Whoever or wherever you are, if you want to create positive change at your university, this book is for you. Nudging has enormous potential to make our universities and our societies greener and we don't have time to waste.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF GREEN NUDGES

A quick guide to reducing your campus' environmental impact through behavioural change

VISION

To help universities, including staff and students, around the world to significantly reduce their environmental impact through behavioural changes. This will ultimately help to protect biodiversity and the natural world that we all rely on.

MISSION

To provide evidence-based nudging options derived from this field of research and to support universities to develop, implement and evaluate behavioural change interventions to promote sustainable lifestyles on campus.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Little Book of Green Nudges is a concise and user-friendly publication which summarises the evidence around what nudges work best while seeking to encourage more sustainable practices among students and staff across several behavioural categories. It also provides simple guidance on how to implement and evaluate behavioural interventions in a variety of contexts.
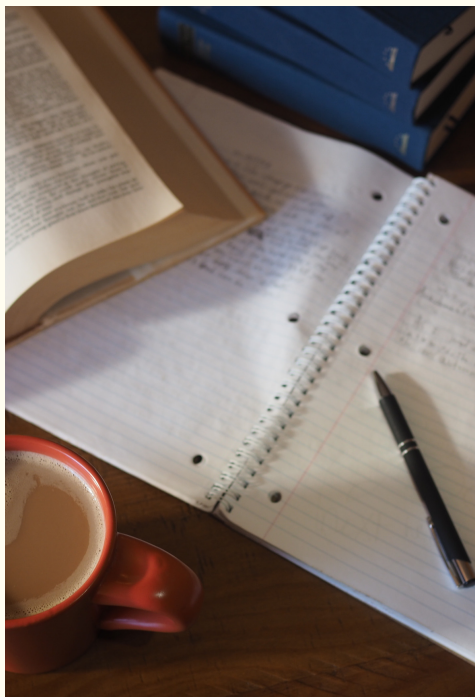
TARGET AUDIENCE

Anyone who wants to create positive change at their university, anywhere around the world, from provosts to campus sustainability coordinators to professors to student leaders.

DEFINITION OF "NUDGES"

Nudges are positive and gentle persuasions that are meant to influence behaviour and decision-making. Such interventions include choice architecture, default setting, social influence and increased salience.

RESEARCH PARTNERS

UN environment programme

THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

GRID ARENDAL
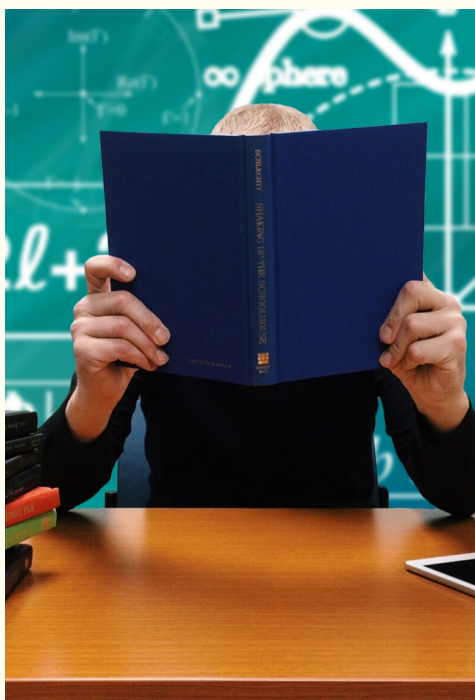
BACKGROUND

Climate change has been highlighted as one of the most critical consequences of unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Linking climate change resilience and mitigation efforts with low-carbon lifestyles offers an opportunity to re-examine our social and economic systems and consider how lifestyle choices affect the environment.

Universities are the incubators of future entrepreneurs, leaders and decision makers. How they equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the SDGs and facilitate more sustainable behaviours of individuals on campus will have an enormous impact on the environment and their well-being in the future.

Therefore, universities are ideal places for instilling pro-environmental values. Students, often away from home for the first time, are not only forming new routines but also new identities. If sustainable habits become part of their lifestyles, these behaviours can last a lifetime.

A powerful way to encourage more sustainable habits is to "nudge" students and other campus community members to make better decisions. A robust body of behavioural science research points to effective ways to encourage sustainable actions through techniques like changing the framing of choices, setting defaults and harnessing social influence.

Methodology - EAST Framework

If you want to encourage a behaviour, make it Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely.
We've seen *why* universities have a role to play in behaviour change for sustainability, and now we consider *how*, using these four simple principles.

Easy
People often take the path of least resistance. We can therefore encourage desirable behaviours by removing small 'frictions' or hassles, by defaulting people into the desirable choice, or by re-designing the 'choice architecture' around us to make the the desirable behaviours easier.

Attractive
Humans are more likely to adopt a behaviour when it captures our attention or is in line with our motivation. We can draw attention with 'salient' visual or physical cues, and leverage motivation by emphasising the positives and using incentives.

Social
Our behaviour is hugely influenced by what others around us are doing. We unconsciously tend to follow social norms, and behave like others we identify with. We're also more willing to act in the public good when others have helped us, and when our behaviour is public.

Timely
We are creatures of habit, and place more emphasis on the present than on the future. These deep tendencies can be harnessed for behaviour change by making use of moments of change, emphasising the current benefits, and helping people plan ahead.

In the rest of this Little Book, we provide ideas in each 'EAST' category for nudges you could implement on your campus. Use the icons below to find nudges for seven different target behaviours, and to see how easy the nudge is to implement, its likely impact, and the evidence base behind it.

Impact
★★★ Potentially high
★★ Medium
★ May be modest

Target behaviours
- Sustainable diet choices
- Reduced food waste
- Engagement and support for change
- Recycling
- Reduced material consumption; sharing
- Sustainable travel
- Energy and water conservation

Evidence
Robust evidence base
Some evidence
Promising but not well tested

Feasibility
👍👍👍 Easy to implement
👍👍 Somewhat easy
👍 May be logistical considerations

Make it **Easy**

Use defaults

What is the nudge? Make the more sustainable behaviour the default option.
Case study: Defaulting customers in a renewable electricity tariff led to a 10-times increase in the number of people on that tariff *[add ref]*.
Why does it work? We tend to stick with the default choice, or the status quo. This is because we don't engage consciously with many of our daily decisions, or lack the motivation needed to take a different course of action. Defaults are also often perceived as a 'safe bet', or as an implicit recommendation.

★★★   👍👍👍

**Make the most sustainable meal the default choice**

How? At catered events on campus, give people the option to pre-order their food; if attendees want the less sustainable option, such as meat, they must actively choose it (the opposite of current norms, where plant-based food generally has to be pre-ordered).

Who? Campus catering coordinator, catering companies

Example of ------ university

What?
Impacts?
Challenge?
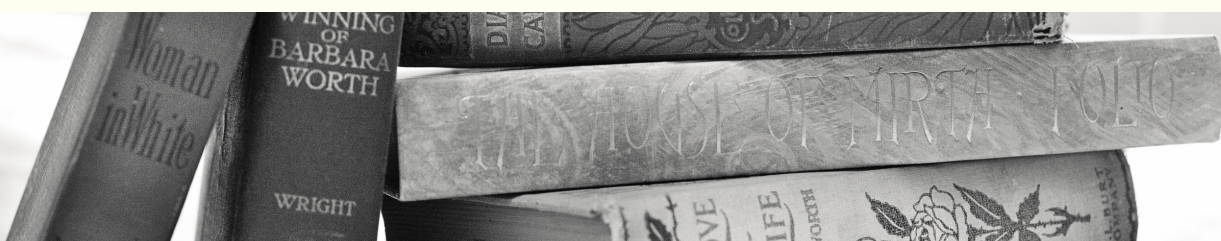
BIGGER PICTURE

Outcome:
Campus community members' lifestyles become more sustainable on campus

Output 1:
Universities become the enablers for staff and students to shift their behaviours to be more sustainable.

Output 2:
Universities are committed and equipped to carry out green nudging on campus to facilitate more sustainable actions and behaviour.

Output 3:
Student unions and/or environment clubs support green nudges on campus through awareness raising and advocacy.
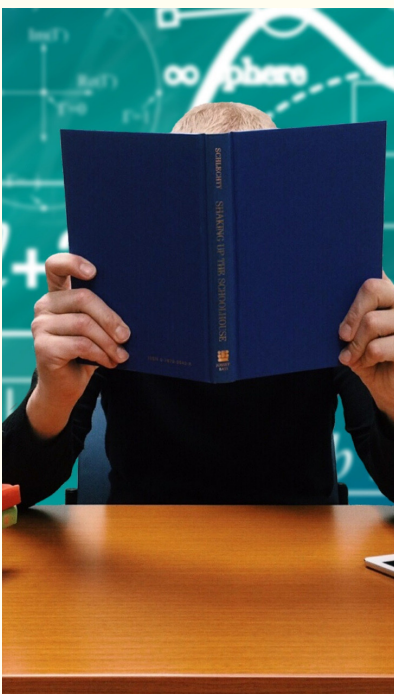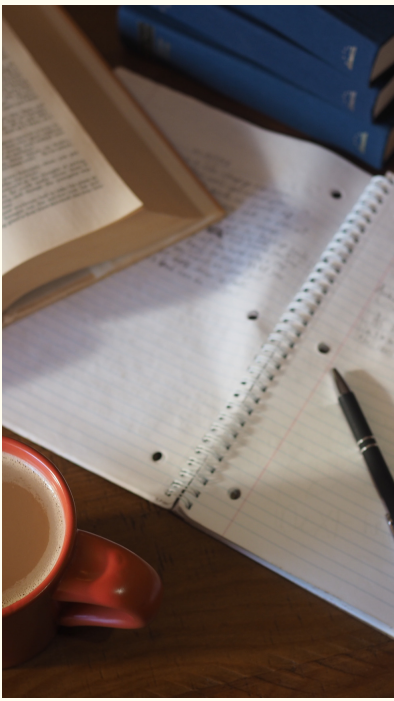
BREAKING IT DOWN

Strategic focus areas
1. Food
2. Mobility
3. Stuff (e.g. plastics, fashion, books)
4. Energy and Water

Desirable Behavioural Patterns

1. FOOD

- sustainable diet choices
- reduced food waste

2. MOBILITY

- walking or cycling to commute
- car sharing

3. STUFF

- reduced consumption of materials / sharing (paper, books, fashion, electronics)
- recycling
- removing single use plastics

4. ENERGY AND WATER

- energy conservation
- water conservation

EXAMPLES FROM UNIVERSITIES

1. FOOD - REDUCED MEAT CONSUMPTION

WHAT: Reduced meat consumption by organising "meatless Mondays", offering plant based dishes and opening a vegan restaurant on campus.

CHALLENGE: Making plant based diets attractive.

2. MOBILITY - REDUCED SINGLE OCCUPANCY VEHICLES

WHAT: Encouraged campus community to use alternative modes of transportation to campus by organising an active transportation campaign.

CHALLENGE: Students tend to choose convenience and flexibility due to their different schedules.

3. STUFF - REDUCED SINGLE USE PLASTICS

WHAT: Reduced use of disposable plastics by banning plastic cups and hosted a free lunch for those who brought reusable containers.

CHALLENGE: While reducing plastic use, other disposable alternatives such as paper and tetra packs became more prevalent.

4. ENERGY - REDUCED ENERGY USE

WHAT: Signage around student accommodations to switch off lights when not in use. Default eco-setting of electronic appliance such as AC, etc.

CHALLENGE: When energy bill is either not charged at all or charged individually, students tend not to feel responsible or motivated to make an effort.

2019-2021

Phase 1 (Sep 2019- Mar 2020)
Publication of
"The Little Book of Green Nudges"

- Research and select green nudges
- Collect case studies from universities

Phase 2 (Mar 2020-Oct 2020)
Campaign and launch of the book

- Launch of the book
- Invite universities to become pilot compuses to implement green nudges

Phase 3 (June 2020-Mar 2021)
Implementation of green nudges on campus

- Select pilot universities
- Start implemention
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation process

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

What does it mean to nominate your campus?
It means that you will select at least one green nudge from "The Little Book of Green Nudges" and implement it on your campus. You will then let us know how it went, what the challenges were and basically give us any feedback that you might have. This will help other universities navigate the nudge implementation process through the sharing of best practices. Check out Steps 1-7 for further details.

STEP 1 Nominate your campus & choose your actions
Email Carina Mutschele (carina.mutschele@un.org) to nominate your campus and choose which nudges you would like to focus on implementing on your campus. You can stick with one or kick it up a notch by selecting more.

STEP 2 Submit your commitment & implementation plan
Outline your commitment including which nudge/s you will be implementing, what your timeline is, who will be involved, how and where you will implement this, what you wish to achieve, etc. and share it through an online form (to be shared).

STEP 3 Invite other universities to join you
Extend the pilot campus invitation to three other universities. They can choose to work with you on your implementation plan or they can create their own.

STEP 4 Implement

Now it's time for you to implement your nudge/s. Get out there and make it happen!

STEP 5 Monitor & share progress

An important part of the process is understanding if and how you are making a difference. Keep track of progress so that you can measure your impact, check in with others to see if there is something they are doing that you could learn from to scale up your impact, and don't forget to let us know if you have any questions or need support.

STEP 6 Evaluate

Once you reach the end of your nudge implementation timeline, evaluate how things went. Were your nudges successful? Did you achieve your intended outcome? Did you encounter any challenges? How could these have been mitigated? What would you do differently next time?

STEP 7 Share results

Now it's time to share your results with us. Send us an overview of how things went so that we can celebrate your progress, learn from your challenges, and help others do the same.

Contact
unenvironment-yea@un.org