

How can Queen Mary best support students to learn about sustainability?

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Project background

As part of Queen Mary University's commitment to sustainability and its 2030 Strategy, this project aimed to enhance student experiences and support learning about sustainability on campus. The project sought to find out how Queen Mary can best support students to learn about sustainability.

Our Approach: Student-Led Research

Responses for both questionnaire and Photovoice came from across our campuses, from Mile End to Holborn to Malta.

1. Questionnaire

We invited students to share their views on sustainability and campus life by answering a short questionnaire. 22 students took part.

2. Photovoice Project

Students took photographs capturing their personal experiences, reflections, and ideas around sustainability at Queen Mary. These visual stories shared powerful insights into how sustainability is seen and felt across campus. 6 students took part in Photovoice project.

Scan the QR code

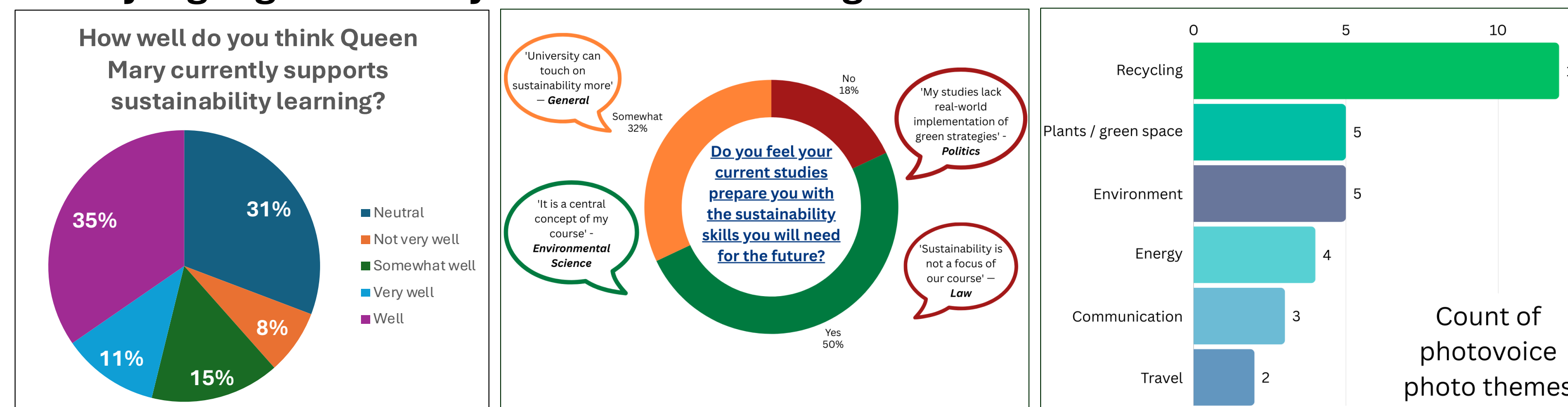
To explore the questionnaire and the Photovoice submission from students – a reflection of how sustainability is seen at Queen Mary.



All students were awarded gift vouchers for compensation of their time.


Results and Analysis

Survey highlights and key themes: visualising student views



What do students' photos tell us? Capturing sustainability on campus

Green spaces



These pictures were taken outside Geography building at Mile End campus

Students appreciate **green spaces** as essential parts of a sustainable campus. They offer a place to **reconnect with nature** and **promote wellbeing** and **environmental awareness** within university education.

Recycling on Campus



Battery recycling station at Malta campus

Book collection near Library Square Mile End

Students are passionate about recycling and appreciate the **battery recycling stations** and **clothes/book donation bins**.

However, **not all students are aware of these stations**. Enhancing student awareness through information or in teaching could make a big difference – for example, adding a poster explaining how **batteries release zinc that harms the environment** and some facts such as, around **20,000 batteries end up in landfill sites across the UK every year**.

Bin Labelling & Food Waste Awareness



Labelled bins at Graduate Centre Mile End

Food waste bin at Malta campus

Clear labels on bins help students understand what goes where. However, **food waste bins are not very common**. One was spotted on the Malta campus, but students expressed a desire for **more dedicated food waste bins** across all sites.

Cycle station at Mile End campus




Students appreciate the availability of cycle shelters, promoting **sustainable transportation** options, and raising awareness of sustainability on campus.

Findings and recommendations

This project found that students want to see more integration of sustainability into their education. Less than 50% of survey respondents thought sustainability learning was currently supported well at Queen Mary.

For students, sustainability education is fully interlinked with visible sustainability on campus. Students want to see more action on campus, as well as workshops, and explicit support for sustainability from their lecturers.

For those students who engaged in the photovoice research, this process resulted in them feeling more connected to sustainability and motivated to be part of ongoing improvements at the university.



In the UK we use **7 million disposable coffee cups** every day

Protect the environment by refilling and drinking from a reusable cup

nus Find out how you can help: sustainability.unioncloud.org

Example poster making sustainability visible on campus

What Students Think Queen Mary Should do to help student's with sustainability

Student Insight into Sustainability at QMUL

Education and Awareness

- Integrate sustainability into the curriculum
- Host sustainability talks/workshops on campus
- Create a 'Sustainability Hub' on campus

Communication and Engagement

- Add a map on the QMUL app to show where the nearest donation boxes/recycling bins are
- Display large posters in social areas to highlight sustainability events

'Green' Values

- Students appreciated the use of 'green' space on campus
- Interested in 'upcycling' events, growing produce and sustainable energy on campus
- Students are interested in preservation of the environment for future generations

- Workshops**
- Incorporate sustainability into modules**
- Volunteering opportunities**
- Gamify Sustainability with app**
- Networking opportunities with sustainability leaders**

5 sustainability skills university students think are important

- Teamwork**
- Problem solving**
- Ethics**
- Critical thinking**
- Communication skills**

