

OU in Scotland Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Estates / June 2026

OU in Scotland Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan

Introduction

The Open University in Scotland (OUIs) Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan aligns with the Net Zero Carbon policy, outlining a roadmap to achieve the Net Zero 2030 commitment in Scotland.

Scope

The Open University (OU) operates across four nations: England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. A Net Zero Carbon policy is in place and applies to all OU sites. In support of this, nation-specific Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plans have been developed to address the unique circumstances and requirements of each region.

The University has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions for all Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2030. For Scope 3 indirect emissions, the target date is set for 2050. Established processes are already in place to monitor and reduce Scope 1 and 2 emissions across all locations. The current focus for Scope 3 emissions is the development of a robust and accurate baseline to inform future reduction strategies.

- Scope 1: direct emissions from carbon-based fuel combustion, fleet vehicles and fugitive emissions, e.g. refrigerants from chiller plant. Please note: there are no fleet vehicles at OUIs.
- Scope 2: in-direct emissions which arise from purchased electricity
- Scope 3: all other emissions in the University supply/value chain, notably arising from; staff working from home, purchased goods and services (of which digital and flights are carbon intensive and high spend), business travel, employee commuting, waste disposal, transportation and distribution (up and downstream), leased assets and franchises and investments.

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Net Zero Carbon

The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan establishes the baseline year as 2020/21. This revised baseline aligns with the **OU Learn and Live Strategic Plan** and more accurately reflects the University's post-COVID operational model, including the adoption of a dynamic working approach.

The plan is structured around the **energy hierarchy** principles, which guide sustainable energy use across the University estate:

- **Reduce/Avoid Energy:** Prioritising effective space utilisation, incorporating passive design strategies, and improving building fabric to minimise energy demand for heating and cooling.
- **Use Energy Efficiently:** Upgrading mechanical and electrical systems to incorporate energy-efficient technologies and advanced controls.
- **Use Green Energy:** Investing in onsite renewable energy generation and securing offsite renewable electricity through dedicated supply contracts.

OUIs Net Zero Carbon Plan

The premises at 9–11 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh consist of three Victorian terraced buildings, each heritage-listed and constructed circa 1880. These interconnected properties span five floors, with a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of approximately 2,715 m² and a Net Internal Area (NIA) of around 1,766 m².

In response to the adoption of a new dynamic working model, there has been a substantial decline in on-site occupancy and overall space utilisation. As a result, the decision has been made to relocate operations to a more suitable location in 2026, which will better align with the organisation's evolving needs in terms of location, size, and improvements in energy efficiency and overall building performance.

This Carbon Reduction Plan is structured around the planned move to Norloch House, along with a series of retrofit and sustainability improvement projects scheduled between 2025 and 2030.

Norloch House is a former Victorian Mission Hall, originally built in 1893. Following a major refurbishment completed in 2015, the building now operates as an open plan office with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of B. The building

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comprises five levels, including a basement and a smaller upper mezzanine floor. Desktop studies estimate the carbon reduction works will require capital investment £355,000 to £405,000.

Measure	Category	Status
Move to Norloch House	Demand reduction	2025-26
Glazing upgrade	Demand reduction	2027-2030
Roof insulation	Demand reduction	2026-27
Internal wall insulation	Demand reduction	Business case required
LED lighting upgrade and controls	Energy Efficiency	2025-26
Electrification of hot water and heating systems. Phased upgrade works.	Decarbonisation	2025-30
Upgrade BMS and controls	Energy efficiency	2025-30
HVAC upgrade – phased with end-of-life equipment replacement	Energy efficiency	2027-30
Install Solar PV	Renewable energy	Subject to planning consent
100% renewable electricity supply via a power purchase agreement.	Renewable energy	2029-30

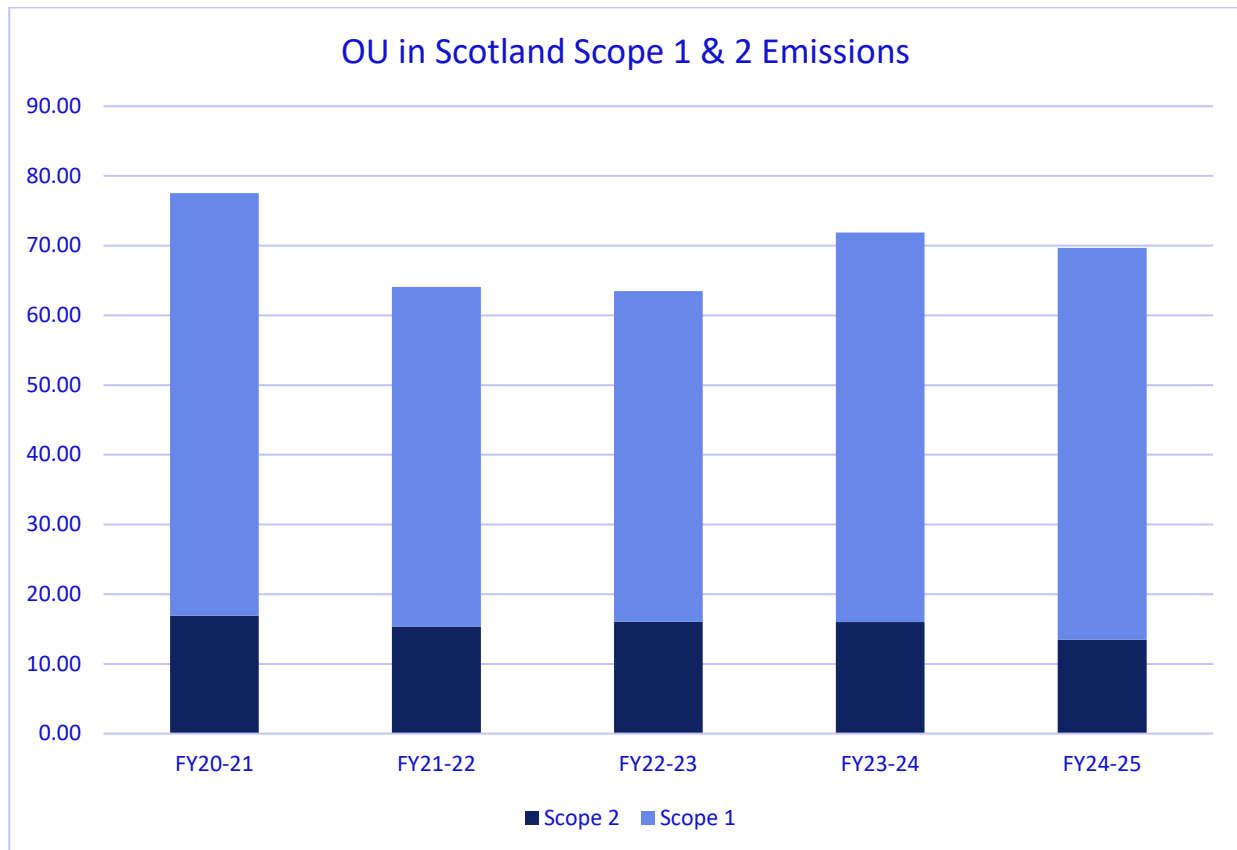
Carbon Tracking

Since the new 2020-21 baseline year, we have achieved minor year on year reductions in carbon emissions from:

- reduced number of staff in office
- consolidation of spaces to better support dynamic hybrid working practices and improved space efficiency
- reducing winter set point by 1 degree to 21°C

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Chart 2 shows scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions since 2020/21. Scope 1 emissions are related to gas usage and scope 2 is electricity usage onsite. Carbon emissions from gas usage for heating is dominant, which is expected for a Victorian Building with large heritage windows in a colder winter climate. 24-25 saw a slight 3% reduction in emissions compared to the previous year 23-24. We anticipate significant reductions from 2026 onwards after the relocation to Norloch House, due to improved energy performance of the building and smaller building size.



OU in Scotland Carbon Tracking FY20-21 – FY24-25

Linked policies

Policies, strategies and plans linked to The Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan include:

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Plan – England, Ireland & Wales
- Sustainable Construction policy
- Water Policy
- Waste and Resource Policy

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- Waste and Resource Management Plan
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy

Monitoring and review

The Net Zero 2030 Policy and nations Net Zero Plans are owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and progress on targets reported to the OUIS Senior Management Team, Sustainability Coordination Working Group and Vice-Chancellors Executive. This forms part of the Institutional Performance Reporting and Strategic Risk Register mitigation measures which are updated quarterly.

Signed By

Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	June 2025	Energy Manager	New OU in Scotland Net Zero 2030 Plan
1.1	June 2026	Energy Manager	Reviewed – carbon data updated

Next review date: June 2027

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