SGSAH GREEN/GRADUATE
Strategy & Operations Plan

January 2022

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Positioning Statement

The Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) recognises the existential nature of the climate crisis and the need for profound changes in everyone's behaviour. As the world's first national graduate school for the arts and humanities SGSAH is uniquely placed to leverage the intellectual and creative power of our doctoral community and beyond to tackle the climate emergency. Through our GREEN/GRADUATE school initiative we state our deep-rooted concern at the crisis affecting us all, a situation that endangers our very existence. We will change our practices and provide intellectual leadership that offers alternatives to existing practices and promotes diversity of thinking on the climate crisis, bringing to bear the creative and intellectual power of arts and humanities research whilst also recognising the interdisciplinary and intersectional nature of the wider socio-ecological crisis of climate emergency and post-pandemic politics.

SGSAH GREEN/GRADUATE school will:

- Lead on conversations across the HE sector on the role of universities in the time of climate crisis.
- Promote the urgency of engaging with the climate emergency through meaningful collective endeavours of interdisciplinary research approaches.
- Advocate for the powerful contribution researchers across the arts and humanities can make to tackling the emergency.
- Work with universities and higher education institutions across Scotland and beyond to change our practices in order to address the climate crisis.
- Provide clear, practical guidance to our doctoral communities that reframes *how* we research.

Context: Scottish GREEN/GRADUATE School for Arts & Humanities

In the context of climate crisis and in the push for environmental sustainability, SGSAH is developing itself as a GREEN/GRADUATE school. The aims behind this are to:

- Interrogate our own operational processes and develop environmentally sustainable policy and processes.
- Advance thinking around the role of arts and humanities research, particularly at PhD/ECR researcher level, including within the environmental humanities and in interdisciplinary terms.
- Leverage SGSAH's status as a national graduate school to take a leading position in addressing the challenges of climate crisis.
- Align SGSAH with external drivers from funders, including the AHRC/UKRI, the SFC, and the Scottish Government.

The development of a GREEN/GRADUATE school is done in the context of the current and post-COVID-19 environment, and also alongside SGSAH's Values and EDI Action Plan and Policy, particularly in its drivers towards a culture of inclusion, moral vision, and social justice.

The environmental humanities are one of SGSAH's Strategic Themes and Priority Areas. Associated events and activities are being developed to address a range of questions, including: what is the role of the arts & humanities in a time of climate emergency? How might we contribute to, and shape, arguments and understandings of the Anthropocene? And what are key considerations – practical and intellectual – for SGSAH as a national graduate school?

Short- to mid-term outcomes include:
- The creation of a Green Operations Plan for SGSAH, which can potentially be adopted by individual HEIs and other DTPs. Includes consideration of post-COVID research-related travel, advice on staging environmentally aware research events, whilst also crosscutting with intersectional concerns (EDI, access).
- The development of a set of GREEN/GRADUATE events, in the lead up to COP26 (November 2021; Glasgow) and beyond. These events will draw in interdisciplinary cohorts (working with DTPs and doctoral researchers beyond the arts & humanities) and external partners, and will form one of SGSAH's interdisciplinary incubators.
- The sharing of the Green Operations Plan with equivalent organisations (e.g. SGSSS; other AHRC DTPs).
- Lobbying HEIs (via Executive/Board) on wider scale change, linked with HEIs' own policies around catering/procurement etc.
- The development of a full Action Plan for GREEN/GRADUATE activities.

In the short-term, SGSAH's work in this area has been supported by a research intern for 3 months FTE (July-November 2021). The intern's work has focused both on the GREEN/GRADUATE Strategy and Plan, as well as Events and Partnerships. SGSAH will be supported by a second research intern for another 3 months FTE, beginning in January 2022 and focused on implementation of the GREEN/GRADUATE Strategy.

Operations Plan

SGSAH's lead HEI is the University of Glasgow, and our Operations Strategy and Plan broadly aligns with the University's Plan (*Glasgow Green: The University of Glasgow's response to the climate emergency*) whilst also acknowledging that individual SGSAH member HEIs may have their own policies and strategies. Our Operations Plan also speaks to a number of UKRI/AHRC initiatives addressing environmental change, sustainable development, and climate resilience.

These proposals for SGSAH's operations are made in the context of potential challenges and risks, including ensuring national and international research and networking opportunities for ECRs, caring responsibilities, disability and access (including to rural areas), personal safety, and affordability. As a national Graduate School we also recognise the geographical spread of our doctoral researchers across Scotland and appreciate that recommendations for travel and events organisation should be considered in light of this.

Travel

For travel *funded* by SGSAH (PhD researcher and staff travel), it is proposed:

- To remove any pressure (perceived or real) to always take the cheapest mode of travel even if it is the least environmental; Engagement Fund application forms to be changed to make

this explicit and to actively encourage environmentally sound modes of travel – transition from 'cheapest' to 'greenest'.

- o For travel within Europe, researchers are to be encouraged to use the [EcoPassenger](#) carbon calculator to help them understand carbon emissions in context and to make informed choices about travel (see Appendix B).
- Within the UK, trains/buses become the norm for travel, with the understanding that home location, caring responsibilities and personal safety (e.g. arrival/departure times) might make longer journey times unsafe or impossible for some. Childcare costs to be factored into travel funding.
- For international travel, SGSAH researchers are strongly encouraged to ensure that travel is only undertaken where it has significant and justifiable benefit for their research. Researchers are also encouraged to create added value and durational length to trips (conferences plus archival visits, for example, and pre-preparation via digital archives).
- All necessary plane journeys should be carbon offset, and funded via SGSAH.
  - o Researchers will use the [Ecopassenger](#) or [Climate Care](#) carbon emission calculator tools (depending on their destination) to inform SGSAH of the carbon impact of their plane journey through the Engagement Fund application form (see Appendix B).
  - o SGSAH will keep a record of these cumulative emissions and purchase carbon offsets to cover them at six- to twelve-monthly intervals.
  - o Only woodland or peatland code carbon offsets will be purchased (see Appendix C).
- Engagement Fund applications and other SGSAH-funded doctoral researcher travel to make this explicit, and to make it clear that offsetting is a legitimate travel cost.

Events

For SGSAH-run events (including those run by Discipline+ Catalysts and KE Hubs), it is proposed:

- Particularly in a post-Covid-19 context, SGSAH will critically engage with delivery modes, and explore continuing online delivery (including digital legacy), blended delivery and decentralisation of events, while understanding the benefits of in-person engagement, particularly for ECRs. Likewise, we recognise the growing impact of digital carbon footprints and will actively engage with initiatives to mitigating this.
- In choosing venues for physical events, SGSAH will take into account the accessibility of locations in travel terms (while also bearing in mind the locations of member HEIs and doctoral researchers). Clear messaging around travel options, including public transport and active travel (walking/cycling), plus – where public transport options are limited – through facilitating car-sharing as appropriate. Taking into account timing of event start/end times is an important factor.
- For catering at events organised centrally by SGSAH – and as far as is possible within the constraints of HEI catering for Catalyst and Hub events – SGSAH will source sustainably (local/seasonal) and with zero or minimal plastic packaging. Vegetarian and vegan food will be the norm. (See Appendix D.)
- To prevent food waste, SGSAH will trial the use of Olio's ad hoc food waste collection service for events of 30 people and above (see Appendix E).
- SGSAH will continue to ensure that no disposable cutlery, plates or other serveware are used, and that drinks refill stations are available at all times.

Other

- SGSAH to develop a framework and guidelines for conducting research sustainably, incorporated into welcome and induction events.
- SGSAH-funded researchers will be asked to develop an environmental impact statement for their research, with supporting guidance and training (developed by our incoming intern in January 2022). The statement would enable individual researchers to assess their impact, but also enable SGSAH to assess collectively the impact of its funded research, and comment upon via its reporting mechanisms.
- In order to facilitate and implement these suggestions, SGSAH could have a 'front face' who leads on sustainable activity, a 'green ambassador/champion', with associated news/social media.
- SGSAH to consider its position as a leading voice in terms of conducting research and research training sustainably (e.g., issues around climate justice, divestment, encouraging partners – including HEIs – to partner with green business to provide e.g., catering).
- SGSAH to consider how it can support (i.e., not penalise/discount) those applying to study with them who have criminal records for environmental activism.

Areas of Work

Events

SGSAH has held, participated in, and is planning the following events:

2020

- [Scottish GREEN/GRADUATE School for Arts & Humanities School Summer School Workshop](#), including talks from Prof Jaime L Toney (University of Glasgow's Centre for Sustainable Solutions) and Dr Dominic Hinde (Queen Margaret University) (June 2020).
- Scottish Arts & Humanities Alliance (SAHA) soft launch workshop, '[The Arts & Humanities and the Environment](#)', chaired by SGSAH Director Claire Squires and including SGSAH CDA PhD researcher Hannah Imlach (University of Edinburgh/RSPB Loch Lomond).

2021

- [Scottish GREEN/GRADUATE School for Arts & Humanities Workshop](#), including talks from Dr Alexandra Campbell (University of Glasgow) and Anne Johnstone (After the Pandemic). (March 2021).
- Dear Green Bothy pop-up event at the SGSAH Summer School 2021, in collaboration with University of Glasgow College of Arts (June 2021). Recording [here](#).
- GREEN/GRADUATE Interdisciplinary hackathon, including three climate challenges posed by Dr Alexandra Campbell, Prof Jamie Toney, and Dr Darrick Evenson. (August 2021).
- 'Guide to COP26' in-person panel event, hosted in collaboration with [RCCGlasgow](#). Speakers include Lewis Coenen-Rowe from Creative Carbon Scotland, Dr Samantha Walton, and Prof Naveeda Khan, chaired by Dr Dominic Hinde. (November 2021.)
- 'Writing for a public audience' in-person doctoral workshop with Prof David Farrier and writer/journalist Cal Flyn. Hosted in collaboration with [RCCGlasgow](#) during COP26. (November 2021.)
- SAHA/SGSAH online keynote lecture by Julia Corbett discussing the importance of the arts and humanities in communicating and addressing the climate crisis. (November 2021.)

2022

- COP26 reflections workshop (March 2022).

Partnerships

SGSAH is working in partnership with a range of individuals and organisations, both within the HE sector and externally. These include:

- SAHA (the Scottish Arts & Humanities Alliance)
- The Dear Green Bothy, College of Arts, University of Glasgow
- RCCGlasgow, pop-up exhibition of the environmental humanities for COP26, funded by the Rachel Carson Centre, and organised by Dr Dominic Hinde (University of Glasgow) and Dr Gerry Aiken (Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research)

SGSAH Funded PhD Research

SGSAH is developing a separate digital research showcase (https://sgsahresearch.com/), which will detail SGSAH-funded PhD research projects relating to aspects of climate crisis and environmental sustainability.

SGSAH Research Intern

The first GREEN/GRADUATE research intern has completed their 12-week (FTE) internship, carried out between July – November 2021 and working primarily on the SGSAH operational strategy and events and partnerships. SGSAH has recruited a second research intern to continue work in 2022.

Areas of focus for the next intern will include:

- Implementing recommendations regarding engagement funding
- Implementing proposed green operations strategy and plan
- Investigating the potential for building Environmental Impact Analysis into doctoral research proposal through consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Developing a series of reflective events post-COP26
- Completing a reflective analysis of the outcomes and impact of our GREEN/GRADUATE events related to COP26 in November 2021
- Identifying further opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration focused on the climate emergency, both within the arts and humanities, and beyond

Consultation

This current document is an agreed document at January 2022, but will be regularly reviewed. Consultation has included the following groups and events:

- Scottish GREEN/GRADUATE School for Arts & Humanities School Summer School Workshop: PhD researchers (June 2020)
- Scottish GREEN/GRADUATE School for Arts & Humanities Workshop: PhD researchers (March 2021)
- SGSAH Board members (March 2021)
- SGSAH Executive members (June and December 2021)
- Doctoral Researcher Committee (November 2021)

Resources

- Research
  - Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research

- o [Edinburgh Climate Change Institute](#)
- o [The Carbon Literacy Trust](#)
- Scottish initiatives/organisations
    - o [Creative Carbon Scotland](#)
    - o [Sustainable Glasgow Charter](#)
    - o [Zero Waste Scotland](#)
    - o [Circular Glasgow](#)
    - o [Sustainable Glasgow](#)
- HE initiatives and guidance
    - o [University of Glasgow Guidance for Sustainable Business Travel for Staff and Postgraduate Researchers](#)
    - o [University of Stirling Students' Union](#) (the UK's first carbon neutral SU)
    - o [UCU Environment](#)
    - o [University of Edinburgh sustainable catering guide](#)
    - o [Higher Education Sustainability Initiative](#) (HESI), part of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs)
    - o [Race to zero for universities and colleges](#)
    - o [Carbon Literacy toolkits for HE](#)
    - o [International Universities Climate Alliance Knowledge Hub](#)
    - o [COP26 Universities network](#) (EAUC Carbon Coalition formed from this)
- Scottish universities' climate/sustainability strategies
    - o University of Edinburgh [climate strategy 2016-2026](#)
    - o University of Glasgow [sustainability website](#)
        - ▪ [Carbon management plan 2015-2021](#)
    - o Edinburgh Napier University [sustainability strategy](#)
    - o University of Aberdeen [sustainability strategy](#)
    - o University of Stirling [environment and sustainability webpage](#)
    - o University of St Andrews [sustainability website](#)
    - o University of the Highlands and Islands [climate commitment](#)
    - o University of Strathclyde [climate change and social responsibility policy](#)
    - o Herriot Watt University [environment and sustainability website](#) (CMP outdated)
    - o University of the West of Scotland [sustainability website](#) (strategy outdated)

Appendices

Appendix A – Background to policy decisions and areas of focus

The areas of policy that have been prioritised in this latest draft of the GREEN/GRADUATE operations strategy include travel, carbon offsetting, and catering. Initial research and data collection into a broader carbon management plan for SGSAH was started in the summer, but after consultation with the University of Glasgow Sustainability Manager, Stewart Miller, we decided to narrow our focus to SGSAH's scope 3 emissions. This is because SGSAH's scope 1 and 2 emissions are very limited: SGSAH does not run company vehicles and only has a small number of offices, which have been unoccupied for some time and are already accounted for under the University of Glasgow's carbon management strategy. In this sense, we felt that we could have most impact by focusing on SGSAH's scope 3 emissions: events, travel, goods and services etc.

This policy draft is one iteration in what will be a constant process of learning and improvement. The research reports and utility data for the SGSAH offices will be made available for future GREEN/GRADUATE researchers and staff who may want to pursue this and draw up a full 'path to net zero' plan for the organisation. It is noted that although this would require a lot of work and consultation for less 'carbon impact', it would still be valuable to do in many ways, not least of which the membership to the EAUC carbon coalition (see Appendix C) that it would open up.
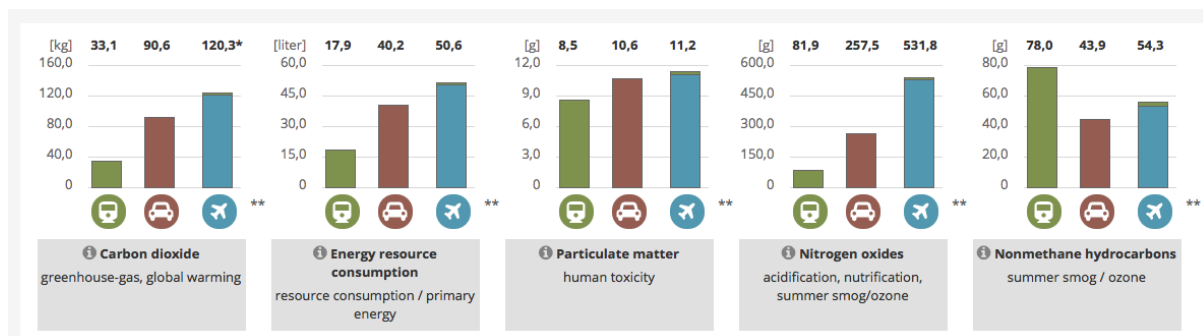
Appendix B – Carbon calculator tools

This policy recommends the use of either the EcoPassenger or Climate Care carbon calculator tools, depending on the researcher's destination.

The Ecopassenger tool is preferable as it has a more accurate methodology and provides a broader contextual understanding (see more below), however unfortunately it only covers journeys within Europe. Therefore, for any journeys outside of Europe, researchers are encouraged to use the Climate Care tool, which provides a fast and simple calculation of carbon emissions for any journey globally.

Ecopassenger

The EcoPassenger tool provides a way to make easy comparisons between the use of car, plane and train for any particular journey. The tool calculates the carbon emissions resulting from each mode of transport for the journey, but also the data for other negative environmental impacts, such as particulate matter and energy resource consumption.

The tool was developed by the International Railways Union (UIC), the Sustainable Development Foundation, the German Institute for Environment and Energy (IFEU), and Hacon software. Its methodology is more complex than most, and accounts not only for the fuel that powers a mode of transport, but also the energy used to produce the fuel – a 'well to wheel' perspective that incorporates the whole energy chain. The screenshot below shows the comparison of the different emissions from a single journey from Glasgow to London.

| [kg] | 33,1 | 90,6 | 120,3* | [liter] | 17,9 | 40,2 | 50,6 | [g] | 8,5 | 10,6 | 11,2 | [g] | 81,9 | 257,5 | 531,8 | [g] | 78,0 | 43,9 | 54,3 |

| **Carbon dioxide** greenhouse-gas, global warming | **Energy resource consumption** resource consumption / primary energy | **Particulate matter** human toxicity | **Nitrogen oxides** acidification, nutrification, summer smog/ozone | **Nonmethane hydrocarbons** summer smog / ozone |

An explanation of EcoPassenger's methodology and the scientific basis behind it can be found here.

Climate Care

Climate Care is an easy-to-use dedicated flight emissions calculator, which calculates greenhouse gas emissions resulting from flights to any destination around the world.

For more information about these and other carbon calculators available, please see this article.

Contextualising emissions

EcoPassenger will also offer researchers a way to put their carbon emissions from travel within Europe into a wider transport context, with detailed comparisons between car, train and plane. We looked into other ways of putting researcher's emissions into a more general context (such as, 'equivalent to planting x trees' etc), but this would involve directing researchers to another external website, adding further labour and complexity to the process. For students travelling outside of Europe, we hope to be able to develop an alternative way of contextualising their emissions in future drafts of this operations plan.

Appendix C – Carbon offsetting

In line with the University of Glasgow and many of the other sixteen SGSAH member HEIs, SGSAH will be using carbon offsetting as part of its wider sustainability efforts. Offsetting will be a last resort measure utilised for residual or unavoidable emissions, such as air travel for essential research trips. The priority will always be to reduce emissions as much as possible first, and only then, to offset. In this sense, SGSAH will be publicising its new travel expenses policy which requires students to prioritise low-carbon travel over low-cost travel, where safe and possible.

In lieu of forthcoming guidance on carbon offsetting from the Scottish government, SGSAH will utilise the guidance already provided by The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (EAUC)* and The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN)

The SSN notes that the Scottish government advice will very likely recommend public bodies to use national as opposed to international carbon offsetting schemes, such as those accredited by the Woodland Carbon Code and the Peatland Code. The advantages of this are many, including:

- Reassurance that the schemes are responsible. To meet the requirements of the codes, projects must:
  - be responsibly and sustainably managed to national standards
  - provide reliable, accurate estimates of the amount of carbon that will be sequestered or locked up as a result of the project
  - be publicly registered and independently verified

- meet transparent criteria and standards to ensure that real, additional carbon benefits are delivered – which would not otherwise have occurred – and that they are permanent
- be part of a long-term management plan
- International offsetting projects are valuable and important, and some of them are regulated by accreditations such as the Gold Standard, but they potentially come with less oversight and assurance. Also, because it's much cheaper to set up projects in the Global South, buyers are potentially at risk of inadvertently funding projects with negative social impacts, such as the practice of dispossessing people from their land in the name of afforestation or other offsetting ventures. (Read more here.)
- The offsetting value of peat and woodland restoration has a strong research evidence base in the UK.
- As the University of Glasgow highlight, offsetting projects can deliver tangible benefits for researchers in Scotland.

Please note that this policy is currently under review and subject to the requirements of the University of Glasgow sustainability department. If they require SGSAH to use a different offsetting provider, this policy will need revising.

*Although the EAUC is also offering membership to its carbon coalition – a consortium of HE and FE institutions that have joined together to offset their emissions – SGSAH is not eligible to join the consortium at this time because the entry requirements include clear targets to be net-zero and a clear plan on carbon reduction (see Appendix A for SGSAH's current position on this).

Example costing of carbon offsetting plan

The price of carbon credits varies widely, depending on the project and the time of issuance. For example, the woodland carbon code currently quotes their units as costing between £7 and £20. Taking £13.50 as an average price, here is some rough costing using examples of SGSAH engagement fund applications including air travel that have been submitted in the last six months:

Example 1

Return flights from Edinburgh to Genoa, connecting in London

Total carbon output calculated at 731kg

Example 2

Return flights from London to Yangon

Total carbon output calculated at 2690 kg

Example 3

Return flight from London to Stockholm 460kg

Return flight from London to New York 1660 kg

Total carbon output calculated at 2120kg

Total carbon output for this period: 5541kg / 5.54 tonnes Co2

Cost to offset = £74.79

Please note that the flights on these applications are not all planned to take place within the 6-month period in which the applications were submitted. Furthermore, this costing is a very rough estimate, given that the price of carbon units varies widely, as do the engagement fund applications submitted to SGSAH within any 6-month period. This costing is designed to provide a rough example of what carbon offsetting costs could look like for SGSAH.

Appendix D – Catering

SGSAH have little control over HEI catering, but as far as possible will request that food be procured to the following standards:

- Vegetarian and vegan
- Sourced as locally as possible
- Fruit and vegetables sourced to sustainable farming standards, such as 'Leaf Marque'
- Eggs should be free range
- Food containing palm oil should be avoided unless RSPO certified
- Food should be fair trade where possible
- Zero or minimal packaging

It is noted that several of the large HEI caterers, including Glasgow and Edinburgh, already have extensive and detailed sustainability policies, from which the above list was created.

Appendix E – Olio

Olio is a free, UK-wide food sharing app. On the app, anyone can advertise leftover food for collection, and anyone can collect it. Olio also offer options (for a small fee) for organisations to help them with food waste leftover from events. These options include regular collections and ad hoc collections, the latter of which would be more suitable for SGSAH. Olio can collect all types of food, including cold buffet food. It just needs to be packaged appropriately and labelled by the caterer in line with legal requirements. SGSAH will trial the use of Olio at its first event of a suitable size (30 people and upwards).