

GIVE YOUR DEGREE A SUSTAINABLE TWIST

**York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs)
Prospectus 2026-27**



**MAKE
SUSTAINABILITY
PART OF YOUR
DEGREE**



York Interdisciplinary Modules

York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs) offer students the opportunity to develop skills and experience in working across disciplines on sustainability challenges.

Our sustainability-related York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs) are elective modules that allow students to work collaboratively in multi-disciplinary teams to solve local, regional and global sustainability challenges. Students are taught by academics from different departments and work in groups with students from across the University, allowing them to apply their expertise to these challenges and learn from students and staff from other disciplines.

Established by Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY), there are currently four sustainability-related YIMs available for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students to take (subject to department availability / timetabling constraints).

Award-winning modules

In 2024, our YIMs were awarded a national Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) from Advance HE. The award has been made in recognition of the ESAY-YIMs team's value-based approach to collaborative, interdisciplinary programme design, teaching and learning.

Why choose a YIM?

Expand your perspective

Sustainability challenges, like climate change, biodiversity loss and social justice, can't be solved by one discipline alone. Our YIMs bring together ideas from science, humanities, business and beyond, helping you see the bigger picture and approach problems in new ways.

Make a real-world impact

Our YIMs don't just teach theory, they connect learn to real-world issues. You'll explore case studies, work on practical projects, and engage with current sustainability challenges being faced all over the world, giving you the tools to contribute meaningfully to change.

Join a like-minded community

When you take a YIM, you join a diverse group of students from other degree programmes who share an interest in sustainability. It's a great opportunity to exchange ideas, challenge assumptions, and build a network of people who are passionate about making a difference.

Boost your employability

Employers value graduates who can think critically, solve problems creatively and collaborate across different teams. By taking a YIM, you'll develop transfereable skills in teamwork, communication and systems thinking; essential for future careers.

Broaden your learning

YIMs offer a chance to step outside your main subject area and engage with new perspectives. Whether you study science, arts, or social sciences, a sustainability-focused module can enrich your academic experience and inspire fresh ways of thinking.



“A benefit of the project was the work experience, which has been really beneficial in bolstering my CV and helped in securing postgraduate job opportunities.”

3rd Year Environment and Geography student, Sustainability Clinic module

At a glance: For 2026/27

Future of Food

Open to: 2nd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Department of Biology and the School for Business & Society.

Module code: ESA00001

Sustainability & Policy

Open to: 3rd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI-Y)

Module code: ESA00004H

Climate Crisis, Advocacy and Action

Open to: 3rd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Department of Chemistry, Department of Environment and Geography, and York Law School.

Module code: ESA00003H

Sustainability Clinic

Open to: 3rd Year UGs in Semester 1 and 2, Taught PGs in Semester 2

Offered by: ESAY, Careers, Department of Environment and Geography, the Baroness Hale Law Clinic and YESI.

Module code: ESA00002H (Sem 1), ESA00001H (Sem 2), ESA00002M (PG)

Just and Equitable Nature-based Solutions

Open to: 2nd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: School of Architecture and Department of Environment and Geography

Module code: ESA00002I

Find out about each elective module in more detail within the upcoming pages.

New for 2026/27!



FUTURE OF FOOD

Shape a sustainable food system for tomorrow.

Develop your knowledge of the food system and work with students from other disciplines to create a solution to a food system related challenge.

Module context

The current UK food system is giving rise to a growing social, health and environmental crisis. Much food production and our practices of food consumption are environmentally unsustainable. A new kind of food system is needed which delivers safe, healthy, affordable food to all, restores and regenerates the natural environment, is built on regenerative agriculture with high welfare standards, provides a thriving rural and urban economy with well-paid jobs and is resilient to future shocks.

Module highlights

- An introduction to social, economic and environmental challenges in food systems with case studies covered in lectures and workshops.
- Work in multidisciplinary teams to create a solution to a food system challenge.
- Teaching draws from a range of disciplines, including guest lectures from policymakers, food industry leaders and civil society leaders to ensure different voices and perspectives are heard.

“Fascinating—a really interesting oversight of the food system and associated challenges. The guest lecturers and experts have been splendid - their shared firsthand experience has been invaluable.”

Future of Food student

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, our students should be able to:

- Collaborate in teams with students from other disciplines to tackle local and global challenges.
- Understand and critically discuss the tradeoffs and synergies within the food system.
- Gain an understanding of 4 major food system challenges: climate change, food waste, balanced diets, and soil health.
- Formulate and evaluate strategies to address key food system issues.
- Learn and apply system mapping theory and methods.



“The content covered in the module has been interesting and very different to the rest of my degree, it allows for something new and refreshing that otherwise wouldn’t occur.”

Future of Food student

Key information

Credit value: 20 credits

Open to: 2nd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Department of Biology and the School for Business & Society.

Module code: ESA00001

How to apply for this module

Visit our “How to apply” page at the end of this prospectus for a step-by-step guide on how to apply for this module.



Find out more about Future of Food on the electives module catalogue.



SUSTAINABILITY AND POLICY

Use policy to solve environmental and social crises.

Learn how to use policy engagement to address environmental and social challenges and work in teams to solve issues faced in developed and developing countries.

Module context

Our planet is faces urgent, life-threatening challenges: climate change and extreme weather events, wildfires, droughts and pollution, and biodiversity loss. Dealing with these challenges has become even more difficult due to a series of events including extended periods of financial hardship, a global pandemic, and war. The science-policy interface, where theory turns into action, is more crucial than ever as time runs out to address these threats to environmental and human health.

“I’ve found the ideas presented in the workshops very engaging and interesting. I also really enjoy learning about sustainability and I feel that the material I’ve learned will equip me with the skills I need to succeed after I graduate.”

Sustainability and Policy student

Module highlights

- This module explores key environmental and social challenges with a focus on policy engagement.
- Learn how to engage with different stakeholders, from local communities to global organisations, and how to best achieve change in developed and developing countries.
- Examine how evidence informs research and policy, and how to communicate science effectively for different audiences to maximise impact.
- The module takes a blended learning approach, combining offline lectures, in-person workshops, and multimedia materials.

What you’ll gain from the module

- An understanding of the current state of sustainable development challenges.
- Critical thinking and research: learn how to assess evidence and conduct systemic reviews.
- Understand different policy types, challenges and real-world impact.
- Learn how to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.
- Develop transferrable skills in problem solving, critical evaluation and presentation skills.
- Learn from success and failure cases shared by experts from the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

“I appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with students outside of my department who can bring fresh perspectives to the table and challenge my way of thinking.”

Sustainability and Policy student

The Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI Y)

This module is offered by the Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI Y). SEI is an international non-profit organisation addressing global environmental and development challenges. As the largest sustainability team at the University, SEI Y bridges science and policy to create solutions for a sustainable future.



Key information

Credit value: 20 credits

Open to: 3rd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI Y)

Module code: ESA00004H

How to apply for this module

Visit our “How to apply” page at the end of this prospectus for a step-by-step guide on how to apply for this module.



Find out more about Sustainability and Policy on the electives module catalogue.

CLIMATE CRISIS, ADVOCACY AND ACTION

Find out what it takes to be an environmental rights investigator.

Place yourself in the shoes of an environmental rights investigator or campaigner and work in multi-disciplinary teams to tackle a climate-related unlawful government policy or failure to act.

About the module

In this module, students act as strategic environmental rights investigators and campaigners, collaborating with peers from various disciplines. Working on real-world issues from external agencies, such as NGOs, they analyse climate crises at a strategic level. For example, students might explore solutions to prevent raw sewage dumping in UK rivers, investigating scientific evidence, community impacts, and potential legal or political avenues, along with any obstacles to change.

Spotlight: Fix the Foss campaign

A team of students launched “Fix the Foss” campaign to increase the profile of York’s River Foss.

As part of this module, four Environment and Geography students launched the “Fix the Foss” campaign for the River Foss Society. The initiative aimed to raise awareness of the river’s health, highlight the importance of rivers both locally and nationally, and encourage community responsibility for its care and conservation.



Read the full story!

What’s included in the module

In this module, you’ll work in a small, multi-disciplinary team to explore real-world issues linked to the climate crisis. Through online lectures and independent study, you’ll investigate topics such as fracking, HS2, or waste incineration, learning how science, policy, and law intersect in decision-making.

Alongside this, your team will collaborate with an external organisation, like a campaign group, to research a current climate-related issue and develop a report and client-facing output. You’ll gain experience in applied research, teamwork, and communicating complex ideas, with assessments based on your contributions and final group report.

Learning outcomes:

- To work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams on pressing local and global challenges.
- To be able to gather, analyse, summarise and present to a non-expert audience an evidence base relevant to the issue.
- To be able to identify practical legal and non-legal actions to be taken to challenge a government policy, decision, practice or failure to act relating to the climate crisis, and analyse the relative prospects of success of those actions.
- To develop a critical understanding of the difficulties and challenges facing activists in seeking to tackle government action or inaction.

Key information

Credit value: 20 credits

Open to: 3rd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: Department of Chemistry, Department of Environment and Geography, and York Law School.

Module code: ESA00003H

How to apply for this module

Visit our “How to apply” page at the end of this prospectus for a step-by-step guide on how to apply for this module.



Find out more about Climate Crisis, Advocacy and Action on the electives module catalogue.



SUSTAINABILITY CLINIC

Work with a real organisation or business to drive change.

As part of a multi-disciplinary team, work on a real-world sustainability problem for an organisation, business, charity or NGO, helping them achieve their sustainability goals.

About the module

As part of a multidisciplinary student team, you will work with a local, regional or national organisation, small business, charity, community group, or NGO to help them find a solution to or better understand a real-life sustainability problem that matters to them. Issues focus on a wide range of topics, including: biodiversity, education, sustainable business, policy and regulation, and heritage and culture.



Support, training & assessment

Throughout the project, you will be supported by dedicated training, a project facilitator and have access to a team of Clinic Expert Advisors who are available to provide advice and subject-specific knowledge. At the end of the module, you'll be assessed by creating a reflective report on your project outcomes, and on your individual contribution to your project.

A dedicated space on campus

As part of this module, you'll have access to the Sustainability Clinic space, located next to Nisa in Market Square (Campus West). This dedicated space is available for you and your group to collaborate and work on your project.

What you'll gain from the module

- Work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams on pressing local or regional issues.
- Define, plan and undertake a "live" real-world sustainability project.
- Work professionally to understand the needs of a client, manage expectations and provide realistic, accurate and clear outputs.
- Analyse and evaluate complex information to provide outputs which consider all facets of sustainability and are designed to bring about positive change.
- Reflect on your personal development, your role as a social leader, and working for the public good.



Past projects to inspire

Since September 2023, our student teams have partnered with a wide range of local, regional and national organisations including the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Rugby Football League, York Minster, River Foss Society, North York Moors Railway, York Explore Libraries, and Hollybank Trust, to name a few!

Read our full Sustainability Highlights Report to read about past projects (found on our webpage below)!

"The module was such a rewarding and enriching experience, offering a unique opportunity to apply sustainability principles in a real world context while making a meaningful impact."

Charlotte, Sustainability Clinic student

Key information

Credit value: 20 credits

Open to: 3rd Year UGs in Semester 1 and 2, Taught PGs in Semester 2

Offered by: ESAY, Careers, Department of Environment and Geography, the Baroness Hale Law Clinic and YESI.

Module code: ESA00002H (Sem 1), ESA00001H (Sem 2), ESA00002M (PG)

How to apply for this module

Visit our "How to apply" page at the end of this prospectus for a step-by-step guide on how to apply for this module.



Find out more about the Sustainability Clinic by visiting this webpage.



JUST & EQUITABLE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

New for 2026/27!

Explore how nature-based solutions can transform the built environment to tackle the climate crisis while advancing biodiversity, health, and social justice.

About the module

This module investigates the development of nature-based solutions for the built environment as an ecosystem-based approach to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis whilst also improving biodiversity, livelihoods, resource use, and health and well-being.

The module will go on to explore the intersection between nature and justice to ensure that the power of nature and people can be used to generate transformational changes in the pursuit of progressive regenerative sustainable and just nature-grounded communities.

Module content

This module covers the following themes:

- nature-based solutions
- biodiversity and net gain
- social value and justice
- urban inequality
- health and wellbeing
- alternative futures and reimagining just nature-grounded communities



**THIS MODULE IS NEW
FOR 2026/27!**

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, our students should be able to:

- Work collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams on pressing local and global challenges.
- Understand and critically discuss the interrelationships of justice and nature in the context of urban planning and design.
- Gather, analyse, summarise and present to a non-expert audience an evidence base relevant to the issue.
- Formulate, identify and design strategies that address pressing issues concerning urban planning and design across and in appreciation of different interlinked scales and spaces.

Key information

Credit value: 20 credits


Open to: 2nd Year UGs, Semester 2

Offered by: School of Architecture,
Dept of Environment & Geography

Module code: ESA000021

How to apply for this module

Visit our "How to apply" page at the end of this prospectus for a step-by-step guide on how to apply for this module.



*Find out more about
Nature-based Solutions
on the electives
module catalogue.*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Thinking about choosing a YIM but have a question? Check out our frequently asked questions below for the answers you need.

How can I apply for a YIM?

YIMs are available to choose as elective modules. If your department or school allows you to take elective modules, you will hear about these at the start of Semester 2 when choosing modules for the following academic year. To apply for a YIM, pick one that fits your stage of study, then login to e:Vision. Go to 'Your study' and navigate to the 'Module registrations' section, then select 'Elective Module Application' (see "How to apply" pages for the full steps).

Who can take a YIM?

York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs) are available to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students from all Departments and Schools (subject to timetabling availability/ Department constraints). Modules are offered to specific year groups and take place in specific semesters. You will need to check the specific module details on the previous pages to make sure this works for your stage of study and programme.

How do YIMs fit in with my degree programme?

YIMs are elective modules that count as 20 credits towards your degree. If your department or school allows you to take elective modules, you will hear about these at the start of Semester 2 when choosing modules for the following academic year.

Do I need prior knowledge or experience to take a YIM?

You don't need any prior knowledge or experience in sustainability-related topics to participate in a YIM. These modules are available to all students and we welcome those with different disciplinary backgrounds.

I don't study a sustainability-related subject. Is a YIM right for me?

You don't have to be studying a sustainability-related course to study on a YIM. The modules are open to students from all subject backgrounds but you will need to complete an elective modules application form (on e-vision) in order to gain approval from your Department.

What are the benefits of taking a YIM?

YIMs equip students to work collaboratively in multi-disciplinary teams to solve local, regional and global sustainability challenges. Each module is project-based, providing students with opportunities and experiences that can be used to enhance your CV.

Will taking a YIM help my career prospects?

Absolutely! Employers value interdisciplinary knowledge and sustainability expertise. YIMs can enhance your CV by showing that you can think critically and work across disciplines to solve global issues.

What are the preparation expectations?

There are no prior requirements to take a YIM but most students are interested in learning more about what they can do to help achieve a more sustainable and more just future.

How are YIMs taught?

While each YIM varies in teaching style, they typically include a mix of lectures, interactive workshops, group discussions, and project-based learning. YIMs feature guest speakers, real-world case studies, and interdisciplinary teamwork.

How are YIMs assessed?

Assessment methods vary for each YIM and may include essays, coursework, or reflective reports. Please refer to the module catalogue for specific assessment details.

Will a YIM include working with students from other disciplines?

Yes! A key feature of YIMs is their interdisciplinary approach, meaning you'll collaborate with students from different degree programmes, gaining new perspectives and bringing your own subject expertise to the conversation. In some YIMs, students also have the opportunity to work with external organisations. This could include community groups, small businesses, government bodies and/or NGOs.

Who will I work with?

YIMs are predominantly project based and require you to work in multi-disciplinary teams with students from different disciplines. They have been designed to allow you to draw upon your own skills, knowledge and experiences to address a particular challenge.

Can I take a YIM if I'm a postgraduate student?

Yes. Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students can take the Sustainability Clinic in Semester 2. Please express your interest as soon as possible so that we can ensure we have enough projects. To express interest, email esay@york.ac.uk.

How much time commitment is required for a YIM?

The workload of a YIM is equivalent to any other 20 credit module.

Can I “dip down” to take a YIM?

No. YIMs are currently available to students at the appropriate stage only. You can take Future of Food and Just & Equitable Nature-based Solutions if you are a 2nd Year undergraduate. You can take Climate Crisis Advocacy and Action, Sustainability and Policy and the Sustainability Clinic if you are a 3rd Year undergraduate. You can also take the Sustainability Clinic if you are studying for an MA or MSc.

I've missed the application deadline. Can I still apply for next year?

We can accept late applications, but applying early increases the chance of securing a place within the timetable. If you're interested in submitting a late application, please email ESAY (esay@york.ac.uk), and we'll review it on a case-by-case basis.

Who should I contact if I have more questions about applying for a YIM?

Have a question that hasn't been answered here? Contact Environmental Sustainability at York (ESAY) via esay@york.ac.uk.

A photograph of three students, two women and one man, gathered around a laptop. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a red and black plaid shirt. The woman in the middle has dark hair and is wearing a grey sweater with a colorful geometric pattern. The man on the right has dark hair and is wearing a red sweater. They are all looking intently at the laptop screen, which is open in front of them. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wall with some posters.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A YIM: 5 EASY STEPS

Applying for one of our YIMs is easy. Just follow these 5 simple steps:

1. Check your eligibility

Find out if your department allows you to take an elective module. You'll have heard about this at the start of Semester 2 when choosing modules for next year.

TIP: Remember to pick a YIM that fits your stage of study!

2. Choose a YIM

Select a YIM that you would like to take. Browse our modules on the previous pages and pick one that fits your stage of study. Remember to check the "open to" section on each module description.

3. Apply via the elective system

Once you have checked for timetable clashes, you can submit your application. To do this login to e:Vision: go to 'Your study' > 'Module registrations' > 'Elective Module Application'.

4. Have questions? Get in touch

If you have any questions about applying for a YIM, you can visit our **FAQ pages** or email us at **esay@york.ac.uk** for support.

5. Wait for confirmation

Once your application has been submitted, you'll be contacted in due course to hear whether your application has been successful.

Useful info and contacts

FOR STUDENTS

Want to explore sustainability beyond your current degree programme?

Consider applying for a sustainability-related York Interdisciplinary Module (YIM) next year and be a part of the future leaders of change.

FOR DEPARTMENTS

Looking to expand your sustainability options for your students to study?

Consider adding our York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs) in your list of elective modules available for students from your Department or School.

Find out more about the our suite of York Interdisciplinary Modules (YIMs):

www.tinyurl.com/sustainability-electives



Contact us

Whether you are a student or staff member please contact us if you have any questions about our YIMs, please contact:

esay@york.ac.uk

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