

Science oath for the climate FAQs

Why do we need a climate oath?

- scientists, academics and researchers have a leadership role and research shows that what they say is taken more seriously if their behaviour is coherent with their words;
- many people at the top of their field lead some of the highest carbon lifestyles of anyone, through attending the international academic conferences linked to career prestige;
- anecdotal evidence indicates that a lot of people in the climate sector will say more in private than they do in public - there is still self-censoring about how far and how fast we need to change;
- professional associations are hugely influential in a number of ways, from standard-setting with international influence, to research agendas, to how they do or don't link with - and validate - fossil fuel interests. By lobbying their professional institutions, scientists can make a huge difference.
- the oath commits people and organisations to laying out a plan and actually starting on a realistic pathway to get in line with the Paris 1.5 degrees target

Why does the oath contain a commitment on individual behaviours as well as speaking out about the scientific evidence?

The oath deals with the false either/or distinction between individual behaviour change and system change. The oath encourages individual actions by scientists in order to build pressure for action at a systemic scale. Very boldly this group of signatories is saying that they commit to changing their own lives **and** trying to change the system.

Why an oath and not a pledge or a promise?

All of these names have their individual merits. After careful reflection, we chose oath because, in the context of the severity of the climate emergency with the 'life and death' implications of the different pathways we choose, we thought it was appropriate to echo the gravity of the medical Hippocratic oath.

What do you mean by 'not second-guess what might seem politically or economically pragmatic when describing the scale and timeframe of action needed to deliver the 1.5°C and 2°C commitments'?

When we talk about not 'second guessing' the science, we mean that scientists should not compromise on saying what they view as necessary to meet the Paris Climate targets for fear of political and economic implications.

I'm not a scientist or engineer but I work in a climate-related area, can I sign?

In a nutshell, if you're an academic from any discipline working in a climate-related area then yes, please sign the oath.

I'm outside the UK, can I still sign?

Yes, please do. This initiative is based in the UK but is open to scientists, engineers and academics working in climate-related topics around the world.

I'm a student, can I sign?

Yes, if you're studying for an undergraduate-level degree or higher in a climate-related field then please do sign.

What happens next?

SGR will draw up a menu of evidence-based carbon footprint reduction recommended commitments for individual scientists to choose from, and invite them to lobby their professional institutions to engage on becoming aligned with 1.5 degree pathways, and end their links to fossil fuel companies.