

# Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education: Current Findings

September 2020





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# About the Climate Commission for Higher and Further Education

The Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education is a unique partnership between Association of Colleges, EAUC - the Alliance for Sustainability Leader in Education, GuildHE and Universities UK launched in November 2019. The Commission is working to coordinate a clear, cohesive and consistent response to the climate emergency for the further and higher education sector by the end of 2020.

The Commission is led by three student and four institutional Commissioners guiding its work and acting as the face of the initiative. Commissioners are supported by a council of 85, including 24 students.

For more information, please visit [www.eauc.org.uk/climate\\_commission](http://www.eauc.org.uk/climate_commission).

## Commissioners

### Institutional Leaders

- **Steve Frampton MBE**, AoC President & AoC representative
- **Professor James Longhurst**, Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of the West of England & EAUC Trustee
- **Professor Joy Carter CBE DL**, Vice Chancellor, University of Winchester & GuildHE representative
- **Professor Judith Petts CBE**, Vice Chancellor, University of Plymouth & UUK representative

### Student Leaders

- **Amy Brazier**, Students, Portsmouth College, AoC representatives
- **Manveer Gill**, Undergraduate, University of Warwick & EAUC representative
- **Marta Crispo**, PhD Researcher, Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures, University of Sheffield, UUK representative

## Steering Group

- **Ian Munro**, Director, Association of Colleges
- **Iain Patton**, CEO, **Fiona Goodwin**, Director of Operations & Planning, EAUC
- **Alex Bols**, Deputy Chief Executive, GuildHE
- **Christopher Hale**, Director of Policy, Universities UK

# Climate Commission: Current Findings and Next Steps

September 2020

Between March and June 2020, the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education held five evidence gathering events. At the events, expert witnesses provided insight on our five priorities to inform our outputs and ensure they are effective and relevant to the sector's needs.

We are delighted to now share some of our synthesised findings with the UK government and the wider public.

Below is an outline of the 5 priorities upon which our work is centred.

# 1

Mobilising the further and higher education voice for impact and influence

# 2

Research and innovation – the funding and scope of research and innovation and maximising its impact

# 3

Measuring and Reporting Scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions

# 4

Deep adaptation – including governance, risk, mitigation and adaptation for the future of our campuses and operations

# 5

Education and the student experience – curriculum development and the climate emergency

The Climate Commission is a **dynamic initiative**, adapting its work quickly to new information and changing circumstances to effectively push and coordinate the sector to take climate action. Please note, our next steps and outputs are subject to change.





## 2019 November

The Climate Commission is launched at Ravenbourne University London. The Commission announces its aim to produce strategic, sector-wide outputs to respond to the climate emergency by COP26 in Glasgow. The event sees students, Vice Chancellors and Principals from across the UK and Ireland come together to review the deliverables and outcomes for the Commission and the year long action plan. Lord Deben delivers a keynote speech.

## 2020 March - June

The Commission holds 5 [evidence gathering events](#) for each priority. Expert witnesses, sector and government bodies, students and university and college staff come together to discuss the sector's needs in relation to the 5 priorities, informing the Commission's work.

The Climate Commission publishes a [statement](#) on offsetting carbon emissions. The Climate Commission Council advises on the statement's development.

COP26, initially meant to take place in November 2020, is postponed until November 2021 due to COVID-19. The Commission releases a [statement](#) acknowledging the importance of reducing the severity of the outbreak and emphasising its continued commitment to tackling the climate crisis. The Commission commits to still sharing some of its work by the end of 2020.

## 2020 September

The Commission hosts "Discussion with Further and Higher Education Governors and Chairs" to share its work thus far with the sector, and ensure it is relevant and beneficial to the sector's decision-making bodies.

The Commission releases a report for UNESCO featuring the insights of 37 UK students on the future of education amid the climate crisis.

The Commission works with the Climate Commission Council to finalise its outputs, including workshopping an HE Climate Action Toolkit, at an online event.

## 2021 January - October

The Commission advances dialogue with the Climate Commission Council and sector bodies, ensuring the sector and the wider public is updated and aware of its work.

Outputs are updated and improved upon.

## Timeline of the Commission's work

(Subject to change)

### 2020 January

The Climate Commission produces a target [statement](#) facilitating a clear pathway to net-zero emissions, as well as identifies 5 priority areas on which its work will focus.

### 2020 July

The Commission begins interpreting discussions from the Evidence Gathering Events to inform its outputs.

Work on producing outputs is now underway. [The outputs are reviewed and occasionally adapted as new information is learned and circumstances change.](#)

The Commission releases the [FE Climate Action Roadmap](#) to positive feedback.

The Commission hosts a student-led event for the further education sector, "Discussion with the Further Education Sector" to ensure its work is relevant and beneficial to the sector.

### 2020 November

The Commission presents its work thus far at "Climate Commission: One Year On" event. Lord Deben returns to give a keynote speech.

More of the Commission's work is showcased and discussed at EAUC's virtual conference.

### 2021 November

The Commission presents its work at COP26 in Glasgow.

# The Commission's Engagement in Numbers

November 2019 - July 2020

12

Online Events

61

Expert Witnesses  
informing our Work

12

Colleges Contributing to  
the development of the  
FE Climate Action  
Roadmap

40

Students Contributing to our  
UNESCO Futures of Education  
Report

490

Event Sign-Ups  
(Around)

67

Students Responding to our  
Engagement Survey

4

Institutional  
Commissioners leading the  
Commission

85

85 Council Members advising  
the Commission

3

Student Commissioners  
leading the Commission

4

# Findings from the Evidence Gathering Events

The Evidence Gathering Events have been crucial in coordinating climate action that is considerate of and relevant to the sector's needs and priorities. The following section summarises the findings and links them to government activity and current affairs. Read more about the Evidence Gathering Events and how you can get involved [here](#).

# 1

The further and higher education sector is a trusted sector in society. The sector's recent academic contributions and community support during the COVID-19 crisis have deepened this trust. We should mobilise our voice to strengthen the impact of our response to the climate emergency by continuing to work to earn trust and cement credibility amongst students, local and national governments and the wider public. The sector can do this by working collaboratively with external, local partners and reviewing internal policies and strategies that are inconsistent with climate action.

## Mobilising the Further and Higher Education Sector Voice

Universities and colleges play a key role in providing the evidence base for the climate emergency while also identifying the impact and mitigation of our research processes. To move forward, the UK sector needs a clear understanding of the extent of climate research and how these findings are disseminated and used to influence policy and the wider public. The sector also needs balance between harnessing the power of climate research through coordination while also ensuring competition from discrete research.

COVID-19 has shown the vital importance UK researchers and academics have in understanding, and providing solutions to global and national challenges. In the July 2020 Research & Development Roadmap, the UK government addresses the critical role of research in realising its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The Roadmap lays out actions to investing in research in technologies including carbon capture and storage as well as research into nature-based solutions to the climate crisis. We must see continued investment in UK research, and increased investment in multidisciplinary climate research.

## Research & Innovation

# 2

# 5



It is crucial to ensure scope 3 emissions are measured and reported as they provide a more truthful, realistic depiction of the sector’s emissions and our opportunities to improve climate action. If we do not report scope 3 emissions, our response to the emergency will be incomplete. The sector must also ensure that GHG emissions data is made accessible to ensure transparency and to allow students and the public to hold institutions accountable.

The COVID-19 lockdown saw a temporary reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. But as we recover from the pandemic, we must ensure we do not increase the threat of climate change through locked-in higher emissions. In a letter to the government on 6 principles to

# 3

## Measuring & Reporting Scope 1, 2 and 3 Emissions

"Building a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 crisis," the Committee on Climate Change recommends making investments for a recovery that are resilient to climate change and do not increase greenhouse gas emissions. The further and higher education must also follow this recommendation and can more accurately ensure its adherence through improved measuring and reporting of emissions.

The onset of COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for resilient and adaptable societies, economies and institutions. While we recover from the pandemic, the climate crisis still looms large. We need to ensure the sector is prepared for a changing world.

Universities and colleges need to consider deep adaptation. They must provide tools and resources to support staff and students. To support the sector a toolkit needs to be provided to encourage and enable honest and clear discussions amongst groups of students, staff, senior management teams and board of governors. Mechanisms and resilience are crucial - both physical and psychological. Climate anxiety needs to be recognised and safety measures in place.

# 4

## Deep Adaptation





Climate and sustainability is not covered comprehensively enough across post-16 education and this can have consequences on the climate crisis as well as on graduates capacity to cope and adapt in a changing world . As curricula is mainly driven by qualification content/needs, it is key to influence professional bodies to fully embed climate education throughout the curricula for all post-16 students. Whilst there are excellent examples of student action and campaigning, this breadth and engagement of all students is needed to drive real change. Core curriculum change is required and needs to be part of funded entitlement for all learners. Students are to be at the heart of a co-created curriculum change.

# 5 Education and Student Experience

These findings support the UK government's position on developing a green economy as this economy can be propelled by graduates who are equipped with skills to ensure a sustainable future.

The College of the Future Commission is working to produce recommendations on the role of UK colleges in the future. Their interim report also emphasises the sector's responsibility to students and local economies to ensure they equipped to thrive in the changing future. This includes knowledge and skills in sustainability.





# Get Involved

The Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education is partnership between Association of Colleges, EAUC- The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership, GuildHE and Universities UK. We collaborate with institutions, individuals and organisations in the further and higher education sector.

We seek to ensure that the wide range of voices in the sector is heard, and the diverse needs, priorities and responsibilities of the sector's 5 millions staff and students is reflected in our work. Throughout the year, we have hosted various events, discussions, focus groups and workshops to ensure the sector can feed into our work.

The Commission will host a few more events before the end of the 2020. Please visit our website: [www.eauc.org.uk/climate\\_commission](http://www.eauc.org.uk/climate_commission) to learn how to get involved.



