



Constitution of the Climate Justice Universities Union

Last Updated: 18 June 2025 (approved at 9 June 2025 Coordinating Team Meeting)

1. NAME

- 1.1. The name of this organization is the Climate Justice Universities Union (hereafter, the Climate Union).

2. AIMS

The **Climate Justice Universities Union** was formed to address the injustices embedded within and beyond higher education systems that are perpetuating narrow and inadequate responses to worsening ecological destruction and human suffering. The Climate Union recognises that the voices of those least responsible and those most vulnerable to the climate crisis, including our students, continue to be marginalised by powerful and influential actors, including higher education institutions. The Union aims to reclaim the transformative potential of the university by supporting collective, community-engaged action within and beyond higher education communities.

- 2.1. The Climate Justice Universities Union is a transdisciplinary and transboundary **international collective** of individuals committed to transforming higher education to advance climate justice principles throughout society. The overarching goal of the organisation is to resist harmful aspects of higher education systems, reclaim the powerful potential of the common good mission of the higher education sector, and restructure the research, learning, community engagement, estates and procurement, and policy impact of higher education to advance climate justice principles.
- 2.2. The **climate justice principles** that guide the Climate Justice Universities Union include: 1) the climate crisis is a symptom of extractive and exploitative systems that need to be transformed; 2) decarbonisation and emissions reduction efforts must be linked with transformative public investments in healthcare, housing, public transport, care work, education, and other basic services that every community needs and deserves; 3) local, regenerative, and community-focused production of food, energy and other necessities must be cultivated and supported to improve wellbeing and restore ecological health and biodiversity of land and water; 4) fossil fuels must be rapidly phased out; and 5) solidary against violent oppression, militarisation, and the material and knowledge-based legacies of colonialism and imperialism.
- 2.3. The **key objectives** of the Climate Union are to: (1) activate transformative change toward a thriving future for all life by expanding scholar-activism and mobilising collective action within and beyond higher education institutions; (2) promote a culture of care within higher education communities by prioritising well-being, compassion, empathy, reciprocity, and relational knowledge, (i.e. interconnections among humans and with the beyond-human part of earth's systems); (3) leverage the influence and reach of higher education for just policies and practices contributing to global just transitions and climate justice movements internationally; (4) mobilise global solidarity and collaboration across national and regional boundaries within and among higher education communities; and (5) co-create educational structures that acknowledge global injustices and co-create with students and communities learning opportunities to enable and equip collective understanding of the polycrisis facing humanity, and multiple possibilities for responding to the polycrisis on the basis of justice.



2.4. To realise these aims, the Climate Justice Universities Union supports multiple initiatives within three types of actions: resist, reclaim and restructure.

2.4.1. **Resist:** The Climate Union resists the complicity and complacency within higher education that supports the status quo and business as usual. The Union resists the corporatisation and commercialisation of higher education institutions and the neoliberal market-based competitive pressures dominating university operations, curriculum and research. Thus, the union seeks to democratisate the university. The Climate Union resists curricula that ignore or only tokenistically address ecological crises and the associated injustices. The Climate Union resists teaching students a narrow neoliberal economic perspective based on market-fundamentalism, techno-solutionism, and growth without acknowledging breadth and diversity of understandings of the economy, including indigenous and non-European ones.

2.4.2. **Reclaim:** The Climate Justice Universities Union is reclaiming the common good mission of higher education. The Climate Union strives to model and facilitate deliberative and experimental democratic processes, transparency, and decision-making in higher education and beyond. The Climate Union is working to reclaim the public infrastructure of higher education by sharing resources among different institutions and communities, fostering collaboration rather than competition. The Climate Union works to recover, amplify, and integrate the importance of indigenous languages, knowledges and cultures in how universities contribute to responding to polycrises.

2.4.3. **Restructure:** The Climate Union strives to restructure research, learning and community engagement, and policy influence in universities to support transformation toward an inclusive, non-extractive and non-exploitative future. The Climate Union creates opportunities to reimagine the role of higher education in responding to disruptions and advancing structural and systemic social change, and focusing on social and economic, and not just technical, innovation.

2.5. Climate Justice Universities Union Principles

We believe transformative social change toward a more just, healthy future for all is possible. We promote **cultures of care**. We endorse fossil fuel phaseout and the international fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, and an end to university complicity in militarisation. We believe in integrating diverse forms of knowledge, including feminist knowledge and indigenous knowledge. We resist the corporate capture of higher education by extractive industries for profit-seeking motives, including fossil fuel and adjacent industries and Big Tech. We support meaningful equality, diversity, and inclusion, and seek to advance gender justice and challenge toxic masculinity. We believe climate justice extends to all forms of social justice including, but not limited to economic justice, gender justice, climate justice, racial justice, housing justice, energy justice, food justice, intergenerational justice, technology justice, water justice, and more.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1. Membership is open to all individuals who share mutual aims and values of the Climate Union and agree to its Constitution, including its principles. Individuals can sign up to become members on the Climate Justice Universities Union website. Membership is free of charge.

3.2. It is the responsibility of individual members to ensure that their contact details provided for the membership purposes are up-to-date.

3.3. The Climate Union complies with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)



4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Climate Justice Universities Union is structured to facilitate distributed self-organised collective action by multiple working groups and a distributed network of branches. There are multiple ways for members to be involved, and all members will be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) as well as other meetings. The strategic direction of the Union between Annual General Meetings (AGMs) will be guided by the Coordinating Team.

4.1. Coordinating Team

- 4.1.1. **Purpose:** To coordinate and co-develop the overall strategy for the Climate Union, to coordinate action across the Union, to support alignment with the union's aims and principles, and to facilitate effective internal and external communication.
- 4.1.2. **Decision-making:** The coordinating team strives for consensus in decision-making. If no consensus is reached, then a decision may go to a simple majority vote. The coordinating team will seek advice from the Advisory Board on any issue it may see useful (but is not bound by the Advisory Board's recommendations). Changes to the Climate Union's constitution need to be approved by the coordinating team.
- 4.1.3. **Membership** of the Coordinating Team: Membership should include no fewer than 5 and no more than 10 Climate Union members. For the first two years, the coordinating team includes those who initially volunteered, and changes to the coordinating team will be made by consensus of the coordinating team. New members can be self-nominated or invited by the coordinating team. After the initial 2-year period (i.e., June 2027) membership and roles will be determined by an open election process either online or at the AGM. Core roles (co-convenor, secretary, etc) should be elected from individuals who have been members of the coordinating team for at least one year, who will be nominated by one 'proposer' and one 'seconder' from within the Climate Union. Non-core role membership will be open to any Climate Union member, who will be nominated by one 'proposer.' If there is more than one candidate for a vacancy, an open online election will be conducted. Members will be encouraged to consider taking turns at these roles.
- 4.1.4. **Core roles and responsibilities:** The Coordinating Team (and the Climate Union more broadly) is non-hierarchical. All members are expected to contribute to strategy, decision making and governance functions. Core roles and responsibilities are defined to ensure regulatory compliance and effective governance of the Climate Union.
 - **Co-conveners:** Two co-conveners ensure the coordinating team is effective in coordinating the strategic direction of the Climate Union. The co-conveners are responsible for convening and facilitating meetings and supporting internal communication among the coordinating team, working groups, and branches.
 - **Secretary/Treasurer:** supports the coordinating team in its functioning; and administers funds as agreed by the coordinating team. Also performs record keeping (e.g., minute-taking); administers membership of the Union; compiles and distributes the Newsletter; notifies the membership of vacancies and organises elections; (shares agenda and online meeting link). Some of these duties may be delegated to a paid administrative assistant, when available. NOTE: As the Climate Union grows and expands its internal capacity, the role of secretary and treasurer could be separated into two different roles.
 - Other roles may be established by the coordinating team according to needs, and for as long as they are required (e.g., Communication Coordinator, Events Coordinator, Campaigns Coordinator, Tech Justice Coordinator; Legal Coordinator; Student Representative; Early Career Representative,)



- **Terms:** All posts are for a duration of 2 years with possibility for renewal.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Gender diversity is a goal among the roles of co-conveners, secretary/treasurer. The coordinating team shall take steps to encourage members from underrepresented groups.
- 4.1.5. **New members:** members may be invited to join the coordinating team as needed to ensure the functioning of the Climate Union, to provide specific areas of expertise e.g., legal, activism, outreach, community organising, and/or to safeguard diversity principles. Individuals are invited (co-opted) to join after agreement by consensus by existing members of the coordinating team
- 4.1.6. The coordinating team will collectively approve specific proposals for the Climate Union to endorse, join, or sign up to particular events, campaigns, or statements. This can be done through email communication or at a coordinating team meeting.
- 4.1.7. **Conflict resolution and removal of members.** When conflicts arise within the coordinating team, restorative approaches to resolve the conflict will be attempted. The coordinating team is responsible for engaging with members up to, and including termination of membership from the Climate Union if individual's actions are misaligned with the constitution or principles.

4.2. International Advisory Board

The Climate Justice University Union will have an international advisory board of invited participants to provide guidance and strategic advice.

- 4.2.1 **Purpose:** The advisory board will provide strategic advice and insights to the strategy group.
- 4.2.2 **Members:** The coordinating team will decide who to invite to be part of the advisory board, and any member can nominate or suggest potential members. Advisory board members will be asked to serve for a term of 5 years, and can be renewed. If an Advisory Board member joins the coordinating team, they cease to be a member of the Advisory Board. Outgoing members of the coordinating team may serve on the Advisory Board.

4.3 Regional Branches

The Climate Justice Universities Union has regional branches at different institutions and across different regions. These branches focus on local initiatives within specific higher education institutions, communities and regions.

- 4.3.1. **Structure:** Local branches can be created at any location when at least three members of the Climate Union come together and establish a branch. At least one member should be designated as the branch coordinator of the local branch and other roles (secretary, communications officers, events/campaign officer, etc) can be defined by the branch membership. These roles can be self-nominated for the first 2 years, and then determined by an open election process thereafter.
- 4.3.2 **Branch coordinators** will promote Climate Union aims and activities in specific higher education institutions or specific geographic regions. The role of the branch coordinator could include convening meetings, maintaining notes of meetings, and communicating with other Union members including coordinators from other branches and working groups.
- 4.3.3 **Local branches** have autonomy to undertake decisions and actions, but must ensure that these are in line with Climate Union objectives and principles so communication is important. The Climate Union strives to have additional meetings where branch coordinators and working group coordinators communicate with each other.



4.4 Working Groups

The Climate Justice Universities Union is structured to include multiple working groups each with a self-defined common purpose and self-organizing structure - that is members can decide what they wish to do, but should seek agreement from the coordinating team (to ensure the proposal aligns with the union's aims and values) or seek union approval/support for their initiatives by proposing motions at the AGM (or EGM). Each working group is autonomous providing they agree to work toward advancing the core principles of the Climate Justice Universities Union. The Coordinating Team reserves the right to intervene in a working group or regional branch of the Climate Union if there is consensus amongst the coordinating team that the working group or branch is not operating within the principles of the Climate Union. Representatives from each of the working groups are responsible for sharing regular updates with the Anchor Circle to ensure open transparent communication and to promote synergies among working groups. Working groups collaborate to advance specific initiatives across the higher education sector (i.e. education/curriculum working group, resisting AI/Big Tech on campus working group, etc).

- 4.4.1 Purpose: Each working group collectively defines their common purpose. The purpose should be clearly articulated so all members are aware of the focus of the working group.
- 4.4.2 Working Group Coordinators: Each working group should have a minimum of two coordinators where a coordinator's job is to call meetings, maintain notes of meetings, refine and update the collective purpose and roles, communicate with other members of the climate justice universities union.
- 4.4.3 New working groups can be formed if two or more members come together and propose a purpose for the working group to the coordinating team via the secretary. This is to ensure the purpose does not overlap with existing working groups and so that the coordinating team is aware of the groups that are in existence.

5. MEETINGS

5.1. Member Meetings

The Climate Union strives for 3-4 general member meetings per year where all members are invited. These include the Annual General Meetings as well as other virtual meetings to which all members are invited.

5.2. Annual General Meetings

- 5.2.1. An Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held annually, no later than fifteen months after the previous AGM to support union-wide communication and global solidarity among members. Some strategic decisions may also be brought for a vote by the AGM.
- 5.2.2. To be inclusive, the AGM will be a virtual meeting. The format of the AGM will be decided by the coordinating team. Members will be notified in writing (via email and social media) at least 30 days before the date of the AGM, stating the date and time, as well as information on any vacancies on the coordinating team or other needs. The secretary will send out a call for proposed agenda items.
- 5.2.3. Open positions in the coordinating team, and/or other evolving needs of the Climate Union, may be filled during the AGM. Applications for coordinating team positions should be made to the Secretary and will be accepted up to fourteen days before the AGM. The candidate also submits a short CV and a motivation letter of maximum one page detailing the vision and strategy for holding the office. Candidates for the core positions of co-conveners, secretary, treasurer, etc. must also secure nominations as detailed in article 4.1.3. Applications for non-core vacancies can be in the form of self-nomination.



5.2.4. The quorum for voting for an AGM will be 10% of total membership in addition to the majority of the Coordinating Team.

5.2.5. At the AGM:

- The coordinating team will present a report of the work of Climate Justice Universities Union and a plan of action for the next year.
- The coordinating team will also present the financial accounts of Climate Justice Universities Union for the previous year.
- Updates will be shared about working groups and branches.
- The incumbent coordinating team will conduct elections for vacant coordinating team positions.

5.3 In-Person Assemblies

In-person convenings have been a critical part of the Climate Justice Universities Union, as the Union emerged from a series of people's assemblies meetings on the island of Ireland. Any branch can propose to the coordinating team a plan to host an in-person meeting of the Climate Union.

5.4 Extraordinary General Meeting

5.4.1 An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) may be called by either the co-conveners, the majority of the coordinating team or by any 10 members of the Union whenever there is a need to convene the full membership of the Climate Union.

5.4.2 The Secretary must give notice of at least 30 days of an EGM in writing (via email and social media) to all members of the Union, stating the date and time..

5.5 Coordinating Team Meetings

5.5.1 The coordinating team will meet at least once a month. Coordinating team meetings will have a regular time that works for members, and additional meetings may be called by the co-conveners or secretary.

5.5.2 All questions that arise at any meeting will be discussed openly and the meeting will seek to find general agreement that everyone present can agree to.

5.5.3 If a consensus cannot be reached a vote will be taken and a decision will be made by a simple majority of members present. If the number of votes cast on each side is equal, the co-conveners shall decide collectively.

5.6 Advisory Board

5.6.1 The Coordinating Team will meet the Advisory Board as necessary but typically once a year.

6 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

This document will be reviewed and revised by the coordinating team in 6 months, i.e in December 2025.

Signatures of Co-Conveners

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennie C Stephens".

25 July 2025

Jennie C Stephens

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Barry".

25 July 2025

John Barry

Date