



Environmental Sustainability Policy

Approved: Feb-24 | Review: Sept-26



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Review period

This Policy will be reviewed by the Working Group every two years for approval by the Student Leadership Team and Board of Trustees.

To note

The Group are required to report on progress in this area every six months. The Environment and Sustainability Working Group Co-Chairs, one Student Leadership Team member and one staff member, have joint responsibility for monitoring and updating this policy.

Contacts

Responsibility for this Policy sits with the Environment and Sustainability Working Group, as delegated by the Student Leadership Team and Board of Trustees.

Introduction

The Students Association recognises the urgent nature of our changing climate, and the need to act swiftly to respond to the impact of global warming and reduce its acceleration.

We commit to working to reduce the negative environmental impact of our activities, whilst taking advantage of the opportunities to have a positive impact through harnessing student voice to advocate for change and encouraging positive collective and individual action.

We aim to create an equitable policy, which is implemented in a socially, environmentally, and financially responsible manner. We are committed to ensuring this policy does not adversely affect those who are already impeded by barriers to their engagement. For example, if someone needs to travel by car to a face-to-face event, we would not want them to feel unable to attend because of environmental factors.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define sustainability at the Students Association.
- Set out our principles in relation to environmental sustainability.
- Identify our objectives for action within this area.
- Share responsibilities, other relevant policies, and plans for monitoring and review.

Definition

Sustainability at the OU Students Association means we will undertake our mission to improve the OU student experience whilst ensuring the organisation is in the best possible position to achieve that mission for future generations of students. It means we will use the earth's resources in a responsible way to minimise negative impact and will empower the student voice to influence decision making throughout the University.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all activities of the Students Association across all our work streams. This includes the Board of Trustees, Student Leadership Team, volunteers and staff of the Association within the Students Association and the OU Student Shop.

Principles

- The OU Students Association acknowledges the challenges of living sustainably.
- We recognise that balance is needed in all things – particularly when considering Environmental Sustainability at the Association and within the University. For example, we know that many students need or prefer physical books in order to study and we know that face to face meetings and events bring huge benefits in relation to building relationships.
- We seek to encourage and empower through positive actions – never through shame or judgement and we want to highlight that small actions can make a big difference.
- We want to ensure the Association is fit for future generations of students and is inclusive of all.

Objectives

In line with our organisational values, the OU Students Association makes the following commitments relating to environmental sustainability:

Impact

- The Association will measure and track the environmental impact of its activities.
- The Association will aim to reduce carbon emissions from meetings, by ensuring all meetings are offered hybrid so attendees have a choice to attend online or face to face. (With the exception of mandatory face to face meetings for the staff team.) Where face to face events and meetings are held, ensure they are worthwhile by maximising their impact. Balance the benefits of having face to face events with their environmental impact.
- To consider environmental impact of all activities through completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- To reduce and mitigate negative environmental impact wherever possible – for example through taking due care to select more sustainable goodies, prizes and giveaways.

Engagement

- The Association will collaborate with stakeholders, including colleagues within the University, to maximise the positive impact of our work in this area.
- To empower and engage students in our work in this area. To provide opportunities to listen to the student voice, and take action based on student feedback.
- The Association will provide opportunities for students to engage on topics relating to environmental sustainability through online articles, events, and volunteering opportunities.

The Open University

- The Association will campaign and advocate on behalf of OU Students, for positive environmental action from the University.
- Through the Environment and Sustainability Working Group, the Association will take up opportunities to share the student voice through the appropriate channels within the University.
- The Association, through the Working Group, will create and disseminate position statements where appropriate.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for this Policy sits with the Environment and Sustainability Working Group, as delegated by the Student Leadership Team and Board of Trustees. The Group are required to report on progress in this area every 6 months.

The Environment and Sustainability Working Group Co-Chairs – one Student Leadership Team member and one staff member have joint responsibility for monitoring and updating this policy.

Linked Policies

Travel and Subsistence Policy

Hybrid Working Policy, within Staff Handbook

Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be monitored through the Environment and Sustainability Working group.

This Policy will be reviewed and updated by the Working Group every two years for approval by the Student Leadership Team and Board of Trustees.