As we face the climate emergency, it is more urgent than ever that we act now to place sustainability at the heart of every young person's future. Young people must be equipped for success in this changing world; we cannot solve today's problems with the same thinking that caused them to be created. Sustainable Futures for HE is designed to help young people in higher education to understand sustainability in the context of the world today, develop skills for the future and build confidence as they make the transition from education into future-focused work.

# The background to Sustainable Futures in HE

Change Agents UK is a charity and not-for-profit organisation focusing on education for sustainability, employability and skills for the future. We have been working with young people in the UK for 25 years to deliver skills development workshops and careers talks, facilitate jobs and paid work placements in meaningful, future-focused roles and to support youth-led sustainability initiatives. Working with fantastic partners including the EAUC (the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education), we undertake skills research and develop new education and support programmes for the tertiary education sector.

Change Agents UK and the EAUC undertook a research study in 2020 examining ‘[Skills for the Future](https://www.changeagents.org.uk/skills-for-the-future)’ – taking perspectives from employers, educational institutions and young people who had recently made the transition from education into work. Using these three lenses, this study interrogated the skills gaps and explored what skills are needed – now, and for our future society. The outputs from this research, along with many years’ experience in this area, were distilled into the Sustainable Futures programme, and we have designed tailored versions for HE students both with and without prior sustainability knowledge. We have piloted this successfully in 2021, positively impacting hundreds of students so far.

# Why is Sustainable Futures needed now?

For all young people today, sustainability will need to become an intrinsic part of their future jobs and careers. Access to the education and skills that will help them to prepare for this future is often limited and hampered by inequality, and universities are constrained by the demands of exams and curricula, with limited staff resources. We believe all young people should have access to sustainability learning – developing skills and building confidence for their future. Sustainable Futures addresses this need.

# Programme menu

## Sustainable Futures Intensive

A 5-hour workshop, including lunch break. Topics covered:

* introduction to sustainability, problems and solutions
* Sustainability & Systems – exploring problems, causes and solutions, including systems change and narratives
* Sustainable Careers – how to benefit social and environmental goals and effect societal change using your skills
* Change Agency – exploration of how to bring about change in the workplace
* Personal Sustainability – understanding your own core values as a key to meaningful and fulfilling work
* Skills for the Future – understanding essential skills for sustainability and the 21st century workplace

# Programme content

All our workshops are interactive, accessible and engaging. We meet learners ‘where they are’, tailoring our work and delivery to suit the needs of each group.

Through our programmes, we help students to understand what sustainability means, what is happening in the world today and why social and environmental issues matter. We look at key concepts such as circular economies and introduce frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help participants to understand solutions-focused thinking. Where participants are more advanced, we challenge them to consider the deeper causes of unsustainability and learn about systemic change.

We are highly experienced at facilitating students’ explorations of sustainability in the workplace. Our workshops give participants a chance to discuss how they can make positive change through many different sectors and roles, and how to go about this. Through interactive tasks, we encourage them to delve into their core values to enable them to identify work opportunities which align with their own personal ethics.

We love to help participants explore the skills needed for a sustainable future, unpicking key qualities such as creativity and systems-thinking and engaging them in fun, stimulating exercises. Drawing on our Skills for the Future research, we discuss key skills for the workplace and enable participants to put them into practice.

All students who complete a Sustainable Futures programme will be provided with a certificate of participation. This means they can put Sustainable Futures on their CVs and/or Postgraduate Degree applications.

# Feedback & Impact

Our Sustainable Futures programme has received outstanding feedback from institutions and student participants. **9/10 young people** tell us the programme has **significantly improved their understanding of how to bring sustainability into their working lives** and that they have a **better understanding of the skills and experience needed for the future**.

Here is a sample of feedback from staff and students:

*"Receiving the support and delivery on our sustainability journey with our students has been invaluable... Having the opportunity to work with Change Agents UK and the provision of their expertise has made a real difference to our staff and the students involved in the Sustainable Futures programme."* Director of Student Experience, UK FE college

*“The sessions were interactive, informative and thought provoking for all students and encapsulated all curriculum areas, employment areas and their impact on sustainability. The students as a result were able to research and question sustainability within their chosen industry and the positive impacts they can have on sustainability, both as employees and as individuals.”* Student Experience Manager, UK FE college

*"I liked how it made me think of the impact I can have, how I can play my part both in personal lifestyle choices but also in the career path I choose."* 2021 student participant

*“I enjoyed learning about the many ways we can build a sustainable future.”* 2021 student participant

*“The brainstorming activities about what characteristics we would want in a job were very insightful and I learnt a lot about what type of job I would want in the future and how I can get it.”* 2021 student participant

*"I thought that all the content covered was super relevant and I now have some really useful resources that I will be able to look back over in the future, especially when applying for jobs. I really enjoyed being able to network with other people interested in sustainability and learn from their career journeys. This programme was a really great introduction into how sustainability relates to the world of work, especially given that I am right at the beginning of my career journey."* 2021 student participant

*"I enjoyed the whole thing. Came away with useful, practical knowledge on what sustainability is and what skills employers are looking for across many different roles. I like knowing that I can approach job searching now with this knowledge in mind, giving me an advantage - I know which strengths to focus on demonstrating and building on. The facilitators were amazing too!"* 2021 student participant

For further details, please see our [website](https://www.changeagents.org.uk/)

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