

Dissertations for Good brief for organisations

1. Introduction

Dissertations for Good is a platform connecting you with a network of university students across the UK, to help answer your important questions about environmental, economic or social sustainability. You can work directly with students to get your research question answered, contributing to the growing field of sustainability research and helping students gain important work experience and skill development while relating their degree to the biggest challenge our world is facing.

Dissertations for Good membership grants your organisation access to a growing network of 800+ students from universities across the whole of the UK for one calendar year. It allows you to post ideas for research subjects, view students' ideas and hear about interesting events and opportunities coming up.

This programme is one of the ways in which NUS helps students to help make the world a better place. While at university, 63% of students take part in formal volunteering, with 95% reporting that they were motivated by a desire to improve things or help people. We are creating a network of these students, allowing them to fulfil their desires as a part of their degree by using their dissertation as a force for good.

2. Membership costs

The annual membership costs are based on the size and type of your organisation, with smaller, public and third sector organisations having their memberships subsidised. We also have 20 free spaces per year for micro-sized public or third sector organisations. Membership includes:

- Access to the network;
- Suggested partnerships with students based on your research interests;
- A visit onsite from an NUS representative to introduce you and your team to the scheme;
- The ability to register an unlimited number of projects on the database;
- Guidance documents from NUS to assist in forming a successful partnership;
- Free template materials to publicise the scheme internally and externally;
- Considerable savings compared to commercial research/consultancy offerings.

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Full-time equivalent employees	Public/third sector	Private sector
<10 (micro-sized)	£100*	£1,000
11-50 (small-sized)	£250	£1,250
51-250 (medium-sized)	£500	£1,500
>250 (large-sized)	£750	£1,750

*We have 20 free spaces for micro-sized organisations each year, subsidised by NUS

3. General information

3.1. The organisation representative is responsible for:

- Agreeing the parameters of the project in the planning meeting, taking into account the fact that it is a student project and their course requirements must come first;
- Providing necessary data and information to enable the student to conduct the project;
- Providing feedback to NUS upon request on how the research was used.

3.2. The student is responsible for:

- Completing the project in a timely and professional manner;
- Updating the organisation and NUS on the progress of the project regularly, most likely following regular meetings with supervisor;
- Submitting their report as usual for a dissertation/research project and subsequently making the report available to the organisations, as agreed in the planning meeting.

3.3. The university, faculty and/or supervisor is responsible for:

- Advertising and publicising the opportunity, if appropriate/applicable, using the template resources provided by NUS;
- Ensuring that the project is of a suitable standard for the student and that it fulfils the requirements of the course;
- Supporting the student as with a usual dissertation/research project;
- Making the report available to the organisation (depending on responsibilities agreed during the planning meeting).

3.4. NUS is responsible for:

- Managing and monitoring the website;

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- Suggesting partnerships to members based on areas of interest, questions and ideas;
- Providing communications about and helping access learning and networking events and opportunities, e.g. the British Conference for Undergraduate Research (BCUR; www.bcur.org.uk) and the annual NUS Sustainability Roundtable;
- Providing a detailed partnership outline to show the breakdown of responsibility;
- Providing template documents for the planning meeting agenda and regular student reports;
- Publishing abstracts of all completed research on the Dissertations for Good website;
- Monitoring student progress, collating impact and celebrating outcomes.

3.5. Other information

- The student must fulfil the requirements for their module. This is the most important aspect to be taken into account and it will be the responsibility of the student and academic supervisor to ensure that the project meets the requirements.
- The type of report delivered by the student may differ from that provided by, for example, a professional consultant. The organisation accepts this when they sign up.
- All members who form a partnership agree to assist NUS with the monitoring and evaluation element of the programme by completing evaluation surveys and adhering to the agreed feedback timeline.
- All members who form a partnership agree to protect personal data obtained through the programme in accordance with the Data Protection Act and to safely dispose of all personal data upon completion of the Programme.
- All members who form a partnership have the right to publicise and promote their partnership and project (with reference to Dissertations for Good).
- All members who form a partnership have the right to present and publicise scientific reports and findings in national/international conferences and research journals (with reference to Dissertations for Good).
- If no student accepts the opportunity to work on this project, the university/faculty and organisation will be able to take part in Dissertations for Good in the future with different students and organisations, **without repaying the membership fee.**

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4. Experiences of the programme

4.1. Organisation experiences

Organisations felt that:

- They had benefited from 'increased insight and commitment' from a student;
- They were pleased that they had the ability to give a student the 'opportunity to be involved in this work';
- The partnerships had transformative impacts;
- They had a good impression of Dissertations for Good and associated communications.

"We benefited from a young person who is genuinely interested in the project and the issues facing young people."

Organisation

"It is a good scheme which allows organisations to investigate areas which would normally be beyond their means."

Organisation

"It has really helped us to build working relationships with overseas groups and to develop knowledge of activity that we would not otherwise have had exposure to."

Organisation

4.2. Student experiences

Students reported that taking part in Dissertations for Good helped to improve their:

- Communication skills;
- Interpersonal skills;
- Problem-solving;
- Organisation;
- Ability to use initiative and be self-motivated;
- Understanding of environment, social and economic connections.

"Dissertations for Good has given real meaning to my University studies."

Student

"I felt part of something more collaborative."

Student

"Working for the sake of something greater than my own academic development has given me drive and motivation to work hard."

Student

"It has given me the opportunity to work with really inspiring people and to gain a lot of practical experience that is applicable in a real world setting."

Student

4.3. Supervisor experiences

Dissertation supervisors felt that:

- They had benefited from the opportunity to promote student research through additional access to conferences and events;
- Students had improved the skills mentioned above, as well as negotiation skills;

"It's been a lesson [for the student] in the challenges of working in the real world."

Supervisor

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- The piece of work has additional responsibility and weight placed on it, so it is important that all partners are aware of this and that the project is suitable for the student.

"It is a good experience that enhances students' profiles."

Supervisor

5. To find out more...

Please visit the website at www.nus.org.uk/dfg or get in touch on dfg@nus.org.uk.

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