

## UAB Climate Policy and Commitments (Agreement of the Governing Council of 24 April 2024) \*

### 1. Preamble

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) has defined its mission and vision that identify and differentiate it as an organisation.

#### **Mission**

The UAB is a Catalan public university that contributes to the improvement of society and economic development through a solid offer of educational courses and the generation and transfer of knowledge.

#### **Vision**

The UAB is a university recognised for its vocation for public service, its high commitment to the regional and social environment, its high degree of autonomy, flexibility, dynamism and efficiency in all its activities **and its healthy and sustainable management model on its campuses.**

It is also internationally recognised for its contribution to responding to social challenges through innovation and ethical commitment, and for its interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research.

In fact, the **Strategic Plan 2018-2030, approved by the Senate** on 27 February 2019, in its strategic line 4 (UAB Campus) defines the UAB campuses as "spaces to promote the relationship, confluence and cohesion of the different groups of the university community". Specifically, in objective 3 of this line, it is explicitly stated that the UAB will "Become a benchmark in university social responsibility (MSR). [...] Implement a sustainable university model, with special emphasis on training and environmental awareness and mobility (internal and external)."

### 2. Background

Concern for environmental issues is deeply rooted in the UAB, which is a pioneer and guide for society in studies in environmental sciences, as well as in research in environmental science and technology, and its impact on society. The Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Sciences at the UAB is the most multidisciplinary and established in Spain, with recognised teaching staff and experts in the field and continuity in Master's degrees and doctoral studies, both within one of the best international research centres in environmental sciences, the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA-UAB), and in other research groups at the UAB.

The **UAB Sustainability Plan for 2013-2017** (PSUAB, approved by agreement of the Governing Council on 14 March 2013) defined the actions that the university had to carry out in the field of environmental sustainability in aspects as important as the management of mobility, waste and agroforestry spaces, as well as energy saving and efficiency and

\*English version from original one in catalan

environmental communication in the university community, among others.

The **Healthy and Sustainable Campus Plan 2018-2022** was a pioneer in presenting a joint plan and in integrating the aspects of health and sustainability into the same plan, which is structured it in 4 broad lines and 12 strategic lines.

In May 2019, the UAB governing team agreed to add to the declaration of the status of **climate emergency** by supporting the initiative of the UAB Ecological Assembly.

More recently, the **Healthy and Sustainable Campus Plan 2023-2027** has been launched, approved on 28 June 2023 by the Campus, Sustainability and Agenda 2030 Committee. This plan reinforces the UAB's contribution to the achievement of goals in the areas of health and sustainability. There are several strategic lines involved:

- 3: Promote healthy and sustainable food and consumption on the campus.
- 4: Create and adapt healthy and sustainable spaces for teaching, research and leisure inside and outside the buildings.
- 5: Promote a more resilient university in the face of climate change.
- 6: To become a more circular and resource-responsible university community.
- 7: Measure, know, communicate and act.
- 8: Assessing the consequences of our choices: footprints and footprints.

At the same time, our society has also been evolving and various regulatory changes (in Catalonia, in Spain and in Europe) require the updating of our policy and the promotion<sup>1</sup> of the university as one of sustainability and one that is engaged in fight against climate change, among other things.

**Organic Law 2/2023, of 23 March, on the university system** establishes that it is the responsibility of the Governing Council, as the university's highest governing body, "to define and promote a climate change mitigation strategy that includes energy efficiency and substitution plans for renewable energies, sustainable and proximity and mobility"<sup>2</sup>. This law also mentions that "universities will ensure that their campuses are climate-sustainable, through the development of a strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change, and will share their knowledge with society to deal with the climate emergency and its effects"<sup>3</sup> and establishes that the basic structural funding must be sufficient for the provision of a quality public service and for investments to guarantee the environmental sustainability of universities<sup>4</sup>.

The inclusion of sustainability in official university degrees is also provided for in Royal Decree 822/2021. Article 4 establishes the guiding principles in the design of the curricula of official university degrees and includes sustainability and climate change<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Organic Law 2/2023, art. 2.3

<sup>2</sup> Organic Law 2/2023, art. 46.2.m)

<sup>3</sup> Organic Law 2/2023, art. 18.2

<sup>4</sup> Organic Law 2/2023, art. 56.3.a)

<sup>5</sup> RD 822/2021, art. 4.2. "2. Similarly, these curricula must have as a reference the democratic principles and values and the Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, [...] d) the treatment of sustainability and climate change, in accordance with the provisions of Article 35.2 of Law 7/2021, of 20 May, on Climate Change and Energy Transition.

" 3. These values and objectives must be incorporated as cross-cutting content or competences, in the

### 3. The carbon footprint of the UAB in 2023

The carbon footprint is the indicator of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with the life cycle of a product, service or organization. It is quantified in CO<sup>2</sup> equivalent emissions that are released into the atmosphere. Its determination and calculation are based on standards such as the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, ISO 14064 and PAS 2050. The UAB's carbon footprint<sup>6</sup> decreased substantially in 2018 when it began to purchase electricity from certified renewable energy sources with a guarantee of origin (GoO) and, therefore, its emission factor is 0 g CO<sup>2</sup>/kWh. The GHG emissions to be taken into account in the methodology for calculating the carbon footprint are classified according to their generator into Scope 1 emissions (direct from the organisation itself) and Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions (indirect, generated before the organisation takes over the product or service).

Let's take **2015 as a reference year**. That year, Scope 1 emissions were 4,891 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, while Scope 2 emissions were 13,858 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and Scope 3 emissions totalled 21,671 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. In total in **2015, 40,420 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent were generated at the UAB**, of which 18,749 tonnes were Scope 1 and 2.

Direct emissions<sup>7</sup> controlled by the organisation (Scope 1) in 2023 account for 13% of the total. Scope 3 indirect emissions, which refer to that part generated before the product or service enters our organisation (purchase of materials and products, capital goods, also emissions associated with the construction of buildings and electronic equipment, for example) and other services (subcontracted cleaning or maintenance, for example), represent the remaining 87% for 2023. As indicated, indirect emissions from electricity (Scope 2) are 0 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. Broadly speaking, in 2023, 79% of GHG emissions at the UAB came from mobility access to the campus, 12% from the gas consumption of buildings and 4% from business trips.

### 4. The strategy for mitigation and adaptation to climate change

Taking into account the UAB's mission and vision, the work carried out over the last 20 years, as well as the requirements at an international level and also those expressed in Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the university system, this document proposes a strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change with medium-term objectives and commitments.

The UAB's strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change aims to tackle the climate emergency and its effects, as well as the limitation of resources, and to guide its healthy and sustainable management model towards the ecological transition.

This document will be reviewed and acted upon through a participatory process in the second year after its approval and the time horizon of 2030 is set. *A Carbon-neutral campus*

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format decided by the centre or university, in the different official courses offered, as appropriate and always taking into account their specific academic nature and the training objectives of each degree.”

<sup>6</sup> *Guide for the calculation of GHG emissions* (29 May 2023). Catalan Office for Climate Change.

<sup>7</sup> Provisional emissions data in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent for 2023, as well as their evolution since 2015, are presented in the annexe.

is one of the models to follow, which can be used as a guide and source of inspiration based on the experience and work of other universities that have already initiated this change.

## 5. Objective

Reduce consumption of resources, achieve climate neutrality by 2030 for the activity of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, offset those GHG emissions that could not be reduced and make progress in reducing Scope 3 emissions.

### Specific objectives:

1. UAB climate neutrality by 2030 in scope 1 (direct emissions) and Scope 2 emissions.
2. Reduction in the use of resources (water and energy).
3. Abandonment of the use of fossil fuels.

## 6. Commitments

This strategy is based on specific commitments. With the approval of this document our commitments are to:

- A. Reduce the consumption of resources (water and energy).
- B. Temporarily reduce GHG emissions to achieve carbon neutrality for scopes 1 and 2 by 2030.
- C. Gradually approve sectoral and/or regional energy efficiency plans.
- D. Not use fossil fuels at the UAB by 2030 and replace them with renewable energies.
- E. Work on the calculation and reduction measures of Scope 3 emissions.
- F. Boost low-carbon public procurement.
- G. Join a higher-level organisation that transcends our university, an international and/or regional platform, and/or an internationally recognised sustainability network.
- H. Incorporate the reduction of our carbon footprint into new construction and, gradually, into old buildings.
- I. Incorporate content on ecological transition, sustainability and climate change into official studies and internal training plans.
- J. Promote the campus as a space for experimentation and demonstration, and as a beacon that guides society in this transition.
- K. Form part of a voluntary reduction agreement.

These commitments affect the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona as an organisation and, at the same time, the UAB undertakes to transfer the commitments and principles of this policy to the entities in which it participates, either directly or through their boards of trustees or boards of directors. The entities that depend on the UAB (Research Park, UAB Foundation) should decide within one year whether to assume the UAB's own policy or define another with its specific objectives, following the same principles.

In cases where it is required, the university's public administrations and funding bodies will be urged to take into account the economic costs that the climate neutrality policy may entail, so that, in the event that there are specific costs, such as offsetting emissions, these are financially accounted for and can be eligible as such in the expenses section.

## 7. Impact

It is hoped that the achievement of these objectives and commitments will have a direct positive impact within the university community and also in the closest social environment, since the University acts as an amplifier through the training, research and practices that are developed there. The UAB is a driver of change and social transformation in sustainability, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and the ecological transition with an impact on a local and international scale.

There will also be an internal impact, as some internal rules will have to be adapted, such as those relating to the purchase of goods and services.

We also hope to strengthen our identity, gain credibility, maintain our social commitment and receive recognition from society. In addition, recognition through university rankings, such as the UI Green Metric or the QS Sustainability, should also be valued. This ranking is part of the metrics of QS's main ranking, the QS World University Rankings, with a weighting of 5%.

These objectives and commitments will contribute to the regional, national and global objectives also set for other administrations and entities. They will serve as a guide for the newly trained professionals, as well as for the organisations, companies, entities and administrations that participate in our research and innovation, which can consider them as a benchmark for their activity.

## 8. Actions

The commitments mentioned in section 6 will start to be implemented as soon as this policy is approved by the Governing Council. Initially, work will be carried out in a scenario of stability in the university's activity. In the process of reviewing and updating in the second year, other scenarios can be included, especially taking into account the availability of the budget, since the Law on the Spanish University System is new and we will need to see how the resources element develops. These new scenarios may take into account the different options for growth and degrowth (in terms of research, etc.) in some of the University's activities, as well as the variation in investments.

In certain cases, some of the commitments are already incorporated into the university's activity, and therefore, they can be implemented in 2024. In others, incorporation must be gradual, and may involve changing internal regulations or adapting processes, or even providing for the resolution of special situations over the next two years.

The following table lists the commitments adopted, the year in which they are applied and the person responsible for their adoption within the university.

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<sup>9</sup> Its main features are included in the annex.

	Commitment	Year	Vice Rector's Office for	Person responsible
A	Reduce the consumption of resources (water and energy).	2024	Campus and Sustainability	Director of Architecture and Logistics
B	Temporarily reduce GHG emissions to achieve carbon neutrality for Scopes 1 and 2 by 2030.	Gradually to 2030	Campus and Sustainability	Office for Sustainability
C	Gradually approve sectoral and/or regional energy efficiency plans	Gradually to 2030	Campus and Sustainability	Director of Architecture and Logistics
D	Not use fossil fuels at the UAB by 2030 and replace them with renewable energies.	Gradually to 2030	Campus and Sustainability	Director of Architecture and Logistics
E	Work on the calculation and reduction measures of Scope 3 emissions.	Gradually to 2030	Campus and Sustainability	Office for Sustainability
F	Boost low-carbon public procurement.	2024 Periods of adaptation	Finance	Office of Administrative Contracting and Procurement
G	Join a higher-level organisation that transcends our university, an international and/or regional platform, and/or an internationally recognised sustainability network.	April 2024	Campus and Sustainability	Office for Sustainability
H	Incorporate the reduction of our carbon footprint into new construction and, gradually, into old buildings.	2024	Campus and Sustainability	Director of Architecture and Logistics
I	Incorporate content on ecological transition, sustainability and climate change into official studies and internal training plans.	2025	Studies and Quality; Academic Staff; Organisation	Faculties; Area of People Management; Executive Management
J	Promote the campus as a space for experimentation and demonstration, and as a beacon that guides society in this transition	2024	Research; Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship; Campus and Sustainability	Challenges Office
K	Form part of a voluntary reduction agreement.	2024	Campus and Sustainability	Office for Sustainability
L1	Entities that depend on the UAB in which <b>the UAB participates in more than 90%</b> .The UAB undertakes to transfer the commitment so that	May 2025	Research; Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship;	Deputy Executive Manager for Finance; Deputy Executive

	within 1 year they decide whether they want to take on the UAB policy or define another with their specific objectives, following the same principles.		Finance	Manager for Research
L2	<b>Entities that depend on the UAB in which the UAB participates in more than 50%</b> And a maximum of 90%. The UAB undertakes to transfer the commitment so that within 1 year they decide whether they want to take on the UAB policy or define another with their specific objectives, following the same principles.	May 2025	Research; Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship; Finance	Deputy Executive Manager for Finance; Deputy Executive Manager for Research
L3	<b>Entities in which the UAB participates directly or through their boards of governors or boards of directors, which are not included in L1 or L2.</b> The UAB undertakes to transfer the commitments and principles of this policy through their boards, administrative councils or other bodies in which it participates.	May 2025	Research; Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship; Finance	Deputy Executive Manager for Finance; Deputy Executive Manager for Research

The Office for Sustainability is the unit responsible for providing support for the monitoring of agreements, and, in particular, for facilitating the metrics and calculation procedures. Likewise, this office must include these commitments and their development in its report, so that they are public. To the extent that the processes are integrated, some parts may be incorporated into the university's quality processes. The Office of the Deputy Executive Manager for Finance will develop and adapt the necessary procedures to implement the costs of offsetting the emissions generated by the university.