

# PLANETARY HEALTH REPORT CARD OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

APRIL 2024

2023-2024 SUMMARY REPORT

**Prepared by:**

Occupational therapy students from the University of East Anglia, UK

**With Support from:**

Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation

Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education

PHRC Interdisciplinary Lead, Dr Hannah Chase & the PHRC Team

[phreportcard.org](https://phreportcard.org)



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# 1. ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

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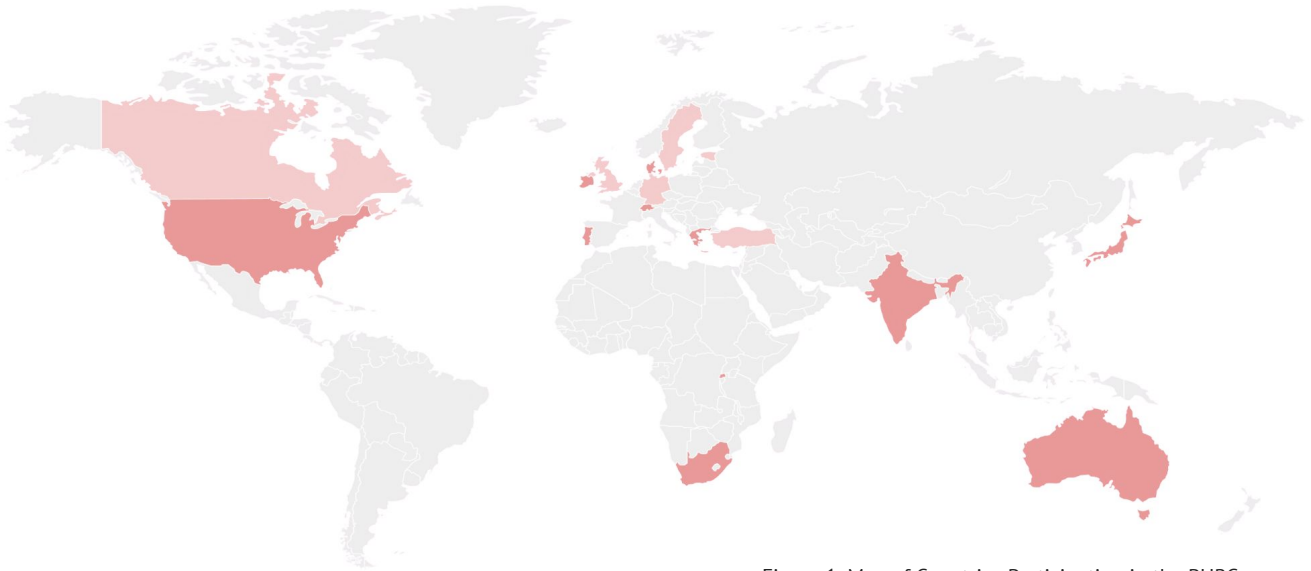


Figure 1: Map of Countries Participating in the PHRC

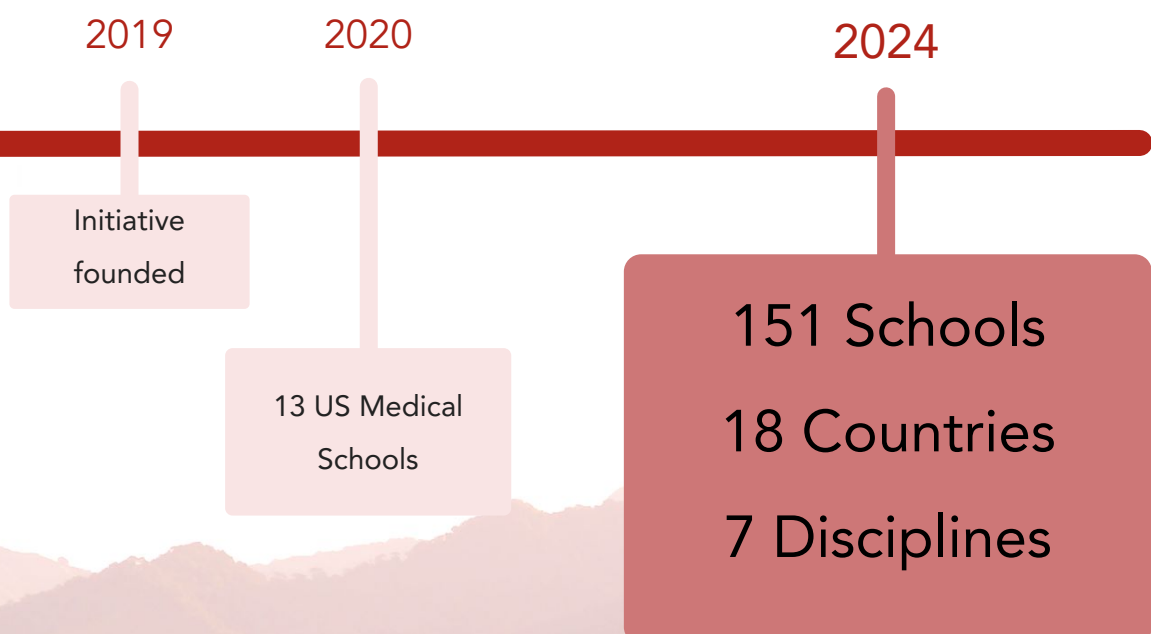
**“Planetary Health** is a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth” (Planetary Health Alliance, 2024)

As future health professionals, we must be prepared to address the impacts of human-caused environmental changes on our patients’ health, and to understand and mitigate the environmental impact of clinical care. It is imperative that we hold our institutions accountable for educating health students on planetary health and education for sustainable healthcare, generating research to better understand health impacts and solutions, supporting related student initiatives, embracing sustainable practices on our campuses and in our hospitals, and engaging with surrounding communities that are most affected by environmental threats. Because climate change and environmental threats disproportionately affect marginalized populations, these issues are inherently ones of equity and justice.

With the purpose of increasing planetary health awareness and accountability among medical schools, the Planetary Health Report Card (PHRC) was developed as an institutional advocacy tool in 2019 by a group of medical students at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine. **The PHRC is a student-driven metric-based tool that aims to evaluate health professional schools on discrete metrics in five main category areas:** 1) Curriculum, 2) Interdisciplinary research in health and environment, 3) Community outreach and advocacy 4) Support for student-led initiatives and 5) Campus sustainability.

Since its founding just five years ago, the PHRC community has grown to encompass 18 countries and 151 health professional schools. As it has spread across the world, it has left many examples of institutional change in its wake. Though initially developed by medical students to evaluate medical schools, the report card has been adapted for dentistry, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacy, and physiotherapy training programs, catalyzing interprofessional collaboration.

For the first time, an occupational therapy PHRC has been designed and piloted in 2024. Occupational therapy joins an increasingly diverse set of healthcare disciplines using PHRCs to advocate for planetary health education. Each of these disciplines offers unique perspectives for finding sustainable healthcare solutions. Occupational therapy in its natural form compliments key principles of sustainable healthcare such as prevention and patient empowerment. In this way, the foundations of planetary health already exist within occupational therapy. However, education is required to develop these skills so they can directly address planetary health concerns. The occupational therapy PHRC hopes to pave the way for these educational habits thereby bringing to life an already existing inclination toward sustainability within occupational therapy.



# 3. SECTIONS OF THE REPORT CARD

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## Planetary Health Curriculum



Today's medical students will be on the frontlines of tackling the impacts of environmental degradation on human health. It is critical that medical education reflects those health threats. Topics like the changing geography of vector-borne diseases, the health consequences of air pollution, environmental health inequities, disaster response principles, and healthcare sustainability must be part of every medical school's core curriculum.

## Interdisciplinary Research in Health and Environment



Interactions between health and the environment are complex and multifactorial. While climate change has been extensively studied from an environmental science perspective, planetary health is an emerging field. As leading health institutions with talented researchers and research resources, medical schools should fund research studying environmental health, the health effects of climate change, and climate solutions.

## Community Outreach and Advocacy



Researching and teaching planetary health is necessary but not sufficient. It is critical that institutions also directly engage with communities most affected by ecological destruction. Although climate change is a problem largely created by those with power and resources, its impacts fall disproportionately on marginalized populations. Institutions should partner with local communities affected by climate change and pollution to share information about environmental health threats and collaboratively advocate for change. Students should be given opportunities to engage in this work.

# 3. SECTIONS OF THE REPORT CARD

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## Support for Student-Led Planetary Health Initiatives



Planetary health is a young field and, as young people facing a future deeply shaped by climate change, students are often some of the first at an institution to engage with it. Institutions should provide support for students to engage in sustainability quality improvement (QI) initiatives, discover mentors in their area of interest, convene in student groups, and receive funding for planetary health projects.

## Campus Sustainability



The healthcare industry is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions as well as pollution that harms local, regional, and global ecosystems. While healthcare is, by nature, a resource-intensive endeavor, the healthcare sector is well poised to lead the world to a more sustainable future. This transformation can begin with our educational campuses; medical schools must sustainably source energy, food, and supplies; ensure institutional investments are free of fossil fuels; and offer incentives for greening lab spaces and events.



# 2024 PHRC RESULTS DISCIPLINE

## 3. OUTCOME

(Click the school name to read their full report)

- Overall
- Planetary Health Curriculum
- Interdisciplinary Research
- Community Outreach & Advocacy
- Support for Student-led Initiatives
- Campus Sustainability

University of East Anglia, United Kingdom

D

D -

F +

D -

C -

C +

80-100% = A, 60-79% = B, 40-59% = C, 20-39% = D, 0-19% = F

Scores within top or bottom 5% awarded + or -, respectively

 = Overall score improved from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024

# 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

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The occupational therapy PHRC highlighted these areas to be addressed over the next academic year to develop planetary health knowledge and awareness.

## 1. PLANETARY HEALTH IN THE CURRICULUM

Occupational therapy curriculums should take clear steps to incorporate planetary health into already established modules and lectures through:

- a. Providing teaching on how specific health conditions are already, and predicted to be increasingly, affected by the climate crisis. This is especially important to add to cardiovascular, mental, and paediatric health occupational therapy teaching.
- b. Equipping students with knowledge of how to meet the increasing clinical demands set to face practitioners following the climate crisis. By teaching sustainable quality improvement and essential carbon literature knowledge occupational therapy students should have clearer means to support service users.

## 2. ORGANISATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Occupational Therapy departments, and the Health Sciences schools they often sit within, could affiliate themselves with planetary health organisations. For instance, the Planetary Health Alliance. This would allow better access to information and support while increasing their academic focus on planetary health.

## 3. STUDENT INITIATIVES

Occupational therapy students should be encouraged to independently engage with sustainable healthcare initiatives. This could include:

- a. Independent research tasks and projects (e.g. on social prescribing)
- b. Elective placements which incorporate nature-based interventions and/or greenspaces
- c. Student societies which discuss planetary health and sustainable healthcare



# 5. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE

## DIRECTIONS

As the first, and only, occupational therapy PHRC this summary can only offer limited insights. To gather more nuanced and useful observations about occupational therapy planetary health education requires further development and wider use of this tool.

This report card was designed by four occupational therapy students and one educator all of whom, bar one student at the University of Cape Town, were based at UK universities. Going forwards, more occupational therapy students, educators, and clinicians should be involved in developing this report card. More than simply increasing the number of contributors, this report card's development requires a greater diversity of opinions. This should incorporate broader international collaboration in the occupational therapy PHRC but with an emphasis on using knowledge from indigenous communities and those in the global south. This is vital as these populations have often been underrepresented despite being disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis.

The occupational therapy PHRC has only been conducted at the University of East Anglia in the UK by postgraduate occupational therapy students. This prevents more nuanced insights about current approaches to planetary health education in occupational therapy courses. In future years more common use of this report card by a greater range of students across the globe will hopefully unearth more in-depth ideas to bolster planetary health education throughout occupational therapy training.

# 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**The creation and development of the Planetary Health Report Card would not have been possible without the help and inspiration of many individuals and organisations.**

The activities reported here were supported (in part) by the **Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation**.

**Thank you** to the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education (GCCHE) and Dr Cecilia Sorensen for your ongoing support and guidance,

**Thank you** to White Coats 4 Black Lives and their impactful Racial Justice Report Card for inspiration.

**Thank you** to the Planetary Health Alliance, who gave us the opportunity to present this idea at the 2019 Planetary Health Annual Meeting.

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The design and implementation of the occupational therapy PHRC was the collaborative effort of occupational therapy students and their educators. Particular thanks go to Ka Yan Hess and Dr Hannah Chase for their sustained support and enthusiasm that made this project possible.



# 7. AUTHORS & LEADERSHIP

## CO-DIRECTORS

### Isabel Waters

*St James' Hospital Dublin, Intern*

### Taylor Diedrich

*Indiana University School of Medicine,  
4<sup>th</sup> Year*

## DISCIPLINE LEADERSHIP

### Catherine Potter

PHRC OT Lead  
University of East Anglia

## INTERDISCIPLINARY LEADERSHIP

### James Lee

Communications Chair  
*Brighton and Sussex Medical School, 5<sup>th</sup>  
Year*

### Hannah Chase

Interdisciplinary Coordinator  
*Oxford University Hospital Trust, F2*

### Lauren Franklin

Data & Analytics Chair  
*Keele University, 5<sup>th</sup> Year*

### Lydia Marie-Luise Holtgrewe

Partnerships Co-Chair  
*University of Southampton/Kassel, 4<sup>th</sup>  
Year*

### Alex Northrop

Grants & Evaluations Chair  
*Columbia University, 4<sup>th</sup> Year*

### Madeline Power

Partnerships Co-Chair  
*Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Year*

## **8. CONTACT US**

We rely on the passion and generosity of the hundreds of students involved in the initiative. If you don't see your **country, school or discipline** represented here we would love to hear from you. If you would like to support the work we are doing please share this report and our initiative with your colleagues, faculty and friends so we can reach as many people as possible.

**Email:** [phreportcard@gmail.com](mailto:phreportcard@gmail.com)

**Website:** [phreportcard.org](http://phreportcard.org)

**Twitter:** [@phreportcard](https://twitter.com/phreportcard)

**Instagram:** [@phreportcard](https://www.instagram.com/phreportcard)

**LinkedIn:** [Planetary Health Report Card](https://www.linkedin.com/company/planetary-health-report-card)

# 9. REPORT CARD SCHOOL TEAMS

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### University of East Anglia

Catherine Potter  
Diya Bhandarkar  
Jessica Sparkes