

# *Racing to sustainability:* A WORK PLACEMENT PARTNERSHIP WITH A DIFFERENCE



*CERIS PALSER, Careers Team Manager at Cardiff Metropolitan University, outlines how the career service is preparing students and graduates for sustainable career opportunities in partnership with electric racing series Extreme-E.*



At Cardiff Metropolitan University (Cardiff Met), we have been ranked as the best UK university for sustainability in People and Planet's Green League 2022/23. Our careers service is at the forefront in preparing students and graduates for sustainable career opportunities by showcasing first-hand the effects of climate change and how they can directly influence the future of their industries. Alongside my role as a Careers Manager, I'm also a freelance events professional with a passion for inspiring the next generation to share their knowledge and understanding of sustainability. This is vital for the longevity and future of our industry.

## SUSTAINABLE WORK PLACEMENTS

In 2020 we exclusively partnered with Extreme E, a unique electric motor racing series, who host international sports championships to highlight the climate change challenges faced by different ecosystems. By racing in areas impacted by environmental changes, they promote clean mobility and other sustainable solutions. A Scientific Committee works alongside the Championship to ensure that there is measurable positive impact left in each community.

“*It is a real game changer for students to see how sustainable events are managed*”

Extreme E provide short placements and insights into freelancing to small numbers of Cardiff Met School of Management students. Students apply and interview for places, with School of Management academic staff shortlisting and selecting the successful students. Each placement usually attracts around 20 applications, and over the past three years, 18 students and graduates have benefited from work placements with Extreme E.

They have worked in incredible locations from the Arctic in Greenland through to Saudi Arabia, Sardinia, Chile and the UK. The Extreme E work placement is open to students at all undergraduate levels and at Masters level.

Numbers are small as placements can be in very remote and challenging locations with basic facilities. Students must be confident in their ability to work within the setting. The wider cohort benefit from the partnership through in-curriculum theory and planning sessions, and from feedback which informs future placements.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Extreme E deliver career talks available to all students, with Operational Managers discussing their own career history and providing advice on how to break into competitive events industries. Extreme E staff share information on hosting and delivering international events. Students are encouraged to follow and connect with relevant team members as a mentoring experience.

On returning from Extreme E work placements, participants discuss their experience and learning with fellow students as part of their department plenary sessions. They are also encouraged to share relevant information as part of their learning modules, linking theory with practice.

We have recently extended the Extreme E partnership opportunities to students studying sustainability pathways. This is to align with the university's sustainability agenda and ensure we are encouraging interdisciplinary working, providing a wider base for shared knowledge and connections.

## RACE WITHOUT A TRACE

Extreme E has the lowest carbon footprint in motorsport. We support Extreme E's legacy programme by capturing all of Cardiff Met's event travel for carbon reporting. The Extreme E team transport all their race cars, event infrastructure and operational equipment using sea freight. This is less carbon intensive than air freight, using 75% less CO<sub>2</sub>, and the ship also provides accommodation during the races and is home to a scientific laboratory.

Following a recent championship in Scotland, over a thousand native trees are being planted to protect the eroding banks of the River Nith. This is part of Extreme E's environmental legacy programme and offsets carbon from unavoidable event travel.

*"I got to have discussions with the Extreme-E hospitality manager about the aims of the company and how they split focus on marketing, sustainability and profitability. I really appreciated their attention to detail within the design of the venue, using local suppliers."*

*I also got the chance to network with potential future employers and experienced industry specialists. This was an amazing insight into the hospitality of an extreme motorsport event while taking actions to maintain environmental sustainability."*

Marios Miaris, BA (Hons) International Hotel and Hospitality Management, Year 1

Extreme E use domestic caterers, with all equipment, staff and produce coming from the countries they race in. They avoid disposables and recycle unavoidable waste. They ask caterers to commit to reducing single use plastic not only at their events but across their business, leaving a positive legacy. Extreme E are increasing the number of plant-based dishes and sourcing sustainable ingredients that leave behind a smaller carbon footprint. Left-over produce is donated to local organisations to avoid waste.

*"Everyone brings their own cups, plates and cutlery, reducing the catering waste. The organisation reuses and owns their furniture and tents, ensuring less waste with each event. I really am blessed to have experienced working within an event that strives for a better world!"*

Cerian Swain, BA (Hons) Event Management, worked at the Scottish championship and has been offered work experience in the next round of the championship in Sardinia.

As a freelance consultant, I advise on the operational aspects of the event, ensuring students are part of the process whilst on site. Students learn from this expertise and input into event decisions. Whilst on site, students collectively agree with the company managers how each day will be delivered. The students' breadth of experience from other placements and work experience benefits this work.

## THE FUTURE IS GREEN

It is a real game changer for students to see how sustainable events are managed. It is essential that the events community educates the next generation of events professionals and encourage them to work sustainably. Events are traditionally highly wasteful, involving a lot of disposable materials, but Extreme E work placements are educating events managers of the future that events can still be amazing without impacting on the environment. A recent Cardiff Met graduate now works on the entire race series as a freelancer, experiencing a different aspect of the operation at each event to broaden his experience.

We will continue to partner with Extreme E in their endeavours to highlight change in the industry, and we will keep influencing the way their events are delivered. Through broadening our students' outlook on the events industry, and sharing the latest academic research and developments in sustainable events with Extreme E, this partnership is successfully striving for change and setting up for sustainable careers.



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