

[TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION \(THE\) UNIVERSITY IMPACT RANKING 2021](#)

- The third edition of the THE Impact ranking was released on Wednesday 21 April. For the second year in a row, the ranking covers all 17 Sustainable development Goal (SDG) categories.
- **Overall, Strathclyde is ranked =32nd out of 1,115 universities globally (an increase from =70th last year), 7th in the UK (out of 50 universities) and 1st in Scotland (out of 6 universities).**
- Overall participation saw a 44% increase from last year with 1,240 institutions submitting data (not all submitted sufficient data to be ranked) compared to 859 institutions last year. 52 UK institutions submitted data in 2021, compared to 35 in 2020.
- For the following two categories, Strathclyde features in the **top 20 globally**: 7th for Responsible Consumption and Production (also 4th in the UK and 1st in Scotland) and 13th for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (also 3rd in the UK and 1st in Scotland).
- Strathclyde also ranks in the **top 50 for four categories**: 31st for Life Below Water, =33rd for Decent Work and Economic Growth, 41st for Life on Land and 48th for No Poverty.
- In this edition and for second year in a row Strathclyde participated in all 17 categories ranked by the THE.
- In the compulsory Partnership for the Goals category (SDG 17), **Strathclyde placed joint 86th, an improvement on last year's position where we featured in band 101-200.**

1. Introduction

On Wednesday 21st April 2021, the Times Higher Education (THE) published its third edition of the University Impact ranking. This ranking attempts to capture universities' impact on society and is based on the 17 [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

The ranking uses a set of performance measures developed specifically for this ranking. A small number of metrics, qualitative and quantitative, are associated with each of the seventeen SDG categories. The third edition of the ranking continues to cover all 17 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

A university's final score in the overall table is calculated by combining its score in SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) with its top three scores out of the remaining 16 SDGs (please see Table 3 below for a full list of SDGs and [methodological](#) breakdown). SDG 17 accounts for 22 per cent of the overall score, while the other SDGs each carry a weight of 26 per cent. This means that different universities are scored based on a different set of SDGs, depending on their focus. THE supplement the institution's submission with bibliometric data from Elsevier.

Fewer institutions participate in this global ranking compared to more established rankings, however the latest edition saw a substantial increase in the number of institutions ranked, from 766 institutions in 2020 to 1,115 in 2021. Out of the 1,115¹ institutions from 98 nations/regions ranked

¹ 1,115 institutions were ranked in the overall category in 2021. 1,240 institutions submitted data to participate in at least one element of the ranking compared to 859 last year.

globally – 50 were based in the UK² and 6 were based in Scotland³. To participate in the overall ranking, institutions were required to submit data towards one compulsory category (partnership for the goals – SGD 17) and at least three further categories.

2. Strathclyde Performance

Strathclyde overall is **ranked =32nd** (out of 1,115 institutions). Strathclyde's overall score has been calculated by combining its score in SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals), with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

We are ranked **1st in Scotland** (out of 4) for the following **2 SDGs**: SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production (4th in UK) and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (3rd in UK).

We are ranked **2nd in Scotland** (out of 4) for SDG 1: No Poverty (8th in UK); SDG 4: Quality Education (=5th in UK); SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (9th in UK); SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (6th in UK); SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (5th in UK); SDG 14: Life below water (6th in UK) and SDG 16: Peace Justice and strong institutions (3rd in UK).

We place in the top 100 Globally for 11 out of 17 SDGs.

Global Top 20, Strathclyde is:

- **7th out of 503** institutions for **SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production** (Top 25%⁴) – up 20 places with an improved score of 89.4, up by 8.1 points from 2020.
- **13th out of 653** institutions for **SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** (Top 25%) – up 25 places with an improved score of 84.4, up by 4.1 points from 2020.

Global Top 50, Strathclyde is:

- **31st out of 379** institutions for **SDG14: Life Below Water** (Top 25%) – down 4 places and down 1.4 points from 2020.
- **=33rd out of 685** institutions for **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth** (Top 25%) – down 13 places and down 0.8 points from 2020.
- **41st out of 402** institutions for **SDG 15: Life on Land** (Top 25%) – down 22 places and down 3.3 points from 2020.
- **48th out of 591** institutions for **SDG 1: No Poverty** (Top 25%) - down 2 places with an improved score of 72, up by 2.8 points from 2020.

Global Top 100, Strathclyde is:

- **=55th out of 680** institutions for **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure** (Top 25%) – up 8 places, with an improved score of 93.2, up by 9.4 points from 2020.
- **69th out of 669** institutions for **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** (Top 25%) – down 57 places and down 6.4 points from 2020.
- **72nd out of 656** institutions for **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities** (Top 25%) – down 31 places and down 4.7 points from 2020.

² Two additional institutions participated in the individual SDG rankings, bringing UK participation to 52 institutions.

³ In addition to the 6 Scottish Institutions who feature in the overall ranking, the University of Stirling participated in SDG3, Good Health and Wellbeing and was ranked joint 99th out of 871 institutions for that SDG. Stirling does not feature in the overall ranking.

⁴ Top 25% – Strathclyde is in the top quartile of Institutions being ranked in the category based on the overall score.

- **=86th out of 1,154** institutions for **SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals** (Top 25%) – up from band 101-200 in 2020 with an improved score of 85.2, up by 7 points.
- **89th out of 520** institutions for **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation** (Top 25%) – down 79 places and down 6.3 points.

Global Top 300, Strathclyde is:

- Band **101-200 out of 442** institutions for **SDG 2: Zero Hunger** (Above Median⁵)
- Band **101-200 out of 966** institutions for **SDG 4: Quality Education** (Top 25%)
- Band **101-200 out of 776** institutions for **SDG 5: Gender Equality** (Above Median)
- Band **101-200 out of 566** institutions for **SDG 13: Climate Action** (Top 25%)
- Band **201-300 out of 871** institutions for **SDG 3: Good health and Wellbeing** (Above Median)
- Band **201-300 out of 560** institutions for **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy** (Above Median) – down from 54th place and down 15.1 points from 2020.

Table 1 shows the SDG ranking categories including the number of institutions that had been ranked in each of them and Strathclyde performance.

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal	Score* out of 100	Score Change	World rank 2021	World rank 2020	Scottish Rank	UK Rank
1	No Poverty	72	2.8	48	46	2nd (out of 4)	8th (out of 23)
2	Zero Hunger*	52.5	2.1	101-200	101-200	4th (out of 4)	=9th (out of 18)
3	Good Health and Wellbeing*	64.2	3.3	201-300	201-300	7th (out of 7)	=23th (out of 46)
4	Quality Education*	64.9	-3.2	101-200	101-200	2nd (out of 5)	=5 (out of 36)
5	Gender Equality*	55.7	-6.4	101-200	101-200	5th (out of 5)	=16th (out of 35)
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	61.2	-6.3	89	10	2nd (out of 4)	9th (out of 22)
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	53	-15.1	201-300	54	=3rd (out of 4)	=19th (out of 26)
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	75	-0.8	=33	20	2nd (out of 6)	6th (out of 35)
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	93.2	9.4	=55	63	2nd (out of 4)	5th (out of 20)
10	Reduced Inequalities	73.8	-6.4	69	12	3rd (out of 6)	23rd (out of 41)
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	76.7	-4.7	72	41	3rd (out of 5)	13th (out of 32)
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	89.4	8.1	7	27	1st (out of 5)	4th (out of 34)
13	Climate Action*	57.1	11	101-200	101-200	4th (out of 5)	=15th (out of 33)
14	Life Below Water	78.1	-1.4	31	26	2nd (out of 3)	6th (Out of 20)
15	Life on Land	77.7	-3.3	41	19	2nd (out of 3)	12th (out of 23)
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	84.4	4.1	13	38	1st (Out of 4)	3rd (out of 33)
17	Partnership for the Goals	85.2	7	=86	101-200	3rd (out of 6)	16th (out of 50)
OVERALL POSITION		91.7	5.7	=32	70	1st (out of 6)	7th (out of 50)

* For these rankings, the overall score in publications is shown as a range. The exact scores have been calculating by applying the methodology on the underlying data supplied by the THE.

⁵ Above Median – Strathclyde Score is above the median score worldwide.

3. Results - overview

Overall, the top spot for the first time went to the University of Manchester, the first time a UK institution has taken the title. The University of Sydney (Australia) was ranked 2nd for the second time in a row with RMIT University (Australia) ranked 3rd.

Top ranking UK universities include the University of Manchester (1st overall), King's College London (11th overall), Newcastle University (15th overall), University of Leeds (16th overall), University of Leicester (19th Overall) and University of Plymouth (=23rd Overall). The UK tops three of the 17 individual SDG tables compared to one last year (table 2 below). Six of the top ten places for SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production are taken by UK institutions, including Strathclyde at number 7.

Table 2 details the highest ranked institution for each SDG category:

SDG	Category	Highest ranked university	Country
1	No Poverty	Queen's University	Canada
2	Zero Hunger	Metropolitan Autonomous University	Mexico
3	Good Health and Wellbeing	Oregon Health and Science University	United States
4	Quality Education	Aalborg University	Denmark
5	Gender Equality	Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University	Saudi Arabia
6	Clean Water and Sanitation	University of Sydney	Australia
7	Affordable and Clean Energy	King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi	Thailand
8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	University of Johannesburg	South Africa
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	University of British Columbia	Canada
		Delft University of Technology	Netherlands
		Technical University of Munich	Germany
		University of Toronto	Canada
10	Reduced Inequalities	University of Canberra	Australia
11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	University of Manchester	United Kingdom
12	Responsible Consumption and Production	University of Manchester	United Kingdom
13	Climate Action	University at Buffalo	United States
14	Life Below Water	University of Plymouth	United Kingdom
15	Life on Land	La Trobe University	Australia
16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Queen's University	Canada
17	Partnership for the Goals	University of Newcastle	United Kingdom

According to Times Higher Education, **the UK has joined Australia and Canada** as nations that **perform well** across all rankings, based on its median score across 11 out of the 18 tables (including the overall ranking). Part of the improved performance has been driven by the UK's increased representation, with 52 institutions participating in 2021, compared to 35 in 2020.

Australia continues to dominate the ranking, however, claiming four of the top 10 positions in the overall ranking.

Aside from SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals which is a compulsory category, SDG 4 (Quality Education), received the most submissions, with 966 institutions submitting data followed by SDG 3 (Good Health and wellbeing).

Six Scottish institutions are ranked in the overall table – **Strathclyde** (=32nd overall, up 28 places), **Edinburgh** (36th overall, down 6 places), **Aberdeen** (57th overall, up 16 places), **Glasgow Caledonian** (69th overall, down 26 places), **Dundee** (band 101-200 overall, down from 44th last year) and **University of West of Scotland** (band 101-200 overall and first-time participant). Edinburgh’s highest-ranking SDG is Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9 and ranked globally 22nd for this), Dundee ranks 5th for Climate Action (SDG 13), Aberdeen ranks 27th for Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), Glasgow Caledonian ranks 5th for Gender Equality (SDG 5), while University of West of Scotland ranks 33rd for Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). University of Stirling was ranked in one SDG (99th for SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing).

Within the UK, Manchester continues to be the **highest ranked institution overall**, topping the main table for the first time, and ranked =1st for Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) and 2nd for Life Below Water (SDG 14).

4. Methodology

The methodology for the THE University Impact Ranking is different from other world rankings, as it relies on qualitative and quantitative data submissions from institutions, which is then supplemented by bibliometric datasets from Elsevier. The broad categories are based on the 17 UN SDGs, and rankings are based on progress towards and commitment to the goals. Institutions are ranked based on different criteria in each category, as set out in table 3 below.

Table 3

SDG	Category	Methodology
SDG 1	No Poverty	Research on poverty* (27%) – based on bibliometric data; Proportion of students receiving financial aid to attend university because of poverty* (27%) – evidence from institutions; University anti-poverty programmes (23%) - evidence from institutions; Community anti-poverty programmes (23%)- evidence from institutions.
SDG 2	Zero Hunger	Research on hunger* (27%) – based on bibliometric data; Campus Food waste* (15.4%); Student Hunger (19.2%) – evidence from institutions; Proportion of graduates in agriculture including sustainability aspects* (19.2%) – evidence from institutions; National hunger (19.2%) – evidence from institutions.
SDG 3	Good Health and Wellbeing	Research on health and well-being* (27%) – based on bibliometric data; Proportion of health graduates*(34.6%) - evidence from institutions; Collaborations and health services (38.4%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 4	Quality Education	Research on early years and lifelong learning education* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Proportion of graduates with teaching qualification* (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; Lifelong learning measures (26.8%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of first-generation students* (30.8%) - evidence from institutions.

SDG 5	Gender Equality	Research* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Proportion of first-generation female students* (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; Student access measures (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of senior female academics* (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of women receiving degrees* (11.5%) - evidence from institutions; Women's progress measures (15.3%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 6	Clean Water and Sanitation	Research on water* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Water consumption per person* (19%) - evidence from institutions; Water usage and care* (23%) - evidence from institutions; Water reuse* (12%) - evidence from institutions; Water in the community (19%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 7	Affordable and Clean Energy	Research on clean energy* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; University measures towards affordable and clean energy (23%)- evidence from institutions; Energy use density* (27%) - evidence from institutions; Energy and the community (23%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 8	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Research on economic growth and employment* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Employment practices (19.6%) - evidence from institutions; Expenditure per employee (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of students taking work placements* (19%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of employees on secure contracts* (19%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Research on industry, innovation and infrastructure* (11.6%) - based on bibliometric data; Patents* (15.4%) - evidence from institutions; University spin-offs* (34.6%) - evidence from institutions; Research income from industry* (38.4%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 10	Reduced Inequalities	Research on reduced inequalities* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; First-generation students* (15.5%) - evidence from institutions; Students from developing countries* (15.5%) - evidence from institutions; Students and staff with disabilities* (23%) - evidence from institutions; Measures against discrimination (19%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 11	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Research on sustainable cities and communities* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Support of arts and heritage (22.6%) - evidence from institutions; Expenditure on arts and heritage* (15.3%) - evidence from institutions; Sustainable practices (35.1%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 12	Responsible Consumption and Production	Research on responsible consumption and production* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Operational measures (26.7%) - evidence from institutions; Proportion of recycled waste* (27%) - evidence from institutions; Publication of a sustainability report (19.3%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 13	Climate Action	Research on climate action* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Low-carbon energy use* (27%) - evidence from institutions; Environmental education measures (23%) - evidence from institutions; Carbon Neutrality (23%) - evidence from institutions.
SDG 14	Life Below Water	Research on life below water* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Supporting aquatic ecosystems through education (15.3%) - evidence from institutions; Supporting aquatic ecosystems through action (19.4%) - evidence from institutions; Water-sensitive waste disposal (19.3%) - evidence from institutions; Maintaining a local ecosystem (19%) - evidence from institutions.

SDG 15	Life on Land	Research on land ecosystems* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; Supporting land ecosystems through education (23%) - direct evidence from institutions; Supporting land ecosystems through action (27%) - direct evidence from institutions; Land-sensitive waste disposal (23%) - direct evidence from institutions.
SDG 16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Research* (27%) - based on bibliometric data; University governance measures (26.6%) - direct evidence from institutions; Working with government (23.2%) - direct evidence from institutions; Proportion of graduates in law and civil enforcement* (23.2%) -direct evidence from institutions.
SDG 17	Partnership for the Goals.	Research* (27.1%) based on bibliometric data; Relationships to support the goals (18.5%) - direct evidence from institutions; Publication of SDG reports (27.2%) - direct evidence from institutions; Education on the SDGs (27.2%) -- direct evidence from institutions.
Overall Rank	SDG 17 + 3 highest scoring SDGs	SDG 17 - 22% from the overall score; Top three SDGs -26% each from the overall score. <i>The score from each SDG is scaled so that the highest score in each SDG in the overall calculation is 100. This is to adjust for minor differences in the scoring range in each SDG and to ensure that universities are treated equitably, whichever SDGs they have provided data for</i>

**The data were normalised across its range using z-scoring.*

5. Media Coverage

There continues to be limited media coverage on the release of the Impact ranking, and this is mostly limited to the Times Higher Education website and university press releases.

- Times Higher Education - [THE University Impact Rankings 2021: results announced](#)
- Higher Education Policy Institute - [Building back greener: the role of UK universities in helping to ensure a sustainable future](#)
- University of Strathclyde: [Strathclyde amongst world's top universities contributing to achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Kate Dreiblathe / Chrissie Finnigan Strategy and Policy, 22 April 2021