**University of Edinburgh Climate Change Adaptation** **Strategy**

A Focus on Business Risks & Opportunities

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There is wide recognition that the success of both the University of Edinburgh’s Climate mitigation and adaptation strategy should closely align with the University’s overall vision and missions laid down in its [**Strategic Plan**](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/strategicplanning/201216/StrategicPlan201216.pdf)**.** As a business enterprise, the University’s whole institution approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation should support the University’s main core functions in teaching, research and innovation.

The Adaptation Strategy should therefore act to support and maintain the University’s excellence in the above three areas, whilst striving to lead adaptation research, learning and innovation. As an internationally recognised higher educational institution with a vision to conduct impactful research, the University’s strategic advantage and social responsibility lies in its ability to successfully engage with all its stakeholders to implement an institution-wide approach to climate change adaptation, securing future student enrolment, stakeholder engagement, research and teaching expertise globally.

**“We deliver impact for society. We discover, develop and share knowledge.”**

The business case for adaptation ultimately presents the financial incentive of taking early action in implementing the University’s Adaptation Strategy. Much evidence exists to support the case for taking proactive measures towards the predicted impacts of climate change. This financial case, which focuses on win-win options for the University as a business entity and adaptation progress, are likely to be the most successful for the University. Incorporating cost-benefit analysis across the University’s adaptation strategy in identifying priorities for action.

**Key Business Risks & Opportunities**

For adaptation, within the University’s overall climate strategy, a whole institution approach incorporates research, teaching and learning, operations and investments. Any of these core activities that could be affected by the impacts of climate change pose potential risks to the University’s core functioning. Therefore, the requirement for adaptation efforts to these potential impacts is critical in order to continue its core operations. Whilst the physical risks of climate impacts to the University’s immediate estate and wider supply chains are more tangible, and impacts more direct, regulatory and reputational risks as a result of impacts will also need to be considered. It is important to note that whilst these pose potentially significant risks to the University’s operations and reputation, these issues can also be seen as an opportunity to take a key leadership role in climate change adaptation, particularly within the public sector.

***Business-focused risks predominantly centre around regulatory and reputational risk (and opportunity).***

***Regulatory risk***

This predominantly focuses around public sector reporting duties, which includes a reporting section on adaptation. There are currently very few public sector bodies reporting successfully on adaptation, mainly due to limited understanding on “adaptation” and what this constitutes, or more focus on mitigation efforts. Whilst this is now a statutory responsibility in Scotland to report on adaptation activities, the University’s efforts to adopt a unique adaptation strategy goes above and beyond other reporting organisations.

***Regulatory opportunity***

This offers a unique opportunity for the University to take a leadership role amongst higher education institutions and more broadly within the public sector. Collaboration with the [Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges](http://www.eauc.org.uk/home) offers the University an opportunity to play a leading role in adaptation reporting and action, keeping up-to-date with key reporting duties and sharing of best-practice with other higher educational institutions.

Broader communication of the Universities adaptation efforts amongst broad stakeholder groups and promotion of knowledge-exchange activities offers opportunities for collective understanding amongst higher education institutions of wider adaptation challenges and successes. This supports the University’s mission of impactful research and teaching, whilst positively impacting both local and global efforts towards climate change adaptation efforts. This also places the University in an elevated position to more quickly respond to future regulatory measures on adaptation activities, given advanced expertise.

***Reputational risk***

Reputational risk emerges from the potential impacts of climate change affecting the University’s core activities, which subsequently results in knock-on effects to its reputation and brand image. The ability of the University to maintain its high standards of teaching and research is driven by the ability of its key stakeholders to undertake the core operations and activities. Reputation is also influenced by the University’s decision-making at all levels; for example, in terms of the investments made in the short-term towards proactive adaptation measures on the University’s own estate to prepare against the impacts of climate change; in addition to external supply chain or energy supply investment decisions, which are likely to be significantly impacted by climatic changes. Investing in adaptation win-wins now will increase the resilience of the University to be best prepared for future challenges of emerging climate impacts; taking a leadership approach and greater recognition from stakeholders. In this way, the University will have taken proactive steps to mitigate reputational risk by making the right investment decisions.

***Reputational opportunity***

**Collaboration with internal partners** on adaptation efforts should be linked to leveraging the University’s current research and teaching expertise within the climate change field. Leading by example, such as through the provision of scholarships for students from some of the most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts; this provides a significant brand opportunity for the University, promoting both its teaching expertise in this field, whilst also reinforcing the impact of its teaching on wider society, will act only to reinforce the University’s brand image.

**Further collaboration in innovative adaptation efforts** should further draw on internal resources such as with the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, with residents such as [Sniffer](https://www.sniffer.org.uk/) (innovative research on climate adaptation, stakeholder engagement and capacity building) and [Climate-KIC](http://www.climate-kic.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/A4-report-2nd-proofs.pdf) (nurturing adaptation start-ups and innovation projects across Edinburgh and Scotland).

**Collaboration with external partners** on adaptation efforts in Edinburgh will also extend the University’s brand image on proactive steps towards adaptation action. It may also present the University with a better negotiating position at future stakeholder events on policy dialogue on local climate change adaptation decisions or legislation.