

GREEN CHARTER REPORT 2009

“Universities not only have massive scope to stimulate more sustainable lifestyles – they can also teach crucial sustainable skills, and act as invaluable centres of research.” (2008, Amy Fetzler)

University of the Arts London is the leading creative institution in Europe, and is well placed to take a leading role on sustainability in the creative industries. From day-to-day life on our sites to coursework content and innovative research, we should strive to be at the forefront of the drive for sustainability. It makes sense ... Arts London becoming greener will pay off in various ways; saving money, inspiring the university community, attracting students and staff, and making an impression on green ‘league tables’ this is an opportunity that should not be missed. It’s not enough for us to offer ‘sustainability’ as an afterthought, it has to be at the core of what and how we teach and research, of how we manage our estates, and how we provide for our students and staff to conduct their lives.

The Arts London community have long been calling out for University management to facilitate them living greener lifestyles, by providing recycling facilities, bike storage, less energy wasted, etc. With significant student support, the Students’ Union Executive Committee chose GO GREEN as one of its main campaigns this academic year. We have already committed to becoming greener as an organisation with students unanimously voting in our first Ethical & Environmental Policy, paving the way for a green action plan which we are beginning to implement. We drew up the ‘Green Charter’ on the basis of student feedback on green and sustainability issues at Arts London.

The Students’ Union will be presenting the Green Charter to Executive Board on the 13th May and will be asking the University management to sign up to the five GO GREEN objectives, and show that this University is fully committed to meeting them in a realistic, but challenging timescale. Listed below are the five GO GREEN objectives with some extended notes on the context and justification for those objectives.

1. Sufficient recycling facilities should be available at all Arts London Sites and all Halls of Residence, with consideration also given to specialist recycling e.g. textiles, wood at relevant sites.

The lack of decent recycling facilities around Arts London sites has been a persistent recurring student & staff complaint for the past few years. Despite this, there has been little development in this area and where there has been, it has mostly been in the form of staff-facing facilities and policies. Students make up the overwhelming majority of the Arts London community and it is unacceptable that so far we have been overlooked. I've often had examples quoted at me of locations where recycling bins get filled with general rubbish by students, but I've yet to see somewhere in the university that has multiple recycling bins and a general rubbish bin next to it. A well known fact in recycling, organisations such as local councils and universities need to make recycling a natural and easy part of everybody's life, rather than something people actively have to go and do. There is absolutely no consistency in the design, size and location of recycling bins across the University estate which means that it is a constant *seeking mission* for students and staff to recycle at our various sites. It also means that we cannot produce any coherent information about recycling. Sending out inconsistent signals means students won't take it recycling seriously, a 'normal' way of doing things needs to be established and enforced.

Consideration also needs to be given to 'specialist' recycling such as textiles etc. As an example TRAIID (Textile Recycling for International Aid & Development) provide textile recycling services in various locations across London, many in other University's campuses and Halls of Residences. A scheme such as this, particularly at sites that use large amounts of textiles, would dramatically decrease our impact on the environment and would lead the way for others within creative industries and education institutions to seek out innovative methods of recycling.

2. At least one aspect of all courses at Arts London should have Sustainability in the learning outcomes, whether this is in the form of a 'Green Module' or is integrated into the curriculum.

In Forum (for the Future)'s recent Future Leader's Survey, covering all university applicants in 2007-08, nearly two-thirds of the respondents wanted to see more about sustainability in the curriculum and the prospectus ... Both the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) agree that a new strategy is required to make sustainability a core part of all campus life. (2008, Amy Fetzter).

Arts London, producing graduates that feed the creative industries each year, arguably has more responsibility than most Universities to make sure that those students are conscious of the environment and impact their actions has on it. Anecdotally there is already a lot of activity in this area at Arts London, but it's emerging slowly and patchily, with no record or structure centrally. As a first step there needs to be a scoping exercise of what is already happening and facilitation of best practice sharing. It then needs to be embedded in the curriculum of all courses at Arts London, and where this isn't possible in the first instance, the 'Green Module' idea should be adopted.

3. Arts London should switch to a Green Energy Provider who supports the development of new carbon-free and renewable energy sources for the future.

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing society today and universities have a responsibility to be more environmentally aware when choosing their energy provider and ensure they set a good example to all staff, students and other stakeholders. No one would deny that Arts London consumes a vast amount of energy and changing to a Green Energy Supplier would make a big impact. Over 14 Universities around the UK have made the switch to being supplied with renewable energy in proportions ranging from 2% – 100%. Between the 1st August 2007- 17th July 2008 Arts London spent a total of £2,143,011 on Gas, Electricity, Oil and Water, if just 25% of this was spent with a provider such as Ecotricity, then Arts London would make a considerable contribution to the future of renewable energy sources. Although each university has different circumstances that need to be considered, Arts London could significantly improve its current Carbon Footprint by switching to a Green Energy Provider. PLATTS & People & Planet suggests the following providers: Ecotricity, Scottish Power, Centrica, Scottish & Southern.

4. Arts London should commit to a continuing programme of sustainable IT development with the aim of reducing overall energy use and pollution.

The expansion of IT to become an integral part of modern business and education practice has carried with it an exponential increase in energy usage, and in the consumption of goods which produce pollution during their manufacture and transit. Whilst this has initially grown unchecked, there is now an increasingly active field of development in green technology programmes, schemes and products, as well as the technical improvements (such as virtualization) that allow organizations like Arts London to provide the same or better service, whilst drastically cutting the required hardware and electricity.

5. Arts London should provide Bike storage facilities at all sites and showers should be installed at all main sites.

The bike culture of London is rapidly changing, with many people resorting to pedal power to beat the rush hour traffic. However, there are many other reasons London's residents, and students in particular are turning to two wheel transport to get around the city. Arts students are becoming increasingly more environmentally aware, using bikes to do their bit for the environment. For students, it is also the huge financial gain they receive from not spending on average £20 a week solely on transport to and from college. London's Mayor also supports cycling as a key mode of transport and has isolated making London more cycle friendly as a key campaign to act on while he is in office. If Arts London wants to become more environmental, then an investment in cycling facilities at sites would be a step in the right direction, and very welcomed by staff and students alike. Incorporating Showers and changing facilities across board, a significant increase in bike racks, and a vision into sheltered bike storage facilities would put the University of the Arts onto the right path.

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Quotes From: **The Future by Degrees in Green Futures**, 9 December 2008, Amy Fetzer
www.forumforthefuture.org/greenfutures/articles/the-future-by-degrees