

Think Tank: Climate Emergency - What can universities and colleges do?

This is a summary from the 16th July 2019 Think Tank event lead by EAUC and SOS and kindly hosted by Nottingham Trent University. The Think Tank was the initial meeting to help develop a sector wide response to the climate crisis. The event resulted in five impact maps for universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland on Leadership and Governance, Estates and Operations, Learning and Teaching, Partnerships and Engagement, and Research. We aim to continue the thinking and encourage any that wish to be involved in the process to contact Fiona Goodwin (fgoodwin@eauc.org.uk).

We have developed a **Climate Emergency Framework** which has actions and resources to help guide Members. We will continually work on this so if you have any recommendations please let me know. <https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/cef>

Think Tank: Leadership and Governance

Below is a summary of discussion points and recommendations:

Some key factors to address within the sector:

- Nature of educational provision – collaborative learning, live projects, civic engagement, systems thinking, multidisciplinary learning, active learning can all support sustainability literacy (bringing transdisciplinary skills into pedagogy and lifelong learning)
- Sustainability of Estates
- Travel (massive carbon footprint, particularly from air travel and estates)
- Climate emergency threats, mitigation and adaptation

What action is needed:

- Pressure to act on and in collaboration with the education sector (from different places – students, Government, parents, staff, Governors, business and community stakeholders including other education sectors)
- Measures and targets (ideally standard ones for use across FE/HE sector)
- Business case – why should this be a priority for leaders?
- Cultural change (top-down and bottom-up within organisations and in the relationships between them)
- Courageous conversations (i.e. a willingness to make difficult decisions – for example not to fly to a meeting that does not justify it.)
- Familiarity with the UN Sustainable Development Goals to provide a common framework of understanding
- Citizenship assemblies – see Manchester institutional assembly on climate emergency
- Accountability – legislation, regulation, reverse mentoring, integrate into reporting such as TEF

Recommendations:

These include actions *for* those in leadership/governance positions as well as recommendations to *support* individuals in leadership and governance positions

- Collate relevant evidence – stories, case studies, data, a business case – to share with stakeholders
- Identify some valuable spokespeople (the 'Greta Effect')
- Explore and implement ideas in support of behavioural change, Carbon Literacy courses, partnered with EAUC, will be available via BEIS soon
- Encourage Times Higher / Guardian rankings to embed a climate crisis / sustainability stream
- Explore philanthropic funding for relevant research and activity for climate emergency e.g. Tesco funded a multi-million-pound Sustainable Consumption Institute for Manchester
- Integrate consideration of climate issues into student representation e.g. through NUS/SOS
- Create a climate crisis related budget
- Integrate addressing of the climate emergency into the risk register and CUC code for governors
- Consider whether the Buurtzorg model for healthcare could be adapted for FE/HE
- Consider how Equality & Diversity, mental health, GDPR and other strategic priorities – what was the journey to get these mainstreamed and how might this work for the climate crisis?
- Calculate and act on carbon sequestration (University of Leicester have a tool developed by a maths student)
- Use terms such as 'climate emergency' and 'climate crisis' to reiterate the issue as a priority
- Engage with local community work on the climate crisis, e.g. Nottingham aims to be carbon neutral by 2028, MMU offers Carbon Literacy training to local organisations
- Consider blended learning (online/in-person) versus expanding estates
- Consider participating in NUS Green Impact – how might this support leadership and governance?
- Write independent/group letters detailing concerns to stakeholders e.g. key newspapers, PM, OfS.
- Link research and other outputs to address the climate crisis
- Recognise students as change agents, ensure dialogue and partnership on boards
- Consider how to align the academy's raison d'être with sustainability
- Determine what employers would like from students re sustainability – speak to BITC
- Consider reverse mentoring e.g. VCs to partner with knowledgeable students/local children
- Look at institutions who have re-focussed around sustainability e.g. Arizona, British Columbia
- Cultural change –
 - o a willingness to question at all levels, a trust that penalties will not ensue and a receptivity to such decisions from leaders
 - o incorporate the SDG's into both the culture of an organisation through its teaching, research and infrastructure

Resources:

- Global Climate Letter - <https://www.sdgaccord.org/climateletter>
- SDG Accord - <https://www.sdgaccord.org/>
- A guide for governors - https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/a_guide_for_governors
- Making the business case for sustainability - https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/making_the_business_case_for_sustainability
- Adaptation Guide <https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/adaptation>
- Green Impact - <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/green-impact>

Think Tank: Estates and Operations



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Leadership & Carbon budget

- Carbon Literacy training for senior management – e.g. PVC, COO etc. Need a road map and PVC level role for sustainability/climate change; Mandatory training and education for all staff & students. Courses under development via Carbon Literacy HE consortium supported by BEIS, partnered with EAUC
- Clear metrics and transparent, accurate information around emissions, scope 1, 2, 3.
- A clear pathway to zero carbon year on year.

New build/Refurbishment

- Contractual operational zero carbon new build; Minimise in refurbishment, before offsets

- Carbon budgeting has to head towards 2050 as national target – it does not include offsets.

Offsetting

- Carbon offsetting should be the last option. Otherwise, wealthy institutions will buy offsets.
- Meaningful and regulated offsets will be essential – Gold Standard – sector-wide scheme?

Travel: Business travel

- Stricter justification for travel; Incentivise international students not to fly home during holidays
- No domestic/near Europe flights; up to 12 hours train travel to destinations. Foreign air travel cannot be a perk of the job
- Incentivising public transport over grey fleet

Procurement

- Reuse; Carbon screening on all forms/apps/designs/purchases. Improve metrics, not just cost.
- Working with suppliers; e.g. meat free Mondays – culture and values

Next steps and Resources

- Carbon budgeting – NTU (Charmaine Morrell); Carbon offsetting – University of Lincoln (Grant Anderson); Carbon Literacy training - Carbon Literacy Project (Phil Korbel)
- Mon 02 Sept 3-4pm: Institution new renewables investment fund exploratory call. Skype for business link: <https://meet.lync.com/sos-uk.org/jamie.agombar/6F972S7Y>
- Tue 10 Sept 12 noon - 1pm Campus reforestation sequestration scheme exploratory call. Skype for business link: <https://meet.lync.com/sos-uk.org/jamie.agombar/OTL9VSR7>
- Mid-late Sept, University Carbon Literacy consortium Writing Group to design Professional Services Carbon Literacy course for rapid piloting at MMU and NTU
- Scope 3 methodology guidance - https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/scope_3_methodology_guidance
- EAUC are leading a working group to develop improved Scope 3 guidance for the sector, partnering with HEPA, AUDE, APUC and purchasing consortiums. If you wish to be involved then contact Fiona Goodwin at fgoodwin@eauc.org.uk
- Making the business case for sustainability - https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/making_the_business_case_for_sustainability
- Sustainability Leadership Scorecard - <https://www.sustainabilityleadershipscorecard.org.uk>

Think Tank: Learning and Teaching

Summary of discussion points from learning and teaching think tank.

We acknowledged that institutions exist within the biosphere and inhabit social and cultural value systems and that the financial climate affects institutional activities. Many stakeholders

were identified that affect the HE and FE environment and therefore impact on learning and teaching.

What do institutions need to do to tackle the climate emergency with regards to teaching? This is linked to the core purpose of institutions. Is it business as usual or is it to change the curriculum to a new model? The curriculum needs to be democratised in order to create change - student must learn and develop skills for real life, but how will this change happen? From within or a complete overhaul?

Recognised that climate change education is not present in all current curricula and needs to be added in all universities, colleges, academic disciplines and institutional practices including extra-curricular.

It was identified that institutions have contributed to the climate crisis and must adopt an approach away from business as usual. One approach is to challenge student funding, students priority is to pay back debt rather than address broader societal concerns. Students are identified as consumers and economic growth is the main driver in quality assurance. Students must be equipped to deal with the climate crisis and make a difference. Focus should be drawn on the present supporting short-term actions to aid the transition and buy time.

Key issues related to teaching and effecting change regarding carbon mitigation

Example from Manchester – elected officers from Student Unions in Manchester (HE and FE) to meet quarterly with the Mayor to talk about general issues that affect them. It is not legally binding but a powerful way to get student voices heard. This could focus on the climate emergency. We could create a wider citizen's assembly including students and academics, sustainability officers, senior leadership teams and voluntary groups/NGOs to discuss climate emergency

AIM – to allow students to have an input into climate action and in particular in relation to teaching to co-create the curriculum and change the way institutions work.

Changing the way institutions operate was discussed in some detail – the current linear operating model was not thought to be sufficient to address the climate emergency. Institutions need re-purposing around the SDGs and in terms of structures around teaching and learning to develop different non-linear skills – systems thinking etc. that will be useful in addressing climate change. The curricula needs to be changed e.g. stop teaching neo classical economics and other subjects in ways that encourage the over consumption and resource use that causes climate change.

Short term steps to develop the curriculum

- Organise a student sustainability summit – climate emergency conference
- Climate mitigation should be core on all curricula
- Engage professional bodies (e.g. CMI Chartered Institute of Marketing etc.) to ensure they have climate mitigation in their requirements

- Student Union reps should work with the academic board to change the curriculum
- Capacity building in both students and staff to equip them with the knowledge around systems thinking, climate mitigation etc. so they can contribute to curriculum development. Utilise carbon literacy project model. Institutions train some students who train other students etc. Also include lecturers to help them build it into their courses. Trained students can also engage with local FE colleges and schools
- Engage the board of governors to put on the institution agenda – staff in institutions can contact their staff reps on the governing body to get it added to the agenda
- Encourage staff and students to work together on this issue
- Utilise funding from alumni to provide funds to develop new activities to support climate mitigation and build capacity – carbon literacy training etc.
- Local citizens assemblies as discussed above to include VC and Dept Heads, prof bodies, local council representation, staff and students to develop new inclusive curricula and change operating models in teaching and learning
- Take VCs and other senior staff to see the effects of climate change – e.g. visit Cape Farewell. Make sure they all undergo Carbon Literacy training so they will make it a core aim of their institutions. MMU Pro VC Andy Gibson is CL trained and speaks highly of it.
- Create a fund from energy saving reductions in Carbon Tax achieved due to energy efficiency etc. to fund carbon literacy training.
- Award for PVCs who show leadership in carbon mitigation
- Set up 'share it' sites to share ongoing information and ideas
- Have regular monitoring of progress through events where SU reps inform staff etc of progress to date and areas for improvement.
- We didn't get time to discuss the approach to internationalisation of HE and the need to reduce travel between overseas campuses etc. but there was an idea that if travel can't be avoided the institution should pay for offsetting
- Responsible Futures - <https://sustainability.nus.org.uk/responsible-futures>

Next steps and further collaboration

- MMU to share their model and materials to train student Carbon Literacy trainers as per their model of student led training that has been training hundreds of students off timetable for three years.
- NBS and other PRME Champions are designing a discipline focused Carbon Literacy Training (Business). A similar version exists for the screen students (BAFTA Albert). Please contact petra.molthan-hill@ntu.ac.uk if you want to run such training in your business school or want to create a version for your discipline.
- Involvement with the NUS Student Sustainability Summit

Think Tank: Partnerships and Engagement

The Role of Institutions in Mitigation: a systems view

We noted several systems impacting upon climate change mitigation in which institutions are (or could be) key players, and examples of effective practice in each case:

- **EDUCATION:** Partnership approaches link well with “student solution” projects. *Examples: climate change hackathons, or extended projects such as Map the System) - external partners provide a challenge and review/respond to proposed ideas.*
- **LOCAL/REGIONAL MITIGATION POLICY AND ACTION:** providing expertise, catalysing change (on transport, energy, etc.) through role as major employers and procurers), contributing to local government-led climate plans. *Example: universities in Leicester supporting City Council to develop climate emergency action plan*
- **NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND ACTION:** as above on larger scale, including sectoral professional networks linked to academic disciplines. *Examples: DMU collaborations with the UN; Bloomsbury University collaborating with the Commonwealth.*
- **ACTION LEARNING ENGAGEMENT:** Partnering to deliver engagement on climate change locally or in institutions wider community, often with external partner providing resources. *Example: MMU students delivering Carbon Literacy training in Manchester schools; Severn Trent water providing resources for local engagement in water conservation in Nottingham; DMU supporting Sustainable Harborough project with action learning.*
- **ACTION RESEARCH:** Partnering with businesses, government and civil society to develop and evaluate zero-carbon systems in society (e.g. for energy, transport, fashion)

Key Influences on what Institutions can achieve

Firstly, each of the above approaches requires engagement from partners with the motivation, resources and capability to engage with institutions. Furthermore, we noted a few major influences:

- **CULTURAL CHANGE:** At every level, from individual through institutional to international, culture can inspire or constrain strong action on climate change. *Implication: Institutions need to embrace this agenda themselves and be supported to do so by government, industry and cultural shifts in society as a whole.*
- **POLICY AND FUNDING:** The agenda set for the further and higher sector, in terms of its purpose, priorities, funding system and incentives for professional advancement have a major influence on research undertaken, courses taught and the resources dedicated for engagement activity. *Implication: Policy and funding for the sector should reflect the climate emergency and incentivise and support partnership working and enhanced engagement.*

Internal Leadership Priorities

We noted some priorities for internal leadership at institutions to catalyse climate action:

- **ZERO-CARBON VISION:** declaring an ambitious decarbonisation agenda, and ensuring that this is future-proof in terms of possible future trends in institutional operations (e.g. shifting to online learning, internationalisation)
- **COLLABORATIVE ETHOS:** co-creating and delivering climate change projects with students, collaborating with other institutions and external partners, doing so through a lens of empowerment, giving voice and agency to those that lack it at present

Is this enough? “Feeling” the sense of Emergency

Summing up, we questioned whether the ideas we developed were strong enough to respond to a Climate Emergency, and were in fact closer to good practice in Education for Sustainable Development. With this in mind, a key recommendation that came up related to the wider context of further and higher education:

- Advocate through sector-wide bodies for institutional funding and governance arrangements that best support an emergency response to the climate crisis.
This might involve: a dedicated research council; responding to climate change being embedded within existing key metrics (REF/TEF/KEF) or via a new metric (Climate Emergency Excellence Framework?)

Think Tank: Research

Unfortunately we did not have any representatives from the Research arena. However, Transition Lab has been created. Transition Lab's core mission is to place a range of people – willing scientists, engineers, highly skilled people and volunteers – directly with projects seeking to mitigate climate change, ecosystem collapse and climate change adaptation -

<https://www.transitionlab.earth/>

Next steps and further collaboration for the Think Tank

- EAUC will hold virtual meetings for each stream in September to continue the discussions
- EAUC will hold a Climate Emergency session in collaboration with NUS Student Sustainability Summit in November.
- EAUC will hold a Climate Crisis Summit in October to bring together leading sector agencies and institutional leaders to develop a framework for the sector

This event was organised by Dr Petra Molthan-Hill, Fellow of the EAUC and Head of NTU's Green Academy in collaboration with EAUC and SOS. Please contact Fiona Goodwin for any further questions you might have fgoodwin@eauc.org.uk.

With many thanks to our think tank facilitators Christine Gilligan, Andrew Wright, Andrew Reeves, and Mark Lemon along with the support from NTU's Green Academy.