



Universities and colleges in the UK have signed a unique agreement with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to bring British sustainability excellence to a global audience.

July 2014

The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), on behalf of its Members in the UK, has committed to a 3 year agreement with UNEP to link and support tertiary education institutions around the world.

As a follow-up to the Rio+20 Summit, UNEP recently convened the first session of the historic United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in July 2014. UNEA presents a universal platform for leadership on global environmental policy, with participation of all 193 member states of the United Nations. As part of its strategic partnerships, UNEP has developed a Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES), which seeks to foster closer linkages between UNEP's policy domain and universities across the globe.

This unprecedented agreement will put the prestigious Green Gown Awards on a truly global scale. The Green Gown Awards recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives being undertaken by universities and colleges. The Awards cover all aspects of educational institutions – from their teaching and research, leadership, buildings and food to how students can benefit the quality of life in the communities around them. The UK Green Gown Awards are now in their 10th year and their 5th in Australasia. With the inaugural French speaking Awards in July, the partnership with UNEP will expand the Green Gown Awards further across the globe with an emphasis on profiling and learning from the Southern Hemisphere. The ethos of the Green Gown Awards is to ensure the lessons and example of good practice are shared and this exciting partnership will put UK universities and colleges as leaders in sustainability as well as being able to continue their learning from global leaders.

The partnership will also bring together EAUC Members and the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES) network, around three key pillars of activities – education, training and networking. We will be delivering training and networking opportunities to radically increase the sharing of the Southern and Northern Hemispheres understanding on what sustainability means for an education institution.

As well as recognising good practice and learning from each other, we will also be working with UNEP to encourage universities and colleges, both in the UK and worldwide, to measure their sustainability performance. We are working with our partners on the [Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education](#), which was launched during an earlier session of UNEP's Governing Council in Nairobi, to improve how universities and colleges can measure, monitor and improve their sustainability performance.

UK universities and colleges, through the EAUC, are taking responsibility for their institutions and their students and ensuring that the UK is leading the way.

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Iain Patton, CEO of EAUC, says:

“The EAUC view is that our Member UK universities and colleges, have to take the lead on a global scale to ensure our students have the skills and knowledge to ensure a social, economic and environmentally responsible future for us all. We are excited to be putting our Members on the map and working together with UNEP to bring this change.”

Mahesh Pradhan, Chief of UNEP’s Environmental Education and Training Unit, says:

“UNEP seeks to enhance engagement with the higher education community, in empowering the next generation of sustainability leaders across the planet. This partnership with EAUC complements current efforts of the Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES), whereby new opportunities for exchange of sustainability knowledge, experiences and networking are created.”

ENDS

Notes to the Editor

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About the EAUC:

With a membership of over 230 universities and colleges, the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) is the sustainability champion for universities and colleges in the UK. Run by members, for its members, the EAUC seeks to work with members and partners to drive sustainability to the heart of further and higher education. For more information, visit www.eauc.org.uk.

About the Green Gown Awards:

Now in their 10th year, the Green Gown Awards recognise the exceptional sustainability initiatives being undertaken by universities and colleges across the UK. With sustainability moving up the agenda, the Awards have become established as the most prestigious recognition of best practice within the further and higher education sector. The Green Gown Awards are administered by the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) and are governed by a [cross agency steering group](#).

For more information visit www.greengownawards.org.uk

About the Platform for Sustainability Performance:

The Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education brings together organisations which have created sustainability assessment tools designed to support universities and colleges around the world. The Platform is also designed to assist commitments of [Higher Education Sustainable Initiative \(HESI\)](#) signatories, by providing a range of tools and options in assessing and improving their sustainability performance. It can also support complimentary Rio+20 initiatives such as the [People's Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education](#). The Platform is supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) and the Global Compact.

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For further information visit: www.sustainabilityperformance.org

About UNEP:

UNEP, established in 1972, is the global environmental authority and voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. UNEP work encompasses: Assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends; Developing international and national environmental instruments and strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment

For further information visit: <http://www.unep.org/>

About GUPES:

The Global Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (GUPES), is one of the flagship programmes of UNEP's Environmental Education and Training Unit (EETU). GUPES was the result of a consultative forum organized by UNEP and its partners in Nairobi, on November 19, 2010 to deliberate on ways of escalating UNEP's engagement with universities. It builds on the successes of the Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in African Universities (MESA), the nascent Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in the Caribbean Universities (MESCA) and the Asia-Pacific Regional University Consortium (RUC). At present, over 430 universities and regional partners/focal points from five different continents are part of the growing GUPES network.

For further information visit: <http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/gupes.asp>

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