**Template University and Student Union Motions on declaring a Climate Emergency**

How to use these documents

These templates have been created to assist you and your campaign to get your university to declare a climate emergency

We cannot provide a plan for each institution to address the climate crisis, but we are calling on universities to set up student & staff forums to produce a plan for how they will contribute to tackling the climate crisis.

The *template university paper/motion* has been designed to be submitted to the decision makers at your university. This may be directly to your Vice Chancellor, Pro-VC, University Senate or University Council. Your university sustainability team or student union may be helpful in informing which of these routes will be most effective.

The *template student union* *motion* has been designed to get your student union to support your campaign and use their access to the university to influence the decision makers. You should speak to your student union about the process for passing a student union motion.

These documents can be used as is or modified in consultation with staff and students to be more specific for your institution. Each university is unique and has its own strengths, weaknesses and challenges in addressing the climate crisis. Remember that all solutions to the climate crisis must be rights respecting.

Template university paper/motion

**What’s the issue?**

Amnesty International has named the insufficient action of governments to act on climate as

potentially the biggest inter-generational human rights violation in history.

Many rights are affected by climate change, including the right to life, right to health, right to

housing and rights to water and sanitation. Climate change is also likely to exacerbate

inequality, including between developed and developing countries, between different

ethnicities, classes and between people of different genders, as well as between

generations.

Urgent action is needed to address the climate crisis, which is happening now, and already disproportionately affecting those in the global south who have contributed least to the rise in global temperatures. 70% of CO2 emissions are created by the top 100 companies.

In October 2018 the IPCC warned that there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. Infinite growth is not possible on a planet with finite resources.

Since then the UK government has declared a climate emergency and committed to reach ‘net zero’ greenhouse gas emissions, with the majority of the UK public supporting a zero emissions target of 2030.

**What is the role of the University?**

Our universities are leaders in our communities, and their voice and influence is needed to tackle the climate

They have a duty to need to equip current and future students with the tools needed to make systematic change whilst addressing their own contribution to the climate crisis

There is an urgent need to invest in renewable energy and not fossil fuels. College and university estates are not yet sustainable and there is an urgent need to commit to achieving net-zero carbon emissions, whilst ensuring biodiversity and human rights are respected in the process.

Our universities should not legitimise the fossil fuel industry by taking sponsorship from, or investing in, fossil fuel companies.

There is an urgent need to build skills for a renewable future**.** Sustainability should be incorporated across the curriculum. Learning about the past, including the legacy and continued dynamics of colonialism, is essential to ensuring a sustainable future. Universities are designed to prepare students, and society, for the future – however, climate break down threatens this future.

Several UK universities have already declared climate emergencies including the University of Exeter, University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, University of Plymouth, University of Keele, University of Sussex and University of Newcastle.

**What should our university do?**

We call on our Institution to declare a climate and human rights emergency, set up a staff & student working group, to produce a plan which includes:  
  
- A commitment to neither take sponsorship from fossil fuel companies nor invest in them   
- A commitment for sustainable development and human rights to form part of the curriculum of every student across every discipline

- A plan to phase out CO2 emitted through the institution to zero including through electricity and vehicles

- A review of food and drink provision to assess ways it could be more sustainable   
- A review of companies invited to careers fairs, with incentives for sustainable companies, and disincentives for oil companies

- The creation of a long-term sustainability representative within it’s governance structure if not already in place

The staff and student forum should ensure there is diversity in those who are making decisions, should create spaces for everyone to input, such as via working groups to ensure accessibility, set deadlines for accountability and remain transparent throughout

The University should also communicate it’s declaration of a climate and human rights emergency publicly, and to write to all councillors and MPs in the neighbourhood of the institution, urging them to produce a plan to phase out fossil fuels nationwide.

Template Student Union Motion

**This union notes:**

1. That 100 companies are responsible for 70% of CO2 emissions  
2. That the UK government has declared a climate emergency, and also committed to reach ‘net zero’ greenhouse gas emissions   
3. That the majority of the UK public supports a zero emissions target of 2030    
4. That the University of Exeter, University of Bristol, University of Glasgow, University of Plymouth, University of Keele, University of Sussex and University of Newcastle have declared climate emergencies.  
5. That Amnesty International has named climate change one of the most significant human rights issues of our time, affecting our rights to shelter, health, food and life.    
6. That climate change magnifies existing inequalities and affects people in the global south first and worst

**This union believes:**   
  
1. That universities and colleges should be leaders in phasing out greenhouse gas emissions  
2. That college and university campuses are not yet sustainable   
3. That there is an urgent need to invest in renewable energy and not fossil fuels  
4. That there is an urgent need to build skills for a renewable future   
5. That learning about the past, including the legacy and continued dynamics of colonialism, is essential to ensuring a sustainable future    
6. That any transition to zero emissions must be just and rights-respecting  
 **This union resolves**  
1. To call on the university to declare a climate and human rights emergency, and to create a staff and student forum to produce a plan which includes

* A commitment to neither take sponsorship from fossil fuel companies nor invest in them
* A commitment for sustainable development and human rights to form part of the curriculum of every student across every discipline
* A plan to phase out CO2 emitted through the institution to zero including through electricity and vehicles
* A review of food and drink provision to assess ways it could be more sustainable
* A review of companies invited to careers fairs, with incentives for sustainable companies, and disincentives for oil companies

2. To work with the university to create a staff and student working group which

* Ensures there is diversity in those who are making decisions
* Sets deadlines for accountability
* Remains transparent throughout

3. To call on the university to communicate its declaration of a climate and human rights emergency publicly, and to write to all councillors and MPs in the neighbourhood of the institution, urging them to produce a plan to phase out fossil fuels nationwide.

Reading List

**Amnesty International -** Climate change as a human rights issue

https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/climate-change/

**People & Planet’s** University League (is the only comprehensive and independent league table of UK universities ranked by environmental and ethical performance. It is compiled annually by People & Planet.

https://peopleandplanet.org/university-league

**EAUC** is the alliance for sustainability leadership in education. EAUC represents over 200 institutions with a combined total of 2 million students and nearly 400,000 staff with a spending budget of over £25 billion. We help leaders, academics and professionals to drive sustainability to the heart of their post-16 education institutions.

EAUC Declare a Climate Emergency - https://www.eauc.org.uk/eauc\_declares\_a\_climate\_emergency

**Climate Emergency** – an organisation focused on local councils declaring climate emergencies across the UK

https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/category/universities/

**The SDG Accord** – In advance of the COP 25 meeting in Chile in December, networks and institutions working in Further and Higher Education are coming together to add their support to this letter that would be shared with key government officials and the media in advance of this event.

https://www.sdgaccord.org/climateletter

**Glasgow School of Art** – Climate emergency motion

http://www.gsasustainability.org.uk/files/5cffc1d3b5bac-Declaration%20GSA%20DRAFT%20for%20comment.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2MOkEF3CT4bvGqjghbe\_OlJWWXt9NiyoRD\_5Iy7aSCF3KHSHVN74We-vs