

# USING THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE

## HOW-TO GUIDE



# UNIVERSITY LEAGUE 2025/26

The University League is the only comprehensive and independent league table of UK universities ranked by environmental and ethical performance. It is compiled by People & Planet and can be a vital tool for putting pressure on your university. Here's how you can use it to help win your campaign!

## 1. WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE?

People & Planet's University League is a league table that ranks universities on certain ethical and environmental criteria. When it launched in 2007, it was the first ever league table to rank universities based on their environmental performance. Now, it is widely used as a way of judging the ethics and sustainability of a university, meaning that it is a powerful incentive for universities to improve. In fact, this year, for the first time ever, our ranking was integrated into the Sunday Times Good University Guide - demonstrating its growing influence and legitimacy for the sector.

The University League is published annually, and the criteria that we use to mark it (things like Carbon Management, Workers' Rights, Ethical Investment and Ethical Careers & Recruitment) evolve year on year. Universities are given a grade (1st Class, 2:1, 2:2 etc.) depending on where they come in the table.

## 2. WHY SHOULD CAMPAIGNERS CARE ABOUT IT?

The University League can be a major incentive for universities to agree to our campaign goals. There are marks available that correspond to each of our campaigns, meaning that universities will gain a certain number of points by agreeing to campaign demands and putting in place the relevant policy. The People & Planet University League sets the agenda for sustainability departments across the university sector. Some universities even set performance targets for sustainability staff based on the

university league!

For example, if they agree to all the demands of the Fossil Free Careers campaign and put in place a proper Ethical Careers Policy, they will score at least 75% in the Ethical Careers and Recruitment section.

At People & Planet, we encourage groups to think of the University League as a carrot to dangle in front of universities. It is most effective when used alongside a stick: the threat of student protests, bad press, and reputational damage.

### **3. HOW TO USE THE UNIVERSITY LEAGUE**

- Find your university in the University League table. Look at where they did well, and where they fell short. Spoiler: if they haven't made a Fossil Free Careers commitment, then they will do terribly in Ethical Careers and Recruitment!
- If you expand a university's profile on the ranking, you can see whether they went up or down from last year's ranking and by how many places.
- If a university has improved, you can congratulate them, and then make the case for why they need to implement your campaign demands in order to keep improving next year. The criteria are very specific, so improvement generally means that your university is already paying attention to the University League. You can use this to your advantage and emphasise that there are lots of easy marks available for doing Fossil Free Careers, Divest Borders and Fossil Free (depending on which of our campaigns you're running)!
- If a university has descended, you can express your disappointment, but then also your willingness to work with the university to improve its ranking next year by implementing your campaign demands (e.g. an ethical investment policy or ethical careers policy with the relevant exclusions!)
- Spread the word, and get people caring about it! Tell your pals, post on social media etc.

### **4. SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS**

1. **USE SOCIAL MEDIA:** Share graphics and videos on your group's social media channels to draw attention to your university's performance and then link that to your campaign. See some creative ideas below for inspiration!
2. **EMAIL THE UNIVERSITY:** Write an email to the university sustainability department to express your congratulations or disappointment, and link this to the desire to discuss your campaign in order to improve next year. Suggested emails below.
3. **WRITE AN ARTICLE:** Writing an article for the student/local press about your university's performance in the University League. You could draw comparisons to other universities, and link it all back to your campaign. Get in touch with us if you would like some help with this!
4. **ORGANISE AN ACTION:** If you're feeling angry and energized, why not design a University League themed action? Universities love league tables, so this is a great opportunity to use this against them.

## 5. LINKS AND RESOURCES

[Click here for the University League Results](#)

**Note:** This year's University League (2025/6) will be published w/c 8 December! Until then, this link will display last year's results)

### EXAMPLES OF GREAT SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR INSPIRATION

1. Shout out to **Imperial Climate Action** for this tongue in cheek [Insta post!](#)

people&planet university sustainability  
league 2023/2024 released

98th! up 6 frm last yr



2. **Cambridge Climate Justice** have a similar sustainability ranking for their colleges and did some great comms around this!

- Check out their [stunt](#) to engage students and raise awareness about the rankings
- And their excellent [video](#) of the university college “opening its results”



3. **UEA SU officers** put together a [post](#) slamming the university on its fall in the league - and used this to push their campaign on ethical banking and investment

