1. History
Green Impact Universities is founded upon the successful Sound Impact Awards (now known as Green Impact Students Unions) developed by NUS to decrease the negative environmental impacts of Student’s Unions. Building on the success of this programme since 2006, NUS then partnered with the University of Bristol to adapt the Sound Impact model to green departments within the University environment. Called Green Impact, the criteria were tailored to common issues relevant to all departments. Green Impact University of Bristol was run over the 2008/09 academic year, attracting 50 departments covering 3,000 staff and delivering measurable behavioural change.

As a result of the success of the Bristol pilot, NUS partnered with the EAUC to roll Green Impact Universities out to 18 other universities, including LSBU, via NUS’s wider Degrees Cooler programme, funded by Defra’s prestigious Greener Living Fund. In 2009/10, 300 teams and departments, covering 15,000 staff, took part in Green Impact, with an additional three universities taking part on a self-funded basis.

During 2010/11 academic year Green Impact Universities was opened up to all UK HEIs, which is when the University of York signed up to the scheme. A total of 35 HEIs are now taking part with 3 FEIs also joining the scheme.

2. How it works?
Green Impact Universities is an accreditation scheme with an awards element. It provides a tangible format for individuals to improve their pro-environmental behaviour at work and is a way of recognising and celebrating the efforts of environmental champions across the University.

Groups of staff form teams and are then sent an online workbook that acts as a framework for continual improvement, suggesting other things they could be doing. The teams aim to achieve the bronze, silver or gold accreditation through fulfilling a variety of environmental criteria that have a significantly positive effect on their working environment. The workbook is designed to be accessible to anyone – regardless of how interested one has been in environmental issues in the past and regardless of position within the university. There are 3 special awards that require nominations – ‘Best Environment Hero’, ‘Best Innovative Idea’, ‘Best Energy Saving Idea’.

Once the workbooks have been submitted, departments are audited by trained auditors. Both staff and students can attend the auditor training session (run by NUS Services) and gain new skills and experience, improving employability for students and improving environmental awareness for staff. An awards ceremony at the end of the year recognises the efforts of everyone involved in the scheme.

The central team at NUS Services help and support the Universities through the process and it’s very much a positive scheme that celebrates achievements, recognises the efforts of individuals and encourages the sharing of good practice through good communication. In conjunction, the University has gained support from NIFES Consulting Group who will provide further training and support for Sustainable Co-ordinators and Green Impact teams throughout the programme.

3. Timescales
The scheme runs parallel to an academic year. Timescales can be flexible, but ideally reflect the following:

November: Staff awareness survey launched (provided by NIFES Consulting Group)
January: Launch event and training/workbooks sent to teams
January–April: Teams work on the workbooks, implementing change
May: Auditor training/departmental audits
June: Awards Ceremony
4. Benefits to the University

Taking part in Green Impact is beneficial to the University and its staff in many ways – reduced energy costs, increased recycling rates and more efficient use of resources. It also empowers staff in departments to take action. Other benefits include but are not limited to:

- Comprehensive, measurable improvements in environmental performance at the University, helping achieve carbon management targets;
- Increased reputation for the institution through involvement with the programme – it is increasingly being seen by students as a valuable initiative for the university to be a part of, demonstrating active commitment rather than simply ‘box ticking’ as well as showing York at the forefront of behaviour change initiatives as one of 37 HEI/FEIs involved in the scheme linked to Defra’s prestigious Greener Living Fund;
- Improved communications about the university’s commitment to sustainability;
- Improved communications amongst departments;
- People feeling recognised for their efforts.

Case Study 1: What people said after year one...

“The University has a duty to the local community to lead the way in green issues, with the amount of students and staff that are here on campus all year round. Green Impact is a very important way to give ‘champions’ of the project the information and power to make changes needed.”

Cate Gleed, Planning Services and the Executive Suite at the University of Exeter.

“I feel it’s important that as an educational institution, we set the way for future generations to learn about the issues surrounding sustainability and the environment as well as ways in which to reduce the effects our everyday practices are having. On a personal note, I also have a sense of pride as an employee of a university who is involved in the project and considers these issues.”

Lauren O’Donnell, Research & Business Development, London South Bank University

“I think the project has helped raise awareness [in the department] and together we have implemented changes and behaviours which are not difficult to maintain.”

Clare Gorman, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages at the University of Westminster

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The day-to-day running of the programme at the University lies with Heike Singleton, the University’s Energy Conservation Officer. This includes recruiting teams, launching the scheme, providing support to the teams when they are working through the workbook, arranging the auditor process and the awards ceremony. She will be fully supported in this task by the NUS and the local students’ union. The University works with Charlotte Bonner, the Green Impact Project Manager who will visit the University, offer advice and support to the Environment Team, conduct the auditor training, attend award ceremonies, process the workbooks, incentivise the Student’s Union to help with the scheme, and is the University’s first point of contact if any issues arise. NIFES Consulting Group will also be conducting a staff awareness survey before the initiative is launched, and will be providing dedicated training and support for staff for the duration of the programme.

Each department or team has a greening team who co-ordinate the implementation of the workbook. They are often champions of sustainability and without them the scheme could not operate. It is incredibly important that the champions and team leads are well supported by their managers.

6. Further Information

For more information, visit www.nus.org.uk/greenimpact or contact Heike Singleton, Energy Conservation Officer, on heike.singleton@york.ac.uk or 01904 322014.