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Responsible  
Futures



# Responsible Futures

*A supported change framework for whole institution sustainability*

Meg Baker - Senior Project Manager (Education)



STUDENTS  
ORGANISING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
UNITED KINGDOM

# Introducing SOS-UK

## We are working to...

- Move sustainability from being a niche subject that relatively few study to something all students learn about - **all students should be “sustainability students”**.
- Create cohort after cohort of **positive, solutions-driven students** who go on to make the world a more sustainable place.
- **Shift society** from an obsession with short-term profit to long-term benefit.

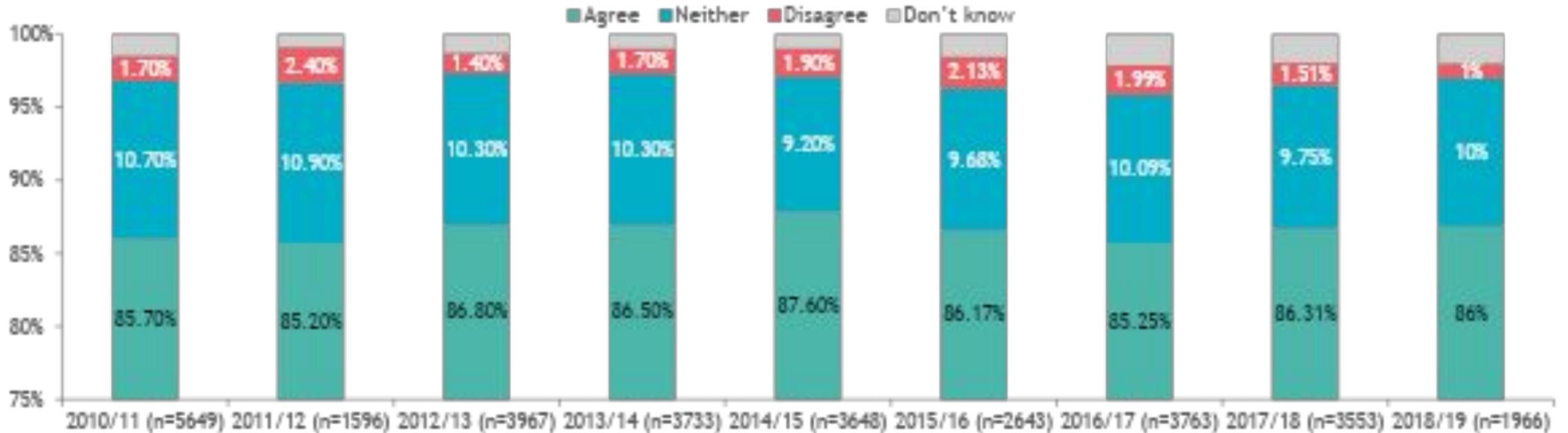


## By...

- Getting more students **leading on, and learning about**, sustainability.
- Embedding sustainability in formal education, **from early years to adult learning**.
- Making sustainability **more inclusive**, for everyone.

# Born out of student demand

“My university or college should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development.”



Source: NUS Sustainability Skills Survey 2018-19 | Base: c.5565 respondents in higher education across the UK

Higher education students

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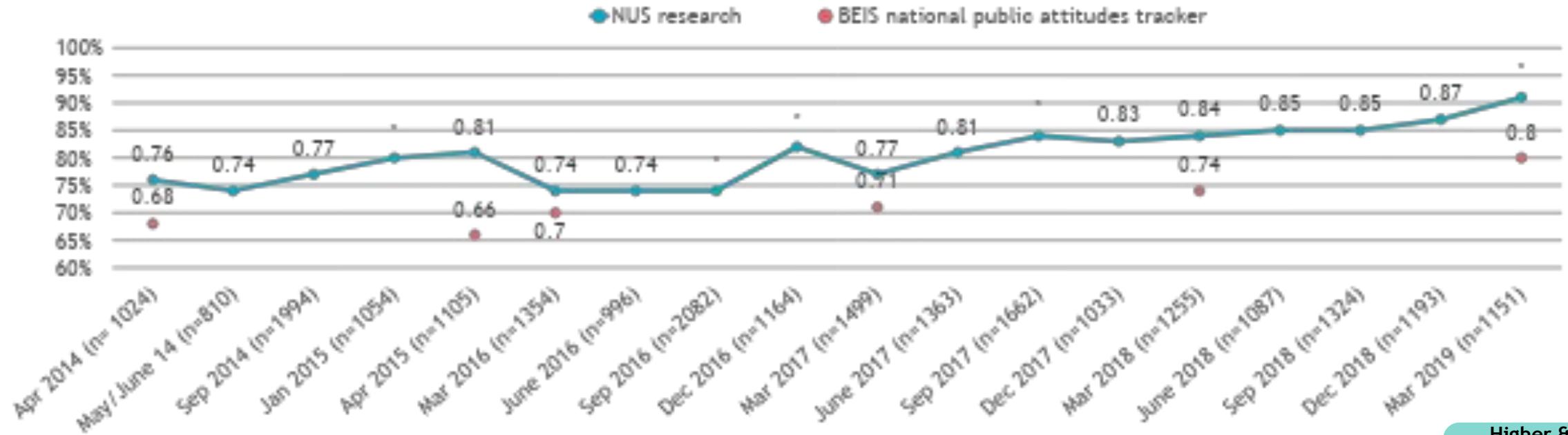
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# Responding to growing concern...

“How concerned, if at all, are you about climate change?”

[Responses shown for very or fairly concerned]



Source: NUS Student Opinion Climate Change | Base: See brackets - respondents in higher and further education across the UK

Higher & further education students

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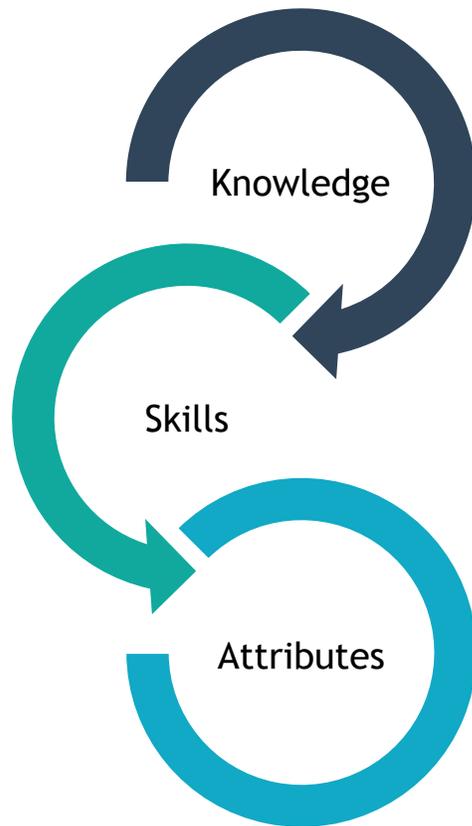


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# Education for sustainable development vs. education about sustainable development



Education for sustainable development is the process of equipping students with the **knowledge and understanding**, **skills** and **attributes** needed to work and live in a way that safeguards **environmental, social and economic** wellbeing, both in the present and for future generations.

*Higher Education Academy & Quality Assurance Agency guidance on ESD (2014)*

*“Education for Sustainable Development helps the citizens of the world to learn their way to a more sustainable future.”*

*UN Decade of ESD 2005-2014*

# Transforming our institutions



A whole-institution approach to embedding sustainability throughout student learning

A good practice framework and supported change programme

A partnership approach between the students' union and the university

An accreditation mark, audited by students

# Multi-faceted change and intervention framework

- Changes in **policy and strategy**
- Implementing requirements for ESD in (re)validation **processes**
- Introducing new **graduate attributes**

**Top-Down**

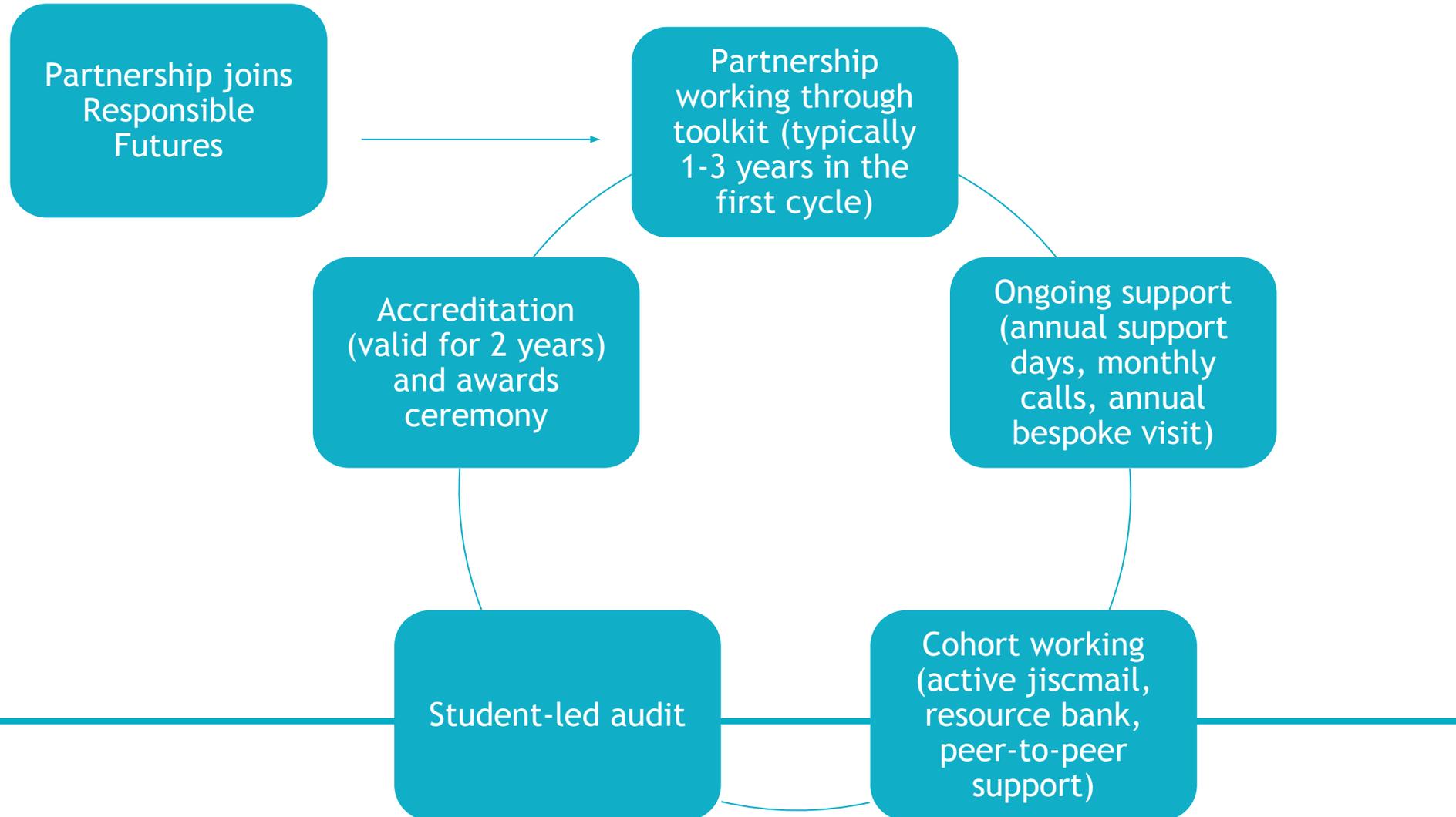
- Supporting **staff innovation** (e.g. teaching and learning funding)
- **Professional development** opportunities for staff
- Fostering **stronger working relationships** between the SU and institution

**Middle-Out**

- Engaging students and staff in collaborative discussions
- Students campaigning for change on their course
- Course reps championing ESD in student-staff meetings

**Bottom-Up**

# The Responsible Futures Cycle



# Criteria overview

**Baselines and benchmarks** - Gaining an in-depth understanding, knowledge, and familiarity with ESD across the institution

**Partnership and planning** - How you work

**Leadership and strategy** - Institutional leadership and gaining buy in through statements of support and strategy

**Policy and commitment** - Committing appropriate resources to the agenda and aligning this with existing processes

**Interventions** - Specific interventions used to engage students and staff

**Impacts and outcomes** - Reflecting on impact

**Outreach** - Sharing what you have done

**Self-defined criteria** - Highlighting unique good practice

- To achieve the accreditation mark, the Partnership must meet or exceed the score threshold of **200 points**, out of the maximum 300 points, not including the three self-defined criteria.
- **45 criteria in total**: 10 are mandatory, 35 are optional, and of which 3 you can write yourself (self-defining criteria).
- **Partnerships must complete the mandatory criteria** to gain accreditation.

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Accredited institution

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Working towards accreditation

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# 5 years of Responsible Futures

Over 500 actions have been taken by Responsible Futures partnerships through the programme

Conducting curriculum audits to identify baseline of ESD content

Passing SU policy on ESD

Creating interdisciplinary experiences for students

Diversifying the curriculum

Securing greater resourcing for ESD

Establishing living laboratory projects

Cohort working

Graduate attributes include sustainability

Gaining buy-in from trustees, governors, and senior management

Developing a stronger relationship between university / college and SU

**2019-20 Launched RF Host Partnerships** | 3 successful applicants - promoting a cohort approach, shared learning and a peer support network

# The value in achieving accreditation

Reflections from accredited partnerships -

- Securing **credibility** - internally and externally
- Developing a **reputation for excellence**
- Enabling access to **funding**
- Developing **new working links** within the unive
- Creating **better partnerships** between th students' union
- Enabling **engagement of staff**, at multiple l embedding sustainability
- Securing incorporation of **ESD into high-level s**
- **Embedding ESD** across the formal and informa



*“A great experience for all involved, it has been incredible to take part in this, and I am very proud of the University & the Students Union at UWE.”*

*Responsible Futures Student Auditor,  
University of the West of England (UWE),  
March 2016*

# Anglia Ruskin University: strategically embedding sustainability....

Committed to ensuring our students are life-long members of our University community and that **our education:**

- Stimulates intellectual curiosity & embeds research & critical inquiry skills that will enable our students boldly to tackle challenges in our contemporary world.
- Builds confident, critical users of information resources & digital technologies.
- Develops the ability of our students to gain, sustain & progress in graduate employment & to be successful in their next & future roles.
- Fosters enterprising, entrepreneurial & creative mindsets able to respond flexibly to complex problems & develop innovative solutions to influence the world.
- **Cultivates responsible, global citizens** who are committed to work inclusively with people from a wide range of backgrounds & cultures.
- Encourages ambitious citizens who are eager to maximise their full potential through contributing positively to society & the communities around them.
- **Develops graduates who are aware of their social & professional responsibility to contribute to the creation of sustainable futures for all.**



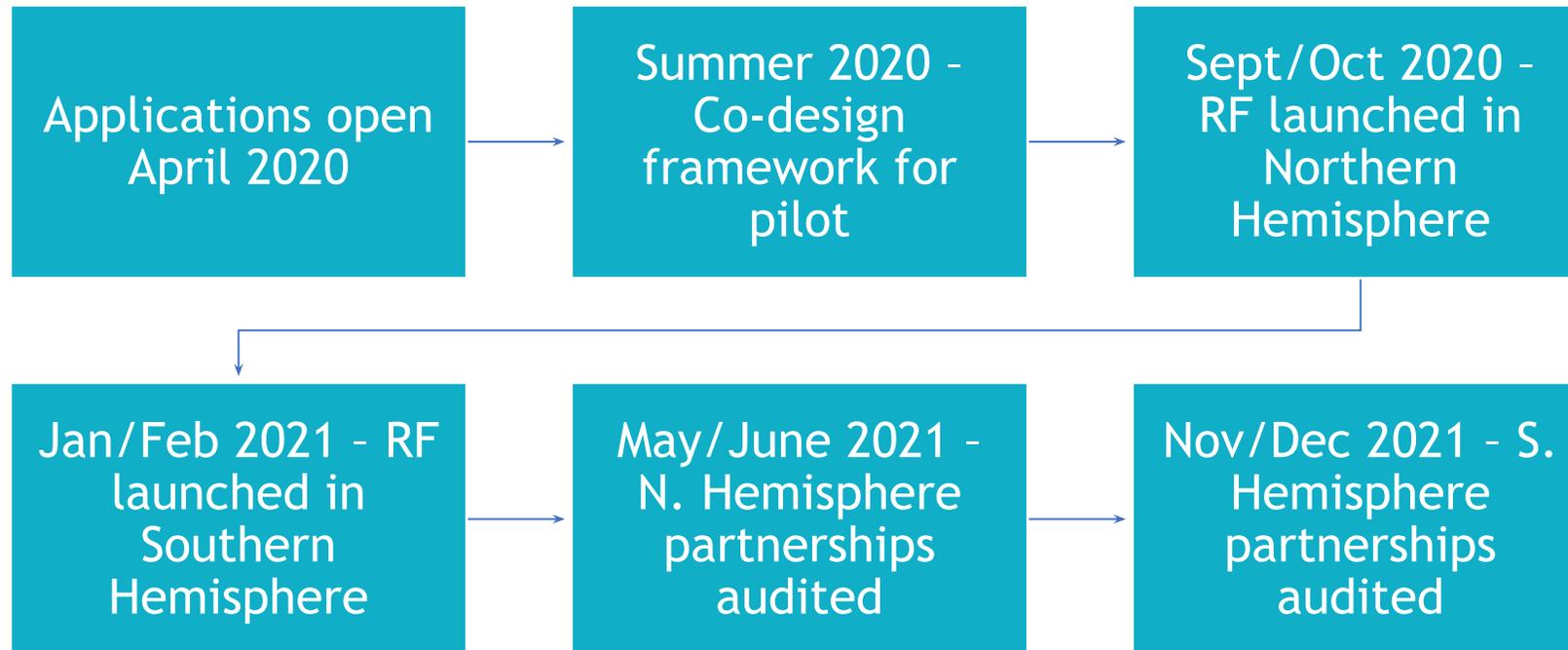
# Ruskin modules

- 15 credit module - option in year 1 undergraduates
- 15 credits - compulsory for all 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduates
- *Aims to, bring together students from different disciplines around key global challenges.*
- SDG's are a convenient way in which to frame these challenges
- Potentially relevant in all faculties and to all students

Challenges	Opportunities
Lack of knowledge of SDG's (even among senior staff)	Awareness raising – poster campaigns, SDG 'Teach-in' etc
Academic staff 'expertise' rather than 'outcome' focused	Support sessions for staff and students on SDG's
Multiple agenda's – employability, digital literacy, interdisciplinarity, active learning	Emphasising sustainability education as high quality and interdisciplinary learning and teaching
Risk that the SDG's could get side-lined in the need to ensure that we have enough modules to offer students	Provide exemplars which do integrate the SDGs fully e.g. 'No one left behind': how can we take action for climate justice?

# Launching an international pilot

- Building on the past 5 years of Responsible Futures learning and developments
- An international pilot in partnership with the International Association of Universities



# Thank you

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w. <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/responsiblefutures>

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