



GOOD PRACTICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY

GREEN HUB TWENTE

Student Engagement in Sustainability

Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

A Project Developed by:



UNIVERSITY
OF TWENTE.



MCAST



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Project: Fostering Student Engagement through AI-driven Qualitative Quality Assurance Practices

Consortium Partners

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University of Twente
Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)
European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (ECA)
Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU)

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Suggested Reference

University of Twente. (2022). Green Hub Twente: Student Engagement in Sustainability.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5914567>

Document Reference: Green Hub Twente: Student Engagement in Sustainability.

Document Version: 2021

Project Reference: 2020-1-LV01-KA203-077578

Disclaimer: This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This document and all its content reflect the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Title: Green Hub Twente

Organization: University of Twente

Country: Netherlands

One liner – essence of the case study: students from the University of Twente participate in initiatives to create a circular ecosystem and reach higher levels of sustainability in the UT community and wider society

Short Summary: Students at the University of Twente have developed the Green Hub Twente, which is set up to collect knowledge and innovations on sustainability with the goal of developing a circular ecosystem, both at the University of Twente and the society surrounding it. This initiative tries to build a network including students and UT staff members, researchers, companies, organizations and local communities. The main goal of this organization is to create a bottom-up platform that will play a pivotal role in realizing sustainability in the UT community.

green hub twente

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

OVERVIEW

1-Short description

University of Twente is a public technical university located in Enschede, Netherlands. It had 11.740 students in 2019, and in 2021 over 3.600 were international students. It harbors five faculties, and offers 20 bachelor programs and 34 master programs.

2-Background Information

The University of Twente officially started the Green Hub Twente in August 2020. The hub, partly an initiative of a group of students, is a central point where all knowledge and initiatives in the field of sustainability within the UT come together, so that they reinforce and help each other. The hub also supports and develops ideas to make education, research and operational management of the UT more sustainable. The Hub is located in the Bastille building and run by students, supported by a permanent coordinator.



Official launch of the Green Hub in August 2020

3-Aims and Motivations

The main objective of the Green Hub Twente is to foster sustainability at the University of Twente campus and the University community. They have identified four goals that are part of their mission, related to the UT Shaping2030 Vision, which are to:

1. Create a central location that connects the UT community, and informs and helps achieving progress in the transition towards sustainability
2. Create a platform to let the UT community engage in a bottom-up approach for sustainability, climate and social justice
3. Play an active role in the formation, realization, implementation and adhering to the UT policy with regards to sustainability
4. Be a channel for sustainable, social, and system entrepreneurs and help them to become ambassadors of sustainable transformations in business and society



Shaping2030 Vision, of which the main goal is to create a fair, sustainable and digital society

4-Stakeholders

Stakeholders in the Green Hub Twente initiative include university employees, students, researchers, student associations and movements, sustainable energy companies and local start-ups, and other universities. There is a stakeholder list that includes 32 actors from these areas. Which stakeholders are engaging with the Green Hub depends on the particular portfolio; the System Entrepreneurship portfolio, to name one example, communicates with entrepreneurship-related stakeholders such as Novel-T, B-Corp, and the Student Union. The Research & Education portfolio primarily establishes connections between UT sustainability researchers, while the Projects & Community portfolio mainly focuses on stakeholders related to student associations and movements. For a bottom-up approach to succeed, the primary target group of this initiative are students, hence the 14 student Green Officers and the involvement of student associations and movements.

The current Green Hub stakeholder list has 32 stakeholders on it, including

- University Employees
- Student associations and movements
- Sustainable energy companies
- Other universities

IMPLEMENTATION

1-Input

The inputs mainly come from students who work as volunteers at the Green Hub Twente. The exception is the Green Hub Coordinator, who is a University of Twente staff member, and the Green Officers who are appointed as UTFlex student employees (internal organization for student jobs). The Green Hub is supported by the University itself. This pretty much summarizes the financial input. It is not clear how financial arrangements are made for organizing events.

2-Strategies and Activities

First, the initiative was started by teambuilding activities, followed by exploratory meetings with stakeholders (Green Hub Twente, 2020; p. 21). The goal of this was to create cohesion among the student members of the Green Hub. After the official launch during the 2020 Sustainability Week, teambuilding was moved to the different portfolios and various activities were organized there. The 2021 Annual Plan names activities such as “the Plaex automatic-waste separation demonstration” and “the online MasterMind – Green Hub Lunch Event” (p. 5), together with a series of events called the Sustainability Series. The main part of the strategy is the “Sustainability Reporting Initiative”, the goal of which is to “systematically map out and report on the different sustainability initiatives and activities that are connected to UT, including research and education activities, as well as operational efforts and companies that are connected to UT” (p. 5). So far the general strategy of the Green Hub to build internal structure.



3-Coordination with the Target Groups

The organization is divided into several portfolios (Research & Education, Operational Sustainability, Projects and Community, External Affairs and Communication, System Entrepreneurship) all responsible for contacting and building relationships with respective actors, as explained in the stakeholder section. At first, exploratory meetings with stakeholders were organized (p. 21). Other activities related to coordinating target groups include making a draft map of possible related stakeholders depending on the portfolio and creating a network with these stakeholders. For example Sustain, which is a study association on sustainability at the University of Twente that is tied to the Green Hub.



4- Outputs

In the case of the Green Hub Twente, the intangible outputs are more significant than the deliverable outputs. Since the initiative started in August 2020, at moment of writing 16 months ago, there has not been much possibility in terms of time and investments to realize the goal of a 'sustainable' university and community. However, what has been reached are mainly educational collaborations between higher education institutions for sustainability, a network among sustainability researchers, new projects, establishing relationships with student associations and start-up organizations, and co-organizing sustainability events. Looking at its mission, a lot has been reached since launch, as they are establishing themselves as a central platform for sustainability at the University of Twente. Students have contributed to them as the organization mainly exists of students, with the Green Officers being students. In this way, the activities organized through the five portfolios can be called student-organized activities.

Research & Education

- Start to establish a network among sustainability researchers at the UT
- Educational collaborations between HEIs for sustainability



Operations

- Started projects

Projects & Community

- Main focus is to discover and map the sustainability-related stakeholders of UT and to understand their needs
- Built a strong relationship with SUSTAIN (great community of students)
- Establishing the Green Hub

External Affairs & Communication

- Formulated a modular approach to our various social media platforms, drafted up communications strategy
- Green Hub promoted through the University of Twente media channels
- Actively participated in promoting and transmitting (online) sustainability events in 2020
 - o Grand Opening of Green Hub Twente
 - o Sustainability Week
 - o Sustain Speed Dating Event
 - o Mastermind Discussion Event

System Entrepreneurship

- Contacting entrepreneurial stakeholders within and outside the UT
 - o Novel-T
 - o B-Corp (Eshuis)
 - o Student Union
- Designing and promoting a Green Social Space in the Bastille in collaboration with the Student Union

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Strategical Initiatives for Evaluation & Monitoring

The strategy is explicitly stated in the 2021 Annual Plan. Internal evaluation will be performed by developing “a systematic approach for assessing the success of our own activities, with regard to our own SMART goals, as well as through the means of appointing our Advisory Board who will provide the necessary perspective to give valuable feedback” (p. 15). Furthermore, this is supported by systematically writing internal reports on reviewing activities organized by the Green Hub. This means that the Green Hub Twente is looking for ways to create “reporting cycles” (p. 15).



SUPPORTIVE AND INFLUENCING ASPECTS

1-Identifying the major Strengths and Weaknesses

Among the major strengths of the Green Hub Twente is the grass-roots, bottom-up approach to reach the organization's mission. Student engagement is therefore inherent to the organization's existence. That being stated, the topic is student engagement with society, and with that in mind, the engagement is not sufficient enough. Judging from the stakeholders involved with the organization, and both the internal and external results that were discussed, it does not seem that the Green Hub Twente has focused much on the wider society around the university. Thus, a real engagement of students with the society around them is barely present. A second strength of the Green Hub is connecting start-ups to sustainability. This means that sustainability as a subject is not merely the focus of students in university, but also of those who move into a professional life, for example by starting a business or joining one of the related companies in the network. Another point of strength is the use of research programs, thereby connecting Sustainability researchers with each other through the Green Hub. It establishes the organization as a means to new research, integrating it better in research networks.

2-Further Challenges

One major challenge of the Green Hub is the bottom-up approach itself. As the organization is pretty much dependent on student input, there are two problems. The first problem is that if students neglect the set duties, there is no obligation to keep the organization going. The second problem is that most students come and go within five years. On the long run this means replacing the engaged students and Green Officers every few years, thus not giving much stability to the organization and its mission.

FURTHER INFORMATION

1-Sustainability Factors

The main sustainability factor is student input and the relevancy of the topic of sustainability. Also, the Green Hub has established itself in a research network consisting of sustainability researchers. They are also supported by the University of Twente.

2-Transferability

The approach that was taken in building up the Green Hub can be a good example of student engagement with societal issues. Perhaps the main strength in this regard is the mission of the Hub to become a central location for the topic of sustainability within the University community, instead of aiming to solve issues related to sustainability by themselves. The goal of becoming a central location is do-able for students at other universities as well, as it mostly requires student input and some back-up support from the university.

4-Links

<https://www.utwente.nl/organisatie/over-de-ut/missie-en-visie/#onze-visie-bijdragenaan-een-eerlijke-duurzame-en-digitale-samenleving>

<https://www.twente.com/en/global-goals/7-affordable-and-clean-energy/university-of-twente-opens-green-hub>

<https://www.utwente.nl/nl/duurzaamheid/green-hub-twente/over-greenhub/#rapportage>

<https://www.utwente.nl/.uc/f4aa8e30f0102430caf004158b00167ab0e85a80470a700/Annual%20Plan%202021%20-%20Green%20Hub%20Twente.pdf>

<https://www.utwente.nl/.uc/f8ae1c26c0102480caf004158b0015ec1137353750fa900/Annual%20Report%202020%20-%20Green%20Hub%20Twente.pdf>

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