



Northumbria students were the first to complete a new intensive programme offered by ACCESS: Policy, providing an insight into addressing emerging global challenges through policy making. Photo Credit: U.S. Embassy London

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Students take on real-world policy issues in the capital

A group of nine Northumbria University students travelled to the U.S. Embassy in London to present their climate and environment policy recommendations after months of being mentored by a number of industry experts from the public, private and third sectors.

The students, studying courses including International Relations, Geography and Politics, were the first selected to complete a new intensive programme

offered by ACCESS: Policy, providing an insight into addressing the global challenges of climate and environmental change through policy making.

[ACCESS: Policy](#) is a non-profit organisation set up by a group of volunteers from a range of diverse backgrounds. ACCESS: Policy aims to inspire and empower people from underrepresented backgrounds to pursue careers in policy making on globally significant issues.

The organisation's first programme, known as ACCESS: Climate & Environment (A:CE), was offered exclusively to Northumbria students who were given the opportunity to work with highly experienced mentors from the climate and environment field over a period of four months.

The students began working in groups in October 2023 to develop research proposals for action on specific challenges, including deforestation, the lives of indigenous people, and farming in resource-scarce conditions.

The programme culminated in an Expo event, held at the [U.S. Embassy in London](#), where the students formally presented their work to a panel of senior government officials and a senior leader in the third sector. The panel provided feedback on the content and presentation of the students' proposals.

The programme culminated in a special Expo event, held at the U.S. Embassy in London, where the students formally presented their work to a panel of senior government officials and a senior leader in the third sector. Photo Credit: U.S. Embassy London

Throughout the day, the students also received a bespoke diplomacy and networking skills session from the US Deputy Chief of Mission, [Matthew Palmer](#). The ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme was funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[Matthew Johnson](#), Professor of Public Policy at Northumbria University, said: "ACCESS: Policy is led by a team of inspirational public sector volunteers from a range of backgrounds. The ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme has put a group of incredibly talented Northumbria students at the heart of dealing with a crucial global crisis and the experience has clearly been transformative for them. I'm not aware of a comparable programme with the same quality of mentoring from experienced people in the field and such an incredible opportunity to work with U.S. diplomatic staff and present policy

proposals to key policymakers.

“This is groundbreaking work at a time of multiple global crises and fits well with Northumbria University’s role as a research-intensive, challenger institution with a social mobility mission at its core.”

The [Graduate Futures](#) team at Northumbria oversee the University’s careers, employability and enterprise support services for students and graduates and were key to matching student applicants with the programme.

Jacqui Darwood, Business Development Adviser with Graduate Futures, was in London to witness the students present their work at the Expo event. She said: “Piotr Mahey, Becca Hawkins and Ellie Belton from ACCESS: Policy have volunteered their time to work closely with our students to make them feel so welcome, inspired and energised by the programme. Piotr in particular embodies the spirit of the programme, which is about opening up a world of new opportunities and possibilities to all students, regardless of their background.”

Amy Campbell, who works within the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#) (DESNZ) as a Climate Negotiator for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was one of the expert mentors paired with second-year [International Relations and Politics](#) student, Molly Smith.

Molly said of her experience: “The ACCESS: Climate & Environment programme has been a unique opportunity to participate in. Being able to collaborate with such brilliant people in their fields and gain insightful knowledge from them is invaluable. I have been so lucky to be paired with a mentor as brilliant as Amy Campbell, who has supported me throughout these four months. The chance to connect with inspiring and passionate people about climate change in person was a blessing, as the issue is ever progressing and I am looking forward to continuing fighting this cause.”

Piotr Mahey, Director of ACCESS: Policy, said: “Talent in this sector is not more prevalent in certain demographics – but opportunities often are. This programme aims to change that and open doors to a sector that is unfortunately not representative of the people that it aims to serve. I am absolutely delighted to see our incredible Student Fellows get so much out of the programme, and I’m very excited to see the even greater things they will

go on to do.”

Discover more about ACCESS: Policy [here](#). The team will soon be announcing plans for their next round of work via their [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

The A:CE programme was funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk