

University of Westminster: Sustainable Development Policy

The University of Westminster has a long and distinctive history, established as the UK's first polytechnic in 1838 we have always held a unique place in the heart of London; respectful and aware of the impact we have on our environment and local, national and international communities. We are committed to being a sustainable and socially responsible University and as such we recognise that our activities have potential to impact the local, national and global environment positively and negatively. We are committed to managing and reducing our environmental impacts and developing our operation in a sustainable manner, adopting best practice and putting sustainable thinking at the forefront of our decision-making processes.

We need to respond to the challenges we face globally around issues such as climate change, food, good health and well-being, procurement, equality, sustainable cities and communities, water and energy security. As a response to this, the University is working towards ensuring that sustainable development is fully embraced by our students and colleagues; is enshrined within all aspects of strategy, planning and activities, with resources available to ensure operational implementation and cultural change when required.

We will map our programmes against the global United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to identify progress. As a University, we have an important role to play in the achievement of these goals and recognise that we will benefit from engaging with them. As part of this commitment, the University will use the global goals as a framework to allow us to effectively combine and report on our progress. We are committed to annually reporting our achievements against these goals and participating in the Times Higher Education's Impact Rankings to help monitor and benchmark our performance.



Sustainable Development Framework

We are committed to embedding sustainable development across all our University sites and in all the work we do. Developing, supporting and promoting environmental activities and events, engaging internal and external communities through initiatives which engender lasting change. To this end, we have developed a framework which encompasses all our activities into three core areas:

Sustainable Curriculum and Research and Knowledge Exchange

We will ensure that the SDGs and Education for Sustainable Development are considered as part of our curriculum and through our Research Communities. Links to the SDGs will be identified and opportunities for further embedding these in the curriculum and research at Westminster will be explored.

Sustainable Campus

We will ensure sustainable development is considered across all University sites and in all the work we do by embedding Environmental Management into the University's decision-making processes. We will cultivate a built environment which prioritises sustainable development in site enhancement, design and operation - leading to improved environmental performance across our estate. We will empower and engage our students, colleagues and the local community to become active citizens for sustainable development – developing and promoting environmental initiatives and events to help the University achieve our SDG objectives and positively impact on the wellbeing of all communities. We will ensure that effective partnerships are in place with our suppliers to reflect our commitments to the SDGs in the products and services we procure.

Pathway to Net Zero

We will develop our pathway to net-zero in response to global carbon reduction targets. Our strategic approach will consider equitable development and societal impacts alongside carbon management. We will publicly report on our achievements towards reaching these carbon goals, including regular reporting of our scope 1,2 and 3 emissions. A core part of this programme will be a focus on Carbon Literacy Training which will be made available across the University to ensure a common language and understanding around the urgency of emission reduction.

Our Objectives

1. Promote the SDGs as part of the curriculum, embedding principles of Education for Sustainable Development in teaching and learning outcomes.
2. Monitor and develop links between the SDGs and research activities at the University.
3. Minimise the impact that University operations have on climate change by achieving net zero emissions, in line with national and global carbon targets.
4. Promote and account for sustainable development in current estate management and future planning, building, refurbishment and use.
5. Measure and account for the social, ethical and environmental impact of procurement and purchasing.
6. Comply fully with all relevant environmental legislation, regulations and agreements.
7. Implement the Waste Hierarchy, focusing on waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and prevention of pollution.
8. Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.
9. Protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity across the University estate.

May 2025

Next review date: May 2026

10. Develop engagement and behaviour change programmes to allow colleagues, students, our local community and all stakeholders to engage with the University on sustainable development and share relevant environmental knowledge, skills and experience to meet our commitments to the SDGs.
11. Embed a continually improving Environmental Management System (EMS) in line with EcoCampus, maintaining a Platinum level award.
12. Annually report on all activities and initiatives that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.