

The Role of Universities and their Leaders Facing the Grand Challenges of Climate Change and Sustainability

Interview questions

Part A (personal)

1. What is your role in the institution (Vice-Chancellor/ Director)?
2. Are you directly involved in any actions relating to sustainability and climate change?
3. In your view, how central should sustainability and climate change be to the work of a university?

Part B (institutional actions)

1. Policy development is considered one of the first steps for planning actions. Does your university have a sustainability policy, strategy, or framework? How was this strategy developed?
2. Is there a climate change policy or strategy in place? If so, does it contain carbon reduction targets? Which are the main targets and the timeframe? Are they connected to national efforts in any way?
3. How is sustainability understood in your institution? How would you describe the balance of emphasis on climate change specifically compare to broader questions of sustainable development?
4. Are there specific roles associated with sustainability and climate change (such as a Director of Sustainability)? If not, who has responsibility for these areas?
5. Which office in your university oversees actions relating to climate change and sustainability? How does this office work?
6. Are there efforts to align the work of the university with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?
7. Does your university participate in national/international networks on sustainability and climate change? If so, which are the main outcomes of such participation?
8. Last year networks representing several universities worldwide have declared a Climate Emergency and agreed on a 3-point plan to address the climate change crisis.
9. The first point refers to going carbon neutral until 2050. Are there any efforts related to this aim at your university?

10. Does your university have a risk management plan connected to climate impacts?
11. The second point of the universities' plan is the mobilisation of more resources for action-oriented climate change research. Does your university have a budget specific for climate change issues? Are there any other strategies for incentivising research related to sustainability?
12. The third action refers to increased delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curricula, campus and community outreach programmes. In terms of curricula, which is the current situation at your university?
13. Community outreach and engagement are important efforts related to the social impact of universities. Does your university have programs/projects related to climate change adaptation/mitigation in local communities? Or other sustainability initiatives? Please describe.
14. Research on sustainability/climate change and published works on the issue are an important contribution of universities. Does your university have projects/publications related to these areas? Please describe. How prominent are they in relation to the broader research portfolio?
15. Does the university have an ethical investment or divestment policies or plans?
16. Does your university have the required infrastructure required for business continuity plans for situations such as Covid-19 lockdown?

Part C (reflection)

1. Which are the main drivers or motivations to invest in climate action and sustainability initiatives?
2. Which are the main barriers that hinder the efforts?
3. What might be distinctive about your institution and its perspective towards climate change and sustainability compared to other institutions?
4. In which areas of work relating to sustainability and climate change do you feel your institution has been most successful? And in which do you think most improvement is needed?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?