



Cabot Institute

for the Environment

University of Bristol

Strategy 2023 - 2026

PART ONE:

Our three-year strategy

Introduction

The Cabot Institute for the Environment was established in 2010, as the University of Bristol's first flagship interdisciplinary research Institute. Since then, the Institute has been at the leading edge of catalysing and promoting interdisciplinary research, education, and engagement on environmental issues. This new strategy sets how the Cabot Institute will continue to support the University and our academic community between 2023 and 2026.

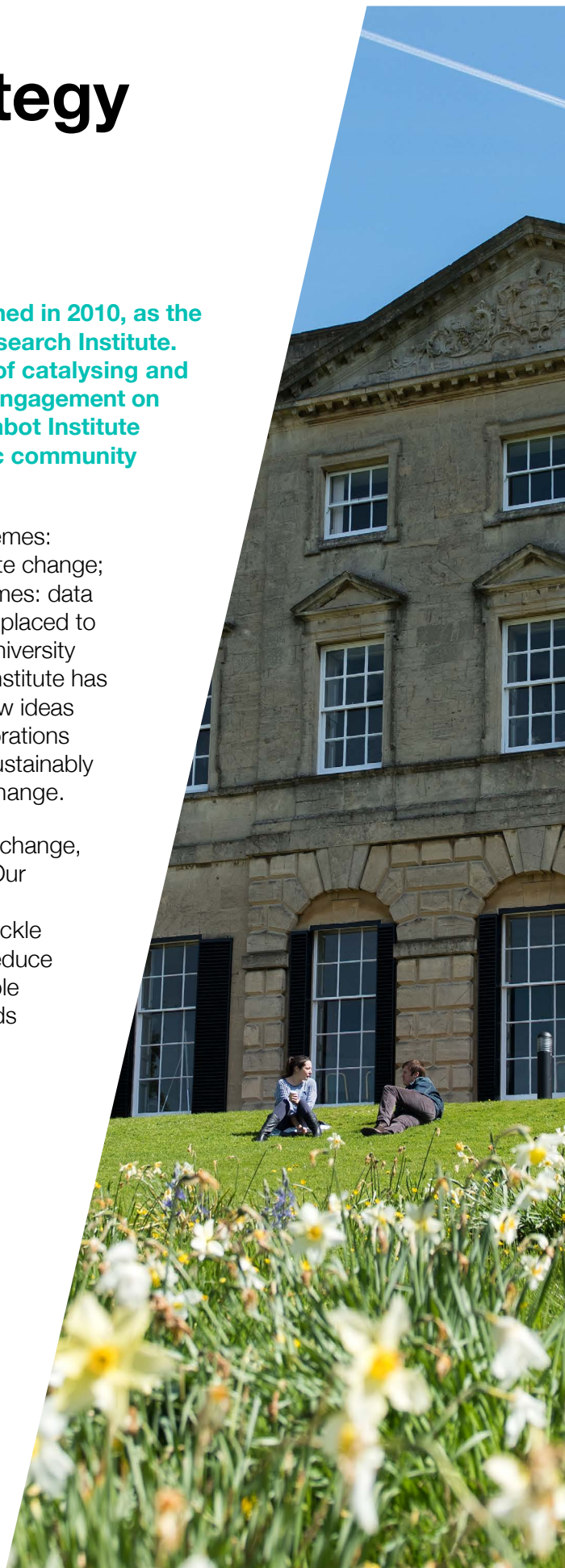
The University of Bristol has three strategic research priority themes: equitable and sustainable health outcomes; net zero and climate change; and creative and cultural industries; with two cross-cutting themes: data and digitalization, and social justice. The Cabot Institute is well-placed to support actions across all five of these areas, enabling cross-university approaches that are agile, radical, and innovative. The Cabot Institute has developed a well-earned reputation for being a place where new ideas and collaborations are facilitated and developed. These collaborations increase understanding across the world of how to live more sustainably within our environment and how we adapt to environmental change.

The breadth of our expertise allows us to address how climate change, biodiversity, and global pollution impacts on our environment. Our community continues to develop new knowledge of how these changes affect food, water, and energy security and how to tackle these problems. Our community is helping to define ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to building sustainable places and transport systems that are resilient to natural hazards and humanitarian disasters. We believe in ambition and for the Institute to remain at the forefront of global interdisciplinary environmental thinking, research, and education.

WE HAVE FUNDED...



**87 projects
& awarded
£296k**



Building on success

The Institute brings together a community of over 600 researchers to form one of the largest and most successful clusters of environmental researchers in the UK. The Institute supports researchers to connect across disciplinary boundaries and facilitates new research and education collaborations. Our community brings a large and diverse range of local, national, and international partners who share our passion for solutions-focused, interdisciplinary environmental research.

Some of the key achievements of the Institute since its establishment include:

- Since 2010, we have established six research theme communities co-led by interdisciplinary theme leaders. These communities have built our capability across food security, water, low carbon energy, city futures, environmental change, and natural hazards and disasters.
- Since 2011, the Institute's Seedcorn Fund (formally Innovation fund), supported by donations from outside the University, has funded 87 interdisciplinary projects, awarding £296k. These initial projects have been a springboard for significant further external funding. They have brought a near 14-fold return on our initial investments, with nearly £4 million of additional external grant funding secured by Seedcorn Fund awardees.
- In 2012, we launched the Cabot Communicators scheme, providing a rich portfolio of training to help maximise our research impact via communications. Year on year we've supported a growing network of 50+ early career researchers.
- In 2019/20, we launched the Cabot Masters by Research (MScR) in Global Environmental Challenges, establishing a pioneering model for delivering a cross-university, interdisciplinary MScR programme. So far, we have welcomed 61 students at different career stages, across our three cohorts.
- In 2021, we secured United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) observer status for the University. This enables us to observe negotiations at Conference of Parties (COPs) and we have sent delegations to COP26, COP27 and COP28.
- Through our outreach activities, we've hosted over 4,500 people at our eight annual lectures, welcomed 20,000 people to Luke Jerram's Gaia and provided over 180 A level students the opportunity to participate in Mock COP negotiations. We have developed a global media presence, with nearly 11,000 followers across our social channels.

Through our new strategy we aim to continue to build upon our strong community foundations and the knowledge and experience we have gained. We will use the relationships and partnerships we have built since the creation of the Institute to support a growing global presence and influence.

*Vision and strategy | About the University | University of Bristol



The Cabot approach

As an Institute focusing on the most pressing global problems humanity has ever faced, we must play our part in driving forward a just transition to environmental change². At the heart of the Institute's work is the core belief that understanding and finding solutions to environmental challenges requires different perspectives, expertise, and action. This is what makes Cabot distinctive; our approach to interdisciplinarity is all encompassing. We bring together knowledge and experience from across the different disciplines hosted at the University, to work together, collectively, to find solutions to wicked problems³.

We recognise the importance of working together in partnership, both locally and across different geographical regions, to ensure our research creates positive impact and action. We are an Institute that embraces difficult challenges and complex problems, and addresses these by understanding the environmental, social, cultural, and economic drivers and context within which they are found. We believe in bringing in different perspectives that arise from different cultures, lived experience and approaches to research. Integral to our approach is challenging ourselves and our partners to deliver interdisciplinary research that is ethical, non-extractive and, as far as possible, co-produced.

Our vision

A global hub for world-leading interdisciplinary environmental research and life-long learning, with a community where all feel welcome and supported to understand and deliver new solutions to environmental challenges. An institute that convenes, connects, and empowers people from around the world to unite on the most pressing global environmental issues of our time to create transitions to a more just and sustainable future.

Our mission

Is to provide knowledge, evidence, education, and solutions that protect our environment and identify better ways to live within our changing planet.

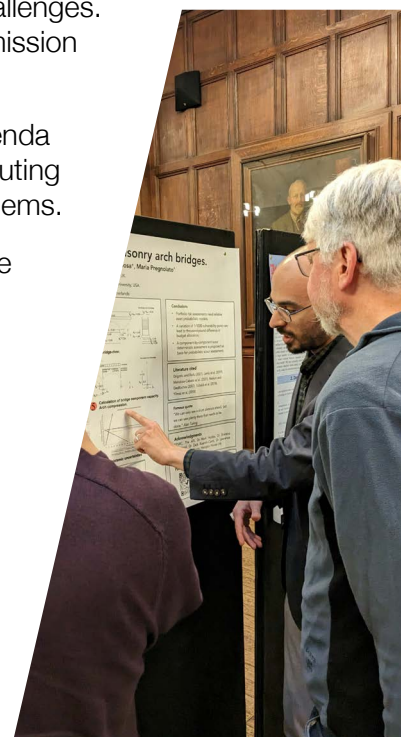
Our ambitions

We believe the Cabot Institute must be ambitious in our approach to environmental challenges. To do this, we have set ourselves four key objectives that will enable us to deliver our mission and achieve our vision. Our ambitions are that we are:

1. An Institute that supports and engages on world-leading research that sets the agenda and is on the cutting edge of global interdisciplinary environmental research contributing knowledge and collaborating to finding solutions to the world's most pressing problems.
2. A place that encourages scholars to go beyond their disciplines to share knowledge and foster innovation and ideas, that contribute to the changes needed to help societies across the world to make a just transition to a more sustainable future.
3. The go-to place globally for policymakers, research funders, industry and community organisations who seek advice and evidence on environmental issues. Working with our partners at all scales to co-create solutions and catalyse the changes needed in our changing world.
4. An Institute that offers global leadership in multidisciplinary environmental education with a recognised and highly esteemed 'brand' that attracts future and emerging environmental research leaders across the world.

²A just transition is a transition to a post-carbon economy that is green, sustainable, and socially inclusive.

³A problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize.



Strategic pillars summary

To achieve our vision and mission we have set out four interconnected strategic pillars to enable us to fulfil our ambitions. These are summarised below, with expanded detail provided in part two of this strategy.

Pillar A: World-leading interdisciplinary environmental research

Our world-leading interdisciplinary research will bring together researchers from all disciplines within the university to deliver high-quality, solution-focussed research into climate and environment, on global to local scales, emphasising systemic change. We will develop international partnerships and networks to enhance our international profile, bringing together global expertise and increasing the impact of our research.

Pillar B: Our inclusive and vibrant research community culture

Our inclusive and vibrant research community culture will be nurtured through the convening power and citizenship of the Institute. We will continue to support, facilitate, and catalyse connections, which enables new research, education collaborations and partnerships.

Pillar C: Creating meaningful impact

Our evidence base will be used to work with policy makers, industry, and civil society to support systemic change in response to global environmental problems, putting fairness and justice at the heart of decision-making. By engaging the general public, we will make our evidence accessible to build wider awareness and support public action on environmental change.

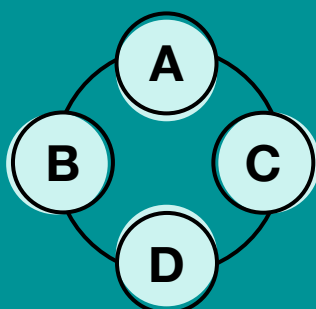
Pillar D: An inspiring education and transformative learning environment

We will build an educational package that nurtures interdisciplinary environmental researchers and leaders, including those from non-traditional, and diverse backgrounds and across career stages. We will continue to run our bespoke Master's by Research degree, offer doctoral places, and provide training for those who want to supervise interdisciplinary projects at all levels of education. Finally, we will support the University of Bristol in its efforts to integrate sustainable and environmental teaching into all its schools and faculties.



World-leading interdisciplinary environmental research

Our inclusive and vibrant research community culture



Creating meaningful impact

An inspiring education and transformative learning environment

Enablers

To deliver our strategy, there are three key enablers:

- **People:** Ensuring we have the right people in place and that we invest in supporting career development and growth of those who work for the Institute.
- **Governance:** Ensuring we have the governance in place to achieve our strategic objectives and provide accountability to the University and to our community.
- **Funding:** Putting in place a fundraising strategy to secure the level and type of finance that will allow us to commission and deliver high quality research.



How we will deliver this strategy

We will develop an implementation plan for the delivery of this strategy. The implementation plan will be a living document which is reviewed annually with modifications made where required. We will define milestones and an associated monitoring and evaluation plan to ensure we measure our progress. We will publish our progress in an annual report which will also set out key targets for the following 12-month period.

The senior leadership team will continue to provide strategic direction for the Cabot Institute, supported by the Institute team providing administrative leadership. We will continue to appoint co-leads for each of our themes to ensure interdisciplinarity. We will maintain our strategic advisory board, made up of external and internal experts, to help guide our thinking and development. Moving forward, the Cabot Institute along with all University of Bristol Research Institutes, will be overseen by a Research Institutes Governance Board, who will monitor our progress against agreed key performance indicators and ensure consistency across the University.



Key performance indicators

We have identified the following key performance indicators (KPIs) for this strategy:

Key Performance Indicators	Pillar
Documented evidence of support to funding applications from University of Bristol that were supported by Cabot during their development	A
Evidence of Cabot Institute attracting funding for research in priority areas from a variety of sources linked to programmes activity and evidence of impact	A, C
Evidence of Cabot Institute Seedcorn funding for pump priming new interdisciplinary research supports the development of new proposals and collaborations	B
Annual programme of events for the Cabot community with feedback demonstrating quality, relevance, and value for the community	B, C
Annual programme of external engagement including public, business, and policy, with feedback demonstrating quality, relevance and value for our partners	C, A, D
Documented evidence of Cabot Institute contribution to the University strategy for improving coverage of environment and sustainability issues across the curriculum	D, C

These KPIs cover the full three years of the strategy and are not annual measures of performance. In the Implementation Plan we will set a series of Pillar specific targets and milestones, linked to these KPIs by which we – and others – can assess our progress.



PART TWO:

How we will deliver on excellence in our strategic pillars

World-leading interdisciplinary environmental research

We will establish mechanisms by which environmental research priority areas can be identified and developed into university scale research programmes. This will build on the excellence and capabilities within our existing communities and themes.

We will prioritise the climate change and health initiative that we co-lead with the Elizabeth Blackwell Institute for Health Research (EBI), tackling climate influences on the determinants of health, as well as the need to adapt health responses and build resilience in health systems. Working with EBI we will deliver an ambitious programme of activity secure research funding from a variety of sources, raise funds to help build our internal capacity, and continue to develop our strategic partnerships with the UK Met Office, UK Health Security Agency and the World Health Organisation.

We will work closely with other Research Institutes at Bristol to develop solution-focussed research that addresses the intersection between environmental issues and the other strategic challenge areas identified by the University. We have identified Just transition and Adapting to climate change through digital environments as two priority areas where there is potential for co-leadership and a critical mass of expertise at the University. The model we developed for the climate change and health initiative will be used to develop co-led programmes of work and constitute cross-Faculty steering groups to direct our efforts. We will set out in annual implementation plans how we will develop programmes of work in these priority areas.

To support the development of our research priority areas, we will put in place an investment strategy to attract long-term funding to support the Institute. We will target philanthropic, business, and high net worth individuals to avoid competing for research council funding that Faculties target. Securing external funding will allow us to push the boundaries of new interdisciplinary research and support researchers across the University to develop and test ideas at a small-scale, creating the foundations for large-scale research bid development. As we take forward actions on priority areas, we will monitor our success in attracting funding. We will use this data to check whether priority areas should continue to be supported or wound down.



To develop our research profile, we will continue to expand and build our national and international partnerships to support our community to develop new research consortiums and enable them to attract new research funding. The Bristol Met Office Academic Partnership (MOAP) will be an important vehicle to support our work on climate change. We will support the Bristol MOAP as it leads the wider consortiums of MOAPs on issues such as the impacts of climate change on heat-related morbidity and mortality.

We will develop strategic partnerships with other UK universities and international universities, such as the University of Cape Town, to encourage more collaborative research. We will work with existing networks such as the Himalayan Universities Consortium and the UK University Climate Network to develop new relationships with other research-intensive universities.

The Cabot Institute will continue to play an active role in supporting major initiatives led in other areas of the University which involve the Cabot community such as the Net Zero agenda. We will do this by participating in steering groups for such initiatives and, where appropriate, providing seedcorn funding for the new research ideas and collaborations.

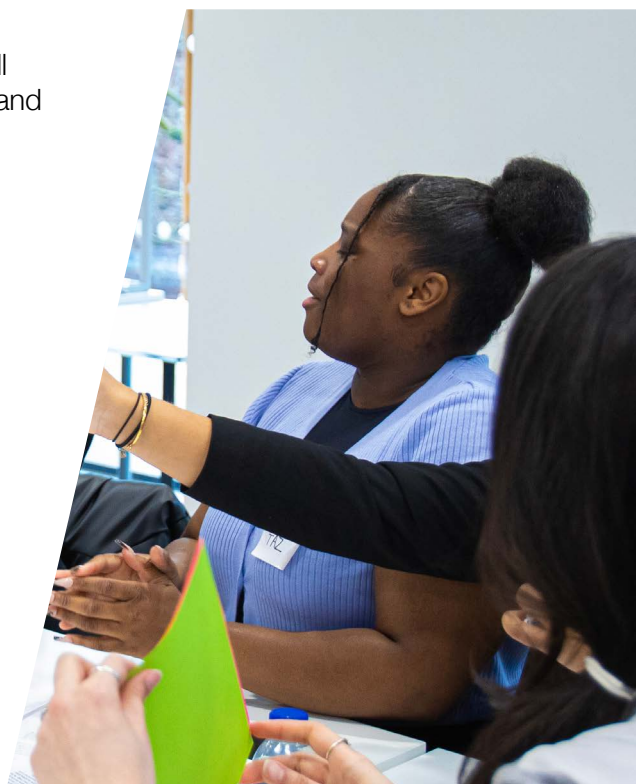
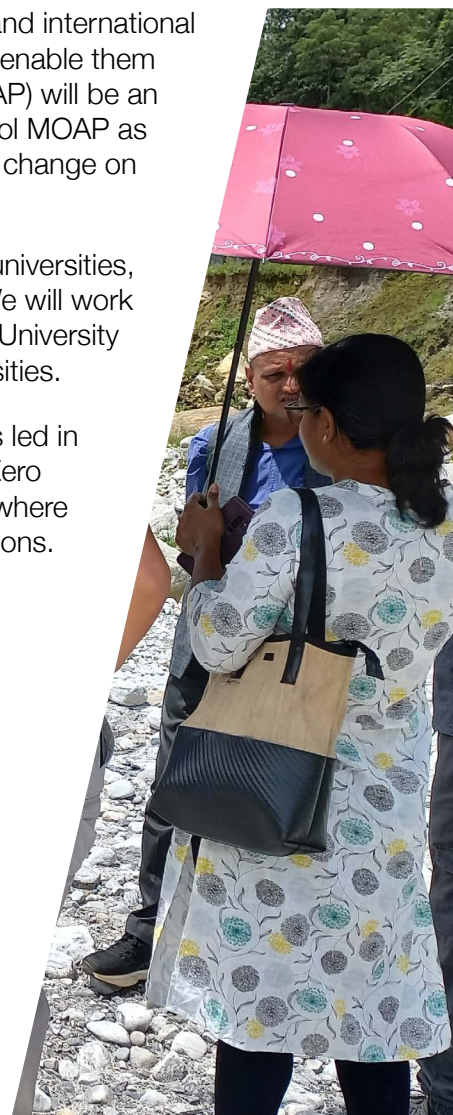
Our inclusive and vibrant research community culture

We will nurture an inclusive research culture from the activities we deliver, to the research we support and conduct, and the partnerships we build. We are committed to improving our policy and processes to ensure that we operate with equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of what we do. Working in partnership with Divisions and Faculties across the University we will maximise the support provided for our research community.

The convening power of the Institute will help build and maintain cross-disciplinary thematic groups that enable individuals to easily find connections for collaborative research. We will create flexible structures that allows for cross-fertilisation of ideas and agile responses to funding programmes, for instance convening groups to focus on challenge areas and/or geographies. To support strengthening of our capacity and capability to understand and address complex environmental challenges, we will create opportunities for our research community to share knowledge and develop new insights, collaborations, and partnerships.

By using mechanisms such as seedcorn funding, workshops, and events we will provide opportunities to incubate new research ideas and connections. We have a particular commitment to support our early career researcher community, creating specific opportunities to help develop and accelerate their skills and career development.

We will continue to convene and support new major interdisciplinary bids by bringing together our community to respond to new research opportunities, working closely with the Division of Research, Enterprise and Innovation at the University when major bids processes are in place. We will make information about upcoming calls more accessible to our community and help them in developing their ideas and proposals. This will include helping identify external partners where this will help improve the quality of bids.



Creating meaningful impact

It is important that the work carried out by the Cabot Institute leads to meaningful impact by meeting the needs for policy, innovation, and practice. We will work with local, national, and international partners, including governments, businesses, non-governmental organisations, community groups, and civic actors to identify research and evidence priorities and develop mechanisms to respond to these in a timely manner.

Developing new partnerships with the UK Health Security Agency and the Environment Agency will be a key part of our approach to achieving greater impact. To support our work to achieve impact, we will create a partnership stakeholder map, to provide a clear route to contacting partners and forging new relationships.

We will ensure that our research community is reflexive about what kind of impact is important to us, by developing democratic decision-making procedures that allow the Institute to discuss our ambitions, plans, and priorities on a rolling basis. This deliberative model will allow for discussions to be evidence-based and provide a safe space to discuss difficult environmental issues in depth, allowing the Institute to take a stand on issues which matter to the research community. The model will be developed within the first year of the strategy, including a pilot period to garner feedback.

Our established newsletter, social media channels and communications training will all be used to enhance our reach and we will continue to work with external collaborators to think about novel ways to engage, communicate and co-produce our research. This will continue to build on the knowledge and partnerships we have developed via our artistic collaborations and public engagement activities.

We recognise that many of our research community members want to make an impact but may be unsure how they can do so. The Cabot Institute will support them in their routes to impact and we will be known as a place where researchers can learn to translate their research for audiences outside of academia.

We will work closely with PolicyBristol and the Impact and Engagement Team at the University to offer training and mentorship opportunities around communication and media engagement, impact work, research translation, and policy influence in different formats to suit different needs. This training will support our researchers to produce accessible, timely, and relevant evidence for addressing local and global environmental challenges. We will run a pilot 'what works' evidence programme to provide an avenue for researchers to publish impact-focused documents.

We will make certain that the University recognises the efforts of our researchers to have an impact on society by providing advice on promotion paperwork and supporting them to discuss their impact work effectively when applying for promotion. We will also offer mentoring and training around measuring impact, particularly around developing Research Excellence Framework impact case studies.

OUR GLOBAL MEDIA PRESENCE...



nearly
11,000 followers
across socials



An inspiring education and transformative learning environment

The Cabot Institute is a key actor within the University on interdisciplinary environmental education given the size of our community and its knowledge and experience of teaching on environmental issues. The Institute has a strong tradition of high-quality environmental education, and we will continue to develop training and education that nurtures talent and shifts the culture on environmental education at the University.

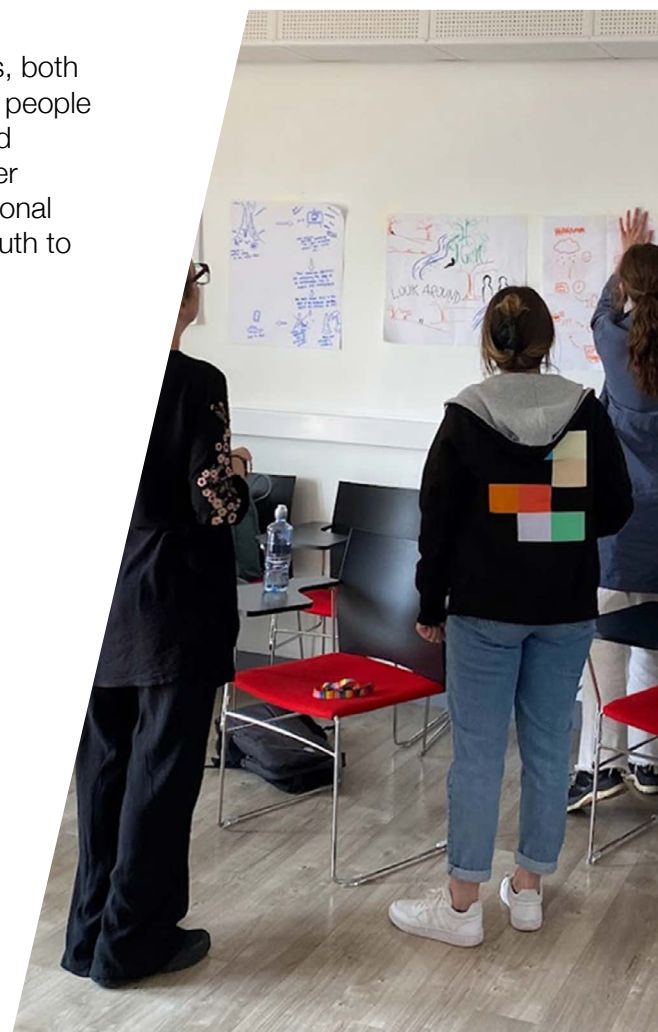
It is important that the next generation of academics working on environmental issues possess skills for interdisciplinary research so that they can thrive within a modern university. To support this, we will offer dedicated training activities to students and their supervisors to develop the specific skills required for interdisciplinary research. We will offer training for early career researchers in how to supervise interdisciplinary projects, and on teaching environmental issues across degree subjects.

“We will continue to develop training and education that nurtures talent and shifts the culture on environmental education”

We will continue to provide opportunities for postgraduate degrees, both at master's and doctoral level. These will be designed to appeal to people from any career and life stage and offer the possibility to retrain and work in the field of environmental problems and solutions. Wherever possible, we will ring-fence funding to assist those from non-traditional backgrounds, minority communities, and those from the global South to access education and training.

The Institute will support the University of Bristol to embed sustainability and environment across the curriculum by providing resources for teaching about environmental problems at all levels and offering our support in reviewing and updating plans for environmental education. To achieve this, we will work closely with the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching and Cultivating Research-rich Education and Teaching Excellence scheme providing training for academics to teach environmental problems in an effective and empowering manner.

Finally, we will foster and cultivate partnerships between our postgraduate research offer (MScR and PhD) and business, industry, and civil society organisations to create a new mechanism to establish recognised routes for employers to support research-engaged continued professional development. Our partnerships are key to making an impact beyond academia, and we want to ensure that we provide a space for partners to engage with the University and benefit from lifelong learning.





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