

A Sustainable Education

Proposer: Louise Henrard (Communities Officer)

Seconders: Piper Booth (Environment & Ethics), Caroline Beaumelou (Environment & Ethics), Cecilia Wallback (Student President)

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.

Circuit laundry motion

Proposer: Joseph Duggan

Seconder: Hellie Duchement

Council notes:

1. Circuit laundry is the only provider of laundry services across University student accommodations.
2. The laundry machines often don't work properly, and the results are unsatisfactory.
3. Circuit laundry has not fixed the issues despite multiple reports.

Council believes:

1. An AUSA campaign is needed to bring about an improvement to the laundry facilities in student accommodation.
2. Students in University accommodation should not have to pay unreasonable fees for a poor quality of service.
3. The monopoly of Circuit Laundry is detrimental and costly to students, both in terms of time and money.

Council resolves:

1. AUSA to lobby the University to reconsider the position of Circuit Laundry.
2. AUSA to lobby the University to put pressure on Circuit laundry to deliver a higher quality and more affordable service.

Students Who Join the Climate Strikes Must Not Be Penalised

Proposed by: Tomás Pizarro-Escuti (Communities Vice-Chair)

Seconded by: Mustafa Mabruk (Fossil Free Coordinator)

AGM notes:

1. That, according to the latest IPCC report, we have 12 years to limit the effects of climate change before we enter into a runaway state which poses existential threats to the future of humanity and that we need to act accordingly¹.
2. That, Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of assembly and association².
3. That many students of the University of Aberdeen, such as the members of the Aberdeen Student Climate Network, Shared Planet Society, Fossil Free Aberdeen, etc.. have raised concerns about being penalised for missing tutorials and classes due to their participation in the climate strikes.

AGM believes:

1. That, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights³; Article 3, Right to Life; Article 19, Right to Freedom of Expression; Article 20, Right to Assembly and Association; and Article 25, Right to Health and Wellbeing- the students of the University of Aberdeen are ensured the right to strike, gather publicly or privately and collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests.
2. That youth-led climate action can be used as a successful influencing tool for national and global environmental policies in order to prevent the catastrophic effects of the climate emergency.
3. That AUSA by supporting the students who decide to strike, is protecting the freedom and rights of students to stand up for what they believe; it is encouraging students to build the future they so desperately want and need, and it is raising awareness of the utter crisis that this planet is experiencing.

AGM resolves:

1. That AUSA will lobby the University to allow the students who wish to strike for climate justice to not be penalised if they are absent from class or could not attend to do their exams or submit assignments in time.

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 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms article 11: https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>