

Green Impact Students' Unions FAQs

Q. When do we need to have submitted the toolkit by?

A. 5pm on Monday 29th April

Q. Remind me of the key dates

A.

Annual NUS sustainability Survey – 22nd October – 11th November 2018

Student Sustainability Summit - 31st October 2018

National SDG teach in – 18th – 22nd February 2019

Submission deadline – 29th April 2019

Audits – May 2019

NUS Awards – July 2019

Q. Have any criteria changed this year?

A. We have looked over the feedback from last year and have made some small word changes to ensure that the criteria remain relevant to unions. We have also made some changes to the points available for a handful of criteria, the largest point changes being to the 'Campaigning and Influencing' section where we have enabled more points to be achieved for the campaign impact.

We have made one criteria change this year. PA006 previously asked unions to have convened an exploratory meeting, early in the academic year, involving institutional sustainability leads. This criteria now asks unions to have proactively engaged with Liberation Officers/groups on sustainability topics and is Mandatory Excellent.

Q. What are the scoring thresholds?

All unions have the same scoring thresholds to meet:

Working towards accreditation – less than 100 points scored and/or not all 'good mandatory actions' completed

Good – 100 to 249 points scored and all 7 'good mandatory actions' completed

Very Good – 250 to 299 points scored and all 14 'good and very good mandatory actions' completed

Excellent – 300 or more points scored and all 21 'good, very good and excellent mandatory actions' completed

Q. Which criteria are mandatory, and which are optional?

A. To reach a standard beyond Working towards accreditation (Good, Very good, or Excellent), you need to achieve **all the relevant mandatory criteria and the minimum threshold score.**

Mandatory criteria are listed in the table below, and identified in the toolkit by the word 'MANDATORY'. All other criteria are optional but, as with previous versions of GISU, you will need to

complete some of them to get enough points if you want to progress beyond Working Towards accreditation.

Good: LD001, LD002, PA001, SU001, SU002, SU003, SU004

Very Good: KN001, LD003, PA002, PA003, PA004, SU005, SU006

Excellent: LD004, LD005, PA006, SU007, SU008, OT001, OC001,

Q. What is the SU and Auditor score on each action?

A. The old GISU used to award a fixed score for achieving a criterion, regardless of whether implementation was good, very good or excellent. We have successfully trialed using ranges in both [Responsible Futures](#) and [Alcohol Impact](#). In these schemes, applicants state what score they think they should get, up to the maximum, and we validate it compared to others as part of a moderation process. This allows us to identify how unions are doing on any particular criteria in relation to others. In the new GISU, you state your suggested score and we will validate it through the evidence and any audit.

Q. How do we score ourselves?

A. To help you score yourselves we have come up with a scoring guide. This year we have added the scoring guidance in the 'How you will be audited' section of the online toolkit.

Note that we will consider the size and capacity of the union when awarding points in the audit and will expect to see progress year to year to maintain the points you have achieved previously.

Q. What evidence do we need to provide?

A. Each criteria will be accompanied by a description of the evidence that we would expect to see, including the process for you to present it to us. Please upload the most relevant documents you feel necessary (no more than 3 per criteria). Should the auditor require more evidence this will be requested within the audit period and will not impact on your final accreditation.

Q. Can we include things we did last academic year?

A. As a general rule you should assume we would want to see evidence that things have happened **this academic year**. However some criteria may have been completed in previous years, if the activity you are claiming as evidence started before the current academic year then please state this in the evidence box for that criteria. To retain or improve on your accreditation year to year, we'll be predominately judging what you have done this academic year.

Q. Why do some of the criteria relate to what the institution is doing?

A. There are a number of actions which directly or indirectly relate to what the institution is doing in relation to sustainability. For instance the inclusion of sustainability in the institution's main strategy could be significantly transformative, as such we hope that you will try and engage and influence the institution on this subject whenever the opportunity arises. This may take several years, but we will award you points relative to the progress which has been made each year.

Other actions such as the reduction of utilities may be indirectly related to your institution as they house the energy monitoring system, enabling you to easily measure the impact of any changes you make. For actions like this we expect you to work in collaboration with your institution, being proactive and lobbying them for facilities or information to help you become more sustainable.

Q. How do I tackle the outcomes section?

A. the outcomes section is worth a total of 100 points, and we've done this to encourage you to prioritise the monitoring and evaluation of your sustainability work. Do refer to the scoring matrix to help you build up points in this section, but you can use this [template](#) to help structure your comments and evidence.

Q. What are the 'rolling' operational criteria?

A. We have five rolling operational criteria, identified by the word 'ROLLING'. The rolling criteria will change annually to ensure we collectively keep on top of operational issues. It is anticipated that all other criteria will stay pretty much the same each year, although we will likely increase the score thresholds, or number of mandatory criteria, to encourage continual improvement. For unions that want to access the old toolkit as an informal auditing resource, you can download a condensed and cleaned list of the criteria [here](#).

Q. What do we need to do for the self-defined criteria?

A. This is your opportunity to share any other initiatives or work which you feel hasn't already been covered elsewhere in the toolkit. One of the three actions is to showcase an 'innovative intervention' which you feel is a new approach to promoting sustainability on campus. The remaining two self-defined actions can be any other activity which you feel deserves recognition.

Q. What support is available?

A. We offer support throughout the year through our online [resource bank](#), Facebook workplace group and email updates. We can offer unions who are new to GISU, didn't submit/achieved working towards last year, or have specific challenges (small and specialist for example) some additional free support throughout the year. All unions can also bolt-on additional on-site support through the sign up page. If you need help, support or have a query please email gisu@nus.org.uk and we will be more than happy to help.

Q. What awards are available this year?

A. Every union who undertakes the audit process will receive a working towards, good, very good or excellent accreditation based upon meeting the mandatory actions and total points threshold. In addition to this there will be 3 national awards, Overall winner, Nations Award and Most Improved.

Q. Why is there no longer a Non-commercial award?

A. As the current toolkit has a much smaller emphasis on facilities issues than historically, we've found that the distinction between commercial and non-commercial unions are no longer needed.

From the accreditations received over the last two years we found a similar distribution of scores between the two categories, and in some instances some ambiguity about which category would best fit. To make the awards as fair as possible we have instead replaced this with new national awards to recognise the overall best achieving union, as well as the most improved union to capture those who have made the biggest strides over the year.

Across the whole toolkit we want unions to think creatively about how they can change and influence the campus to be more sustainable no matter what size you are. With the scaled scoring model this will enable students unions to gain points for trying to make progress in areas where it doesn't have full ownership or responsibility (see question about questions relating to the institution).

Q. How will the audits work?

A. Following the success and learnings from the audits in 2018 we will aim to audit all submitting unions either over the phone or in person. We will be in touch with further details about the audits from March onwards.

Q. I'm from an FE union, can I take part?

A. Alongside the GISU programme, we have launched Green Impact Colleges. This is a new scheme based on feedback from colleges and FE unions, designed to be more relevant, more impactful, and better suited to a further education context. You can still take part in GISU if you wish, but we would strongly advise that FE unions join the new GI for FE programme. You can learn more about GI for FE [here](#).

Q. How will we find out about any updates to GISU this year?

A. We will send all updates out via email, either directly to the three named individuals on your sign up form, or via the 'NUS Sustainability Staff and Officers' Facebook Workplace group. For any other queries, please contact us on gisu@nus.org.uk.

We would also recommend that you join our [Sustainability Mailing list](#). This will provide regular updates on Sustainability within the sector, including examples and ideas from other unions.