

STUDENT CONSULTANCY PROGRAMME: FIVE STUDENTS INFORM REAL-WORLD CHANGES TO HASTINGS DIRECT SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

The Student Consultancy Programme is an opportunity for students to gain work experience through working on a real-life brief set by an organisation. Earlier this year, five students from different academic disciplines were paired with Hastings Direct – a general insurance provider to the UK car, van, bike and home insurance markets – and given a brief to research what the company can do to improve its contributions towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The student team conducted research over four weeks in the spring term, culminating in a presentation with suggestions of how to improve the company’s sustainability efforts. Since the programme, Hastings Direct have implemented a number of changes, with some aligned to the student’s recommendations.

Hastings’ sustainability activities in 2024 have included:

- Signing up to the Toilet Twinning initiative, a fundraising project that helps provide toilets, clean water and hygiene education
- Adding EV charge-points to office parking areas and assessing the potential opportunity for an EV scheme for employees
- Bexhill and Leicester colleagues taking part in beach and river cleans
- Reviewing opportunities to include sustainability messaging on Hastings Group website and make sustainability report more visible
- Completing a gap analysis which will see more funding focused on projects relating to sustainable infrastructure
- Plans to conduct an office food waste audit
- Research and review potential to install solar panels at the Bexhill office as their first on-site source of renewable energy



Ryota Yasui (Social Development MA), one of the student consultants on the HastingsDirect brief, who focused on aligning the company's sustainability strategy with the UN 'life under water' SDG

Emma Bush, Sustainability Analyst at Hastings Direct, was the lead client contact for the student consultancy team. “We wanted to support local communities and youth in education looking for an opportunity to experience working with a corporate client,” said Emma. “Additionally, it was a beneficial exercise for our department to get a fresh perspective on the project topic in order to implement some new initiative.”

Emma added that the experience of working with the student consultants was “really positive – the students demonstrated a good understanding of the project brief, covered the four key questions we asked, and gave some valuable and specific insights.”

Reflecting on the experience, student consultant Ryota Yasui (Social Development MA) noted that the consultancy was an opportunity to “gain vivid experiences with real clients,” and a learning experience in “simplifying a message, critical thinking, and standing in other people’s shoes. I highly

recommend this project. If you don’t have prior knowledge about consultancy, that wouldn’t be a problem, as the university provides support.”

Hastings Direct also recommends that students take part in the student consultancy programme. “This is an excellent opportunity to list some professional work experience on their CV that potentially relates to a field or sector that they’re interested in, and to develop transferable skills useful for life post-university,” said Emma.

The Student Consultancy Programme runs twice a year during term time, and is open to third, final year, and postgraduate students. The programme is part of Career Lab, a series of opportunities designed to develop students’ skills, experience and confidence, to help boost their career prospects. For more information, visit <https://student.sussex.ac.uk/careers/career-lab>.