

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER AND CLIMATE ACTION

Here we provide some information about the University of Manchester as an organisation, and shine a light on the work being done by students at the University. These are organisations that you can also be part of.

The University, like any large organisation (a company, a hospital, a whatever) uses a lot of energy and resources, and like most, has developed plans which (cl)aim to do something about this. One thing you could do in your time here is help to hold them to account for these plans. Are they on target? Are the plans ambitious enough anyway.

But a university is NOT exactly like a company, a hospital or a whatever, because it is also a place where research about the world is done, and where young people receive additional opportunities to become more informed, more thoughtful people.

So, how is the university doing on THAT? Is climate change genuinely embedded in the curriculum? Are students being taught the basics of how to “be” citizens, who are critical and effective actors who can be useful to society in the 21st century?



The University of Manchester is the largest single-site university in the UK, and has one of the biggest student communities as well. As of 2019, there are over 26,855 undergraduate students and 13,395 students enrolled in postgraduate taught and research courses. Furthermore, there are currently 12,800 staff members engaged in academic teaching and research, as well as IT, administrative and secretarial services. In July 2019, the University declared a climate emergency.

## FACULTIES AND SCHOOLS

The University is divided into three faculties, and within each are different Schools. A detailed guide of each Faculty and its constituent Schools is available here. A brief overview includes:

- **The Faculty of Humanities** which consists of four academic Schools - the Alliance Manchester Business School, the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, the School of Environment, Education and Development and the School of Social Sciences
- **Faculty of Science and Engineering** comprises the School of Engineering (chemical engineering, computer science, mechanical, aerospace and civil engineering) and the School of Natural Sciences (physics, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, earth and environmental sciences)
- **Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health** which is made up of the School of Biological Sciences, the School of Health Sciences and the School of Medical Sciences offering cross-disciplinary research.

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## UoM CLIMATE ACTION (CONTINUED)

We believe that you as students should focus at least some of your energies on your school - what is it teaching undergraduates, is it up to date, is it relevant, and also at the Faculty level. Is climate change education embedded not just in nice mission statements but also in all of the day-to-day thinking and doing. This is of course not glamorous, but on the up-side, you won't get arrested/tasered/deported.

### **These are some schools and institutes within the University that may be of interest:**

The **Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research** was founded in 2000 as a collaboration across several UK universities, including University of Manchester. It engages in multidisciplinary research across energy systems, carbon budgets and pathways, the water-energy-food nexus, communities, and circular economy. Furthermore, the research undertaken at Tyndall has been useful for guiding policy responses to climate mitigation and adaptation at the regional, national and international level. Academics, research fellows, post doctoral research associates and PhD researchers at Tyndall Manchester also collaborate with researchers at the University of East Anglia, Newcastle University and Cardiff University. More information on the research at Tyndall is also available on their [website](#).

The **Sustainable Consumption Institute** was established in 2008 and has since worked on transformations to more resource-efficient consumption and production systems. Research at the Institute focuses on four themes: studying social practices in our everyday lives, system innovation and transformation, examining the politics of unsustainability and working towards sustainability by engaging multiple stakeholders. Like the Tyndall Centre, the research undertaken at the SCI has also informed policy responses at different levels, including initiatives at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the the UK Women's Budget Group Commission on a Gender Equal Economy. More information is available on the [SCI website](#).

The **Manchester Environmental Research Institute (MERI)** brings together academics from health sciences, engineering, social sciences and humanities to foster interdisciplinary environmental research. The research at MERI focuses on human health, food and agriculture, water resources, energy and changing ecosystems. You can find out more on the [MERI website](#).

There are also MANY academics who are interested in climate change, both personally and professionally. If you threw a rock at the Arthur Lewis building (we are speaking metaphorically here), you'd probably hit one (please don't do this). Geographers, Political Scientists, Sociologists "etc." We've included an interview with one such academic, Dr Joe Blakey, on the following page.

There is also an online course, which ANYONE can take, and counts towards your degree. **University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL)** offers modules to address the urgency of climate change. The 2020-21 course units focus on climate change include [Climate Change and Society](#), addressing [21st Century Challenges](#) and [applying the Sustainable Development Goals in practice](#).

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## THE UNIVERSITY'S PLANS AND PROMISES: EMISSIONS, TARGETS AND MEASURING PROGRESS

The University has developed a Sustainable Resource Plan to encourage resource efficiency. The plan covers ten delivery areas: Carbon reduction (Scope 1 and 2 emissions), energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, responsible purchasing and sustainable travel, technical spaces, construction, IT services, catering and conferencing. Targets have been set across each of these areas until 2022, and the University has committed to publishing annual reports that outline specific action plans to meet these targets. A detailed plan of each delivery programme and its 2022 targets can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#). The devil is always in the detail, and your skills at researching, and asking awkward questions, and knowing when you are being distracted or diverted, are needed to help scrutinise and figure out what is actually going on.

Focussing on carbon emissions, the University has proposed to reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 40% by 2020 calculated from its baseline year 2007/08. The most recent update (in 2018/19) shows that the University is on track to meeting its goal; it has reduced its emissions by 37% from the baseline measure. However, it must be noted that these emissions pertain to scope 1 and 2 activities. Put simply, Scope 1 refers to all direct emissions produced by the burning of fuels, owned and controlled by an organisation. Scope 2 refers to the indirect emissions from the generation of electricity purchased and used by the organisation (e.g. the emissions from supplying energy to power computers, heating and cooling systems). Scope 3 emissions, also known as consumption-based emissions, refers to other indirect emissions from sources that an organisation does not own or control. For instance, this includes emissions from the procurement of goods and services which are consumed by an organisation but may be produced in another region or country.

The university's carbon budget has focused on scope 1 and 2 emissions. The Sustainable Resources plan contains non-carbon targets for scope 3 activities, such as Active Travel measures and Sustainable Catering targets. However, while writing this section, we were not able to access a detailed report on Scope 3 activities, either because it was restricted for the use of staff or because it was archived. This is hardly democratic or transparent. If it wants to be taken seriously, the university needs to reveal these numbers and to commit to publishing them regularly.

## CLIMATE ACTION INITIATIVES AT THE UNIVERSITY

As a part of its Social Responsibility initiative, UoM has launched the 10,000 Actions challenge to educate and support staff by encouraging sustainable personal actions. It is the biggest sustainability initiative for staff in the UK. As a part of the University's 'Ethical Grand Challenges' initiative, all first-year undergraduates can participate in the Sustainability Challenge which involves working in interdisciplinary teams to brainstorm sustainability-focused solutions and ideas while developing plans for an ideal sustainable future campus. Feedback in previous years about the Sustainability Challenge as a semi-compulsory activity has been mixed, to say the least.

The University has also committed to eliminate avoidable single-use plastics by 2022, and is working with regional universities and colleges in the Greater Manchester area to achieve this goal. So far, the university has encouraged 'plastic-free' events on campus and has also ensured that Food on Campus outlets sell food that is wrapped in biodegradable plant-based packages.

The Students' Union has also expanded the 'Want not Waste' shop which offers a range of plastic-free, zero waste products. The Students Union is a separate body from the academic university, and is both run by and for students. This means that the SU has the power to campaign with and on behalf of the students it supports. It is, as the name suggests, a Union separate to the University hierarchy.