

# Students as partners, students as leaders

Charlotte Taylor  
NUS

# Why does NUS care about ESD?

*"It is worth noting that the destruction of the planet is not the work of ignorant people. Rather it is largely the results of work by people with BAs, BScs, LLBs, MBAs, and PhDs...Education can equip people to be more effective vandals of the earth.*

*If one listens carefully, it may even be possible to hear the Creation groan every year in late May when another batch of smart, degree-holding, but ecologically illiterate, Homo sapiens who are eager to succeed are launched into the biosphere"*

David Orr

# The student voice matters...and they're saying sustainability is important...



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The student voice matters...and they're saying sustainability is important...

Part of the Problem



Employable  
conformist  
graduates

OR

Part of the Solution



Challenging  
activist  
graduates

# Student attitudes and skills for sustainable development

# Background to the research

**This research has been carried out over four years (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14) against a backdrop of...**

- Over 1m unemployed young people (November 2011, 16-24 year olds)
- Graduate full-time (FT) employment fell continuously between 2002 and 2010, from 57% of graduates in 2002 to 51% of graduates in 2010
- Education for Sustainable Development is of increasing policy relevance through climate change and the 'green economy'
- An increasing focus on the idea of 'graduate attributes' upon leaving higher education
- Changing funding landscape within higher education including increase in maximum fees to £9000 in 2012

# Skills for sustainability

Understand  
people's  
relationship to  
nature

Act as a  
responsible  
citizen locally &  
globally

Analyse using  
many subjects

Use resources  
efficiently

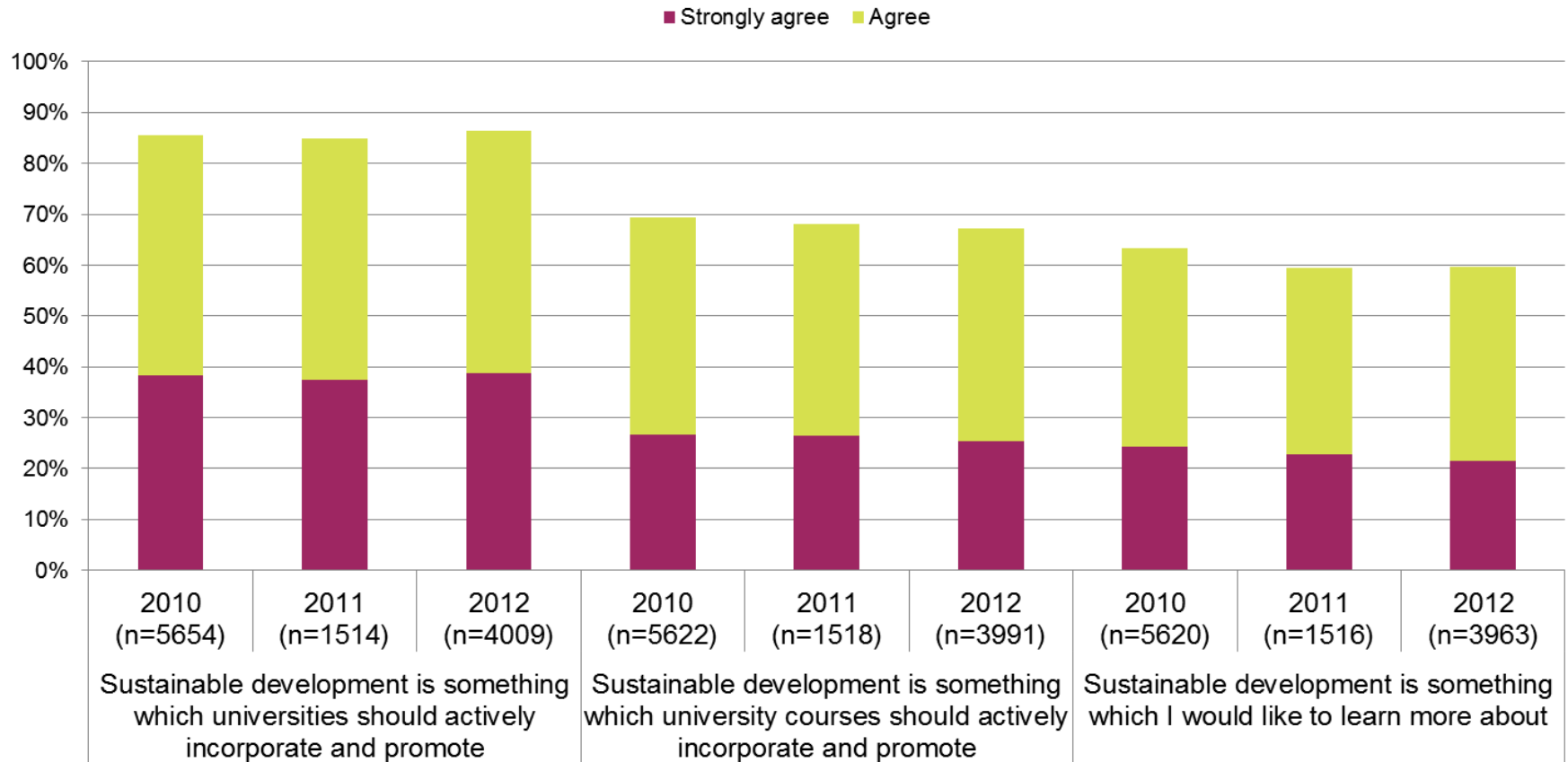
Plan for the long  
term as well as  
the short term

Consider the  
ethical issues of  
your subject

Adapt to new  
situations

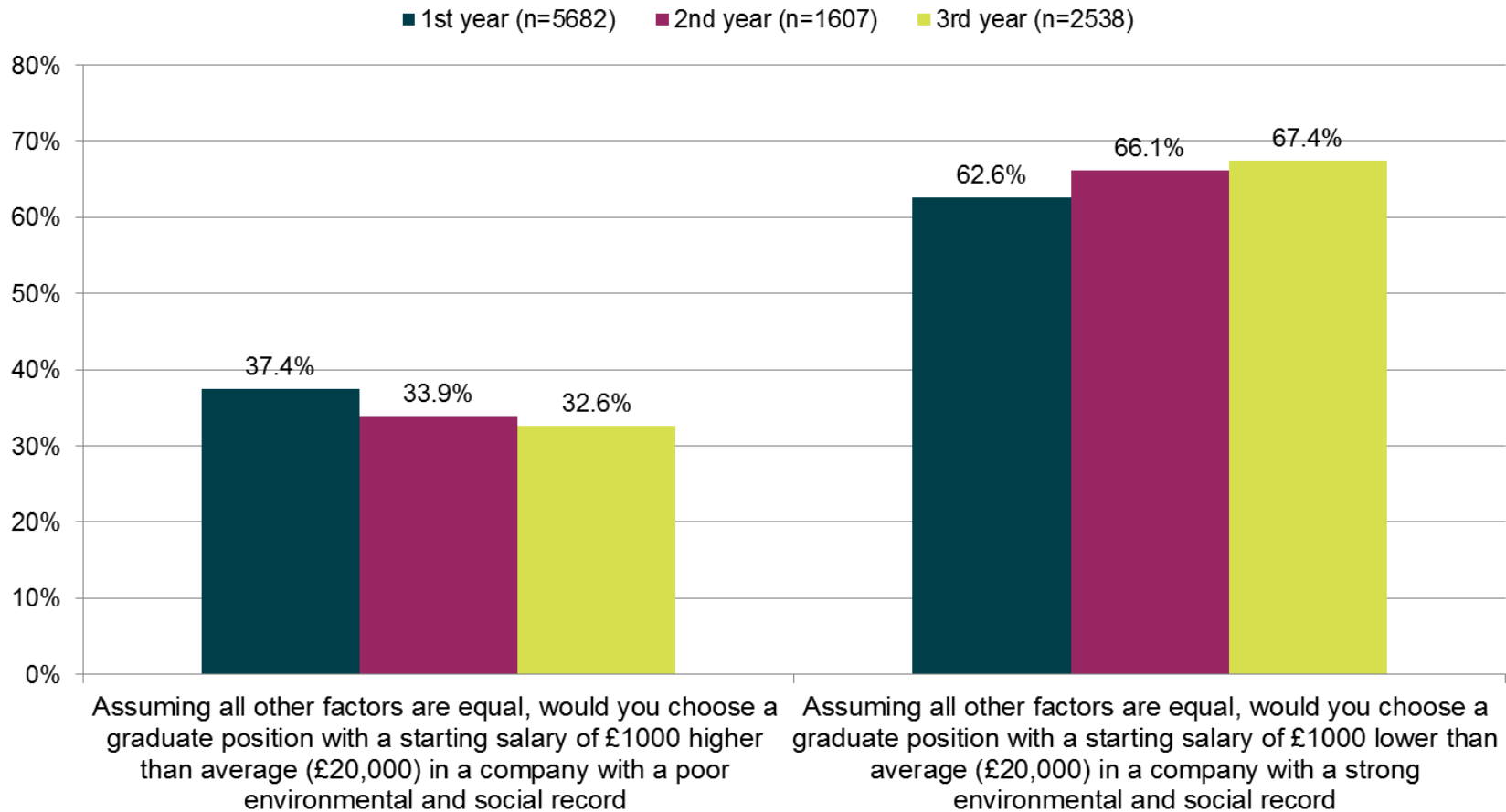
Think of the whole  
system and the links  
when considering  
new ideas

# ESD is in demand and continues to be seen as a core agenda for universities





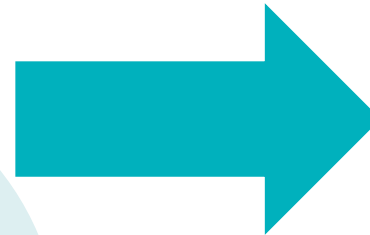
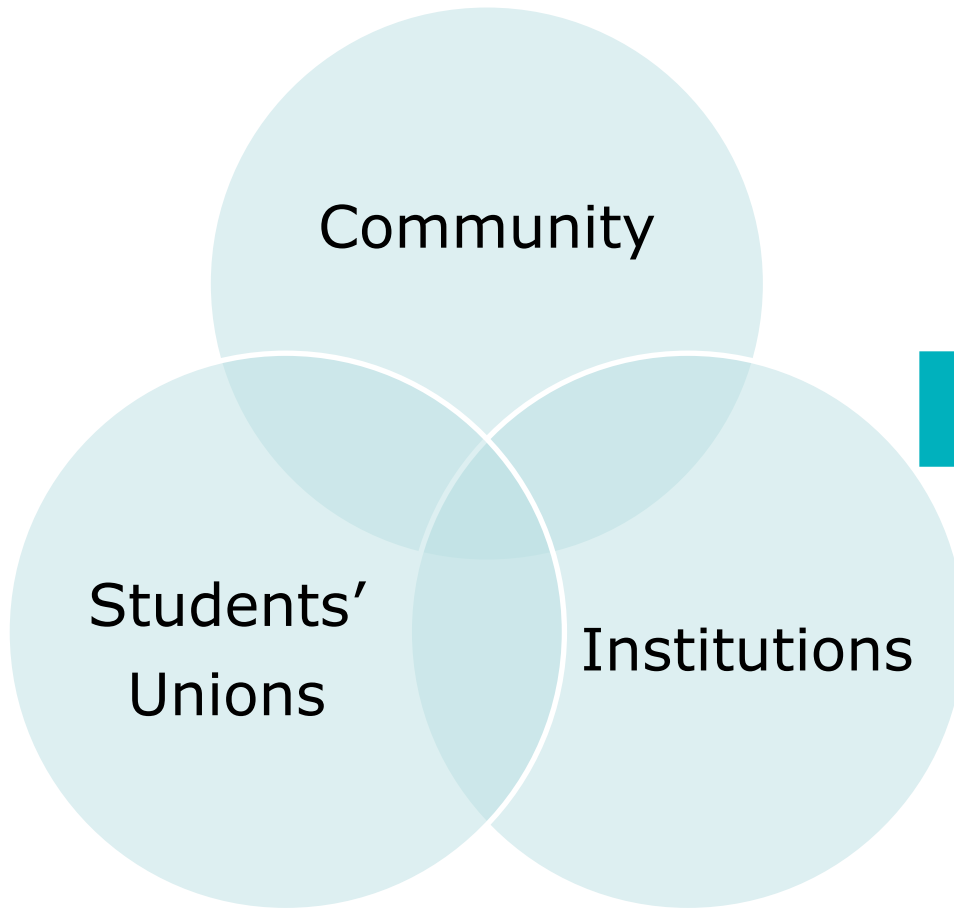
# Willingness to sacrifice £1000 from salary for an employer with a strong SD record increases throughout university career



ESD is a growing agenda for students:

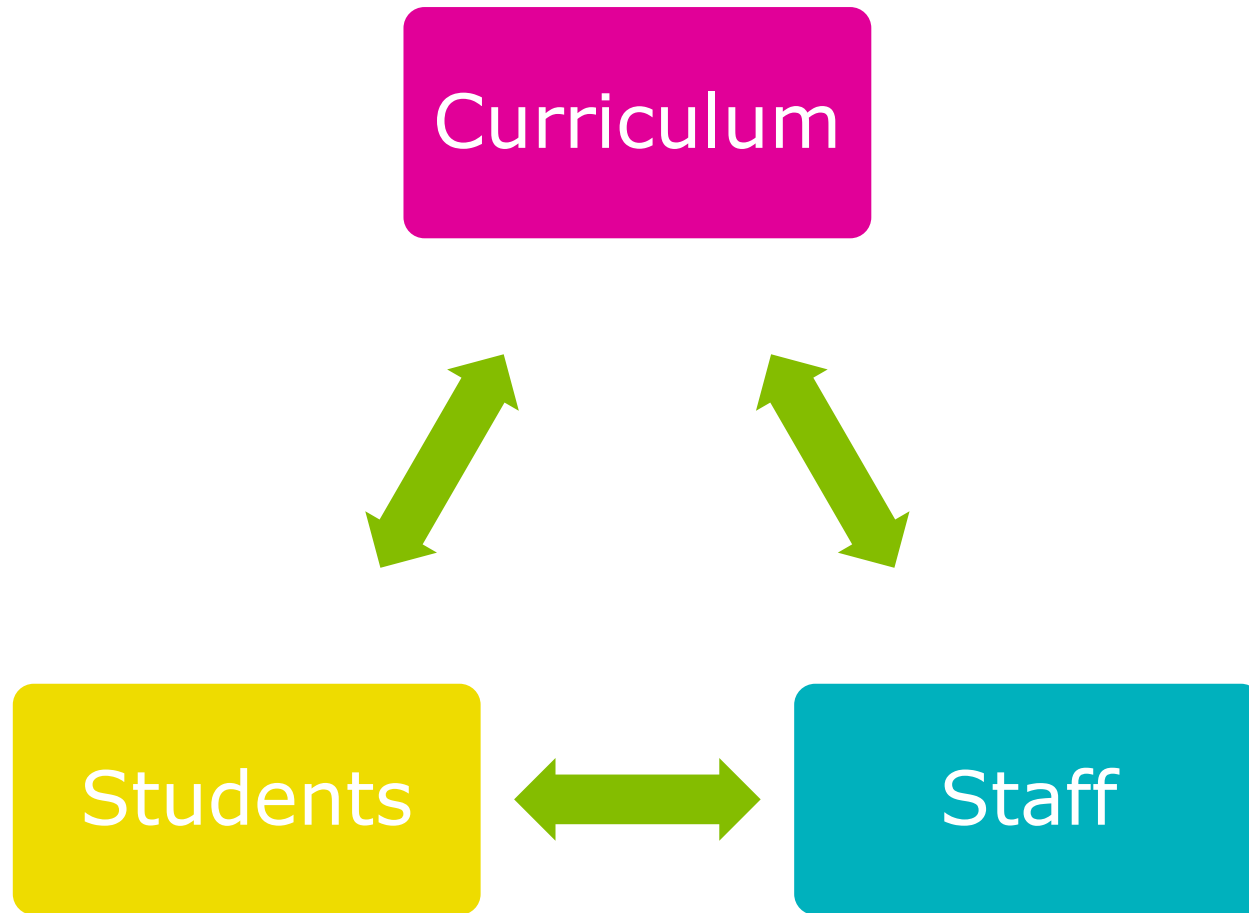
- NUS programmes
- Students Green Fund
- Employment

# Three key areas of work



Students  
leave tertiary  
education as  
part of the  
solution,  
rather than  
part of the  
problem

In each of these areas we aim to include...



# From energy saving to food growing...

**student  
Switchoff**  
[www.studentswitchoff.org](http://www.studentswitchoff.org)



**STUDENT  
EATS!**

**nus**  
national union of **students**



# Working within and across institutions and their communities...

**nus**

**Students'  
Green Fund**



**Green Impact**



# What is already being done

## **NUS**

- Member of Learning for Sustainability Scotland
- Chair the Greener Jobs Alliance
- HEA QAA ESD framework
- Green Impact Students Unions Excellence
- Course reps training on ESD
- Student Led Teaching Awards

# What is already being done

## **Students' Unions**

- Awareness raising
- Sustainability starting to be embedded in SU processes
- Presidents, Academic and Education Officers becoming more engaged
- Course reps
- Attendance at ESD events growing
- Sustainability hubs- training and employability
- Research



# Students' Green Fund

£5m pilot fund from HEFCE for **student-led sustainability projects** to be run by students' unions in partnership with their parent institutions

Four key themes:

- **Student engagement**
- **Partnership**
- **Impact**
- **Legacy**



## **Liverpool Guild of Students**

Developing an institution-wide team of Green Course Ambassadors supporting the embedding of ESD into the curriculum.



## **Wigan and Leigh College Students' Union**

Running a dragon's den style competition for innovative ESD projects. Staff from subject areas will be encouraged to submit bids in partnership with students, to develop and embed a sustainability project within their curriculum area.

# Students as partners

## Exeter Students' Union

- Activism with world expertise
- 20 student projects
- Student-led environmental solutions



# Conclusion

- Partnership is key
- Students are in a unique position to campaign for this agenda
- They're our future



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