

# University of Birmingham Sustainability Policy

## What is sustainability?

Sustainability is the goal of achieving development in the present that is not detrimental to future generations.

## Our approach to sustainability

By balancing the economic, environmental and social impacts of decisions, we aim to maximise our positive contributions, especially through teaching, learning and research, and minimise our negative impacts, especially related to our operations.

We will ensure that students and staff are equipped and supported to maximise their contributions.

We are guided by our Strategic Plan, which focuses on:-

- Increasing our national and global influence.
- Using our global reach to tackle the major challenges of our time.
- An approach based upon purposefulness, pragmatism and partnership to spread knowledge and ideas, which will help to transform the world.

## About us

We accommodate over 32,000 students and 7,000 staff on our Edgbaston, Selly Oak and Dubai Campuses, together with facilities in Stratford, Coniston and Antsy, Coventry. We are increasing our global presence via strategic alliances and in America, Brazil, China and India. We are a major employer and a substantial contributor to the economy with links across the West Midlands, nationally and internationally.

The Sustainability Task Group is responsible for developing and delivering sustainability policy and plans, monitoring their effectiveness and is committed to continuing to improve our approach to sustainability.

## The global context

There are global challenges facing humanity that require concerted and coordinated efforts to tackle. We, as a global thought leader, are well placed to contribute to sustainable solutions to world problems and benefit from our innovative research in the operation of our estate.

We will contribute to Sustainable Development Goals in our learning, teaching, research and operations.

## Our impacts

Our activities and actions impacts on the economy, environment and society at a local, national and global level. To enhance our positive and reduce our negative impacts we will establish objectives and targets to guide and waymark our sustainability journey.

We aim to manage our activities, buildings and estate, embedding the core aspects of sustainable development in all we do, whilst ensuring minimal damage to the natural environment and conserving natural resources.

We will comply with and where possible exceed requirements set out in laws, regulations and standards by which we are governed.

The key areas through which sustainability will be approached are:

1. **Education, research and knowledge transfer** - increasing awareness, understanding and ensuring high standards of sustainability behaviour by staff and students. Serving society by producing and promoting research and teaching on sustainability.
2. **Energy and carbon management** – continuing to encourage energy efficient practices and investment in our estate to reduce carbon emissions and switching to lower carbon alternatives.
3. **Emissions and discharges** - putting in place appropriate controls to prevent pollution and reduce emissions and discharges to air, land and water.
4. **Waste and material resources** – continuing to prevent and reduce waste and increasing reuse of resources prior to recycling or disposal.
5. **Water** – manage and reduce water consumption through water efficient practices and technologies.
6. **Transport**– minimise the impact (emissions, congestions etc.) of business travel and commuting, by staff, and students, by encouraging use of lower / zero carbon forms of transport, vehicle sharing, public transport and use of IT (e.g. video conferencing).
7. **Buildings** –designing, refurbishing and operating buildings in line with sustainable principles including effective use of space and maximising health and wellbeing.
8. **Biodiversity** – protecting and enhancing natural habitats to encouraging wildlife and biological diversity on our estate together with supporting wider initiatives.
9. **Procurement** – encouraging systems thinking and applying the principles of the circular economy by embedding sustainable, ethical and life cycle considerations in purchasing decisions.
10. **Community** - working with local and international networks and supporting volunteering.
11. **Wellbeing** - Promoting and encouraging the wellbeing of our staff and students.
12. **Adapting for climate change** - considering how our estate needs to adapt to meet the challenges of climate change, for example overheating, flooding and biodiversity.

This policy, together with the objectives and targets stemming from it, will be reviewed by the Sustainability Task Group and progress reported annually, to University Executive Board making such recommendations, as it considers appropriate.