

SYMBIOTIC?

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPUTATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Research Project for the World 100 Reputation Network
Membership 2022/2023

OVERALL FINDINGS

www.theworld100.com

research@theworld100.com

Mark Sudbury, Head, the World 100 Reputation Network

mark.sudbury@theworld100.com





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INTRODUCTION

The World 100 Network annual research project always aims to push the boundaries of understanding about global university reputation. The project for the 2022/23 membership year sought to gain some further understanding of the relationship between reputation and the recent focus of many universities on promoting activity around the sustainable development agenda.

How universities can demonstrate the impact of their research, teaching and engagement activities has become critical to success in an increasingly competitive and scrutinised higher education environment.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), published first in 2015, have achieved broad support as a way of measuring progress in addressing key global challenges by governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), businesses and research funders.

Progress against the SDGs is therefore being used increasingly by universities worldwide as a way to demonstrate the impact of their research and teaching, and to build reputations with key stakeholder groups around the positive effect that they have on society.

The SDGs are also attractive to universities in providing opportunities to demonstrate interdisciplinary impact which have often been lacking previously. Many institutions started to develop their own interdisciplinary focuses around 'grand challenges', but the SDG framework has the benefit both of wider awareness and a degree of independence from the higher education sector.

In 2019, Times Higher Education launched a new project, the THE Impact Rankings, which brought together key factors including independence and a series of HE-focused measurements to allow universities to demonstrate impact and celebrate their success in doing so.

So the last few years have seen opportunities for universities to build new approaches to building reputation through this new framework. This project seeks to understand those opportunities, using data from a variety of sources, and to help World 100 Network members to fully exploit them.

This project asked several key questions:

- What does data from the THE Impact Rankings tell us about the relationship between reputation and sustainable development?
- What do key stakeholder groups think of the relationship?
- How are World 100 member universities representing their impact in their communications activity?
- What is best practice in building reputation through impact and sustainable development?

To answer these questions, we looked in some detail at the data emerging from the THE Impact Rankings, surveyed some key audiences, and engaged with World 100 Network members to understand how they have been responding to the sustainable development agenda.

The results of the project are intended to inform the future work of World 100 members in developing reputation strategies to maximise their impact with key audiences.



METHODOLOGY

There were five parts to the research, including the surveying of three main audiences:

1. An assessment of the overall World 100 member performance in the THE Impact Rankings benchmarked against global university performance, and a deep dive into member performance *per* SDG, identifying which of the individual metrics World 100 universities are most proficient in.
2. A survey of **academics** working around the globe at leading universities (ranked in the top 200 of world university rankings). Academics were asked about their perceptions of the relationship between sustainability and reputation, focusing on the efforts and areas of focus of an institution (see appendix 1).
3. A survey of **prospective international students** considering undergraduate or postgraduate level study. Students were asked about their university choice motivation and whether a university's commitment to sustainability impacted this (see appendix 2).
4. *Sustainability Brand Snapshot* - analysing how World 100 members communicate sustainability through their website and social media presence. Adapting the Brand Snapshot technique established in the 2019 World 100 Research project, this analysis shows how World 100 universities attempt to carve out distinctiveness through promoting sustainable development activities, and to ascertain whether the current narratives around sustainability align with the SDG strengths identified in Part 1.
5. Focus groups with communications, marketing and academic representatives from world-leading World 100 member universities around the globe. We asked them to consider how World 100 practitioners utilise sustainability activities to develop reputation, and offer insights into its importance for communicating with different stakeholder groups.

Full details of the sample are available in Appendix 1.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Demonstrating the impact of their research teaching and engagement activities has become critical to universities seeking to build reputation in an increasingly competitive and scrutinised higher education environment.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), published first in 2015, have achieved broad support as a way of measuring progress in addressing key global challenges by governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), businesses and research funders.

Progress against the SDGs is therefore being used increasingly by universities worldwide as a way to demonstrate the impact of their research and teaching, and to build reputations with key stakeholder groups around the positive effect that they have on society.

In this project, we explored a number of ways in which the relationship between reputation and sustainable development is playing out in universities with the aim of highlighting further opportunities for World 100 members to demonstrate impact and showcasing best practice.

THE Impact Rankings

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings were launched in 2019 to provide a way of assessing the performance of universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Three quarters of World 100 members submitted to at least one of the SDGs in 2022.

World 100 members are actively participating in the THE Impact Rankings partly as a reflection of their missions, but also because there are clear opportunities for reputational advancement that arise from activities in the sustainable development area.

Data shows us that World 100 members who are participating in the Impact Rankings perform really strongly in the overall metrics, scoring 27 points higher than the global average across all of the SDGs. This will partly reflect the research quality of members, but also highlights the link between reputation and sustainable development.

The areas of sustainable development that World 100 members are stronger in include SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals. This performance suggests that these are more impactful areas from a reputation perspective - but also highlights areas not currently being focused on by leading institutions that might provide opportunities for differentiation.

The data does not suggest strongly that World 100 members are over-performing in the metrics around stewardship and outreach. Given the reputational potential for the evidence required to be submitted to the Rankings in these areas, this may be something that members want to consider further and engage with colleagues within their institutions to highlight.

How Stakeholder Groups are engaging with the SDGs

Prospective students, whilst having a strong interest in 'green' and equality issues in particular, do not prioritise a commitment to sustainability as a key choice factor when choosing which university to study at. This proxy measure for reputation differs across different geographical areas, with students from the developing world more likely to reference sustainability as a choice factor. However, there is some evidence to suggest that universities that perform well in the THE Impact Rankings do, to an extent, attract applicants with more of a focus on sustainability.

Students currently studying at university do have a stronger interest in their institutions committing to key sustainable development actions. Many World 100 members are targeting messages about impact to current students as well as alumni.



We asked a sample of **global academics** about how they saw the relationship between reputation and sustainable development. Asked whether a university's efforts with sustainability and the SDGs impacted reputation, a large proportion of academics agreed that institutional reputation was affected by efforts to some extent (77%). Only 15% of academics from the total sample believed that there was no connection between the two.

Academics from STEM disciplines are most likely to consider sustainability as having an impact on a specific institution's reputation. Social Sciences academics are the least convinced of the link. Faculty from the developing world were more convinced of the relationship.

The minority of academics who were less positive about the link between reputation and sustainable development were often focused on the importance of promoting disciplinary strength, whilst some were concerned about the perceived 'political' focus of the UN SDGs and the challenges of 'greenwashing'.

How communicators are leveraging sustainable development activities to build reputation

Those responsible for building reputation in global universities are clear that using their performance against the UN SDGs as an externally validated approach is beneficial for engaging effectively with key stakeholder groups.

Universities that take part in the THE Impact Rankings have been proactive in using their performance in those rankings as an engagement tool, recognising that league table performance resonates with many stakeholders. The process that a university goes through in submitting evidence for the Impact Rankings is also beneficial in providing examples of impact that can be communicated to help build reputation.

A number of World 100 member universities have brought their activities together in engaging Sustainability Reports, which have the dual benefit of being a scoring metric in the Impact Rankings and acting as engagement tools for communicators and leaders.

Some World 100 member universities have created a strong link between their institutional strategies and sustainable development, including structuring priorities around SDGs and developing brand pillars. Some institutions have been successful in building unique selling points that link their missions to the sustainable development agenda.

Many institutions have developed effective campaign activity that links sustainable development activity to stakeholder focuses, focusing on key concerns such as climate action and also leveraging the benefits of engagement around global events such as COP summits.

Whilst communicators are largely positive about the opportunities, a small number of challenges were identified. Participation in the Impact Rankings was noted by some as being an onerous process that might divert attention from other activity with the institution. And the sheer breadth of the SDGs can make it challenging to focus on activity which helps universities to differentiate themselves from others.

Finally, communicators were clear that reputation-building activity needs to authentically reflect the unique research and teaching activity going on within their university, rather than being seen to 'jump on the bandwagon' or even get involved with 'greenwashing'.

Ultimately, the sustainable development agenda provides enormous opportunities for universities to build effective messaging that engages with key stakeholder groups and demonstrates the positive impact of their institutions.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The research findings have a number of implications for institutions as they think about developing their reputation strategies:

- **STRATEGY:**
Universities that have been most successful in harnessing sustainable development initiatives to build reputation take a whole institution approach to demonstrating impact. Orienting institutional strategies around the SDGs or specific sustainable development priorities helps to bring the vision to life.
- **STAKEHOLDERS:**
Many key stakeholder groups are intensely interested in the SDGs specifically or in key sustainable development initiatives, so universities should focus on developing SDG-informed communications programmes that target the particular focuses of key opinion-forming groups - students/alumni, governments, businesses, NGOs.
- **BALANCE:**
Global academics are a key audience to influence in order to build reputation. Whilst most academics do have a good understanding of the SDGs and agree that demonstrating progress against them helps to grow profile, universities should recognise that some have a nuanced approach. For many, disciplinary excellence remains the key driver of excellence; others are concerned by a perceived political focus and 'greenwashing'. Universities should be aware of these factors when designing their communications programmes, and focus on authenticity.
- **DIFFERENTIATION:**
In order to stand out from competitors, universities need to have unique selling points. SDG performance data and case studies of impact can be used to help identify points of differentiation - but communicators need to be aware of the tendency towards common messaging. Some universities have been successful at linking key distinctive elements of their missions to the sustainable development agenda. All institutions should be thinking proactively about harnessing the opportunities provided by the SDGs to demonstrate impact and their relevance to society.



THE IMPACT RANKINGS - WHAT DOES THE INVOLVEMENT OF WORLD 100 MEMBERS TELL US ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPUTATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

INTRODUCTION

The *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings were launched in 2019 to provide a way of assessing the performance of universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. A series of indicators have been developed to provide comprehensive and balanced comparisons across four broad areas: **research**, **stewardship**, **outreach** and **teaching**.

- **Research:** the most obvious and traditional way that a university might help to deliver the SDGs is by creating research in relevant topics.
- **Stewardship:** universities are custodians of significant resources; not just physical resources, but also their employees, faculty and students. How they act as stewards is one of the key factors in delivering the SDGs.
- **Outreach:** place is critical in higher education, and the work that universities do with their local, regional, national and international communities is another key way that they can have an impact on sustainability.
- **Teaching:** teaching plays a critical role, both in ensuring that there are enough skilled practitioners to deliver on the SDGs, and in making sure that all alumni take forward the key lessons of sustainability into their future careers.

The 17 SDGs are:



Universities can submit data on as many of these SDGs as they are able. Each SDG has a series of metrics that are used to **EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THAT SDG**.

There are three categories of metrics within each SDG:

Research metrics are derived from data supplied by Elsevier. For each SDG, a specific query has been created that narrows the scope of the metric to publications relevant to that SDG. This is supplemented



by additional publications identified by artificial intelligence. A five-year window between 2017 and 2021 is used. The only exception is the metric on patents that cite research under SDG 9, which relates to the time frame in which the patents were published rather than the time frame of the research itself. The metrics chosen for the bibliometrics differ by SDG and there are always at least two bibliometric measures used.

Continuous metrics measure contributions to impact that vary continually across a range - for example, the number of graduates with a health-related degree. These are usually normalised to the size of the institution.

Evidence where universities provide material about policies and initiatives - for example, the existence of mentoring programmes. Credit is given for the evidence being public. Evidence is evaluated against a set of criteria, and decisions are cross-validated where there is uncertainty. Evidence is focused on examples that demonstrate best practice at the institutions concerned.

WORLD 100 MEMBER IMPACT RANKINGS ANALYSIS

The THE Impact Rankings do not set out specifically to measure reputation, unlike the THE World University Rankings (as well as QS World University Rankings and US News & World Report Best Global Universities) which have specific metrics.

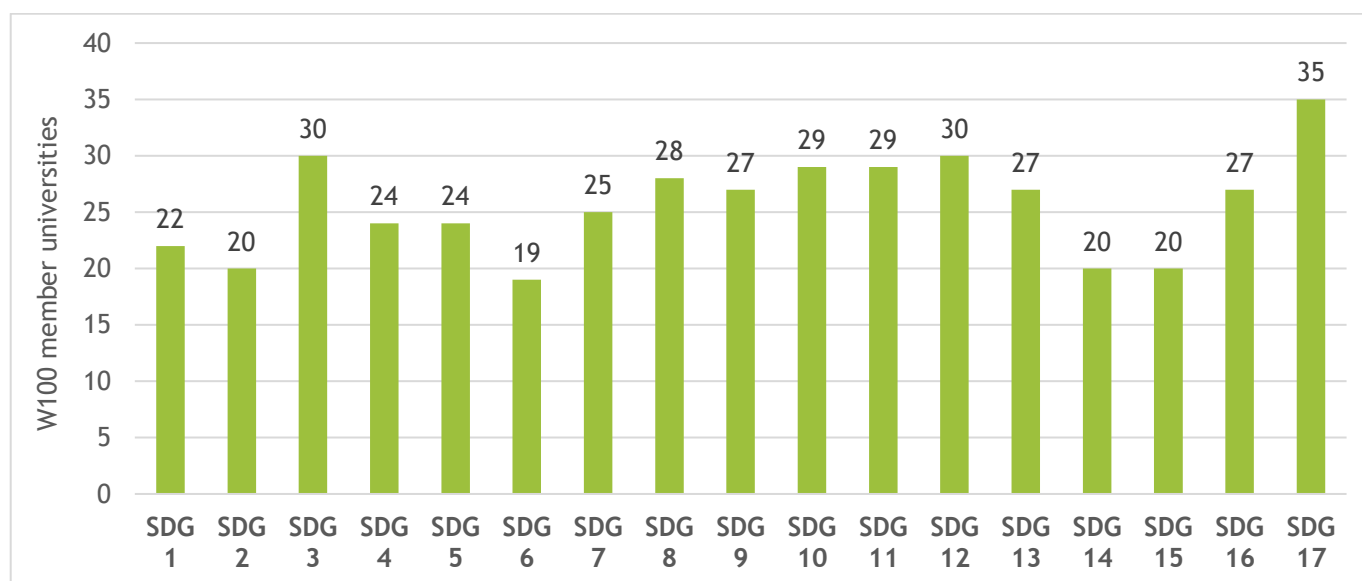
However, analysis of the data that underpins the rankings can help to illuminate the relationship between reputation and sustainable development, as participating World 100 members demonstrate a strong focus on growing global profile through their involvement in the Network.

DATA

Of the 48 World 100 members in 2022/23, at least half submitted data for each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Times Higher Education's Impact Rankings in 2023. Excluding SDG 17, which is mandatory for participation in the rankings, SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) were the most popular areas for submission.

The SDG with the fewest participating World 100 members is SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation, which is the 13th most popular SDG for global universities to submit to (695 institutions).

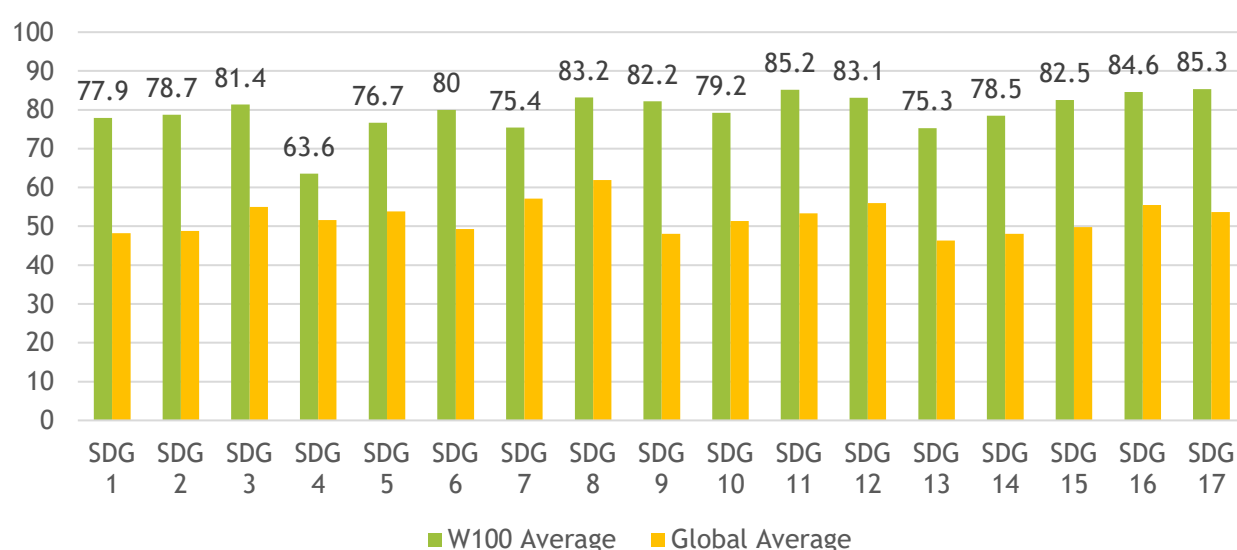
35 World 100 members submit to at least one of the SDGs, whilst 13 World 100 members did not submit to any. It should be noted that some World 100 members have previously submitted to the THE Impact Rankings, but chose not to so in 2022.



When looking at SDG scores benchmarked against the global average - ranging from 502 institutional participants (SDG 14, Life Below Water) to 1,591 institutional participants (SDG 17, Contribution to the Goals) - World 100 member universities are on average 27 points higher. The performance difference between the World 100 average and the global average is greater with some specific goals, and lower with others.

The SDG with the largest performance margin between World 100 member universities and global universities is SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

The SDG with the smallest difference between the World 100 and global university average is SDG 4, Quality Education, with World 100 universities achieving 12 points ahead of global universities. This is also the goal which sees the lowest average score for the World 100 group at 63.6.





SDGs that World 100 members achieve the highest scores in:



SDGs with the biggest World 100 to global university average difference:



Examining specific metrics that constitute each of the goals, World 100 members see the biggest average difference compared to the global average in citations and publications metrics. For SDG 1, No Poverty, World 100 members average 96.9 for the 'No poverty publications' metric, 63.1 higher than the global average of 33.8. It is a similar story for the majority of SDGs, with either citations or publications scores achieving the largest deviation between the two groups. This demonstrates the high level of research quality within universities that monitor, measure and strive to improve their reputation internationally.

Alternatively, there are some SDG metrics in which World 100 universities collectively perform below the global average:

- SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): proportion of graduates in agriculture and aquaculture
- SDG 4 (Quality Education): proportion of graduates with relevant qualification for teaching
- SDG 4 (Quality Education): proportion of first-generation students
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality): proportion of senior female academics
- SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy): energy use density
- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): proportion of first-generation students

OBSERVATIONS

World 100 members are actively participating in the THE Impact Rankings partly as a reflection of their missions, but also because there are clear opportunities for reputational advancement that arise from activities in the sustainable development area.

Data shows us that World 100 members that are participating in the Rankings perform really strongly in the overall metrics, which will partly reflect the research quality of members, but also highlights the link between reputation and sustainable development.

The analysis of the data shows the areas of sustainable development that World 100 members are stronger in, which suggests that these are more impactful areas from a reputation perspective - but also highlights areas not currently being focused on by leading institutions that might provide opportunities for differentiation.

Initial indications from the data do not suggest strongly that World 100 members are over-performing in the metrics around stewardship and outreach. Given the reputational potential for the evidence required to be submitted to the Rankings in these areas, this may be something that members want to consider further and engage with colleagues within their institutions to highlight.



HOW UNIVERSITIES ARE USING IMPACT RANKING PERFORMANCE FOR BUILDING REPUTATION

As outlined above, the performance of World 100 Reputation Network members in the THE Impact Rankings provides good evidence for reputation building, demonstrating real world impact for their activities in research and teaching.

Since their launch in 2019, universities have also been able to build messaging around their performance in the Rankings themselves. This messaging has the potential to engage positively with key audiences, including staff and students, partners and alumni.

In the Focus Groups we ran with World 100 member communicators, a number commented on how they are using their performance in the THE Impact Rankings to build reputation.

One focus was the way in which Impact Ranking performance has led to enhanced engagement with both internal and external stakeholders.

“One benefit is that our performance in the rankings has started conversations with a broader group of people in the university who are really proud that we do well. And also our alumni our Board and General Assembly, some of our key stakeholders, they’re incredibly proud.”

The evidence submitted to the rankings was also useful in helping to define communications strategies.

“The Impact rankings have been valuable internally for us to actually be able to identify things that we are really good at that we didn’t realise we were really good at.”

The University of Manchester has used its strong performance in the THE Impact Rankings to engage with a wide range of audiences through many channels:





Queen's University in Canada focused on leveraging its 3rd place overall in the 2023 Impact rankings:

Queen's places 3rd worldwide in 2023 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

Thursday June 1, 2023

By Dave Rideout, Senior Communications Officer

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University secures its best performance to date with third consecutive top-10 finish.



Other universities have used performance in one particular SDG as a key focus for messaging, a good example being RCSI University of Medicine & Health Sciences in Dublin:



Canada's Dalhousie university had a strong focus on performance in SDG14, Life Below Water, an area of research that features strongly in its brand messaging:



Dal shows strength in 2023 Impact

Rankings, claims top spot in Canada for life

below water

Dal places among the top 100 universities in the world for support of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.



A key tool developed by many World 100 network members is the bringing together of a wide range of activity focused on addressing the SDGs in a Sustainability Report. These reports, available online and in some cases in printed format, have the dual benefit of being a scoring metric in the Impact Rankings and acting as engagement tools for communicators and leaders.

The University of Manchester has produced a particularly compelling report which covers examples of impact across all 17 SDGs:

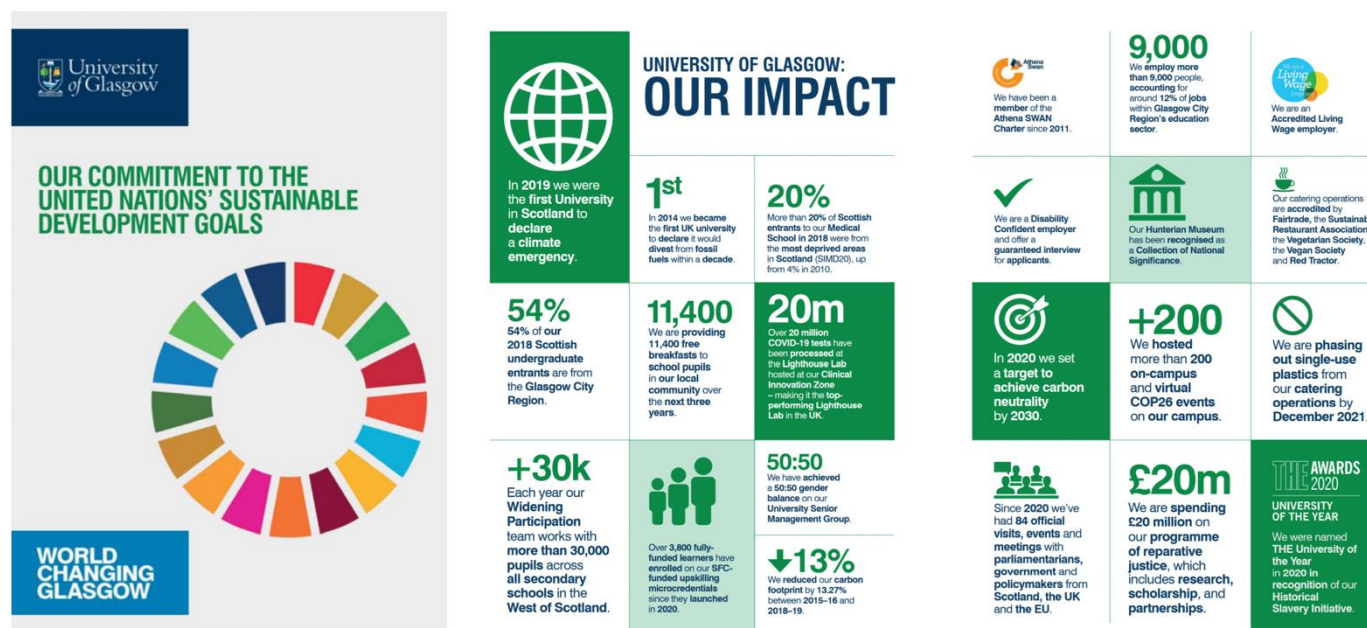


Keio University in Japan has also produced a Sustainability Report, in English, providing comprehensive case studies in both research and teaching:





The University of Glasgow produces a comprehensive annual publication, intended to provide an update on some of the work and activity that has been taking place across institution to contribute to the UN SDGs:



Another approach adopted by World 100 member universities is to develop websites or tools that allow users to search for and view information about activities that relate to each SDG. These may act as a way of collecting together the information submitted to the THE Impact Rankings, or as a more comprehensive source of information that can be added to on an on-going basis.

A particularly compelling example comes from Virginia Tech university in the USA:





The University of Nottingham (UK) has also developed a comprehensive approach to reporting on its impact, including an impactful video:

Nottingham is the only UK university offering research expertise and capabilities across the food system. We are helping future-proof agriculture in the face of climate change and mapping UK food insecurity. In Nottingham, we support our students, from breakfast clubs to sharing knowledge about eating well and on a budget, while our students support food redistribution networks across the city.

2,000 Malawi farms and small holdings surveyed in Geonutrition project

1st Midlands university to introduce carbon labels on food menus

2,078 free breakfasts served to students

The 17 goals

- No poverty**: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Zero hunger**: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Good health and well-being**: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Quality education**: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Gender equality**: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Clean water and sanitation**: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

We've helped our partners cut CO2 emissions by 16.3m tonnes a year in recent years. Across transport, food, energy and other industries, our technologies are securing a net-zero future.

8 RECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

8,000 staff employed by the University of Nottingham

£1.1bn university's annual economic impact in the UK

18,000 jobs supported by university activity

1,200 UK construction workers interviewed to help combat exploitation

Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals.

Securing the low-carbon economy of the future

CHALLENGES

Whilst we found many examples of benefits to universities from engaging with the THE Impact Rankings, it should be noted that a small number of comments from World 100 members reflected on potential challenges. Indeed, some members had previously been involved with submitting to the rankings but had decided not to proceed in future years.

"We're not involved with the Impact Rankings this year as the process for submitting has become too resource intensive and we need to focus on other ways of demonstrating impact."

Another view expressed concerned timescales associated with the UN SDGs and by extension, the THE Impact Rankings.

"What happens after 2030? Are we in danger of putting all our eggs in a basket that will change into something else?"

Despite these notes of caution, we found strong evidence from World 100 members that there are positive opportunities for building reputation that arise from institutional participation in the THE Impact Rankings. Given the interest of a range of stakeholder groups who are increasingly paying attention to these rankings, World 100 members should give due consideration to active engagement in the future as a key way of demonstrating their impact.



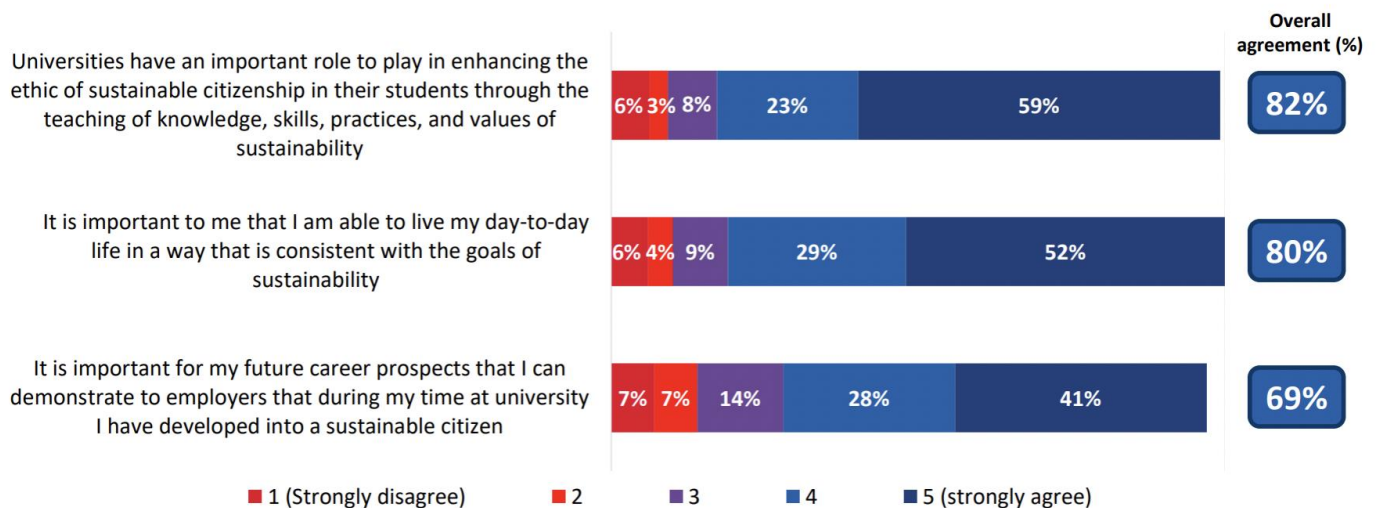
HOW AUDIENCES ENGAGE WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PROSPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Students looking to study abroad are always a key stakeholder group of interest to leading global universities so, for this project, we surveyed a group of students in order to try and understand how they view the relationship between sustainable development and reputation.

Perceived wisdom suggests that 'Generation Z' has a stronger focus on environmental sustainability than other age groups. Other research conducted by Times Higher Education has indeed suggested that current international prospective students do pay attention to key aspects of sustainability, both in terms of their own ethical responsibility and what they expect from universities.

82% of students say universities have an important role to play in enhancing the ethic of sustainable citizenship among their students



Question: A 'sustainable citizen' is defined as someone who takes responsibility for living their own lives in a sustainable manner. With that in mind, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

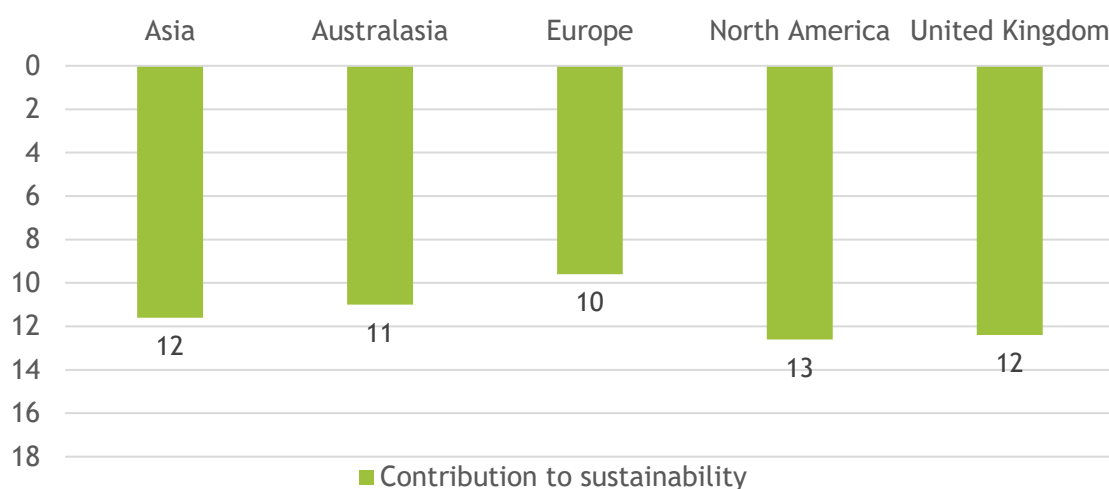
Base: 2,000 students

But, for this study, in order to probe the relationship with reputation, we wanted to understand whether sustainability issues have a significant impact on the choices made by students on where to study. Sustainability was therefore available as one option for respondents to choose when asked what attracted them to apply to a particular university.



This chart shows the ranking position of “contribution to sustainability” out of 18 pre-coded choice factors asked of students interested in studying in these countries:

“What attracted you to apply to this university in x country?”



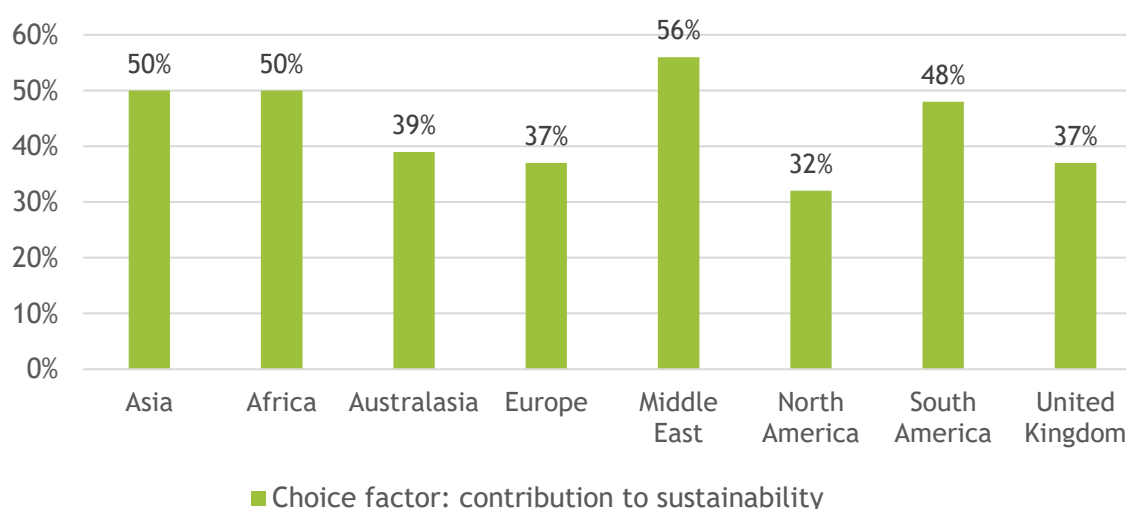
International students interested in studying in Europe were the most likely to select sustainability as a choice factor when considering universities to apply for, and therefore the most conscious of the sustainability agenda.

However, it is clear that, with sustainability ranking between the 9th and 13th most significant choice factor, it is not playing a leading role in the decision making of prospective international students.

Key choice factors tend to focus on quality of teaching and research, employability and student experience measures, in addition to ‘hygiene’ factors such as ‘offered the course I wanted’ and ‘safe environment’.

Looking at the data in a different way, through identifying whether sustainability is mentioned at all as one of the top five choice factors by respondents, a slightly more positive aspect emerges. Looking at the regions where respondents originate from, more than a third of prospective international students do at least consider sustainability alongside all other factors.

That is significantly higher in some regions, notably the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America, indicating that prospective students from the developing world have a stronger focus on sustainability as a choice factor.



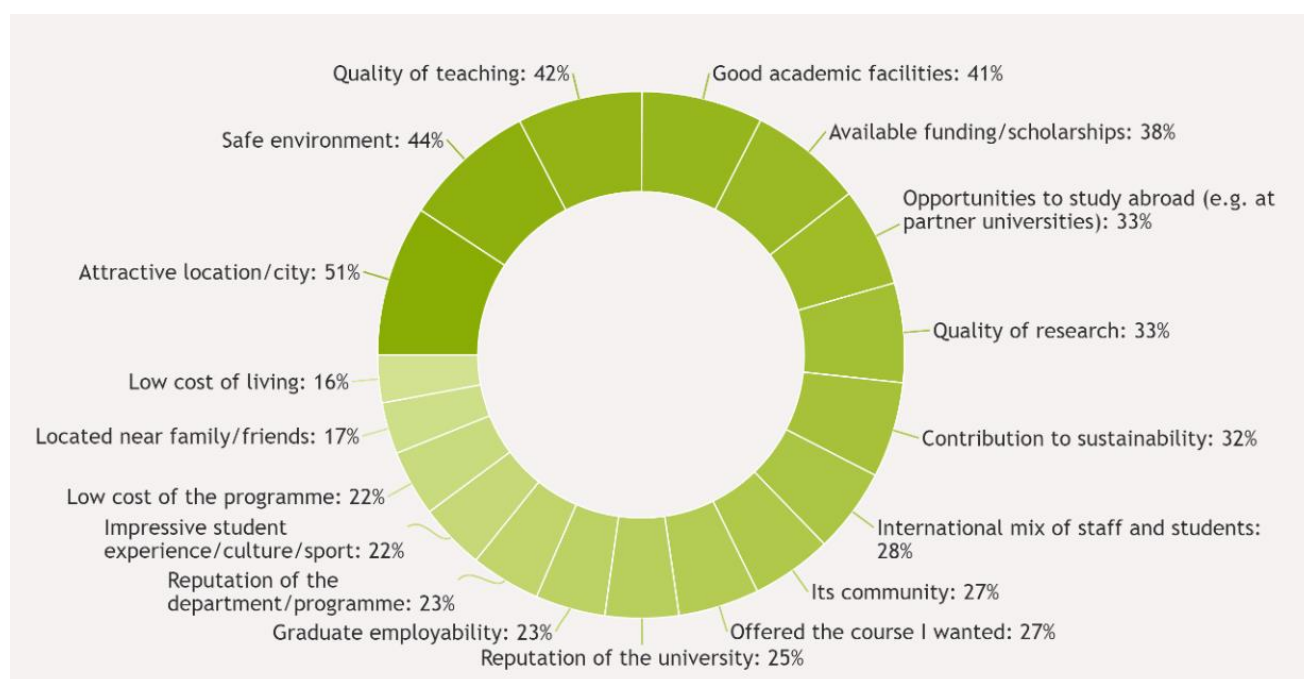


The data also highlights the following global trends in choice factors:

- North Americans chose 'safe environment' and 'location' most often
- Australasians also considered 'safe environment' but also highlight 'funding/scholarships'
- Asian prospective students choose 'academic facilities' as the leading factor
- South Americans chose facilities, funding and location
- African students choose 'good academic facilities'
- Middle East students identify 'quality of teaching', 'facilities' and 'location'
- UK students chose 'location'

In order to further probe the relationship between reputation and sustainable development, we can look in more detail at the choice factors identified by universities that perform strongly in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.

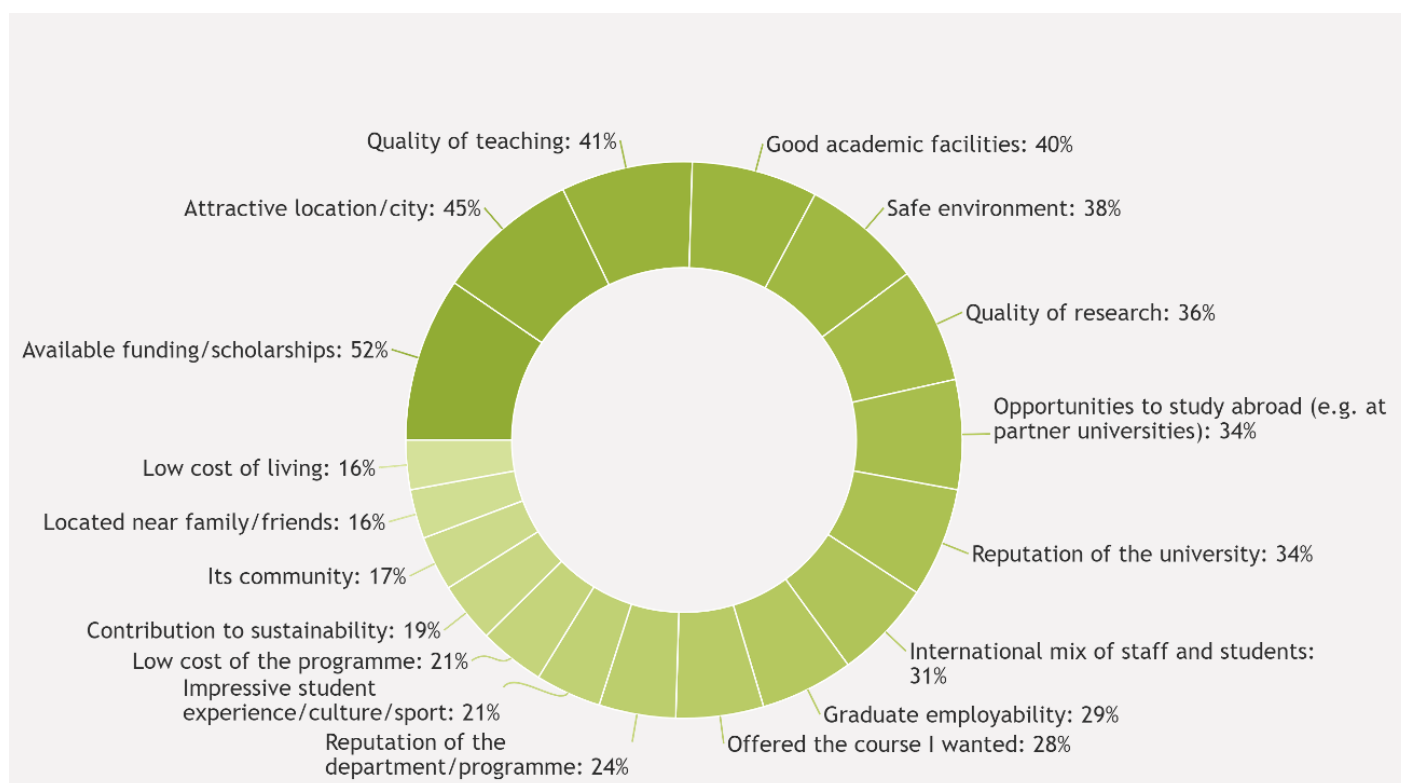
The following example is an Australasian university that is ranked in the top 10 and has a strong institutional and brand focus on sustainability:



A third of respondents identified 'contribution to sustainability' as a leading choice factor.

A UK university in the top 10 of the THE Impact Rankings saw a similar result, with 30% of respondents identifying 'contribution to sustainability'.

This contrasts markedly with another Australasian university which does not take part in the THE Impact Rankings. Only 19% of prospective students pick 'contribution to sustainability' as a choice factor:



These results suggest that universities that have a stronger focus on sustainable development do see this reflected in the way prospective students consider their study choice, although other factors remain a stronger focus.

In our Focus Groups with World 100 members, we also picked up some comments about the impact of sustainable development on reputation with prospective international students.

Echoing the results of our survey, participants felt that a focus on sustainable development was not key to driving recruitment of international students:

“Unprompted, prospective students don't mention Sustainable Development as a reason necessarily why they are choosing an institution or equally declining an institution.”

However, one participant did highlight the potential opportunities for developing more focused messaging around sustainable development as a way of appealing to the altruistic thinking of prospective students:

“There's a neoliberal way of thinking about the very limited role of a university which is about a cost and a benefit to the individual. What we're trying to say to students by linking programmes to the SDGs is 'come and study here and you can change the world'.”

In conclusion, our research suggests that for prospective students as a group there is a relatively weak connection between reputation and sustainable development. Generation Z students undoubtedly consider sustainability issues to be important, but they do not play a major role in their consideration of the reputation of universities. However, there is some evidence that universities that prioritise sustainable development in their strategies and brand are attracting students who consider these issues to be more important.



CURRENT STUDENTS

In contrast to prospective students, our World 100 member Focus Group attendees highlighted the importance of students currently studying at their institutions as an audience with a strong focus on sustainable development:

“When they are actually on campus they get involved and very engaged and there’s even more of an impact at the postgraduate level.”

Many World 100 members are focusing specifically on communicating messages about their sustainable development activities to current students, recognising the levels of interest from current cohorts:

“We’re focusing on student research - being able to contribute to something bigger than ourselves is so important - students all want to make a difference.”

Universities also have an eye on developing longer term engagement as students transition to alumni:

“Our current students will become our alumni - and we are very keen to develop those long-term relationships based around an understanding of the impact that the university has on wider society. Alumni are our greatest brand ambassadors.”

The University of Sydney provides a good example of a university bringing together content for students, highlighting opportunities for engaging with sustainability:

Study sustainability
Search through our sustainability courses to find what best suits you.

Curriculum Garden awarded the 2022 Australasian Green Gown Award for 'Creating Impact'

Equal 1st in Australia and equal 5th globally for Sustainability QS rankings

Signed PPA with Red Energy in July 2022 to source 100% of electricity from renewable sources

Hydrawise smart irrigation system saved 21 million litres of potable water

Biodigester produced 18,693 kg of nutrient-rich compost for use on campus

Operationalised hard-to-recycle enable wall in the Wentworth Building

Gender equity
We advance gender equity by promoting women in leadership and furthering women's education.

Sustainability at Sydney
The University is addressing some of the world's most complex issues by putting sustainability at the heart of our campus operations, environments and engagement activities.

Sustainability
1st in Australia and 7th in the world

Sustainability Action Student Life Grants
* Make our campus and community more sustainable with a Sustainability Action Student Life Grant.

1st for sustainability*
We're tackling the world's greatest environmental, social and governance challenges (1st in Australia)¹
¹QS World University Rankings 2024

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- 05 September 2023: International Centre of Crop and Digital Agriculture opened at Narrabri
- 28 October 2022: University of Sydney named one of the world's most sustainable universities

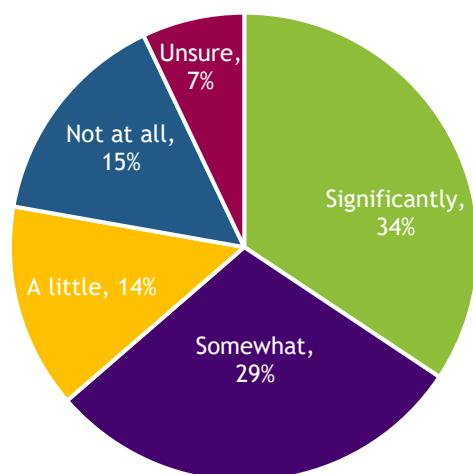
Caring for Country impact case study: the 'Creating Impact' Green Gown Award
The University of Sydney won the 'Creating Impact' category in the 2022 Green Gown Awards for Nguragaingun, Ngara, Pemulan - our Curriculum Garden and Biodiversity Management Plan. The Green Gown Awards are considered the most prestigious recognition of sustainability excellence in the tertiary education sector in Australasia. In their 13th year, the awards are administered by Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS). The Curriculum Garden was designed using over 1,000 Australian native plants in partnership with IndigoGrow, to act as a space for cultural and environmental learning.



GLOBAL ACADEMICS

International academics are one of the main stakeholder groups that engage directly with sustainable development. Higher education institutions are considered to have an essential role in sustainability, in terms of policy, education and research, and the research conducted by a significant proportion of academics will, to some extent, be impacted by, and create impact for, sustainable development. Therefore, primary research was conducted as part of this project with this audience to understand their perceptions on the impact sustainability may have on a university's reputation.

“Does a university's efforts with sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) make it more reputable, in your opinion?” n=2165

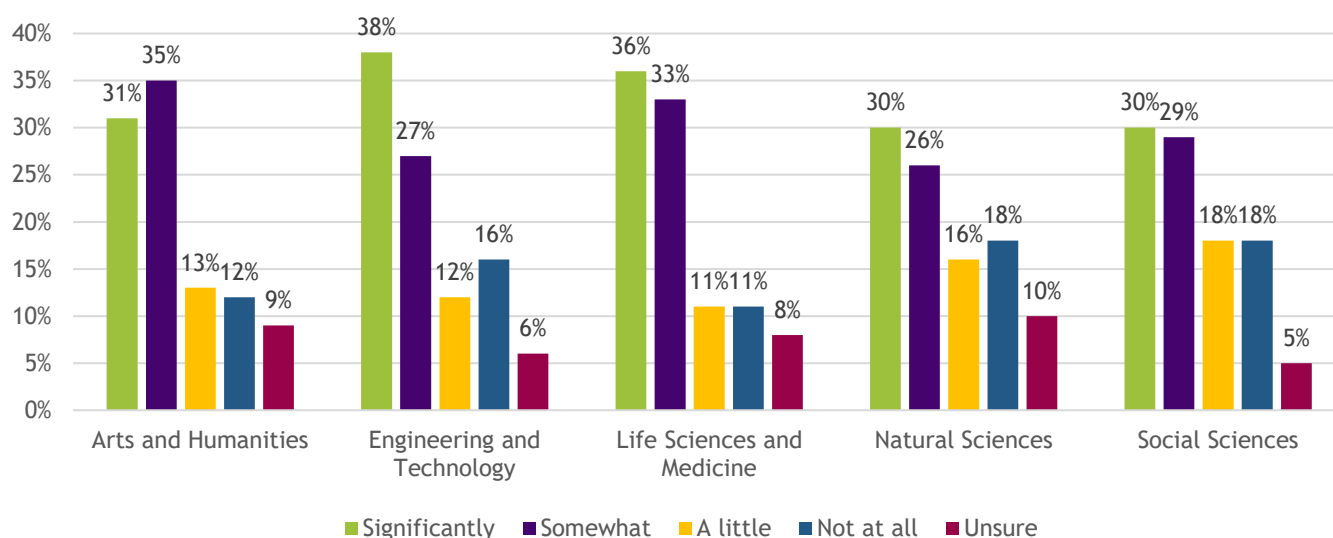


	%	Count
Significantly	34%	743
Somewhat	29%	633
A little	14%	297
Not at all	15%	331
Unsure	7%	161
NET	100%	2,165

Asked whether a

university's efforts with sustainability and the SDGs impacted reputation, a large proportion of academics agreed that institutional reputation was affected by efforts to some extent (77%). Only 15% of academics from the total sample believed

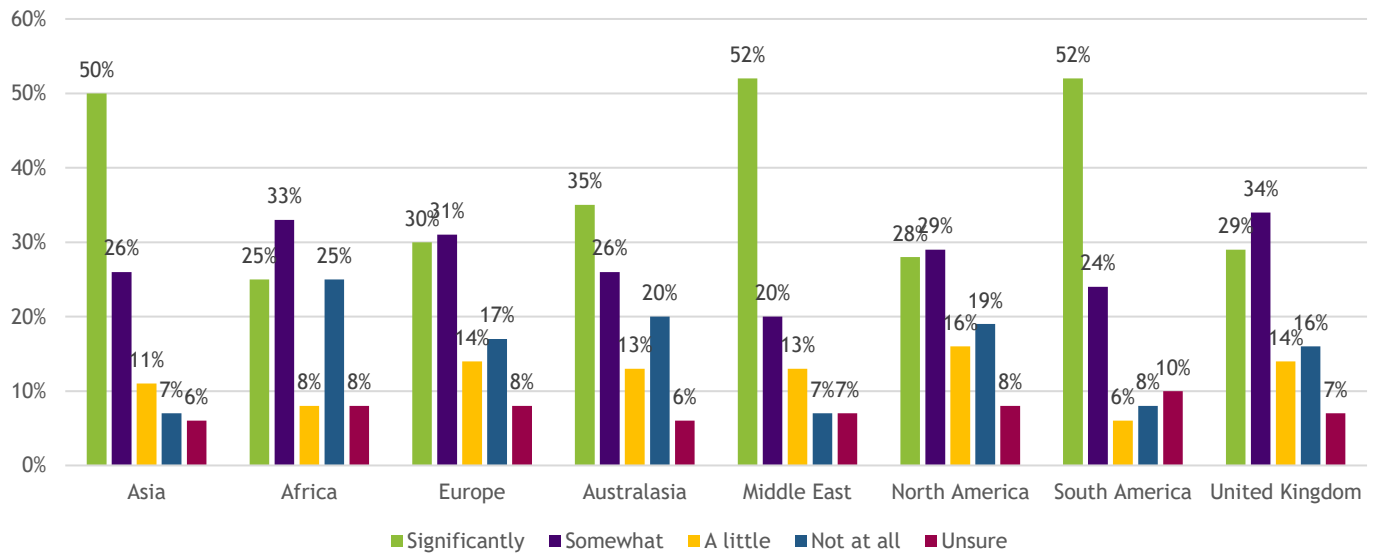
that there was no connection between the two, and, with the lowest proportion (7% unsure responses), it can be understood that most academics have an opinion on the relationship between the two elements.



The findings show that the location of the academics and their field of discipline impacts how they view sustainability, and how this affects their sentiment towards sustainable development and the SDGs. Those directly involved with some STEM disciplines, categorised within the Engineering & Technology and Life Sciences fields, were most likely to consider sustainability as having an impact on a specific institution's reputation. 38% and 36%, respectively, claim it does so 'significantly'. Academics from the Natural Sciences are outliers with a smaller proportion believing that sustainability efforts impact university



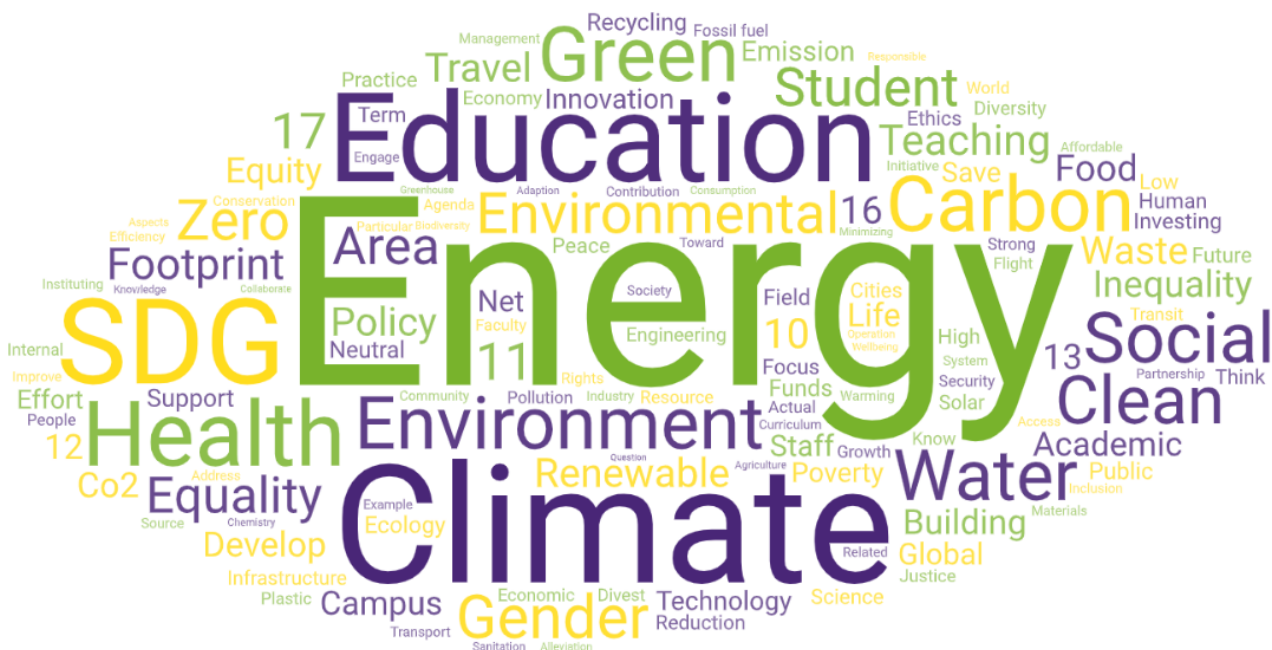
reputation. Social Sciences academics are the least convinced of the link between reputation and sustainability.



When analysing the data by region, there is further variation on how academics perceive the reputation-sustainability relationship. Notably, ‘Western’ countries and regions are much less likely to consider sustainability efforts as a driver for improving university reputation. Europe, Australasia, North America and the United Kingdom all experience lower percentages selecting ‘Significantly’ in comparison to Asia, the Middle East and South America - at least 15% lower. On average, 31% academics from these regions believe sustainability impacts university reputation significantly, compared to the 51% of other regions.

How domicile and field factors impact the amount of exposure and engagement individuals have with sustainability should also be considered here.

“Which area(s) of the sustainability agenda do you consider important for building a university’s reputation?”





As an addition to understanding the relationship between sustainability and reputation, academics were also asked to consider the areas of sustainability that they believe to be of most impact to reputation.

Energy was the biggest consideration amongst academics as an aspect of sustainability to help build a university's reputation. Environmental factors are the second leading choice amongst academics here, with climate, carbon and environment appearing as the most frequently selected areas. Whilst the environment covers multiple SDGs, the clearest considerations are for SDGs 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and 13 (Climate action). Other top choices include health, equality and gender, most closely aligning with SDGs 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality) and 10 (Reduced inequalities).

We asked respondents to explain the reasons for the scores they provided in the survey. Verbatim comments from global academics help to bring to life some of the key themes around reputation and sustainable development emerging from this survey.

Many respondents focused on the clear link between the mission of universities and sustainable development:

"A commitment to sustainability and SDGs implies (a) available resources and (b) a broader perspective to understand the importance of investing in a sustainable future. These are both signs of a reputable institution."

"Research should be driven by curiosity and societal needs. SDGs relates to the latter and is very important for our common future."

And there was strong support for the idea that a focus on sustainable development has a clear link with reputation:

"By consistently demonstrating a dedication to sustainability, a university can build a strong reputation as a leader in the global sustainability agenda, attract like-minded students and faculty, and make a positive impact on society and the environment."

Some academics were clear there was as much a focus on the education mission when thinking about sustainable development:

"If a place that is about educating students for their future does not care about sustainability, it is not a credible place."

Other respondents focused on the importance of partnerships:

"If we don't get the sustainability question right, there will be no universities left to collaborate with."

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY ACADEMICS

Whilst the data from the survey indicates strong support for the idea that sustainable development and reputation are strongly linked, it is also instructive to dig further into the more negative responses.

A common theme amongst respondents who didn't consider that there was a relationship between sustainable development and reputation was a concern about the political nature of the SDG agenda.

"Universities should not engage in political issues."



"Universities are about research and science development. Sustainability levels are somewhat irrelevant in regard to the quality of the science done there and indicate only a political viewpoint or stance."

A number of responses were concerned that a reputational focus on sustainable development initiatives might tip institutions into the category of 'greenwashing'. Indeed, some felt that universities were already over-focusing on some activities in these areas, whilst continuing to operate on a non-sustainable way in others:

"Most universities are greenwashing this issue. I don't believe most of the claims."

Another concern raised by some respondents relates to the broad nature of the SDG framework, making it potentially difficult for institutions to have a clear approach to building reputation:

"Since the number of categories of SDGs is too many, it is not easy to understand the actual vision and goal that each organization intends."

A small number of respondents expressed the view that their sole focus was on their area of research interest, and were not even aware of the UN SDGs, a reminder that the academy is very broad and diverse:

"No idea what SDG means."

Issues raised by academics in the survey are a reminder to communicators in universities that messaging about the sustainable development activities needs to be nuanced, recognising the interests and focuses of different groups. In particular, communications need to be firmly rooted in the science, and authentic to the mission of the university.

HOW OTHER AUDIENCES ARE ENGAGING WITH THE SDG AGENDA

During the Focus groups run for this project with World 100 Member universities, a clear focus emerged on understanding how other key stakeholder groups engage with SDGs, allowing institutions to tailor communications in order to build reputation.

Using the SDGs as an externally validated framework was identified as an important factor in stakeholder engagement and in particular in relating to their interests:

"It helps us figure out what we should be known for and then to create content to engage with our stakeholders in a better way and not as a generic kind of description of the university. From a reputation building perspective, I think that's been really helpful to us."

There was also a sense that the SDG framework encourages universities to take a less inward-focused approach than is too often the case.

"SDGs are an outside-in rather than an inside-out approach. So, what we typically do in universities is talk about faculties and institutes and centres and we wonder why then we get no traction in the real world. This allows us to make that connection."



GOVERNMENT AND POLICYMAKERS

Most governments around the world are engaged strongly from a policy perspective with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, opening up opportunities for universities to demonstrate their impact with this key audience.

Focus group attendees reflected that the SDGs have been really useful in supporting a range of engagement with government and policymakers:

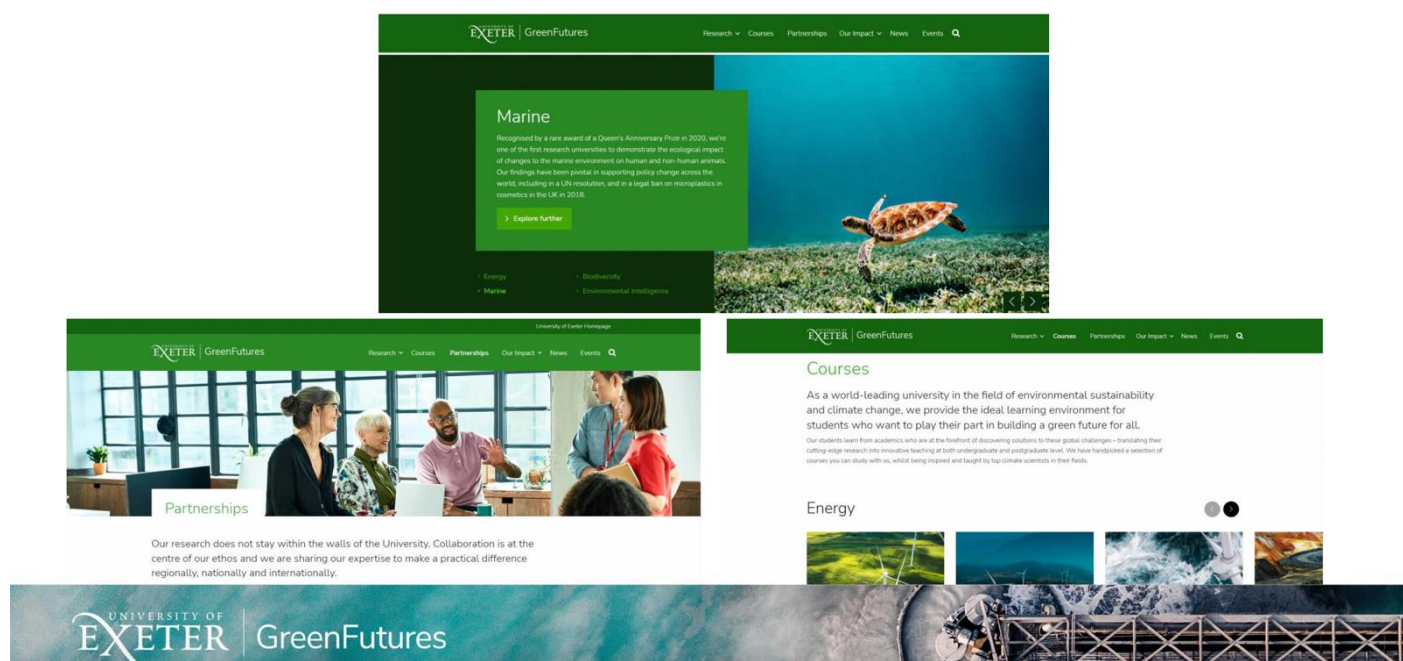
"It is about bringing together the policymakers with the researchers. Policymakers need evidence now to make the policy decision. And they know that the resources are there and university to help inform the policies."

This activity can take place at many different levels - international, national and regional:

"When we think about impact it's really important to think of the local government dimension. A lot of our really good policy work is done in our city and region now. And you can get that kind of real work academic impact."

Another way of engaging with policymakers that has been highlighted by World 100 members is through involvement in high profile events.

The University of Exeter developed an engagement programme to highlight their wide-ranging sustainability work in conjunction with the UK's hosting of a meeting of Group of 7 Nations held in Cornwall in 2021.





The University of Glasgow leveraged their involvement with the COP 26 meeting hosted in their home city, also in 2021, hosting a wide variety of events and engagement opportunities.



At the most recent COP 28 meeting, the University of Birmingham's Dubai Campus was actively involved, hosting the UK's team of negotiators.

A very different example of how governments are engaging with SDGs and universities is reflected in work done by Times Higher Education with Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand (MHESI). A Student Sustainability Survey has been launched to track and measure the impact of sustainability education in Thailand. MHESI has a visionary goal for universities to shape and guide the next generation, enabling students to enter the workforce prepared to make tangible changes in society. This includes teaching students about sustainability and the SDGs, and also creating citizens with sustainable outlooks and behaviours.

BUSINESSES, LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Focus Group attendees highlighted a number of other stakeholder groups as targets or engagement work around impact, with a specific focus on their interest in the SDGs.

"Businesses are seeing the SDGs having a truly global focus, and universities can be a really important partner."

Local community stakeholders were also identified as an important audience. The University of Newcastle in Australia has a strong focus institutionally on local engagement.

"The SDGs allow us to take what we do locally and connect it to something bigger, to see how their work contributes to solving problems in the wider community and globally. and to work with community partners."



An example of Newcastle’s approach is its actions around supporting indigenous communities, linked firmly to the SDGs:

Our commitment to Indigenous Higher Education, Innovation and Engagement

We are proud of our record in Indigenous higher education, innovation and engagement, which has been driven by relationships with the Indigenous community and through the work of the Wollotuka Institute.

We are the sector leader in terms of Indigenous student enrolments and the employment of Indigenous staff, and commit to building on this strength and extending our collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous peoples of our regions and beyond.

Students: Tahlia and Kadina

Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals





HOW UNIVERSITIES ARE PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In the final section of the research to inform this report, we looked in detail at how World 100 member universities are promoting sustainable development activities. As we have already seen, there are many examples of good practice, but we wanted to get an overall sense of how our members are stepping up to the challenge.

THE BRAND REVIEW PROCESS

A review of online materials was conducted to understand how universities are communicating sustainability work that takes place within the university. The review took the form of a revised World 100 tool, the brand snapshot, used in many university reputation projects to date, and also formed the structure of the 'World 100 Annual Research Project 2017/18: Measuring online brand strength in world-class universities'. The brand snapshot analyses the main English language website (where available) for each World 100 network member in the network year. The revised format shifted the focus to sustainability content, removing unnecessary measures and shifting the focus of existing measures to sustainability, impact and the SDGs.

Notably, the vast majority of universities promote their sustainability activities on their website and social media accounts, with some going to great effort to ensure messages are clear, focused for key audiences and, to an extent, are engaging. The amount of content has increased significantly over the last several years.

FINDINGS

It is clear that many World 100 universities have developed interesting and unique ways to communicate sustainable development efforts, and are now using SDGs as a defining focus for university websites. For many sites, the SDGs act as a device that the university uses to draw together activities across the institution, such as research, study programmes, campus initiatives and community actions, that can map against each area and communicate messages in a consistent language. Several members utilise the same SDG navigation tool: displaying all 17 SDGs on the main sustainability page and linking to individual pages for each which highlight relevant content. The alignment of messaging across universities can be effective for communicating to sector-wide audiences, however, universities need to provide evidence to avoid sounding like their competitors.

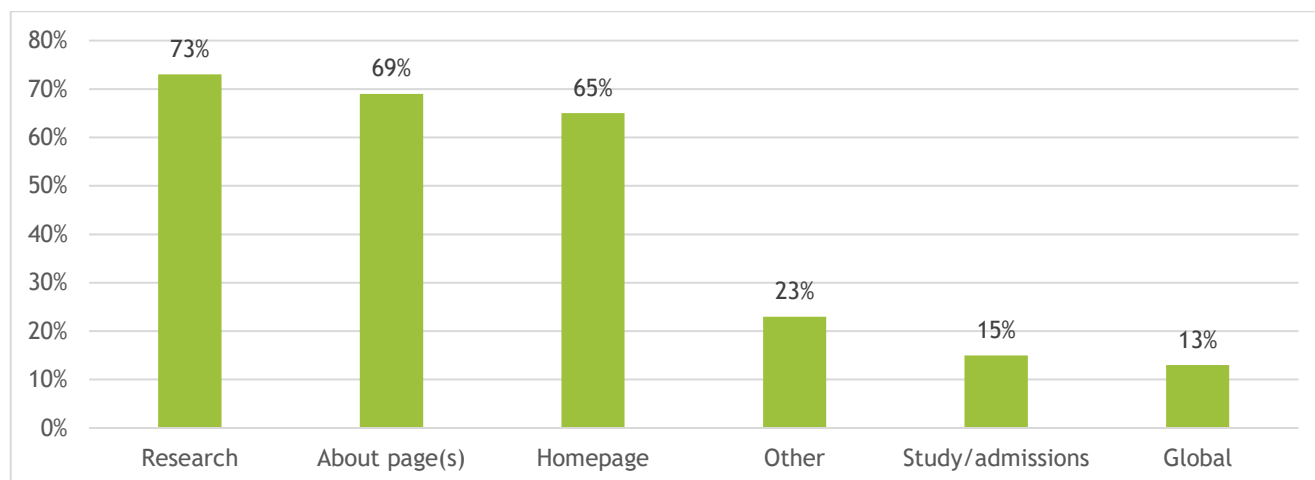
Another key finding is that a number of World 100 members increasingly include ranking figures related to sustainability and impact on their websites. In line with the increased focus on sustainability in the higher education sector and the development of sustainability measurements and metrics, some universities are now incorporating sustainability ranking positions within their 'Facts and figures' and 'Rankings and achievements' pages. A smaller percentage include these specific rankings on the homepage. Times Higher Education's Impact rankings and QS's Sustainability rankings are provided as evidence of achievement and success within focus areas, highlighting achievement for specific sustainability metrics (Climate action, Impact of education etc), but also overall ranking position. Rankings - typically world and subject rankings - are noted by students domestically and internationally, so the usage of rankings focused on sustainability may be another angle for universities to leverage leading status.

For the most part, World 100 members struggle to identify an audience of focus for their sustainability content. Content can be spread across several areas of the website, but content mainly sits within the 'Research' and 'About' pages. Here, sustainable development content remains less targeted and more generalised to cater for the multiple audiences that would visit. The review shows that members



typically do not cater often for prospective or current students outside of green campus initiatives, which aligns with comments made during the focus groups on student attention being captured only once on campus.

“SDGs, sustainability etc. In which website areas can mention of the SDGs or other sustainability content be found?”



Research is the section of the website that is most likely to be populated with sustainability content, followed by the About page(s). 65% of members include at least one piece of sustainability or SDG content on the homepage, which indicates the importance being placed on this material for reputational purposes.

Most World 100 members do not include sustainability content within the Study, Admissions or Academics website sections. Of the small number that do (15%), the focus is typically on programmes and research opportunities that address sustainable development. In a few cases, sustainability is highlighted through volunteer and community initiatives within student experience content, and also the subject rankings.

Study

Global

→

→

→ Postgraduate research opportunities

Study sustainability

Be the change you want to see. Study sustainability at the University of Newcastle and help develop global solutions.

[Find out more >](#)

Study sustainability

Search through our sustainability courses to find what best suits you.

Education

Developing Water Engineers

Masters students studying Water Engineering MSc at the University of Sheffield gain in-depth knowledge on the most up-to-date methods and technologies for designing water and sewage networks and water quality processing and treatment. They also study what makes a water system sustainable, including ways to balance the complex economic, social, ecological and regulatory tradeoffs involved, as well as how to deal with the uncertain impacts climactic, social, environmental and economic changes might have on different water systems.

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT

Water Engineering MSc

📅 September 2024 ⌚ 1 year / Full-time 🏆 Accredited

Protecting and improving our water resources and protecting people from flooding and droughts are some of the most significant engineering challenges we face today. This course gives you the fundamental knowledge and experience for a career in water engineering, including skills in environmental enhancement and protection.

Online sustainability course: Environment, Economy and Society

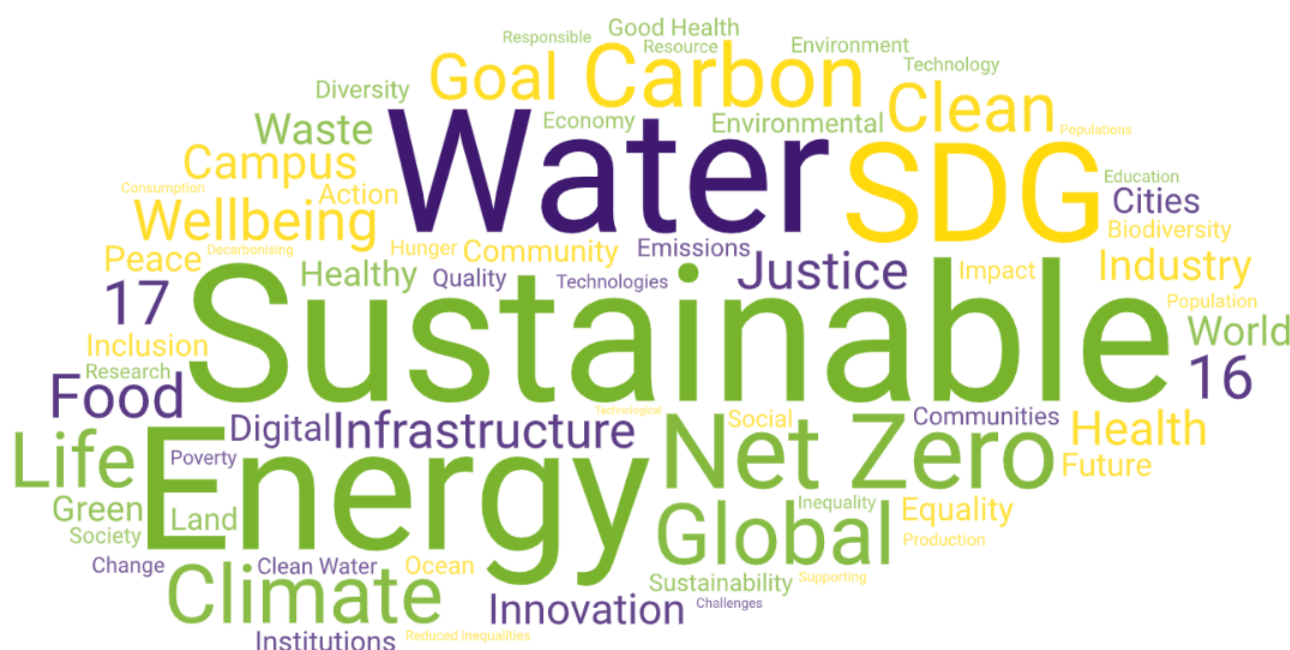
Online sustainability course: Communication Strategies

Future Careers in sustainability

“Are there pages related to SDGs/sustainability that get their own sub-menu listing (is the page listed under the research navigation pane drop-down, for example)?”



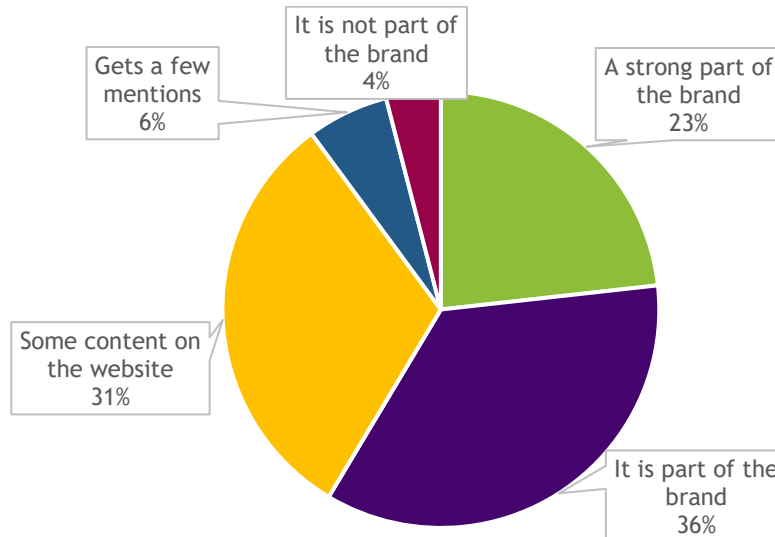
“Which are the most prominent SDGs or areas of sustainability as stated on the website?”





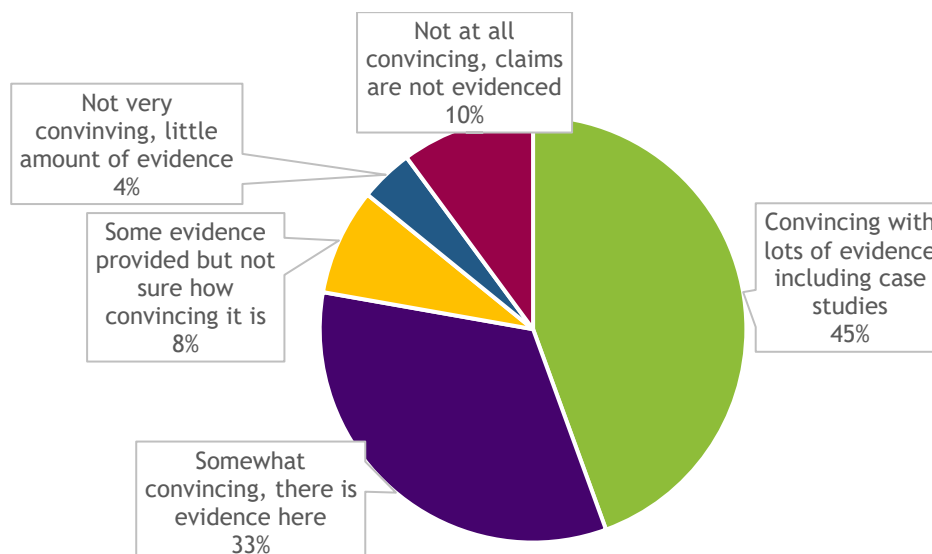
Energy, water and net zero are the most notable areas of sustainability focus on World 100 member university websites. This demonstrates the areas World 100 member universities perceive as most important to promote and give prominence, and the areas that they are pushing most in order to boost their brand. Whilst the most dominant sustainability areas here are not what World 100 member universities excel in, according to THE's Impact Rankings, they do align with opinions from the academic survey, which suggests that academic and public opinion influences the content that universities are highlighting.

“Is the university making sustainability impact part of its brand?”



World 100 universities achieved an average score of 3.6 out of 5 for efforts towards making sustainability part of their online brand. Only two universities were felt to exclude the sustainability agenda from their online assets (4%), whilst over half of network members (58%) were perceived as embedding sustainability into their brand ('A strong part of the brand', 23% and 'It is part of the brand', 36%).

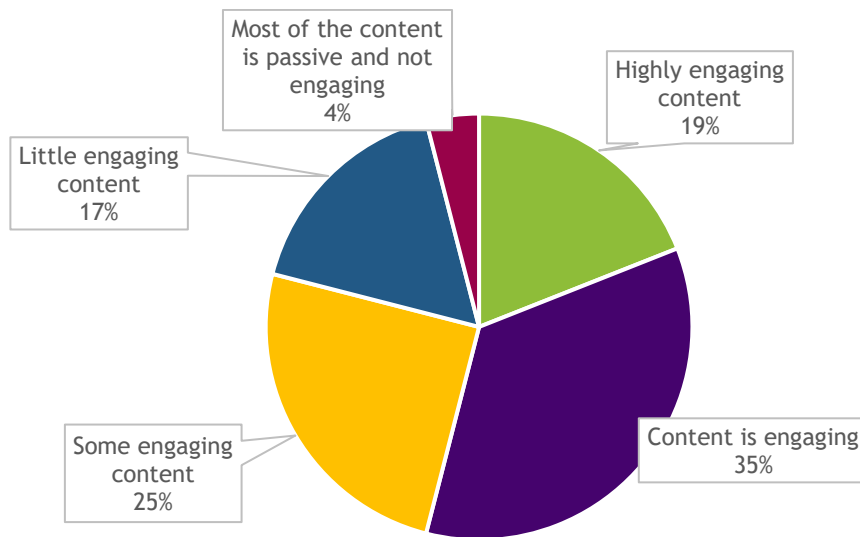
“Does the university’s website provide evidence to support its sustainability brand claims? Is it convincing and believable?”





When scoring World 100 members on sustainability evidencing, universities average 4 out of 5 across the group, with the majority judged as being either ‘Convincing with lots of evidence including case studies’ or ‘Somewhat convincing, there is evidence here’. Facts, figures and case studies are a regular element of sustainability brand communication for most websites, suggesting that universities deem it important to provide tangible evidence of their activities. However, the issue then is creating factual content that is engaging to the audience.

“Looking at the sustainability content, how engaging is it?”



The average score for engagement content is 3.5 across the World 100 group demonstrating that, whilst member universities are convincing at making sustainability part of their university brand, the evidence can be somewhat dry and unengaging. Analysts considered most members to lack highly engaging content - only 19% of members were said to have content that was highly engaging - but overall, university websites were considered to have at least some engaging sustainability content (79%).

Members that were considered to have highly engaging sustainability content supplied a variety of resources, in a variety of formats, that were highly visual, dynamic and easily consumable. Examples of content include rich media such as videos, case studies, social media posts and brochures.



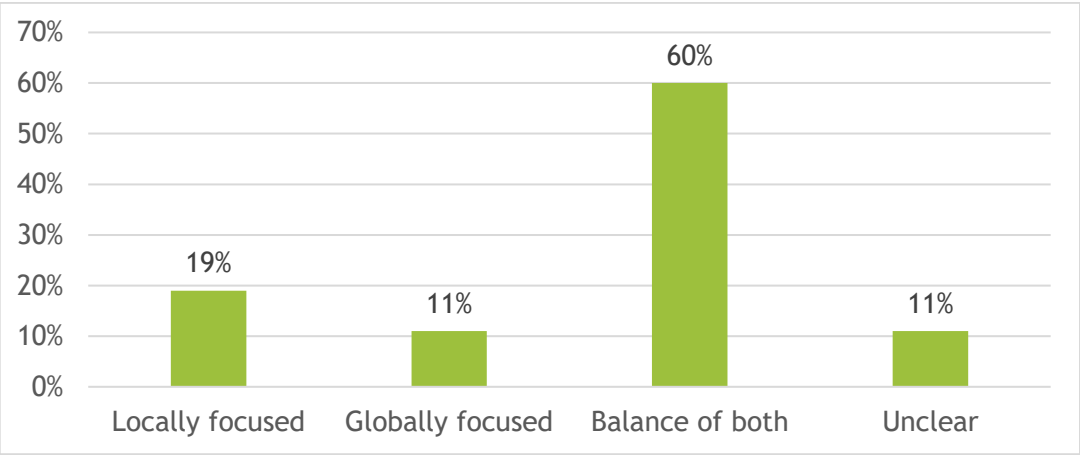
Queen's University Belfast is notable here for its student-focused initiatives, spanning across platforms and formats including social media posts and videos.

<p>Windsor Women's Centre Christmas Tidy Up 🌿 ☐ The Sustainability Team, Gardening Team and landscapers from Dalzell Landscape Company visited the Windsor Women's Centre Belfast to help them prepare for Christmas. This included tidying up their allotment area (which had become overgrown since COVID-19), and decorating the allotment to become a Winter Wonderland for Santa visiting next</p>	<p>As part of a series of cop28uaeofficial events, The Sustainability Team hosted a fantastic panel discussion last night at the crescentartscentre in Belfast with a number of expert panellists discussing the topic 'Connecting Belfast: Transforming Travel'. 🚗 With representatives from alliancepartyini fsb_uk qubelfast sustrans translinkni Department for Infrastructure, there were varied</p>	<p>Panel Discussion: 'Transforming Travel: Connecting Belfast' 🚗 🚲 📅 When? 6 December, 6-8pm ⌚ 📍 Where? Crescent Arts Centre 📍 This event is part of Queen's University's COP28 Campaign. Further information, including how to register, can be found via the link in our bio! 📢 #QUBSustainability #climateaction #netzero #sustainabletravel #activetravel</p>



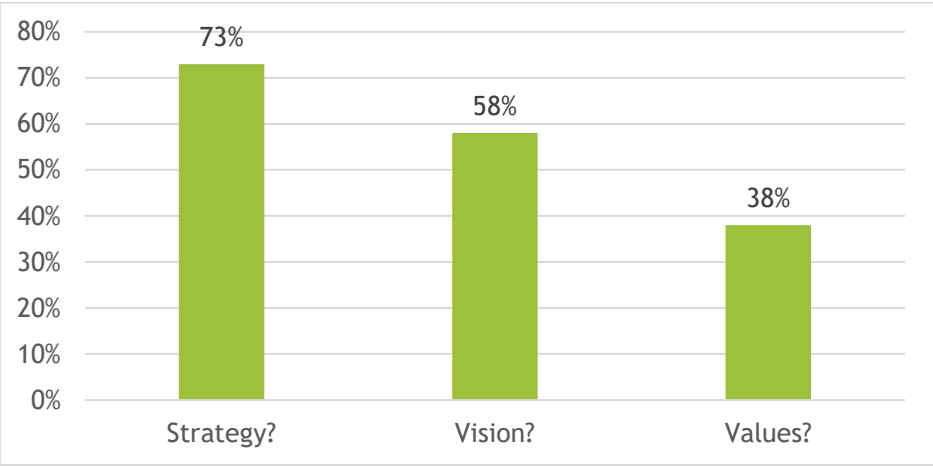


“Are the sustainability initiatives of the university more...?”



Positively, the majority of members have a balance of both a global focus and a local focus when it comes to the sustainability content they supply on their websites. 19% are more focused on the local environment, typically putting more time and consideration into communicating what they are doing on campus and in the community than with initiatives internationally. Few are only globally focused, suggesting that most have a civic aspect to their brand.

“Either explicitly or implicitly, is sustainability a part of the university’s...?”



Universities are less likely to communicate the sustainability agenda as part of their values, as outlined principles generally have much wider scopes, but most are incorporating elements of it into their strategy. Several members have specific strategies dedicated to sustainability.



STRATEGIC FOCUSES

We also heard more in the Focus Groups about strategic approaches being taken by World 100 network member universities.

The University of Bologna has gone furthest in structuring its institutional strategy (not just its communications strategy) around the SDGs:

“Our university strategy has been re-oriented to reflect the SDGs. Instead of identifying the SDG targets and actions that would conveniently align with university’s actions, UNIBO adopted a reversed approach.”



This has produced many benefits in aligning strategy and messaging focused on key stakeholder groups, including students, researchers, partners and particularly governments at different levels.

The University of Exeter, whilst not adopting the same all-encompassing approach focused specifically on the SDGs, has developed a strong focus on sustainable development both in its most recent institutional plan but also its new brand strategy.

“Sustainability is right at the heart of the new strategy, providing a clear focus in the university, but it's been broken down to make it a little bit more digestible and create a real clarity of message. So that's become 'greener, healthier, fairer'.”



The University of Navarra in Spain has also developed a strong strategic focus on sustainability.

RESULTADOS

01 PARTICIPACIÓN
Entre 240-395 personas/semana

02 LO QUE YA SE HACE
Lo más conocido: Green Tecum. Más del 60% no conoce ninguno

03 PROPUESTAS
Relacionadas con concienciación y mejora de la gestión de residuos

04 CONOCIMIENTO/ CONCIENCIACIÓN
Medios: blogs

RESEARCH

Around biodiversity and the environment, with a approach multidisciplinary, to provide global and innovative solutions.

"From the University of Navarra we want to contribute to the resolution of the environmental, economic and social challenges of our time from the **research, the Education and innovation**, at the service of the common good".

MARIA IRABURU
President of the University of Navarra

Strategy 2025

UNIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Ecosystems

Anthropogenic impacts

Global change and biodiversity

Science communication

Environmental management awards

GREEN FLAG

The campus of the University of Navarra received in 2021, for the fourth consecutive year, the international award Green Flag Award for parks and spaces. The awards a recognition of the comprehensive management of its green areas and places the campus as one of the best parks in Europe for the level of excellence of its management.

UI GREENMETRIC RANKING

In 2021, the University was ranked 203rd in the world.

Sustainability at the School of Engineering
Campus of San Sebastian

DIFFERENTIATION THROUGH LINKING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY MISSION

Central to any effective university communications strategy is a focus on differentiation. In the Focus Groups, a number of points were made about how the sustainable development agenda and the breadth of the SDGs have provided universities with opportunities to identify points of difference which can be promoted to key audiences.

Three particularly interesting examples from World 100 members concern the linking of the sustainable development agenda with the unique institutional missions of the universities.

Virginia Tech in the USA focuses on the link between its mission as a Land Grant University and the SDGs.

VIRGINIA TECH.
GLOBAL IMPACT

GLOBAL LAND-GRANT IMPACT

Virginia Tech demonstrates impact as a global land grant - progressing sustainability in our community, through the Commonwealth of Virginia, and around the world. [More information on Virginia Tech's commitment to sustainability is available through the Office of Sustainability.](#)



Keio University in Japan links its focus on the concept of Kyosei to a number of the UN SDGs.

Keio “Kyosei”

Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion



Keio University established the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion on April 1, 2018 towards building an environment conducive to staff and faculty members and students of all ages cooperating and coexisting in a spirit of mutual respect and acceptance for one another’s individual personalities and diverse values, and to facilitate prompt responses to issues relating to welcoming diversity. In September 2019, Keio also drafted the Charter for the Promotion of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which challenges us to strive for a world in which no one—regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, culture, nationality, race, religion, or lifestyle—is isolated or excluded from society. With the charter, Keio aims for the actualization of an inclusive society where people of diverse backgrounds respect and cooperate with each other. In order to do so, the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is engaged in Keio-wide initiatives—encompassing the affiliated schools, university, graduate schools, and university hospital—that address the areas of work life balance, eliminating barriers for those with disabilities, and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) to develop an environment and systems that respect these ideals. These efforts are carried out based on a platform for promoting diverse values, and sharing the knowledge that Keio has cultivated over the years.

A campus based on “independence and self-respect” and “respect for others”

How we define “Kyosei” at Keio

As a society in which respect is given to different values, we accept one another, and each individual is free to live out the life that they choose, uninhibited by mental and physical barriers or societal stigma.

The guiding principles of a “Kyosei” community

Maintaining an open mind toward different values, respect for others, and, above all, empathy and compassion for being true to oneself

Organizations capable of accepting and promoting diversity are best situated for growth and development



University of Galway in Ireland adopts its 'Learn-Live-Lead' approach as a way to map its activities to the sustainability agenda.



CHALLENGES

Whilst the evidence uncovered in our research has been overwhelmingly positive about the opportunities for building reputation through a focus on sustainable development, a small number of challenges were raised by World 100 members.

One particular concern echoed an issue identified by some in our global academics sample:

"For academics who are interested in interdisciplinary research, the SDGs can be a real help. But many are still really focused on disciplinary excellence. And some are, of course, suspicious of rankings."

Another issue raised concerned the challenge of focusing in on areas of research strength given the broad nature of the SDG agenda:

"Having 17 SDGs to think about, and map our research against, adds yet another layer of complexity in trying to define and promote a small number of key strengths."

Another concern relating to messaging highlights the potential challenges around universities all focusing on similar themes that tend to dominate the sustainable development agenda:

"There's a bit of a danger that we all say the same things as everyone else - solving the world's big challenges etc. It's really difficult with some audiences to broaden the focus from 'green' issues to the much wider sustainable development agenda - and we are undoubtedly missing opportunities."

Finally, there was a reminder to avoid the potential challenges of 'greenwashing':

"The SDGs provide so many opportunities for comms teams, but ultimately the agenda is not about marketing but we should constantly remind ourselves that our communications need to be authentic."



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Demonstrating the impact of their research teaching and engagement activities has become critical to universities seeking to build reputation in an increasingly competitive and scrutinised higher education environment.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have achieved broad support as a way of measuring progress in addressing key global challenges by governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), businesses and research funders.

Progress against the SDGs is therefore being used increasingly by universities worldwide as a way to demonstrate the impact of their research and teaching, and to build reputations with key stakeholder groups around the positive effect that they have on society. World 100 members are at the forefront of demonstrating impact and showcasing best practice.

THE Impact Rankings

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings were launched in 2019 to provide a way of assessing the performance of universities against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Three quarters of World 100 members submitted to at least one of the SDGs in 2022.

World 100 members are actively participating in the THE Impact Rankings partly as a reflection of their missions, but also because there are clear opportunities for reputational advancement that arise from activities in the sustainable development area.

Research for this project showed that the World 100 members that are participating in the Rankings perform really strongly in the overall metrics, scoring 27 points higher than the global average across all of the SDGs. This will partly reflect the research quality of members, but also highlights the link between reputation and sustainable development.

The areas of sustainable development that World 100 members are stronger in include SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals. This performance suggests that these are more impactful areas from a reputation perspective - but also highlights areas not currently being focused on by leading institutions that might provide opportunities for differentiation.

The data does not suggest strongly that World 100 members are over-performing in the metrics around stewardship and outreach. Given the reputational potential for the evidence required to be submitted to the Rankings in these areas, this may be something that members want to consider further and engage with colleagues within their institutions to highlight.

How Stakeholder Groups are engaging with the SDGs

Prospective students, whilst having a strong interest in 'green' and equality issues in particular, do not prioritise a commitment to sustainability as a key choice factor when choosing which university to study at. This proxy measure for reputation differs across different geographical areas, with students from the developing world more likely to reference sustainability as a choice factor. However, there is some evidence to suggest that universities that perform well in the THE Impact Rankings do to an extent attract applicants with more of a focus on sustainability.

Students currently studying at university do have a stronger interest in their institutions committing to key sustainable development actions. Many World 100 members are targeting messages about impact to current students as well as alumni.



We asked a sample of **global academics** about how they saw the relationship between reputation and sustainable development. Asked whether a university's efforts with sustainability and the SDGs impacted reputation, a large proportion of academics agreed that institutional reputation was affected by efforts to some extent (77%). Only 15% of academics from the total sample believed that there was no connection between the two.

Academics from STEM disciplines are most likely to consider sustainability as having an impact on a specific institution's reputation. Social Sciences academics are the least convinced of the link. Faculty from the developing world were more convinced of the relationship.

The minority of academics who were less positive of the link between reputation and sustainable development were often focused on the importance of promoting disciplinary strength, whilst some were concerned about the perceived 'political' focus of the UN SDGs and the challenges of 'greenwashing'.

How communicators are leveraging sustainable development activities to build reputation

Those responsible for building reputation in global universities are clear that the using performance against the UN SDGs as an externally-validated approach is beneficial for engaging effectively with key stakeholders groups.

Universities that take part in the THE Impact Rankings have been proactive in using their performance in those rankings as an engagement tool, recognizing that league table performance resonates with many stakeholders. The process that a university goes through in submitting evidence for the Impact Rankings is also beneficial in providing examples of impact that can be communicated to help build reputation.

A number of World 100 member universities have brought their activities together in engaging Sustainability Reports, which have the dual benefit of being a scoring metric in the Impact Rankings and acting as engagement tools for communicators and leaders.

Some World 100 member universities have created a strong link between their institutional strategies and sustainable development, including structuring priorities around SDGs and developing brand pillars. Some institutions have been successful in building unique selling points that link their missions to the sustainable development agenda.

Many institutions have developed effective campaign activity that links sustainable development activity to stakeholder focuses, focusing on key concerns such as climate action and also leveraging the benefits of engagement around global events such as COP summits.

Whilst communicators are largely positive about the opportunities, a small number of challenges were identified. Participation in the Impact Rankings was noted by some as being an onerous process that might divert attention from other activity with the institution. And the sheer breadth of the SDGs can make it challenging to focus on activity which helps universities to differentiate themselves from others.

Finally, communicators were clear that reputation building activity needs to authentically reflect the unique research and teaching activity going on within their university, rather than being seen to 'jump on the bandwagon' or even get involved with 'greenwashing'.

Ultimately, the sustainable development agenda provides enormous opportunities for universities to build effective messaging that engages with key stakeholder groups and demonstrates the positive impact of their institutions.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The research findings have a number of implications for institutions as they think about developing their reputation strategies:

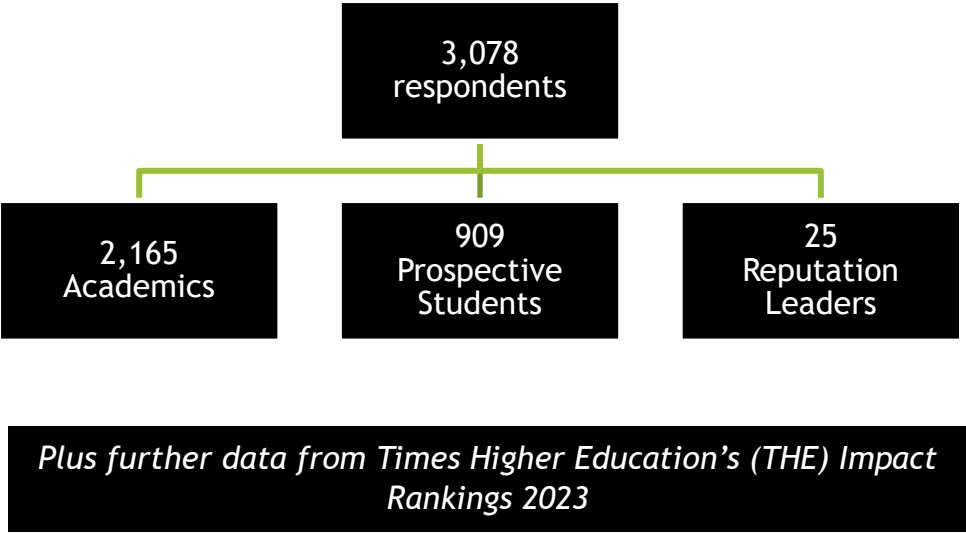
- **STRATEGY:**
Universities that have been most successful in harnessing sustainable development initiatives to building reputation take a whole institution approach to demonstrating impact. Orienting institutional strategies around the SDGs or specific sustainable development priorities helps to bring the vision to life.
- **STAKEHOLDERS:**
Many key stakeholder groups are intensely interested in the SDGs specifically or in key sustainable development initiatives. Having an independently developed framework against which to demonstrate impact is also helpful in that it allows universities to relate directly to stakeholder interests. Universities should focus on developing SDG-informed communications programmes that target the particular focuses of key opinion-forming groups - students / alumni, governments, business, NGOs.
- **BALANCE:**
Global academics are a key audience to influence in order to build reputation. Most academics do have a good understanding of the SDGs and agree that demonstrating progress against them helps to grow profile. Universities should feature sustainable development activities strongly in their engagement with this key audience, recognising that academics in particular disciplines and regions have particular interest. Universities should also recognise that some academics have a more nuanced approach to sustainable development and reputation. For many, disciplinary excellence remains the key driver of excellence; others are concerned by a perceived political focus and 'greenwashing'. Universities should be aware of these factors in designing their communications programmes and focus on authenticity.
- **DIFFERENTIATION:**
In order to stand out from competitors, universities need to have unique selling points. SDG performance data and case studies of impact can be used to help identify points of differentiation - but communicators need to be aware of the tendency towards common messaging. Some universities have been successful at linking key distinctive elements of their missions to the sustainable development agenda - social responsibility at Manchester, land grant mission at Virginia Tech, Kyosei at Keio. All institutions should be thinking proactively about harnessing the opportunities provided by the SDGs to demonstrate impact and their relevance to society.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE

For this research, we surveyed a total of 3,077 respondents across two surveys: international academics at top 200-ranked universities globally and prospective international students interested in studying outside of their home country. Focus groups were held with reputation leaders at World 100 member universities, and further data from Times Higher Education’s Impact Rankings 2023 was used to support survey findings.



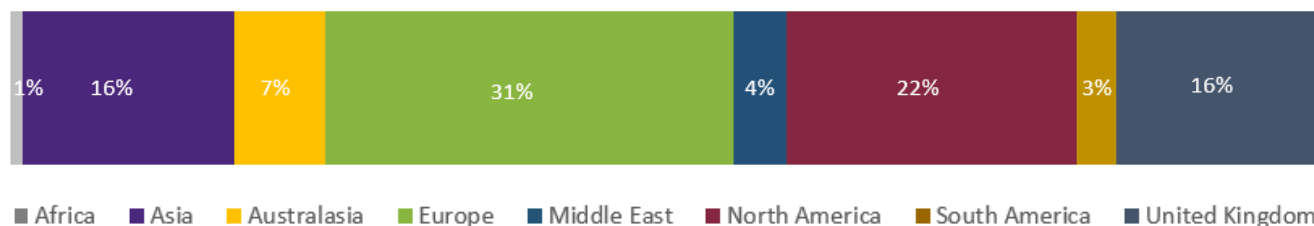
From the main international academic survey for this research, responses were collected from academics across 70 countries globally, with the United States the most represented country. The international prospective student sample spread even further, with prospects from 82 countries participating in the survey, achieving the highest proportion of representation from Asia and Africa. Reputation leaders who contributed to the research were based at World 100 member universities in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Hong Kong and the UK. In total, respondents from 106 countries contributed to at least one survey across the three main audiences.





INTERNATIONAL ACADEMICS

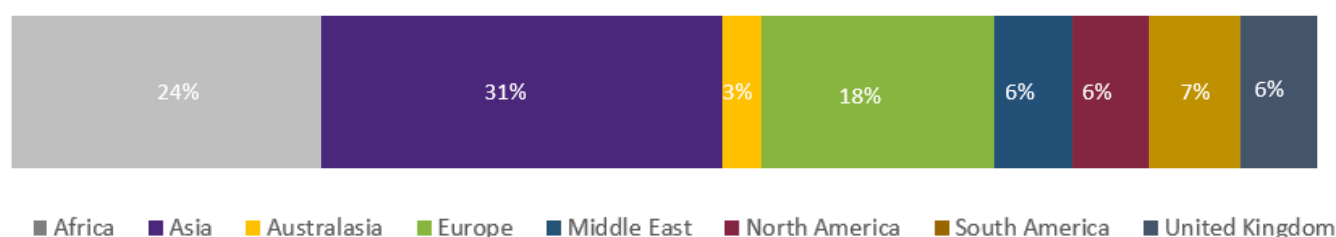
In which country is your university's main campus based? (coded by region)



As well as Europe, there was a high proportion of academic respondents from North America, UK and Asia. There were fewer academics from South America and Africa for this audience.

PROSPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

What do you consider to be your home country? (coded by region)



The majority of students surveyed were based in Asia and Africa which is generally geographically representative of World 100 member university international student recruitment. The lowest proportion of responses came from Australasia, where students are more likely to undertake shorter study abroad opportunities than undergraduate and master's level study globally.

Which level of study are you interested in?

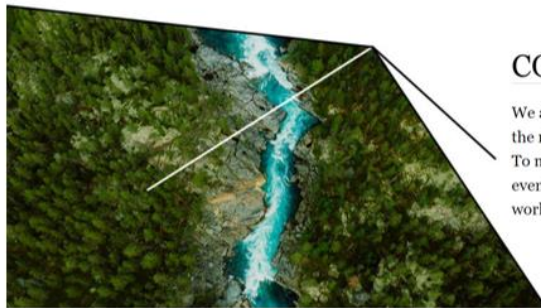




APPENDIX 2: CASE STUDIES

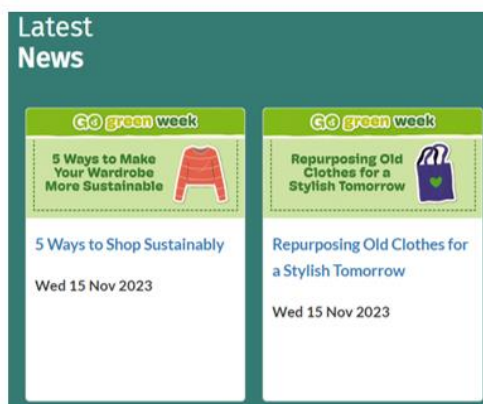
Usage examples of sustainability content available on World 100 member websites

University of Birmingham



COP28

We are leading research to help mitigate and adapt to the risks and impacts associated with climate change. To mark COP28, we are hosting a programme of events, discussions, and projects - highlighting our work to address the climate crisis.



University of Bologna

Sun Addicted

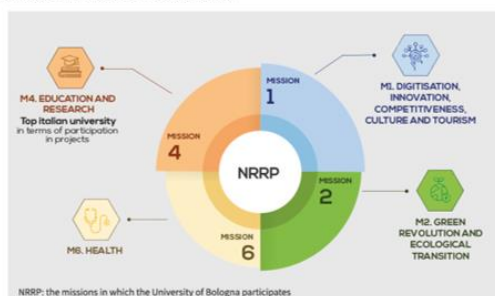
The project involves the installation of photovoltaic systems for generating electricity from renewable sources, in order to meet the needs of heating/cooling systems and the energy needs of the University structures



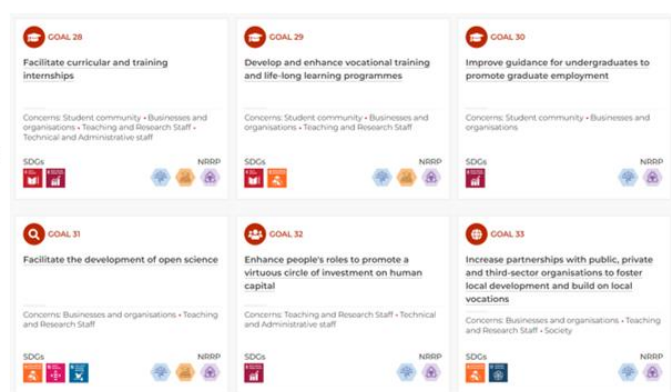
GOAL

The University of Bologna has installed photovoltaic systems in the university structures to produce electricity using renewable sources. The energy produced by the systems is mainly intended for on-site consumption or to operate heating/cooling systems and to meet the energy needs of the structures included in the project scope. The systems installed in the first phase provide a power output in excess of 1 MW and are distributed on various sites on the Bologna Campus: Lazzaretto, CAAB, Ozzano, Cadriano and ex-Morassutti.

What is the University of Bologna doing



12 Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2030 Agenda) - SDGs represented by the Plan





University of Galway



A Selection of Collaborative Research Projects



CLIMAREST
Developing and demonstrating restoration tools and activities at five sites in Europe, from Svalbard in the high north to Madeira in the south.



SeaChem
Training a new generation of researchers in offshore seaweed aquaculture to produce high-value chemicals.



SeaMark
Demonstrating how to scale up innovative seaweed cultivation and processing into price-competitive product applications.



OCEAN CITIZEN
A multidisciplinary approach integrating science and society in marine forest regeneration for ocean management and protection.

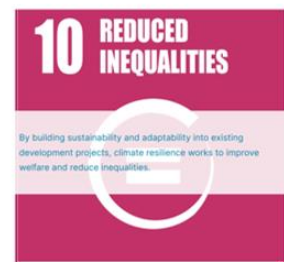


OceanICU
Producing new data, information and understanding on the role of the ocean in the global carbon cycle.

Sustaining our Planet and People



RTÉ ONE: 'Ten Things to Know' investigates Bioenergy and discusses how researchers at University of Galway helped develop NVPs unique waste to energy technology.



University of Glasgow



World top 20 for sustainability

- Our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- We are ranked in the top 20 universities in the world for sustainability
- Sustainability at Glasgow



Our commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Find out about our progress towards the 17 SDGs



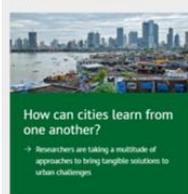
SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

Redesigning Glasgow for wellbeing

- Cities are responsible for around 70% of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. Emission reductions can be made by changing how cities are designed and connected. How is Glasgow confronting these issues?



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHTS



→ All research spotlights

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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



Our research
Glasgow Research UK has awarded funding to a team of researchers in Glasgow and Cambridge to help cities across the globe to improve the lives of their citizens by addressing the challenges of sustainable cities, health and wellbeing and quality education.

Find out more
→ Glasgow Research UK team

Study

Glasgow degrees related to sustainability and the environment

- Undergraduate degree programmes
- Postgraduate taught degrees
- Postgraduate research opportunities



The University of Hong Kong

BULLETIN

China launched its war on pollution a decade ago. Research by Dr He Guojun of the HKU Business School has shown that it is saving lives and reducing pollution across the country. His research has also demonstrated how citizen watchdogs can improve the results further.

KE Video

Revitalising Hong Kong's Abandoned Villages – Mui Tsz Lam & Kop Tong

There are more than 600 recognised villages scattered around Hong Kong that have been in existence since at least 1980. Most are isolated, rural communities with a mix of old and new buildings and are a living link to the history and cultural heritage of the past.

Impact

Solving the 'Goldilocks' Problem of Swallowing Disorders

"There was not a comprehensive guideline available before to teach people how to do this, but we knew there was a need."

Dr. Karen Chan Man-Kai, Director of the Swallowing Research...

Engagement

Lifting the Burden of Hopelessness

"We want to intervene well before someone needs professional help, so we have moved away from a medical approach to a bio-psycho-social approach. Suicide is not..."

Global

Rural Sustainability Programme – APAC Initiative for Regional Impact (AIR) Held Inaugural Regional Roundtable

AIR is a proud extension and scaling up of our Rural Sustainability programme at La Chi Vao, where the great work has been recognised by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for...

Search All Stories

Please enter keywords to search

Culture Environment Health Industry Public Policy Society

HKU environmental research validates China's anti-pollution successes

Keio University

Goal 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

As of 2021, Keio University has greatly expanded the number of university-developed venture businesses to 175 companies, ranking 5th in Japan.

Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Among Japanese universities, Keio University ranked third in the number of successful candidates and fourth in the pass rate for the Japanese national bar examination.

<http://www.keio.ac.jp/en/news/2022/05/06/648-171891/>

THE Impact Rankings 2023

On June 1, 2023, Times Higher Education (THE) published its 2023 edition of THE Impact Rankings. The THE Impact Rankings assesses universities' impact measured by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is them accordingly.

Keio University achieved top 100 rankings in the world for the following three SDGs.

SDG	Rank
Goal 14: Life Below Water	77th
Goal 15: Life on Land	86th
Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	32th

Rankings (International)

TOP 200

► 101st-200th in THE University Impact Rankings[®]

According to the 2023 Times Higher Education Rankings

Latest

2023.07.19

Event News

"Thinking about the Reconstruction and Future of Ukraine" Joint Workshop Held at Sophia University

2023.07.05

News

New Website Launch: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at the Faculty of Science and Technology of Keio University

2023.06.28

News Event

Keio University Hosts DEI Symposium, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Challenges in Universities: Learning from Diverse Experiences; Reaching Common Goals"

SDGs at Keio

Keio University is one of thirty-one universities to join the United Nations University SDG-Universities Platform (UNU SDG-UP). Established in October 2020, UNU SDG-UP aims to "strengthen collaboration among Japanese universities and various stakeholders to promote research and educational activities advancing the SDGs, enhance the presence of Japanese universities in the international community, and contribute to the sustainable development of Japan and the world."

Keio University presented at the 2022 UNU SDG-UP online symposium about university management and its role in promoting the SDGs.

Keio University Ranked in the Top 100 Universities in the World for Six Categories of the SDGs in the 2022 THE Impact Rankings

Keio University achieved placements in the top 100 universities in the world in 6 categories of the 2022 edition of the THE Impact Rankings published by Times Higher Education. The THE Impact Rankings were first released in 2016, with the particular aim of evaluating universities around the world regarding their impact on global society through their achievements within the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 1,458 institutions from 106 countries and regions participated in the 2022 rankings, the fourth edition of this publication.

Keio University achieved the 100th ranking in the following on SDGs:

- Goal 1: No Poverty: 20th
- Goal 2: Zero Hunger: 49th
- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being: 19th
- Goal 4: Quality Education: 10th
- Goal 5: Gender Equality and Empowerment: 9th
- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: 9th
- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: 10th
- Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: 10th
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: 5th
- Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities: 10th
- Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: 10th
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: 10th
- Goal 13: Climate Action: 10th
- Goal 14: Life Below Water: 77th
- Goal 15: Life on Land: 86th
- Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: 32th
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals: 10th

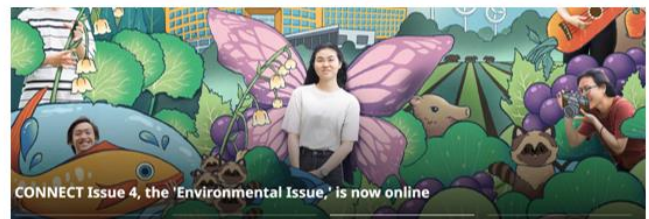


Kyushu University

Recent stories



Environment and Sustainability



Research Centers and Laboratories



Center for Designed Futures

Incorporating design into solutions for social problems



Energy Resources Engineering Laboratory

Geothermal and fossil fuel resources with minimal environmental impact



Hayashi Laboratory

Thermochemical reactions for efficient conversion of carbon into energy



Climate Change Science Section

Elucidate climate change caused by atmospheric substances



Energy Science and Sustainability Laboratory

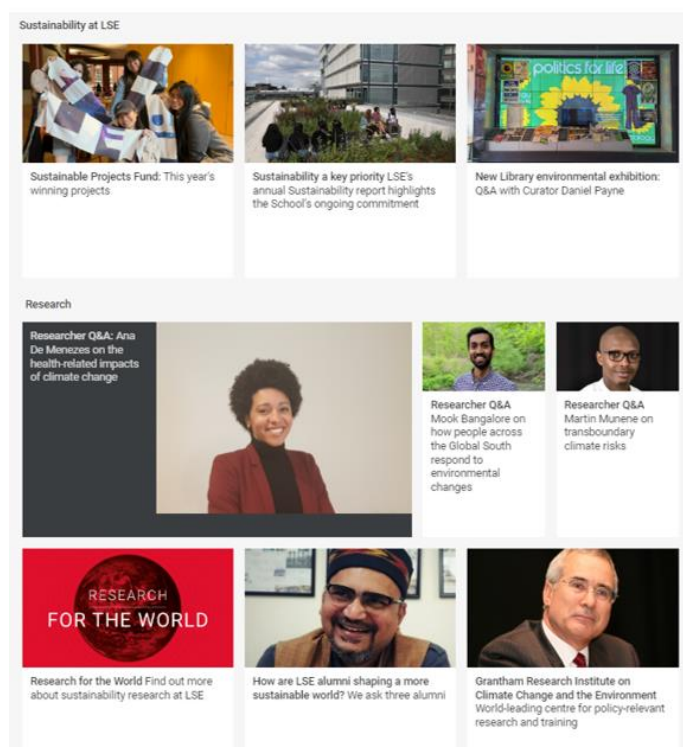
Energy analysis, energy economics, and social equity research



Hironobu Kan Laboratory

Coral reefs and coastal geology

London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE)



Creating a sustainable LSE

We will create a world-class campus for our community, with state-of-the-art teaching, learning and social spaces, and adopting an approach of "freedom within a framework" to streamline administrative processes whilst supporting innovation.

Education





Queen's University, Canada

UN SDGs: How we are meeting them

Across the Queen's community, much of our research, teaching, outreach and stewardship activities are directly tied to the 17 SDGs and their targets. Click on any of the 17 SDGs below or view our annual reports to find out more about how the Queen's community is helping to advance these global goals and achieve social impact.



Global Impact

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

We're one of the top 10 universities in the world who are advancing the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Local Impact



Sustainability

We're fighting climate change by improving our operations and decreasing our environmental footprint.

Community impact

Between May 2021 and April 2022, Queen's Hospitality Services, through campus partners Queen's Soul Food and Loving Spoonful, donated 8,611 pounds of food to community partners, including Kingston Food Bank - Partners in Mission.

Eliminating hunger in our community

Queen's and its students are committed to reducing hunger in the Kingston community. Soul Food is a student-run organization that delivers extra food from campus cafeterias to four local shelters every night, as well as to the Kingston Street Truck Mission in the winter.



GLOBAL PURPOSE

Queen's ranks 3rd worldwide in Impact Rankings

Source: Queen's Gazette

Queen's is dedicated to achieving carbon neutrality by 2040.

33% of waste → **1,195 tonnes**

Queen's diverted 33% of its waste in 2018/19, resulting in 1,195 tonnes of recyclables and organics diverted from landfill.

Queen's University Belfast

EUROPEAN WEEK FOR WASTE REDUCTION

European Week for Waste Reduction (EW4WR) 20-24 November

We are hosting a number of events in a week's time in partnership with SU Volunteer and others to explore sustainability across all sectors, including circular economy, volunteering, art and fashion.

Sustainable Art Workshop, 20 November, 10am-12 noon, Drawing Room, Level 2 in One Elmwood.

Panel Discussion: Circular

lease bikes for students

• £50 for a semester or £84 for an academic year

• free scheduled servicing on campus

• free bike lock

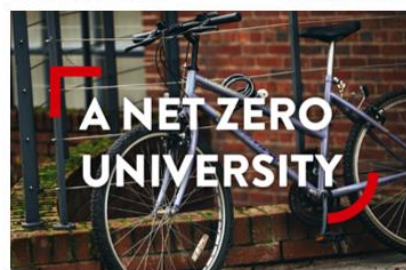
• exclusive to QUB students

Are you a QUB student interested in active travel? Then this post is for you! Here on campus we have our very own bike loan bikes, hub, run by...

ACORN STALLS

Acorn Stalls: The Sustainability Team are inviting staff and students to collect a planted acorn on Wednesday 8 November in 2 locations on campus. This is a great opportunity for those that missed the Net Zero Launch event to collect some acorns to plant at their homes. The two locations and timings are detailed below: Wednesday 8 November, 10-11:30am at Junction Cafe; Wednesday 8 November, 1-2:30pm at the...

- Partnership for the Goals**
#97 out of 1438 Institutions Ranked
- Reduced Inequalities**
#41 out of 796 Institutions Ranked
- Sustainable Cities and Communities**
#87 out of 783 Institutions Ranked
- Life Below Water**
#22 out of 452 Institutions Ranked
- Life on Land**
#38 out of 521 Institutions Ranked
- Responsible Consumption and Production**
#35 out of 604 Institutions Ranked



Our leading research

New method in search for sustainable cooling technology developed at Queen's University Belfast

Queen's cancer in

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Sustainable Development Goal 8

Decent Work and Economic Growth

"Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" - United Nations

Queen's has a significant direct impact on our local economy, contributing £10n to the UK economy, creating jobs and delivering innovation. The University has delivered on its commitment to the Real Living Wage and has incorporated it into the pay scale. Currently, work is ongoing to ensure contractors who work with us are also being paid a living wage.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Sustainable Development Goal 9

Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

"Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation" - United Nations

Excitement in research and innovation, and making a positive global impact, are central to what we do at Queen's University. We aim to deliver social, economic and cultural benefits through our research.



GREEN FLAG AWARD

Quality environmental management

Queen's has been recognised for a second consecutive year in the Green Flag Awards after becoming the first university in Northern Ireland to be recognised by the scheme.

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK. It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country and is an internationally recognised certification for environmental quality management for parks and open spaces.

We've also achieved Platinum status for the third year running in the Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey.

Latest Events



30 NOV

Convocation Presents Sustainability: Giving Back to the Future

TOWARDS A BETTER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL

SUSTAINABILITY AT QUEEN'S

Top 100

Queen's is ranked 85 in the world for impact

Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023





University of Sheffield

Sustainability

We will aim to be one of the most environmentally sustainable research-intensive universities in the country, ensuring that sustainability runs through everything we do: the education we provide for our students; the world-class research and innovation we carry out; and our campus operations and local environment.

Education

Developing Water Engineers

Masters students studying Water Engineering MSc at the University of Sheffield gain in-depth knowledge on the most up-to-date methods and technologies for designing water and sewage networks and water quality processing and treatment. They also study what makes a water system sustainable, including ways to balance the complex economic, social, ecological and regulatory tradeoffs involved, as well as how to deal with the uncertain impacts climatic, social, environmental and economic changes might have on different water systems.

POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT

Water Engineering MSc

September 2024 • 1 year / Full-time • Accredited

Protecting and improving our water resources and protecting people from flooding and droughts are some of the most significant engineering challenges we face today. This course gives you the fundamental knowledge and experience for a career in water engineering, including skills in environmental enhancement and protection.

Sustainability Action Plan

Planned 41 In Progress 51 Completed 32

The food system

Explaining the food system →

The future of our food →

Study

- Postgraduate
- PhD study

Connect

- Contact us
- People
- News

About

- About us
- Explore research stories
- Our flagship institutes



Uniting experts to address infertility in The Gambia and beyond

Societal expectations of becoming a parent soon after marriage are high in The Gambia, but thousands of couples face involuntary childlessness, or infertility. Our international research collaboration is improving fertility awareness, guiding policy and transforming practice.

[Fertility care in the Global South →](#)

Have we turned plants against us?

Air pollution is a growing threat to our health and climate. But research by Dr Stuart Campbell found that its effects on plants could be worse than we initially thought.

[A vicious cycle →](#)

Filling the silence: the powerful music of Afghanistan's exiled musicians

On the morning of August 15 2021 the flourishing musicscape of Afghanistan fell silent. As the Taliban regime came back into force, musicians disappeared and fled. Dr Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey is working with Afghan musicians now living in exile to create new platforms to share their work.

[The Orchestras of Afghanistan →](#)

University of Sussex

University of Sussex
Rob Byrne

ETHICAL EDUCATORS

1 No Poverty, 2 Zero Hunger, 4 Quality Education, 5 Gender Equality, 10 Reduced Inequalities

DECARBONISING THE ECONOMY

7 Affordable and Clean Energy, 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 13 Climate Action

CIVIL LEADERS AND PARTNERS

3 Good Health and Wellbeing, 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, 17 Partnerships for the Goals

ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

6 Clean Water and Sanitation, 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, 14 Life Below Water, 15 Life on Land

Our policy and strategy

Read our 2021 Sustainability Strategy and see how we are working to improve sustainability across our University

Land proposed to be sold
Land under review
New land to be sold identified during consultation
Land currently not available for nature
Ancestry protected

1st
in the world for Development Studies (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2023)

3rd
in the UK for sustainable institutions (QS Sustainability Rankings 2023)

Top 50
in the world for impact, assessed against the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2023)

Sussex at COP26

See some of the people from Sussex who attended COP26 below. You can also read our [experts' analysis about COP26 issues](#).

Professor Peter Newell
Professor of International Relations and Research Director of the Rapid Transition Alliance.
[Read more](#)

Dr Chukwuka Monyei
Research Fellow in Energy Justice and Transitions
[Read more](#)

Yao Shi
Doctoral researcher in Science and Technology Policy
[Read more](#)

Latest news

University of Sussex Business School to co-host Pavilion at COP28
23 November 2023
The University of Sussex Business School partners with Just North, a climate action project exploring Arctic...

New report sets the groundwork for reducing the carbon footprint of surgical care
16 November 2023
A landmark report presents the first detailed account of...

Sustainability report reveals significant progress, driven by Sussex Community
13 November 2023
University ranked in UK top 10 for progress on UN Sustainable Development



Blog

Welcome to what we hope will be a lively and passionate sustainability blog from all sections of the staff and student community at Sussex.



University of Wollongong



Water consumption awareness on campus

Water consumption reduction and reuse initiatives are a focus in UOW as that have negative environmental, social and economic impacts. UOW op consumed including sports field maintenance, provision of food services, i program is a key strategy in [UOW's Water Management Action Plan](#) as it practices. UOW aims to achieve these aspirations by implementing a prior changes to reduce demand for and manage the supply of energy, water a cannot be reduced or eliminated.



Pioneering Green Hydrogen for Net-Zero Emissions

Green hydrogen is crucial for net-zero emissions, Hysata is a company spun out of UOW research to commercialise breakthrough Australian hydrogen electrolyser technology. Hysata's game changing and efficient electrolyser technology converts electrical energy into hydrogen sustainably. The Hysata team is dedicated to leading the green hydrogen industry's transformation globally.

[MORE ON HYSATA >](#)

Operations

3.2ML
Onsite rainwater storage*

35%
Reduction in water consumed since 2019**

50
Water bubbler or bottle refill stations

Teaching, learning and outreach

2,051
Students studying subjects about this goal

103
Media articles about this goal

73M
Articles appeared in media outlets with a combined potential audience reach of 73M

Research

66.7%
Publications with international collaboration

SDG subjects and courses



SDGengage

UOW's new online short course, SDGengage, explains the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), their history and impact, how they are implemented and how they are relevant to you. Open to all community members.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



UN Sustainable Development Goal Report

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provide a shared global framework of development priorities. The UOW Global Challenges Program has almost one hundred interdisciplinary projects working toward the goals.

[READ THE UOW SDG REPORT >](#)



University of Waterloo

At a Glance

OVERALL
20/27
Sustainability strategy objectives complete or mostly complete

SILVER
Rating through the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System
AASHE 2021

55th
THE Impact Ranking on the UN SDGs Globally
THE 2023

BE A LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

>360
Researchers exploring the UN SDGs

HOST
Canada-wide SDG Network

>680
Academic courses related to the UN SDGs

OPERATE THE CAMPUS SUSTAINABLY

5%
Decrease in water intensity since 2015

88%
Of commuting trips to campus made using a sustainable mode of travel

FAIR TRADE
Designated campus since 2012

Upcoming events

NOV 22 10:00 PM
Eco Summit 2023: Accelerating Action
The Sustainability Office is thrilled to host our **10th annual Eco Summit** to showcase sustainability achievements, celebrate progress, and build connections with our campus community. All students, staff, and faculty are invited to attend.

NOV 24 11:00 AM
WISE Public Lecture
WISE Public Lecture by Umar Waqas (Vice President, Engineering & Continuous Improvement) on the topic of "How local utilities will play a key role in the Energy Transition".

NOV 27 10:00 PM
COP28 as a Catalyst for Climate Action: Empowering Youth for Impactful Engagement
Join the Waterloo Climate Institute for the virtual workshop "COP28 as a Catalyst for Climate Action: Empowering Youth for Impactful Engagement" with special guest, Jenna Phillips.



Top 10 in the world
for research on ending poverty and hunger
Times Higher Education's University Impact Rankings 2023

Top 50 in the world
for sustainable cities and communities
Times Higher Education's University Impact Rankings 2023

PROGRESS SNAPSHOT

OBJECTIVE A4: By 2020, celebrate sustainability research as a core thematic strength of Waterloo's reputation and identity

Complete

INDICATORS:

30% Percent of central news releases and research-focused Waterloo stories highlighting scholarship related to environmental sustainability

OBJECTIVE A5: By 2025, become a world leader for research excellence in five sustainability related themes

Somewhat complete

INDICATORS:

361 Faculty members conducting research advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2022)

40 Canada Research Chairs conducting research connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (out of 65)

OBJECTIVE A6: By 2025, establish Waterloo as a "go-to" hub for



Sustainability Living Lab



Curriculum Integration project



Undergrad + grad programs



Research groups



York University

