

Student experiences of completing a final-year project on the climate-crisis



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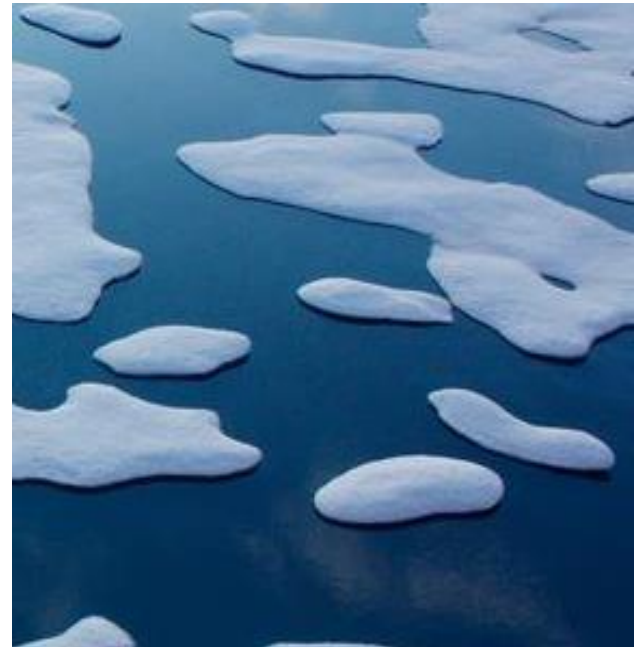
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Environmental concerns

A recent global survey showed 84% of young people are concerned about the environment (Hickman et al, 2021)

In addition, many academic staff feel they don't have the time or expertise to contribute to the solutions

What can we, both staff and students, do to make a difference?



1 in 5 Project: Driving sustainability through student projects



Initiative developed by academics at Cardiff, Bristol, Birkbeck and Manchester.

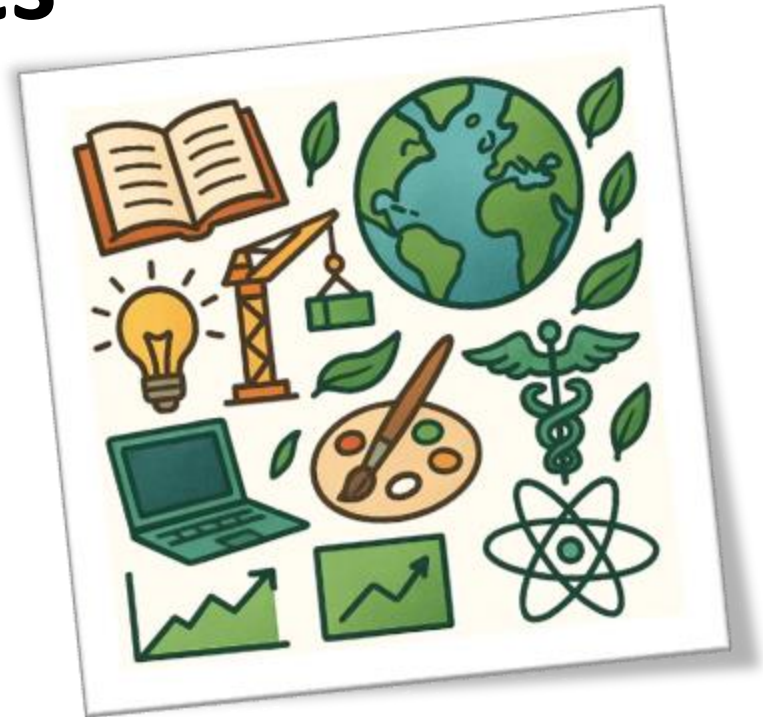
The **1-in-5** project aims for one in five final-year undergraduate students, **in any discipline**, to carry out a substantial final-year piece of work on a topic related to **climate change, sustainability or loss of biodiversity**.

This may be a research study, dissertation, production, composition, exhibition, etc

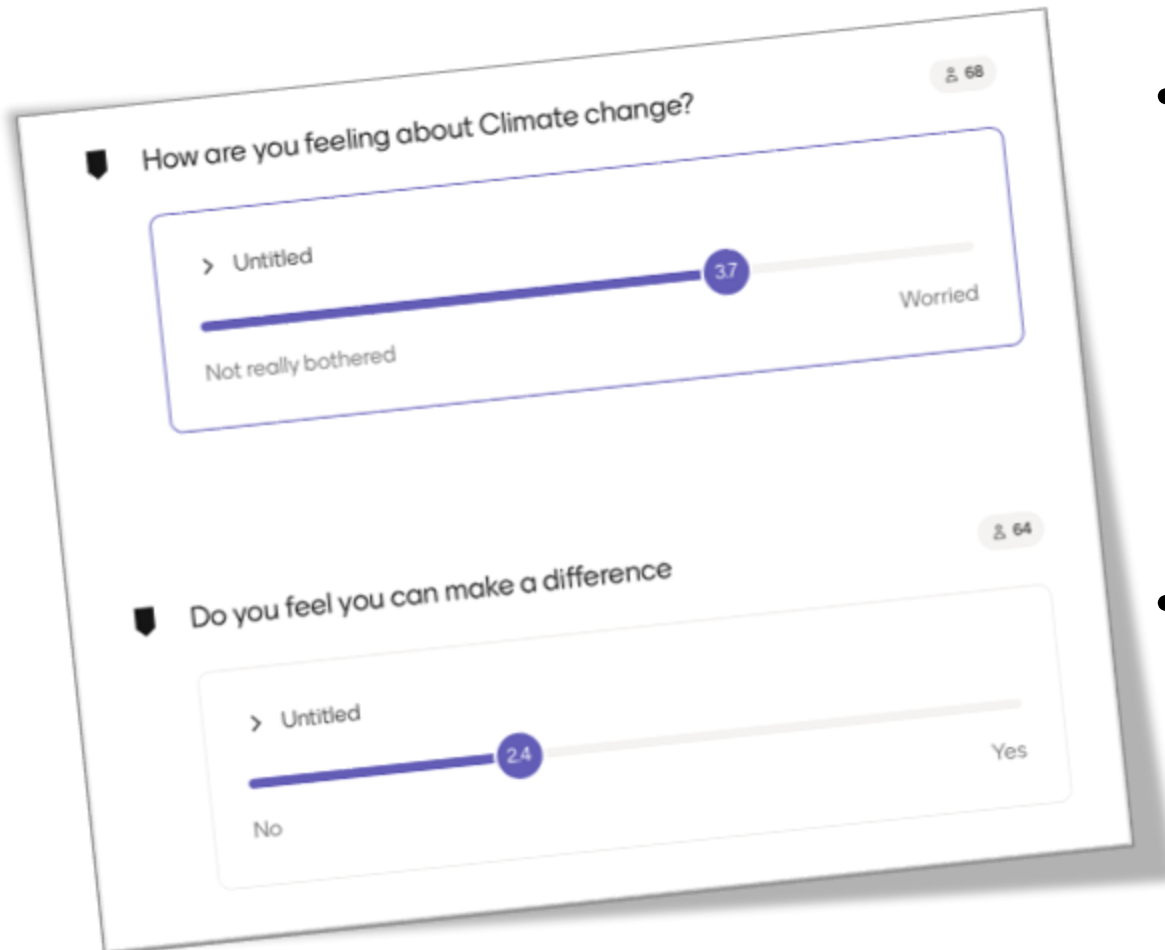
500,000 UK students complete UG degrees annually, so this initiative could generate **100,000** projects each year.

1 in 5 project benefits

- **Outputs:** produce outputs with the potential to have a real-world impact on environmental issues.
- **Students:** provides an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in this area, to improve sense of agency and the ability and confidence to make a difference and influence others.
- **Staff:** empowers all academic staff, including those without expertise in environmental issues, to use relevant aspects of their research expertise to tackle climate-relevant issues, without adding to workload
- **Institutions:** provides an opportunity to achieve social responsibility goals in collaboration with staff and undergraduate students.



1 in 5 on BSc Psychology at UoM



- Year 2 BSc Psychology students report feeling worried about climate change
- They also feel uncertain that they can make a difference

1 in 5 on BSc Psychology at UoM

- Final-year BSc Psychology students complete a final-year research project (40 credits) supervised by academic staff
- We have been running 1 in 5 projects over several years
- The number of project supervisors involved has increased from 14% (24/25) to 31% (25/26).



Example projects:

- The impact of negative publicity on **Fast Fashion** purchasing intentions.
- The effect of **carbon-footprint labelling** on student meal choice
- The **effect of framing** on pro-environmental behaviour

Pizza Pepperoni



Pizza BBQ Chicken



Research Questions

Why do BSc Psychology students choose to undertake a climate change-related final-year project?




What are the perceived benefits of completing the project?



Method



Participants

- Final year BSc Psychology students
- Projects on:
 -  Climate Change
 -  Sustainability
 -  Biodiversity



Data Collection

1. Questionnaire 1 (Oct 2024)
 - Motivation for project choice
 - Expected gains
2. Questionnaire 2 (May 2025)
 - Satisfaction
 - Learning outcomes
 - Perceived benefits

Questionnaire 1 (N= 3, October 2024)

Why Choose a Climate-Change Project?

"I chose a climate-change related final year project as it used to be something I was very passionate about, pre-covid. Obviously I am still very aware of the issues but I am aware that some of the precautions I used to take in terms of my consumption, and diet etc I no longer take and I would like to hold myself accountable."

"Sustainability is an important topic to understand"

Questionnaire 1 (N= 3, October 2024)



What Students Hoped to Gain

“Increased understanding of sustainability issues and how we can make suggestions to contribute towards a greener future more”

“Learning about the impacts of fast fashion on the environment and on human rights and how reducing consumption can help to reduce pollution and to promote a more sustainable model of fashion”

Questionnaire 2 (N=4, May 2025)



What Students Learned

"I have learnt about the negative impacts of fast fashion on the environment. I think I had quite a general understanding that it can be harmful, but in my research i learned about at what aspects of the supply chain does it become harmful etc."

"Learnt about different personality traits that make people more likely to want to combat the environment. And from this how messages can be phrased in certain ways to make people more involved."

Questionnaire 2 (N=4, May 2025)



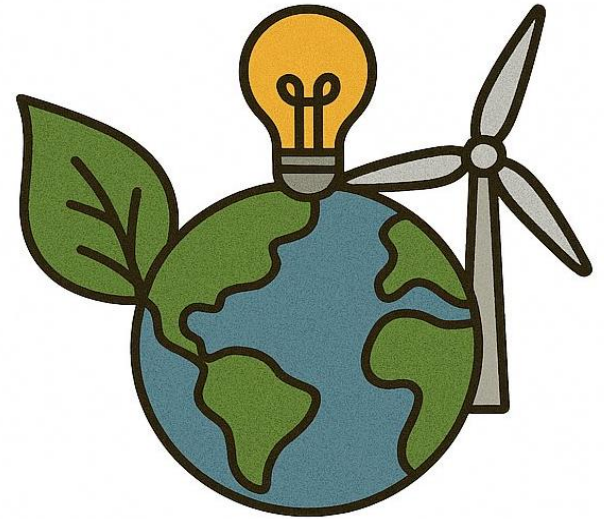
Benefits of the Project

“The benefits have been raising my personal awareness of the industries causing climate change, and therefore ways to reduce my personal footprint according to this”

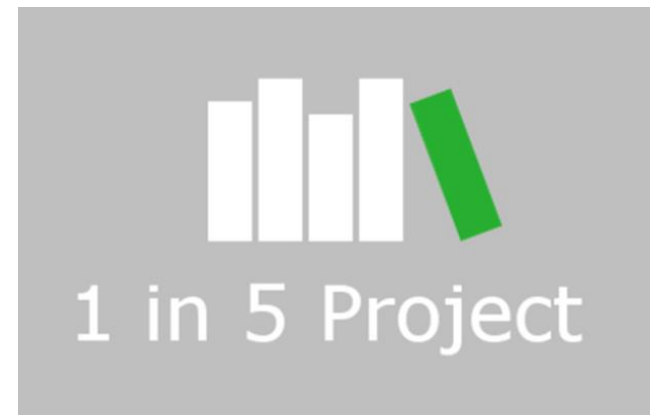
“I want to work in the environmental sector so massively beneficial for me. I can talk about my diss in job interviews and on my CV.”

Conclusions

- BSc Psychology students:
 - motivated to complete a 1in5 research project to increase understanding of the issues
 - reported increased understanding of the topic investigated
 - increased personal awareness and potential career opportunities
- Future research – augment existing data with next year's cohort.



1 in 5 Project



- An opportunity for staff and final-year students to engage in environmental research
- To learn more and get involved visit www.1in5project.info/
- 1 in 5 Project ideas – all disciplines
- FAQs e.g.
 - What if I don't have any ideas for climate- related projects?
 - Won't this cost me lots of time?
 - What if I'm sceptical and I don't think this will work?
 - What if I don't work in a discipline that can do environment related work?

Any Questions?



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