

A Sustainable Education

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AGM notes:

1. The leading scientific community acknowledges the world is facing a climate and ecological crisis.¹
2. The University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) and Scottish Government 'Just Transition Commission' have committed to reducing their carbon footprint and actively contributing to the transition to a low-carbon economy. The University has a current policy aiming to incorporate environmental sustainability in the curriculum.²
3. According to NUS Surveys,³ almost 9 out of 10 2018/19 respondents in HE agree that sustainable development is something that universities and colleges should actively incorporate and promote.
4. A sustainable education means including key environmental and sustainable development issues into teaching and learning, such as sustainable consumption, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, climate literacy etc.
5. Environmental sustainability means living within our environmental limits both now and for the future.
6. Education does not only cover formal curriculum but includes extra-curricular activities, career and volunteering opportunities, and more.
7. The University of Aberdeen has a large number of academics and students involved in the fossil fuels industry.
8. The Just Transition Movement⁴ aims to transition to a clean, safe energy system while protecting the workers and their communities currently dependent on jobs in high carbon sectors like oil, coal or gas.
9. Many resources already exist regarding embedding environmental sustainability in the curriculum. Notably, the Environmental Alliance of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) has published specific guides to help institutions.

¹ 1 IPCC, 2018: C2: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2018) Global warming of 1.5 °C: an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. Geneva, Switzerland.

² <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-sustainability/2013-SSR-Curriculum-FINAL.pdf>

³ NUS, 2018

⁴ <http://foeeurope.org/just-transition>

AGM believes:

1. Every student should be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability.
2. The University should integrate sustainability into all degree programmes, even in courses that are not typically related to sustainable issues.
3. Sustainability skills and knowledge will increase students' employability.
4. Departments across the University should be encouraged and given the resources to adopt more sustainable behaviours through their operations.
5. The University has a key role to play in the just transition movement as part of their duty of care to students studying and graduating from degrees involved with the fossil fuel industry.

AGM resolves:

1. For AUSA to work with the University and the appropriate trade unions so that environmental sustainability is embedded within the curriculum of all degrees and at all levels of study to ensure students graduate with sustainability knowledge and skills.
2. For AUSA to provide training for their class reps and school conveners on matters relating to environmental sustainability and social responsibility.
3. For AUSA to work with the Career Services to increase their engagement with low-carbon employers including, but not exclusive to, the creation of a sustainable careers guide.
4. For AUSA to work with the University for the introduction of paperless submissions of assignments and reduction of the use of course readers when applicable.
5. For AUSA to offer opportunities for students to acquire skills relating to carbon and sustainable literacy and to actively promote and invite environmental organisations during their Volunteering Fayre.
6. For AUSA to lobby the University to actively support current students and graduates looking to transition from high-carbon sectors to low-carbon industries such as renewables.