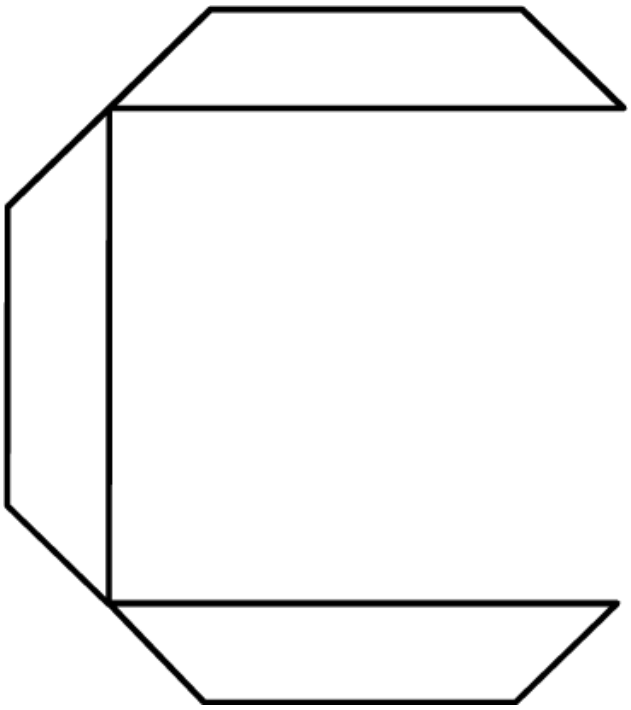
FORWARD
Task force report

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Practical Tools for Balanced Climate Implementation



SDU



Content

01 Introduction 4

01.01 Executive Summary 5

01.02 Acknowledgements 5

02 Statement from SDU Management 6

02.01 Danish abstract – Dansk resumé 7

03 Why this FORWARD task force? 9

04 Approaches – Balanced Implementation and Fair Rules 11

05 Climate Change Communication at Universities 12

05.01 The Six SDUs as University personas 13

05.02 Soft, Moderate and Hard Interventions 14

06 Recommendations 15

06.01 Theme 1: Air Travel 16

06.02 Theme 2: Digital Carbon Footprint 17

06.03 Theme 3: Resource Use 19

07 From Dialogue to Climate Action: A 5D Model of Climate Action at SDU 21

07.01 5D model for implementation of climate initiatives 22

07.02 1. Define 22

07.03 2. Discover 23

07.04 3. Design 24

07.05 4. Demonstrate 25

07.06 5. Deliver 27

08 List of participants 17 March 2026 29

09 Concluding remarks 30

09.01 Sources and literature 31

01 Introduction

This report provides practical tools and recommendations developed through the FORWARD task force to support decisions for how universities can implement climate action in a balanced and operational way. It brings together recommendations from the FORWARD task force and translates them into practical approaches for implementation. The FORWARD task force was initiated and facilitated by PhD fellow Morten Ploug Henriksen and supported by the leadership of the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) to strengthen the University's work on climate action, behavioural change and climate communication. As part of the SDU Climate Plan, both the report and the task force were funded and supported by the Office for Climate Operations, led by Bill Busch Andersen.

Based on recommendations and discussions from the FORWARD task force, this report synthesises climate communication research, behavioural science and task force inputs into practical tools and recommendations for action within three key areas: air travel, digital carbon footprint and resource use. To support local dialogue, reflection and future implementation efforts, the report introduces practical tools, including the Six SDU personas, the Intervention Calibration Model and the 5D implementation framework, to help translate climate ambitions into everyday practice.

The recommendations presented in this report originate from discussions within the FORWARD task force. The report synthesises these contributions with relevant research and presents practical implementation tools developed and adapted by Morten Ploug Henriksen.

Important note

The recommendations and tools presented in this report are proposals developed through discussions within the FORWARD Task Force. They are intended as inspiration for further dialogue, experimentation, and prioritisation and do not constitute approved SDU policy. Likewise, the report does not assign responsibility for implementation to specific organisational units. Any future initiatives should be considered within SDU's existing governance structures, climate priorities, financial framework, and decision-making processes.

01.01 Executive Summary

The FORWARD task force brought together researchers, staff, students and external partners to identify practical approaches for climate action at SDU. The work focused on three areas with significant climate impact: air travel, digital carbon footprint and resource use.

A central conclusion is that effective climate action requires more than ambitions, information campaigns and individual engagement. Sustainable choices must be supported by clear priorities, practical systems and local ownership.

The recommendations presented in this report should therefore be seen as a starting point rather than a final solution. Climate implementation at SDU will depend on continued dialogue within departments, research groups, and administrative units about how climate goals can be translated into local practices and priorities.

To support these discussions, the report presents a set of practical tools, including the Six SDU Personas, the Intervention Calibration Framework and the 5D Model for climate implementation.

Together, the recommendations and tools provide a foundation for local workshops, experimentation and implementation processes that can help SDU translate climate ambitions into everyday practice.

Next steps at SDU

- Use the recommendations as a basis for local discussions or workshops.
- Identify priority behaviours and challenges within your unit.
- Apply the Six SDU Personas and the 5D Model in local workshops.
- Test and evaluate solutions before scaling them.
- Share experiences across departments and administrative units.

01.02 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mikkel Holm Sørensen for providing external review and constructive feedback on the structure and development of this report. His perspectives on implementation, organisational change and behavioural design contributed to the development of the 5D framework presented in this report. The author is also grateful to the many SDU colleagues who contributed through discussions, shared experiences and perspectives, and reviewed either parts or the entirety of the report. Their comments, questions and suggestions have helped strengthen both the quality and practical relevance of the final report.

02 Statement from SDU Management

At the University of Southern Denmark, we believe that universities must not only generate knowledge about the climate crisis but also take responsibility for reducing the climate impact of their own activities. Achieving this requires us to translate knowledge and climate ambitions into practical solutions that work within the everyday realities of a complex university.

The FORWARD Taskforce has brought together researchers, staff, students, and external participants to explore how climate communication, behavioural insights, and organisational change can support this work. The Taskforce provides valuable perspectives and practical tools that can inform SDU's continued efforts to turn climate ambitions into action.

A central insight from the work is that the green transition cannot be achieved through individual effort or communication alone. It requires clear priorities, supportive structures, relevant data, and leadership decisions that make sustainable choices easier and meaningful. At the same time, initiatives must be fair, transparent, and designed with an understanding of the different conditions, responsibilities, and needs that exist across the university.

The recommendations and tools presented in this report should be regarded as contributions to further dialogue, testing, and prioritisation within SDU's existing governance and climate framework. They do not in themselves constitute approved SDU policy or commit individual organisational units to implementation. Concrete initiatives must be assessed in relation to their expected climate impact, organisational responsibilities, financial implications, and alignment with SDU's Climate Plan and other ongoing activities.

I would like to thank the participants in the FORWARD Taskforce for contributing their expertise, experience, and creativity. Their work strengthens our shared understanding of how climate initiatives can be developed and implemented in practice. It also provides a useful foundation for further collaboration and for testing solutions that can help SDU make measurable and lasting progress in its green transition.

Bill Busch Andersen

Head of Office for Climate Operations at University of Southern Denmark

02.01 Danish abstract – Dansk resumé

Denne rapport præsenterer taskforcen FORWARD anbefalinger til, hvordan Syddansk Universitet (SDU) kan styrke sin grønne omstilling gennem målrettede, realistiske og socialt afbalancerede indsatser. Arbejdet viser, at de største klimaeffekter opnås, når ledelsen sætter tydelige rammer, skaber rum for forandring, fjerner strukturelle barrierer og gør bæredygtige valg til den nemme løsning i hverdagen.

Rapporten fokuserer på tre centrale områder: flyrejser, digitalt klimaaftryk og ressourceforbrug. På tværs af temaerne peger taskforcen på behovet for klare politikker, grønne standarder og digitale systemer, der understøtter bæredygtig adfærd uden at lægge ekstra byrder på medarbejdere og studerende. Samtidig viser forskningen, at engagementet styrkes, når kommunikationen er gennemsigtig, når løsninger opleves som fair, og når den kollektive effekt er synlig.

Rapporten giver dermed et konkret grundlag for ledelsesmæssige beslutninger der kan gøre at SDU både reducere sit klimaaftryk markant og skabe en mere velfungerende organisation med tydeligere valg, bedre systemer og stærkere fælles retning mod et grønt universitet. Rapporten giver dermed et konkret grundlag for ledelsesmæssige beslutninger, der kan bringe SDU i front som et grønt og ansvarligt universitet.



03 Why this FORWARD task force?

At the University of Southern Denmark, climate ambitions are high, but implementation is uneven and often constrained by organisational complexity, competing priorities and deeply entrenched practices.

In practice, climate initiatives must navigate tensions between academic freedom, decentralised decision-making and the need for coordinated action. For example, reducing air travel may conflict with research collaboration needs, while digital practices continue to increase energy consumption.

These challenges cannot be solved through information or isolated initiatives alone. They require solutions that are both scientifically grounded and operationally realistic.

The FORWARD task force was established to address these challenges directly by bringing together researchers, administrative staff, students and practitioners. The purpose was to identify practical recommendations and approaches that work within the realities of a university setting. The work is guided by five central principles:

1. finding the right balance in climate implementation
2. identifying communication that resonates with diverse groups
3. choosing interventions that support behavioural change
4. building collaborations across SDU and with external partners
5. placing responsibility with the appropriate actors

The goal is to translate existing knowledge into actionable solutions that can be implemented across SDU and beyond. At the same time, the task force sought to make knowledge and recommendations accessible so that employees and students can actively contribute to implementation.



04 Approaches – Balanced Implementation and Fair Rules

Implementing climate initiatives at universities requires more than ambitious goals. Sustainability efforts are often constrained by structural, cultural and administrative barriers, making context-sensitive implementation essential (Leal Filho et al., 2023).

This report adopts a pragmatic approach focused on what works in everyday university practice. Climate initiatives should be tested in real contexts, adjusted based on experience, and developed through collaboration between leadership, researchers, staff and students.

Such an approach helps bridge the gap between climate ambitions and institutional realities, thereby enabling solutions that are both effective and implementable. Rather than pursuing ideal solutions, the focus is on creating meaningful progress through practical, evidence-informed action.

A Pragmatic Approach to Climate Implementation at SDU

- Test climate solutions in real university settings
- Adjust initiatives based on experience and feedback
- Prioritise practical actions over ideal solutions
- Involve researchers, staff, students and leadership throughout the process

05 Climate Change Communication at Universities

Universities play a unique role in the climate transition as knowledge institutions, workplaces and communities that shape everyday practices (Wenger, 1998). Climate action therefore depends not only on policies and technologies but also on changing established routines and norms (Shove, 2012).

Research consistently shows that information alone rarely changes behaviour (Moser, 2010; Boykoff, 2011). Effective climate communication combines clear information with supportive structures, social norms and practical opportunities for action (Cialdini, 2003; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008).

Universities must also recognise that climate engagement varies across staff and students. Studies such as the Six Americas and the Six Danes demonstrate the need for communication that reflects different motivations, capacities and concerns (Maibach et al., 2011; Henriksen & Grønning, 2025). Communication should therefore avoid moralisation and instead emphasise shared responsibility, transparency and collective impact (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010).

Making climate impacts visible is equally important. Complex sustainability data, including life-cycle assessments, should be translated into simple and relatable formats that support everyday decision-making (Berners-Lee, 2011).

Principles for Effective Climate Communication at SDU

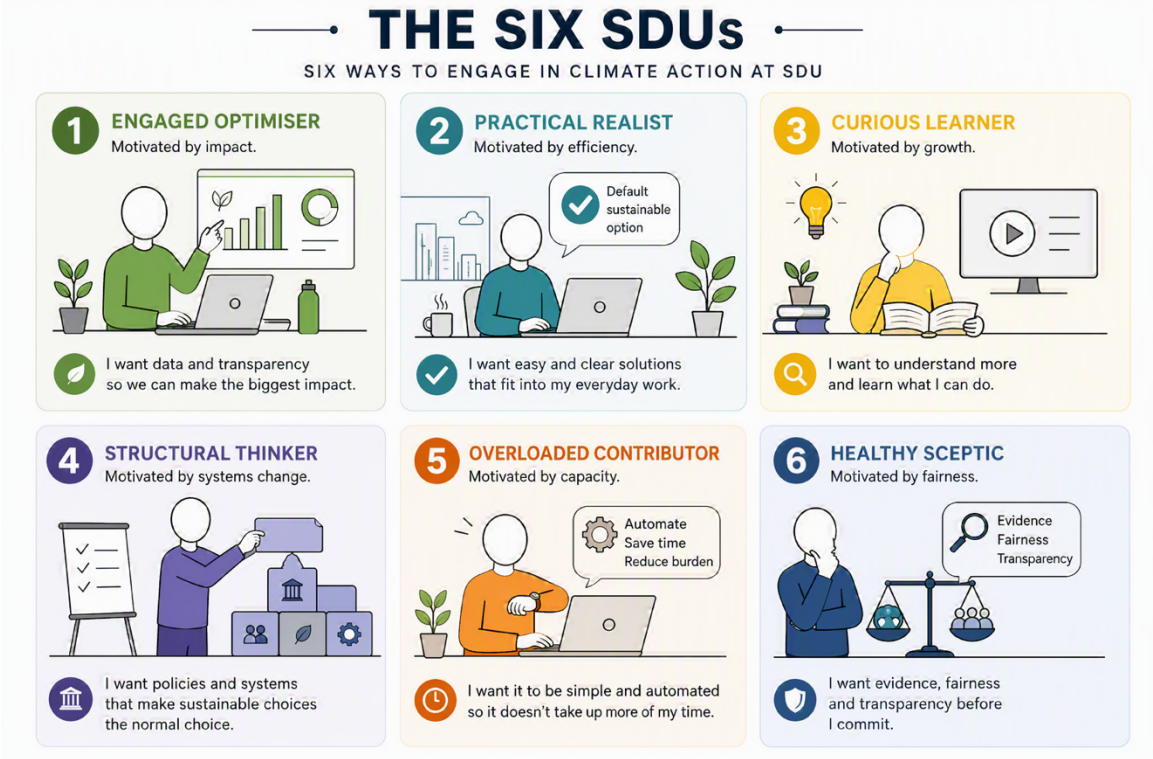
- **Making sustainable choices easy and meaningful**
  Align communication with practical structures and defaults that support climate-friendly behaviour in everyday university life.
- **Avoiding moralisation and blame**
  Frame climate action as a shared institutional responsibility and acknowledge structural constraints rather than placing the burden on individual morality.
- **Showing collective impact and visible progress**
  Make progress tangible by communicating how individual and local actions contribute to broader institutional goals.
- **Tailoring messages to different groups**
  Adapt communication to varying levels of engagement, capacity and concern among staff and students instead of relying on one-size-fits-all messaging.
- **Linking information to everyday practice**
  Translate abstract climate data into intuitive, relatable formats that directly connect to daily decisions and routines.

05.01 The Six SDUs as University personas

The task force discussed six science-based personas that reflect the diversity of motivations, barriers and needs among staff and students at SDU. These personas were inspired by Henriksen & Grønning's (2025) Six Danes and help ensure that climate initiatives are designed with real people in mind.

Different groups often require different types of interventions. Climate initiatives fail when the same intervention is applied universally, regardless of motivation, capacity or concerns. The Six SDUs therefore function as a practical intervention framework: climate measures are more effective when matched to primary user types. In other words, when interventions do not fit the people they target, they do not work. The six university personas presented below were discussed within the task force and subsequently refined by Morten Ploug Henriksen for use in climate implementation at SDU.

6. *The Engaged Optimiser:* Highly motivated and well-informed, already acting sustainably. Thrives with transparency, data and opportunities to contribute, but becomes frustrated when sustainable options are hidden or inconsistent.
7. *The Practical Realist:* Supports sustainability when it aligns with efficiency and workflow. Needs simple defaults, low-friction systems and clear procedures.
8. *The Curious Learner:* Interested but unsure where to start. Benefits from guidance, visual cues and reassurance that small steps matter.
9. *The Structural Thinker:* Views sustainability as a systemic challenge. Responds best to clear policies, leadership action and long-term planning.
10. *The Overloaded Contributor:* Cares about sustainability but lacks capacity due to workload or stress. Needs low-effort actions and supportive reminders.
11. *The Healthy Sceptic:* Questions fairness, evidence and effectiveness. Requires transparency, dialogue and solid arguments.



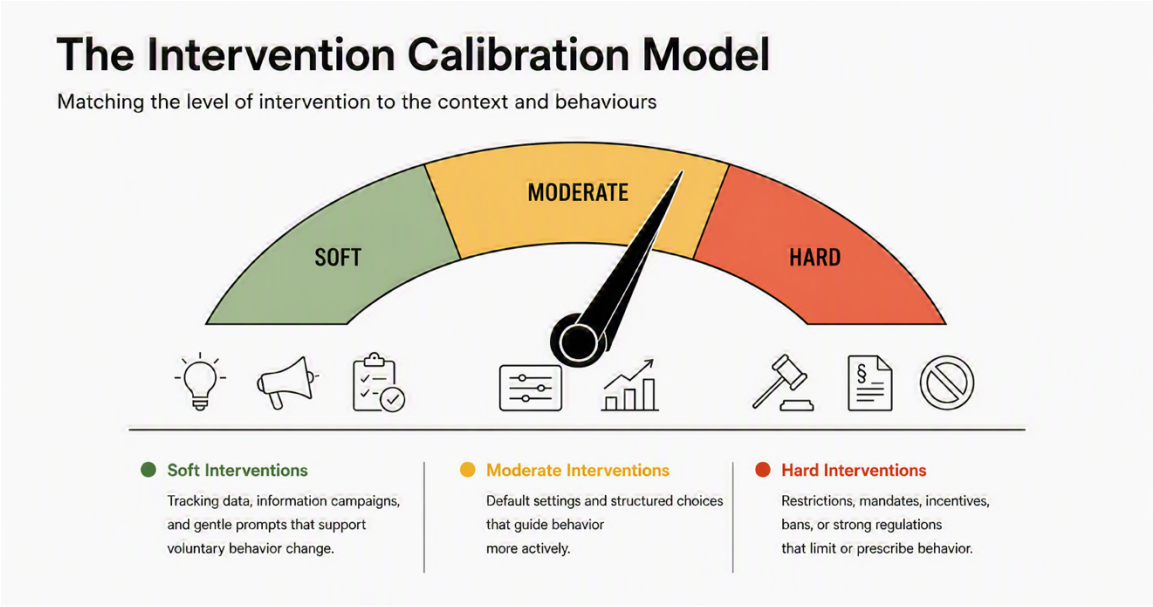
How the Personas Support Implementation

The Six SDUs help tailor climate initiatives to different user needs and motivations. By linking interventions to specific groups, they improve effectiveness, support fairness and reduce reliance on one-size-fits-all approaches. They provide a practical framework for designing policies, communication and systems across SDU.

05.02 Soft, Moderate and Hard Interventions

To support balanced implementation, the task force also worked with a simple framework for categorising interventions according to their level of influence. This helps clarify which tools are appropriate for which personas and under which conditions. The framework is adapted from the Nudge Intensity Model developed by Henriksen (2026), which categorises interventions according to their level of influence.

- Soft interventions: Tracking data, information campaigns and gentle prompts that support voluntary behaviour change.
- Moderate interventions: Default settings and structured choices that guide behaviour more actively.
- Hard interventions: Restrictions, mandates, incentives, bans or strong regulations that limit or prescribe behaviour.



The Intervention Calibration Model inspired by the nudge intensity model by Henriksen (2026). This spectrum illustrates that effective climate implementation rarely relies on one type of intervention alone. Instead, it requires a thoughtful combination and calibration to the context, the people involved and the desired outcomes.

06 Recommendations

The FORWARD task force was launched on 17 March 2026, bringing together 26 researchers, administrative staff, students and external partners. The process served as a structured forum for translating diverse perspectives and expertise into concrete recommendations and implementation insights.

As part of the kick-off programme, Professor Max Boykoff delivered a keynote on creative climate communication, offering recommendations that are integrated into this report. Participants engaged in a three-hour co-creation session focused on generating solutions for SDU. These discussions resulted in a set of operational recommendations, which have since been refined and consolidated. The recommendations presented in this report originate from the task force discussions. The report further integrates research-based tools and implementation frameworks developed and adapted by Morten Ploug Henriksen to support their application in practice.

The report is structured around three priority themes identified by the task force:

- Air travel
- Digital carbon footprint
- Resource use

The following recommendations were discussed during the task force workshop on March 17 and subsequently refined through follow-up discussions with task force participants.



06.01 Theme 1: Air Travel

Air travel remains one of the most significant sources of CO_2 emissions at universities, and SDU is no exception. The task force's recommendations focus on creating fair, transparent and system-level solutions that make sustainable travel the easier choice. By combining national coordination, financial fairness and smarter digital travel tools, SDU can meaningfully reduce its climate footprint while supporting academic mobility.

Core Recommendations

1. Promote sector wide and national guidelines: Danish universities should collaborate to establish shared standards for legitimate travel purposes and sustainable alternatives. The goal is to ensure common ground across universities.
2. Financial compensation for sustainable choices: SDU should cover additional costs when staff choose trains over flights to remove financial barriers and provide an economic incentive for researchers.
3. Improved travel assistance and digital nudges: SDU should learn from Swedish universities that introduce friction in flight booking systems and guide users toward train travel.

What this changes in practice for the six SDUs

By reducing financial barriers, simplifying decision-making and creating clearer expectations around travel, they make sustainable choices more accessible, acceptable and practical for different staff profiles.

How to work with the six SDUs

Use the Optimisers and Structural Thinkers as ambassadors in policy development and communication. Then provide Realists and Overloaded Contributors with streamlined booking tools and automatic compensation and offer Curious Learners simple visual explanations of climate impact. If possible, engage Sceptics through transparent data, fairness arguments and open dialogue.

Soft-Moderate-Hard interventions

- **Soft:** CO_2-transparent booking systems, travel tips, train travel campaigns and peer stories.
- **Moderate:** Compensation schemes, default train options in booking systems, standardised internal travel guidelines.
- **Hard:** National rules on legitimate travel, mandatory justification for flights, restrictions on short-haul flights where train alternatives exist.

Responsible actors:

- SDU leadership: Sets policy and direction
- HR and Finance: Implement compensation structures
- Departments: Ensure compliance



06.02 Theme 2: Digital Carbon Footprint

Digital infrastructure is an increasingly important yet often overlooked contributor to SDU's climate impact. From data storage to device repair and everyday email habits, small digital actions can accumulate into substantial emissions. The task force's recommendations aim to build digital awareness, strengthen policies and integrate gentle nudges into daily workflows – making sustainable digital behaviour both visible and achievable.

Core Recommendations

1. Digital clean-up events and courses: Promote good IT practices (e.g. responsible AI usage), data minimisation, and energy-aware digital behaviour.
2. Policies on repair, AI usage and email culture: Establish clear guidelines for device repair, responsible AI use and reducing unnecessary email volume.
3. Pop-up information and digital nudges: Integrate timely reminders within SDU's digital platforms to encourage sustainable habits.

What this changes in practice for the Six SDUs

The recommendations enable Optimisers to promote sustainable digital practices and Structural Thinkers to support stronger digital policies. Realists and Overloaded Contributors benefit from automation, default settings and digital nudges, while Curious Learners are encouraged through courses and clear explanations. Healthy Sceptics are more likely to engage when the measures demonstrate measurable impact and real emission reductions.

How to work with the personas

Let Optimisers lead clean-up events and provide Realists and Overloaded Contributors with automated deletion tools and default settings. Try to offer Curious Learners micro-learning modules and involve Structural Thinkers and Sceptics in policy design and evaluation.

Soft-Moderate-Hard interventions

- **Soft:** Pop-ups, reminders, courses, awareness campaigns.
- **Moderate:** Default storage limits, email guidelines, AI usage frameworks.
- **Hard:** Mandatory repair policies, strict IT procurement standards, enforced data retention rules.

Responsible actors:

- IT department
- Communications
- Teaching and research support
- Leadership (policy approval and enforcement)

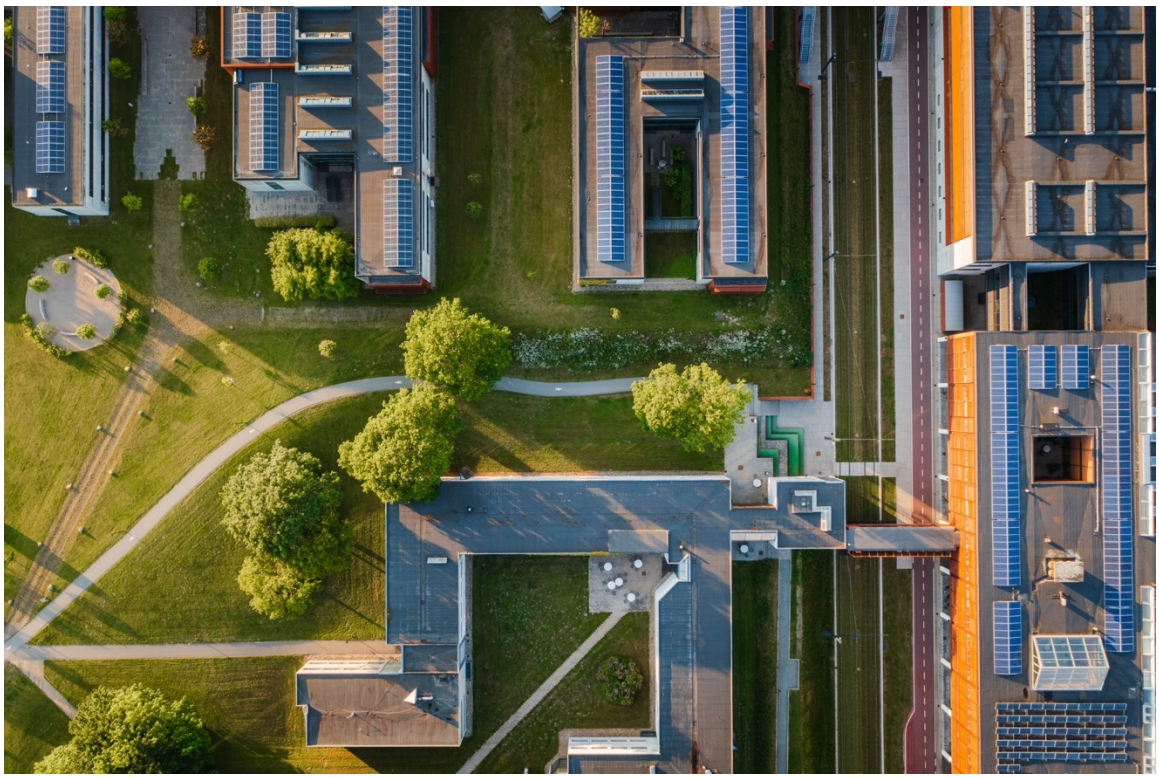


06.03 Theme 3: Resource Use

Resource use affects everyone at SDU, from food and materials to energy and procurement, with a substantial share driven by externally funded research and grant-based equipment purchases. Many sustainable choices require extra effort and therefore are not the default option. The task force recommends shifting systems so that sustainable options become the norm, supported by visible leadership and clear communication of collective progress. This theme focuses on enabling low-effort, high-impact change across the entire organisation.

Core Recommendations

1. **Make sustainable options the default:** Ensure that sustainable choices are built into canteens, meetings, procurement, building operations and grant-funded projects.
2. **Leadership by example:** Leaders at all levels should visibly demonstrate sustainable practices.
3. **Visualise collective impact:** Make progress visible so staff can see the shared effect of their actions.



What this changes in practice for the Six SDUs

The recommendations enable Optimisers to champion sustainable resource use and Structural Thinkers to support system-wide change through green defaults and visible leadership. Realists and Overloaded Contributors benefit when sustainable choices are embedded into everyday systems and require little additional effort. Curious Learners are encouraged through clear explanations and visible progress, while Healthy Sceptics are more likely to engage when the impact of resource-saving measures is transparent and measurable.

How to work with the personas

Use Optimisers and Structural Thinkers to co-design default systems, including procurement and application-support structures for grant-funded research, and then provide Realists and Overloaded Contributors with friction-free sustainable choices. Try to engage Curious Learners with visual dashboards and target Sceptics with transparent, verifiable data.

Soft-Moderate-Hard interventions

- **Soft:** Visual dashboards, nudges in canteens and meeting setups.
- **Moderate:** Green defaults in procurement, catering and building operations.
- **Hard:** Mandatory sustainability standards in procurement and facility management.

Responsible actors:

- Leadership (role-modelling and follow-up)
- Facility Management & Procurement
- Communications
- Research Support



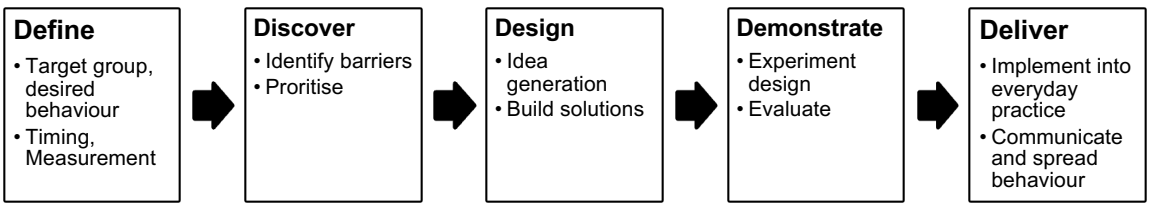
07 From Dialogue to Climate Action: A 5D Model of Climate Action at SDU

To translate climate ambitions into meaningful action, SDU needs approaches that work within the everyday realities of departments, research groups and administrative units. Climate action does not happen in abstract strategies alone, but through local decisions, routines and priorities.

The 5D model (Define, Discover, Design, Demonstrate and Deliver) provides a structured way to turn dialogue into implementation. The model draws inspiration from design thinking and behaviour change frameworks, combining the exploratory and solution-oriented logic of the Double Diamond model with principles for intervention design, implementation and evaluation from behaviour change research. (Kochanowska & Rochacka Gagliardi, 2022; Abraham & Denford, 2020).

At the same time, the model serves as a practical bridge between three key elements in this report: the diversity of users (The Six SDUs), the calibration of interventions (soft, moderate, hard), and the need for locally anchored and operational solutions. Used together, these elements ensure that climate initiatives are not only well-intended, but targeted, fair and implementable across different parts of the University.

Importantly, the model should not be understood as a strictly linear process. Climate implementation is often iterative. New insights gained during testing or implementation may reveal previously overlooked barriers, thereby requiring teams to return to earlier phases and refine their approach. Progress therefore involves continuous learning and adaptation rather than a simple step-by-step progression, reflecting both the iterative nature of design processes and implementation science.



5D model for implementation of climate initiatives at SDU

07.01 5D model for implementation of climate initiatives

The model can be applied in different formats depending on available resources and ambitions. A department may complete a condensed version during a half-day workshop to quickly identify promising initiatives, while larger projects can use more extensive processes involving pilots, data collection, and organisational implementation. A typical workshop might allocate approximately 30–60 minutes to each of the first three phases, while the final two phases often extend over weeks or months as initiatives are tested and implemented.

The first three phases – Define, Discover, and Design – focus primarily on understanding the challenge and developing solutions. The final two phases – Demonstrate and Deliver – focus on validation, organisational learning and implementation. This distinction helps avoid a common pitfall in sustainability work: generating ideas without creating mechanisms that ensure they become part of everyday practice.

07.02 1. Define

The first step focuses on clearly defining the specific behaviour needed to create the desired climate impact. Behaviour change requires precision: who should do what, when, and how.

For example, if the goal is to reduce air travel, the desired behaviour is not simply ‘travel more sustainably’, but something concrete, such as choosing train travel instead of air travel when a viable alternative exists. This level of specificity creates a clear link between intention and action.

Defining behaviour also requires identifying:

Target group (e.g. the Six SDUs): Is the target group dominated by Practical Realists who need efficient solutions? Are there many Overloaded Contributors who require low-effort changes?

Desired behaviour (one specific action): (1) Air travel: Choose train over flights when a viable alternative exists. (2) Digital carbon footprint: Reduce unnecessary data storage and email volume (3) Resource use: Choose default sustainable options in food, procurement and meetings

Timing (when the behaviour should occur): Some behaviours are one-time actions, whereas others must be repeated regularly to create lasting impact. Is the behaviour linked to specific situations such as onboarding, travel booking, event planning, purchasing decisions or management reporting?

Measurement (how the behaviour will be observed or tracked): Clarify how the behaviour could be observed or measured if impact tracking is needed

Although this step may appear simple, it is often challenging. However, without a clearly defined behaviour, it is not possible to design effective interventions or measure impact.

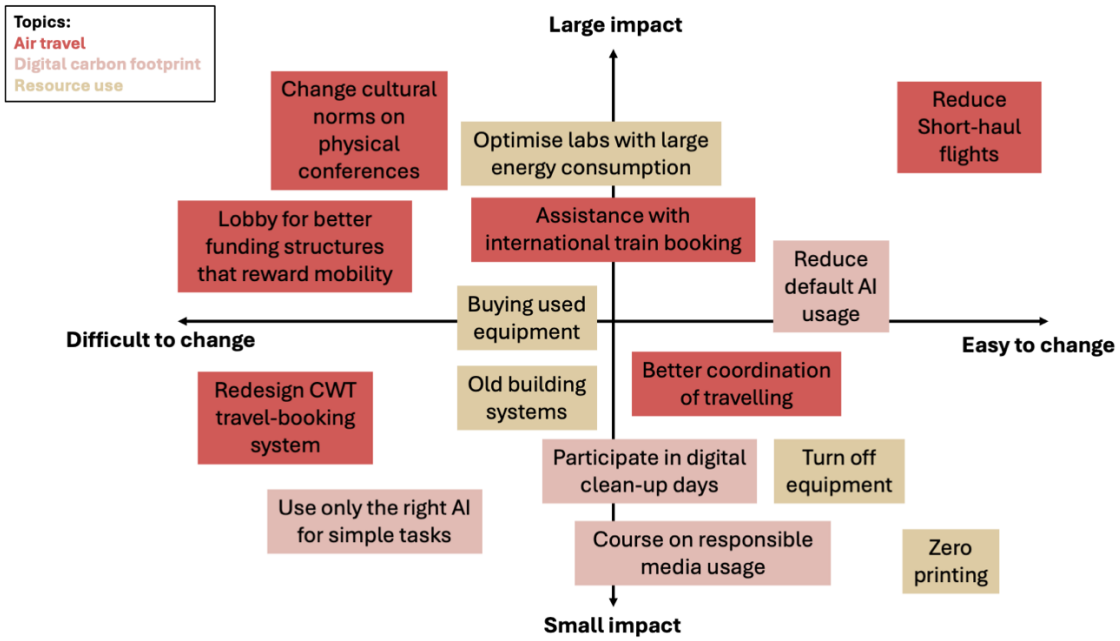
07.03 2. Discover

The second phase focuses on understanding the user's reality and identifying why the desired behaviour does not already occur. In many cases, people do not choose the less sustainable option because they oppose climate action, but because it is easier, faster or more familiar within their daily work routines. At SDU, staff and students often face competing priorities, limited time and uncertainty about procedures, which means they naturally gravitate toward established practices.

The purpose of the Discover phase is therefore to explore both what is easy and what is difficult for the target group. Booking a flight is often straightforward, while arranging international train travel can be more complicated and time-consuming. Purchasing new equipment is usually easier than identifying suitable reused alternatives. Similarly, using AI tools requires little effort, whereas understanding how to use them in more climate-conscious ways requires additional knowledge and reflection. Digital clean-up is often relatively simple, but it is rarely perceived as an urgent priority in a busy working day.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between behaviours that have a large climate impact and those with a smaller impact. Some actions, such as reducing air travel or increasing the use of reused equipment, can significantly reduce emissions. Other actions may currently have a more limited effect but can become increasingly important over time as digital technologies continue to expand. The objective is therefore not simply to identify barriers, but to identify the barriers that matter most.

A useful way to support this process is the Impact and Changeability Model. The model maps behaviours according to two dimensions: their potential climate impact and how feasible they are to change. This helps departments prioritise interventions that are both meaningful and realistic. By focusing on behaviours with high impact and a reasonable likelihood of change, SDU can avoid spending resources on initiatives that are either difficult to implement or unlikely to generate substantial climate benefits.



Impact and changeability model is a tool for understanding barriers and prioritising

To prioritise effectively, barriers can be mapped based on:

- Impact (high vs. low effect on behaviour)
- Changeability (easy vs. difficult to change)

The Digital Impact Cards were developed to help make invisible digital climate impacts visible. By translating digital activities into familiar everyday comparisons, the cards support reflection and dialogue about which behaviours should be prioritised for change during the Discover phase. Additional cards and supporting material are available upon request from Morten Ploug Henriksen (mortenh@sdu.dk).



Two examples of the Digital Impact cards (in Danish)

07.04 3. Design

The Design phase focuses on developing solutions that address the barriers and opportunities identified during the Discover phase. Rather than asking people to simply change their behaviour, the goal is to redesign the surrounding conditions so that sustainable choices become easier, more attractive and more likely to occur in everyday practice.

A useful starting point is to consider three core drivers of behaviour:

- Motivation: Increasing the willingness to act.
- Friction: Reducing effort, complexity, uncertainty or other obstacles.
- Triggers: Creating prompts or cues that encourage action at the right moment.

Many climate initiatives focus primarily on motivation by providing information and raising awareness. While motivation is important, research and practical experience often show that reducing friction can be even more effective. If sustainable choices are easier than existing alternatives, behaviour can change without requiring additional effort or strong personal commitment. At SDU, examples could include simplifying train bookings, introducing sustainable default options in procurement systems or automating digital clean-up processes.

The Design phase should also consider the diversity of users represented by the Six SDUs. Practical Realists and Overloaded Contributors often benefit from solutions that reduce friction and automate decisions, while Curious Learners may require guidance and explanations. Structural Thinkers may support policy-based solutions, and Healthy Sceptics often respond positively to transparency and fairness. This means that different user groups may require different combinations of interventions to achieve the same behavioural outcome.

Once potential solutions have been identified, teams should consider whether they are primarily soft, moderate or hard interventions. Soft interventions rely on information, feedback and voluntary engagement. Moderate interventions reshape choice environments through defaults or structured decision-making. Hard interventions introduce requirements, restrictions or formal regulations. Effective climate initiatives often combine elements from all three categories rather than relying on a single approach.

To support idea generation, the Design phase can make use of behavioural cards developed for climate initiatives at SDU. The cards provide practical inspiration and creative perspectives for developing interventions.



Three examples of the Behavioural Cards (in Danish)

07.05 4. Demonstrate

In the fourth step, the focus is on validating and estimating the potential impact of proposed solutions. This requires developing a behavioural statement that clearly specifies how the desired behaviour will manifest and how it can be measured in practice. Based on this, an experimental setup is designed to test whether the intervention leads to the intended behaviour change. In this phase, the experiment form is completed to document the behavioural statement, the proposed intervention, and the evaluation approach, as illustrated by the example below on reducing short-haul flights among researchers.

Experiment form

Solution name: _____

We believe that...
Describe the hypothesis you want to test in the experiment

To confirm that, we will…
Describe how you will test the hypothesis

And measure…
Describe how you will measure the effect

Success criteria

We know we are right if…
Describe which outcome confirms your hypothesis

After implementation: We learned to…
Describe what the experiment showed

After implementation: Therefore, we will…
Describe how you will apply the learning

Experiment form

Solution name: Green Travel Challenge – Department competition

We believe that...
Describe the hypothesis you want to test in the experiment

We believe that if research groups compete to reduce their travel-related CO_2 emissions then researchers will voluntarily shift from short-haul flights to train travel, reducing emissions by at least 30%.

To confirm that, we will…
Describe how you will test the hypothesis

Run a 12-week "Green Travel Challenge" across multiple departments with a intervention. Monthly leaderboard that show % reduction in CO_2 emissions per group (normalized per researcher), Shared internally (e-mail or intranet) with top 3 groups highlighted. 1; Simple travel guide as a 1-page guide with "If <800 km → consider train first", Example routes (Odense–Berlin, Copenhagen–Stockholm, etc.), CO_2 and time comparisons, Simple rule of thumb ("Train if <6 hours"). 2; Light visibility nudges where departments/groups that improve are highlighted in internal newsletter, Meetings, Intranet. 3; Rewards like "Green Travel Award" (certificate + visibility and Small group benefit (e.g. funding for a social event, conference support, or sustainability-related activity)

And measure…
Describe how you will measure the effect

Existing administrative data: CO_2 emissions from work travel per group (normalized per capita). Number of flights <800 km. Share of train vs. plane for short trips

Optional: Participation rate (how many groups actively engage). Short survey (motivation + barriers)

Success criteria

We know we are right if…
Describe which outcome confirms your hypothesis

≥30% reduction in CO_2 emissions in top-performing groups. Clear shift from plane to train for trips <800 km. At least 50% of groups show some reduction. Positive engagement (e.g. groups referencing the competition)

After implementation: We learned to…
Describe what the experiment showed

Whether social comparison and competition drives behavior change. Whether motivation is primarily: Recognition (status), collective identity (group effort), climate concern. Which groups can change behavior most easily (and why)

After implementation: Therefore, we will…
Describe how you will apply the learning

If effective: Scale to faculty/university level. Make it a recurring annual initiative. Combine with structural changes like easier train booking or default travel recommendations. Target low-performing groups with tailored support

Above is a form for experiment design without an example and one form filled out with an example.

The purpose of this step is to move beyond assumptions and generate evidence-based insights that can support decision-making and further prioritisation. To document these insights, a range of approaches can be used, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations or different kinds of data analysis, as illustrated by the example on reducing short-haul flights.

07.06 5. Deliver

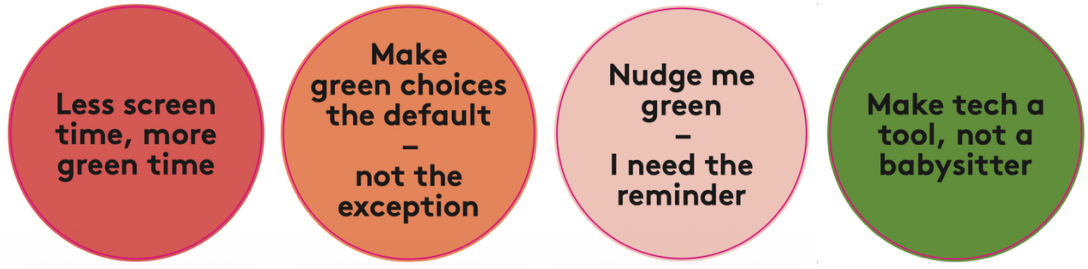
The final step focuses on implementation – bringing successful solutions into everyday practice at SDU. Examples of this may include:

Air travel: Integrated booking systems, national coordination and funding structures

Digital: Embedded nudges and policies in IT systems

Resource use: Institutionalised defaults in procurement, catering and facilities

Even well-designed solutions can face challenges during implementation, such as technical constraints, competing priorities or organisational resistance. Successful delivery therefore requires attention to integration with existing systems and everyday practices, as well as clear organisational ownership and effective communication. The documentation from the previous step becomes critical for securing support from leadership, as it provides the necessary evidence to justify investments and organisational change.



Four examples of stickers with climate related messages

To support implementation and long-term behaviour change, PhD fellow Morten Ploug Henriksen developed a series of climate stickers and visual nudges. The stickers are designed to make sustainable choices more visible in everyday university life and can be used in offices, classrooms, digital platforms, campaigns and workshops. Rather than relying on rules or persuasion, they function as gentle reminders that reinforce desired behaviours and help keep climate action present in daily routines.







08 List of participants 17 March 2026

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The participants discussed the three main themes presented in this report and contributed to the development of the recommendations. Several participants also took part in follow-up discussions and provided additional perspectives that informed the final report.

09 Concluding remarks

SDU's green transition depends on leadership decisions that make sustainable choices simple, fair and integrated into everyday university life. The recommendations developed through the FORWARD task force highlight that the most effective climate actions remove structural barriers, create clear expectations and support staff and students in making sustainable choices.

The task force discussions demonstrated that climate implementation requires more than information and good intentions. Successful initiatives must be tailored to different user groups, supported by appropriate interventions and embedded in existing organisational practices. To support this work, the report presents the Six SDU personas, the Intervention Calibration Framework and the 5D implementation model as practical tools for translating climate ambitions into action.

For SDU, this means prioritising solutions that combine clear direction with local ownership. Shared travel guidelines, sustainable defaults, responsible digital practices and transparent communication can help create a culture where climate-conscious choices become part of everyday routines. Engagement is strengthened when people experience fairness, transparency and visible progress, and when they see how individual actions contribute to a collective effort.

The recommendations presented in this report originate from the FORWARD task force and reflect the expertise and perspectives of researchers, staff, students and external partners. Building on these contributions, the report provides research-informed frameworks and implementation tools developed and adapted by Morten Ploug Henriksen to support practical climate action at SDU and beyond.

If implemented consistently and visibly, the task force recommendations have the potential to reduce SDU's climate footprint while improving the quality, coherence and efficiency of everyday work. A greener SDU is not only better for the climate; it is also a more resilient, well-functioning and future-oriented university with a stronger shared sense of purpose.

09.01 Sources and literature

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For more information about the FORWARD task force and climate action at SDU, please visit: https://www.sdu.dk/da/om-sdu/strategi-politikker/klima-paa-sdu

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