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Derounian, James ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1738-9764> (2017) A 'Big Green Gap Year' (BiGGY) for school leavers before taking up a university place. HEA Flexible Learning Practice Guide. pp. 16-17.

EPrint URI: <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/4356>

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Title: A 'Big Green Gap Year' (BiGGY) for school leavers before taking up a university place

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Description: The 'Big Green Gap Year' (BiGGY) offers school leavers an opportunity to complete purposeful & socially beneficial work, before taking up a university place. Student input is rewarded with a living wage by a host employer (e.g. a Wildlife Trust, NHS provider).

James Derounian, University of Gloucestershire (UoG), conceived the idea around 2011, and has tested the initiative since then. BiGGY draws on the work of American educational reformer John Dewey. Of particular relevance are Dewey's beliefs that all genuine education comes about through experience (1938: 25); culminating in the fact that (The school itself) shall be made a genuine form of active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons (1900: 27). In 2015 BiGGY was piloted at the UoG by 6 school leavers. The project was supported by the NUS and Gloucestershire Students' Union. Participants undertook an intensive planning period, followed by project based stints with Gloucestershire public and voluntary agencies. The 2015 BiGGY Pilot Evaluation notes: 100% of placement hosts stated that the BiGGY participants added value to their organisations; that they would recommend BiGGY to other organisations....the contributions participants made to Gloucestershire organisations supported them to become agents of positive change...whilst gaining employability skills and bridging the gap between school and university. This work is linked specifically to 'Pedagogical Approaches', which is in the bottom right quadrant of [HEA Flexible Learning Wheel \(see P. 2\)](#).

Impact:

- Enables school leavers to make a smoother transition to independence and university life
- A means to address the democratic deficit – disaffected teenagers
- Enthusiasm, and engagement of youth with society
- Cross-generational work
- Accelerates the 'attack' on climate change, improves community cohesion and social welfare
- Exchanges service for university fees / 'working wage'
- Provides purposeful 'employment' in time of recession

Further details:

Derounian, J. (2011) Green national service – an idea whose time has come? Guardian online, 9 June. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2011/jun/09/green-national-service-idea-come>

Big Green Gap Year BiGGY is listed by NESTA 2015 as one of its 'New Radicals' at:

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/news/new-radicals-2014/big-green-gap-year>

Evaluated very positively by student participants and hosting agencies:

<http://sustainability.glos.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/BiGGY-Pilot-Evaluation-2015.pdf>

Video (5 minutes). Students speak about the BiGGY and its impact on them:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inspiring-results-from-biggy-summer-placements-programme-megan-baker>