



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**UN Global Compact
Communication of Engagement (COE)
January 2022**



1. Period of coverage.

This report covers the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

2. Statement of Continued Support by the Vice-Chancellor.

I am pleased to reaffirm the University of Leeds' support of the ten principles of the UN Global Compact with respect to human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

The University's 10 year strategy – '[Universal Values, Global Change](#)' – has the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its heart, with the aim of using our research and education to reduce inequalities and positively shape our world. This means strategically aligning our core activities, collaborating internally and supporting our community of students and staff to deliver global impact. We also recognise the need for universities and businesses to collaborate to help to deliver the SDGs, and so we are committed to engaging industry in research and development and lifelong learning in line with our shared values.

With this Communication on Engagement, we set out the progress we have made integrating the principles of the Global Compact into our business, operations and culture. Highlights including our ambitious plan to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; appointing two Deans for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and the publication of the University of Leeds Human Rights Journal – the first of its kind in the UK.

In the coming year, we will establish four new 'Futures Institutes' to deliver interdisciplinary, applied research that tackles major global challenges in health, education, climate and society.

The University of Leeds is pleased to continue its support of the UN's mission, in line with our own values of compassion, collaboration, inclusivity and integrity.

We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.



Professor Simone Buitendijk
Vice-Chancellor, University of Leeds

3. Description of Actions

Human Rights

[The University of Leeds Human Rights Journal](#), the first of its kind in the UK, is a multidisciplinary journal focusing on human rights issues. It publishes high quality scholarship produced entirely by undergraduate students. The publication brings together students from different faculties and academic disciplines to publish material on a diverse range of both domestic and international human rights issues. Through the journal, the University encourages the next generation to stimulate debate and think creatively about the theme of human rights which is relevant to every academic field and industrial sector in which they may secure work.

Additionally, the University marks and celebrates key dates throughout the year – often in conjunction with the city, region or national organisations. These included Black History Month; Windrush Day; International Women’s Day; the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia; LGBT+ History Month; Deaf Awareness Week; Carers Week; Mental Health Awareness Week; and Pride and National Inclusion Week. Much of this work has involved our Staff Equality Networks, which have increased in the period that this report covers, from five to six. This reflects objectives in our Strategy to be an organisation that believes and actively promotes equality, diversity and value in cultural differences.

Research and Innovation Services and Human Resources have collaborated to produce on-line training in [Safeguarding in Research](#). When dealing with research projects this may include staff, students and collaborators, external partners, participants in research as well as their families/households, and communities involved in or affected by the research. The University of Leeds recognises its safeguarding responsibilities and that it has a duty of care to ensure that the welfare of those carrying out activities on its behalf, is a priority, and that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to those involved in research. The training is made available to partners overseas to adapt for their own circumstances.

The University has a [Sustainable Procurement Standard](#) than ensures that our procurement processes adhere to modern slavery and international labour standards. We ensure that when tendering for goods and services we request and measure supply chain social sustainability considerations in line with these standards to be sure that we are not complicit in any human rights abuses. We also have a [Fairtrade policy](#) to ensure that where possible Fairtrade goods are sold in University shops and cafes.

The University has a comprehensive set of [HR policies](#) which seek to support and protect the rights of our staff and students and comply with all relevant UK and International legislation. We also have comprehensive [health and safety](#) policies and procedures to protect our staff, students and wider community. A Director of People and Culture has recently been appointed to ensure that people and organisational development have inclusivity, collaboration and respect at the heart of standards and policy.

Labour

In 2020, we published our new Equality and Inclusion (E&I) Framework 2020-25. Consistent with our standing as an international, research-intensive university with a strong commitment to student

education, this focuses on creating an inclusive environment that attracts, develops and retains the best students and staff from all backgrounds from across the world. This supports individuals to attain their ambitions while also supporting the University's strategic aims. The Framework comprises five E&I commitments alongside five E&I themes: changing culture and behaviours; developing staff and the working environment; supporting students and student education; developing an inclusive research culture; and providing an accessible infrastructure.

The [Equality and Inclusion Unit \(EIU\)](#) sets [standards/policies](#) through this [Equality and inclusion Framework](#). EIU carries out activities to ensure that all staff and students are supported and protected at the University and equality considerations are included within all of our activities. This includes specific activities related to supporting those with protected characteristics, including training, networks and initiatives.

To underpin this work, the University has invested in two new Deans for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, both of whom report directly to the Vice-Chancellor, and a Dean for Research Culture who reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation. These Deans work in partnership with the Interim Head of EDI; the Head of Educational Engagement, and the Director of Human Resources: HR Service & Organisational Change. This means that they are able to ensure cutting edge research and world leading experience are guiding University policies, operational planning and new initiatives.

One Dean EDI is Professor Iyiola Solanke, Chair of EU Law and Social Justice in the [School of Law](#). Prof Solanke has an outstanding research track record in the fields of EU and anti-discrimination law and she is also an international advocate for anti-discrimination, diversity and equality, within and beyond the University. This includes being Chair of Leeds 11, the University's Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff network, as well as a founder of the Temple Women's Forum North and the [Black Female Professors Forum](#).

Prof Solanke is currently principal investigator on a £2.5 million UKRI-funded [project looking at the impact of COVID-19 and discrimination on practices of wellbeing and resilience in BAME families and communities in the UK](#). She is also the lead for a new award, Generation Delta, which has been designed to lay the foundations for a long-term increase in the number of BAME female professors at higher education institutions in England. This project will be delivered in collaboration with 4 other universities in England.

Our other Dean EDI is Louise Bryant, Professor in Psychological and Social Medicine, Associate Dean for EDI in the [School of Medicine](#) and the University's Academic Lead for Gender Equality. Professor Bryant's inspirational leadership and drive played an integral role in the [School of Medicine's Gold Athena SWAN Award in 2019](#) – the first medical school in the UK to receive the accolade, which recognises progress towards gender equality within higher education. She also led the recent institutional Bronze Award submission with colleagues from across the University.

The University is leading the sector in terms of investment for postgraduate 'inclusion and access' enabled through our [Access and Student Success Strategy](#) which ensures that the University takes a focused, 'whole institution' approach to finding solutions in this area. This activity is supported by our major involvement in two out of thirteen recent projects [funded by Research England and the Office for Students](#) addressing the recruitment and support of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Postgraduate Researchers. These two projects (one of which is led from Leeds by Iyiola Soyanke) bring together expertise and institutional funding across a total of nine Universities to support an evidence-based and sector-wide effort to deliver more equitable doctoral education.

The University supports and observes three National/International Trade Unions including UCU, Unison and Unite. The Director of Reward & Employee Relations liaises with the Unions on behalf of Human Resources and the University.

Environment

In 2019, the University announced its [seven principles to tackle the climate crisis](#) – including our aim of having no direct carbon emissions by 2050 and achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. One element of implementing our principles was to formulate an overarching Climate Plan which would set out both work that is already in train and progress to date, along with how we go from here to deliver net zero in a way that is achievable, with defined interventions and an associated investment plan.

The Climate Plan was approved by the University Council at its November 2021 meeting. The plan is the culmination of years of research, scoping and engagement with academics and our partners. Given the critical importance of climate action at the University, it is right that we have taken the time to develop a plan that is ambitious, specific and deliverable – a plan that ensures the University shows leadership and helps deliver a sustainable, low carbon future.

A vital component of the Climate Plan is a Net Zero Plan, which sets out how we will achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It considers a number of pathways to help us reach this goal – including direct emissions from owned or controlled sources, indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy, and business travel and commuting. It also presents a preliminary post-2030 ‘net zero plus’ strategy to bring a wider set of emissions into scope, including student travel, and to achieve an overall zero emission target.

Our Net Zero Plan makes the case for an integrated approach across the University, underpinned by cooperation, empowerment and widespread communication across all staff and students, and requiring the single largest investment in our history. This investment, combined with a focused strategy, can deliver a sector-leading, rapid and just transition to net zero.

Additionally, the University’s Sustainability Service is working with Faculty Schools, and Services across the organisation on plans to outline how all units of the University will play their part in delivering the University’s strategic approach to sustainability and its Climate Crisis Principles.

Building Knowledge and Capacity encompasses both the University’s core academic mission and the foundations for a sustainable society. Students are given the chance to develop sustainable research projects through their studies and share their ideas at our annual Student Sustainability Research Conference. Our world-class research builds knowledge through our Living Lab Programme, an approach to problem-solving which brings together research, education and operations, using the University as a test bed for sustainable solutions.

The University has one of the largest climate science research centres in the world, with the [Priestley International Centre for Climate](#) established in 2016. Our climate experts conduct fieldwork in every continent and make key contributions to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Their expertise was evident at the recent United Nations global climate change conference [COP26](#) in Glasgow, helping raise awareness and shape international policies on areas ranging from decarbonisation and glacial melt to biodiversity and sustainable food supplies. The University was

awarded a [Queen's Anniversary Prize](#) in November 2021 for research in climate and extreme weather, aiding vulnerable communities in the global south with new forecasting and warning systems.

Anti-Corruption

The University of Leeds is a global university with international collaboration forming a major part of its research and education portfolio. With clear plans to further strengthen our international footprint we need to ensure that our activities are carried out with the highest degree of integrity and in line with relevant UK legislation. Collaborating with countries that do not have the same or equivalent legislation or anti-corruption safeguards in place adds another layer of complication, particularly as the University wants to protect its reputation for equitable partnership.

To this end, the University is investing in a new post for an International Risk and Export Control Manager. The role will interface with a wide range of services including Research and Innovation Services, the International Office, University Secretariat, Risk Management as well as Human Resources and relevant Faculties.

Data breaches or IT security attacks have been identified as operational risks that could affect the University's IT services, its ability to operate and damage to its reputation. The requirement for short-term remote working for most staff as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the potential threats of email scams, more sophisticated phishing attacks and the need to bolster Virtual Private Network (VPN) connectivity and security.

4. Measurement of Outcomes

Human Rights

The University of Leeds Human Rights Journal publishes one Volume per year, comprising 16 articles. The articles are assessed for relevance in the real world – *e.g.* Hong Kong pro-democracy, gilets jaune, climate strikes, Black Lives Matter, Decolonising Human Rights – and success is measured through submissions and the journal's ability to attract local and international guest speakers and collaborators to events including Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, the European Centre for Responsibility to Protect (ECR2P), and other universities.

Safeguarding training has been embedded in Research Ethics and Integrity Training. Access and downloads of the training modules are logged to monitor uptake.

Our tendering process and ongoing sustainability performance of assessing contracts according to medium or high risk, is monitored by the Sustainable Procurement Group. This procedure and the performance of contracts monitored for sustainability is audited periodically through use of the University Environmental Management System and a random selection of contracts is audited annually.

Labour

Through her role as Dean of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Prof Solanke has led the University's adoption and signatory status of the [Race Equality Charter](#) from Spring 2022. Human Resources is also investing in new work on inclusive recruitment. Measures for success are new Service investment in EDI and new standards and policies resulting from EDI Dean roles.

The University's [Leeds Gender Framework](#) is our strategic approach to gender equality. An Athena SWAN employer, we offer development programmes and services designed to support female staff across our University. The University holds a bronze Athena Swan award, with individual units holding one gold, five silver and two bronze awards, including the first gold award for a School of Medicine.

Just as research is being used to inform EDI standards and policies, EDI operations and initiatives are also driving novel research. For example, Professor Pippa Chapman from the School of Geography is a co-investigator in the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) which will work with the universities of Bradford, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and York to adapt and adopt international best practice on access and the on-course postgraduate researcher experience, including improved advice and guidance for preparing PhD applications, contextual admissions and PhD mentoring. This symbiotic relationship between academia and services, demonstrates the effectiveness of our Strategy. New EDI research awards secured will be logged as we progress.

For postgraduate 'inclusion and access' the University is committed to:

- addressing unequal access to postgraduate study through contextual admissions at postgraduate taught and research level, building on [Access to Leeds](#), one of the biggest contextual admissions schemes in the UK.
- accelerating efforts to progress students from under-represented groups to postgraduate study, with a particular focus on co-creation between students and staff.
- convening and collaborating to contribute to a national understanding of systemic access issues at postgraduate level.
- advancing our personal tutoring and postgraduate research supervisor model to ensure all students feel they matter, drawing on significant expertise from across the University.
- engaging early with postgraduate taught and research students including through online modules and training.

When the UK government reduced the UK Aid budget in-line with a drop in GNI (Gross National Income), the University's ODA (Official Development Assistance) research portfolio was hard hit. The Director of Reward & Employee Relations was an active member of the University's Working Group established to mitigate the impact of these cuts, and liaised with our Unions from the outset to keep them updated on staff contracts and employment issues. The Working Group conducted an Equality Impact Assessment and drew up a set of principles for decision-making for projects facing budget reductions. These ensured that staff at Leeds and their collaborators overseas were treated equitably in the face of cuts. All contractual obligations were respected, and a fundraising campaign ensured there was no need for redundancies or early termination of employment contracts, or for researchers overseas to lose their jobs or reduce their hours on projects.

Environment

Monitoring and evaluation of our Climate Plan, including assessment of our pathways for achieving Net Zero. Our 2020 baseline for emissions covered by the net zero target is 71,546 tCO₂e1 and our pathway will reduce this by around 70%. The remaining emissions will need to be offset in a credible way. An annual review by the [Priestley International Centre for Climate](#) will look to heighten ambition across all elements of the plan, to further reduce this 2030 offset figure and make sure future offsets are academically verified as net zero compatible. Additional reduction targets linked to the University's farm will be announced in the next couple of years, and will increase this planned reduction.

Over 40 Blueprints have been drawn up with Services and Schools, containing identifiable measures and targets for how we will change our behaviour and processes to be more compatible with the University's Climate Change Principles in such a way as to adopt more sustainable business practices. Blueprint objectives are being embedded in local governance processes and monitored and evaluated through these channels on an annual basis.

In 2020, over 6,600 students took up opportunities to study sustainability as part of their formal curriculum through our Creating Sustainable Futures modules. 26 new Living Lab projects led by staff and students brought sustainable solutions to life, bringing the total number of Living Lab projects since its inception to 97.

The Priestley International Centre for Climate includes 8 key contributors to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment report; 5 experts contributing to the UK Committee on Climate Change Net Zero report; 7 researchers who worked on the latest UK Climate Change Risk Assessment; 7 members advising the Leeds Climate Commission; and 2 COP26 Fellows from 5 awarded across the Higher Education sector.

Anti-corruption

The International Risk and Export Control Manager will develop systems to identify, record, and track applications and licences granted to the University for exported technologies, including processes to monitor licences granted, to ensure that expiry and other issues are managed correctly and in a timely manner. Additionally, the postholder will produce University guidance concerning export controls and security issues, and on compliance for use by academic colleagues.

For cyber security, the University is currently in Phase 2 of an ongoing Information Security Management programme and we continue to enhance our IT security policy, training, protection software and systems.