

# How Green are the Students at the Arts University Bournemouth?

An online survey was carried out in March and April 2016 at the Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) in order to better understand student attitudes and behaviours with regards to sustainability. The results of the research will be used to inform a longer-term strategy on engaging students in environmental initiatives planned by the Students' Union (AUBSU).

## Context

AUBSU is a growing students' union with 2015/16 being the first year to have a staff member to run community and environmental projects. There has long been an intangible sense that overall students at the AUB are very environmentally friendly but, with no real historical data to look back on, it was important to develop an empirical understanding. By carrying out a survey of students' current environmental behaviours and attitudes it is possible to devise longer term strategies in encouraging progressive behaviours and attitudes towards environmental issues.

## Hypothesis

AUB students are actively environmentally friendly in their own lives but do not engage in environmental opportunities, initiatives and programs put forward for them by the AUB and AUBSU.

A representative sample of 134 students across all year groups was obtained.

Environmental attitudes are very positive with 98% of students engaging in environmentally friendly behaviours with 40% of students believing that the environmental initiatives on campus have had a positive effect on their behaviour.

Lack of financial incentives actively prevent students from carrying out environmental behaviours. However, AUB students appear to be very knowledgeable about environmental issues.

Increased communication from both AUB and AUBSU with students will help to promote existing projects run by both and will encourage more student engagement.



# How green are AUB students and why?

The research sought to be able to answer the following questions:

What are the current AUB student attitudes towards environment?

What are the current AUB student environmental behaviours?

What is the AUB student awareness of current environmental initiatives run by AUB and AUBSU?

What environmental areas would students like AUBSU to focus on in the future?



## Methodology

Data was collected via an online quantitative survey, run at the Arts University Bournemouth collected between March and April 2016. The survey was promoted through Social Media channels and AUBSU newsletters. A neutral incentive was put into place in an attempt to engage a wider audience.

1x £50 Amazon Voucher

5x local coffee shop vouchers

## Sample

A sample of 134 students was achieved across all year groups with 42% level four, 28% level five, 20% level six, 8% foundation and 2% MA/Postgraduate students.

Of the respondents:

62% lived in HMO or shared accommodation

5% lived alone

18% lived halls

1% lived with host family

9% lived with family

5% other

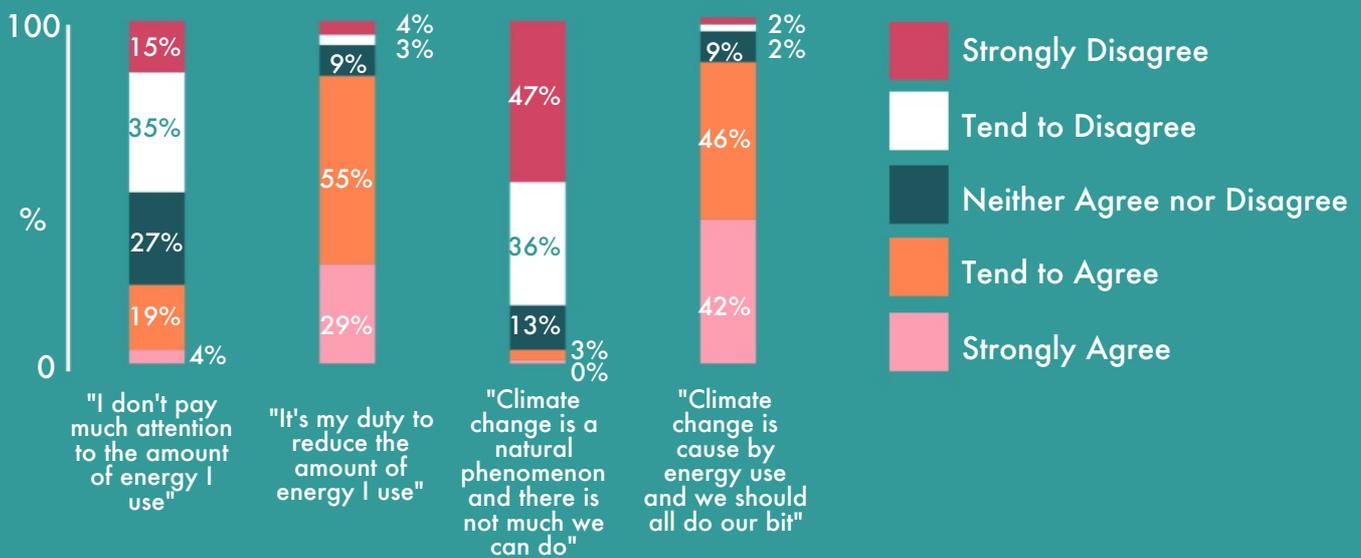
# Results

## What are the current AUB student attitudes towards environment?

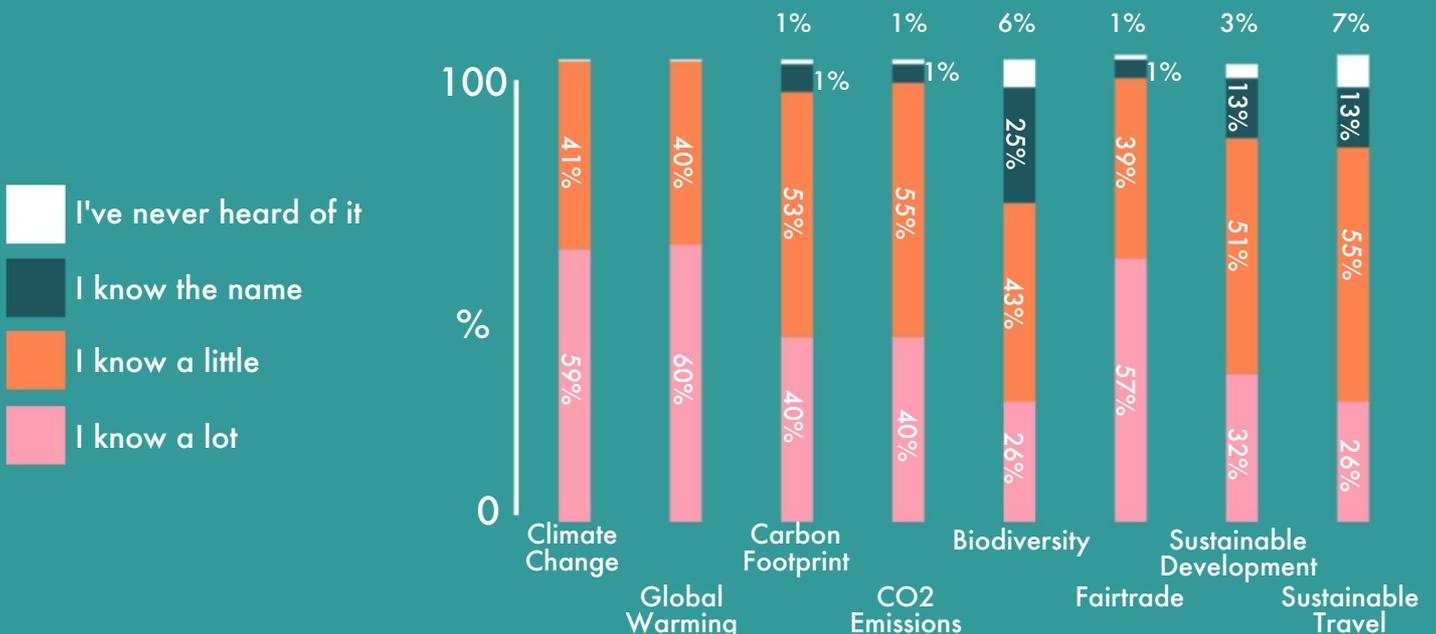
The vast majority of students held positive environmental attitudes with 84% of students believing that it is their duty to reduce the amount of energy they use and 83% disagreeing with the belief that there is nothing that can be done about climate change. Their general understanding of environmental issues was also high with over 80% of students declaring to know "a little" or "a lot" about nearly all issues asked, with the one exception of "Biodiversity" still recording results of 69%.

Students were ambivalent to the environmental status of the AUB when selecting a university, placing most emphasis on league table results.

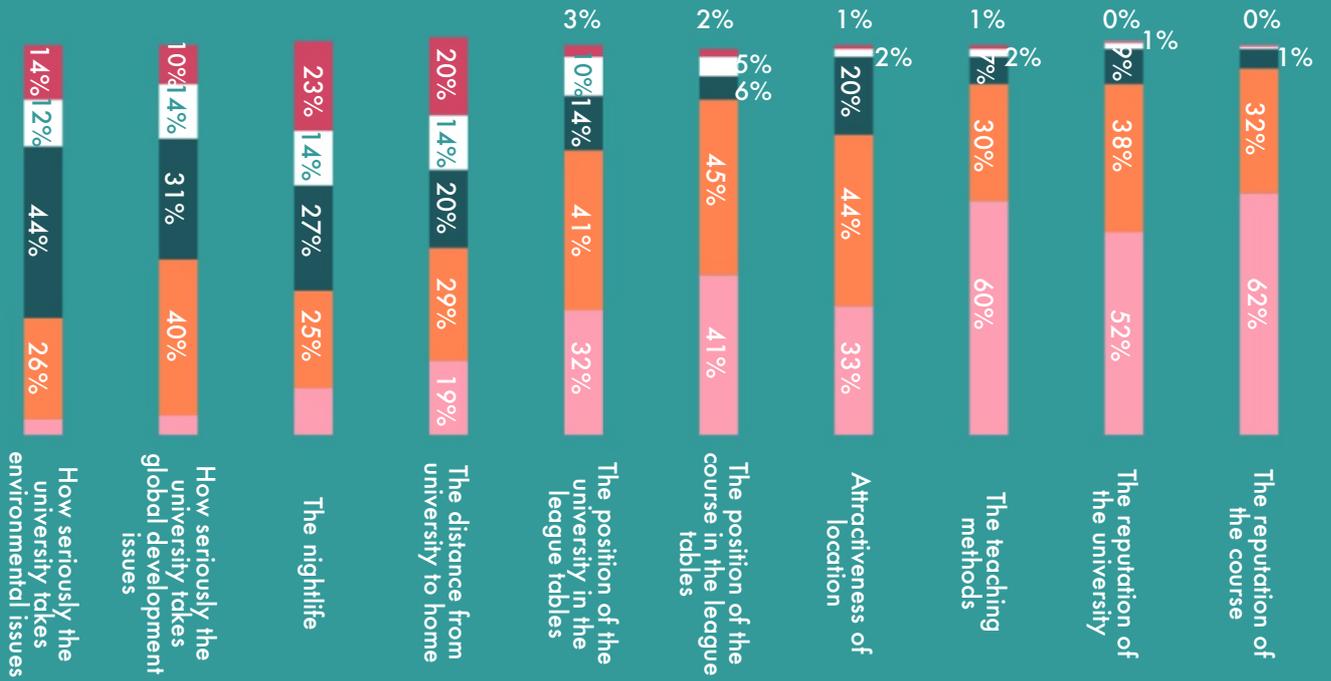
### Q13. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following?



### Q8. What, if anything, do you understand about the following terms?



Q4. How important were the following when choosing which university to apply for?

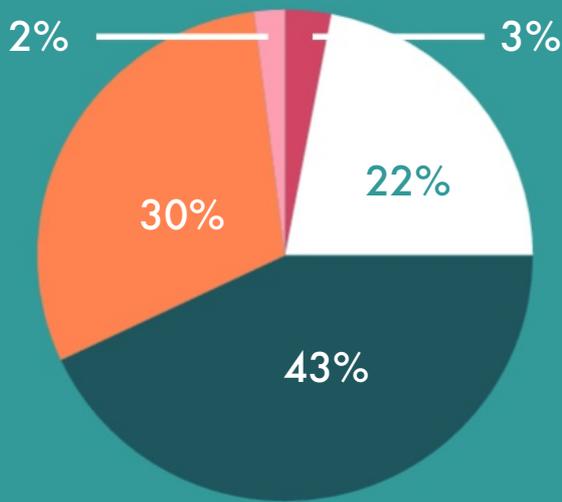


## What are the current AUB students' environmental behaviours?

Overall AUB students behaviours seem to reflect their environmental attitudes as they are quite active in their lifestyle behaviours, 98% of students questioned considered themselves to carry out a number of environmentally friendly behaviours indicating that they are already aware of their impact on the environment. When asked directly how often they carried out individual behaviours more than half of students

carrying out the majority of positive environmental behaviours on a regular basis. Students were also asked for their motivation for these behaviours, 46% of students stated that financial benefits are the reason they would be most likely to carry out more environmentally friendly behaviours and 45% implicated financial reasons for why they do not carry out more environmentally friendly behaviours.

Q7. Which of these statements would you say best describes your current lifestyle?



- I'm environmentally friendly in everything that I do
- I'm environmentally friendly in most things that I do
- I do quite a few environmentally friendly things
- I do one or two things that are environmentally friendly
- I don't really do anything environmentally friendly





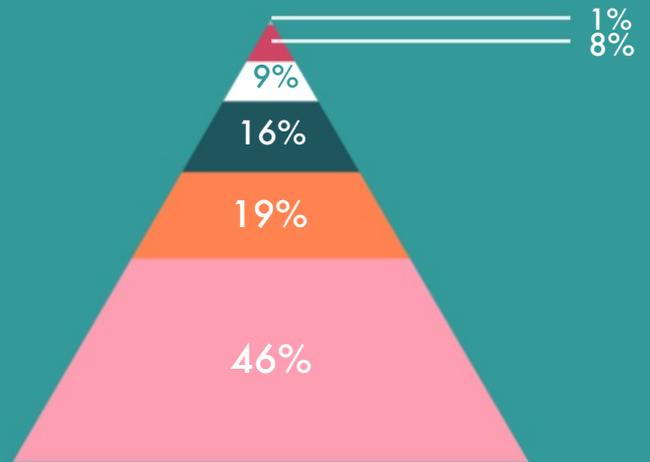
Q9. How frequently, if at all, do you perform the following behaviours?

Percentage of students who responded "Always" or "Very Often" when asked how frequently they perform the following behaviours

Shut windows when the heating's on	92%	Let clothes dry naturally rather than using a tumble dryer	63%
Turn lights out when not in the room	91%	Choose environmentally friendly forms of travel	63%
Recycle waste	88%	Purchase/use energy saving lightbulbs	62%
Ensure tap is not left running when brushing teeth/washing up	86%	Wash clothes on cold (30*)	56%
Ensure TV is turned off, not left on standby	77%	Turn computer off rather than leave on standby	54%
Put more layers on when feeling cold rather than putting the heating on	72%	Turn off mobile charger when not in use	49%
Turn heating off when out of the house for a few hours	71%	Put lids on pans when cooking	45%
Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need	67%	Buy locally sourced produce	29%

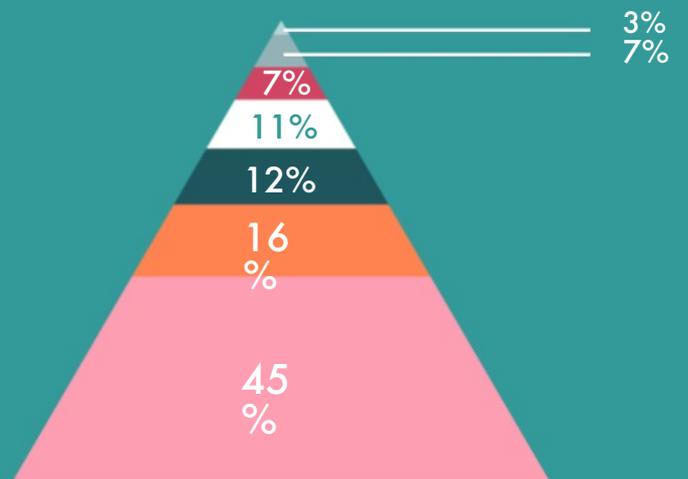
Q10. Which of the following would most likely encourage you to carry out environmentally friendly behaviour?

- If my friends were doing it
- If it was something I was passionate about
- If it helped my local environment
- If it helped the world at large
- If it was easy to do
- If it saved me money



Q11. Which of the following would most likely discourage you from carrying out environmentally friendly behaviours?

- If it was something I didn't understand
- If I didn't feel it made a difference
- Nothing would discourage me
- If it took too much time
- If it took too much hassle
- If I couldn't control the decision
- If it was too expensive

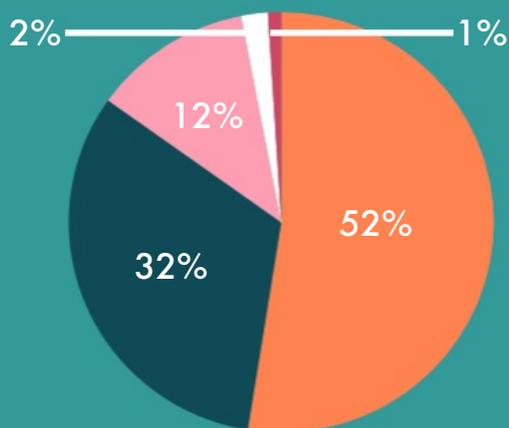


## What is the AUB student awareness of current environmental initiatives run by the AUB and AUBSU?

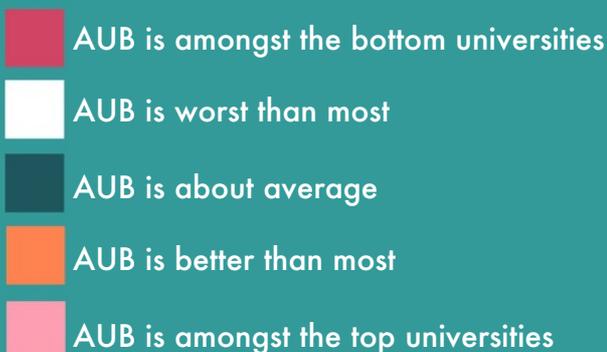
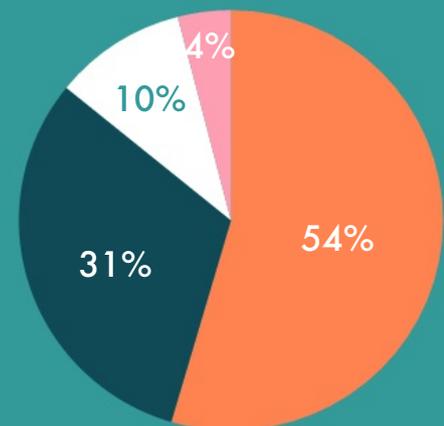
Students were asked of their opinion of the environmental behaviours of the AUB and their specific course. The students' responses demonstrated that they see AUB as a very environmentally friendly university in comparison to other universities with 52% of students believing AUB is better than most. Individual courses also rated highly with 54% of students rating their course as somewhat environmentally friendly. However, when asked what they know about specific environmental initiatives run by the AUB and AUBSU, on average only 40% of students had any knowledge about any initiatives with just 6% participating. There were only two initiatives that surpassed this mean, "On Yer Bike" Vouchers for low income students and the AUBSU Tree Planting.

This lack of engagement may explain why so few students believe that their time at AUB has had any effect on their environmental behaviour with just 40% of students reporting any positive impact.

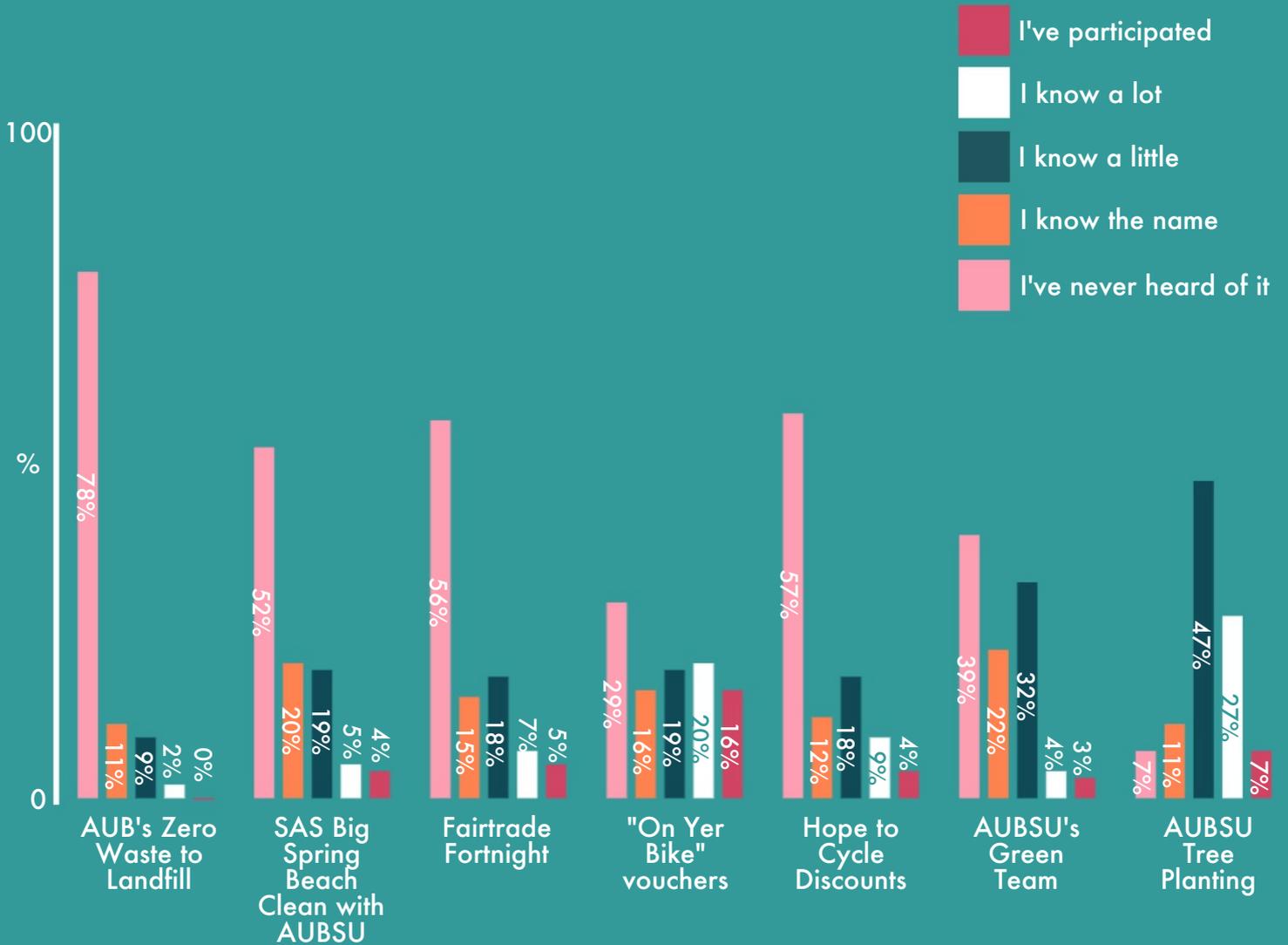
Q5. Where, in your opinion, does AUB sit on the scale of universities with regards to sustainable behaviours?



Q6. In your opinion how environmentally friendly is your course?



Q14. To what extent, if at all, are you aware of the following AUB and AUBSU initiatives?



Q15. To what extent, if at all, do you believe that the environmental initiatives on campus have impacted on your behaviour during your time at university?

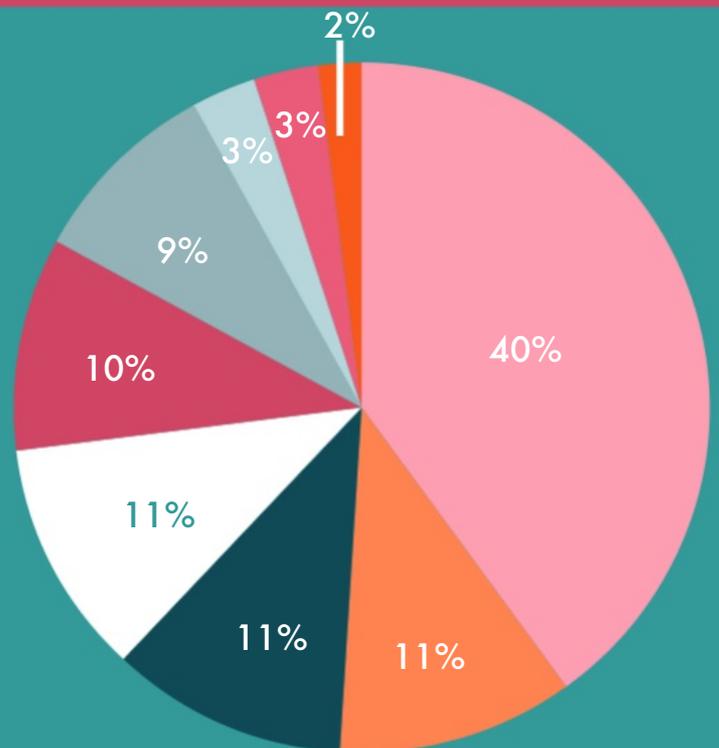


## What environmental areas would students like AUBSU to focus on in the future?

The final question asked was to gauge what area of sustainability the students of AUB felt needed most attention. The question was deliberately left open to qualitative responses to avoid any suggestion or encouragement from AUBSU. This resulted in responses that were varied in nature but could be fit into nine main categories:



### Q17. What, if any, environmental issues would you suggest AUBSU try to tackle in the future?



# Discussion

## Student Attitudes

The students demonstrated a high sense of personal responsibility in regards to environmental issues with many agreeing that they have a duty to reduce the amount of energy they use. However, few students claimed actual knowledge of their personal energy usage with only 19% considering they pay any attention to what they use and 4% knowing their exact usage. This data matches up with UK-wide statistics. (YouGov, 2012).

Students' overall knowledge of environmental issues is very high. Based on their existing knowledge it can be deduced that the area that needs the most development is Biodiversity as only 69% felt they had knowledge of this area. One consideration of this is to use the AUBSU Tree Planting event as an opportunity to educate students about Biodiversity.

## Student Behaviours

Overall the students' behaviours reflected, if not exceeded, their attitudes and knowledge. An overwhelming 98% of students engage in environmentally friendly behaviours even if it is just one or two things. It may be that students engage in environmentally friendly behaviours more than they realise, either out of habit or just without environmental purpose.

The reason behind this is not clear and would require further study, however, it may be due to shifts in societal norms regarding environmental initiatives with emphases being placed on renewable energy and recycling (DEFRA, 2010).

Students reported financial reasoning behind both encouragement and discouragement of carrying out environmental behaviours.

It is possible that due to financial incentives being the main reason 46% of students would carry out environmentally friendly behaviours there is a large proportion of students carrying out energy reducing behaviours such as shutting windows when the heating is on (92%) and turning lights out when not in the room (91%).

Financial expenses are the top reason students cited for not carrying out behaviours which may explain why buying locally sourced food was only carried out regularly by 29% of students as price is a big deterrent when looking to buy food (DEFRA, 2008).

Exploring financial incentives and free or cheap ways to be environmentally friendly could be used to engage students on environmental matters. As buying locally sourced food may be out of the question for many students who are trying to save money many universities set up co-ops with local providers which can tackle this issue. Alternative possible solutions are:

- encouraging students to grow their own produce such as vegetables.

- invite local farmers to sell their produce at the university at discount prices.

## Student Awareness

The survey found that many students acknowledged the AUB to be an environmentally friendly environment with 64% believing the university to be amongst the best or better than most and 58% believing their course to be environmentally friendly.

While the students have a positive opinion of the institution it is not overly clear why. When asked about their awareness of environmental initiatives carried out by the AUB and AUBSU only 40% of students had any knowledge with only 6% participating. This suggests that, like the survey's hypothesis of the students, there is an intangible feeling of environmental awareness amongst the students about the university.

This is also echoed in the fact that so few students feel that their time at the AUB has had any positive impact on their environmental behaviour with just 40% stating that their behaviour has improved. Fortunately, only 5% believe that it has had a negative impact on their behaviour, however, 55% believe it has had no effect.

Raising student awareness of the environmental initiatives carried out by the AUB and AUBSU is high on the agenda for both parties with AUB's Environmental Policy (AUB, 2013) wanting to "[promote] environmental awareness amongst staff, students and stakeholders", "encouraging the integration of environmental issues into the curriculum and research, and helping students develop their environmental understanding and awareness" and The Carbon Management Plan (AUB, 2011) wanting to "raise students awareness" and "encourage students to positively manage their own

environment when they have completed their studies" And the AUBSU strategic plan (AUBSU, 2014) which aims to "provide effective communication methods between the students' union and the students at the AUB" and "to work in partnership with the University to minimise our potentially negative environmental impacts".

## Student Aspirations

In an open, qualitative question about what environmental issues the students would like AUBSU to tackle in the future many students responded with things they are dissatisfied with at the AUB.

The responses varied from student to student but most could be grouped together in nine main areas:

- Material Waste/Recycling
- Food Waste
- Energy
- Education
- Food Options
- Awareness
- Green Areas on Campus
- Transport
- Water

The areas that students have noted are mostly areas that have been flagged up in the AUB Environmental Policy or Carbon Management Plan. This suggests that many of these areas, particularly recycling, waste and energy usage are areas that the AUB are already working on or looking to work on. This disparity in communication between organisation and students is highlighted by several responses to the survey with students saying things such as:

"It seems you are trying to tackle a fair bit but some of them I have never heard of so maybe do promo days for them around campus to get more people aware of what they could be involved in."

"There needs to be more information about how the uni are trying to keep green"

"Raise more awareness for the issues you're already tackling"

## Conclusion

The results of the survey do go to support the hypothesis that students at the AUB are environmentally friendly in both their attitudes and behaviour but goes on to suggest that their engagement with environmental projects carried out by the AUB and AUBSU is limited due to poor communication. Current methods of email, social media, posters, newsletters and the both the AUB and AUBSU websites are proving to be insufficient with regards to environmental initiatives. Possibilities include awareness campaigns, education through courses and a student-lead green committee.

Additionally the AUBSU continue to work on and develop the environmental projects related to the areas that have been raised by the student body as areas they wish to see improved. Existing programs such as the Student Switch Off campaign and Fairtrade Fortnight will be reevaluated for future implementation.



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