2026 edcom x Ad Net Zero Student Competition

Creative Brief: The "Every Brief Counts" Challenge

1. The Core Mission (The "Why")

In 2026, the advertising industry is moving beyond awareness and into operational reality. While the industry is working hard to decarbonize its own operations, its greatest superpower remains its influence on culture.

Your mission is to create a 3–5 minute video designed to persuade advertising professionals and brand owners to put sustainability at the heart of every creative decision.

We want to encourage the advertising industry (and it's professionals) to move beyond talking about being green, into normalizing green behaviors, through the power of video.

2. The Goal:

- To Explain: Highlighting that Greenwashing is a risk, but "Green-doing" is an opportunity. Brands that authentically lead consumers toward better habits earn long-term loyalty and relevance.
- To Educate: Explain the importance of promoting better consumer behaviour to the industry – ie: Don't just sell a product; show a world where sustainable choices are the norm.
- To Inspire: Demonstrate how creative storytelling can bake in sustainable behaviors.(e.g.diet, transport, energy use, or circularity) without them being the hero of the ad.

3. The Target Audience: The Industry Gatekeepers

Your video must speak directly to those who hold the creative license:

- Creative & Art Directors: The visual architects who decide what the "normal" world looks like in an ad.

- Strategists: The thinkers who define the "why" before a single pixel is drawn.

- Brand Managers & CMOs: The clients who need to see that sustainable modeling builds Consumer Trust and long-term brand growth.

3. Strategic Pillars: What to Include

Your argument should be grounded in the following three areas:

- Action 5 (The Power of Creative): This is the heart of the brief. It is about our influence. Explain why the industry must shift from talking about being green to normalizing green behaviors.

- Every Brief Counts: Show how *any* campaign, for any product is an opportunity for Sustainable Modeling. Whether it's showing public transport in the background, plant-based options on a table, or products being repaired rather than replaced, sustainability should be the default, not the hero.

- The Insights (Kantar & The Action Gap): We encourage students to reference the Ad Net Zero x Kantar Sustainable Behaviour Ad Tracker. Use the data to highlight the "Say-Do Gap": 85% of people want to live sustainably, but only ~6% of ads currently show them how. Your video should show agencies how to close this gap by making sustainable living look aspirational and effortless.

4. Technical Expectations & Deliverables

Video:

3 minutes in length (10-20 seconds runover will be allowed).

Format: MP4. Language: English

Style is open: it could be a provocative manifesto, a documentary-style piece, or a creative narrative.

We encourage the use of real people, rather than animation.

The Reflection Paper

Length: Max 350 words explaining:

The specific behavioral change you targeted, the insight or research (e.g., Kantar) that drove your creative direction. Explain how your video specifically targets the professional mindset of agencies/brands.

Note: Your video is not a public-facing commercial for a green product. It is a B2B (Business-to-Business) tool designed to convince the industry that they have the power to shape the future of the planet through the stories they tell.

5. Responsible Innovation: Use of AI

As a competition rooted in sustainability, we must be mindful of the carbon footprint of our tools:

- Allowed: Generative AI is encouraged for brainstorming, script polishing, or structural research.

- Discouraged: The use of AI for full video/image generation is discouraged. High-fidelity AI video production is carbon-intensive, which contradicts the "Ad Net Zero" mission.

- Mandatory Disclosure: All AI tools used must be clearly listed in your submission. Transparency is a requirement.

4. Expectations from Students

We are looking for the next generation of "Purpose-Driven Communicators." Submissions will be judged on:

- Strategic Insight: How well do they use data (like the Kantar tracker) to justify their creative choices?

- Creative Execution: Is the video engaging? Does it avoid "greenwashing" and "eco-anxiety" in favor of positive, relatable storytelling?

- The "Action 5" Lens: Did they successfully show a sustainable behavior being "normalized" rather than just lectured?

- Production Mindfulness: Did they consider the carbon footprint of their own production (e.g., using local talent, minimal travel, or responsible tech use)?