# **Scottish colleges and university leadership checklist for responding to the climate and ecological emergency**

# **Checklist context:**

All public bodies listed in [Schedule 1 of the ‘Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies; Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015’](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2015/347/schedule/1/made) as amended by the [Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2020/281/contents/made), are required to report annually on compliance with climate change duties established under [S44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/section/44) and in accordance with [Schedule 2](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2015/347/schedule/2/made) of the 2015 Order. Mandatory Public Bodies Climate Change Duties (PBCCD) reporting began in 2015/16.

In October 2021, the Scottish Government published guidance on [Public Sector Leadership on the Global Climate Emergency](https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/documents/). Whilst this is interim non-statutory guidance, the Scottish Government is currently in the process of developing updated statutory guidance based upon this latest guidance. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) updated its [Outcome Agreement Guidance](https://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/outcome-agreements-guidance/outcome-agreements-guidance.aspx) with colleges and universities in 2023-2024 including updating to align with Scottish Government and other net zero progress and requirements. Scotland’s colleges and universities are moving to align more closely with the expectations set out in the [Public Sector Leadership on the Global Climate Emergency](https://www.gov.scot/publications/public-sector-leadership-global-climate-emergency/documents/) guidance.

Note the SFC’s updated [Outcome Agreement Guidance](https://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/outcome-agreements-guidance/outcome-agreements-guidance.aspx) with colleges and universities in 2023-2024 also references learning & teaching. Whilst beyond the scope of this checklist, this area aligns with wider education sector developments including:

* the General Teaching Council for [Scotland’s Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland’s Colleges](https://www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/professional-standards-for-lecturers-in-scotlands-colleges/) (sustainability is referenced under 1.2.5 and 2.3.5)
* QAA and Advance HE’s [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/education-for-sustainable-development)
* Scottish Government’s [Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/skills-planning/climate-emergency-skills-action-plan-implementation-plan/)
* Scottish Government’s [Learning for sustainability: action plan 2023 to 2030](https://www.gov.scot/publications/target-2030-movement-people-planet-prosperity/)

# **How to use the checklist:**

This checklist summarises the key actions expected of Scotland’s colleges and universities under the current statutory and non-statutory guidance set out by the Scottish Government. The checklist should be used to rapidly assess areas where an institution is meeting or exceeding expectations, as well as identify leadership blind spots or gaps which need follow up action on to meet guidance expectations.

Ideally the checklist should be completed through an internal Sustainability Committee or similar, with input and discussion from Board-level sustainability sponsors if they are not part of the Sustainability Committee. Through this route the checklist exercise can also become an internal engagement and knowledge-sharing opportunity.

# **Additional PBCCD support:**

Through our 12-month SFC-funded programme, EAUC Scotland is providing support to all of Scotland’s colleges and universities to meet the key expectations and actions within this checklist. Current programme support includes:

* regular [Topic Support Networks](https://www.eauc.org.uk/topic_support_networks) (which include topics on travel and transport, energy and water, waste management etc)
* Jiscmail updates and opportunities for peer-to-peer requests
* an annual PBCCD Reporting Peer Review
* launch of a Domestic and International Student Relocation Emissions Calculator Tool (in collaboration with University of Aberdeen)
* publishing guidance on how institutions can use output from APUC’s Scope 3 Supply Chain Emissions Tool within PBCCD reporting and for supply chain engagement.

If you have any questions or would like EAUC Scotland to present at an internal meeting on sector expectations and PBCCD, please contact [scotland@eauc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@eauc.org.uk).

**Wider support from EAUC:**

Wider EAUC support that is available to the sector and supports actions within this checklist include:

* [Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework](https://www.eauc.org.uk/scef) (SCEF) - SCEF provides a clear methodology for colleges and universities to expand the emission sources they report and aligns with the latest Scottish Government guidance.
* [Cost of Net Zero Calculator Tool](https://www.eauc.org.uk/the_cost_of_net_zero) - the Cost of Net Zero Calculator Tool can provide institutions with a high-level costing for decarbonising different emission sources and can be used as evidence within PBCCD reporting in supporting Statutory Expectation 3 under “College or University Governance, Strategy and Policy” (see next page).
* [Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges](https://www.eauc.org.uk/fe_roadmap) and [Climate Action Toolkit for the HE Sector](https://www.eauc.org.uk/climate_action_toolkit) - provides inspiration on how to embed sustainability holistically within a college or university.
* [Sustainability Leadership Scorecard](https://www.eauc.org.uk/sustainability_leadership_scorecard) (SLS) – SLS is a tool to enable a holistic self-assessment of institutional sustainability action across four priority areas (Leadership and Governance; Partnerships and Engagement; Learning, Teaching and Research; Estates and Operations). The tool maps actions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and could support institutional Outcome Agreement reporting to SFC under Priority Area 5.
* [EAUC Scotland Business Travel Guide for the Further and Higher Education Sector](https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/business_travel_guide_for_further_and_higher_ed) – this guide highlights the Scottish policy and social drivers for addressing business travel emissions, and showcases best practice in strategies, reporting and reduction activities.
* [Domestic and International Student Relocation Travel Emissions Calculator Tool](https://www.eauc.org.uk/the_domestic_and_international_student_relocati) – developed by the University of Aberdeen and made available to the sector through EAUC Scotland, this tool enables institutions to quickly measure and report Domestic and International Student Relocation Travel Emissions.
* [EAUC Scotland Saving Energy – a guide for the FHE Sector](https://www.eauc.org.uk/saving_energy_a_guide_for_the_fhe_sector) – this guide provides **a brief overview of energy reduction measures** and signposts to useful guidance on saving energy for colleges and universities in the UK.
* [A Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/members/handbook-for-monitoring-and-evaluating-esd-in-universities.pdf?sfvrsn=ac42af81_12) – this handbook supports a reflective, collaborative approach to monitoring and evaluation to strengthen the quality of education for sustainable development in universities. The handbook presents a framework, tools, and case studies to offer practical support underpinned by theory. This can support institutions with understanding and evidencing learning, teaching and skills development aligned to sustainability within their education delivery and could support institutional Outcome Agreement reporting to SFC under Priority Area 5.

**College or University Governance, Strategy and Policy**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Statutory Expectations** | **Check if actioned** | **Evidence / References / Comments** |
| 1. Institution has a target date for achieving zero direct emissions of greenhouse gases (i.e. no offsetting allowed of natural gas heating emissions) |  |  |
| 1. Institution has targets for reducing indirect emissions of greenhouse gases (e.g. 50% reduction in business travel emissions by 2025 vs 2018 baseline)[[1]](#footnote-1) |  |  |
| 1. Institution evidences how it is aligning its spending plans and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions and delivering its emissions reduction targets |  |  |
| 1. Institution evidences it publishes progress on delivering reduction targets |  |  |
| 1. Institution evidences what contribution it has made to deliver Scotland’s Climate Change Adaptation Programme |  |  |

**Non-Statutory Expectations**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Institution boards and senior executive teams must ensure that climate change systemically informs strategic investment planning and decision-making processes and is embedded into the management of risks and opportunities across the organisation. | |  |  |
| 1. Climate change must be integrated into financial planning and reporting | |  |  |
| 1. Institution must consistently, accurately and transparently report all Scope 1 & 2 emissions and all relevant and significant Scope 3 emissions | |  |  |
| 1. Institution should set board level KPIs for climate change targets and if targets are missed, a corrective action plan is required | |  |  |
| Sustainability strategies and policies must include the following climate change backstop targets (or more ambitious) and actions: | |  |  |
|  | 1. Zero direct emissions by 2045 at the latest, including interim targets to monitor progress |  |  |
|  | 1. Zero direct emissions from all estate buildings by 2038 |  |  |
|  | 1. Net zero targets for indirect emissions that clearly state what is included. If an institution chooses to exclude a source of indirect emissions from its target it must clearly explain the reasoning for this |  |  |
|  | 1. All new fleet cars and light vehicles must have zero emissions by 2025 and larger new vehicles by 2030 |  |  |
|  | 1. No waste to landfill by 2030 |  |  |
|  | 1. Air travel should be minimised and mainland UK air travel should be eliminated. Where air travel is unavoidable it is recommended that the passenger class is the most efficient in terms of emissions (e.g. economy class as default). |  |  |

**College or University Reporting of Emissions**

**Statutory Expectations**

1. Institution reports annually emissions from[[2]](#footnote-2):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| * Fleet Vehicles |  |  |
| * F-gases |  |  |
| * Building energy consumption (e.g. natural gas; heating oil) |  |  |
| * Purchased Electricity |  |  |
| * Purchased Heat and Steam |  |  |
| * Purchased Electricity Transmission and Distribution |  |  |
| * Purchased Heat and Steam Transmission and Distribution |  |  |
| * Water Supply |  |  |
| * Water Treatment |  |  |
| * Waste |  |  |
| * Business Travel |  |  |
| * Homeworking of staff |  |  |

**Non-Statutory Expectations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Institution has identified which additional emission sources are relevant to the institution against the [GHG Protocol Corporate Value Chain Accounting Standard](https://ghgprotocol.org/standards/scope-3-standard) and expanded reporting accordingly[[3]](#footnote-3) |  |  |
| 1. Institution evidences improving the quality of emission data sources over time (e.g. from estimation to measurement) and communicates assumptions within reporting |  |  |

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Please contact [scotland@eauc.org.uk](mailto:scotland@eauc.org.uk) with any queries

1. Note: Institutions are not expected to set reduction targets for sources of emissions with a high level of estimation and therefore uncertainty e.g. supply chain emissions. However, institutions are expected to report actions undertaken to reduce these emissions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note: some of the listed emission sources might be ‘0’ depending on the institution’s context e.g. the college or university does not have fleet vehicles; does not purchase heat or steam; no f-gases released. ‘0’ figures should still be reported. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Note: Institutions can use the sector’s [Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework](https://www.eauc.org.uk/scef) to support this action. Significant additional sources of Scope 3 emissions for the Scottish college and university sector are likely to include staff & student commuting, international & domestic student relocation travel and supply chain emissions. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)