

ENABLING CHANGE AGENTS VIA UPSKILLING

One of the biggest challenges around climate change is convincing individuals that they can make meaningful change through their actions and their choices. At the University of Glasgow, the teaching team of Prof. Jaime Toney, consultant Elaine Heslop, and sustainability officer Stewart Miller joined forces to provide life-long learners with practical skills to enable sustainable practices in their homes, communities and workplaces, while extending their professional networks, enhancing their communication skills and using peer feedback to create viable solutions.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused major disruption to how we live, work, communicate and more. However, it also offers an opportunity for higher education institutions to reflect on what knowledge and skills are needed for the post-pandemic workforce. The Centre for Sustainable Solutions, University of Glasgow (UofG), has carefully considered how to make a meaningful contribution to achieving a sustainable and just transition. Addressing the education gap that causes individuals to feel paralysed by the complexity and scale of the climate crisis is at the top of our list. In turn, this will drive larger behavioural change, creating global citizens with the skills to critically assess how they can make change.

UofG has developed a portfolio of upskilling courses supported by the Scottish Funding Council that brings new skills to those who are unemployed or under threat of redundancy. One challenge in reaching this demographic is the need to develop and deliver content that is accessible to wide range of learners with a broad range of experiences. UofG created a virtual platform to engage learners asynchronously, with 180 learners engaged in the first cohort (April - July 2021). It provides valuable peer learning opportunities through

Action Learning, which means that no matter where the learners are based, or what hours work best, they can engage with course content easily. Learners gradually learn skills to assess their carbon footprint and/or that of their workplace, work with their sphere of influence to identify opportunities for change, and act to make positive change.

The project team surveyed learners and found that, as a result of the Action Learning approach, the 20 learners who have responded so far, have collectively reduced carbon emissions by 6.1 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent during the 10-week course, and project that they will additionally decrease their carbon emissions by 13.0 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent by the end of 2021. In addition, so far, 18 learners have joined our professional network. The project will continue to monitor carbon emissions reductions that each cohort makes, gauge through surveys how empowered students feel compared to the start of the course and monitor the size of the growing professional network.



The education gap on climate change strengthens the divide between vulnerable and less vulnerable communities. Education that shows individuals how they can act to make positive change toward a sustainable future is an important way forward.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Engaging with non-traditional HEI learners** is key to driving change toward a sustainable future.
- **Widening participation in climate change education** provides mutual benefits to learners and HEI staff by breaking barriers, making knowledge accessible, and keeping lessons grounded for real-world people and solutions.

In future runs, the course will be opened internationally, beyond Scotland-domiciled learners. The delivery platform is also being refined to enhance content engagement. Finally, the project will increase the opportunity to engage in live Q&A sessions, which were positive, interactive peer-learning sessions that covered curiosity-driven content sparked by engagement with course content and interaction with the instructors.

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Institution name	University of Glasgow
Location	Glasgow, UK
Number of students (total for institution)	26,000
Number of staff (total for institution)	8,600 total (4,000 research and teaching)
Campus type	Westend of City

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE CASE STUDY

University or department led:	Led by the Centre for Sustainable Solutions.
Number of staff engaged:	Seven (including administrators).
Number of students engaged:	180 (first run April - July 2021)
Credit-bearing:	Students could choose to take the course for credit (roughly half took it for credit).
Mandatory or optional:	Optional.
External partners:	Elaine Heslop – Lucidity Services
Engagement approach used:	This was a mostly asynchronous, online course with a weekly, live Q&A and 2-weeks of live Action Learning Sets that facilitated peer learning.

Project team: Jaime Toney, Stewart Miller and Elaine Heslop

More info: www.gla.ac.uk/study/microcredentials/climatechangecarbonliteracy/

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

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