



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Sustainable Research Practices

Annual Progress Summary

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Reporting period:

Academic year 2025/26

Summary

The University of Birmingham is committed to reducing the environmental impact of our research while continuing to lead world-class research. As a signatory to the [Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation](#) (the 'Concordat'), we are working to embed sustainable practices across all research activities and to support sector-wide change.

A dedicated Task and Finish Group reviewed our alignment with the Concordat in 2025/26 and identified priority actions for improvement; the high-level action plan has been endorsed by Sustainability Steering Group and University Research Committee. This year, we have focused on strengthening internal governance and building practical tools and guidance to support our research community.

Our Progress

Leadership and System Change	• Sustainability is embedded in our institutional strategy including priorities to adopt environmentally responsible practices across our University and embed a culture of sustainability beyond our campus. Institutional governance is in place; progress delivering our strategic priorities is overseen by Sustainability Steering Group (SSG) and University Research Committee with ultimate reporting responsibility to University Executive Board. • Research practices is a key focus area embedded in the sustainability strategy, directed and managed by SSG, the leadership body for sustainability at University of Birmingham. • A new Sustainable Research Practices Action Group formed this year to promote, support and embed environmentally and socially sustainable practices across all research activities at the University. Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (Sustainability) chairs the group, supported by Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor (Research Environment) as deputy chair, with members spanning our colleges, professional services including research, strategy and services division. The Action Group has direct reporting responsibilities to both SSG and University Research Committee. • We are committed to sharing best practice and our learning experiences to support continuous improvement across the sector; we have directly contributed material to the UKRI Spark Hub and shared our experiences and progress at sector networking events (Medical Research Council, UK Network for Sustainable Research)
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Embedding Sustainable Research Practices	• We launched our Green Laboratory Accreditation Scheme in May 2025, with over 200 Principal Investigators (PIs) participating in our first programme and working to embed consistent good practice in our research laboratories. Our second programme launched in May 2026; a list of accredited colleagues is shared on our website. • The College of Social Sciences secured funding to develop a Sustainable & Inclusive Research Toolkit to help researchers reduce environmental impact and support inclusive research. The toolkit launched in June 2026; materials have been published on our website and shared with UKRI. • We created new sustainable research webpages as a single, central source of guidance, information and University policy for our research community and the wider sector.
Sustainable infrastructure	• Sustainability principles are reflected in our campus strategy, including work to reduce energy and water use. • We are identifying and testing further opportunities to improve how research buildings, equipment and computing infrastructure are used more efficiently. • We promoted BEAR research computing services to encourage research community to cut the carbon impact of computing-intensive research and drive ongoing emissions reductions; in 2025/26, three research groups achieved Green Disc accreditation.
Sustainable procurement	• We updated our Sustainable Procurement Policy and our procurement team have started to develop a more consistent sustainable procurement framework to support better purchasing decisions within our research community and wider University. • We have developed category-specific sustainability criteria for scientific and capital equipment tenders, aligned with ISO 20400 and now built into all larger tenders in this category. • Working with our College of Life and Environmental Sciences, we have piloted sustainable purchasing and waste-reduction initiatives in our research laboratories, including greener consumables, take-back schemes and equipment sharing

	We reintroduced a partnership with UniGreen Scheme, enabling our staff to reuse and resell laboratory equipment and we promote use of the National Equipment Portal through our website.
Emissions from business and academic travel	- We have shared travel guidance to encourage lower-carbon options for essential journeys and are improving travel data insight and reporting to support informed decisions on when and how to travel. - A Business Travel Task & Finish Group has been established, reporting to SSG, to explore initiatives and ways of working that will encourage more sustainable travel choices.
Collaborations and Partnerships	- Staff and student engagement in sustainable research practices growing through laboratory accreditation activities. - We trialled a new approach to measuring and reducing the carbon impact of large events at the Royal Geographical Society conference, saving 10 tonnes of carbon emissions and created materials to share our learning to help others adopt similar low-carbon solutions.
Environmental Impact and Reporting Data	- We report environmental data and performance through Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and our annual Carbon Accounting report; this information is shared on our website. - We are exploring options to enable improved access to data, to help researchers understand and reduce the environmental impact of their work. Colleagues within the Birmingham Institute of Sustainability and Climate Action are contributing to the TRACE pilot, exploring options to quantify carbon impacts at project level.

Priorities for the Next 12–24 Months

- Strengthen leadership and accountability for sustainable research across all Colleges
- Develop the Sustainable & Inclusive Research Toolkit; to expand its content so it can be used across all research areas, with the aim of establishing it as the University's standard resource

- Expand Green Laboratory standards and participation in our accreditation scheme
- Agree an approach to improving data, reporting, and transparency on environmental impacts of research
- Develop and deliver targeted improvement projects: laboratory waste, business travel, equipment reuse, research infrastructure & building efficiency
- Develop and launch an institutional circular economy strategy

Commitment

We recognise that reducing the environmental impact of research is a shared responsibility. We will continue to work with partners, funders, and the wider sector to deliver measurable progress and support the transition to more sustainable research practices.

Additional Information

- [Our approach to Sustainability](#)
- [Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action \(BISCA\)](#)