

BARGAINING OBJECTIVE 1

Climate emergency and associated policies

BACKGROUND

Most, if not all colleges and universities will have sustainability and climate related policies in place. The first element of the claim therefore is working towards ensuring these are fit for purpose, ambitious and not just an attempt at an institution to 'greenwash'.

DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Most institutions in the sector will have an environmental/carbon management policy.

If it is regularly updated, it may contain reference to the term climate emergency, climate breakdown or climate crisis. Where a climate emergency has been declared it should contain a reference to at least one target date. The date may refer to the type of target:

- **Zero carbon** implies that no carbon emissions will be produced.
- **Carbon neutral** means that while some carbon dioxide will still be produced it will be cancelled out in other ways, whether that be through planting trees, storing it underground or using carbon credits. This is referred to as offsetting.
- **Net zero** includes not just CO₂ and methane but also nitrous oxide, which is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities as well as from fossil fuels. The reasoning is that simply being carbon neutral would not stop global warming because these other gases are also harmful to the atmosphere.

In July 2019 over 7,000 colleges and universities around the world declared a climate emergency. They also committed to a three-point plan outlined in the SDG Accord Climate Letter:

1. Committing to going carbon neutral by 2030 or 2050 at the very latest.
2. Mobilising more resources for action-oriented climate change research and skills.





3. Creation increasing the delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curricula, campus, and community outreach programmes.

Collectively, 48 UK universities, colleges and students' unions and education providers have signed and, as of January 2021. The first two further education colleges were – Bridgend College and Gloucestershire College – which have both committed to a carbon neutral target by 2040. One further education college in Ireland – Kinsale – has committed to 2025. <https://www.sdgaccord.org/climateletter>

GND CLIMATE EMERGENCY DEMANDS FOR BRANCHES

- Ask the employer to publicly declare a climate emergency.
- Set out a target for achieving carbon neutrality, zero carbon or net zero by 2030 (or earlier) to support progress for the Paris Agreement.
- Develop or enhance a set of climate emergency/sustainability policies and associated demands and action plans to ensure a whole institution approach is taken achieved.

NEGOTIATING OBJECTIVES

1. Branches need to start by finding out if their institution has declared a climate emergency.
2. Where the institution has declared a climate emergency, UCU branches need to interrogate the relevant policies and practice to see if they contain targets on how they will bring down their own GHG emissions consistent with the rapid reductions needed in the period up to 2030. These may be in the form of a climate emergency action plan or associated action plans (eg sustainability action plan, carbon management plan), these need to be ambitious enough to address the climate crisis to ensure they are demonstrating genuine commitment to taking action.

NEGOTIATORS' RESOURCES

- Refer the employer to the Environment Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC) which has a wealth of resources for FHE sector including the following business case for sustainability: https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/making_the_business_case_for_sustainability
- EAUC Road Map for FE: https://www.eauc.org.uk/fe_roadmap
- See what score your university received in the P&P University League Category 1 'Environmental Policy and Strategy' <https://peopleandplanet.org/university-league>
- Visit the Climate Emergency Universities web site to check if your institution is listed. <https://www.climateemergency.uk/universities/>
- Check if the institution is covered by any sector ranking systems. For example, Times Higher Education rankings against 11 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2019/overall#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined





- Collaborate with your students' union to lobby the institution to declare a climate emergency: <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/policy-declaring-a-climate-emergency>
- Carbon Targets Scorecard for Universities and Colleges: <https://www.carbontargets.uk/>

THIS GND QUICK GUIDE provides an overview and entry point to engaging with one of six UCU Green New Deal demands for universities and colleges. To access the full GND bargaining and negotiation framework, click here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11326/Green-new-deal-bargaining-guide--model-claim/pdf/green-new-deal_bargaining-guide_jan21.pdf

To discuss this further, seek advice on progressing this demand or other aspects of the GND, and to use the model claim and letter, contact environment@ucu.org.uk

