Times Higher Education
Sustainability
Impact Ratings

SDG

8

Decent Work and Economic Growth

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Why we measure

Decent work in safe and stable conditions is a vital component of helping people out of poverty, with the related aspects of reducing hunger and increasing health. The rise of precarious employment, modern slavery, and uneven growth has created threats to a sustainable future. Universities as employers can lead the way, as teachers can educate for the future, and as innovators can develop new and fairer ways of working.

We are exploring how universities live up to these expectations.

https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/

Links to other SDGs

Sustainable and fair economic growth will require societies to create the conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy while not harming the environment. Innovation will be key to this, as will education (SDG4 and SDG9). Women are often in the most precarious and poorly paid jobs – or face issues of pay equity and advancement (SDG5).

Metrics and indicators

8.1 Research on economic growth and employment

8.1.1 Decent Work and Economic Growth: CiteScore

This indicator measures the proportion of a university's publications appear in the top 10% of journals according to the Citescore metric. It is intended to reflect on excellence of academic output.

The indicator is normalised and is worth 14% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 3.64% of the overall score).

8.1.2 Decent Work and Economic Growth: publications

The number of publications looks at the scale of research output from a university around decent work and economic growth. It is not scaled by the size of the institution – rather it looks at the overall impact.

This indicator is normalised and is worth 13% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 3.38% of the overall score).

8.2 Employment practice

Universities need to demonstrate commitment to good employment practices: for example paying staff living wage, union recognition, policies against exploitation (incl. early stage researchers), process to appeal, etc.

There are a total of 28 points that could be gained from meeting the criteria in this metric, worth 19.60% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 5.10% of the overall score).

This metric and indicators relate to the UN Targets 8.5, 8.7 and 8.8.

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#	Indicator	Maximum score
8.2.1	**Employment practice living wage** **Year: in place by 2024** Pay all staff and faculty at least the living wage, defined as the local living wage (if government defines this) or the local financial poverty indicator for a family of four (expressed as an hourly wage) Up to three points based on: • Living wage being paid – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)
8.2.2	**Employment practice unions** **Year: in place by 2024** *This indicator has been split into two indicators this year, 8.2.2 Employment practice unions and 8.2.9 Employment practice labour rights* Recognize unions for all, including women & international staff Up to three points based on: • Existence of recognition – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	**1.22% in SDG** (0.32% Overall)
8.2.3	**Employment policy on discrimination** **Year: in place by 2024** Have a policy on ending discrimination in the workplace (including discrimination based on religion, sexuality, gender, age or refugee status) Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)

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#	Indicator	Maximum score
8.2.4	**Employment policy modern slavery** **Year: in place by 2024** Have a policy commitment against forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)
8.2.5	**Employment practice equivalent rights outsourcing** **Year: in place by 2024** Have a policy on guaranteeing equivalent rights of workers when outsourcing activities to third parties Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)
8.2.6	**Employment policy pay scale equity** **Year: in place by 2024** Have a policy on pay scale equity including a commitment to measurement and elimination of gender pay gaps Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)

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#	Indicator	Maximum score
8.2.7	**Tracking pay scale for gender equity** **Year: in place by 2024** Measurement or tracking pay scale gender equity Up to three points based on: • Existence of measures – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)
8.2.8	**Employment practice appeal process** **Year: in place by 2024** Have a process for employees to appeal on employee rights and/or pay Up to three points based on: • Existence of process – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	**2.45% in SDG** (0.64% Overall)
8.2.9	**Employment practice labour rights** **Year: in place by 2024** Recognise labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) for all, including women and international staff Up to three points based on: Existence of recognition – one point Evidence provided – up to one point Is the evidence provided public – one point	**1.22% in SDG** (0.32% Overall)

Data submission guidance

Definition: Living wage (8.2.1)
There are different definitions for every country and this can be seen as a contextual local issue. What we are trying to capture here is whether you as institution have commitment to this.

Guidance: Discrimination (8.2.3)
A university should not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.

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Definition: Pay scale equity (8.2.6)
This refers to equal pay for work of equal value. Equal pay for equal work addresses situations in which men and women do work of the same value. Often law requires employers to pay female jobs at least the same as male jobs if they are of comparable value, but this needs to be supported by action within an institution to ensure that it can be achieved.

Guidance: Appeal process (8.2.8)
This definition has been expanded to include processes for employees to appeal against pay determination and/or appraisal reviews.

8.3 Expenditure per employee

Year: 2024
Universities can be the economic hub of their city or region. This metric explores the extent to which the university is a significant economic driver in its locality.

The metric is calculated by dividing the university expenditure by the number of employees, and is then normalised by the regional GDP per capita. This gives us a measure of the relative value to the region in which the university is situated that is independent of institution size.
The metric relates to the UN Targets 8.1 and 8.4.

This indicator is normalised and is worth 15.40% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 4% of the overall score).

8.3.1 Indicator: Expenditure per employee

Data Collected	Definition
Number of employees	**This is the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) number of employees, including outsourced core services, referring to year 2024.**
University expenditure	**Total university expenditure in last financial year 2024.**

Data submission guidance

Guidance: Expenditure
This refers to spending in three main categories:
- Staff costs (including outsourced core services)
- Fundamental restructuring costs
- Other operating expenses

This does not include:
- Capital
- Spending on new buildings
- Depreciation
- Interest and other finance cost

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Definition: Fundamental restructuring costs
Restructuring costs are costs an organisation incurs during restructuring. They are nonrecurring operating expenses and are classified as an unusual and infrequent expense.

Restructurings may occur during a major reconfiguration of operations or during a change in upper-level management at a company. Restructuring charges often include cash costs, accrued liabilities, asset write-offs, and employee severance pay due to layoffs.

Definition: Number of employees
Typically, an employee in legal terms is a person who is hired for a wage, salary, fee or payment to perform work for an employer. This does not include short term consultants. “Workers” and “staff” are employees.

Employees include all academic and non-academic staff working for the university. It should also include people working for core university services that have been outsourced (for example cleaners, janitors, caterers, gardeners where the relevant services are provided by an external company).

The FTE for an employee can be calculated as the total number of hours worked during the year, divided by the number of working hours of a full-time person.

Definition: currency
Expenditure is to be provided in the currency previously identified as that used by your institution.

8.4 Proportion of students taking work placements
Year 2024

To understand if universities are preparing students for the world of work we asked for the number of students with an employment placement of more than a month required as part of their studies, divided by the total number of students. All data are provided as full-time equivalents.

The metric relates to the UN Targets 8.6.

This indicator is normalised and is worth 19% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 4.94% of the overall score).

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8.4.1 Indicator: Proportion of students with work placements

Data Collected	Definition
Number of students	This is the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) number of students in all years and of all programmes that lead to a degree, certificate, institutional credit or other qualification, referring to year 2024.
Number of students with work placements for more than a month	This is the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) number of students with work placements (required as part of the course) of more than a month, referring to year 2024. This is a subset of number of students.

Data submission guidance

Definition: Students
see 1.2

Definition: Work placements
By work placements we mean placements with an organization outside the university where students can gain experience of the world of work. This may be in a domestic or international context. For example, students working abroad for a year as part of a language degree, or students on a work placement. This may include students on work placements who are not paid, although there are ethical and equalities issues associated with this practice.
Work placements must be a mandatory part of the programme; voluntary placements should not be included.

Guidance: Work placements duration
It might be that some students attending placements (as required by the course) over the duration of the academic year. These students should be included in the count as long as the placement totals more than a month.

8.5 Proportion of employees on secure contracts

Year: 2024
The casualisation of the university workforce is a growing concern so we asked universities to supply the number of employees (both academic and non-academic) on contracts of more than 24 months, divided by the total number of employees. All numbers are provided as full-time equivalents. This explicitly excludes short term contracts required to cover for maternity or paternity leave.

The metric relates to the UN Targets 8.5.

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This indicator is normalised and is worth 19% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 4.94% of the overall score).

8.5.1 Indicator: Proportion of employees on secure contracts

Data Collected	Definition
Number of employees	**This is the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) number of employees, including outsourced core services, referring to year 2024.**
Number of employees on contracts of over 24 months	**This is the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) number of employees including outsourced core services, on contracts of over 24 months, referring to year 2024.** **This is a subset of number of employees.**

Data submission guidance

Definition: Employees
see 2.2

Guidance: contract length
Permanent or rolling contracts without a fixed term are considered to be of more than 24 months duration. The focus of this metric is employment that is short term and therefore less stable.

This excludes:
- short-term contracts that are explicitly to cover maternity leave
- part-time teaching staff serving as guest lectures for only a few lectures, and visiting scholars if they retain their employment rights in their original institution.