

# Engaging Students in Climate Discussions



Steven Forrest (2025)

Image: Amy Richardson

## So you're thinking of hosting a Climate Café?

*Climate cafés can be friendly and inviting spaces for staff and students to come together to discuss and explore the climate emergency. Follow this useful guide to help you plan and organise some fun and engaging events with students.*

### 1. Climate Emergency

- Climate change is an urgent societal challenge
- Increasing extreme weather events and greenhouse gas emissions
- Need to develop innovative solutions to adapt and mitigate climate change

### 2. Aims

- Engage students from diverse degree programmes
- Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the climate emergency
- Foster collaboration and critical thinking

### 3. Maximising Student Voice

- Ensure there is space for asking questions
- Encourage discussions with dedicated time set aside
- Empower students to be speakers



### 4. Identifying Relevant Concerns

- Provide discussion and dialogue spaces
- Use post-it notes for students to make their concerns visible
- Encourage the identification of solutions to the problems faced



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# 5. Typical Structure

- Intro to Climate Café and theme (1-2mins)
- Speaker 1 (5-8mins) + Q&A (5mins)
- Speaker 2 (5-8mins) + Q&A (5mins)
- Activity and discussion space (15mins)
- Group sharing (5-8mins)
- Thank you and next time (2mins)
- Additional time for students to continue to discuss as they leave

# 6. Do Consider

## Timing

- Student timetables – try to minimise clashes with timetabled teaching
- Avoid holidays, exam periods, and dates outside of terms

## Relevance

- Connect to current affairs and special days e.g. World Water Day

## Room Setup

- Aim for small clusters of tables
- Make sure you have the right cables and have tested the sound settings

# 7. Avoid

- Presentations longer than 10mins
- Too much text on slides
- Too many speakers in one climate café



# 8. Use Varied Materials

- Short presentations (5-8mins max.)
- Use ‘wow’ images that inspire
- Use videos and animations (e.g. Planet Earth short videos)
- Bring props that can be passed around the audience
- Consider serious games

# 9. Include Diverse Speakers

- Academics from marine biology, engineering, social sciences, disaster studies, and the humanities
- Elected student representatives
- Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council



# 10. Case Study: University of Hull Sustainability Competition

- Climate cafes provide a platform to bring students from diverse degree programmes together to identify problems and develop solutions
- In-person and online proposal pitches with cash prizes for students
- Selected winners represented the University of Hull at the Yorkshire Multi-University Challenge Day
- Students collaborated to create a pitch articulating their sustainability-focused ideas whilst developing teamworkings and business skills

Projects led by Dr Steven Forrest (University of Hull, UoH) in collaboration with Michelle Bennett (Hull University Students’ Union, HUSU). Funding provided since 2020 by the Energy and Environment Institute (UoH) and HUSU as well for the sustainability competition by the Yorkshire Universities-UPP Foundation.

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