



University of Essex



Waste Reduction, Reuse & Recycling Policy

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Publication date:	August 2022
Amended:	June 2025
Review date:	June 2027

Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Policy

Based on 2024 figures, the University produces an average of approximately 15 tonnes of waste every week, and manages this in accordance with the waste hierarchy: reducing, reusing, recycling, and disposal when there are no alternatives. Through our waste contractors we ensure that we are adhering to statutory obligations on the handling of waste and duty of care responsibilities. These contracts aim to commit zero waste direct to landfill; where disposal is the only viable route, materials will be treated for energy recovery.

We currently run recycling schemes for paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, cans, confidential paper shredding, WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment), batteries and metal. The University uses various external waste contractors to provide a collection, transportation and disposal service of all waste and recycling generated.

We ask that when students, staff or visitors no longer need an item, it is disposed of responsibly using the correct bins for everyday recycling and waste, and appropriate routes for larger/bulky and hazardous items. We currently receive rebates on recycled metal and cardboard, and therefore encourage correct separation on campus.

Our community can help to avoid generating waste by considering what they are buying/using at the outset. Following the principles of reduce, reuse, refill, recycle helps to inform your decisions:

Reduce: Consider the long-term impacts of items you are using; is there an alternative?

Reuse: Is it something that can be repurposed? Can you use it elsewhere, or could someone else?

Refill: Use a reuse bottle when topping up from one of the many water coolers on campus. Buying a coffee? Use a reuse cup to reduce waste and avoid paying the 'latte levy'.

Recycle: Put items in the correct bins to ensure they can be repurposed elsewhere.

Our vision for waste management at Essex focuses on circular economy principles. We don't just want to make sure we are recycling as much as possible, but instead are striving to ensure that, where possible, waste is eliminated, and our community supports reuse, waste minimisation and recycling in the most sensible ways.

The Sustainability Sub-Strategy 2021-28 sets out our commitments across 13 priority areas, including waste and recycling. [More information can be found on our website](#). Our aim is to increase the proportion of recyclable material collected on campus, alongside an overall decline in waste production, delivered through improved facilities and behaviour change.

Waste produced on our campuses comes from a wide range of sources due to the diverse nature of our activities. Progress has been made in providing recycling facilities on our campuses and in

accommodation buildings, working alongside our waste contractors to ensure materials removed from our campuses are processed responsibly.

We encourage our community to minimise waste where possible, from taking a reusable cup to cafes on campus, to choosing reused items of furniture rather than buying new. Some procedures and practices to facilitate these choices are already in place, while others are in development.

Our current KPIs (to 2026) are as follows:

- By 2026, total waste reduced by 5% (measured in tonnes) year-on-year from a 2019 baseline.
- General food waste audit across all areas and food waste trial undertaken in accommodation areas by 2023.
- By 2025, single-use plastics will not be used at events or in marketing materials.
- Average annual recycling to reach 50% by 2026.

These targets should help to inform decision-making in purchasing and waste management practices across all section and departments. Alongside this, work will progress in the Soft FM team, alongside the Sustainability team to create the facilities to make it as simple as possible for everyone.

[An A-Z of waste is available on our website](#), detailing what to do with a wide range of items. While not exhaustive, it covers the most common types of recycling and waste found on campus. If you have further queries, please contact the Sustainability team – sustainability@essex.ac.uk.

Hazardous wastes must be handled appropriately. This includes:

- Lamps and fluorescent tubes
- Paint and thinners
- Chemicals and cleaning products
- Sharps/needles
- Laboratory waste
- Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- WEEE

For all hazardous wastes, in the first instance you should contact the Soft FM Cleaning and Operations team – softfmcos@essex.ac.uk.

To arrange collection of large items, please contact the Estates helpdesk – ems-helpdesk@essex.ac.uk.