



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Sustainability Engagement Strategy

Making sustainability part of everyday
life on campus, 2026 - 2030

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Introduction

As a university founded on social responsibility, we are committed to addressing the sustainability and climate challenges facing our world. Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and our role as a leading global institution, we aim to drive positive change not only through our research, education, operations and partnerships, but through the behaviours and actions of our students and staff, and our engagement with local communities.

Our ambition is to embed sustainability into everything we do, empowering our community to lead, innovate and act for a more sustainable future.

This engagement strategy supports delivery of the University's 2030 Strategic Framework and People and Culture ambitions, by setting out how we will work together as a university community to build shared understanding, ownership and capability. It turns our [Sustainability Policy](#) into practical action, helping embed sustainability in how we teach, research, work and operate across our university.

Key Indicators of Engagement

We will use the following key indicators to measure and track staff and student engagement each year:

- **Positive statements to sustainability in the annual staff 'Have Your Say' survey;** measuring staff awareness and perception of progress on campus
- **Positive statements to sustainability questions in the annual student NSS survey;** measuring student awareness and perception of progress on campus and exposure to sustainability learning and engagement as part of student courses
- **Participation in engagement activity;** measuring staff and student training completion rates, participation in staff and student communities/networks and event attendance at key events
- **Participation in targeted sustainability schemes and initiatives;** measuring the number of teams participating in the annual Green Impact scheme and Green Laboratory Accreditation scheme, staff and student participation in sustainability projects and participation in co-circular activity

Our Current Position

Engagement in sustainability at our university is growing, with activity taking place across research, teaching and operations.

2024/25¹

- 58% of staff participating in the 'Have Your Say' survey, agree their college or division is taking steps to reduce its impact on the environment
- 45% of students participating in the NSS survey agree they have had opportunity to take part in activities supporting environmental sustainability
- Over 700 staff and students enrolled on the 'Sustainability in Action' Canvas course
- Staff and students participated in 28 University of Birmingham Green Week activities
- 40 University teams received Green Impact Awards
- 40 students completed sustainability-focused internships to date²

However, we can continually improve. Feedback from staff³ indicated a desire for clearer guidance, more training, and access to information to support action, specific to their roles; there is also a need to better share and connect good practice already happening across the University.

We have opportunity to build on this progress by making our approach more consistent and visible, and making it easier for everyone across the University to take action and play their part.

Our Approach

Our approach to delivering the engagement strategy aims to make sustainability practical and relevant for our staff and students across our University, making it easier for our community to take action. We will:

- work collaboratively with colleagues across the institution to embed a devolved model to ensure our small central team is able to lead significant change at pace
- build a clear and consistent narrative for what sustainability at University of Birmingham looks like
- work with staff and students, building on existing networks, teams and initiatives to reach people in ways that feel familiar and accessible

¹ 2025/26 data was not available at the time of publication. Statistics have been sourced from the Sustainability Scorecard and the Sustainability in Focus report 2025. These will be used as our baseline figures for future reporting.

² Since 2023

³ Feedback collected throughout 25/26 from sustainability champions (mostly professional services representatives) and college leadership (academic and professional services representatives)

- focus on everyday actions, helping individuals understand what sustainability means in their role, how they can contribute, and the difference their actions make
- share clear and consistent communication, ensuring people know what's changing, our progress and impact, why it matters, and how to get involved
- take an inclusive and flexible approach; recognising different starting points, competing priorities, climate emotions and the need to keep engagement manageable and meaningful
- celebrate and build a culture of individual and institutional pride in staff and students' sustainable practices and achievements and developments across the University

This strategy focuses on engaging our staff and students across the University, including academic, professional services and leadership roles. Most activity will be centred on our Edgbaston campus, with opportunities to extend this to our Dubai campus and wider communities where relevant.

Our Key Focus Areas 2026 – 2030

We aim to grow staff and student engagement in sustainability, continuously improving our institutional impact and performance, by focussing on the following themes of work:

Theme	Our Aim	Enablers
Understand: Build understanding and confidence	Build the knowledge and confidence staff and students need to take action on sustainability, on and beyond campus	Training and development activities Communities of practice: mentoring and peer learning Clear, relatable communication and storytelling through our communications activity (e.g. institutional, college, school) Local role modelling / peer influencing; making 'sustainability in practice' visible across campus

Embed: Make sustainability part of everyday roles	Ensure staff and students understand what sustainability means for them in their roles and take simple, relevant actions in their day-to-day work and study.	Integrating sustainability into teaching, research and operational practices e.g. through Green Impact, Green Accreditations and other schemes/ initiatives Role-relevant guidance and support for teaching, research and professional services roles (including leadership roles, aligning with leadership priorities) Shared tools and guidance to support consistent approaches Integrate sustainability into course content and create opportunities for students to apply learning on campus Local role modelling / peer influencing; making 'sustainability in practice' across campus Targeted engagement at key staff and student touch points/ physical spaces e.g. student accommodation, teaching spaces, laboratories, food & beverage areas
Evolve: Encourage shared ownership and shaping action	Create opportunities and incentivise staff and students to get involved, contribute to our strategic priorities and build shared ownership	Clear and consistent communication (institutional, college/ school, division) Opportunities to share ideas and feedback (institutional, college/ school,

		division, programme-level student reps etc) Sharing practices and connecting activity across teams and areas within the University Recognition and celebration of action Student co-creation, innovation and pilot opportunities (e.g. Student Sustainability Hub) Extra-curricular opportunities for students (e.g. volunteering, sustainability internships, competitions, programmes like Go Global and Birmingham Professional)
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Delivering Action

The Head of Sustainability and Director of Sustainability Education are responsible for overall leadership and oversight of the strategy, reporting to Sustainability Steering Group. They work with the Sustainability Engagement Lead and Educational Development and Engagement Fellow for Sustainability to coordinate and support delivery across the University.

Delivery of the strategy will be a shared effort across our wider University community, with colleagues contributing through their roles, teams and areas of activity. The central sustainability team will enable this by providing direction, coordination, support and opportunities to get involved. The University Guild of Students will be one of our key stakeholders and partners.

The Engagement Strategy sets out how we will build understanding, encourage action and embed sustainability into the culture of the University. The Sustainability Communications Strategy and Action Plan will support this work, by ensuring our sustainability messages, progress and opportunities for involvement are communicated clearly and consistently.

Each academic year, we will develop a focused action plan aligned to our key themes, setting out the activity we will deliver. We will agree SMART objectives to support delivery, for example, delivering an annual Green Week for our University community.

Measuring Impact

We will use our engagement indicators to review progress annually and adapt our approach to keep building momentum. We aim to increase awareness, participation and action across our staff and student community each year to 2030, measured through our engagement indicators.

We use our position in the QS World Sustainability Rankings, along with broader measures in the University Sustainability Scorecard, to understand whether our engagement activity is influencing our institutional impact and performance. The Sustainability Scorecard measures our environmental performance as well as progress delivering our broader strategic priorities.

Governance

The Sustainability Engagement Strategy was endorsed by Sustainability Steering Group July 2026. We will report progress delivering our action plan on a monthly basis, through established reporting channels. The Sustainability Steering Group will review the strategy annually to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose.

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