

Living SFU Sustainability Advisory Council (S-AC)

Terms of Reference

Living Document Revised: March 11, 2021

SECTION 1: TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that our work takes place on the unceded* and traditional territories of the Katzie, kʷikʷə́łəm (Kwikwetlem), xʷməθkwə́yəm (Musqueam), Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Tsawwassen and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

*Unceded means this land was never surrendered, relinquished, or handed over in any way.

We acknowledge that:

- Indigenous¹ communities are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis despite being amongst the lowest greenhouse gas emitters²;
- In many profound ways, historical and ongoing settler colonialism has disrupted the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and the land³; Climate change compounds this disruption⁴;

¹ Following the lead of the SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council's (ARC) final report, Indigenous is used in this document as a way "to be inclusive of those who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis, while recognizing that no single term is acceptable to or preferred by all. Similarly, the use of the general terms 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' is not meant to imply homogeneity of cultural or linguistic representations" (SFU Aboriginal Reconciliation Council, 2017, p. V). There is a vast diversity between Nations and within Indigenous communities.

² Indigenous Climate Action & Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 2020; Settee, 2020; Watt-Cloutier, 2015

³ Gilio-Whitaker, 2019; Simpson, 2017; Spice, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Whyte, 2018

⁴ Indigenous Climate Action & Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 2020

- We are following in the footsteps of Indigenous land and water defenders who have resisted harmful resource extraction over the last 500 years, since the arrival of settlers to what is currently called “North America”⁵; and
- The environmental movement has contributed to the dispossession of Indigenous Lands and cultural practices through conservation efforts aimed at protecting a pristine environment from human use and that this notion of an untouched environment is fundamentally contrary to Indigenous understandings of land stewardship and reciprocal relationships with the land and all beings⁶;
- Pre-colonial Indigenous communities interacted with the natural world in a sustainable way. As our contemporary economy (predicated on extraction and inequality) is inherently harmful to the planet’s ecosystems, settlers have a lot to learn about how to practice sustainability from Indigenous communities⁷.

Therefore, we also acknowledge that structural changes to our climate action work are needed in order to approach this work in respectful and reciprocal ways and to be successful in our efforts long term. Although the path forward in this work is not clear it must be co-created in community, in reciprocal relationships, and in dialogue with each other. It also must be done with a decolonial lens and with reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples as a priority.

THESE TOR ARE A “SCAFFOLDING”, RATHER THAN A FIRM/FINALIZED DOCUMENT

We are deeply grateful to the Developmental Advisory Council (DevAC) for helping us to create this foundational document. We intend to use this document as a roadmap for the S-AC to co-create their own terms of reference. Many committees’ TOR’s are determined and written before membership is chosen. While some may think that determining this first allows for a faster ‘getting down to business’, doing so can miss an important opportunity for developing relationships within the committee. Relationality is foundational to this work and for this reason we intend to prioritize it. As we strive to intentionally decolonize these structures and systems, and as we understand exemplary practices around the post-secondary sector, we are looking at the S-AC TOR’s as a living document that is co-created with membership, re-evaluated periodically and amended when necessary. When members are central in the creation of TOR’s or protocols, there is often better commitment and participation, as well as stronger process overall. Engagement with stakeholders inside and outside of the committee (where appropriate) is critical in building trust as the shared ‘win’ of creating contextually sensitive, empowering TOR’s or protocols, which can help to propel this committee into its vital work.

⁵ Gilio-Whitaker, 2019

⁶ Rodgers & Ingram, 2019; Simpson, 2017

⁷ Oral teaching from Chepximiya Siyam’ Chief Janice George & Skwetsimeltxw Willard ‘Buddy’ Joseph, of L’hen Awtxw Weaving House, and Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee & Lloyd Attig, from Decolonizing Practices <https://nahaneecreative.thinkific.com/collections>

Important questions that the S-AC may want to revisit include the leadership structure. Will there be co-chairs or some kind of rotation? Will there be opportunities for mentorship by having one student and one faculty member co-chair? Could we follow a structure similar to the one used by the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC's Indigenization Standing Committee? In their process, 'wise ones' assume leadership of the groups through co-chairing for a time when the topic of discussion is within their expertise. When a new topic is centered, another 'wise one' steps in.

As well, the S-AC may want to specifically address protocols around membership imbalance. To ensure participation from all committee members, it is important to consider how to make room for different communication and thinking styles so that all members of the committee are able to share their opinions during decision making discussions. We must consider different measures or meeting facilitation approaches that can address and mitigate risks that marginalized committee members may encounter by being involved in the committee. We must pay special attention to power relations within the committee, so as to account for the possibility that some racialized students or students with other intersecting identities might feel constrained from being able to express their views in front of those with greater privilege and access to power within SFU. Likewise, students and others should not be expected to bear emotional burdens or "speak for" all people with whom they share a particular aspect of their identity. By co-creating the final TOR's or protocols with the S-AC, guided by the important work that the DevAC has done, we intend to model a decolonized approach to committee building. This approach encouraged us always to ask ourselves: 'Who is missing from this table and why? How can we ensure that many voices are heard? Who needs to participate in or inform this particular conversation?' To borrow the slogan from the disability rights movement, which has become foundational for decolonized work, *nothing about us without us* is our guiding principle.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

Strategic Sustainability Plan, 2020-2025

SFU's Strategic Sustainability Plan ("SFU 2025 Plan), approved by the President and Vice Presidents in January 2020, covers sustainability work at SFU between the five-year period of 2020 to 2025. The goals, targets, and strategies within the plan prioritize climate action, which acts as the plan's guiding theme. This plan is a part of SFU's [integrated planning framework](#).

The current version of the Plan is the result of consultation with many people at SFU (including those with academic knowledge related to climate change). However, due to time and structural constraints the planners were unable to conduct a thorough and appropriate consultation process with Indigenous Peoples and those living with disabilities and neurodiversity (among other equity deserving groups). As we develop strategies for achieving the goals and targets within the plan, we recognize how critical it is to have these voices at the table and as such have placed high prioritization of these voices in the S-AC

The Plan is designed to be a living document⁸ that will evolve and be responsive to the most current contributions from people within the SFU community, including those with lived experience expertise, those with subject matter expertise, and those working on reconciliation and equity, diversity, and inclusion at SFU. It will also be updated to reflect current climate science and shifts in international, national, and regional climate policy.

Advisory Council

There are many stakeholders that will work together to accomplish the Plan's goals, including working groups for each of the Plan's 16 targets and an Advisory Council.

While the working groups will be the key implementation mechanism for the Plan, the Advisory Council will be the governance body responsible for ensuring that the Plan is implemented based on its guiding principles. For more information, see the Sustainability Advisory Council's mandate below.

The Sustainability Advisory Council Terms of Reference was co-created with members of the Fall 2020 Developmental Advisory Council (DevAC). Membership of the DevAC was a diverse group of SFU community members with a particular focus on the voices of those at the intersections of different equity deserving groups (BIPOC, people living with disabilities and neurodiversity, LGBTQ2SAI+ etc.,) and those of students. The Advisory Council's Terms of Reference (ToR) will be reviewed and revised as needed in consultation with the Advisory Council membership. Since the original ToR document was co-designed, any revisions to this document must strengthen its contribution to climate action, climate justice, decolonization, and anti-oppression.

The Advisory Council was a critical part of the approved SFU 2025 Sustainability Plan. It was approved to provide recommendations to the Sustainability Office team, the Working Groups, and the President and Vice-Presidents.

⁸ As a living plan, the Strategic Sustainability Plan will be revised and updated regularly.

SFU 2025 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



SECTION 3: DEFINITIONS

The DevAC provided several recommendations for definitions of terms. As these are evolving and not all the terms are used in this document they will be provided on the Sustainability Advisory Council (S-AC) website in the near future.

SECTION 4: MANDATE

The primary mandate of the Sustainability Advisory Council (S-AC) is to be the central governance hub for the SFU 2025 Plan (and Climate Resilience Plan which is in development) and advise from a holistic perspective on the implementation, reporting, and annual revisions to both plans in accordance with the University's priorities and commitments and the SFU 2025 Plan principles. A secondary mandate is to provide advice and recommendations on related sustainability work that may impact or intersect with the SFU 2025 Plan and Climate Resilience Plan (e.g., UN SDGs) on an ad hoc basis. The S-AC mandate specifically includes:

1. Reviewing SFU 2025 implementation plans at regular intervals to identify connections and potential gaps in the overall implementation approach and provide advice and recommendations on potential revisions to these plans.
2. Reviewing the implementation plans, data collection and reporting, and SFU 2025 Plan living plan revisions to ensure an equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens, and a decolonization and reconciliation lens has been applied from members of those groups.
3. Review and provide advice and guidance on the development of the Climate Resilience Plan (in development)
4. Provide advice and guidance, at the request of the Sustainability Office, or other SFU departments, on other sustainability-related projects as required (2022 and beyond)

SECTION 5: COMPOSITION AND SIZE

To capture a diversity of SFU community perspectives, students, staff, and faculty members of all identities and communities are welcome to become members of the S-AC and contribute through the lens of their professional, academic, and lived experience expertise. In particular, participation of people from communities that have been marginalized by environmental interventions and that are disproportionately impacted by climate change, (including but not limited to Indigenous and Black communities, people living with disabilities and neurodiversity, female identified persons, and people who identify as LGBTQ2SAI+) will be actively recruited. All members should have experience in, knowledge of, and/or an interest in *just* climate action and resilience at SFU.

Membership:

There is no ideal number for the complete membership. The aim will be to have approximately 17-20 members this mix of members with a minimum 50% of members composed of students to balance out the power differential between students and other community members. The below provides an example of what the Council may end of up looking like:

- Students (graduate and undergraduate) (up to 11)
 - Including when possible⁹: Embark Sustainability’s Social Sustainability Coordinator¹⁰ (1), Indigenous student representatives (2), representatives from BIPOC groups such as Students of Caribbean & African Ancestry (SOCA)(2), SFU 350 (1), a student representative from the Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance (DNA)¹¹ (1), and a student representative from Out on Campus (1).
- Faculty and staff (up to 4)
 - Including when possible an Indigenous Studies faculty member
- Sustainability Office team members (2)¹²

⁹ The Sustainability Office will intentionally recruit from these areas but in the case that a member of one of these groups is not available the Council can replace them with another student.

¹⁰ Embark Sustainability’s Social Sustainability Coordinator (a student role) helps to further Embark’s theory of change by “advancing regenerative social processes by promoting equity, building capacity, and welcoming diverse perspectives in order to strengthen student communities” (see [Embark’s Theory of Change](#) for more information).

¹¹ One seat is reserved for a representative appointed by the DNA constituency group, given the impact of previous sustainability initiatives on people living with disabilities and neurodiversity. This student will confer with DNA as a group and contribute the group’s recommendations to the Developmental Advisory Council.

¹² To act as secretary and support for the Council and as subject matter experts on the SFU 2025 Plan.

- S-AC Chair, Co-Chair and/or facilitator (1-3)¹³
- External community representatives with expertise in climate action from Burnaby, Surrey, and Vancouver (up to 3)
- One (or all) of the host communities (a seat will be reserved for each host community)

A call for members will be done by November of each year and as required. Interested members can submit a letter of intent. The SFU Sustainability Office and S-AC will appoint new members of the Sustainability Advisory Council based on the criteria above and in consultation with on and off campus advisors.

SECTION 6: ACCESSIBILITY

Being mindful that students experience additional barriers to access that may impact their ability to participate as outlined in this document, accessibility and inclusivity will be incorporated throughout this process. However, all accessibility needs cannot be anticipated, therefore, the discussion is open to a variety of different options for participation. Members are invited to share, prior to joining the Advisory Council (in their application) or submit requests in confidence to the Sustainability Office upon appointment.

Efforts will be made to make membership accessible and inclusive of all its members. This will include:

- Agendas and documents will be sent out well in advance of meetings and written using accessibility guidelines/formatting
- Meeting formats will be designed to accommodate a diversity of learning and working styles and needs
- Education on equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization and reconciliation, anti-racism, anti-oppression, will be paired with co-designed community agreements to increase safety for all members

Once selected, Advisory Council members must be asked if any specific accommodations are required to facilitate participation.

SECTION 7: TERM OF APPOINTMENT

The term of appointment for members of the Sustainability Advisory Council is one year . Should a member’s appointment end before the completion of the term, the SFU Sustainability Office and the members of the S-AC will use their discretion to fill the vacant seat. This could take place via direct recruitment and appointment. The Sustainability Office is responsible for onboarding the new member and bringing them up to speed on the progress thus far, so that the member can make meaningful contributions in due time.

¹³ The S-AC membership will decide who will be in these leadership positions and there will likely be rotation based on content expertise over time.

Members may express interest in continuing past their 1-year term to the Sustainability Office by November of the appointment cycle. The S-AC will vote on the continuation of that member, and the final decision will be made by the Sustainability Office. The maximum number of terms in succession allowed per member is 2.

Should conflict arise in the SAC due to the problematic behaviour of one member, a three-strike warning system will be implemented by the Chair/Facilitator and the Sustainability Office. If the member continues to be problematic, the member will be asked to leave the S-AC after the warnings have been administered.

SECTION 8: MEETINGS

- The Sustainability Advisory Council will meet at the call of the Chair/Facilitator. Meeting details will be decided on by polling the S-AC members and scheduled with a minimum of four (4) weeks advance notice before the meeting date. Meetings in 2021 will take place in April(2), June, July, September, and November.
- Meetings will take place online, via Zoom and other online supporting applications, until it is safe for for *all* members to return to in-person meetings. At this point a combination of in-person and online video conference meetings will be considered.
- Meetings will include at least one 10-minute break
- Meeting agendas, minutes and supporting materials will be produced by the Sustainability Office and distributed to all Council members at least one (1) week before a scheduled meeting. The office of record will be the Sustainability Office.
- Meetings will be recorded (either by video and/or meeting notes) for members who are unable to attend in person, providing an opportunity to participate and contribute.

SECTION 9: ROLE OF MEMBERS

- Members must have read and be familiar with the SFU 2025 Plan in advance of the first meeting of the year
- Group members are asked to review materials to be discussed at meetings, attend/contribute at meetings, engage in constructive and respectful dialogue, and to honor the confidentiality of other members.
- Meetings will be interactive and oriented towards completing the work that the Sustainability Advisory Council is mandated to complete. Therefore, members should expect to prepare for each meeting.

Scheduling conflicts and flexibility can be discussed with the AC Chair/Facilitator and Sustainability Office.

SECTION 10 – DECISION MAKING

- This will be an important subject for discussion amongst the group.

SECTION 10: STUDENT HONORARIUM

- An honorarium will be provided to all student members in recognition of their time and effort. The honorarium will be determined by the Sustainability Office and will not be pro-rated based on participation or attendance.

SECTION 11: TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW AND REVISIONS

- On the advice of the Council, the Sustainability Advisory Council's Terms of Reference will be reviewed and revised annually by the Sustainability Office as needed.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Our approach to the development of the Advisory Council has been informed by the following key resources:

- [A Strategic Framework for Public Engagement](#) (Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue)
- [Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement](#) (Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 2020)
- [Characteristics of Participatory Systems Change](#) (Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 2016)
- [Participatory Systems Change: A Primer](#) (Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 2017)
- [Turf, Trust, Co-Creation and Collective Action](#) (Liz Weaver, Tamarack Institute, 2017)