

NPU STUDENT AMBASSADOR

TOOLKIT 6: ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Credit: Michael Teague



Credit: Familial Forestry



Credit: Taras Bains



Credit: Federal University of Technology Owerri

**NATURE
POSITIVE
BY 2030**

Beyond campus activities & outreach

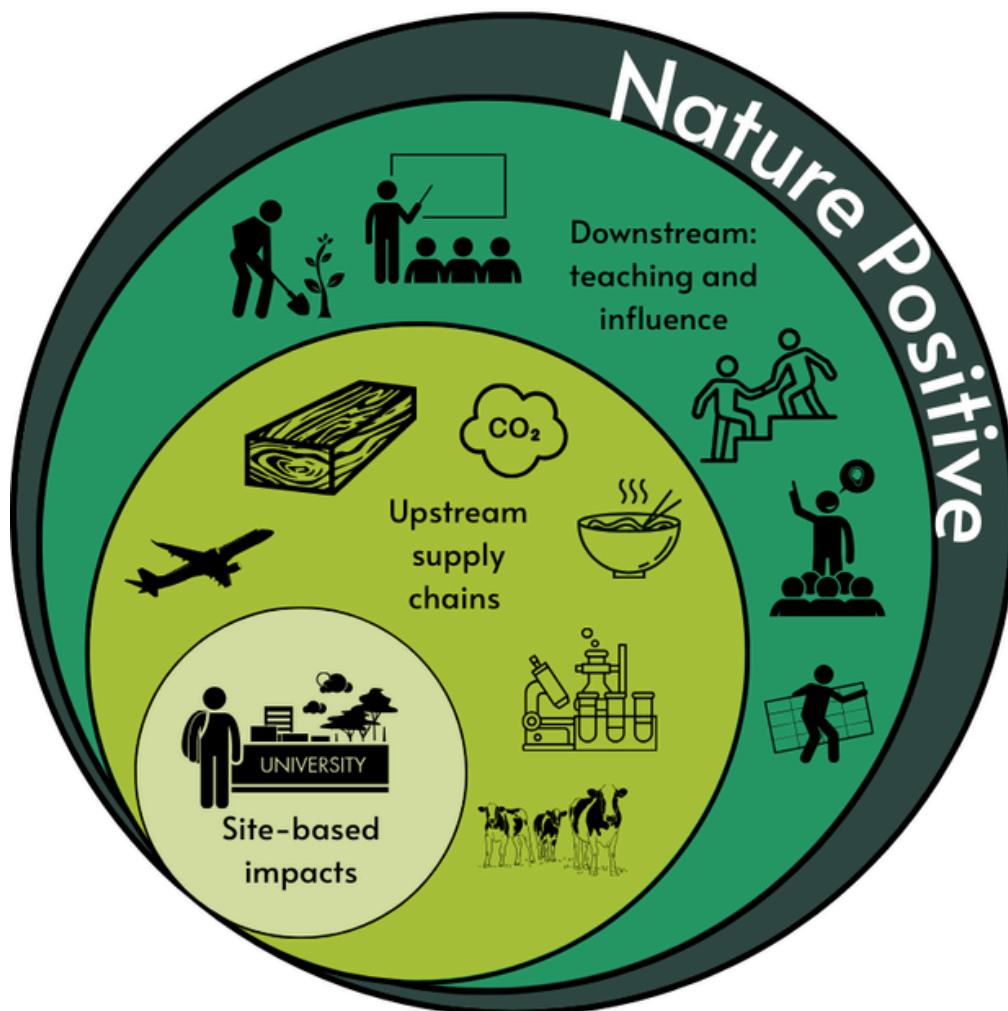
Our universities are a vital piece of the puzzle of Nature Positive. If we are to truly reach our goal, we need to start where we are and cause change in our institution, but then work beyond this and spread ripples of change through the rest of society.



We also need to consider the opportunities for impact of our university beyond what it consumes and its on-campus impacts: its curriculum, engagement with its city and community, career offerings and green skills provided to its students, and the behaviours it encourages amongst the staff and students that pass through its doors.

Beyond campus activities & outreach

Biodiversity impacts at a university can be **site-based** relating to campus land management and construction, **upstream** related to supply chains of products and services used by the university, or **downstream** related to research, teaching and community outreach.



For a university, we define being **nature positive** as restoring the species and ecosystems that have been harmed by the impacts of the university and its activities and enhancing the university's positive impacts on nature.

Beyond campus activities & outreach

We start with **site based impacts**, such as the way we manage our grounds, the energy and water we use, and habitats we choose to create on campus.

The next level is **upstream impacts**, which include the land required to grow the food we eat and the natural resources used to provide the materials we use to support our activities. This section is much larger than people realise, often requiring significantly more land, in terms of farm, forest and cropland, than is associated with the physical footprint of the institution's buildings and green space.

This toolkit will focus on the final sphere, which we believe is crucial to achieve a global nature-positive goal, and help transform at a societal level: **downstream impacts**.

This includes the teaching and research activities of universities including the range of subjects offered and non-examined courses such as green skills trainings, as well as the influence that universities can have in their communities through collaboration, outreach and wider engagement.

This level also includes what you as students decide to do with your knowledge and skills gained through your time at university, and the extent to which you feel empowered to contribute towards an equitable zero carbon and nature positive future.

Explore your **green skills**



This toolkit is focussing on the concept of **green skills** which we believe are crucial skills that will be required to achieve a global nature-positive goal, and help transform at a societal level. Green skills can be gained through many avenues: on university courses, through volunteering, internships or work experience, through programmes such as the NPU Student Ambassador programme or other youth initiatives.

We believe that the following skills, that we have highlighted throughout the NPU Student Ambassador programme are crucial for helping the green transition towards a truly nature-positive economy and planet, whatever your subject discipline and expertise are. However it is not an exhaustive list, there are many more!

- biodiversity baselines
- citizen science
- conservation hierarchy
- systems thinking
- collaboration
- cross-cultural understanding
- networking
- imagination and creativity
- project management
- presentation skills
- social media
- photography

Explore your **green skills**

Green skill example 1 : **Photography**

Our student speaker for Workshop 6, Michael Teague, shared his experience using nature photography to engage students on campus at University of Lincoln, UK. Through development of his interest in photography, Michael was able to contribute to biodiversity conservation in a number of ways:



Posting photographs on social media, which raised awareness of the existence of wildlife on campus, combined with advice for how to safely interact and care for wildlife.

Using photography to encourage engagement with important groups such as insects which may otherwise be overlooked.



Using photographs as citizen-science records to help identify and record presence of species appearing on campus using the iNaturalist platform.

Credit: Michael Teague

Explore your **green skills**

Green skill example 2: **Collaboration**

Michael also described a collaboration between students and a local environmental group, Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB).



This developed from an ongoing project that the environmental group ran at Lincoln cathedral, educating the public about nesting peregrine falcons in the bell tower, that the students engaged with.

After spending time with the environmental group, the students were invited to attend regular trips by bus to nature reserves, organised by the group (with a discount provided for students to make it affordable).



This fruitful collaboration increased the access and engagement with local conservation sites, and built stronger relations between members of the community of all ages and backgrounds, centred around nature.

Explore your **green skills**

Green skill example 3: **Citizen Science**

Student speaker for Workshop 6, Gabrielle Pengyu Shao, from University College London, UK, shared her experience engaging with citizen science to contribute to water monitoring:

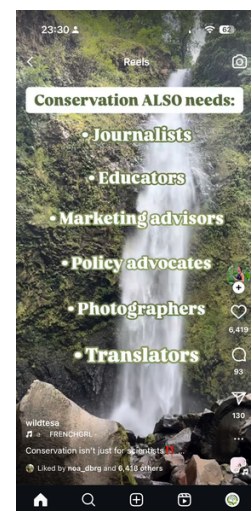
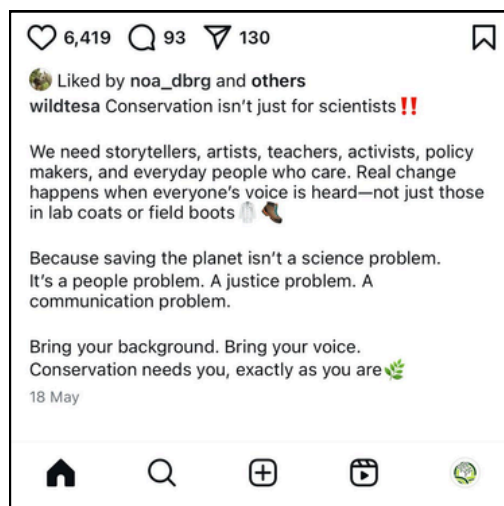


In the presentation, Gabrielle shared her advice on how to get involved in environmental activities:

1. Become a volunteer and a citizen scientist - e.g. The Conservation Volunteers and Freshwater Habitat Trust
2. Monitor your own rivers - buy or lend equipment to monitor river quality
3. Learn your skills - to help you become a citizen scientist, e.g. <https://castco.org/>
4. Find your opportunities - Gabrielle is starting a project to set up a platform to find conservation opportunities for volunteers. Contact Gabrielle to find out more and get involved: gabrielle.shao.23@ucl.ac.uk

Make your job a **green job**

While there are specific skills and subject knowledge gained through conservation, biology and environmental science courses, that can contribute towards a nature-positive future, we believe every job can be a green job, and everyone has a role to play.



Here are some resources to help explore green jobs, and working to make your job a green job:

Every job is a nature job

<https://www.unep-wcmc.org/en/news/every-job-is-nature-job-how-companies-can-protect-nature-and-build-resilience>

Make every job a green job

<https://www.iema.net/campaign-landing-pages/green-skills-for-organisations-download-your-toolkit/>

LinkedIn Global Green Skills Report 2023

<https://economicgraph.linkedin.com/research/global-green-skills-report>

Host an environmental education event at a local school



To truly reach Nature Positive we need to open doors of learning to everyone, informing and educating them about the role they can play in nature conservation and the actions they can take. Many schools do not have the expertise to educate their students on environmental topics, but young people are the future and we need them to become invested in making change.

Steps to conducting an outreach event at schools

- Recognise the school or community you want to speak with, and so who your target audience is – your approach might be different for rural and urban communities, depending on what you think is important to those groups.
- Contact the school head about your desire to host an educational event and organise a date.
- Organise a team of fellow university students to help out at the event, and write a plan for the session including the topics you'll cover, who will say what, how long it'll take, and whether you need to produce any posters or worksheets, etc.
- Gather the necessary materials, and be willing to leave these with teachers to ensure they can conduct these lessons again in the future.

Examples from our network:

Favour (University of Benin) organised outreach encouraging the next generation of environmental activists to make pledges at local schools.



Natty Molang (Cross Rivers University Calabar) visited schools to help establish eco-clubs for school children and raise awareness on environmental issues.



Choose a nature positive dissertation or essay topic

Whilst at university you have a chance to contribute to academic knowledge and advance your field – so why not link this to being nature positive?



Choose a topic you're passionate about

Your dissertation or research project will take a lot of time, so it's important to choose a topic that interests you. Think about what you've learnt on your course, through the Nature Positive Universities programme, or through others?

Choose something different

It's important to choose a unique topic for your project in order to draw novel conclusions and contribute to the field. Read surrounding literature and see if any questions come to mind – you might think of approaching an already-researched area from a different angle, applying an existing method to a new study system, or answering a question posed in the discussion section of recent work.

Find a supervisor

Hopefully there will be someone in your university able to supervise your work, but if not you can look further afield! Search online for academics who have written papers you're interested in and get in touch – you never know if they'd be willing to help out.

Campaign for curriculum change

You'll know by now that every sector of the economy needs to consider its environmental impacts if we are to become Nature Positive and reach Net Zero. This means it's important not just to teach about environmental sustainability in biology and geography, but across all different subjects.

Do you think there is enough environmental education in your course? Or is there room to campaign for more? If you think there is, you could take this action to campaign for curriculum change.

How to campaign for curriculum change:

- First, identify what you think needs to be added to the curriculum. This might be small things added into each lecture, or a set of topics that need to be added as separate lectures.
- You then need to draw up a plan of how these can be incorporated into the curriculum – for example, what lectures would they replace? What specific classes could the ideas be incorporated in? Who could deliver the lectures? This shows you're dedicated and have thought this through: although staff members might not use your ideas directly, they might take inspiration from them.
- Talk to lecturers first and ask if they'd be willing to add the desired topics to their lectures.



- Create a petition before you approach the university management so they can see that the request is coming from a large body of students and that sustainable knowledge is in demand.
- Contact the relevant staff members and organise a meeting!

What could be added to my curriculum?

Below are some ideas for things you might want to see on your course. The list is not exhaustive, and there is likely something you can think of relevant to your course!

- **Biology** – ecology & conservation; the link between biology & social science in encouraging behaviour change; conservation policy & governance.
- **Chemistry** – how chemicals are sourced and the impact of different chemical materials; renewable energy generation; sustainable lab practice (see the LEAF scheme for laboratory sustainability).
- **Engineering** – renewable energy generation; life cycle assessments of materials & their environmental sustainability.
- **Material science** – consideration of the life cycle assessments of materials used in the course; use of low-impact materials.
- **Social sciences** – how we can cause behaviour change to encourage more sustainable practices; working with people in conservation; stakeholder engagement; community-based conservation.
- **Arts and fashion** – sustainable materials; how paint/other media is made and its impact; alternative models to consumption such as leasing & rental; using 'artivism' to raise awareness to change.
- **History** – the environmental context of the eras you're learning about.

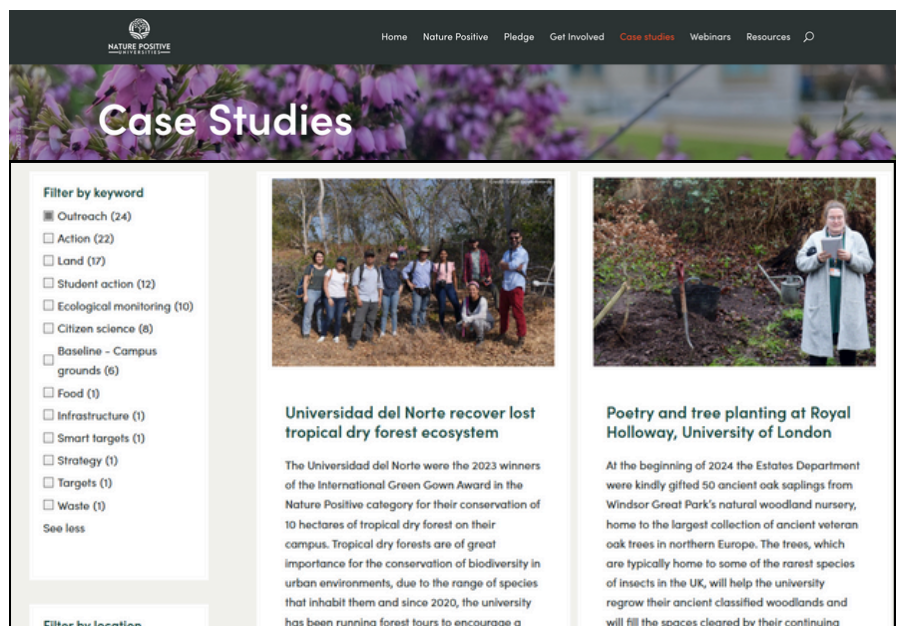
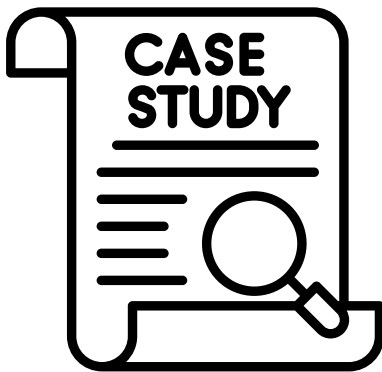
Ambassador actions:

Submit your actions as Case Studies

As we've mentioned before, we'd love to feature your activities or those of your institution as Case Studies on the NPU website. We need a **title**, **100 words**, a **photo**, and a **URL** (if available) with a link to a website / post with more information. We will also be happy to feature these in future toolkits and in social media posts (with your permission).

www.naturepositiveuniversities.net/case-studies

SUBMIT



Ambassador actions:

Feedback on the NPU Student Ambassador Programme:

Thank you for getting to the end of the 2024/25 Nature Positive Student Ambassador programme, we hope you have found it informative and inspiring, and have enjoyed learning from and with students all over the world!



We'd love to hear how you've found it and consider the ways we can improve. Here are some steps we invite you to take:

- Please fill in our **feedback form** - it makes all the difference!
- Leave a **public testimonial** that you'd be happy for us to use in the future on social media to recruit our next generation of student ambassadors.
- **Consider staying on for another year** if you will be a student for 2025/26 and **let us know your plans** in the feedback form.

Further guidance and information:



- Explore Case Studies on the NPU website, several of which involve projects involving advocacy and community engagement.



- Watch back a presentation about how to start an environmental campaign given by Favour Eragbie at a Student Ambassador workshop in 2023.



- Read the UNEP-WCMC article about Nature Jobs.



- Check out the LinkedIn Global Green Skills Report 2023.