

SUSTAINABILITY WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY



SUSTAINABILITY
STRATEGY



Context and rationale

Our students are entering a world characterised by rapid change, uncertainty and risk which will affect them throughout their professional and personal lives. Globally, societies are facing urgent and unprecedented challenges and opportunities relating to how an economically, environmentally, socially and politically sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations can be realised and sustained.

Mindful of this context, Plymouth University has already established a reputation both nationally and internationally as a leader in the higher education sector for sustainability, taking an award-winning whole institutional approach and working collaboratively across operations, research and teaching and learning, as well as driving innovation for sustainability at all levels from local to international.

Our Sustainability Strategy will help us achieve our ambition to go further in realising the concept of the 'sustainable university' making a powerful positive difference to our individual and collective futures, whilst maintaining our high profile in national and international sustainability indexes (e.g. Living in Future Environments (LiFE) and People and Planet Green League) and playing a vital leading role in the city of Plymouth, the region and well beyond.

We believe strongly that we should enable individuals and communities to achieve their potential in ways that protect their futures as well as maintain the resilience and health of the planet's life-support systems, so ensuring a legacy for future generations.

The challenges created by the financial crisis have been, and continue to be, considerable and yet we have demonstrated our ability to deliver efficiencies and operate more effectively and to build a financially sustainable future for our University.

"Today we stand at a crossroads. Continuing on the same path will put people and our planet at greatly heightened risk. The other path, we believe, provides extraordinary opportunity, but we must be committed and courageous in following it"

Co-chairs of the United Nations Secretary-General's
High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability

Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A future worth choosing (2012)

Overarching aims

We aim to build on our existing position as a leading UK university in sustainability by striving for excellence in financial, environmental and social responsibility – and demonstrating sustainability best practice, knowledge generation and ideas - across all of our activities.

We will continue to demonstrate - through our students, staff, graduates and partners - our commitment to addressing social, economic, environmental and ethical issues and their interrelationship, through our work including social enterprise, volunteering and community engagement.

We will harness together our spirit of enterprise and our ethos of sustainability to make a positive and transformative impact on the University community, Plymouth, the region, nationally and internationally, working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders throughout.

We will continue to deliver efficiency and value for money to ensure we are in a position to demonstrate our commitment to financial sustainability with a strong, robust evidence base.

We will also continue our commitment to a number of international accords¹ relating to sustainability and ensure that we implement our obligations with regards to sustainability in teaching, research, operations and infrastructure.

A sustainable society is one that can persist over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or social systems of support.

Meadows, Meadows and Randers (1992: 254)

¹The Talloires Declaration http://www.ulsf.org/talloires_declaration.html; The Rio+20 Treaty on Higher Education <http://www.copernicus-alliance.org/>; The Rio+20 Directory of Committed Deans and Chancellors

<http://rio20.euromed-management.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Higher-Education-Sustainability-Initiative-for-Rio-The-directory-of-Deans-Chancellors-committed.pdf>

Link with Strategy 2020

Our Sustainability Strategy directly supports the delivery of the University Strategy 2020, particularly in addressing the ambition to achieve resilience, sustainability and effectiveness. Our Sustainability Strategy builds on the objectives set-out under this ambition, highlighting the actions that will be taken to maintain and enhance Plymouth's standing as a leading institution with regard to sustainability. Sustainability is a university-wide undertaking and as such our overarching aims and goals in this area, as articulated by Strategy 2020, are supported and enacted throughout the institution.

Relevance to you

Our Sustainability Strategy will drive our success and focus our activities in sustainability across the University.

If you are:

- **a student**, this strategy emphasises our commitment to helping you understand broad issues of sustainability on a local and global scale, and invites you as a member of the University community to be an active and creative partner in helping realise the University's sustainability ambitions.
- **a member of staff**, this strategy demonstrates our commitment to embedding sustainability across the University, and to growing our world-class reputation for sector leadership in this respect. Your positive contribution to realising this strategy and shaping activities and outcomes is important and welcomed.
- **an alumnus, business associate, community member, partner or other stakeholder**, this strategy encapsulates the University's dedication to all issues relating to sustainability, including its social responsibility. We invite and welcome your involvement in making partnership an essential part of realising the Strategy.

Goals and Actions

We have identified three goals and action areas to drive forward our sustainability agenda in support of the University Strategy 2020.

Goal 1: A sustainable university.

We will develop and manage sustainable resource strategies for our estate and for the procurement of goods and services, and strengthen and diversify our income base to ensure that we have sufficient resources –financial, technological and physical estate –to deliver our University mission while also reducing our impact on the natural environment.

“An institution is being managed on a sustainable basis if, taking one year with another, it is recovering its full economic costs across its activities as a whole, and is investing in its infrastructure (physical, human and intellectual) at a rate adequate to maintain its future productive capacity appropriate to the needs of its strategic plan and students, sponsors and other customers’ requirements”.

“Assessing the sustainability of higher education” (June 2011)

Actions:

- Secure our long term financial sustainability by focussing on income generating activities that will create a positive financial contribution and return on investment, diversifying income streams, challenging cost bases and maximising ethical giving through philanthropy.
- Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of University processes, particularly through intelligent use of information technology, and improving decision-making and transparency around resource allocation
- Effective application of whole life costing models, especially when designing and procuring new buildings, refurbishing existing buildings and buying equipment
- Support local, regional and social enterprise through business-community partnership, ensuring university funds are invested ethically with a particular emphasis on funds that provide social, economic and environmental benefits.

- Embed sustainable procurement, by ensuring the University is purchasing from socially, ethically and environmentally responsible businesses.
- Continue to reduce our carbon emissions, with an ultimate aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, by reducing the University's own operational emissions as far as possible.
- Maximise biodiversity on campus and find opportunities to create green environments.
- Develop a sustainable food culture at the University, providing Fairtrade products where possible and working with local food partners to increase the demand and supply of seasonal, local and organic food.
- Minimise the environmental impact from transport associated with the University through the promotion of sustainable travel options for staff, students and our suppliers and the greater use of video conferencing and other technology enabled solutions to facilitate meetings
- Reduce waste generated per staff and student, increase the proportion of waste recycled and manage waste streams including food composting.
- Show continuous overall environmental improvement by conforming to the international standard ISO 14001.
- Continue to pursue sustainable ICT projects to increase the efficiency of ICT and building systems, and to minimise their negative impact on the natural environment.

This action area is led by Finance and Sustainability which encompasses Finance, Estates and Facilities Management, and Procurement and Sustainability.

Goal 2: Learning for the future.

Learning from sustainability best practice within Plymouth University and across the world, our students will be able to engage positively with sustainability issues affecting their personal and professional lives in a rapidly changing world. In support of this, we will enable organisational learning involving all members of the University community towards sustainability-oriented whole institutional change.

Actions:

- Support curriculum innovation, development and change towards sustainability through working with Schools and Faculties, developing resources, and providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- Implement innovative and transformative ways in which sustainability can enhance the student and staff experience.
- Offer high quality curricula that reflect our sustainability and enterprise ethos and incorporates innovative learning approaches to meet the needs of current and prospective students, employers, professional and statutory bodies, nationally and world-wide.
- Engage students as partners in creating learning experiences relating to sustainability.
- Pioneer extra-curricular opportunities to augment students' understanding of sustainable development.
- Sustain our involvement with local schools and the University Technical College to continue to raise aspirations of higher education study in the city of Plymouth and surrounding region.
- Monitor the status and incidence of sustainability in the curriculum.
- Support, develop and enhance the use of the campus and local environments for sustainability-related learning, within and outside the formal curriculum.
- Pursue synergies with regard to both pedagogic research and teaching and learning potential by building on collaboration between the Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory (PedRIO), Centre for Sustainable Futures (CSF), Institute of Sustainability Solutions Research (ISSR) and other university research interests, operations, and external partners.

- Work at all levels of the University to support organisational learning towards the sustainable university, including induction, Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and CPD.
- Play a national and international role in profiling the University's sustainability education work and in contributing to, and learning from, best practice and developments at a global level.

This action area is led by the CSF in association with PedRIO and Education Development.

Goal 3: Undertaking expert research and its translation.

We will continue to demonstrate our expertise in sustainability research contributing to defining the problems and creating solutions for the world's most pressing international, national and local, environmental, economic and social challenges. Through our creativity, innovation and our energy for change, we will make a difference to the world and be known as a hub of social transformation and learning for a more sustainable, just and equitable future.

Actions:

- Pursue a systems-based and inter-disciplinary approach to sustainability research, embracing broad social, economic and environmental perspectives and working in partnership where appropriate with the private, public and voluntary sectors.
- Enhance the staff and student experience by bringing together multi-discipline networks for sustainability, encouraging engagement from all disciplines.
- Support research centres, groups and individuals with funding bids and project delivery; emphasising a solution-oriented approach.
- Engage all relevant communities and stakeholders with our sustainability research, encouraging the co-design and co-production of research projects.
- Improve communication of our sustainability research activities through targeted events, publications and digital media.

- Develop long-term impact for our sustainability research by promoting exchange of knowledge and influencing policy/strategy development with external stakeholders.
- Play a national and international role in profiling the University's sustainability research, shaping, leading and learning from best practice and developments at a global level.

This action area is led by the ISSR, in collaboration with other research institutes, centres and groups at Plymouth University.

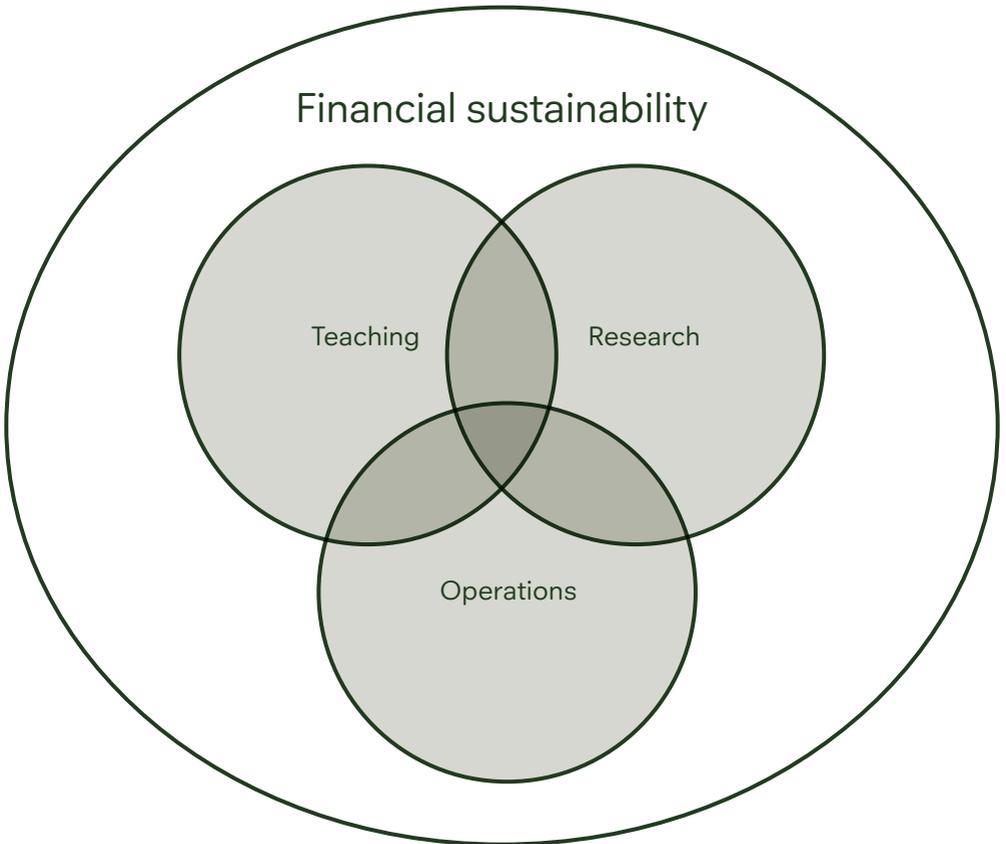
Achieving our Goals

Our Sustainability Strategy is owned by Plymouth University's Sustainability Executive and primarily led through cross-institutional collaboration between Finance and Sustainability, Student Gateway, Teaching and Learning, ISSR, and External Relations, in partnership with the student body represented by Plymouth University's Student Union. Sustainability is also monitored and supported by the wider Sustainability Stakeholder Advisory Group (SSAG) which includes external stakeholders.

Three existing principles guide how we will continue to embed our sustainability aims and goals. Our 'tri-cameral' approach seeks to embed and address sustainability issues in all that we do through our teaching, research, and operations activities:

- **Teaching:** from an existing strong base, we are further developing our learning and teaching, scholarship and enterprise activity to embed, inform and illuminate sustainability understanding and practices as a critically important part of preparing graduates for a rapidly changing world.
- **Research:** we are continuing to grow our world-class reputation for global leadership in Sustainability Research, engaging our network of researchers with local, national and international stakeholders.
- **Operations:** we continue to develop and embed sustainable resource policies and practices for our estate and associated facilities, the procurement of goods and services, and travel and transport arrangements.

Success in delivery of this tri-cameral approach will contribute to the long term financial sustainability of the University and will support the University in achieving Strategy 2020.

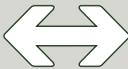
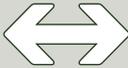


"...opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental for sustainable development. We underscore that sustainable development requires concrete and urgent action. It can only be achieved with a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector, all working together to secure the future we want for present and future generations."

'The Future We Want', UN General Assembly, 2012

Measures of Success

Our Sustainability Strategy will be updated as new initiatives emerge and the national and international sustainability agenda evolves. The following overarching measures of success will be monitored on a regular basis by the Sustainability Executive and included in institutional performance data and information where relevant.

Measure	Baseline	2020 Target (unless otherwise stated)	Trend
Carbon emissions from operations	12692 tonnes (2005)	43% reduction from baseline by 2020 and carbon neutral by 2030	
LiFE accreditation	Silver (2012)	Sustain performance or above overall and all sub-categories	
People and Planet Green League	2nd (2012)	Retain leading position within the top 5 UK institutions	
Financial sustainability – operating surplus based on EBITDA ²	£18.8m rolling average (2012/13)	£28m	

Our Sustainability Strategy is delivered through the Sustainability Action Plan and associated policies ³. This Action Plan contains more detailed measures of success against specific initiatives and is monitored on a regular basis by the Sustainability Executive.

² EBITDA stands for Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation.

³ The Sustainability Action Plan will coordinate specific sustainability targets including the Environmental Policy, the Energy and Water Policy, Carbon Management Plan, Ethical Investment Policy, Waste Management Plan, Travel Plan, Construction and Refurbishment Policy and Biodiversity Policy.

Translating the strategy through the University

Our strategy is translated and delivered from high-level ambitions to local level actions throughout the University and with our partners. It is a process that connects strategy to people, offering sufficient freedom and flexibility to capture creativity and sustain enterprising behaviours.

Guided by our values and leadership principles, Plymouth University's Strategy 2020 will help deliver strong performance and sustainable outcomes that result in reputational gain as we deliver on our mission of 'Advancing knowledge and transforming lives through education and research'.



Getting involved

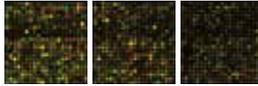
- See the sustainability pages at **<http://www1.plymouth.ac.uk/sustainability/Pages/default.aspx>**
- Teaching and learning: contact the Centre for Sustainable Futures **csf@plymouth.ac.uk** tel **+44 (0) 01752 588890**
- Research: contact the ISSR at **issr@plymouth.ac.uk** tel **+44(0) 1752 585816**
- Operations and campus: contact the department of Procurement and Sustainability at **sustainability@plymouth.ac.uk**

**TEACHING
& LEARNING
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**



TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE
STRATEGY

**RESEARCH
& INNOVATION
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RESEARCH & INNOVATION
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**RAISING
ASPIRATIONS
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RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND DRIVING ENGAGEMENT
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**SUSTAINABILITY
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