

Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027

Introduction

1. The Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027 is the University's third institution-wide sustainability strategy. It aims to maintain a sector-leading approach and continue our improvement journey. This strategy is rooted in the aims of our University Strategic Plan 2022-2027 and benefits we seek for key stakeholders, primarily our students. We have defined priority goals for this next 5 years that reflect our maturity on sustainability and align with our core mission, vision and objectives.
2. In the University's Strategic Plan, sustainability is both an integral part of our Vision and one of our five Values. This plan carries the vision of 'changing your world, so you can change ours' and the sustainability programme builds on this vision. We have been widely recognised as leaders and pioneers in sustainability, and this new strategy for 2022-2027 sets out how we can maintain that position and optimise our impact. The ambition for sustainability within the wider Strategic Plan is underpinned by our joined-up approach to sustainability and Education for Sustainability (EfS).
3. The University defines sustainability using internationally agreed principles, related to the full span of university activities and the core purpose of universities in society. Our definition sees the need to limit the negative environmental consequences of our activities, but also foregrounds the critical positive role of learning, research, imagination and leadership, in supporting societies towards sustainable futures. The definition we developed reflects the 'triple bottom line' of environmental protection, economic value and social equity, that underpins the concept of sustainability:

"Sustainability prompts us to think in terms of the future and using global perspective, recognising the connections between economy, society and ecology. The concept carries the aim of improving quality of life for people and communities across the globe, whilst protecting the natural systems upon which life depends."

4. The overarching aim of our Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027 is to achieve positive impact for the University, its stakeholders and wider communities, through three interlocking aspects: **sustainability learning, practice and collaboration**. The 6 core goals of the strategy connect across these impact areas and cover course experience, research impact, environmental management, carbon emissions reduction, collaboration with students, and our external partnerships.

Context and Aims

5. Sustainability agendas are growing in prominence, in light of accelerating climate change and loss of ecosystem assets essential to the wellbeing of future societies. Our Sustainability Strategy takes seriously the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report in August 2021, flagging current rates of environmental change as 'code red' for humanity. Our programme supports the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by United Nations (UN) Member States in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.
6. Evidence from students and young people points to the rising importance of sustainability for their professional lives, as well as their action as citizens. On this basis the NUS-linked education sector charity SOS-UK (Students Organising for Sustainability UK) has described sustainability as a '4th

functional skill' for the 21st century. Aligned to this, the 2021 UK Quality Assurance Agency guidance on Education for Sustainable Development places increased expectation on curriculum design that equips graduates to develop solutions and lead change on sustainability challenges.

7. Recognising this landscape, and the interconnected nature of the systemic changes that can be achieved within a university setting, our Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027 is focused on achieving impact through sustainability learning, practice and collaboration.
8. We will increase our academic and professional impact through **sustainability learning** by integrating Education for Sustainability more widely into curriculum design across our UGT and PGT core offer. We also intend to maximise the positive impact and sustainability benefit of our research pathways, building on the sustainability-focused achievements in our 2021 Research Excellence Framework submission. This will extend the capacity building, educational innovations, research impact and sector influence we have created to date in this area.
9. We will continue to improve our **sustainability practice** through responsible business operations that minimise negative environmental impact arising from our core activities. The critical aim in this area will be delivery against the reduction targets in our Carbon Net Zero Strategy to 2030, for all 3 scopes of carbon emissions. This strategy builds on our progress to date and joins the wider momentum towards 'net zero' emissions reflected at the COP26 conference in 2021.
10. We will progress **sustainability collaborations** via local, international and sector partnerships, notably collaboration with our students, which greatly enhances the impact we can collectively achieve. Our aspiration is to engage and support our students, working with them to deliver their priorities for action and change within and beyond the University. We also aim to strengthen our role as a regional anchor institution, improving the wellbeing of communities whilst protecting natural assets, and connecting sustainability with local regeneration and skills development.
11. The overall impact we can achieve is increased by the connectivity across the impact areas we are targeting, and the cumulative benefits these actions can generate:
 - We aim to forge collaborations with impact for partners and that co-produce new sustainability practice, bringing dynamic learning opportunities into our course offer;
 - As students develop through their learning experiences, the greater their impact as future sustainability professionals who work across borders and drive industry change;
 - Improving our good practices for sustainability and learning through our experience, enables our students to also learn from and help to drive our innovations.
12. Our status as one of the global network of United Nations recognised Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) in Education for Sustainable Development – “RCE Severn” – is key to our sustainability mission. Through all these connections, our whole university community can collectively extend its impact and support significant change, including locally in our region, within the education sector, and as part of the global effort towards a wider sustainability transformation.

2022-2027 Goals

13. This strategy has 6 goals, each associated with an impact area where they can make the most powerful contribution. These goals and the impact measures associated with them are summarised below (with further details, including baselines, contained in the action plan on pp. 6-7).

Impact Area	Goal	Measure/Objective
Learning	Goal 1 - Embed Education for Sustainability across our UGT and PGT offer	Achieve 100% integration of EfS into UG and PGT courses
	Goal 2 - Maximise our research outcomes and impact for sustainability	Develop 10 defined sustainability-focused research impact pathways
Practice	Goal 3 - Maintain leading performance and continual improvement in sustainability	Meet the improvement targets and policy commitments of our Environmental Management System (detailed in action plan below)
	Goal 4 - Achieve 2027 emissions reduction targets in the Carbon Net Zero Strategy	Meet the interim 2027 carbon reduction targets on our net zero goals (detailed in action plan below)
Collaboration	Goal 5 - Support students to drive change for sustainability within and beyond the University	Achieve 85% student satisfaction on sustainability in the National Union of Students skills survey
	Goal 6 - Collaborate with stakeholders to develop skills and practice in sustainability	Maintain status as a United Nations University recognised Regional Centre of Expertise in sustainability education

14. The University remains committed to the implementation and maintenance of an externally audited Environmental Management System (EMS) and associated policy commitments, to ensure transparency and accountability in our duties on environmental protection. In 2017 we moved our environmental governance arrangements from the Estates service into the Sustainability service, so its oversight aligns to this strategy and spans all professional and academic services and teams.
15. We have continued to operate our EMS accredited to the BS EN ISO 14001 standard, as the first English Higher Education institution to achieve this quality marque. We upgraded the system and gained accreditation to the latest 2015 standard in 2018. Our scope of accreditation covers the whole university estate and all areas of business, both campus operations and academic activities.
16. Our EMS and its performance improvement objectives are anchored into our Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027, with continual improvement supported by an annual sustainability performance review. Our formal policy commitments, which are assured by the operation of our EMS:
- i. are appropriate to the purpose and context of the University as an organisation, including the nature, scale and impacts of its activities, products and services.
 - ii. provide the framework for setting sustainability objectives in all areas of its core business, taking account of corporate operations and academic activities.
 - iii. formalise its commitment to environmental protection, including prevention of pollution; responsible procurement, supply chain management and resource use; climate change mitigation and adaptation; and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems.

- iv. provide assurance that the University is committed to the fulfilment of its compliance obligations with regard to the above priorities.
 - v. ensure its commitment to the continual improvement of its Environmental Management System to progressively enhance its sustainability performance.
17. Our Sustainability Strategy 2022-2027 is the public document that outlines these commitments and communicates them within the organisation and to interested parties. Delivery against the EMS objectives is supported by specific policies and plans, including our Estates Strategy; Carbon Net Zero Strategy; Travel Plan; Ethical Investment Policy; Procurement Strategy; and Catering Policy.
18. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – known as the “Global Goals” – communicate an agreed international purpose that guides our ambitions. We will continue to share our delivery against the SDGs in our public sustainability reporting and reporting to the UN, as a UN Regional Centre of Expertise and signatory of the tertiary sector SDG Accord.
19. The SDG framework helps to identify mutual benefits and creative collaboration opportunities across a range of industries, communities and professions. Our strategy focuses on the need to connect the ‘triple bottom line’ of sustainability in all our activities, to avoid treating the SDGs as unique objectives that can be pursued in isolation from one another. This connected approach underpins our educational mission and the principles of Education for Sustainability.

Strategic Capability

20. The University’s sustainability programme is well established at the close of our second Sustainability Strategy 2017-2022. As an early sector leader, UoG has pioneered an integrated approach, with expertise in developing Education for Sustainability in the core curriculum, both modelling good practice and working with key agencies to develop this new practice in our sector.
21. We have developed an integrated and mature sustainability programme, with international recognition for our pioneering approach that combines continual improvement in our whole university change programme, with the strategic development of Education for Sustainability to enrich our academic activities and wider educational partnerships.
22. Our capability to deliver on our goals for 2022-2027 is underpinned by a range of improvements achieved through our Sustainability Strategy 2017-2022. Notable achievements included:
- Becoming the #1 most sustainable UK university for the 2nd time in 2019, in the student-led People & Planet league that ranked every HE institution on 13 common scoring categories.
 - Winning 3 Green Gown Awards (2 UK, 1 international) and 5 Highly Commended (runner up) places in Green Gown Awards categories, plus a range of other recognition awards.
 - Developing a sector-leading Education for Sustainability approach that has reached 67% of our core courses and seen us provide expert advice to the UK Quality Assurance Agency.
 - Having 6 of selected 26 Impact Case Studies in our 2021 Research Excellence Framework submission with a direct focus on sustainability benefit and environmental protection.

- Completing our 10-year Carbon Strategy 2010-2020 having exceeded its 40% scope 1 and 2 emissions reduction target, with 45% reduction in 2021 against our 2005 baseline.
- Achieving specific operational milestones that evidence the maturity of our sustainability commitments, notably fossil fuel divestment in 2018 and zero waste to landfill in 2019.
- Creating the multiple award-winning ‘Who Cares’ marketing campaign that has led the sector in communicating sustainability and ceasing production of printed prospectuses.
- Delivering innovative award-winning Education for Sustainability learning partnership projects, as one of the United Nations recognised Regional Centres of Expertise.

23. The critical internal strategic alignments that optimise our sustainability contribution include:

- **Education Strategy** – to embed EfS as key to our curriculum offer, via inter-disciplinary and applied learning that enables students to innovate and work in ways that reach beyond their chosen subject specialism and enhance their employability.
- **Research Strategy** – to increase our impact through research and innovation that tackles the ‘grand challenges’ of sustainability, optimising the application of our research and adding to the global perspective and inclusivity of our research culture.
- **Estates Strategy** – to ensure delivery against our carbon ‘Net Zero’ emissions reduction objectives, whilst driving efficiencies and reducing the risks around volatile energy markets, and to design and operate our new City Campus to reflect our sustainability principles.
- **Digital Strategy** – to support our ‘Net Zero’ ambitions and wider sustainability principles with responsible IT practices, the use of online technology for learning and collaboration, and data-led approaches to sustainability performance and continual improvement.
- **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy** – to mutually reinforce the shared concern with justice and equity for all communities worldwide that links across our sustainability and equalities programmes, and to bring an environmental focus into our EDI activities.

24. The whole university community plays its part in our sustainability work and our Chair of University Council co-ordinates the involvement and input from our governors. Our Students’ Union contribute to sustainability and the development of their own practices, on behalf of our student community. We have established an Annual Sustainability Report, annual performance review, and a range of online communication channels, to share and develop this work with all stakeholders.

25. As an early pioneer, the University continues to advance on sustainability in a rapidly changing and complex sector environment. We aim to adapt to the future of agile working and learning in ways that support our sustainability commitment and look forward to the multi-level sustainability contribution we can make through the development of our new City Campus in Gloucester.

26. We will continue to deploy our expertise and resources to maximise impact and collaboration, as part of our ‘anchor institution’ role and standing as a UN recognised Regional Centre of Expertise. This will ensure that we are effectively positioned to pursue our vision for this next phase of our sustainability programme, in ways that improve prospects for societies worldwide.

Action Plan

Goal	Priority Actions	Measures & Timelines
<p>1. Embed Education for Sustainability across our UGT and PGT offer</p>	<p>1.1 Support course teams on curriculum design and assessment to meet EfS targets</p> <p>1.2 Offer CPD support to academic staff through LIFT fund, PGCAP, ADU programmes and resources</p> <p>1.3 Support validation processes and quality assurance teams to reflect EfS in new provision</p> <p>1.4 Collaborate with student representatives to reflect their learning and employability needs into EfS developments in the curriculum</p>	<p><u>2027 Target</u> = EfS integration into 100% of UGT and PGT courses (2021 baseline = 67%)</p> <p>Quality ratings targeted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bronze – 33% ○ Silver – 37% ○ Gold - 30% <p>Annually monitored with progress check in 2024</p>
<p>2. Maximise our research outcomes and impact for sustainability</p>	<p>2.1 Develop selected research themes to optimise sustainability impact narratives</p> <p>2.2 Support early career researchers and pedagogical researchers in developing sustainability research</p> <p>2.3 Develop research and publications from the leading EfS practice at the institution</p>	<p><u>2027 Target</u> = 10 impact pathways in development with clear sustainability focus (2021 baseline = 6)</p> <p>Aiming at next REF – review case study potential with RPA leads at 2027</p>
<p>3. Maintain leading performance and continual improvement in sustainability</p>	<p>3.1 Maintain performance standards and deliver on agreed targets for university operations</p> <p>3.2 Produce annual sustainability report and meet other external reporting requirements</p> <p>3.3 Operate the Environmental Management System (EMS) to drive performance improvement</p> <p>3.4 Seek recognition for initiatives and innovations from expert bodies and awards schemes</p>	<p><u>2027 Targets</u> = ISO 14001 EMS = successful annual audits and delivery against objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce gas consumption by 32% - Reduce electricity consumption by 5% - Reduce water consumption by 12% - Reduce waste arising by 23% - Increase recycling rate to 60% <p>City Campus BREEAM accredited by 2023</p> <p>Aim to maintain top tier status in the SOS-UK new Carbon Targets ranking</p> <p>Maintain fossil fuel divestment commitment</p> <p>Maintain commitment on zero waste to landfill</p>

		<p>Maintain Marine Stewardship Council and Red Tractor status for catering service</p> <p>Establish new objectives and monitor progress on biodiversity improvement</p>
<p>4. Achieve 2027 emissions reduction targets in the Carbon Net Zero Strategy</p>	<p>4.1 Drive the Carbon Net Zero Strategy including monitoring, funding bids and stakeholder liaison</p> <p>4.2 Deliver carbon reduction projects across the estate and building management systems, including our new City Campus development</p> <p>4.3 Meet reporting requirements associated with ESG loan at City Campus</p> <p>4.4 Develop new travel plan with Estates, with annual monitoring linked to net zero objectives</p> <p>4.5 Establish procurement practices and objectives to deliver supply chain emissions reductions</p> <p>4.6 Contribute to JISC project on smart buildings and dashboarding to enable user communications on utilities consumption and carbon emissions</p>	<p><u>2027 Targets</u> =</p> <p>Carbon reduction targets (ESG financing-linked)</p> <p>Scope 1 = 33%</p> <p>Scope 2 = 34%</p> <p>Scope 3 Travel = reduce emissions per FTE by 12%</p> <p>Scope 3 Procurement = limit increase to 47% (includes construction emissions at City Campus)</p> <p>Delivery of projects funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PSDS2 boiler replacement and building performance works – complete in 2022 - PSDS3 infrastructural improvements at City Campus - complete in 2023
<p>5. Support students to drive change for sustainability within and beyond the University</p>	<p>5.1 Deliver the Live Smart learning and engagement initiative in partnership with students</p> <p>5.2 Collaborate with Student Subject Representatives to co-produce and influence course experiences</p> <p>5.3 Support the Students' Union on their sustainability developments</p>	<p><u>2027 Target</u> =</p> <p>85% NUS survey satisfaction measure (2021 baseline = 79%)</p>
<p>6. Collaborate with stakeholders to develop skills and practice in sustainability</p>	<p>6.1 Provide staff guidance and resources to enhance sustainability implementation and good practice</p> <p>6.2 Maintain the UN University RCE Severn hub and annual public engagement and learning projects in sustainability with local and/or global partners</p> <p>6.3 Co-ordinate action on sustainability research and innovation with Schools and regional partners</p> <p>6.4 Deliver stakeholder communications and sector collaborations to support sustainability practice</p>	<p><u>2027 Target</u> =</p> <p>Maintain UN RCE status and deliver at least 1 RCE collaborative learning project annually</p>

