Sustainability Strategy

2022-25

STUDENTS' UNION UCL

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Contents

'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

Brundtland, G. (1987). Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future

Introduction

Welcome the Students' Union UCL Sustainability Strategy 2022-2025. It sets out an updated action plan for us to achieve our vision to be an organisation that lives up to our students' values, by being truly sustainable in all aspects of our work, educating our members about climate change and protecting the environment, and effectively influencing UCL to operate to the highest standards of sustainability.
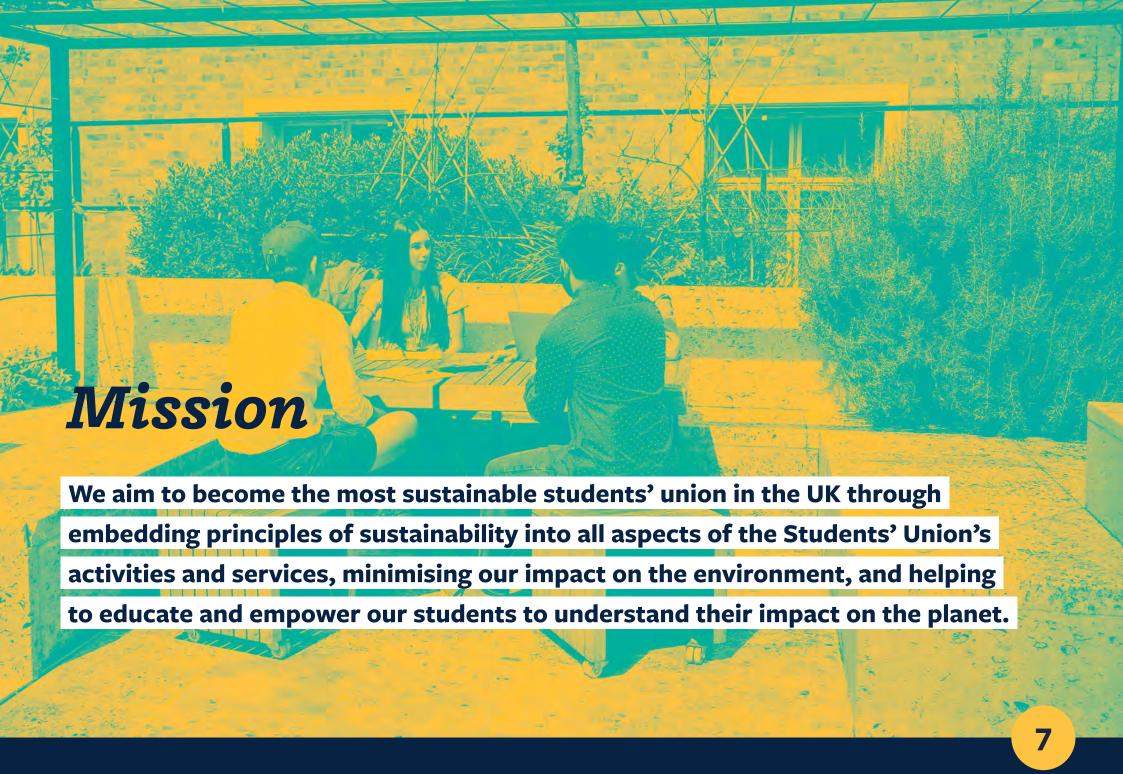
Sustainability is increasingly becoming one of the most important issues for our members – leaders and shapers of tomorrow. As the representative body of present and future UCL students, the Students' Union is uniquely positioned to lead by example through embracing sustainability in all aspects of its work and service provision, educating its members about the dangers of climate change and the urgent need for action to protect the planet, and influencing UCL to accelerate its work to be a truly sustainable university.

Our ambition to be a leader of environmental stewardship in the sector reflects not only our responsibility to play the part in global response to the climate crisis, but also our commitment to best represent the values and interests of our members. To that end, this strategy sets out an evidence-based and data-driven approach for the Student's Union UCL to become a net-zero organisation by 2030, alongside other headline commitments to ensure that we are a truly sustainable organisation.

Vision

Our vision is to be an organisation that lives up to our students' values, by being truly sustainable in all aspects of our work, educating our members about the threat of climate change and the need for urgent action to protect the environment, and effectively influencing UCL to operate to a truly sustainable university.

Mission

We aim to become the most sustainable students' union in the UK through embedding principles of sustainability into all aspects of the Students' Union's activities and services, minimising our impact on the environment, and helping to educate and empower our students to understand their impact on the planet.

Headline commitments

Our headline commitments are:

1. Become a net zero-carbon organisation by 2030

2. Cut the amount of non-recyclable or non-compostable waste we generate by 50% by 2025, and by 90% by 2030

3. Ensure all food and drink sold by the Union are ethically sourced and low carbon

4. Aim to improve the percentage of hot drinks sold in reusable cups to at least 50% by 2025 and 90% by 2030

5. Divest the Union from all single-use plastic by 2025

6. Launch a sector-leading sustainability education and leadership programme for students.

Key Objectives

Governance - Ensure the Students' Union embeds sustainability in decision-making across the organisation, and that the Union is transparent about the actions we set in our sustainability action plan and our progress towards them.

Waste - Minimise the amount of waste our operations and activities produce including through supporting behavioural change and facilitating the most sustainable disposal of waste across our facilities.

Energy efficiency - Establish accurate energy and water usage data and reduce the use of these resources used in our buildings and facilities.

Procurement - Only procure products with the highest environmental and animal welfare standards, and develop close collaboration with suppliers to improve their own environmental performance so that we're reducing the environmental impact of our supply chain.

Travel - Systematically capture data on all travel resulting from our operations and activities and implement evidence-based processes to reduce emissions to a minimum.

Student engagement - Educate and empower our members through a programme of sustainability education and involve our members in our sustainability action through effective consultation and communication.

Offsetting and Insetting - Develop a robust offsetting or insetting scheme for the Students' Union, linked to our activities, for any emissions that it is not possible to eliminate, to enable us to achieve net-zero carbon.

1. Governance

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
1.1. Develop and agree a comprehensive environmental policy.	2022	Health, Safety & Environment; HR & Central Support
1.2. Add sustainability requirements to all job descriptions.	2022	HR & Central Support
1.3. Include sustainability as objective in appraisal for all seniorstaff and other staff members where appropriate.	2022	HR & Central Support
1.4. Put in place new Standard Operating Procedures based on the Impacts and Aspects Register provided by the audit, particularly on resource-efficient management, data collation, monitoring and reporting.	2023	Health, Safety & Environment
1.5. Include 'Sustainability' as an agenda item in regular senior meetings to ensure continuous communication and embed sustainability in the culture of the organisation.	2022	HR & Central Support
1.6. Report key carbon emissions metrics as part of regular monthly performance reporting alongside management accounts.	2022	Finance; HR & Central Support
1.7. Update the environmental policy at least annually in consultation with staff, members, and other stakeholders as necessary.	Annual	Health, Safety & Environment; HR & Central Support
1.8. Report annually to the Board of Trustees on progress against the sustainability strategy.	Annual	HR & Central Support
1.9. Hold an annual induction session for our new Sabbatical Officer team specifically on the Union's approach to sustainability and support them with efforts to influence UCL to take an even stronger approach to sustainability.	2022	HR & Central Support; Chief Executive

2. Waste

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
2.1. Introduce consistent and clearly labelled waste collection infrastructure aligned with UCL-managed waste streams across all SU spaces.	2022	HR & Central Support; Facilities
2.2. Implement a process for measurement of the waste produced by the Union, by waste stream.	2022	HR & Central Support; Facilities
2.3. Pressure UCL to introduce waste collection stream for industrially compostable disposables across campus in coordination with CH&Co.	2024	HR & Central Support; Catering
2.4. Increase a takeaway single-use cup extra charge to 50p.	2022	Catering
2.5. Scope out and introduce a reusable cup scheme (e.g. Clubzero) to provide a convenient alternative to single-use disposables (cups, lids, stirrers etc.) in our cafes.	2022	Catering
2.6. Run an intensive communication campaign to inform customers about available reusables options and reinforce the uptake.	2022	Marketing & Communications; HR & Central Support
2.7. Switch from disposable 'Vegware' and drinks cups in catering outlets back to crockery and cutlery for all 'drink in' customers, deploying energy efficient dishwashers.	2022	Catering
2.8. Consult students about switching to the most convenient, effective reusable containers for food or universally recycled, low-impact disposable containers.	2023	Catering
2.9. Undertake a packaging audit to determine what types of single-use plastic packaging can be phased out and review all products sold in the SU outlets from a sustainable circular-economy perspective.	2023	Catering, Retail, HR & Central Support
2.10. Make all events catering disposables-free.	2022	Catering

3. Energy efficiency

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
3.1. Request SU areas are audited under next ISO50001 UCL internal energy audit to ensure SU staff are following energy efficiency procedures.	2023	HR & Central Support; Facilities
3.2. Work with UCL to arrange appropriate sub-metering for all SU spaces so that we have accurate data on all energy and water usage.	2024	HR & Central Support; Facilities
3.3. Regularly input and report all energy and water usage data in Axiom.	2022	HR & Central Support
3.4. Actively lobby UCL on improved facilities management for Union spaces, to complement the Union's environmental management procedures.	Ongoing	Health, Safety & Environment; Facilities; HR & Central Support
3.5. Ensure that lights and electrical equipment will be switched off when not in use through technological solutions, enforcement protocols, and regular switch-off events.	2023	Health, Safety & Environment; Facilities; Systems
3.6. Purchase energy efficient equipment and products for our facilities and outlets avoiding like-for-like replacements so that our purchasing strategy is energy effective. Introduce a purchasing policy with energy-efficiency specs for outlet and other electrical equipment.	2023	Facilities; Systems
3.7. Manage our water use to meet good practice measures for offices and commercial premises through standardising water saving devices and agreeing on minimum specification for water-efficient dishwashers.	2023	Facilities; Catering; Bars
3.8. Develop historical data storage and disposal protocols to reduce emissions from cloud computing.	2023	Systems

4. Procurement

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
4.1. Develop a sustainable and ethical procurement policy to prioritise sourcing products that have low carbon footprint, are made from recycled materials, are designed to be easily recycled, avoid over-packaging, do not lead to waste with serious environmental impacts, and, where appropriate, are produced according to organic principles and fairly traded.	2022	Finance; HR & Central Support
4.2. Carry out a suppliers' list audit to update and reduce the number of our suppliers.	2022	Finance; All departments
4.3. Investigate the environmental performance of 30 priority companies in our supply chain and give preference to products and suppliers with least environmental impact, based on the guidelines in our sustainable procurement policy.	2025	All departments
4.4. Through supplier engagement, obtain actual carbon emission factors per unit of product service provided from at least 30 highest impact suppliers by 2025, and from all by 2030.	2025	All departments
4.5. Require all priority suppliers to provide details of their own GHG emissions reduction activities and Environmental Social Governance (ESG) practices at least annually to track and reduce our scope 3 emissions footprint.	2025	All departments
4.6. Maintain up-to-date supplier profiles in the Axiom software with information obtained through supplier engagement.	Ongoing	HR & Central Support
4.7. Provide training on sustainable procurement and supplier engagement for all staff dealing with procurement.	2022	HR & Central Support
4.8. Create an internal sustainable events policy to reduce waste arisings (esp. through guidance on allowed giveaways), reduce the carbon impact of our events, and to favour local, sustainable produce and products.	2022	Clubs & Societies; Central Support
4.9. Ensure that all cleaning materials used on our premises are environmentally friendly with a low emissions footprint.	2023	Facilities; Catering; Bars
4.10. Ensure that all materials, furniture, fixtures, and flooring used in facilities refurbishment are resource efficient and environmentally friendly and – where possible – part of the circular economy.	2024	Facilities

4.11. Review the Union's banking arrangements to ensure that our funds are held in banks which have strong environmental credentials.	2022	Finance

5. Travel

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
5.1. Embed a Sustainable Travel Calculator in all travel reclaim procedures to improve travel data capture and encourage more sustainable travel decision-making across the organisation.	2022	Finance; Clubs & Societies; Volunteering
5.2. Scope out a process for systematic capture of all C&S and volunteering travel data.	2023	Clubs & Societies; Volunteering; Central Support
5.2. Embed reducing the need for business travel by encouraging the use of remote technologies in all Union's business travel-related policies.	2022	Finance
5.3. Audit the Union's travel policies and amend if necessary to ensure incentivisation of the most sustainable travel options.	2022	Finance; Clubs & Societies; Volunteering
5.4. Conduct an annual all-staff commuting survey, develop an action plan to reduce emissions from staff commuting and enable all staff the option to offset their emissions.	2022	HR & Central Support
5.5. Make a travel calculator available to students to encourage personal journeys with the lowest carbon emissions.	2022	HR & Central Support
5.6. Enable all delegates to travel to and from our events using low carbon forms of travel and voluntarily offset their emissions.	2023	HR & Central Support

6. Student engagement

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
6.1. Launch a sustainability communications plan, embedding sustainability updates, opportunities, calls to action and progress celebrations in weekly communications from the Officers.	2022	Marketing & Communications; HR & Central Support
6.2. Create a sustainability hub on the SU webpages, integrated into the main menu structure (possibly under 'Make a change' tab).	2022	HR & Central Support
6.3. Develop a carbon footprint measurement tool for clubs and societies to support the identification of highest-impact opportunities for carbon reduction.	2025	Clubs & Societies; HR & Central Support
6.4. Embed practical sustainability guidance in existing training programmes for student leaders (Officers, C&S, Reps, Volunteers).	2023	HR & Central Support; Clubs & Societies; Policy, Governance & Insight, Volunteering
6.5. Update the Sustainable Societies checklist.	2022	Clubs & Societies
6.6. Explore opportunities for embedding sustainability requirements in guidance for clubs and societies (e.g. preferred suppliers list, travel procedures, event organisation).	2024	Clubs & Societies
6.7. In collaboration with UCL, carry out an in-depth analysis of student sustainability awareness and behaviours, registering student ideas and concerns, and their identification of obstacles to implementing sustainable practices (as part of the Grand Challenges grant).	2022	Clubs & Societies
6.8. Implement a recurrent consultation with students about their consumer habits and behaviours to identify opportunity areas for the Union for engagement with members, impactful change in commercial offering and education about sustainability.	2022	Commercial; Marketing & Communications

6.9. Define and scope out options for an education and leadership programme on sustainability in consultation with our student body and relevant UCL departments.	2023	HR & Central Support
6.10. Coordinate a sustainability awareness campaign throughout the year, including a distinct Union presence as part of UCL's 28 Days of Sustainability and an annual flagship sustainability lecture for our students.	2022	HR & Central Support
6.11. Lobby UCL to provide more space for the Union to host a student kitchen as part of the consultation on the Masterplan for SU Space	2022-23	Sabbatical Officers and Chief Executive
6.12. Further develop the clubs and societies resource centre with rentable reusable equipment for events.	2023	Clubs & Societies

7. Offsetting and insetting

Actions	Target Date	Responsible departments
7.1. Research and develop options for a sector-leading carbon offset scheme, linked to the SU mission and community, to target our residual emissions.	2023	HR & Central Support

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