



2020 Office Awards Participants' Guide



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Office Awards! The [Office Awards](#) are part of the SRS Department's Sustainability Awards scheme, which recognises efforts by staff and students to make our University more socially responsible and sustainable.

Office Awards are presented annually to departments, schools or research centres that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and sustainability by fulfilling a range of criteria focused on ethical and environmentally-friendly working practices and behaviours. Criteria fall under a variety of themes including sustainable travel, purchasing and wellbeing.

There are five Sustainability Awards categories in total. Each category is tailored to suit a particular group in the University. You can find out more about all of the categories at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/what-we-do/awards/about-the-awards>.

2. Overview of the Office Awards

Office Awards participants are a community of around 200 staff from over 25 University departments, schools or research centres who are making a difference in the University and beyond. Every year our teams make an invaluable contribution to social responsibility and sustainability by raising awareness, conserving resources, saving energy and fundraising for good causes.

The Office Awards typically run annually on a calendar year basis, with registration opening in the spring. Throughout the summer and early autumn, participants work to complete the criteria for their chosen Award level (bronze, silver or gold). This typically involves sharing sustainability messages, embedding University guidance and looking for opportunities to improve departmental practices. Normally we ask teams to submit evidence of their actions and activities on the Awards online platform in October, and in November audits are carried out by trained student volunteers. Successful teams will receive a locally crafted and sustainably-sourced trophy at the annual Sustainability Awards Celebration in spring 2021.

For the 2020 Awards, the timelines have changed in response to the Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent closure of the University. Further details are provided in the Timeline section of this guide on [page 14](#).

New from 2020 is the option to take part in the mentoring of another awards team. Teams which have successfully completed an award have valuable knowledge and experience of how to make meaningful impacts, and mentoring another team provides an opportunity to share this expertise. This would be in addition to maintaining your chosen level and is open to Bronze, Silver and Gold teams.

3. Why participate?

These are just some of the reasons to take part in the Office Awards:

- The Office Awards criteria give departments a **holistic framework for embedding sustainable processes and ways of working**.
- The Office Awards are a fantastic opportunity for staff to develop **leadership and teamwork** skills by **working as a team** with colleagues.
- Teams receive **support and advice** from the SRS Department throughout the year.
- **Training and Professional Development opportunities** (contact Rachael.Barton@ed.ac.uk to discuss).

- Participants have opportunities to **learn from and network with other teams** from around the University, including mentoring teams.
- Departments can achieve **continuous improvement** by progressing to more advanced levels over time.
- Teams will be invited to the annual Sustainability Awards Celebration, attended by **senior members of the University**.
- Incentives and additional **support to access funding** to implement your ideas.
- **Special recognition** for teams who participate long term (5 years +).
- Participants are part of a **University-wide movement** with representation from almost every college and support group.

4. Office Awards and the Sustainable Development Goals

The 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, were adopted by the United Nations and world leaders in 2015. By 2030, the SDGs aim to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) developed the [Sustainable Development Goal Accord](#) (SDGa), which the University of Edinburgh has signed up to. Through its research, learning and teaching, operations and community of staff, students and alumni, the University is committed to delivering these Goals with partners, including the Students' Association, both locally and globally. Contributing to the SDGs is a key part of the [Social and Civic Responsibility focus](#) within the University's [Strategy 2030](#).

The Sustainability Awards encourage action on a range of environmental and social issues, and each Awards criterion links to one of the 17 SDGs. These links are detailed in the Guides for Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, and you can learn more about each SDG [here](#). By participating in the Sustainability Awards, you and your team will be directly contributing to helping achieve the SDGs.

The EAUC have collated further examples of [how the SDGs can be embedded](#) within Higher and Further Education institutions.



5. Who can take part?

Anyone can take part! Although we often use 'department' as a generic term, the Office Awards are actually open to teams of any scale – from a single office or floor to an entire building or school. It is up to individual teams to decide how to structure their team. While the criteria were initially designed for office-based spaces, they are flexible and can be applied to most areas of the University.

Teams that incorporate multiple buildings must follow certain guidelines. These are listed on [page 12](#).

Although the Office Awards are aimed at staff, teams are strongly encouraged to involve students where possible, to ensure their feedback and ideas are taken into consideration.

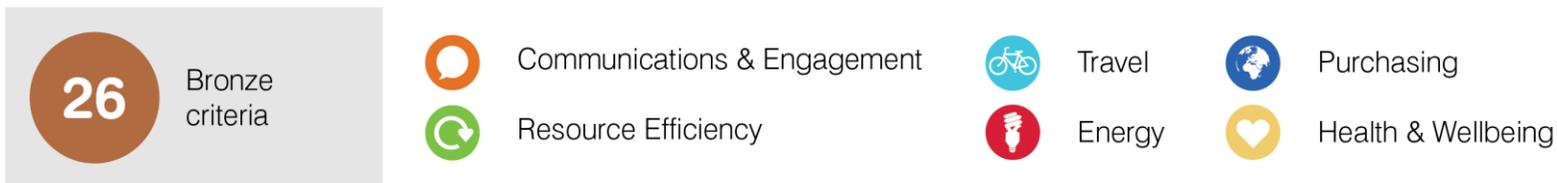
6. Criteria and levels

There are three Office Awards levels; bronze, silver and gold. Each has its own set of criteria that build on the previous levels.

Additionally, to recognise the valuable experience of existing teams, those who have previously participated have the option of mentoring another team.

Bronze: Bronze requires departments to follow University guidelines, demonstrate good practice and raise awareness of sustainability amongst staff.

To receive a bronze Office Award, teams must typically meet 26 bronze criteria categorised into 6 sustainability themes; Communications & Engagement, Resource Efficiency, Travel, Energy, Purchasing and Health & Wellbeing.



26 Bronze criteria

- Communications & Engagement
- Resource Efficiency
- Travel
- Energy
- Purchasing
- Health & Wellbeing

Silver: Silver requires departments to go further by embedding resource efficient processes and a culture of sustainability.

To receive a silver Office Award, teams must meet the 26 bronze criteria AND choose 12 or more silver criteria, spread across at least 4 themes. The ability to pick-your-own silver criteria means teams can focus on actions that will have the greatest impact in their department. Criteria are again categorised into 6 sustainability themes; Communications & Engagement, Resource Efficiency, Travel, Energy, Purchasing and Health & Wellbeing.

Please note: **Activities can't be double counted.** For example, if your team organises a pedometer challenge, this should not be submitted as evidence for both the "Run a sustainable travel initiative" AND "Run an initiative to promote physical activity" criteria.



Gold: Gold level requires departments to design and implement a unique project with a demonstrable sustainability impact at least once every 3 years. This gives teams the opportunity to design an intervention that aligns with their own priorities and interests. **In the intervening years, gold teams are reassessed to ensure they still fulfil the bronze and silver criteria.**

Teams undertaking a gold project must complete 6 criteria at various stages of the project. These criteria cover the planning, delivery and reporting stages of the project. Note that teams are only eligible to work towards gold if they received silver the previous year.



Mentoring: This new opportunity will allow teams who have completed an award to offer support to another team who are completing their chosen level for the first time. Teams are able to mentor others of the same or lower level to them e.g. Bronze teams may mentor new Bronze teams, Silver teams may mentor Silver or Bronze, and Gold may mentor at any level.

To be eligible to mentor, your team must have achieved an award within the last 2 years. Mentorship will not replace participating in a Bronze/Silver/Gold level but would be undertaken as an additional achievement (e.g. Bronze+ Mentor).

As the nature of mentorship is highly variable and unique to each partnership, there are no specific criteria to complete other than the following. We will expect teams to commit to:

- Communicating at least monthly with each other
- Undertake visits to each other's workplaces
- Provide a case study on their experience (written or video)

Mentoring teams should also arrange to hold an informal Sustainability Open Day for their mentees or the wider University community, to highlight their successes and challenges.

Visits may be in person or virtual, as most appropriate.

If your team is interested in mentoring please contact Rachael Barton (Rachael.barton@ed.ac.uk) to discuss.

7. The online platform

Teams are required upload evidence to an online platform, which auditors will review before the audit.

The online platform can be accessed at <https://sustainability.ed.ac.uk/awards/login/>.

Uploading evidence is quick and straightforward. The platform accepts photos, calendar invites, word documents, PDFs, comments etc. Please remember that the more thorough and up-to-date your evidence, the easier it will be for auditors to credit you for your efforts. You should assume that auditors don't know anything about your department. Upload as much evidence as needed to demonstrate compliance.

In some cases it may be easier to review certain actions / practices with your auditors in person, rather than upload evidence ahead of time. If this is the case then simply select the 'discuss in audit' option on the platform.

8. The assessment process

At the end of the Awards year, participants are assessed to ensure that they have fulfilled the relevant criteria. Assessments are conducted by trained student volunteers who will review any evidence (files and comments) that departments have uploaded to the online platform. This is followed by an onsite audit.

Step 1: Reviewing evidence on the online platform: Before the audit, auditors will review evidence uploaded to the online platform and request more information if necessary. Uploading evidence speeds up the assessment process and serves as a useful record, so we ask that teams upload as much of their evidence as possible.

Step 2: The onsite audit: Auditors will also undertake a face-to-face audit of all participants. This is an opportunity to observe physical evidence and discuss teams' activities in more detail. Audits typically last 1 to 2 hours.

Teams receive the results of their audit before the winter holiday. This will include confirmation of the Office Award level achieved and an audit report with more detailed feedback.

Points to remember:

- Once all criteria have moved to the *Completed* tab, your submission is complete! You do not need to hit a final *Submit* button or notify SRS of your completion.
- Try not to make any changes after the submission deadline. The auditors will be looking at your evidence before the onsite audit and wouldn't want to miss anything.
- Returning teams should be aware that auditors can only view files and comments submitted this year. If you want to make use of previous years' evidence, then you must transfer it over using the function on the platform.
- It's best to assume that your auditors know nothing about your department. Short comments that explain your actions and provide some context are really helpful.
- Teams often underestimate the amount of time it takes to gather evidence and upload it to the online platform. We recommend starting this well in advance of the submission deadline.

NOTE: For the 2020 Office Awards, if auditing the office in person is not possible, a virtual audit will be arranged. In such circumstances, providing evidence on the online platform will be particularly helpful.

Furthermore, any team which was due to participate in the 2020 Awards in order to maintain their accreditation, and finds themselves no longer in a position to do so, will have their accreditation extended.

9. Our team is new to the Office Awards – what should we do?

New Office Awards teams can work towards bronze or silver level in their first year. Get in touch with rachael.barton@ed.ac.uk if your department is interested in participating.

10. Our team last received an Office Award in 2018 – what should we do?

If your team would like to maintain its Office Award then you will need to complete the criteria and be audited again this year. You can enter at the same level as before, or work towards a more advanced level. You may also wish to consider mentoring another team.

(Any team which was due to participate in the 2020 Awards in order to maintain their accreditation, and finds themselves no longer in a position to do so, will have their accreditation extended.)

11. Our team last received an Office Award in 2019 – what should we do?

Teams that received an Office Award in 2019 have two options:

- 1. Take a 'year off' in 2020:** Bronze and Silver Awards are valid for 2 years, and Gold for 3 years (where Silver is completed every 3 years and a Gold project completed every 3 years). Teams that received an award in 2019 have the option to take a year off and resubmit in 2021 (see the diagram below).
- 2. Actively participate in 2020:** Teams that received an award in 2019 also have the option to work towards a more advanced level in 2020 (see the diagram below). You may also wish to consider mentoring another team.



BRONZE

Prior requirements NONE
 Criteria to complete BRONZE
 Assessment EVERY 2 YEARS ★



Optional:
 Once Bronze is completed,
 teams can mentor new
 Bronze teams



SILVER

Prior requirements NONE
 Criteria to complete BRONZE & SILVER
 Assessment EVERY 2 YEARS ★★



Optional:
 Once Silver is completed,
 teams can mentor new
 Bronze and Silver teams



GOLD

Prior requirements SILVER
 Criteria to complete BRONZE, SILVER & GOLD PROJECT
 Assessment Gold Project AT LEAST ONCE EVERY 3 YEARS ★
 Bronze & Silver AT LEAST ONCE EVERY 3 YEARS ★★



Optional:
 Once Gold is completed,
 teams can mentor any
 team up to Gold level



12. How much effort is involved? How many people do we need on our team?

The amount of time, effort and people required to achieve an Office Award varies depending on the level:

Bronze: Teams working towards bronze may find that their department already fulfils many of the bronze criteria. Achieving a bronze level Office Award is often a matter of consolidating existing activities, filling in any gaps and gathering evidence. This certainly requires buy-in from senior managers and colleagues, but it can be carried out by the coordinating staff member(s). It is possible for a single person to bring together a bronze submission, but it will be easier (and more fun) to work as a team.

Silver: Teams working towards silver will be required to implement new processes and initiatives in order to fulfil the silver criteria. This will likely require some involvement from managers and other functions in the department. It is usually not achievable for one person to coordinate a silver submission, so we recommend getting a team together. This will enable you to share the workload and delegate tasks.

Gold: Teams working towards gold are required to develop and implement a unique sustainability project. This is likely to require involvement from senior managers and other sections of the department. It is not realistic for one person to coordinate an entire gold project.

Mentoring: Teams who would like to mentor another team will be involved in offering support and advice to their mentees. To successfully share experiences and knowledge, it is recommended that mentorship is offered as a team effort rather than from one individual. The time commitment will vary depending on the level of award being sought, but we would expect at least monthly contact between teams including office visits.

13. Guidelines for multi-building teams

Many schools have found that grouping several buildings together into one Office Awards team enables them to take a more strategic approach to sustainability and implement consistent practices across their sites. Therefore, we place no restrictions on the number of buildings that can be covered by an Office Awards submission, providing that multi-building teams meet the following requirements:

- Have a sustainability team or committee that meets regularly and includes a representative from each building
- Provide evidence that criteria were implemented across all buildings
- Gold Projects should involve all buildings
- Each building should typically have its own Sustainability Champion

14. Support for teams

Office Awards teams will receive support and advice from the SRS Department throughout the year, including:

- An initial meeting to discuss the Awards in detail, and ongoing support thereafter.
- The online platform, which enables teams to track their progress and store evidence.
- A [Yammer group](#) to help teams communicate with each other to share ideas and experience.
- Networking events and workshops to support your application.
- [Resources and templates](#) to help teams complete criteria.
- Training and Professional Development opportunities (contact Rachael.barton@ed.ac.uk to discuss).
- An end of year audit report highlighting key achievements and areas for improvement.
- Teams can access up to £500 of funding through our [SRS Project Grants](#).
- Support to apply for the [Sustainable Campus Fund](#).

15. Sustainability Champions Network

Join a network of staff and students making the University of Edinburgh more sustainable by developing skills to lead positive change in your area of work.

Replacing the former Energy Coordinator and Waste Coordinator networks, the [Sustainability Champions Network](#) offers opportunities to increase your sustainability knowledge, gain professional and personal development, help empower others, attend events, and make your voice heard.

Register and [join the network here](#).

16. Timeline

The Office Awards run annually, typically launching in April with a submission deadline of mid-October.

In 2020 the timeline will be altered to account for the Coronavirus pandemic and closure of the University. As different parts and buildings of the University will reopen at different times, the Awards will have flexible joining times and submission deadlines. The outline below shows the potential timeline which the 2020 Awards will follow.

An initial launch of the Award information, criteria and guides will take place in June 2020, to allow teams to find out more about what is involved and to allow those who wish to plan ahead to do so. Once the majority of the University has reopened, the Awards will be formally launched.

Depending on when this takes place, we will either set a fixed submission deadline 8-12 months after this launch, or offer a rolling submission where teams can submit whenever they feel ready. Details of the submission deadline will be confirmed closer to the formal launch date.

- **June 2020:** Initial Awards launch, providing information to existing and new teams
- **Summer/Autumn 2020:** Advice and support given to interested teams
- **Autumn 2020:** Awards formally launch
- **Autumn/Winter 2020-2021:** Networking and support events, teams complete criteria
- **2021:** Deadline for submitting evidence to the online platform
- **2021:** Audits
- **2021:** Evaluation and review
- **2021:** Sustainability Awards Celebration



OFFICES TIMELINE



Gold
Deadline



Deadline
for all
levels



Event for
all levels



Audit for
all levels

19-20
Sustainability
Awards
Celebration
(online)



20-21
Office Awards
launch



Meetups



Deadline for
Gold teams
to submit their
project proposals



Try to register your
Sustainability
Champion so we
can invite them to
relevant events!



Deadline for
uploading
evidence to the
online platform



Trained student
volunteers will review
evidence submitted to
the online platform
and conduct an audit
of each team in
person



Results
confirmed



20-21 Office Awards
recipients announced
online and in the SRS
newsletter



20-21
Sustainability
Awards Celebration



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www.sustainability.ed.ac.uk/awards

17. Next steps

New teams: Contact rachael.barton@ed.ac.uk or register your interest online at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/staff/be-part-of-the-sustainability-awards/enter-the-office-awards>.

In the meantime you can get a head start by:

- Securing support for participating in the Office Awards from senior managers in your department
- Looking through the Office Awards criteria
- Speaking to your colleagues about forming a team