



# Sustainability (and Social Responsibility) Policy

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set out **plainly** and **simply** the University's commitment to sustainability (and social responsibility), the **expectations** for staff and students around the University and actions that all can take.

## 2. Background

Strategy 2030 sets out our vision to make the world a better place. The Social & Civic Responsibility plan shows how we will deliver on our commitments to Social & Civic Responsibility as part of Strategy 2030 (launched September 2019) and our commitments to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The University of Edinburgh currently has a framework of key strategies which inform our plans and actions on key topics (i.e Climate Change Strategy: Zero by 2040; Waste Strategy; Integrated Transport Strategy; Community Engagement Strategy). Different departments and areas will also have strategies which will include sustainability. Additional policies around the University relate to sustainability but do not set out in one place expectations for staff and students in the choices that can be made and how we can all contribute.

This policy supersedes the Sustainability Policy (2000).

## 3. Scope

Everyone at the University has a role to play. This policy outlines our shared and individual responsibilities. It applies to all University sites, students, and staff/personnel.

## 4. The Policy

The University is committed to ensuring our impact is a positive one. Our commitments are set out in our S&C Responsibility Plan. Everyone has a role to play through the following strategic objectives and associated actions:

**1. We will become a zero carbon and zero waste university. Developing and pioneering approaches to deliver a low carbon and circular economy and protecting and enhancing biodiversity.** We will:

- Identify opportunities and implement actions which reduce our environmental impact whilst improving staff, student and wider community wellbeing.
- Implement energy and water efficient practices. Minimise consumption and maximise efficiency.
- Promote the use of renewable energy.
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment.
- Take a climate conscious approach to travel by: ensuring travel is only undertaken when necessary, encouraging the use of virtual collaboration tools where appropriate; providing

relevant and accurate information to guide travelers, travel bookers, and management groups when making decisions regarding travel; and choosing a method of travel that reduces the climate impact (for example by mandating trains for journeys within mainland Britain, with limited exceptions).

- Eliminate waste. Encourage prevention, reduction, reuse of resources prior to recycling or disposal and ensure assets are used to their fullest extent. Phase out single use items wherever possible.
- Think about the whole life-cycle when purchasing. Apply sustainable procurement duties, choosing goods and services which reduce carbon/waste.
- Source /provide food that is good for the environment and people (as set out in our Good Food Policy).

**2. We will widen participation in higher education and support inclusion, increasing opportunities and raising aspirations by making both an achievable goal for more people in Scotland and across the world. We will:**

- Provide more opportunities for young people and students at the University through modern apprenticeships and placements, enhancing employability.
- Support communities through activities and investments and widen participation in education.
- Be a welcoming and inclusive organisation which celebrates diversity, recruiting and supporting students and staff from diverse backgrounds.
- Work with our neighbours and community partners to inspire the next generation workforce.
- Work with our suppliers to offer community benefits.
- Engage with our suppliers to encourage fair working practices across the University's supply chains.
- Ensure fair, progressive and ethical working practices across the University.

**3. We will work together with local communities to share knowledge and skills and contribute to improving the lives of people across Edinburgh. We will:**

- Increase opportunities for students to interact with the wider community as part of research, study, work or volunteering programmes supported by a community of practice.
- Increase mutual awareness, understanding and knowledge of the university and the community.
- Share skills and learning with local communities. Promote staff and student volunteering.
- Assess and address the potential impacts of our activities on our neighbours. Consult with and respond to the concerns of our community stakeholders in a timely manner.
- Identify opportunities to make our places and spaces more accessible to local communities.
- Source locally wherever possible.

**4. We will critically engage and contribute towards the Sustainable Development Goals and promote, protect and respect human rights through everything that we do. We will:**

- Provide and support opportunities for students to learn about sustainability and take action (formally through the curriculum and informally through co-curricular activities).

- Provide opportunities and support staff to learn about sustainability and take action.
- Improve our positive impact and reduce any negative impacts on the environment and communities across our organisation.
- Choose goods and services that benefit society, economy and the environment as per requirements set out in our sustainability procurement duty, our Fair Trade Policy and other policies and commitments.
- Take action to ensure our impacts are positive and where necessary mitigate any negative impacts on the environment or society (avoid, prevent, minimise, restore, offset).
- Integrate sustainability in our decision making across the University.

## 5. Governance and Reporting

At the corporate level, our Social & Civic Responsibility Plan will guide our governance and reporting and provide an overall mechanism for reporting on targets and implementation plans. Colleges and schools will include Social & Civic Responsibility plans in their overall planning and decision making.

## 6. Equality and Diversity

Achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change require transformations and complementary actions by all organisations. Climate change impacts disproportionately on the world's poorest and most vulnerable. Tackling climate change and the SDGs makes a major contribution to global justice, gender, education and protection of natural resources. Specific projects and programmes designed to meet our commitments will undertake appropriate assessment of equality and diversity implications.

## 7. Approval and review

Reviewers	Sustainability Strategy Advisory Group and SRS Committee which included both staff and student representatives.
Final approval by	Director of Social Responsibility & Sustainability.
Consultations held	Working groups and committees.
Date of commencement of policy	23 April 2020
Dates for review of policy	2025
How policy will be reviewed	Every 5 years via SRS Committee.
Policies superseded by this policy	Sustainability Policy (2000)
Version 1.1	This version reflects minor edits made in October 2020 to version 1.0 approved in April 2020