



Sustainability and Climate Action in Higher Education

UNICA Green and SDG's
„Approaches to Green Academic Travel“

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Sustainability and Climate Action in Higher Education

“[Sustainability] is a problem in which the discovery and dissemination of knowledge will play a critical role. And it is a problem that must be faced ... in ways that universities are uniquely suited to model.”

Drew Gilpin Faust, President of Harvard University, 2007-2018

Whole Institution Approach

Research

Contributions to research and to solutions of global future questions
(e.g. climate crisis, biodiversity loss, limited natural resources, social inequalities)

Teaching

Integration of sustainability within the curricula
Empowering students to gain the required knowledge and skills for shaping sustainable development

Management & Campus

Reducing environmental impacts in buildings, green IT, energy efficiency, management systems, procurement, HR, community engagement, green business travel etc.

Strengthening inter- and transdisciplinary approaches

Universities as living labs and learning communities for sustainability

Sustainability as a holistic approach
Dialogue with university community & public outreach
Continuous improvement process

Climate Emergency Declarations and Climate Action Plans in Higher Education

More and more universities are setting ambitious goals in the areas of sustainability and climate change mitigation, e.g. [Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges](#) is a global campaign to rally leadership and action in the education sector:





Climate Emergency Declarations and Climate Action Plans in Higher Education

Freie Universität Berlin declared a state of **climate emergency** in December 2019. The Executive Board of the university passed a resolution acknowledging the university's responsibility for climate protection and formulating seven far-reaching goals focusing on the whole university. Among other things, the university aims to become climate neutral by 2025.

Areas	Measures / Comments
Improving Energy Efficiency on Campus by 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continuation of energy efficiency activities
Increasing the use of renewable energy (installation & procurement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Installation of additional photovoltaic and solar thermal plants on campusPurchase of carbon neutral district heating,Switch from natural gas to biogas (partially)
Sustainable mobility (in esp. business trips)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Defining a reduction goal for flight emissionsEstablishing a sustainability-compliant business travel policyExtending virtual communication and conferencesCreating an internal climate fund for promoting new projects
Internal Offset Projects (e.g. plant coal project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Production of compost and plant coal from green and organic waste, feasibility study shows a potential of 2,800 tons of negative emissions
Ideas and Innovation Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promoting climate protection projects and living labs on campus as well as additional ideas for carbon offset mechanisms, addressing research, teaching, transfer and campus



The Role of Academic Travel

CO₂-Emissions in tons 2018/19, based on the average of energy consumption in 2018 and 2019

	District heating in t	Natural gas in t	Heating oil in t	Energy in t	Vehicle Fleet in t*	Campus in t	Business travel in t (flights only)**	Business travel in t (train, bus, car)	Paper in t	Total in t
CO₂-emissions according to supplier information / electricity supply contract	2.063	5.101	80	0	190	7.433	3.798	190	71	11.492
in percent (campus only)	27,7%	68,6%	1,1%	0,0%	2,6%	100,0%				
in percent (campus and business travel)	17,9%	44,4%	0,7%	0,0%	1,7%	64,7%	33,1%	1,7%	0,6%	100,0%

*about 680.000 km/a (2016/17)

** Flights accounted for by the travel cost center, excluding student mobility.

Business trips, vehicle fleet and heating oil according to CO₂ values of the Federal Environment Agency, district heating, natural gas and electricity according to CO₂ values of the energy suppliers or the corresponding supply contracts



The Role of Third Party Funding

Third-party funded projects play a significant role in international research cooperation. A large proportion of travel is financed by these acquired funds, which are then also subject to the regulations of the third-party funders.

In 2018/19 over 70 percent of business trips at Freie Universität Berlin (student mobility not included) were financed by third-party funds.

Through their funding guidelines, third-party funders have the potential to:

- create awareness of the applicant university or researcher
- support the choice of sustainable travel options by offering financial support or other incentives
- establish reporting guidelines and commitments
- support internal policy development.