**“From the interview, I was surprised by how reliant sustainability initiatives are on individuals and passion projects rather than on strategic initiatives or directed programmes.”**

## **Mainstream ESD**

Auditors commend the work the partnership is doing to embed ESD into all faculties. However, from the evidence and staff interviews, auditors feel that although there is a high level of activity around ESD, it is possible for two students in the same course to have different experiences of and engagement with sustainability and ESD.

Auditors feel this can be mitigated by further work to mainstream ESD; perhaps this can be done by providing more opportunities across disciplines to access programmes like VIP4SD, other research opportunities grounded in real life challenges, or more widely accessed and offered opportunities to co-create learning between students and staff.

Auditors note that there is work being done through the Learner Experience Framework to better understand how ESD is embedded into each faculty. However, auditors would like to see not just levels of ESD measured through quantitative analysis, but also understanding if it is meaningful for students across all faculties through more qualitative approaches which can perhaps be progressed by the new ESD tool or climate justice tool.

**“It’d be great to see how the partnership can make the student experience around sustainability more consistent.” - Student auditor**

## **Engage students on and promoting work related to Responsible Futures**

Auditors feel there is a wide range of activity around holistic sustainability and that there can be improvements on how this information and opportunities are shared with students.

Firstly, through the focus group, students noted that there can be information overload with the number of emails they receive and the options for events and workshops. Auditors feel there is opportunity to streamline information. For example, utilising existing advertising space in elevators or in buildings as opposed to sending additional emails to promote sustainability work.

Secondly, auditors noted that there is opportunity to better understand the nuances between different groups of students and tailor communications to specific student experiences. For example, many of the auditors were international students and highlighted that there is scope to better engage international students by exploring their experiences, priorities, and goals, and embedding sustainability into that. Some auditors who were international students noted that they are very keen to develop skills and gain experiences while studying and would be open to further engagement if they are able to better access information on opportunities. Additionally, a few of them noted making use of office hours and additional support from teaching staff to better engage with their studies - perhaps these experiences can inform further communications, for example, asking teaching staff to share information or posters during office hours.

## **Reflect on positive outcomes for staff and students**

Auditors would like to see more reflection on positive outcomes for both students and staff to better understand how the partnership’s work is impacting students and staff positively, as work related to Responsible Futures is focused on both content of education, as well creating supportive, fulfilling learning and teaching environments for students and staff.

Firstly, auditors would like to see reflection on positive outcomes for students, going beyond understanding the numbers of student participating in formal and informal activity on sustainability, to understanding skills development and other positive outcomes, including, for example, increased confidence in or ability to take action, wellbeing amid potential eco-anxiety and meaningful employability that can support students to take sustainability values into their careers and contribute to sustainability.

Auditors would also like to see increased reflection on positive outcomes for staff from progressing work related to Responsible Futures, this could include confidence around ESD, enjoyment of role etc., the partnership could also work in partnership with trade unions to better understand this, including having trade union representation on the ESD working group.

## **2.9 Lead Auditor Summation**

Ten students led the audit process for Responsible Futures, gaining valuable employability and ESD skills as a result. At the close of each day of the audit students participated in reflection activities to track their development over the two days. At the end of the audit, they had the following to say about their personal experience:

**What has surprised you most through your role as an auditor?**

- “The openness of the University and students’ union to engaging in the audit, there was a refreshing willingness to engage.”
- “How much of an impact Strathclyde is having in driving sustainable initiative.”
- “That there is so much going on at the University through many different groups. However there seems to be a lack of cohesion and communication between them to develop a comprehensive and actionable plan of meeting sustainability objectives.”
- “I was surprised that the Students’ Union does not currently offer specific training in sustainability to staff.”
- “I was surprised at how important auditors are to the University and how their views, opinions and recommendations mean a lot.”
- “The importance of participation in sustainability, of students and all other stakeholders.”
- “I was mostly surprised by how much the University was doing towards achieving sustainability, also I was surprised that our feedback mattered to them.”
- “It surprised me the most learning about things the University does behind the scenes that most students don’t know are happening and how these help the students.”

**What change implemented by the partnership do you think has achieved the most impact?**

- “Collaboration between various working groups and coalitions of faculties and Centre for Sustainable Development.”

- “In terms of numbers the sustainability conference seems to have had the most student participation. But also, the sustainable transport through the Next Bike scheme from my experience seems to be well used.”
- “The fixing of issues related to Responsible Futures into their human resources, induction, and the inclusion of training processes for all types of new starters such as students, staff, sabbatical officers, governors etc.”
- “The establishment of various projects and projects to improve sustainability across the school and get accredited.”
- “Creating awareness on sustainability and working with student auditors. The opportunity presents a win-win situation where students gain professional experience and are directly involved in improving sustainability in their schools, which ultimately is the goal of the institution; having students steer and lead the campaign.”
- “I think the sustainability hub.”
- “I think the change to adding more sustainability modules within courses has achieved the most impact as it has raised awareness for sustainability to those who may not have been previously involved.”

#### **What would you recommend the partnership focuses on next?**

- “I think formalising the informal connections that exist within the wider partnership would be a good start. There is a clear path to ensuring sustainability is formally included in Uni/Union strategies and plans more explicitly. Getting meaningful student engagement in both activities and planning exercises is important- I would suggest being slightly more purposeful with student recruitment, ask people you think would be interested and use snowball recruitment after that.”
- “How to make more drive come from bottom up, i.e., figuring out how to make students participate actively in the whole process.”
- “I would like to see better communication between all divisions, the student union, Sustainable Strathclyde, faculties, and the Centre for Sustainable Development so that change within the University can happen more quickly and become ingrained in all aspects of the institution. Having a united voice will better show the executive body that it is important to all and more needs to be done quickly. I would also encourage them to create a connotation that being a Strathclyder implies a good understanding of sustainability as well as what can be done to reach targets and implement measures of achieving sustainability across all future careers of their students.
- “The partnership should increase sustainability awareness and deliver focused engagements with specific targets and duration.”
- “I would recommend the partnership focus on getting more student auditors to audit monthly or quarterly so that the partnership can track their progress and get feedbacks even before the time of accreditation.”
- “Implementing the findings of the audit and engaging student ambassadors.”

- “I think the partnership should focus on gaining ground and impact with already existing projects rather than starting new ones.”
- “I recommend the partnership continue with the steps they are currently taking as these will continue to have positive impacts in the future years.”

**Is there anything else you’ve learnt through your experiences as an auditor?**

- “Implementing programs is a slow, boring and hands on the ground process. No matter how grandiose it is, it needs work to work.”
- “Through the interview process, I have seen the passion that those involved in sustainability at the University have. How much work they put in and how hard it is to create meaningful and lasting change in a well-established institution.”
- “My experiences on day two of the audit was more of putting theory into practice! I learnt interview techniques and applied what I learnt on interviewing training when I was interviewing Scott, Debbie, and Lizann. It was a great experience!”
- “I have learnt quite a lot...especially the importance of accountability. I have developed my note taking skills, critical thinking and analysis, interview skills and reviewing skills.”
- “I have learnt a lot about sustainability that I was previously unaware of. I have learnt how to ask critical questions, listen actively, observe behaviour, and collate information from several sources to improve a system. It has been an interesting and equally rewarding experience.”
- “I learnt that I indeed have an interest in sustainability and would love to participate in future activities geared at sustainability and also incorporate it into my day-to-day life.”
- “I’ve learnt a lot of new skills and built on my confidence. I have developed my critical thinking and analytical skills whilst doing the audit which will help me in my academic career as I progress.”

**How, if at all do you think you might use the knowledge and skills you’ve developed during this experience?**

- “Definitely was a great opportunity to test and refine some critical thinking and analysis skills - this is useful both for my own studies but for future work as well. It is also fantastic exposure to the University/Union 'machine'.”
- “I plan to use my knowledge of sustainability and skill of auditing in my career in the development sector and in my personal research work.”
- “I hope to remain in academia with a strong focus on sustainable research. I think participation in the audit demonstrates my will to also drive sustainability at the University. It has also shown me where there is potential for more involvement in sustainability initiatives.”
- “The knowledge and skills I have developed during this experience have given me the confidence and competency to conduct a successful interview.”



- “I will apply it to my professional capacity and everyday life.”
- “I am already being steered towards a sustainability referenced project dissertation. Regardless, this experience and the skills I have gained from the exercise have opened a doorway in my mind to live more consciously and take more opportunities to contribute, create awareness and improve everywhere I am.”
- “I will be using the skills I developed for my research, and it will definitely come in handy after school when I get a job.”
- “This experience will help me in my academic and professional career as being able to build rapport and connect with others of varying backgrounds and experiences is very important in the workplace. This has allowed me to develop these skills more.”

Thank you to the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union for your hard work and commitment to progressing sustainability in all student learning in partnership with students and staff. Your strong collaborative approach was a pleasure to learn more about, as well as the range of activity around ESD. We hope to continue working with you to ensure all students at the University of Strathclyde and Strath Union are equipped with skills and competencies to create a better world.



# Further Information

## 3.0 General Information

### 3.1 What does my accreditation mean?

The “Responsible Futures Accreditation” means that you have gained the full accreditation by exceeding the score threshold of 220 (out of 355) and have demonstrated and evidenced your partnership’s commitment and progress for embedding sustainability and social responsibility across the whole institution.

### 3.2 How long will the accreditation last?

Accreditation is valid for two years, so until July 2025, at which time another audit will be required to re-validate your accreditation.

### 3.3 How do we use the logo?

Each institution will be given the appropriate logo - please use this widely to recognise your accomplishment and your partnership’s commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. If you would like to provide further information about the programme, please link to <https://www.sos-uk.org/project/responsible-futures>.

### 3.4 What’s next?

After achieving accreditation, the annual membership fee will cover all future audits to maintain accreditation as well as ongoing support. The membership fees and sign-up form can be found here: <https://www.sos-uk.org/programme-sign-up>

### 3.5 How do we keep improving?

We encourage you to use the feedback from this report and through the audit process to inform your work moving forward.

In conducting your next audit, we would hope to see progress against the recommendations outlined in this report.

The Responsible Futures accreditation will push the sector for continuous improvement, and we hope you will continue to actively engage with other institutions in the cohort to share learning and good practice.

### 3.6 How do we compare?

Responsible Futures is not a league table and therefore individual scores will not be published. SOS-UK will not share your scores; however, you are welcome to share them with others if you wish.

Note that 2014/15 pilot year participants worked to a maximum score of 260 points which the accreditation threshold being met at 130 points before the threshold was raised to 200 points out of a maximum 330 in summer 2015.

### 3.7 I would like to be re-assessed, what can I do?

If you do not agree with your score/accreditation and would like to be re-assessed, please contact the Responsible Futures team on [responsiblefutures@sos-uk.org](mailto:responsiblefutures@sos-uk.org). The documentary review can be re-conducted if the partnership feels that the assessment is inaccurate.

**Responsible  
Futures**



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