

# Terms and Conditions of the *Students4Sustainability* Project Funding Programme

*The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), upon consultation with the relevant departments at the four universities in Bern (University of Bern [Uni Bern], Bern University of Teacher Education [PHBern], Bern University of Applied Sciences [BFH], University of Teacher Education NMS Bern [PH NMS Bern]), decides:*

## 1. General

Extracurricular student engagement is key to promoting sustainable development (SD) at universities<sup>1</sup>. For this reason, the *Students4Sustainability* at the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern offers funding for student projects in the field of SD.

### 1.1 What is *Students4Sustainability*?

*Students4Sustainability* offers students at the four universities in Bern (University of Bern [Uni Bern], Bern University of Teacher Education [PHBern], Bern University of Applied Sciences [BFH], University of Teacher Education NMS Bern [PH NMS Bern]) content-related and financial support in their commitment to SD. The support on offer ranges from topic-specific workshops and events to individual coaching. In addition, students can apply for funding by submitting a project proposal to *Students4Sustainability*. They can apply for up to CHF 10,000 per project. Apart from funding, the universities can also provide student projects with benefits in kind, such as the use of equipment, facilities, and resources (office or meeting space, ICT infrastructure, etc.).

### 1.2 What are the goals and impacts of *Students4Sustainability*?

*Students4Sustainability* has three aims: to motivate students from all disciplines at the Bern universities listed under point 1.1 to become involved in SD; to lower the inhibition thresholds for such a commitment; and, in the process, to build up a cross-university student sustainability community.

Criteria for a successful application include ensuring that the proposed student teams are as interdisciplinary as possible, and/or that the project envisages cross-university collaboration. The projects should contribute to institutional, formal, non-formal, or informal learning<sup>2</sup> and strengthen the links between the universities. This will be achieved, among other things, via the above-mentioned cross-university project teams and/or by making the project outputs accessible to all four Bern universities.

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<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Lipscombe, BP (2008). Exploring the role of the extra-curricular sphere in higher education for sustainable development in the United Kingdom. *Environmental Education Research* 14:4, 455-468. DOI: 10.1080/13504620802278803  
UND Drupp et al. (2012). Change from below – student initiatives. In: L.W. Filoh (Hg.) (2012). *Sustainable Development at Universities: New Horizons*. Peter Lang Scientific Publishers, Frankfurt.

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. UNECE (2005). UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. In: *CEP* (ed.) AC. 13. Vilnius: Committee on Environmental Policy.

### 1.3 What is sustainable development (SD)?

SD is a long-term optimistic model of social development that focuses on people and their needs, abilities, and actions. Its goal is to achieve inter- and intragenerational social and economic justice while respecting ecological limits. This cross-cutting task requires contributions at all levels of decision-making, which means that enabling people to have a say and to participate are core principles of SD. Ideally, all actors ensure that their goals and measures are in line with the overarching vision. SD is thus a continuous process of negotiation and compromise that serves to weigh up and coordinate a wide range of environmental, social, and economic interests, and to peacefully resolve conflicting goals by consensus. This requires that the actors have – or are enabled to acquire or expand – the necessary knowledge and corresponding capacity to act.

## 2. Prerequisites for participation and project contents

Project submission is open to all Bachelor's and Master's students enrolled, at the time of submission, at either the University of Bern, BFH, PHBern, or PH NMS Bern. Compulsory elements of the degree programme (e.g. semester papers or Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral theses) are not eligible for funding. However, support can be provided for projects that build on such compulsory work by expanding it or applying its results in practice.

The projects submitted can take a variety of forms. Anything is possible, from non-profit projects or educational programmes to business ideas. It is important that the projects are linked to sustainable development (see point 1.3) and that they include cross-university activities (i.e. products, events, etc. resulting from the projects must be accessible to all students of the four Bern universities).

Special provisions apply to projects that aim to develop web applications. In this case, the project application must specify how the application will continue operation after the end of funding by *Students4Sustainability*. Web applications may only constitute a part of the project, and the type of web application as well as the duration of its operation must be clearly defined.

## 3. Form and aim of funding

The project team can consist of students from any of the four Bern universities. Each project must be submitted by the main applicant (project leader) and confirmed by a co-applicant (see point 6). The project duration is limited to the duration of the funding programme (until the end of 2025 at the latest). The project should start within four months of the submission deadline.

Project ideas must show how the project intends to contribute to sustainable development (SD), as well as how it will allow people working on the project to expand their skills. "Skills expansion" can be anything from gaining knowledge in the field of SD to having diverse learning experiences or improving project management skills. The experiences gained must be recorded in a final report after completion of the project.

## 4. Procedure

As a first step, the completed project application form must be submitted to [bern@students4sustainability.ch](mailto:bern@students4sustainability.ch) by the specified deadline. All information on the forms and the procedure can be found on the website [www.students4sustainability.ch/projekte](http://www.students4sustainability.ch/projekte).

Following receipt of the project applications and confirmation that they are complete, the applications are reviewed and examined by an evaluation panel (see point 7). The panel also has the option of awarding only part of the requested funding amount and/or granting the funding subject to conditions.

## *Students4Sustainability*

After the decision by the evaluation panel, the project leader is informed in writing about the decision and the reasons behind it. There is no legal entitlement to funding and there is no right of appeal. If funding is granted, a project agreement is signed by all project team members. At the start of the project, the project team is usually provided with the full funding amount. If a project is approved subject to conditions, the project leader is given four months to fulfil these conditions in order to receive the full funding amount.

Halfway through the project, the project leader submits an interim report based on predefined guiding questions. This will be complemented by a phone call between the project leader and the management at *Students4Sustainability*.

At the end of the project, the project leader submits a final report, which is signed by the co-applicant (forms are sent to the project leader). If these requirements are not met, the funds must be repaid.

At the end of the project duration, or in the event of premature termination, any unused money must be repaid to the *Students4Sustainability programme*. An extension of the project duration is only possible in justified exceptional cases. If a project is continued after the official duration (e.g. as a spin-off), this must be done completely independently of *Students4Sustainability*.

### 5. Evaluation criteria

- **Impact:** Potential of the project to contribute to sustainable development (SD) or education for sustainable development (ESD), or to advance the university's efforts towards sustainable development
- **Innovation:** Novelty and originality of the project (for the selected context) – at least one component of the project should be novel
- **Increased connectivity:** Contribution to a stronger connection between the four Bern universities, between representatives from other disciplines at the universities, as well as cooperation with partners from outside the university, i.e. civil society, the private sector, or the public sector
- **Efficiency:** Relation between requested funds and expected results
- **Skills:** Further development of professional and methodological skills in the field of (E)SD as well as project management skills (e.g. team organization, reflection on the project process)
- **Diversity:** Consideration of diversity aspects in the project team and in the project-specific target group according to the [swissuniversities checklist](#) (available in German and French)

### 6. Co-applicant

The project submission must be confirmed by a co-applicant. The co-applicant, if possible, should be a member of same institute/department as either the project leader or one of the team members and must be employed at a higher education institution. The main task of the co-applicant is to confirm, through their signature, the project application and the final report. If there is reason to believe that these Terms and Conditions and/or the specifications in the written decision on the project application have been violated by anyone involved in the project, or if the project has been discontinued, the co-applicant must immediately inform the management at *Students4Sustainability*.

The above-mentioned tasks of the co-applicant are a minimum requirement. Should the co-applicant wish to participate more actively, for example by offering professional support for the student project, this is possible, following consultation with the head of *Students4Sustainability*.

## 7. Evaluation panel

### 7.1 Tasks of the evaluation panel

The evaluation panel reviews and discusses the project submissions. It then makes the funding decisions. All submissions are read by all members of the evaluation panel. The representatives of the four Bern universities and the two external experts additionally write a review report for each submission based on a criteria grid. The submissions for the review are distributed randomly and as evenly as possible among the representatives of the four universities in Bern and the two external experts. The review reports are then presented to the entire evaluation panel, and are the basis on which the evaluation panel makes the funding decisions. It should be noted that the evaluation panel may decide to award only part of the requested funding amount and/or granting the funding subject to conditions.

### 7.2 Composition of the panel

The evaluation panel is composed of nine people, as follows:

- Four experts; one from each of the Bern universities (Uni Bern, BFH, PHBern, and PH NMS Bern)
- Four student representatives; one each from the University of Bern, BFH, and PHBern, plus one representative from BENE, the association for sustainable development at the universities in Bern
- Two external experts with experience in student projects

The current representatives of the evaluation panel are listed on the website [www.students4sustainability.ch](http://www.students4sustainability.ch).

### 7.3 Voting rights

- The members of the evaluation panel each have one vote in the decision-making process. The experts from the universities also have the right of veto.
- Members withdraw when the panel deals with business that affects their own interests or the interests of natural or legal persons close to them.
- In the event of a tie, the head of *Students4Sustainability* shall have the casting vote.

## 8. Further provisions

### 8.1 Intellectual property

The results of a given student project are the intellectual property of the team members of the respective project. If a project involves external persons or institutions, the intellectual property rights must be specified in a separate agreement between the parties, which must be attached to the project application.

### 8.2 Insurances

The people involved in the project are responsible for informing themselves about personal insurance and ensuring they have the necessary coverage.

### 8.3 Legal requirements

Activities within the *Students4Sustainability* project funding programme must always comply with the internal legal requirements of the universities involved. This demands particular attention within cross-university projects or when cooperating with external persons or institutions.

#### 8.4 Entry into force

These Terms and Conditions come into force on 3.2.2023 and apply to all project submissions to and projects funded by the *Students4Sustainability* funding programme. The Terms and Conditions apply until 31 December 2024.

*This document is a translation that is provided for information purposes only. It is not legally binding. In the event of a dispute about the interpretation of an article, the text of the original German version will therefore always prevail.*