Responsible Futures Cohort catch up – Self-defined criteria

August 2025

Purpose of cohort catch ups

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- Informal spaces bringing together staff and students to share updates and resources, ask and answer questions and discuss work related to RF

- Each session will cover a specific theme within the RF framework, and may include short presentations from guest speakers

Updates

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- Framework review is ongoing and will be shared soon – updates will be made online

- The <u>Student Sustainability Symposium 2025 Zine</u> has been published!

- Recording, slides and notes from the Empowering Futures: Brand Value, Employability and Responsible AI in Education event coming to the Jiscmail shortly

- Recording of the presentation from P&P Josie from the session exploring ethical careers and Fossil Free Careers within the Responsible Futures framework has been shared – follow up call in Nov/Dec

- Framework notices:

  - Any comments and evidence will be deleted from our systems after 2 years, so be sure to save/export this data before. Please also email your SOS UK Lead Contact if there are people listed in your team who no longer need to be included.

  - This is to keep the framework up-to-date and reduce our digital carbon footprint!

Criteria theme - overview

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- 3 criteria, worth 30 points total
- Scoring is in line with similar criteria elsewhere in the framework
- All criteria are optional
- The self-defined innovation criteria should highlight the unique approaches to embedding sustainability. These should not have been previously mentioned in your Responsible Futures submission.

Case studies

University of Derby - Nature Connectedness

- **Context:** The <u>Nature Connectedness Research Group</u> focuses on the relationship between people and the rest of nature.

- **Actions:** The work of the group offers simple solutions for complex problems of climate change, biodiversity loss and mental wellbeing, including through The Nature Connection Handbook, an activity handbook for families with young children, the Nature Connections conference series and more.

- **Impacts and reflections:** The work of the group underpins an internationally available online course (MOOC), has informed the development of the Green Care Code, and was in receipt of two Green Gown Awards in 2021.

Advice:
- Engage students with your research: incorporate it into courses, organise informal activities and embed it into your campus
- Explore unique research angles: Address sustainability by focusing on innovative, people-centered approaches like nature connectedness
- Use digital platforms and build strategic partnerships for wider reach: Offer online courses or resources to share research and engage broader audiences, and collaborate with external organisations to expand impact beyond the institution

A <u>webinar on this work and the student learning experience</u> was delivered for Responsible Futures colleagues in 2023.

De Montfort University - Decolonising DMU

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- **Context:** The <u>Decolonising DMU project</u>, through DMU's Race Equality Charter actions, aims to challenge racism and build an anti-racist university that creates fair outcomes for staff and students.

- **Actions:** <u>DMU's Decolonising Toolkit</u> provides a range of guidance and resources to support staff with working towards an anti-racist and decolonial institution. It provides explicit examples of how staff across different departments are approaching decolonial academia in practice, and support for professional services staff, and includes guides specific to topics such as applying decolonial lenses to research funding bids and knowledge transfer.

- **Impacts and reflections:** Published peer-reviewed research output, 'Decolonising or anti-racism? Exploring the limits of possibility in HE'. They've also hosted events for students/staff in 2023, and the decolonising toolkit has been embedded within their Education 2030 toolkit.

Advice:

- Continue to critically engage with your work – the toolkit is an evolving entity
- Involve staff in collaborative creation of resources for stronger buy in

Mykolas Romeris University – Human-Environment-Technology Systems Centre

- **Context:** The HET Centre focuses on interdisciplinary research on wicked problems with systems thinking, approaches to social system resilience, sustainable transitions and digital transformation

- **Actions:** The Centre started an international research cluster on digital inclusion/exclusion and is planning its next cluster focused on sustainable transitions, examining the role of digital technologies in production/consumption systems and circular economy

- **Impacts and reflections:** The Centre represents an institutional pilot to test novel academic paradigms for addressing complex sustainability challenges.

Advice:

- Interdisciplinary environments support peer-to-peer learning for staff

- Learning from international expertise can be a great push for local action

Article interviewing the Centre's leader.

Open University – Citizen Science initiatives

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- **Context**: The Open University is creating citizen science platforms and activities for members of the public to engage with biodiversity investigations

- **Actions**: The platforms include e.g.
  - nQuire - enabling engagement with biodiversity research that promotes awareness and learning
  - iSpot - engagement with the process of data collection and species identification
  - Treezilla - encourages collaboration in mapping, measuring and monitoring trees across the UK and Ireland

- **Impacts and reflections**: Over 326,000 people have engaged with citizen science biodiversity research through the platforms. X-Polli:Nation projects engage thousands of school pupils in the UK and Italy with citizen science through outdoor learning on pollinators. Exploring ways to democratise research by enabling non-professionals to take part, but also define their own biodiversity research agendas.

Advice:

- Use technology for sustainability engagement

- Apply tools both within formal learning, and in community outreach activities

OU Citizen Science and AI Research Group webpage

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University of Exeter – Student empowerment zine and workshop

- **Context:** The student intern team at Exeter have developed a zine and workshop on student empowerment, to inspire students within the Partnership in campaign development and support their participation in democratic and non-hierarchical university life.

- **Actions:** It explained the roles and structures of student representation which exist at the Partnership, included advice on effective activism which supports wellbeing, and had examples of campaigns and peer guidance on the topic.

- **Impacts and reflections:** Development of the zine was a very beneficial process for the creator team and fostered transferable skills in graphic design, communication, collaboration, and others. The accompanying workshop allowed for participants to access the content in whichever way they choose that will work for them.

Advice:

- Support student engagement with existing democratic representation structures

- Through co-creation, students are empowered to be changemakers

UWE Bristol – The MAKERS Project

- **Context:** <u>The MAKERS initiative</u> - Making And Knowledge Exchange for Repair and Sustainability – engages diverse engineering students through monthly Repair Café repair activities

- **Actions:** Project focus is on practical skills and hands-on repair of broken objects, which enhances identity development as engineers, as well as tackling social isolation

- **Impacts and reflections:** The environment brought students together in a purposeful environment, enabled student community formation, developed practical skills and had access to informal mentoring, supported student agency for own project development

Advice:

- Practical learning opportunities are invaluable for student skill and confidence development

- Engagement with the local community enhances partnership working for sustainability

Queen's University – Arts and culture engagement

- **Context:** The <u>Agnes Etherington Art Centre</u> has offered many sustainability-related exhibits, intriguing projects encompassing Indigenous ways of knowing and being with the Land, as well as more-than-human worldviews through different artistic and sensory mediums

- **Actions:** As the Centre undergoes renovations, they have listed being sustainable as one of their primary goals in the reimagined Agnes. There has also been wide engagement with art and academic-led projects on climate education and pedagogy, amongst other notable projects.

- **Impacts and reflections:** A unique example of transdisciplinary engagement on social and cultural aspects of sustainability.

Advice:

- Engage with sustainability holistically for students and staff across all disciplines to see its relevance to them

- Use art as a medium to 'engage the unengaged'

Open discussion

- What activities could you include/have you included in your self defined criteria?

- General reflections

- Any other questions or discussion points?

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Thank you!

Next call – 9/10th Sept

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