



Travel Better Pledge

a Pledge Template for the FHE sector



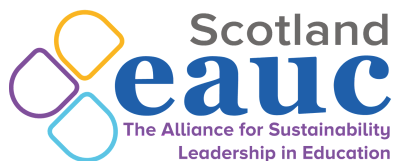
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Acknowledgements

The Travel Better Pledge Template has been authored and designed by Sonya Peres. The resource was developed between October 2019 and March 2020.

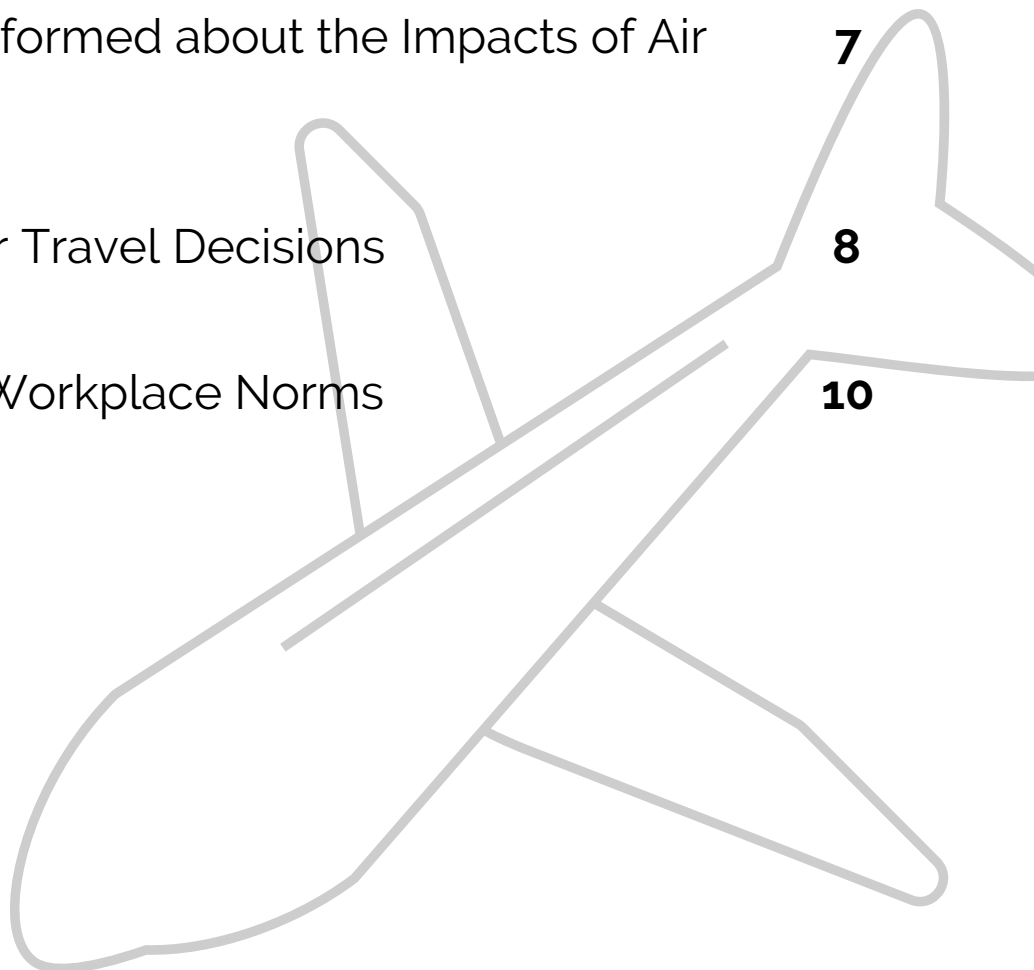
The work has been made possible through funding from the University of Edinburgh and the University of Strathclyde.

Thank you to everyone who looked over drafts of the resources and provided invaluable feedback.

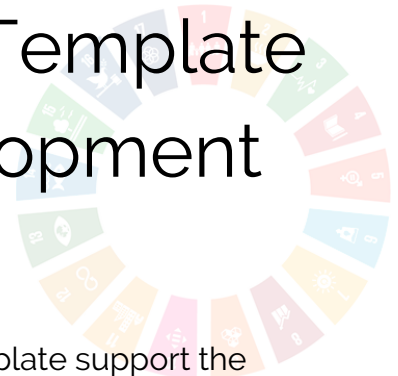


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The Travel Better Pledge Template and the Sustainable Development Goals



The Travel Better Package and the Travel Better Pledge Template support the realisation of multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as highlighted below:



SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production seeks to reduce material consumption and the over-extraction of natural resources. The Travel Better Pledge Template encourages a reduction in flights and thus, consumption of kerosene used to fuel aircrafts. It also provides individuals with knowledge to live "in harmony" with nature.



SDG 13: Climate Action seeks to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Travel Better Pledge Template contributes to this goal by sharing knowledge about carbon intensive activities and impact reduction.

Air Travel and Climate Change

Climate change poses a serious threat to humanity. Air travel is responsible for around 2.4% of global carbon emissions from fossil fuel use, helping propel global warming. Demand for air travel is projected to [double](#) over the next 20 years, causing air travel to contribute to over [20% of global carbon emissions](#), assuming other sectors decarbonise. This is a significant proportion of carbon emissions that will hinder the [IPCC's](#) urge to cut emissions by 90% to maintain a 1.5 °C increase in the earth's temperature.

Air Travel and the Further and Higher Education (FHE) Sector

The FHE sector relies heavily on air travel. Whether it is to attend a conference, work on global research, sit on international boards or promote universities to international students, success in the sector is often understood to be synonymous with air travel. As a leading sector in climate change mitigation and adaptation, we must address this behaviour and re-evaluate the emphasis placed on air travel.

How to Use this Resource

This resource is a pledge template that can be used to:

1. Inform individual behaviour change
2. Inform departmental/institutional policy, statements, pledges etc,

Through the three goals and ten steps, individuals, departments and institutions can develop ways to travel better while influencing colleagues and peers to do the same.

Hyperlinks to sources are embedded in the document, simply hover over a blue word.

The Purpose of your Promise

A

Be better informed about the harmful impacts of air travel

A 2018 [poll](#) by Possible identified a pervasive lack of knowledge about the environmental impacts of air travel with only 15% of 1,750 respondents correctly identifying taking one less flight as having the biggest impact amongst individual actions against climate change in a year-long period.

Although knowledge alone cannot change behaviour, an awareness of the situation can provide some useful context. Additionally, [studies](#) show that knowledge of the consequences of an action allows people to better understand their responsibility to think more deeply about the action and change their behaviour where possible.

B

Make better decisions regarding travel

Turn your knowledge into practice and try your best to make better decisions regarding air travel. This may look like properly justifying a trip involving air travel, or choosing to prioritise collective ground travel for certain trips. Making better decisions regarding air travel can also affect others. The same 2018 poll by Possible found that only 61% of respondents were willing to reduce their flying. However, if aware of other people also changing their flying behaviour, 69% of respondents were willing to reduce their flying.

C

Challenge workplace norms and push for institutional change where possible by influencing peers and engaging in discussions to reduce air travel in the FHE sector

Changing individual behaviour is important. Individual change can also contribute to a change in workplace norms, which may in turn influence institutional change. While personal norms are important for behaviour change, an appropriate organisational climate is also needed. Organisational climate refers to how individuals (or employees) perceive an action is encouraged or promoted by a governing organisation (ie. an employer). Therefore, the third goal aims to normalise a reduction in flying in the workplace to improve the organisational climate of the FHE sector in supporting and encouraging less flying. Our work in the sector will **challenge, instead of reproduce, a need for air travel in the sector.**

A

Be better informed about the impacts of air travel

1

I will use EAUC-Scotland's Question & Answer Tool to address any concerns I may have about avoiding or reducing flying before booking a flight or deciding on a trip

EAUC-Scotland's Question and Answer document provides information to address concerns individuals in the FHE sector may have about reducing air travel. Although the information provided may not give an ideal alternative or alleviate all concerns, it provides useful facts and figures on the impacts of flying and how flying and the FHE sector interact to allow you to re-evaluate your need for, and relationship with, air travel.

2

I will actively look for articles, essays and other ways to educate myself about the impacts of air travel if I have any concerns before booking a flight or planning a trip

There is a wealth of both academic and grey literature on the impacts of air travel across many sectors. A simple internet search may provide you with answers to your most pressing concerns in a myriad of ways. Additionally, the [Flying Less blog](#) has collated a plethora of resources on reducing flying in the HE sector. Also, online forums, like the [Roundtable](#) of Sustainable Academic Travel can help you to connect with individuals working on reducing air travel in their institutions, better inform yourself about the impacts of air travel and learn more about what is being done to reduce air travel in the sector through network membership.



Make better travel decisions

3

I will use decision trees when deciding whether to fly to a conference/business trip

Decision trees can support you in lowering carbon emissions by reducing flying. By asking you to address certain circumstances surrounding your trip, it helps you to gauge whether air travel is really necessary to attend an event or conference. [Tyndall Centre](#) for Climate Change Research and the [University of Iceland](#) have both published decision trees regarding air travel.

4

I will use EAUC-Scotland's Air Travel Justification Tool to assess whether I will benefit from attending a conference/event to which I must fly

EAUC-Scotland's Air Travel Justification Tool is as an extension of a decision tree. If you have completed a decision tree and found that your only option is to fly to a conference/event, this tool will support you in reflecting on whether it is important, or beneficial, to even attend the conference/event.

5

I will travel by train, bus or carpool to destinations within 6 hours from my original location

While other pledges encourage ground travel (ie. trains, buses etc.) for destinations within 12 hours, it may be more realistic to set aside 6 hours to begin with. On average, [certain journeys](#) take a shorter amount of time by train than by flight and it may be beneficial to avoid flying in these cases.

6

If flying, I will try to extend business meetings and incorporate other meetings/conferences as well as leisurely activities into my trip

Why not feed two birds with one worm? If it is necessary to fly somewhere, make the most of these carbon emissions. For example, consider whether it is possible to conduct research, meet other colleagues or family members or see a site you have been meaning to visit in the same location, or nearby. This will maximise the benefits of your emissions and allow you to reduce flying elsewhere by possibly avoiding flying for another business trip or holiday.

7

If flying, I will travel economy class to avoid increased emissions from business and first class

Flying economy class is an easy way to travel better. Depending on the airline, the extra seat space business and first class seats offer means your individual journey takes up a larger proportion of the flight's emissions. For example, according to the [UK Government's](#) 2019 emission conversion factors for carbon reporting, a business or first class seat on a longhaul flight is responsible for 3 or 4 times more CO₂e than an economy seat, respectively.



Challenge workplace norms and push for systemic change where possible



I will publicise times when I am successful in avoiding a flight on social media/in conversation with colleagues and/or students

If you have avoided a flight, publicising your success may inspire others to do the same, or reassure them that it is possible and even enjoyable. This information can be publicised through social media (Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn), at lectures, on curricula vitae etc. It may make the idea of avoiding flying more normalised for your colleagues and the students at your institution.

Be sure to publicise this information without shaming others who may not be able to do the same at the current moment. This can be done by specifying exactly how you were able to avoid flying and providing an acknowledgement that it may not always be possible.

On social media or in conversation you can mention:

1. The purpose of your trip
2. Why you decided to avoid air travel
3. How your networks, job position and access to tools enabled you to avoid flying
4. Your reflections on avoiding flying
5. If communicating on social media, don't forget to use the hashtag #travelbetter

9

I will support my peers, supervisors and students in reducing air travel by engaging in discussion, providing information on reducing air travel and rewarding a reduction in air travel if and when possible

You can support students, staff and colleagues at your institution to reduce their air travel by sharing or developing local research/internship/study/grant opportunities or other opportunities that do not require air travel.

Some academics have prioritised asking graduate students or early-career academics to attend conferences and events in their place. This can publicise the need to reduce non-essential travel and reduce air travel while improving equity and diversity in academia.

Lastly, rewarding a reduction in air travel may incentivise individuals in the FHE sector to limit flying and reconfigure the relationship between air travel and career progression that is pervasive in the sector. A reward can look like publicising research that does not require air travel which can increase citations, an award, offering research/job opportunities etc.

10

I will discuss the impacts of and benefits of reducing air travel with my colleagues, supervisors, students and other individuals and organisations

If you are aware of an individual at your institution who is struggling with reducing their air travel, discussing with them ways you have reduced air travel and its emotional, and physical benefits, may provide necessary support.

Additionally, if you come across organisations or groups within your institution working to institutionally change the sector's relationship with air travel, providing support and experience can ensure a more sustainable shift.

For example, [The Academic Flying Petition](#) by Professor Parke Wilde and Professor Joseph Nevins asks individuals in the sector to petition their institutions:

"(a) to include all university-related flying (whether directly paid by the university or by others) in their environmental impact measurement and goal-setting

(b) to support and work to realize marked reductions in flying by faculty, staff, and students commensurate with the cuts suggested by climate science

(c) to establish and publish short- and medium-term benchmarks for reductions; and

(d) to use their influence with professional associations to reduce reliance on flying for academic and research conferencing."

Version 1 of The Travel Better Pledge
Template was prepared and delivered by



With funding and support from

