



University of Essex



Sustainability Policy

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Sustainability Policy

1.Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to improving the environmental efficiency of our campuses through infrastructure enhancements. Being a sustainable university requires input from all members of our community through the day-to-day choices they make. These choices are an essential part of efficient use of resources that ensure Essex can prosper for years to come.
- 1.2 Environmental sustainability is beneficial for Essex, improving our impact on the community around us and proliferating pro-environmental behaviour well beyond our campuses, as students take their learning with them in their careers. It also helps to manage costs and embed efficiencies for the long term as we navigate our journey to net zero. Importantly, for most people, changes just take a shift in mindset so that actions become more conscious.

Purpose

- 1.3 There are local, national and global impacts of what we do and while Essex is a force for good, there are always environmental consequences of our operations. We must remain committed to minimise the actions that we have, both through simple changes and deeper systemic approaches, to maximise positive outcomes.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Sustainability Policy is to encourage and support all members of our community to participate in sustainability at Essex through areas in their control, to contribute positively to the environment and ensure that Essex delivers on its declaration of a climate and ecological emergency.

Scope

- 1.5 This policy applies to all operations at the University of Essex. It is relevant to all staff, students and visitors, as well as on-site contractors and those working on behalf of the University of Essex and its subsidiary companies.
- 1.6 Our [Sustainability Sub-Strategy 2021-28 \(SSS\)](#) sets out our objectives to embed sustainable practice across 13 priority areas. The SSS guides our overall strategic approach, while this policy focuses on day-to-day activities of our campus community. [SSS progress reports and information on carbon reduction](#) are produced annually.

2. Everyone Can Do Their Bit – General principles and practices

2.1 Every member of our community plays a part in our ambition to deliver sustainable education and research. How this is achieved from one team to another, or one department to another, will vary; you are the expert in your area. Our core principles are to:

- Reduce waste overall and recycle as much as possible – thinking about the full lifecycle of products and services.
- Use water, gas and electricity (utilities) as efficiently and as mindfully as practical.
- Minimise our carbon emissions from electricity and gas use to reduce our contribution to climate change.
- Use our resources as wisely and efficiently as possible, to avoid all forms of wastage.

2.2 Contributing to sustainability at Essex is a broad spectrum; some actions are complex to deliver, while others are simple and should be adopted by everyone on our campuses. Regardless of your role at Essex, there are several basic steps, that will multiply to have positive effects. We encourage all members of our community to engage with the resources available, and information shared regarding sustainability.

2.3 The below are standard actions we expect our community to adhere to:

- Dispose of your waste appropriately, using the correct bins for recycling and general waste.
- Avoid waste where possible. For example, by taking your own cup when buying a hot drink on campus (most cafes offer a discount), purchasing only what you need or offering items for reuse by others.
- Switch off lights and equipment that are not in use to avoid wasting energy. If you are the last to leave a classroom or office, please take a moment to check that things are not left on unnecessarily.
- Turn off taps after use to avoid wasting water.
- Refer to the [Travel Decision Tree](#) for business travel, to help avoid high travel emissions (particularly from flights).

Sustainable Essex Commitment

2.4 As an organisation we are committed to reducing our environmental impact, and to be truly effective our culture must reflect this through our community's actions. To signify our shared commitment and accountability to sustainability, we ask our students and staff to sign up to the

Sustainable Essex Commitment. This is a pledge show that you understand your responsibilities and will do your part as a member of the University community. [Visit Moodle to complete the Commitment and earn a certificate.](#)

2.5 In addition to this, departments have the option to complete their own sustainability audit as a team, to review where they are already making good progress, and identify further opportunities. [The template document, with instructions, can be found on Moodle.](#)

Communication, Events and Purchasing

2.6 Visibility of sustainable practise is as important as actions themselves and are integral to driving environmental and financial efficiencies. How we communicate both internally and externally, and the products and services we purchase, are some of the most common areas where our community can have an impact on sustainability. If you are sharing a message, hosting an event or procuring goods, there are likely opportunities for direct or indirect sustainability action, and you should consider how this can be incorporated.

2.7 [Guidance for communicating sustainably is available online](#) – please refer to this to identify any enhancements you may be able to make. This includes simple steps such as showing reusable cups instead of disposables and ensuring longevity of printed materials.

2.8 You can also find [Sustainable Purchasing Guidance](#) online, offering steps to consider when purchasing goods, from value and longevity to end of life disposal and sustainability accreditations. The Procurement process already accounts for sustainability, but purchasing at local level is managed by teams.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Students and Employees

3.1 All staff and students have a responsibility to study, work and live on campus in environmentally conscious ways. They should adhere to above general principles and practices in addition to the below.

- Understand this Sustainability Policy and take responsibility for your individual actions.
- Understand other relevant policies related to sustainability. [These can be found online.](#)
- Complete essential training which covers sustainability.
- [Review and sign up to the Sustainable Essex Commitment.](#)
- Report problems or incidents to the appropriate team. For faults and maintenance issues this is ems-helpdesk@essex.ac.uk, and for sustainability topics this is sustainability@essex.ac.uk.

University Executive Committee

3.2 The University Executive committee is responsible for the strategic management of the University to delivering its overarching mission of excellence in education and research. In support of this policy, it is their responsibility to:

- Provide visible leadership in support of sustainability at Essex by championing general principles and practices.
- Embed appropriate action, where relevant, into university operations.
- Provide support to initiatives that further the University's operational sustainability progress.

Heads of Section / Departments and Faculty

- Review practices to ensure that operations and activity within their departments are being delivered in accordance with this policy, and in line with any relevant environmental legislation.
- Explore opportunities to embed sustainability into existing policies, where appropriate, at review stage.

Line Managers

- Ensure that operations and activity within their control are being delivered in accordance with this policy.
- Where relevant, discuss opportunities to enhance sustainability in their working practices with their employees.

Suppliers / Contractors / Sub-Contractors

3.3 We expect that those acting on behalf of the University of Essex adheres to our sustainability principles they will:

- Understand this policy, and ensure all staff deployed to our campuses are aware of their responsibilities.
- Provide information on their own environmental policy (or equivalent), for example at tender stage, to demonstrate commitment to sustainability.

4. Monitoring and Review

4.1 This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets with current needs and is in line with our commitment to addressing the climate and ecological emergency (alongside the SSS).

4.2 We will monitor progress in line with our annual SSS progress reporting, to assess the impact of our community's contribution.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

5.1 The University recognises that some aspects of sustainable action may not be suitable/feasible for all, and therefore projects/initiatives should be mindful of the impacts on all members of the community, with allowances/exceptions made where appropriate. Inclusive approaches will always be sought, in line with existing University practise.