



Climate Action Roadmap for Colleges

Version 2

November 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Climate change and ecological destruction are some of the biggest challenges of our time. Further Education (FE) institutions, like all institutions, have a responsibility to address them; and to meet the UK Government's target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

In 2019, the Climate Commission for UK Higher and Further Education was established to develop a strategic, sector-wide approach to tackle the climate emergency. In 2020, the Commission engaged Nous Group to support them to develop the 'Climate Action Roadmap' for further education colleges to reach the net zero target.



In 2023, we sought feedback from the sector on how they engaged with the roadmap and its impact, which was met with positive results. However, to ensure its continued relevance, the roadmap needed updated to reflect the evolving landscape of environmental sustainability and education.

Four years after its initial release, AoC and EAUC have collaborated to revise the roadmap, adding new tools, resources and a roadmap dashboard tool to help colleges monitor their journey towards sustainability. We engaged the sector to gather feedback, ensuring that the roadmap remains relevant to the current sustainability challenges faced by FE institutions.

While the roadmap offers a universal framework, the actions outlined are adaptable to each institution's unique context. This flexibility allows educators and staff to interpret and apply the roadmap in line with their specific setting.

HOW TO USE THIS ROADMAP

▶ **The roadmap includes three 'levels'** of colleges' approaches to sustainability, organised by different levels of maturity:

- **Emerging:** colleges just beginning to address sustainability
- **Established:** colleges with an established approach to sustainability and structures in place to support it
- **Leading:** colleges which are models to others on sustainability

▶ **Each 'level' contains a series of initiatives** colleges can implement to reach net zero emissions and improve their environmental impact.

These initiatives are categorised into the same categories as EAUC's 'Sustainability Leadership Scorecard':

- Leadership and Governance
- Learning, Teaching and Research
- Estates and Operations
- Partnerships and Engagement.

We have also added another category, data collection and reporting.







▶ The roadmap is intended **to be used by college Principals and their leadership teams, students and other members of the college community.** Although many of the initiatives require executive action or investment, **students should be seen as partners in developing and implementing the college's approach to sustainability.** The roadmap can also be shared by the college with other stakeholders – such as local authorities or businesses – to explain their approach to reach net zero emissions.

To assist colleges in using the roadmap, a **dashboard tool** has been created as a baseline template for tracking progress and monitoring sustainability actions over time.

▶ **This roadmap shows just ONE possible path to reach net zero emissions.** Because it is intended for the whole sector, it does not take into account the range of contexts colleges operate in and different opportunities. Every college's journey will look different. We encourage you to **amend these actions to fit your institution** and use this roadmap as a 'starter' as you begin to develop your own roadmap to net zero.

▶ The newly added actions have an **asterisk '*'** at the beginning of the action and throughout the document.

▶ Each **initiative has both a 'cost' and 'time' rating.** Because every college is different, it is not possible to estimate this precisely. Instead, the ratings should give a sense of whether the cost and time is high/medium/low. As a general guide, we would estimate the following:

COST	EXPLANATION	TIME	EXPLANATION
LOW 	Main cost is staff time	LOW 	Less than 6 months
MEDIUM 	Additional costs (e.g. £10-50k) and/or substantial staff time	MEDIUM 	6 months – 1.5 years
HIGH 	Additional costs (>£1m) and/or very substantial staff time	HIGH 	+1.5 years

▶ The revised roadmap has included new resources available to assist colleges in sustainability. Some of these are linked throughout this document, while others are available with the EAUC, SOS-UK, and others. Colleges looking for inspiration should look to awards like the [Green Gown Awards](#) and [AoC Beacon](#) to learn from and share good practices across the sector.

CLIMATE ACTION ROADMAP ACTIVITIES BY AREA



EMERGING



ESTABLISHED



LEADING

Leadership and Governance

Gather college views on sustainability

Establish Sustainability Committee

Meet with leaders to set net zero target

Incorporate net zero ambitions in strategic plan and establish ring-fenced budget

*Develop climate adaptation/ climate risk mgmt. approach

*Incorporate sustainability into governance arrangements

Embed climate responsibility into all staff development

Teaching, Learning, and research

Deliver carbon literacy training to staff and students

*Engage teaching and learning community with ESD

*Include sustainability in learner progression IAG

Participate in Global Goals Teach In

*Create an ESD baseline and action plan

*Ensure staff have access to CPD and incorporate sustainability in their professional practice

*Audit curriculum against SDGs using Responsible Futures framework

*Establish ESD partnerships

*Measure your ESD outcomes and impacts

Estates and Operations

*Complete a single use plastics and takeaway cup audit

Implement strategies to reduce energy use

*Modify estates strategy in-line with net zero target

Apply for funding to improve energy efficiency/reduce emissions

Set and implement targets to reduce waste on campus

*Implement travel policy to reduce emissions from commuting to/from campus

*Develop and implement biodiversity-positive approaches to estates management

Implement renewable energy on a part of/all of the estate

Expand travel policy to reduce long-haul aviation travel

Partnerships and Engagement

Sign Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges

Negotiate with food suppliers for sustainable food options

*Join communities of practice, and network groups

Sign the SDG Accord

*Join or establish climate action network with local council

*Develop sustainable procurement policy and strategy

Work with local community/council/businesses to improve local biodiversity

*Develop fossil fuel divestment plan

*Apply for Green Gown (UK Wide) or AoC Beacon award (England only)

Data Collection and Reporting

Upskill on measuring emissions

Measure college carbon footprint using existing data

*Publish targets and related strategies

*Conduct biodiversity survey of estate

*Develop and implement plan to measure and report all Scope 1, 2 and significant scope 3 emissions

Share carbon footprint data collection approach as model to other colleges



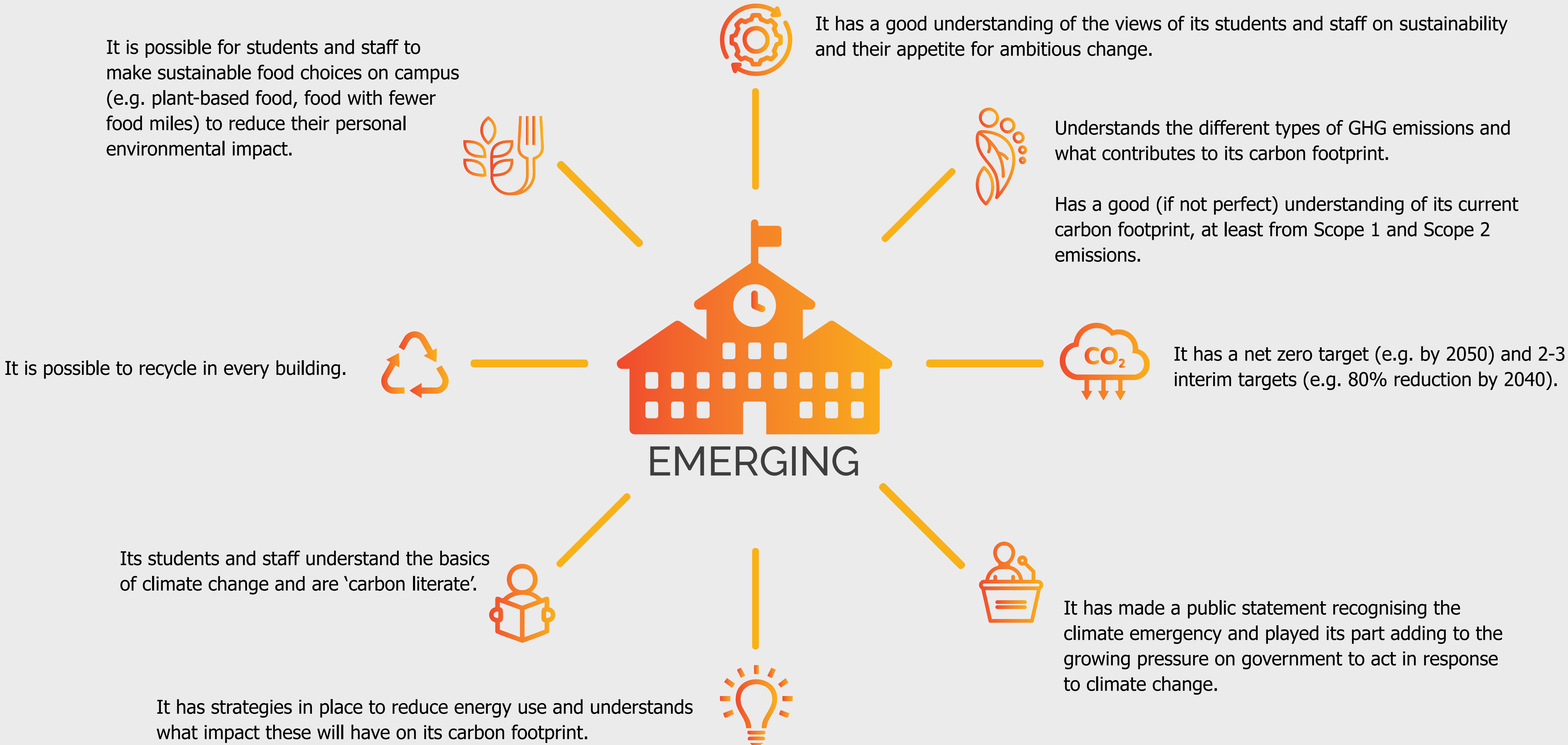
Emerging



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WHAT DOES AN 'EMERGING' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?



EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

Leadership and Governance

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Gather college's views on climate change and sustainability.

- Develop and distribute a short online survey to students and staff to gather their views on sustainability and assess their ambition for action in the college.
- Include questions like 'how important is sustainability for you?', and 'in what ways would you like to see the college respond to climate change?'
- Use resources like the [FE Governance Toolkit](#) and [Code of Good Governance](#).

Understanding the appetite for action to combat climate change among the college community will help to build the case for change.



Staff time is involved in designing, distributing, and analysing the survey.



Approximately 2 months.

Establish a Sustainability Committee/Group:

- Establish a group of roughly 10 people who meet regularly, with responsibility for delivering sustainability initiatives.
- The group should include students and staff, including a member of the college's leadership team.

This group will give a face to and help to drive forward the sustainability agenda in the college. Including a member of the leadership team will ensure the group has clout. Including students will make sure it is representative of the whole community.



Only cost is staff time involved in the committee.



Approximately 1 month.

Meet with college leaders to set net zero targets and sustainability ambitions

- Hold a meeting/workshop with the Sustainability Committee, senior leadership team and governors to discuss level of ambition for net zero and sustainability targets.
- Set net zero target (e.g. 2050, or more ambitious and earlier?).
- Set interim targets (e.g. 50% reduction by 2030).

College leaders will ultimately be responsible for delivering on these targets, so it is important they are involved in setting them. Having an explicit discussion about the level of ambition, and how quickly the college can achieve net zero will help to ensure initiatives are practical and appropriate to the college's context.



Staff time being involved in the workshop.



Approximately 1 month (including preparation and holding the meeting).

EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

Teaching, Learning, and Research

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?


How long will it take?

Deliver carbon literacy training to staff and students

- Design and deliver 1-day carbon literacy training to all staff and students with support from carbon literacy programmes such as the [Carbon Literacy Project](#) (which offers a day's worth of training on climate change, carbon footprints and other environmental issues).
- Use the [Sustainability Champion Learning Pack](#)¹ to enhance professionals, trainers and students' sustainability awareness.

The college community must have a good understanding of climate change, what causes it, and how it is likely to affect them if they are to take action in response. The Carbon Literacy project delivers this foundational understanding and shows individuals actions they can take to reduce their individual environmental impact.


 There is a cost involved in the Carbon Literacy Project certifying/delivering training for the college. For more information contact info@carbonliteracy.com


 Approximately 2 months to arrange then deliver training.

*Engage teaching and learning community with ESD (Education for Sustainable Development)

- Raise awareness of why climate education, and education for sustainable development more broadly, amongst teaching and learning staff.
- Gather feedback and ideas from students as well as educators to help shape and refine the organisation's ESD strategy and practices.
- Use [Monitoring ESD Colleges](#) to refer to a six-step framework for monitoring and evaluating ESD.

Empowers staff and students to understand and address sustainability challenges, fosters a culture of shared responsibility, ensures your ESD strategy reflects diverse perspectives, enhancing its relevance and impact, and allows you to identify those with existing expertise and enthusiasm.


 Costs to train staff on ESD.

 Approximately 3-6 months to raise awareness and gather feedback.

*Include sustainability in learner progression IAG (information, advice and guidance)

- By highlighting green career pathways, integrating ESD competencies and values into career advice, including relevant information in tutorial content, and promoting courses that align with sustainability-focused industries.
- Use the [Green Careers Guide](#) to support learners in green careers and [Showing the Pathway to Green Jobs](#) for support staff.

To prepare learners for the growing demand in sustainability-related sectors, helping them make informed, future-proof career choices while contributing to wider societal sustainability goals.

 Costs to staff time to integrate learner progression.

 Ongoing process.

(1) An EAUC members-only resource.

EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

Data Collection and Reporting

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Upskill on measuring emissions/carbon footprint

- Sustainability team and others learn about how to measure carbon footprint, including Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions.
- Use resources like [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#) guidance, [Standardised Carbon Missions Framework \(SCEF\)](#), and [guidance from EAUC on measuring Scope 3 emissions in HEI context](#).
- Connect with other colleges (e.g. leading colleges) to learn from others in the sector.
- Sustainability committee share their knowledge with others.

Measuring an institution's carbon footprint can be tricky. Take the time to first learn how to do this, drawing on external resources.

Educating others will help reporting to be more effective. The Department for Education² sustainability and climate change strategy, including its target for all educational settings in England to have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place Climate Action Plans by 2025, which includes curricular and extra-curricular activity.



Staff time to upskill and share resources.



Approximately 1 month.

Measure college carbon footprint using existing data

- Sustainability team collect available data to measure College's carbon footprint.
- Aim to measure Scope 1 and Scope 2 using the SECR tool. Try to estimate Scope 3, if possible.
- Use freely available existing tool to measure and project emissions, such as Carbon Footprint and Project Register Tool.

Even if the college has patchy data, it is important to measure its current carbon footprint as accurately as possible, to establish a baseline and inform your net zero targets. This should also reveal gaps in the college's current data collection.



Staff time involved in collecting data/measuring.



Approximately 2-3 months.

*Publish sustainability targets and related strategies

- Based on the results of the workshop, share the college's net zero target and interim targets (e.g. net zero by 2040, 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025) with the wider college community.
- Publish targets on college website.

Publishing targets signals the college's sustainability ambitions to the whole community, including partners and external stakeholders. It is important to be transparent about your sustainability goals, policies and actions to date.



Staff time (e.g. marketing/communications team/individual).



Approximately 1 week (working between sustainability committee and comms person/team).

*Conduct biodiversity survey of estate

- Complete habitat and biodiversity surveys of your estate at different points in the year to create a baseline for your estate.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. However, with changes in estates management and planning, organisations can radically improve the biodiversity of their estate whilst also improving the student and staff experience and reducing climate risks.



Staff time involved in conducting surveys.



Approximately 6 months to account for the different seasons.

(2) The Department for Education is for England colleges only.

EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

Estates and Operations

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Implement strategies to reduce energy use

- Identify opportunities to reduce energy use (e.g. by doing an energy walk-around, different heating and cooling timers, campaigning to switch off lights).
- Draw on free and publicly available resources/guidance, such as the [Carbon Trust's guide to energy saving](#) and [Catapult Public Sector Decarbonisation Guidance](#).
- Report to the college community how much energy has been saved and the impact on the college's carbon footprint.

There are likely to be several low or no-cost initiatives the college can implement to reduce its energy use before it begins to explore higher cost options to increase energy efficiency and eventually explore renewable energy. Focusing on these 'quick wins' first will reduce the college's carbon footprint straight away and build momentum for future initiatives.



Staff time involved in designing and implementing initiatives.



It may take longer than 6 months to design and implement these initiatives and report on their results.

*Complete a single use plastics and takeaway container audit and implement actions for their removal/reduction

- Identify the use of single-use plastics and takeaway containers across the campus.
- Develop an action plan to transition to use reusable sustainable packaging.

By removing single use plastics and catering containers, not only is the organisation reinforcing a strong sustainability culture, but it also stops problems such as recycling contamination further down the line.



Staff time in completing a waste audit.



Approximately 2 – 3 months to complete the audit.

Modify estates strategy in-line with net zero targets

- Sustainability committee work with estates director/estates to modify the college's estates plan in-line with net zero targets.
- This may include introducing space optimisation measures to avoid building new buildings; implementing refurbishment measures to improve energy/water/waste efficiency; making sure new buildings are BREEAM standard 'excellent'.

Optimising the college's estate (rather than building new buildings) and improving the efficiency of existing buildings through refurbishment is a powerful way to reduce the college's carbon footprint.



Optimising space on campus can save cost; but sustainable refurbishment requires investment.



Ongoing process.

Incorporating sustainability into the estates strategy will ensure decisions about the future of the estate and investment take into account the college's net zero targets.

EMERGING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (5)

Partnerships and Engagement

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Negotiate with campus food suppliers to supply sustainable food options

- Understand how sustainable the food options are on your campus (consider the number of vegetarian/vegan options available, food miles and seasonality).
- Develop a set of criteria for more sustainable food. Check for resources and information on [Sustain](#).
- Procurement team and sustainability committee negotiate with food suppliers to ensure more sustainable options are available, based on criteria.

A significant proportion of carbon emissions come from food we produce, eat and waste; and some foods – like beef, lamb, cheese and chocolate – have higher carbon footprints than others. Other factors, like how far away food comes from and whether it is in season, also affect its environmental impact. Offering sustainable food options gives students and staff the choice to reduce their personal environmental impact and contributes to positive behaviour change across the college.



Cost should be borne by the supplier and consumers.



3-6 months to negotiate change and implement.

Sign the Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges

- College Principal sign the [Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges](#) on behalf of the college – a global commitment for institutions to commit to becoming net zero.

Demonstrate the college's commitment to climate action and increase the growing pressure on governments to act in response to climate change. It recognises the important role of education in responding to climate change at a global level and is an initiative by [UNFCCC](#) and is championed at COP events.



No cost.



Annual reporting required.



Established



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WHAT DOES AN 'ESTABLISHED' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?



ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

Leadership and Governance

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

*Incorporate sustainability into all governance arrangements

- Make clear leaders' accountability for delivering on sustainability agenda.
- Make the sustainability agenda a part of executive group and governing board arrangements – e.g. a standing agenda item is how the college is delivering on its net zero target/environmental objectives.
- Use resources like the [FE Governance Toolkit](#), [Governance Development Programme](#) and [a whole college approach to climate action toolkit](#).

Being explicit about leaders' accountability for sustainability in the college will future-proof the college against a change in leadership or change in priorities.

Incorporating sustainability into key governance meetings will ensure the issue and progress on targets is front of mind for these groups.



Low cost.

N/A - ongoing.

*Complete climate risk assessment and embed adaptation measures within strategies and operations

- Assess the risks of climate change to the college (e.g. heatwaves, flooding) and incorporate these risks explicitly into the college's risk management plan.
- Draw on [guidance developed by the EAUC and AECOM](#) on how universities and colleges should adapt to a changing climate.
- Use resources like the [Climate Risk Register Guide and Tool](#) to assess your organisation's risk to current and future climatic events, and develop an action plan to adapt your infrastructure, operations and campus community to these risks.

The effects of climate change – particularly severe weather events like flooding and heatwaves – pose threats to almost everything colleges do (teaching, recruitment, their supply chains, infrastructure). Colleges should incorporate these risks into their normal risk management approaches.

Early action on understanding and adapting to climate risk will make your organisation more resilient, cost-effective and improve the student and staff experience.



There may be costs involved in additional risk management approaches/mitigations.



How long this takes may depend on the complexity of climate-related risk to the college (e.g. susceptibility to floods).

Incorporate net zero ambitions in the strategic plan and establish a ring-fenced budget

- At the next review of the college's institutional strategy/strategic plan, revise the strategy in line with the college's environmental targets.
- Based on the college's net zero target, establish a ring-fenced budget to implement strategies to reduce the college's carbon footprint and improve its environmental impact.
- Include a part of this budget that students/staff can bid for to fund specific sustainability projects (with measurable environmental impact).

There is a risk that environmental ambitions are superseded by other strategic goals if they are not incorporated into the strategy.

Strategies to reduce the college's carbon footprint through energy reduction/efficiency/renewables may bring cost savings to the college, but also require an up front investment. Ring-fencing a budget will protect the funds needed to implement these initiatives.



This cost will depend on how much of your budget/surplus you are prepared to dedicate to sustainability. This should match your level of ambition.



Approximately 3-6 months to adjust strategy and negotiate budget.

ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

Teaching, Learning and Research

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Participate in the Global Goals Teach In

- Participate in the Global Goals Teach In: an annual week-long campaign delivered by Students Organising for Sustainability that asks college teachers (and university lecturers) to embed the Sustainable Development Goals into their teaching for a week.

This week-long exercise will increase students' understanding of sustainable development. It will also pave the way for sustainability being embedded across the curriculum. This is a good opportunity to engage with Students Organising for Sustainability, which is a leading voice on incorporating the SDGs into college and university education.



No additional teaching cost.



Some time needed for teachers to upskill on the SDGs.

*Create an ESD baseline and action plan

- Conducting comprehensive curriculum mapping, involving staff and learners, to identify current sustainability themes and gaps covering sustainability content, capability development and ESD pedagogies.
- Use [Map the Curriculum tool](#), a spreadsheet to map the curriculum.
- Outcomes of this process should be used to inform future curriculum design, course provision and CPD (continuing professional development) provision.

To develop a meaningful, cross-curricular ESD approach that evolves through staff and student contributions. In the long term this should ensure that all learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to contribute positively to sustainability goals, and that the organisation provision develops the skills needed by employers and society.



Low cost.



Approximately 3-6 months to involve staff with mapping and action plan.

*Ensure relevant staff have access to CPD, supporting them to incorporate sustainability into their professional practice

- By offering targeted training on integrating sustainability into the curriculum. This can be supplemented with workshops, access to resources, participation in communities of practice, peer support and practitioner enquiry.
- Training should be sequenced, supported and role-specific where possible.

To equip staff with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively incorporate sustainability into their teaching and learning practice, ensuring all students receive consistent, high quality, relevant ESD.



Potential cost associated with CPD training.



Time will vary to incorporate sustainability into the curriculum across organisations.

ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

Estates and Operations

Initiative

Why do it?


How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Set and implement target to reduce waste in the college by 50-75%

- Collect data on the college's use and waste of plastic and paper to develop strategy to reduce waste.
- Consider the waste hierarchy: prevention, reusing, recycling, disposal.
- Set targets to reduce waste; proportion of products reused; proportion of products recycled; and proportion of products diverted from landfill.
- Aim to reduce waste on campus by 50-75%.

Everything the college consumes has an environmental impact, creates greenhouse gases in production, and uses finite natural resources. As waste breaks down in landfill it produces gases that play a part in climate change. Reducing the college's consumption of materials is the first step to reduce this impact, followed by reusing materials as much as possible, and avoiding sending waste to landfill.


 Costs associated with strategies to reduce waste.


 Time taken to introduce new strategies to reduce waste and to encourage behaviour change.

*Develop and implement biodiversity-positive approaches to estates management

- Once a habitat and biodiversity baseline for your estate has been established, develop and implement an action plan to improve the quality and range of habitats on your estate.
- Bring in students, staff and relevant external organisations such as The Conversation Volunteers and Butterfly Conservation to support biodiversity initiatives.

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. However, with changes in estates management and planning, organisations can radically improve the biodiversity of their estate whilst also improving the student and staff experience and reducing climate risks.

 Cost associated with implementing biodiversity actions.


 Staff time to implement changes and actions.


*Implement travel policy to reduce emissions from commuting to/from campus

- Set a target to reduce carbon footprint of staff and student travel to and from the college (e.g. 75% reduction).
- Implement a range of initiatives to support low-carbon travel (e.g. shuttle bus from town centre, bike storage, car sharing scheme, bike hire and repair scheme, walkathon, etc).

Colleges can reduce their Scope 3 emissions and work towards their net zero target by reducing emissions from people commuting to and from college.

Initiatives like cycling and walking schemes can also help to improve mental health and wellbeing.


 Potential cost associated with subsidising bikes or building additional bike lanes/bike storage in college.


 Travel policy will not take long to amend but behaviour change will take time.

Apply for a grant loan for financial support to improve energy efficiency on the estate

- [Salix Finance](#)³ provides interest-free Government funding (£842m) to the public sector to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and lower emissions.
- Exploring options to increase efficiency is based on the assumption the college has already tried to reduce its energy use.
- Refer to [EAUC funding sources](#)⁴ for the latest funding grants.

Salix Finance provides the resources to implement ambitious energy efficiency and carbon reduction campaigns that can be paid back over time with money saved on electricity costs. Over 100 different energy-efficiency technologies are available for Salix interest-free financing.

 Cost of developing the loan application and paying back overtime (depending on gap between cash saved from energy efficiency and loan).

 Approximately 1 month to make application/business case and pay-back period up to 5 years.

(3) Salix funding schemes vary for nations, refer to the Salix funding according to England, Scotland and Wales

(4) An EAUC members-only resource.

ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

Partnerships and Engagement

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Sign the SDG Accord

- College Principal signs the [SDG Accord](#) on behalf of the college.
- Identify a staff member (e.g. member of Sustainability Committee) to be responsible for reporting ([2020 reporting template available here](#)).

The SDG Accord recognises the critical role of education in advancing the SDGs. Institutions that sign make a commitment to embed the goals in teaching, learning, research and operations.
The SDG Accord provides a framework for action on sustainability throughout the college.



Only cost is staff time in reporting.



Approximately 1 month.

Join or establish climate action network with local council

- Contact local council/local community organisations to establish a local climate action network, which can implement initiatives across the region to combat climate change/OR join existing network.
- Draw on resources from the [Place-Based Climate Action Network](#) and learn from other established networks.

Colleges can increase their impact by partnering with local councils in their region and working with local communities (e.g. implementing bike lanes throughout a city; organising direct-from-farm vegetable schemes).



Low cost to establish network.



Less than 6 months to establish network; implementing initiatives will take longer.

Develop sustainable procurement policy and strategy; engage with supply chain to improve sustainability

- Review the college's current sustainability policies and strategy to include procurement policy by engaging with the supply chain for sustainable supplies.

Scope 3 supply chains emissions are likely to be your organisation's largest single source of emissions. By developing a sustainable procurement policy and implementing actions, you can support your supply chain to become more sustainable and resilient to climate change, as well as improving your own organisation's sustainability.



Low cost.



Staff time to contact supply chain and develop strategy.

ESTABLISHED COLLEGES INITIATIVES (5)

Data Collection and Reporting

Initiative

Develop and implement plan to measure and report all Scope 1 and 2 emissions and significant Scope 3 emissions

- Develop plan to collect data on/estimate Scope 3 emissions.
- Use resources like [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#) guidance, [Standardised Carbon Missions Framework \(SCEF\)](#), [guidance from EAUC on measuring Scope 3 emissions in HEI context](#)
- Use tools like the [Higher Education Supply Chain Emissions Tool \(HESCET\)](#), [APUC Scope 3 Supply Chain Emissions Reporting Tool](#), and Net Zero Carbon Supplier Tool on the [responsible procurement group](#) to calculate Scope 3 emissions.
- Use resources like the [EAUC Commuting Guide and Tool](#) to calculate and report student and staff commuting emissions, and staff homeworking emissions.

Why do it?

The data measured and reported will be used to inform internal and external reporting.

The majority of a college's emissions will be Scope 3 – emissions controlled by others and produced by things the college does/consumes (e.g. goods and services, travel, waste disposal, investments, staff and student commuting).

It is not possible to achieve net zero without measuring Scope 3 emissions and finding opportunities to reduce them.

How much will it cost?



Cost involved in additional data collection, management, and reporting. Upfront investment of time to fairly estimate Scope 3 emissions.

How long will it take?



This could take time, depending on the quality of the college's data and time taken to establish a baseline.



Leading



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WHAT DOES A 'LEADING' COLLEGE LOOK LIKE?



LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (1)

Leadership and Governance

Initiative

- Embed climate responsibility and sustainability into staff development**
- Work with college HR team/representative to incorporate climate responsibility and sustainability into staff development practices, including induction, CPD, and possibly promotion and award structures.
 - Consider incorporating sustainability as a standard item on job descriptions – for example, knowledge about and commitment to the SDGs.

Why do it?

Incorporating sustainability into the college's staff development practices is an opportunity to make it a key part of the workforce. It will also help teaching staff to become better teachers of sustainability and ensure that sustainability initiatives in the college are more likely to 'stick'.

How much will it cost?



Staff time associated with updating standard induction and other procedures.

How long will it take?



Changes to staff development practices and the workforce will take some time, as people adapt. Changes to pay and reward structures, for example, require careful change management.

Data Collection and Reporting

Initiative

- Share carbon footprint data collection approach as model to other colleges**
- Share data collection methodology – particularly approach to measuring Scope 3 emissions – with other colleges in the 'emerging' or 'established' phases. E.g. share spreadsheets/examples of data collection processes.

Why do it?

Sharing this methodology as a model to other colleges will help them to measure their own carbon footprints more accurately, particularly more complex aspects like Scope 3 emissions.



Very low cost.



Some time may be needed in explaining the methodology to other colleges (e.g. a webinar).

LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (2)

Teaching, Learning, and Research

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Audit college curriculum against the SDGs using Responsible Futures Framework and accreditation

- Assemble a team of teaching staff and students from across the college to audit the college's curriculum against the Sustainable Development goals.
- Engage with [Responsible Futures](#), run by Students Organising for Sustainability, to conduct the curriculum audit, drawing on the Responsible Futures Criteria (although note that these expand beyond just teaching and learning).
- Gain accreditation with Responsible Futures.

Understanding where the sustainability goals are already reflected in the curriculum – and the gaps and opportunities – is the first step towards offering students an educational offer informed by the SDGs.

Responsible Futures offers a comprehensive approach to reviewing the college's teaching and operations against the SDGs, and can give the college accreditation. This signals to the college's community and external stakeholders how seriously it takes sustainable development. Also, it gives students an opportunity to be closely involved in sustainability at the college.



More substantial staff time commitment
Cost of first-year accreditation with Responsible futures is £1,600.



Audit is likely to be time-consuming, depending on college's size.

***Establish ESD partnerships**

- Through internal living labs programmes or collaborating with local employers, community groups and academic institutions, partnership approaches to ESD offer practical, real-world sustainability experiences for students and staff and can enhance the providers' social value.

To enhance learning by connecting theory with practice, enriching ESD delivery through external expertise, and fostering innovation. Such partnerships strengthen links between education, community and industry.



Low cost.



Staff time involved contacting local organisations.

***Measure your ESD outcomes and impacts**

- Understand ESD outcomes and impacts by using tools like surveys, feedback and performance metrics.
- Regular evaluations should involve both staff and students.

To ensure ESD initiatives are effective and provide data to aid continuous improvement. Measuring impacts helps align efforts with organisational goals and broader sustainability targets, ensuring meaningful contributions to both education and societal progress.



Low cost.



Approximately 3 months.

LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (3)

Partnerships and Engagement

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Partner with local community/council/businesses to improve local biodiversity

- Partner with local businesses and draw on local climate action network to implement local biodiversity strategy (e.g. bee highways, re-wilding areas around campus/owned by local communities).
- If appropriate, draw on students to implement biodiversity initiatives as learning activities.
- Draw on guidance produced by [EAUC to Biodiversity on Campus](#).

The loss of biodiversity – the variety of natural species on earth – threatens natural ecosystems we depend on for food, water, and protection against climate change. Colleges have a responsibility to protect and foster these natural ecosystems in their natural environments; by partnering with their local community, they can do so over a greater area. Strategies to enhance biodiversity also offer teaching opportunities (e.g. through planting new green spaces).



Likely to be cost involved in implementing biodiversity initiatives (e.g. planting new wild flower meadow).



Time taken will vary based on size of the college/level of ambition of biodiversity initiatives.

Apply for a Green Gown (UK-wide) or AoC Beacon Award (England only)

- Apply for a Green Gown Award which recognises exceptional sustainability initiatives in colleges and universities.
- And/or apply for an AoC Beacon Award, such as the 'Education for Sustainable Development' award, which recognises excellence in embedding the SDGs in all aspects of college teaching, learning and operations.
- Either the Sustainability Committee or people involved in a specific college sustainability project could apply for the award.

Applying for a Green Gown Award or an AoC Beacon Award is an opportunity for a leading college to showcase its performance on sustainability – the awards are well-known in the UK and increasingly internationally. The award could increase the college's profile and encourage more students to attend, and it also provides an opportunity to learn from other colleges' sustainability projects and performance.



Staff time involved in applying for the award.



Less than 1 month.

Develop fossil fuels divestment plan

- Review the college's investment portfolio to check whether it has any direct investments in fossil fuels.
- Contact the college's pension fund for advice on whether pensions are invested in fossil fuels.
- Develop plan to divest from fossil fuels over 3-5 year period/or update responsible investment policy.

The college's investments form part of its Scope 3 emissions. Developing a plan to develop a green investment portfolio/green pensions is a step towards net zero. The college would also join the growing divestment movement, which aims to divert funds away from fossil fuel companies and encourage them to transform their business models.



Cost involved in implementing divestment plan, less in developing plan.



How long the plan takes to develop and implement will depend on the complexity of the college's finances/ the level of current investment in fossil fuels.

LEADING COLLEGES INITIATIVES (4)

Estates and Operations

Initiative

Why do it?

How much will it cost?

How long will it take?

Implement renewable energy on a part of/all of the Estate

- Switch to a green electricity tariff – check they are a REGO-certified providers.
- Consider project to implement on-site renewable generation (e.g. [University of Lancaster's wind turbine generates 15% of campus electricity](#)).
- Consider direct power purchase agreement of renewable energy, potentially in partnership with other colleges (e.g. [20 universities, including Newcastle, Exeter, and Aberystwyth cut £50m deal in 2019 for 10 years of direct wind energy](#)).

Renewable energy (such as solar, wind, hydro and biomass energy) produce no green house gas emissions and in some cases can reduce air pollution. Renewable electricity is also often cheaper than electricity from fossil fuels, particularly on-site renewable generation, which will eventually cover the initial costs of installation. Installing renewable energy will help the college to further reduce its carbon footprint, once it has explored opportunities to reduce its energy use and become more energy efficient.



Staff time involved in designing and implementing initiatives.



It may take longer than 6 months to design and implement these initiatives and report on their results.

*Expand travel policy to reduce long-haul aviation travel

- Implement new travel policy that aims to reduce long-haul airplane travel and conduct long-distance business virtually by default.
- Invest in video conferencing facility for all staff and students (e.g. Zoom licenses) if this has not happened already.
- Implement new travel policy that aims to reduce long-haul airplane travel and conduct long-distance business virtually by default.
- For long-haul business travel that must go ahead, managers to approve it using a framework like that developed by the [Tyndall Centre](#) (including encouraging train/bus travel).
- Use resources like [Business Travel guide](#) to implement a Business Travel Action Plan and the [Domestic and International Student Relocation Travel Emissions Calculator Tool](#).

Long-haul airplane travel drives up the college's Scope 3 emissions significantly, but it can often be avoided by meeting over video conference, or if travel is critical, taking lower-carbon modes of transport like the train.



Cost saving from less and cheaper travel.



The college may pilot the new policy in one area first before expanding it to the whole college.



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