



**Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee**

**Tuesday 18 August, 3pm**

**via Microsoft Teams**

**AGENDA**

- 1 Minute** **A**  
To approve the minute of the previous meeting on 25 February 2020

- 2 Matters Arising**  
To raise any matters arising not covered on the agenda or in post-meeting notes

**STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

- 3 Covid-19 – Impacts & Implications** **Verbal**  
To receive an update from the Convener and discuss as a group
- 4 Social Responsibility and Sustainability- Embedding Across the University** **B**  
To note and discuss a paper from the Director of SRS
- 5 Integrating SDGs in University Committee papers** **C**  
To note and discuss a paper from the Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning
- 6 Sustainability, Student Experience and the Curriculum: Integrating the SDGs** **D**  
To note and discuss a paper from the Deputy Director of SRS
- 7 University Community Plan – Updated Draft** **E**  
To discuss and endorse a paper from the Assistant Principal Community Relations

**ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

- 8 Social & Civic Responsibility Plan – Communications** **F**  
To receive a paper from the SRS Communication Manager
- 9 Responding to the Climate Emergency – Report of the Travel and Aviation Working Group** **G**  
To note a paper submitted by the Convener and Director of SRS to University Executive
- 10 Responding to the Climate Emergency – Forests and Peatlands Proposals** **H**  
To note a paper submitted by the Convener and Director of SRS to University Executive
- 11 THE Impact Rankings – Results, Performance & Process** **I**  
To receive a paper from the Student Engagement, Events & Reporting Programme Manager
- 12 Good Food Policy Update** **J**  
To receive a paper from the Deputy Director of SRS
- 13 Any Other Business** **Verbal**  
To consider any other matters from Group members

## UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

**MINUTE OF A MEETING** of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee held in the Raeburn Room, Old College on Tuesday 25 February 2020.

**Present:** Sandy Tudhope (Convenor), University Lead on Climate Responsibility and Sustainability  
 Lesley McAra (Vice Convenor), Assistant Principal Community Relations  
 Michelle Brown, Deputy Director and Head of SRS Programmes  
 Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience  
 Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability  
 Pete Higgins, Director, Global Environment & Society Academy  
 Gary Jebb, Director of Estates  
 Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning

**In attendance:** Gavin Donoghue, Deputy Director Stakeholder Relations, for Theresa Merrick

**Apologies:** Laura Cattell, Head of Widening Participation  
 Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services  
 Claire Graf, Joint Unions Liaison Committee representative  
 Craig Hennessy, Functional Lead, Service Excellence Programme  
 Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications & Marketing  
 Rachael Robertson, Deputy Director of Finance  
 George Sked, Director of Procurement  
 James Smith, Vice Principal International  
 Rosheen Wallace, Students' Association VP Community

1 The minute of 24 October 2019 was approved as a correct record.

A

**2 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## STRATEGIC AND SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

**3 Social & Civic Responsibility Plan – Integrating the SDGs**

B

The committee noted this update on work undertaken on the Social & Civic Responsibility Plan, as part of Strategy 2030. A Working Group had met in December and February, looking at targets, ambitions and objectives around the SDGs. The Group highlighted the need to differentiate between aspects that were a focus for the organisation, and those that were a focus for research and teaching.

Members welcomed progress achieved to date, noting parallel efforts in some Schools and Support Groups who were looking at how to integrate the SDGs into their own plans. The SRS Department did not own this work, but were working to embed it and ensure a coordinated approach across the University.

Action – TS to follow up with College Registrars to extract SDG content from School Plans.

Action – MB to review School Plans to help align them with central efforts.

The Committee strongly endorsed the draft delivery plan, which covered well activities within the region and potential opportunities, but felt that more could be done to clearly articulate the University's global impact, including specific examples of how it was helping communities adapt to change. These examples should be presented in a nuanced way that acknowledged the University's history and position.

Action – PH to share with MB outputs from the short life working group on embedding the SDGs in the curriculum.

Action – GD to share with MB details of work with CEC on anti-poverty measures.

Action – MB to check the wording on zero carbon buildings with GJ.

Action – All members to send any other comments to MB by 6<sup>th</sup> March.

Action – MB to take the delivery plan to University Executive in March.

Next steps would include development of a strategic performance framework and a communications plan.

#### **4 Mapping of Research in Relation to the SDGs**

**C**

The Deputy Director of SRS presented this review of the SDGs in University research. SRS met with the Research Office in the summer to discuss testing a pilot approach, settling on the Leicester methodology which used a publication count based on SCOPUS to map research outputs. It was acknowledged that this methodology might not be reflective of CAHSS outputs. It also did not capture the quality or impact of a publication. The Research Office were reviewing the approach and would hopefully take ownership of this work in future. Page 3 of the annex compared UoE's performance to the rest of the HE sector both within the UK and globally, highlighting the University's strengths. UoE was currently seeking Zero Waste Scotland funding to establish a Circular Economy hub, which should further enhance its performance. This analysis was not intended as a league table but a prompt to further conversation and a first step towards developing a more comprehensive approach.

The Committee endorsed the paper and proposed next steps, including using the headlines in SDG reporting and engagement with Schools, and reviewing the Leicester methodology against other mapping and analysis tools. Members recommended looking through REF impact case studies with a bearing on the SDGs, and reviewing grants awarded in the last few years (particularly from the Global Challenges Research Fund) and impact statements to funding bodies in order to round out the results and help identify strong projects addressing the SDGs. The Committee emphasised the need to build excellence in under-represented areas rather than just focusing on existing areas of strength. Rather than being simply responsive, it was also key to emphasise what UoE was doing to inform the next set of SDGs.

Action – MB to ask Conor Snowden to come feed back to SRSC.

Action – TS to flag to senior managers that UoE was not currently using the language of the SDGs when discussing the social, environmental and cultural impact of the University, and to follow up on REF.

### **ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

#### **5 Responding to the Climate Emergency**

**D**

The Director of SRS had attended this morning's meeting of University Executive to give a sense of the range of progress since the climate emergency discussions at the Strategic Away Day in June. UoE now had more confidence about what its emissions might be in 2040. Concern about carbon associated with expansion of the supercomputer centre had been flagged, as this would double the University's emissions. These were national facilities, but run by UoE. Further discussions with UKRI would be required. This could be an opportunity to expand current sequestration proposals. Once key decisions had been made the University's Climate Strategy would be updated. It was acknowledged that there could be a spike in emissions in the 2020s.

UE had asked for a firm proposal on forestry by the end of May, as well as agreement on what to do on aviation. UE endorsed trial of a levy on flights, advising a careful approach to consultation and messaging, keeping associated admin processes as simple as

possible, and ensuring visibility of the connection between action and outcome. The levy would just be one of a wider package of measures, including restricting UK flights, subsidising rail travel, and enhancing business travel data. The Committee recognised the merits of an incremental approach, given the effectiveness of nudge-based methods in promoting behaviour change, and recognised the need for clear leadership from senior management. There would need to be a granular review of routine activity, including PhD vivas and external examining, to identify what could most readily move online, as well as a corresponding investment in enhancing the University's VC facilities.

For heat and energy, the timeline was less clear. One possibility was requesting an increase in funding for the Sustainable Campus Fund. The aim was to establish three to four major projects, such as introducing hydrogen into the gas pipeline at KB, technologically innovative ideas for Easter Bush, and large scale district heating for the Bioquarter. The ambition was to be market-leading in this space. While it was not this Committee's role to tell SRS or Estates how to allocate their resources, members strongly supported these plans and felt they were ripe for funding. The Committee was also supportive of work by Estates and SRS to provide living lab opportunities. Members asked that it be made clear in subsequent papers that these measures were also about protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

Action – ST & DG to discuss further how to take these work streams forward.

## **6 University Position on Carbon Sequestration and Carbon Offsets**

**E**

SRS Committee noted this position paper on carbon sequestration and carbon offsets agreed at University Executive. As noted in paragraph 3.1, the University planned to reduce demand for energy and resources and only look to sequester what it could not eliminate (principally flights). In the light of significant staff and student interest, members welcomed clarity on this issue.

## **7 Draft Social Investment Fund Document**

**F**

The Committee noted this paper from the Director of SRS drawing together information pertaining to the University's £8M commitment to social investment. SRS Committee had played a role in helping set the overall direction for the fund. Part of the journey toward professionalising the fund, this draft would be developed into a prospectus. Work on impact and risk was ongoing and research was being commissioned to help inform investment decisions.

Members discussed whether the fund could invest in internal projects and spin-offs. While this was possible, it would not help diversify risk. The fund was intended to achieve multiple goals, including financial and social impacts. One aim was to increase the amount of Edinburgh-specific investment. It was important to develop a rigorous framework around the fund to help guide decision making, without over-burdening it with administrative processes, placing excessive demands on senior staff time, or over-spending on advice. Operation of the fund would align with the Community Engagement and SRS Strategies.

Action – TS to share with DG any thoughts on establishing an appropriate amount of research and scoping work.

## **8 Social Investment Performance**

**G**

Members noted this update on early performance of the Social Investment Fund. Quarterly reports were being produced to include how much had been invested, returns to date, and a short commentary highlighting key issues. Edinburgh Innovations were integrating this work into their other business. The Treasury Manager in Finance and Investment Team in EI would take it forward.

## **9 Sustainability Awards, Champions and Building Capacity for Sustainability Across the University**

**H**

The Deputy Director of SRS updated members on the Sustainability Awards for Offices and Labs and alignment with Strategy 2030. The aim was to embed sustainability across the University, ensuring all staff and students had the tools to integrate it into business as

usual. The framework criteria for offices and labs had been reviewed to see where efficiencies could be made, and to strike a balance between not overloading teams or reducing participation to a tick box exercise. The lever of the new Strategic Plan had brought interest from areas which had not previously engaged on these issues. The paper included recommendations for how to manage the growing scheme, including involving students in office audits, and introducing peer reviews of labs. Rather than operating to current timelines, the scheme could transition to running year round. Some concerns had been raised about expanding sustainability criteria to include promotion of vegetarian and vegan diets. Altering this to 'climate conscious diets' was preferred.

Members welcomed the proposed changes, particularly empowering Sustainability Champions to make changes locally, and recommended including more brief video clips focusing on individual stories and staff discussing their personal choices.

Action – All members were encouraged to attend the Awards ceremony in March.

## **10 THE Impact Rankings Submission**

The Committee noted this update on the University's submission to the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2020. While recognising the potential issues and challenges with such a ranking, members felt it was valuable for UoE to participate in the conversation. The submission focused on those SDGs recommended by the Committee and where information was available, recognising that there were stories, particularly around research impact, that had been missed. The results would be published in April.

The Committee thanked Matthew Lawson for his work bringing together the submission, recognising the constraints of the timeframe and of the information available. Next steps would include reflecting on the process for next time, working from this baseline in order to widen involvement and engagement. The aim was to have a champion for each SDG the University would submit against.

Action – MB to share the results with the Committee, including some reflections on performance and process.

Action – MB to take the updated paper to University Executive in May, and PRC and Court in June.

## **11 Community Engagement Delivery Plan**

The Assistant Principal Community Relations gave a verbal update on developments. The Committee had agreed at the previous meeting in October to proceed with the delivery plan. However, once the timetable was drafted, it was realised that it would not allow enough time to co-create a plan with the community and other areas of the University. The delivery plan would have to align with the Civic and Social Responsibility Strategy, which would also slow down the process. A revised timeline had been produced, including further community consultation in March, submission of a draft to SRS Committee in June, going on to University Executive. The aim was to submit a final plan to the Committee in October, going on to UE for sign off before being launched. This revised timeline should allow for sufficient consultation to make for a whole institution approach, connecting to relevant strategies vertically and horizontally, as well as increasing opportunities for community engagement.

Members welcomed the update, recognising in particular the need for UoE to take a socially responsible approach to events such as the Fringe, and the resultant displacement of local populations.

## **12 Any Other Business**

### *SRS Committee Membership*

Members acknowledged the need for representation from HR on the Committee.

Action – ST, DG, LM & MB to meet to review current committee membership, check it was fit for purpose, and secure additional representation where required.



18 August 2020

### **Integrating SDGs in University Committee papers**

#### **Description of paper**

1. The paper adds a new section within the template and guidance for University Executive and Court committee papers with the intention of integrating consideration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Strategy 2030 outcomes into future University committee papers.

#### **Action requested/Recommendation**

2. The Committee is invited to comment on the draft new section (included in Appendix 1) before submission to the University Executive.

#### **Background and context**

3. Integrating the SDGs and Strategy 2030 outcomes into University committee papers is a part of wider efforts to embed these plus the Social and Civic Responsibility Plan and responding to the climate emergency within the ongoing work and planning of the University. Our Social and Civic Responsibility Plan committed us to critically engage with, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. A request to include consideration of the SDGs within all future Court papers was made at a September 2019 Court Seminar on the climate emergency and agreed by Court members. A request was also made to include consideration of Strategy 2030 outcomes within all Policy & Resources Committee papers and it is therefore proposed to:

- Include a new section on both Strategy 2030 outcomes and the SDGs in Court and Court Committee templates given the linkages between Strategy 2030 and the SDGs (e.g. Strategy 2030 outcome number 10 is: 'We will see integrated reporting of our whole organisational impact against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals');
- Seek to also add this new section to University Executive and other key University Committee papers, e.g. Senate and its committees, tailored where appropriate.

5. As a first priority, appropriate Estates Committee papers have included a new sustainability section since December 2019. Feedback has been positive, with engagement from Committee members on the information presented.

#### **Discussion**

6. The template and guidance for University Executive and Court committee papers is attached in Appendix 1, with the new section included within paragraphs 9-10. Paper authors are asked to identify which, if any, of the 13 Strategy 2030 outcomes and 17 UN SDGs the proposals in the paper will contribute towards (or hinder, and if so, any mitigations that would counter-balance this) and evidence for this. The logos for the likely most relevant UN SDGs are included to help encourage their use and engagement by the Committee members when reviewing the paper.

7. Comments on the text in the template would be welcome along with thoughts on other means of engaging committee members and paper authors. It is intended to create support, training and guidance to help authors and committee members and suggestions on what this could entail would be welcome. We wish to avoid a new section being seen as a 'tick box' for both paper authors and committee members and are conscious that additional requirements can be seen as burdensome by both authors and committee members so wish to encourage rather than demand engagement. If committee members critically engage with and discuss information provided in the new section then over time authors are more likely to focus attention on this area, creating a virtuous cycle of engagement. The fact that Court members have requested a section on the UN SDGs is a positive start, as is the Estates Committee experience with a new sustainability section in papers.

### **Resource implications**

8. The intention is to encourage paper authors and University committee members to engage more fully in considering how proposals could impact on the University's Strategy 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals so a greater time commitment is envisaged for both authors and readers. No direct financial implications are envisaged.

### **Risk Management**

9. Greater engagement with Strategy 2030 and the SDGs should reduce the risk that the University does not meet the Strategy 2030 outcomes and SDGs. The extent to which the addition to the paper template have helped foster greater engagement and if improvements could be made could be assessed by Committee members and secretariat support after an initial 12 month period.

### **Equality & Diversity**

10. Many of the Strategy 2030 outcomes and SDGs are directly intended to achieve positive equality and diversity impacts, e.g.

#### Strategy 2030 outcomes with direct equality and diversity impacts

- iv) Improved digital outreach will see us enabling global participation in education.
- v) We will be leading Scotland's commitment to widening participation.
- vi) We will be a destination of choice, based on our clear "Edinburgh Offer". All of our staff and students will develop here, whether they are from Leith, Lisbon, Lahore or Lilongwe.
- viii) Edinburgh will become the Data Capital of Europe. We will deliver inclusive growth, provide data skills to at least 100,000 individuals, and create new companies and solutions for global challenges.
- xii) Multidisciplinary postgraduate education pathways will support flexible whole-life learning.
- xiii) Our estate will be fit for purpose, sustainable and accessible. We will support learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses and partners.

#### Examples of relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals for equality and diversity

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls  
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

### **Next steps/implications**

11. Subject to comments, the paper is intended for submission to the University Executive and then to Court for consultation.

### **Consultation**

12. The paper has been submitted to the SRS Committee for initial consultation, with an earlier draft reviewed by Dave Gorman and Michelle Brown, SRS and Tracey Slaven, GaSP.

### **Further information**

13. Author

Lewis Allan  
Head of Court Services  
11 August 2020

Presenter

Tracey Slaven  
Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning

### **Freedom of Information**

14. Open paper.





**COMMITTEE NAME**

**Date**

**Title of Paper**

**Description of paper**

1. State the purpose of the paper in clear non-technical terms.  
(Length guide: 1 or 2 sentences)

*[Note: text in this section will normally be published even if the paper classed as a 'closed' paper (see Freedom of Information section below)]*

**Action requested/Recommendation**

2. Detail what Court is being invited or recommended to do. If a decision is time-critical identify when a decision needs to be reached by. The text should be short, clear and identify all decisions needed. If there are financial implications, the finance template should also be completed (more details below in the Resource implications section). The [Delegated Authority Schedule](#) can help in clarifying whether Court or another Committee's approval is required. Example: "Court is invited to approve/note/consider/receive x."  
(Length guide: 1-3 sentences)

*[Note: text in this section will normally be published even if the paper classed as a 'closed' paper (see Freedom of Information section below)]*

**Background and context**

3. Court and Committees need to be able to understand very quickly what it is they are being asked to consider and why. This section should cover the reasons for the paper. It may be helpful to state how the topic relates to the Strategic Plan (or not) here.  
(Length guide: 1-2 paragraphs [sequentially numbered])

**Discussion**

4. This is the meat of the paper – please provide sufficient detail for Court Members to understand the issue and any proposals and options.
5. Comments should be focused on essential information and the key issues necessary for good decision-making. Alternative options and arguments for and against proposals can also be included here, as well as the rationale for any course of action. More headings and paragraphs can be added to draw out key issues.

(Length guide: 1-3 pages)

**Resource implications**

6. Please detail here any resource implications associated with the paper. If appropriate, outline the costs and how they will be met. Please specify if funds are being requested. Court will not approve any new policies/procedures where the cost implications are not clearly identified. Normally proposals are expected to be met from within existing budgets and should be approved by the relevant

College/Professional Services Group budget holder, with additional items being identified in the planning round. If the paper requests new resources, over and above approved budgets, or where there is a material re-profiling of existing planned resource the Financial Template must be completed to assess the financial impact of the decision. This should be submitted as an appendix to the paper. Any additional costs, e.g. VAT or other taxes should be specified. Procurement of >£50k for goods or services and >£2million for works must follow new EU Procurement Directives in force from April 2016.

(Length guide: 1-2 paragraphs)

### **Risk Management**

7. Key risks and mitigating measures associated with the proposal should be outlined here. You may wish to reference the [University's Statement of Risk Policy and Risk Appetite](#).

(Length guide: 1 sentence – 1 paragraph)

### **Equality & Diversity**

8. The University is required by law (Equality Act 2010 and supporting Regulations) to give due consideration to equality and diversity. If proposing new or revised policies or practices these also require an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (EIA). Please detail whether equality and diversity has been considered, whether an EIA is required and any major equality impacts.

(Length guide: 1 sentence – 1 paragraph)

*[Note: text in this section will normally be published even if the paper classed as a 'closed' paper (see Freedom of Information section below)]*

### **[DRAFT] Strategy 2030 and UN Sustainable Development Goals**

9. Explain how the proposals in the paper will contribute to the 13 outcomes set out in Strategy 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by completing the following.

This contributes to the following Strategy 2030 outcomes (delete any that are not applicable):

- i) We will see our research having a greater impact as a result of partnership, international reach and investment in emergent disciplines.
- ii) The undergraduate curriculum will support breadth and choice, preparing students, graduates and alumni to make a difference in whatever they do, wherever they do it.
- iii) We will be a global leader in artificial intelligence and the use of data with integrity.
- iv) Improved digital outreach will see us enabling global participation in education.
- v) We will be leading Scotland's commitment to widening participation.
- vi) We will be a destination of choice, based on our clear "Edinburgh Offer". All of our staff and students will develop here, whether they are from Leith, Lisbon, Lahore or Lilongwe.

- vii) We will have created opportunities for partners, friends, neighbours and supporters to co-create, engage with the world and amplify our impacts.
- viii) Edinburgh will become the Data Capital of Europe. We will deliver inclusive growth, provide data skills to at least 100,000 individuals, and create new companies and solutions for global challenges.
- ix) We will have more user-friendly processes and efficient systems to support our work.
- x) We will see integrated reporting of our whole organisational impact against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- xi) We will be on track to be a Carbon-Zero University by 2040.
- xii) Multidisciplinary postgraduate education pathways will support flexible whole-life learning.
- xiii) Our estate will be fit for purpose, sustainable and accessible. We will support learning, research and collaboration with our neighbours, businesses and partners.

This contributes to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (delete any that are not applicable – the most likely appropriate SDGs are listed below with the full seventeen goals listed here:

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>):



*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*



*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*



*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*



*Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all*



*Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*



*Reduce inequality within and among countries*



*Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*



*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*



*Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

10. Provide supporting information beneath the choice of Strategy 2030 outcomes and UN SDGs to justify the contribution of the paper towards these. If the paper does not contribute to the Strategy 2030 outcomes or SDG goals state: This paper does not contribute to the Strategy 2030 outcomes or SDG goals (and explain why, e.g. 'as it fulfilling an external regulatory requirement' or similar). If the proposals would hinder the achievement of any Strategy 2030 outcomes or any UN SDGs please state this and set out any mitigating actions that would minimise or counter-balance the effect.

(Length guide: 2 paragraphs)

### **Next steps/implications**

11. Include a summary of what will happen next, including communications. For example, who will be responsible for overseeing any changes or for implementation?

(Length guide: 1 sentence – 1 paragraph)

### **Consultation**

12. Include details of consultation, whether internally and externally, on the proposals in the paper. Include here whether any other Committees have reviewed the document and their views.

(Length guide: 1 sentence – 1 paragraph)

*[Note: text in this section will normally be published even if the paper classed as a 'closed' paper (see Freedom of Information section below)]*

### **Further information**

#### **13. Author**

Forename Surname  
Position/Area of the University  
XX Month Year

#### **Presenter**

Forename Surname  
Position/Area of the University

### **Freedom of Information**

14. State whether the paper is either an Open paper or a Closed paper. If closed, explain why, e.g. commercial confidentiality.

The default expectation is that papers will be published in full on the University website and are classed as 'open.' Some sections of closed papers are typically still published: the title, purpose, action requested, equality & diversity, consultation, further information and freedom of information sections. If these are also sensitive and should not be published, please inform the Committee secretariat.

(Length guide: 1 sentence)

*[Note: text in this section will normally be published even if the paper classed as a 'closed' paper]*

**Social Responsibility & Sustainability Committee****18 August 2020****Sustainability, Student Experience and the Curriculum:  
*Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals*****Description of paper**

The purpose of this paper is to highlight opportunities and make recommendations for enhancing the student experience at the University of Edinburgh to support achievement of Strategy 2030.

**Action requested/Recommendation**

SRS Committee is asked to review the paper, endorse next steps and **provide any additional suggestions for actions**.

**Background**

In September 2019 the University launched [Strategy 2030](#) with a vision to make the world a better place. Social and Civic Responsibility is a key focus area.

In April 2020, University Executive approved the **Social & Civic Responsibility Plan** which sets out strategic objectives in relation to: the climate and ecological emergency; inclusion and participation; community engagement along with a cross cutting theme to engage critically with, and contribute to the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) in our operations, research, learning and teaching.

A key area of activity recognised in the plan relates to student experience and education. We committed to:

- provide opportunities for students through the academic curriculum and extra-curricular activities to critically engage with the SDGs.
- develop the graduate attributes of students, ensuring they have the skills, knowledge and passion to make a positive difference to society.

In addition, the University's **Climate Emergency Response Plan** (agreed by University Executive Aug 2019) committed to integrate climate change and SDGs into our curriculum.

There is a growing interest from stakeholders to understand how our University integrates sustainability in the curriculum. Standards bodies are currently looking at this with University academics advising. Telling our story of impact needs to connect with this ambition. Reporting on the SDG Accord asks for progress in this area. The University is part of partnerships like **U7** looking to map this (see Annex 1 for recent questionnaire). Leading universities from around the world are similarly taking action highlighted through the recent THE Impact Rankings (see separate paper to SRS Committee). Some progress has been made but there is still a lot to do as this is not yet part of every student's experience.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted learning across the world. As the University plans for reforms to the curriculum, there is an opportunity to integrate changes to ensure sustainability this is part of every student's experience.

**Discussion**

Sustainability means different things to different people and in different contexts. It is outside the scope of this paper to take a deep dive into all of the definitional issues and debates. For

simplicity we can take a broad framing of the United Nations UNESCO on their website in relation to 'Education for Sustainable Development'<sup>1</sup>:

*With a world population of 7 billion people and limited natural resources, we, as individuals and societies need to learn to live together sustainably. We need to take action responsibly based on the understanding that what we do today can have implications on the lives of people and the planet in future. **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers people to change the way they think and work towards a sustainable future.***

The global **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) while not without their criticisms provide a lens for 'sustainability' issues affecting people, planet, peace and prosperity. Through a range of projects and initiatives in 2019/20, the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) together with the Institute of Academic Development (IAD) and a steering group of staff (including members of the SRS Committee) and students initiated a small collaborative project to learn more about how sustainability (and the SDGs) come to life in University programmes and in different schools as well as some of the opportunities and barriers. Key projects have included:

- **SDG Mapping:** Guided by a steering group and through the efforts of a PhD intern and a wider student group, the project aimed to track the inclusion of the SDGs in the curriculum. The project shifted from an initial idea of looking at *all* schools in the University to focusing on one school (Business) in depth and testing the approach. The project applied and adapted a methodology developed by staff and students at the University of Toronto. Full report available [here](#). A follow on project is currently being carried out with Geosciences.
- **Scoping Staff Learning and Development Opportunities:** Learning for Sustainability Scotland (LFSS) led a scoping project to understand the drivers and barriers for integrating SRS issues in learning and teaching. Full report available from SRS.
- **Responsible Futures Benchmark:** Since 2015, we have participated in the National Union of Students 'Responsible Futures' project, with the Students' Association, which looks at how sustainability comes to life for students in the curriculum and the wider student experience.

### **Lessons learned and findings from recent projects and engagement:**

1. **Students want and need this.** Embedding SRS into courses was one of the issues highlighted in the 2019 SRS Department Survey by students. 45% of students who participated in the survey responded that issues relating to SRS featured in their programme. 39% responded that they felt they had enough opportunities to learn about SRS in their programmes. Across the UK, 60% of students who completed the NUS Sustainability Skills Survey in 2019 reported that they want to learn more about sustainability. NUS 'Teach the Future' campaign has a call to action on this. Employers are also looking for this in graduates. Sustainability issues are critical for any organisation. The NSS asks students if 'The skills I have developed during my time in higher education will be useful in my future career'. We have an opportunity (and responsibility) to improve.
2. **Gap in student learning outcomes / graduate attributes and guidance.** Literacy on sustainability (or the SDGs) is not yet defined in the University's student learning outcomes/graduate attributes. The mapping project looked at course engagement with the SDGs rather than on assessment and standards of teaching. Staff indicated there is lack of guidance on what constitutes a "successful" curriculum in relation to integration of the SDGs".

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO definitions also not without criticism in past for people centred approaches etc... Can add links to additional background if useful

3. **Critical engagement with the SDGs.** Our Social & Civic Responsibility Plan committed to critical engagement with the SDGs. While they are a lens for social responsibility and sustainability issues the SDGs are not without criticisms and are also being used by organisations to 'rainbow wash'.
4. **We need more efficient ways to map activity and sign-post sustainability in the curriculum for students.** When we launched the SDG mapping project, we intended to survey all schools, so that the University could have a baseline of how the SDGs are integrated. However, we changed to focus more on the learning in one school rather than focussing on reporting purposes. The work of Reid (2020) and the student team tested an approach which can be used elsewhere. The team were able to (1) illustrate the current inclusion of SDGs in our trial school's curricula; (2) provide a framework for mapping and monitoring of SDG inclusion at other schools; and (3) support staff and students in learning and teaching themes related to these goals<sup>2</sup>. However, this is a resource intensive approach. The project has had numerous other (intended and unintended) benefits but we still do not have a comprehensive overview of opportunities here which not only helps our reporting but, more importantly can help students choose there should be more efficient ways to map activity and sign-post sustainability in the curriculum for students.
5. **Standardised 'sustainability' tagging in DRPS would make it easier** for students to find this information and develop their learning pathways. Course descriptions are often not explicit enough in their links to sustainability. The University could improve communication to students about the elective courses they can select that address the SDGs.
6. **Varying staff interest and capacity.** Much has depended on 'champions' and their own interest in this area. Teaching staff have also indicated the time pressures they are under (exacerbated by Covid). Others have indicated that they are keen but do not know where to go for guidance and support. The Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice has some sustainability related content within the introductory module (but inclusion is a choice of staff delivering the course). Opportunities for staff to explore and discuss these issues is also important.
7. **UoE has great examples to build on.**
  - a. **MA Sustainable Development Degree** Hosted in the School of Social and Political Science, this degree programme has lots of fantastic courses where students explore issues through multidisciplinary social science teaching. In the first year, students study two compulsory courses and chose a main subject area.
  - b. **Sustainability and Social Responsibility Online Course** Developed by the Schools of Geosciences (Prof Dave Reay) and Education (Prof Pete Higgins) and contributions from across the University, this course provides an accessible online learning opportunity for students from any school.
  - c. The **Global Challenges for Business** first year course launched in 2019 (by Dr Sarah Ivory) provides students with an opportunity to explore the role of business in relation to global digital, environmental and social disruption. It was recently recognised through the Aspen awards '10 ideas worth teaching'.
  - d. **Our Changing World Course** Offered via Biomedical Sciences and open to all student, this credit-bearing interdisciplinary course is based on the lecture series with the same name and then global challenges are further explored in facilitated group discussions and project work.

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<sup>2</sup> Reid, Sarah-Kate (2020) "Mapping the Sustainable Development Goals in the University Curriculum. Report for the Department of Social Responsibility & Sustainability".



- e. **Vet School** have undertaken a range of have undertaken a range of projects looking at ways in which we can embed sustainability in our teaching and learning.
- f. **Case Studies in Sustainable Development** is a postgraduate course based in the School of Geosciences which has adopted a Living Lab approach. Students work in groups with the Department for SRS on a projects related to SRS issues in campus across operations, teaching and research. Students undertake research and present their findings and recommendations back to their peers and to key stakeholders.
- g. **Co-curricular opportunities:**
  - i. **Be Sustainable** Online for students provides a simple 40 minute online learning platform to explore sustainability, what it means to the University and how people can get involved and take action. Be Sustainable Advanced (SRS) is a blended learning and development programme for staff.
  - ii. **Sustainability Champions and Student Pathways.** Over 300 students have participated in the Sustainability Champions Network and Student Pathways through SRS. The Student Pathways promote active student-led learning beyond students' main programmes of study, with opportunities for experiential learning on campus and in the community. Students who participate in the Student Pathways can work towards the Edinburgh Award.
  - iii. **Students as Change Agents** facilitated through Careers Service where groups of 5-6 students from different disciplines to tackle real-world problems with a wider social, environmental, or economic impact

## 8. Other Universities are moving quickly in this area

- All degree programmes at the **University of Leeds** include Discovery Modules, providing students with an opportunity to broaden their skills and experience. The Creating Sustainable Futures Discovery Theme allows students from a wide range of disciplines to complete sustainability modules.
- **Aberdeen** has a list of '21<sup>st</sup> Century courses where students must take at least one in years 1 or 2.
- The **University of Bristol** Futures Open Online Courses are open to all students, staff and alumni to develop skills and knowledge around Innovation and Enterprise, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Futures. This is an essential element for students taking the Bristol PLUS Award.
- All students at the **University of Manchester** can take credit-bearing units through the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning. Courses encourage learning around new ways of thinking and key questions facing society. Courses include Climate Change and Society, Global Citizenship and Society, Crisis of Nature. All first year students take part in a Sustainability Challenge during Welcome Week.
- The **University of Auckland**, which topped THE Impact Rankings this year, introduced a new module on sustainability this past year, which is open to both Arts and Science students.

9. **Every discipline but also interdisciplinary.** The students involved in the pilot mapping project urged provision of “more collaborative cross-curricular programmes.” There may be arguments both to ensure that students in any discipline have the opportunity to explore these issues but also the importance of an interdisciplinary approach.

10. **Space in curriculum and between schools a challenge.** Course specificity in many areas was cited as a barrier to integrating sustainability themes (LFSS 2020) although 4 year vs 3 years provide more flexibility. In some courses this was due to perceived requirements of external boards and covering a specific syllabus in a tight time frame

(biomedicine). In other areas people noted lack of clarity on how their subject related to sustainability (linguistics) or the requirements to focus on specific technical knowledge (e.g. engineering or astrophysics). The SDG Mapping project highlighted a need for “better communications between Schools to support student’s creating their own path for learning”.

## Recommendations

There are many important new initiatives happening which will open up more opportunities for students in the context of Education for Sustainable Development. This includes: UNA Europa’s Sustainability Project; new micro-masters on Sustainability; and the Edinburgh Future’s Institute postgraduate degree in Future Sustainability. In addition we recommend:

1. **More opportunities** for ‘open and accessible’ cross disciplinary courses.
  - **Make the current ‘Sustainability and Social Responsibility’ (Education / Geosciences) online’ course even more widely available.** This would require some updates to the course but was recommended by many consulted for this paper. Could provide a flagship course for students in any discipline. Strongly encouraged or mandatory?
2. **Integration into the curriculum reform.** This paper is based on an informal review. As the University is currently reviewing and reforming the curriculum, it is an opportunity to ensure that a vision for all students to have this in their curriculum is embedded. It will be more effective to feed into this broader discussion rather than parallel conversations.
3. **Graduate attributes** should include sustainability with guidance and standards for course leaders as to what this looks like. Different courses across schools to also include lens of sustainability in their disciplines.
4. **Sustainability content could be a mandatory part of the matriculation process** so that every student has had some sustainability content.
5. **Sort out easier and more efficient ways to map sustainability in courses and programmes**
  - a. **Update / Enable DRPS** to tag courses for sustainability and the SDGs.
  - b. **Engage students in the review. A co-curricular student learning opportunity to undertake the mapping at University scale.**
6. **Staff development, support and training.** Support staff to integrate in teaching (and sharing practices) – networks / formal and informal learning. Following on from the working group in place for the SDG mapping project, academics have asked for a ‘community of practice’ to share their experiences. Embed sustainability in the leadership and performance management frameworks across the University so that this becomes a formal part of discussions and development.
7. **Continue to provide additional co-curricular training and learning opportunities.** SRS will continue to support Co-Curricular Pathways and Edinburgh Award and opportunities for Student Sustainability Champions from SRS. Given the current Covid challenges SRS extensive internal and external networks have been drawn upon over recent months to source alternative masters projects at short notice. In 2020 we will deliver Be Sustainable training which encompasses SDGs as well as a new proposed Carbon Literacy training for staff and students and supporting the ‘Students as Change Agents’ (SACHA) Programme for SDG challenges.
8. **Mandate basic information and awareness** through making sustainability part of every student and staff induction.

9. **Celebrate** innovation and inclusion of sustainability in learning and teaching in the Annual Sustainability Awards and explore if the Student's Association could include 'outstanding commitment to sustainability or SDGs' in the annual Teaching Awards.

### **Resource Implications**

There are some actions that SRS can take forward (co-curricular opportunities for student engagement) and will build into planning and there are some actions and recommendations that would need to be reviewed and taken forward by other Depts or by the senior leadership. To meet the University goals in this area more resource will be required to be invested in this area so that all programmes and courses integrate and embed sustainability.

### **Consultation & Next Steps**

This paper was reviewed by members of the SDG mapping working group (Pete Higgins, Liz Bomberg, Liz Grant, Kenneth Amaeshi, Jon Turner, EUSA VP Education) and then an early draft was shared with the Chair of the SRS Committee (Sandy Tudhope) and the VP Students (Colm Harmon).

### **Risk Management**

Covid-19 and its operational and financial impacts will bring risks and opportunities.

### **Equality and Diversity**

Achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change require actions by all organisations and individuals. Climate change impacts disproportionately on the poorest and most vulnerable. Tackling climate change and the SDGs makes a major contribution to global justice, gender, education and protection of natural resources.

### **Further Information**

Michelle Brown, Head of Social Responsibility & Sustainability (SRS) Programmes and Deputy Director of SRS

Matthew Lawson, Student Engagement, Events and Reporting Programme Manager, SRS

Rachel Chisholm, SRS Projects Coordinator: Student Engagement

Based on detailed reports by Sarah Kate Reid and Learning for Sustainability Scotland.

### **Freedom of information**

Open paper.

## Annex 1

### Example of interest from University Partnerships and questions asked

U7 is an important partnership for the University of Edinburgh. 45 Universities. 18 Countries. Committed to tackling global issues. <https://www.u7alliance.org/>

#### Principle 3

**We recognize that our universities have a major role to play in addressing the environmental issues and challenges to sustainability such as climate change, biodiversity and energy transition. This should include leading by example on our own campuses.**

#### Action 2

**Promoting that all students of our universities will have access to courses related to climate, biodiversity and sustainability.**

Championed by the University of Toronto and Paris Sciences et Lettres. 28 U7+ Universities will take part in this action

#### U7 Questionnaire

Do you count how many courses you offer with climate, biodiversity and sustainability content? (Y/N)

If yes, how many courses are offered with climate, biodiversity and sustainability content?

How many undergraduate-level courses are offered with content related to climate, biodiversity or sustainability?

What is the total number of undergraduate courses offered?

How many graduate-level courses are offered with content related to climate, biodiversity or sustainability?

What is the total number of graduate courses offered?

Are these courses made visible and accessible to students? Please provide details and links, if possible.

**Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee****Tuesday 18 August 2020****Social and Civic Responsibility Plan: communications****Description of paper**

1. This paper explains how the University's new Social and Civic Responsibility Plan (SCR Plan) will be communicated to:

- increase awareness of Social and Civic Responsibility (S&CR) amongst students and staff as a focus area of Strategy 2030
- encourage audience action to help achieve its objectives
- act as a stepping-stone towards increasing the presence of social & civic responsibility in the University's internal & external corporate narrative.

**Action requested**

2. The Committee is invited to note and comment on the paper. The author wishes to draw the Committee's attention to paragraph 20 which will be discussed during the meeting.

**Background and context**

3. In September 2019 the University launched [Strategy 2030](#) with a vision to make the world a better place. [Social and Civic Responsibility](#) is a key focus area, and the Strategy makes explicit reference to the University's contribution to the global [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

4. A working group was formed to clarify what the University's commitments to Social and Civic Responsibility were and the key objectives this focus area would achieve. In April 2020, the working group presented a Social and Civic Responsibility Plan to the University Executive. It was approved.

5. As some specific projects within the plan were not yet signed off (e.g. proposals to sequester carbon by planting trees), a decision was made to [publish an executive summary](#) of the delivery plan [*Appendix 1*] so as not to delay communication of the University's objectives in the key area of focus.

6. A [Sustainability \(and Social Responsibility\) Policy](#) (SRS Policy) was also approved in April 2020. This policy sets the University's commitment to sustainability (and social responsibility), the expectations for staff and students around the University, and actions that the whole University community can take to be more sustainable and socially responsible.

**Discussion**

7. Sarah Ford-Hutchinson, SRS Communication Manager, is leading on communicating the SCR Plan & SRS Policy with support from CAM. Andrew Moffat, PR and Media Manager, has been designated as CAM's supporting contact after Kathryn Darcus, Head of Corporate Communications, was reassigned to ART comms.

8. The following 3 activities (A-C) are being undertaken to communicate the SCR Plan.

*A. Raising awareness of the SCR Plan & SRS Policy with key stakeholders*

9. In May 2020, SRS drafted a communications plan for the SCR Plan in order to communicate it (and the SRS Policy) to key stakeholders between May and August 2020. This work is ongoing.

10. Key stakeholders include:

- SRS Committee
- The Directors of SRS, Estates, Edinburgh Global, Widening Participation and the senior lead of Edinburgh Local
- Communications staff within these Units
- Staff within CAM's Corporate Communications, External Affairs, Internal Communications, Marketing and PR & Media teams
- The Students' Association
- Heads of Schools, Colleges and Departments

11. Stakeholders were asked to:

- Read the SCR Plan & SRS Policy
- Consider how to integrate the Plan's objectives into their school / college / department's planning
- Encourage staff within these units to become engaged with the objectives in the SCR Plan
- SRS also offered selected stakeholders (e.g. ISG) a presentation, workshop or training session on how to integrate the plan's objectives into their area of work

12. Communications to schools, colleges and departments is ongoing; SRS are piloting engagement with ISG before deciding how best to engage other Units.

*B. Raising awareness of the SCR Plan & SRS Policy with key audiences*

13. In August 2020, SRS announced the SCR Plan and SRS Policy to its engaged audience of approximately 8000 staff and students via a newsletter and social media. Key stakeholders were encouraged to do the same with their audiences, highlighting what the Plan and Policy were, and how students and staff could get involved with delivery of them.

14. At the time of writing we are yet to review audience engagement with these announcements.

*C. Next steps: increasing the presence of social & civic responsibility in the University's corporate narrative*

15. From February 2020, SRS and CAM's Corporate Communications team had been discussing how to increase the presence of social & civic responsibility in the University's corporate narrative. A year-long communications campaign was drafted as a starting point, in which external events, such as COP26, would be used as a peg for the University to present its achievements, such as climate change research & operational action, both internally and externally.

16. Covid-19 paused this plan as CAM's resource was required to support ART communications.

17. In July 2020, SRS restarted this conversation with CAM and refreshed the draft communications campaign plan, sharing this with communications staff in Edinburgh Local, Edinburgh Global, Widening Participation and Estates for input.

18. It was agreed between each Unit's communications staff that an effort should be made to link relevant stories to the University's SCR focus, thus beginning to increase awareness of SCR actions to both internal and external audiences.

19. At the time of writing, SRS & CAM are yet to agree the format of this campaign, but it is noted that there is a strong desire to make the stories about real people and projects rather than about the Plan itself, which would not receive much traction.

20. SRS believe there are huge reputational advantages to make each of the elements of the University's SCR Plan a more prominent part of the University's corporate narrative. There are also increasing reputational risks in not including zero carbon, zero waste, widening participation and community engagement in the University's corporate narrative, with Covid-19, the drive for a 'green recovery' and current cultural anti-racist work only increasing this risk. This will be discussed with the Committee.

21. Suggested next steps:

- SRS & CAM agree format of campaign and intended audience to raise awareness of SCR activities and ambitions at the University
  - Edinburgh Global, Edinburgh Local and Widening Participation contribute, providing upcoming stories in 2020/21
- SRS & CAM agree ways to further embed SCR into the University's corporate narrative, e.g. in 2021/22 student Prospectus, thought leadership pieces in sector-wide publications, etc.

### **Resource implications**

22. Next steps can be delivered by current SRS & CAM resources, with input from communications staff within Edinburgh Local, Edinburgh Global, Widening Participation and Estates.

### **Risk management**

23. Reputational: unexpected incidents (such as an increase in carbon emissions or waste; exclusion within education; or increased tension with local communities) undermining the objectives of the plan, resulting in our audience rejecting the plan as false promises.

24. Covid-19 resource impacts: staff involved in delivery or communications of the plan have less capacity to drive the plan forward, lessening audience engagement and risking objectives not being met.

### **Equality & Diversity**

25. Concerns about structural racism, increased poverty and the persistence of an economy centred on fossil-fuels are very apparent in the UK's cultural landscape at present. In communicating this plan, the University should engage with these topics and clearly demonstrate how achieving its SCR Plan objectives are paramount to tackling inequalities.

### **Further information**

26. Author & presenter

Sarah Ford-Hutchinson

Communication Manager, Social Responsibility & Sustainability

7 August 2020

### **Freedom of Information**

27. Open paper



# Appendix 1: Social and Civic Responsibility Delivery Plan (Executive Summary)

Published July 2020



## Social and Civic Responsibility - Delivery Plan Summary



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH



### Our focus

The University of Edinburgh's Strategy 2030 sets out our vision to make the world a better place. Our purpose is to address tomorrow's greatest challenges with a values-led approach to teaching, research and innovation, and through the strength of our relationships, both locally and globally. Social and Civic Responsibility is a key focus of our work to ensure that our actions and activities deliver positive change locally, regionally and globally.



### Local and global context

Social and Civic Responsibility can mean lots of different things. We use the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals to guide our work: 17 things humanity must do to ensure peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Our Social and Civic Responsibility objectives closely align with some of these "SDG"s, and contribute to others.

### Our objectives

To deliver Social and Civic Responsibility at the University of Edinburgh, we have chosen three strategic objectives and one cross – cutting theme.

#### 1 We will become a zero carbon and zero waste university.

Developing and pioneering approaches to deliver a zero carbon and circular economy and protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

Aligning with the following SDGs



Contributing to additional SDGs



#### 2 We will widen participation in higher education and support inclusion.

Increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making education and employment an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and globally.



#### 3 We will work together with local communities

to contribute to improve the lives of people across the Edinburgh City Region and beyond.



Cross cutting theme: In our operations, research and teaching we will engage critically with, and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals including the promotion, protection and respect for human rights.



## What does Social and Civic Responsibility mean at the University of Edinburgh?

As a large organisation, how we do things can have both positive and negative impacts on people and the natural environment near and far. We actively choose to increase the positive impact we can have - such as by ensuring greater access to education - and actively seek to reduce any negative impacts - such as carbon emissions. We also contribute positively to society through our teaching, research and innovation, and through the strength of our relationships, both locally and globally. We use our global influence to encourage others to have a more positive impact on people and the planet.



### Our principles

To achieve the University's Social and Civic Responsibility Plan, the following principles will guide our actions:

- Students will be taught about social and civic responsibility and encouraged to develop a passion for this locally and globally.
- Staff will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to ensure their teaching and research can make a positive impact on society.
- University operations, investments and purchasing decisions will have a positive impact on society and any negative impacts will be mitigated.
- We will support physical, mental, emotional and financial wellbeing of our staff and student community, and ensure equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will work in partnership with our neighbours and local communities.
- We will use global partnerships to tackle social and environmental challenges and opportunities.
- We will be transparent and demonstrate accountability through our reporting and communications.

The Social & Civic Responsibility Plan sets out measures of success for 2025 and 2030 and key areas of activity in relation to each of the key objectives and the cross-cutting theme.

Connections to other key strategies and plans around the University:

- [Climate Strategy](#) (2016)
- [Waste Strategy](#) (2018)
- [Widening Participation Strategy](#) (2018)
- [Community Engagement Plan](#) (2020)

**Colleges, Schools, and all Departments are working to support the Plan and integrate action within their own areas.**

The Plan was developed by the University's **Social Responsibility & Sustainability (SRS) Committee** together with staff and students from across the University. The SRS Committee will oversee progress and monitor and review this Plan on behalf of the University's Executive.

For more information on different aspects of the Plan, how you can get involved and how we can work with you contact:

#### **Social Responsibility & Sustainability:**

[www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability](http://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability)

#### **Widening Participation:**

[www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation](http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation)

#### **Edinburgh Local:**

[www.ed.ac.uk/local](http://www.ed.ac.uk/local)

#### **Edinburgh Global:**

[www.ed.ac.uk/global](http://www.ed.ac.uk/global)

## **Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee**

**Tuesday 18 August 2020**

### **THE Impact Rankings – Results, Performance & Process**

#### **Description of paper**

1. The purpose of this paper is to update committee members on the results of the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2020, including the University's performance and the submission process for the next iteration of the rankings.

#### **Action requested**

2. The SRS Committee is asked to note and discuss the paper.

#### **Recommendation**

3. The SRS Committee should note and discuss the paper and provide feedback on the submission process for the next iteration of the rankings.

#### **Background and context**

4. THE Impact Rankings assesses the social, environmental and economic impact of universities based on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The ranking seeks to showcase aspects of university performance not covered in other rankings (i.e. recognising impact of operations).
5. The first iteration of the THE Impact Rankings was published in early 2019, with the University of Auckland topping the rankings. The University of Manchester and King's College London were the leading universities from the United Kingdom, placing joint third and fifth respectively. The University of Edinburgh did not participate in this iteration.
6. While recognising the potential issues and challenges with such a ranking, in June 2019 the SRS Committee endorsed the University's participation in THE Impact Rankings 2020.
7. The minimum requirement for universities was to submit data for four of the Sustainable Development Goals (number 17 which focuses on partnership for the goals was mandatory for all universities), however institutions were allowed to submit data against more of the Sustainable Development Goals. Universities were ranked based on the three Sustainable Development Goals they best perform against and number 17. Participating universities submitted data in January 2020.
8. Each of the Sustainable Development Goals within the rankings has a number of metrics associated with it. Data comes from a variety of sources including direct submissions of universities and bibliometric datasets from Elsevier (including but not limited to citespace, field weighted citation impact, number of papers).

9. The Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability coordinated the University's submission, working closely with Governance and Strategic Planning, and liaised with other departments to collate the required data. Following consultation from key stakeholders and feedback from the SRS Committee, the University submitted data for eleven of the Sustainable Development Goals, covering the academic year 2017-18.

## Discussion

10. The University was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in the THE Impact Rankings 2020 out of 767 institutions, achieving an overall score of 91.8 out of 100. Notable individual rankings included being ranked 4<sup>th</sup> for Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals and being ranked 13<sup>th</sup> for Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Production and Consumption.
11. The University ranked 1st in Scotland, 7th in the UK and 5th among the Russell Group universities. The University achieved top quartile scores for 10 of the 11 Sustainable Development Goals, which we were ranked for. The table below provides a breakdown of the University's rank and score for each Sustainable Development Goal that we submitted evidence for.

Value	UoE's Rank	Institutions ranked	UoE's Score	Top - Worldwide
<b>SDG1: No Poverty</b>	54	372	67.4	88.5
<b>SDG3: Good Health and Wellbeing</b>	89	620	76.2	90.8
<b>SDG4: Quality Education</b>	101–200	676	61.4	95
<b>SDG7: Affordable and Clean Energy</b>	38	361	70.9	83.2
<b>SDG8: Decent Work and Economic Growth</b>	201–300	479	53.8	83.8
<b>SDG9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure</b>	39	494	90.8	100
<b>SDG11: Sustainable Cities and Communities</b>	89	470	72.6	94.8

<b>SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production</b>	13	360	85.6	92.3
<b>SDG13: Climate Action</b>	30	376	66.3	84.8
<b>SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</b>	39	453	80.2	90.6
<b>SDG17: Partnership for the Goals</b>	4	806	97.2	99.2

12. The University of Auckland topped the rankings with an overall score of 98.5. Half of the top ten placed universities were from Australia and New Zealand. The University of Bologna was placed 6<sup>th</sup> and was the top ranked European university with an overall score of 96.1. The University of Manchester was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> with an overall score of 95.6 and was the top ranked UK university.

13. Results for the THE Impact Rankings 2020 were published in April 2020. Participating universities were provided free access to their own scores, including metric scores for the Sustainable Development Goals that evidence was submitted for. Universities can only view the overall scores (including the three best performing Sustainable Development Goals and number 17) of other institutions. A more detailed breakdown is available at a cost.

14. A review of the metrics where the University scored well has been completed. The University generally performed well against research metrics, with scores ranging from 80.3 to 99.3. Other metrics the University scored highly on included community anti-poverty programmes; support of arts and heritage; sustainability reporting; working with government; education for the Sustainable Development Goals; relationships to support the Sustainable Development Goals and patents citing university research. All these metrics scored 100.

15. A review of the metrics where the University scored lower has been completed. The University did not score highly around the number and proportion of graduates in certain fields (including law and civil enforcement, health professions, teaching qualifications with a focus on primary education). Smaller or less comprehensive universities with relevant departments are likely to have scored better for this. Other metrics the University did not score highly on included energy use density (important to recognise number of historic buildings); low carbon energy use (strict definition of renewables); proportion of students

receiving financial aid (strict definition of absolute poverty); spend on arts and heritage (complex figure to calculate due to wide range of functions with responsibility) and proportion of first generation students (defined as first generation first degree entrants as a proportion of all first degree entrants).

16. Following the publication of the results, the International Sustainable Campus Network completed a survey of their membership who participated in the THE Impact Rankings 2020. Key findings included a growing momentum of universities participating and planning to participate in the rankings; universities spent on average a total of six weeks to collate and complete their submissions; universities adopted three main strategies for submissions (broad selection, selection based on self-improvement, minimal selection); concerns over the methodology and in particular the overall scoring; and the need for more transparency in the publication of the rankings.
17. Collating the data required for the submission was a significant project, assisted greatly by the guidance and support provided by Governance and Strategic Planning. The already established reporting procedures the University has for social responsibility and sustainability issues were also beneficial. Through analysing the results we have identified opportunities to address some of the metrics where the University scored lower on and also ways to further strengthen evidence where the University ranked well, including providing more impact case studies of research. The experience gained in this first year of participation has been incredibly valuable and will support efforts to improve the University's position in the next iteration of the rankings.

### **Resource implications**

18. Resource to support the University submission to the THE Impact Rankings 2020 was covered by existing resource from the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability and Governance and Strategic Planning. Data was collated from a range of internal departments. Staff resource to coordinate the University's submission to the next iteration of the rankings has been built into the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability's annual planning.

### **Risk management**

19. There was a clear reputational risk for the University if it did not participate in the rankings this past year due to the inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals in the University's Strategic Plan 2030. We worked extensively with departments from across the University to submit a detailed submission, however important to recognise the University did not perform as well as expected against some of the individual Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure the University improves its ranking in the next iteration, we have analysed our performance and have identified specific opportunities to improve our scoring.

## **Equality and Diversity**

20. A key aim of the submission is to report the University's progress on equality and diversity issues, however we recognise that more can be done. Work will be undertaken, as part of collating our submission, to identify academic research, teaching and outreach projects that are led or involve Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, staff and communities. We will engage with RACE.ED and stakeholders from under-represented groups in the university community.

## **Next steps/implications**

21. Registration for THE Impact Rankings 2021 is now open. The detailed methodology for this iteration will be published in August 2020. Data collection will commence on 1 October 2020 and complete on 30 November 2020. The results will be published in April 2021. Important to note that this is a shorter timeline for data collection than last year.
22. The Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability will complete the registration process on behalf of the University and work with Governance and Strategic Planning to review the methodology when published and start collating data.

## **Consultation**

23. Key stakeholders have been consulted throughout this process, from the decision to participate in the rankings to the analysis of the rankings and scores. This paper incorporates analysis from Governance and Strategic Planning.

## **Further Information**

24. Author and presenter

Matthew Lawson

Student Engagement, Events and Reporting Manager

## **Freedom of information**

25. Open paper.



**Social Responsibility and Sustainability Committee****18/08/2020****Good Food Policy Update****Description of paper**

1. This paper summarises progress made towards implementing the University's Good Food Policy and presents an updated version of the Policy. It identifies a number of future priorities including the formation of a Good Food Working Group to oversee future action.

**Action requested**

2. The Committee is invited to note and discuss the University's updated Good Food Policy 2020 and associated activities.

**Recommendation**

3. The committee is ask to endorse the next steps and priorities identified in section 10 of this document.

**Background and context**

4. The way food is produced, processed and consumed has a considerable impact on planetary and human health. The food system estimated to contribute between 19 to 29% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Most food production depletes natural resources like fresh water, fertile soil and forests faster than they can be regenerated.

5. The food system also has far-reaching impacts for our economy and our society. Millions of people are employed in food supply chains, but many of these jobs are precarious or poor quality. Many people eat too much of the wrong types of food while others are malnourished and go hungry. A third of all food is lost or wasted.

6. In 2016, the University developed a [Good Food Policy](#)<sup>1</sup> setting out our commitment to support sustainable food systems by taking action in five areas: sourcing, provision, practice, research learning & teaching and leadership & culture. The Policy recognises the need to keep food systems within environmental limits and to support sustainable livelihoods for people involved in food supply chains. Our vision is to run a responsible catering service that succeeds in providing healthy, sustainable and affordable food to the University community. We also aim to support staff and student-led projects and research on these issues.

7. The Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS Department), the Department for Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) and the Procurement Office are jointly responsible for delivering the Good Food Policy. We have worked together to put our commitments into practice and to identify areas for further improvement. In 2019, the University won an EAUC Green Gown Award in

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<sup>1</sup> The Good Food Policy and a description of our current priorities can be found on the SRS Department website at <https://edin.ac/2D559og>.



the Campus Health, Food and Drink category for our commitment to responsible catering and our whole institution approach.

8. The positive actions we have taken to date include<sup>2</sup>:

- The introduction of a 30p levy on single use coffee cups in all University cafés and food outlets in August 2018, leading to a 46% reduction in disposable coffee cup purchases up to March 2020
- An increase in the number and variety of plant-based and vegetarian products in ACE-run outlets.
- An increase in the number of fairly traded and locally sourced ingredients and products.
- ACE increased its Sustainable Restaurant Association rating and retained a number of other health and nutrition awards.
- Successful adoption of the Too Good To Go food waste-prevention app to sell surplus food from University cafes.
- Partnership with a Scottish company to recycle coffee grounds from University cafes into compost to be used by our Landscape team.
- Adoption of a University Palm Oil Policy setting out our commitment to buy sustainably sourced palm oil.
- Training roughly 150 students per year to cook healthy meals from scratch at the Pollock Halls Cook School, run by University chefs.
- Research opportunities for students in partnership with the SRS Department.

## **Discussion**

### **9. The Good Food Policy 2020**

In 2020, SRS coordinated a light touch update of the Good Food Policy. The Policy now contains more specific and ambitious commitments to discourage the purchase of bottled water, to ensure that at least 50% of options in University outlets are vegetarian or plant-based, and to remove disposables and single use plastics from our catering service wherever possible. A comparison of key changes can be found in Appendix A at the end of this paper.

### **10. Next steps**

Significant progress has been made towards enacting our Good Food Policy. In order to meet the University's Social & Civic Responsibility ambitions, and our Waste, Climate and revised Good Food commitments, we must continue taking steps to remove single use plastics and disposable items from catering, reduce the carbon footprint of food served on campus, encourage healthy and sustainable diets, support fair trade, and promote good food throughout the city region.

Going forward, ACE and SRS have agreed to establish a working group with representation from ACE, Procurement, Estates, SRS, researchers and Sabbatical Officers to enable coordination on these shared goals and ensure that commercial considerations, civic and social responsibility commitments and staff / student views are taken into account.

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<sup>2</sup> More details about our sustainable catering practices can be found in the Good Food at a Glance infographic, which is linked on the SRS website at <https://edin.ac/30w7IIC>.

Key priorities in 2020-21 will include:

- Assessing alignment our catering practices against the University's climate goals.
- Pursuing measures to remove single use plastics and disposable items from catering activities, including consideration of new innovations such as closed loop reusable grab n' go packaging.
- Contributing to efforts to tackle food insecurity and support sustainable food systems in our local city region.
- Expanding sourcing of fairly traded products and ingredients where available.
- Agreeing a set of Good Food KPIs and targets to assist with monitoring.
- Bringing proposals and recommendations to SRS Committee where appropriate.

### **Resource implications**

11. Proposals will be met from within existing budgets.

### **Risk Management**

12. There are risks associated with failing to meet our Good Food, Climate and Waste commitments. The proposed priorities and working group will help the respond to emerging issues and fulfil its targets.

### **Equality & Diversity**

13. Climate change and resource scarcity disproportionately impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable. Tackling unsustainable food systems makes a major contribution to alleviating poverty, improving health and protecting natural resources.

### **Next steps/implications**

14. The Good Food Working Group will meet in autumn 2020 and then regularly thereafter.

### **Consultation**

15. This paper was reviewed and approved by the Director of Catering and the Deputy Director of SRS. The Good Food Policy was updated in consultation with ACE, Procurement, student sabbatical officers and the University's Waste Manager. It was reviewed and approved by the Directors of SRS, Catering and Procurement.

### **Further information**

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3 August 2020

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### **Freedom of Information**

17. This is an open paper.

## Appendix A

Below is a comparison of the key changes to the Good Food Policy.

Good Food Policy 2016	Good Food Policy 2020
“Use traceable ingredients that minimize harm to the environment and uphold the highest standards of animal welfare from farm to plate.”	“Use traceable ingredients that minimize harm to the environment and where financially viable ensure meat is Red Tractor assured balanced with ability to also benefit from more local supply with provenance.”
“Offer better quality meat and attractive vegetarian and vegan options.”	“Offer better quality meat and attractive vegetarian and vegan options. We will ensure that 50% of meal options in our outlets are vegetarian or plant-based by July 2020, including Pollock Halls and our cafes.”
“Provide free tap water in all catering outlets and buildings and encourage staff and students to use tap water in preference to bottled water.”	“Actively discourage bottled water purchases by providing accessible tap water points across the University, selling affordable reusable bottles in University shops and cafes, charging higher prices for bottle water in our outlets and offering a supplier route for departments to buy water jugs for events and meetings.”
“Take action to minimise food and packaging waste generated from our activities.”	“Support the University’s Zero Waste ambition by minimising food and packaging waste wherever possible. This will include removing single use disposables from University catering at every opportunity, discouraging the use of disposable items, exploring circular economy initiatives and ensuring no edible food is wasted. We will continue to recycle all coffee grounds, which are turned into fertiliser and oil for the cosmetics industry.”