

*TITLE:*

## Resourcing sustainability at Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I College

*DATE:* June 2009



WYGGESTON & QUEEN  
ELIZABETH I COLLEGE

*INSTITUTION PROFILE*

Organisation profile  
250 employees  
2100 students  
Sixth Form College

*SUMMARY*

A European volunteers scheme provided the perfect half-way house for this Leicester college when it needed someone to improve its sustainability.

The college couldn't afford a dedicated member of staff, so turned to charity StudentForce for Sustainability to provide volunteers on a short-term basis to tackle specific projects.

*EAUC COMMENT*

This case study provides an excellent example of how organisations such as StudentForce can provide institutions with much needed support to meet sustainability commitments in an effective and affordable way.

### PROJECT PARTNERS

StudentForce for Sustainability

### THE PROBLEM

Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College (WQEIC) in Leicester had already made a commitment to sustainability but was lacking staff time and resources to really make changes.

The college wanted to give a real boost to aspects of its sustainability programme but felt it could not afford the usual solutions, such as employing a dedicated member of staff.

When the college was approached by StudentForce for Sustainability and asked to participate in its Sustainable Colleges project WQEIC knew it had found an affordable solution.

StudentForce for Sustainability is a charity which works through the European Voluntary Service programme to place graduate European volunteers in colleges to work on sustainability projects as part-time staff.

### THE APPROACH

The college's senior management felt that to participate in this scheme would not only help it progress on its sustainability projects, but would also complement its commitment to graduate development.

The college and StudentForce drew up activity agreements which set out what each volunteer would be expected to achieve while working at WQEIC. The college first piloted the approach and was matched with a volunteer, Rime Saidi, one day a week for two terms to establish baseline information about sustainability at the college.

Following the successful pilot, the college agreed to take part for another year and French volunteer Florian Babeau was chosen by the charity, as his experience and expectations matched the needs of the college.

Florian's agreement covered travel planning, the healthy college programme, recycling, publicising the college's commitment to sustainability and, importantly, setting up and running a 'green group' course as part of the college's enrichment curriculum.

The college's experience is that engaging 16-19 year-old urban students with sustainability issues is very difficult and believes that peer-driven change is more likely to succeed than a staff-led approach. Florian's task was to establish an enrichment course in which students would play a large part in the design and delivery.

## OUR GOALS

- To progress WQEIC's commitment to sustainability while at the same time offering a good opportunity for graduate development
- To create an enrichment course to get students involved in the sustainability debate and in the college's commitment to sustainability
- To promote the college's activity on sustainability, both within the college via its intranet, events, and other communication – such as poster campaigns and in the wider community via the college's website
- To provide advice and support to staff on sustainability-related projects such as travel planning, recycling performance and achieving the Kirklees Healthy College Standard.

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

### Obstacle

- Language – despite good conversational language skills it took a while for Florian to feel confident in the work environment. This could be a problem for any college employing graduates with English as a second language
- Budget - the college's budget for sustainability is minimal. No allocation had been made for sustainability staffing or materials/course costs
- Apathy - getting enough people interested in the 'green group' to make sure it can continue as an effective presence in the college
- Teaching background – Florian didn't have experience as a teacher

### Solution

- Colleagues were patient and Florian asked for people to speak more slowly and occasionally explain things more than once
- Funding to cover staffing was found from personnel budgets. Materials and other costs were covered by budgets within the control of the Estates and Services Office
- The information in the prospectus will be re-written for the start of the 2009 academic year after feedback from the students who took the course during 2008/09
- Hopefully students will see the changes being made at the college, for example to travel planning and recycling facilities, and feel inspired to be part of them
- Adoption of a participative, interactive approach with the purpose of stimulating debate and guiding students, rather than teaching them

## PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

- A successful first year of the green group where they created outfits from recycled materials for the college fashion show, hosted a stall at the college's open day and held a green awareness day as well as participating in workshops, visits and lessons as part of the educational content of the course
- Sustainability sections uploaded to the college's intranet and website ([www.wqeic.ac.uk/sustainability](http://www.wqeic.ac.uk/sustainability))
- Travel planning launched with an ongoing staff and student travel survey
- Carried out a waste audit highlighting the performance of the college's recycling scheme and pointing to areas for improvement
- Gathered evidence in support of the Healthy College Standard

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Graduates/volunteers on development programmes are highly motivated and a good 'half-way house' between no staff and a permanent member of staff
- A clear set of priorities and outcomes is needed for such a relatively short placement so that all parties are clear on what constitutes success
- The management structure must be clearly defined beforehand and time allocated to maintain an overview of the volunteer's work
- The curriculum for the green group needs more structure to ensure the students can clearly link their activity to changes at the college. More external speakers and debates are planned for the beginning 2009/10

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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- Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College  
[www.wqeic.ac.uk](http://www.wqeic.ac.uk)
- Prospectus information for the green group for 2008/09  
[www.wqeic.ac.uk/courses/detail.asp?id=333](http://www.wqeic.ac.uk/courses/detail.asp?id=333)
- StudentForce  
[www.studentforce.org.uk/](http://www.studentforce.org.uk/)



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