

Sustainability, Environment and Ethics Policy

Purpose

Staffordshire University Students' Union recognises that the key to a sustainable future is through the engagement and education of our student members. The Union is dedicated to its role as a champion of sustainability and its responsibility in helping to reduce the impact of our business operations on the environment, as well as being committed to reducing negative impacts upon the environment and to adopting ethical principles into all its activities.

The Students' Union aims to show a continuous reduction in the negative environmental impacts of its operations, which will be reviewed and monitored regularly, with the results of these measures and findings being communicated to our membership and stakeholders.

Strategy

The policy intrinsically aligns with the strategic core values of the Students' Union; Being Responsible means that 'We recognise the responsibilities we have as an organisation towards our members, our staff, the University and the wider communities we are part of. We will ensure we understand the impact of our actions and actively seek ways of eliminating or mitigating any negative impacts or consequences'.

Leadership

Each academic year, an Officer and Senior manager will be designated as the senior leaders, directing and driving the sustainability work of the organisation. The Students' Union is committed to ensuring that ethical and environmental good practices are embedded into the Union's every day activities, and requires all staff and officers to champion these values and practices as the norm.

Supporting Documents

The *SEE Policy Guidance notes* are available for staff and student groups as supporting documents to this policy, to provide further detailed guidance and information as to how the aims and objectives of this policy can be practically delivered on a day-to-day basis.

SEE Policy Compliance Guidance document for staff

SEE Policy Guidance document for student groups

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The Students' Union will:

1. Comply with all current environmental legislation; aiming to meet environmental best practice wherever possible.
2. Participate in SOS-UK Green Impact Students Unions accreditation framework or any scheme thereafter to ensure that the Union is nationally recognised for its ethical and environmental work with the aim of achieving the top grading.
3. Continue to seek student feedback and act upon the student voice in relation to sustainability, ethics and the environment and ensure that findings continue to shape and inform the work of the Union.
4. Support, educate and empower students to change and affect society through student-led environmental and ethical campaigns, in line with The Students' Unions policies and values.
5. Campaign for environmental sustainability change and awareness in the institution and the wider community.
6. Convene a Sustainability Working Group consisting of an elected Officer, Senior Manager, and core staff members, meeting at least once every 2 months.
7. Convene a Sustainability Employee Voice Forum consisting of a Senior Manager, HR representative and student staff, meeting at least once per term.
8. Support training opportunities for staff and students to increase knowledge and understanding of environmental sustainability.
9. Continue to use its work in environmental sustainability to maintain and strengthen its partnerships with: The institution, National Union of Students, other Students' Unions, suppliers, external stakeholders and local community groups.
10. Reduce the impact of its operations on the environment by a suitable mix of best available methods and business appropriate changes wherever possible.

Work with the institution to reduce and account for its consumption of natural resources as a method of reducing the impact of Union operations on the environment including:

- i. Energy and water consumption
- ii. Waste generation.

11. Ensure responsible building management
 - i. Including shut down plans and procedures for buildings and equipment.
 - ii. The Union will work with the university to optimise the efficiency of its heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment.
12. Ensure responsible consumption management
 - i. Having effective waste minimisation controls
 - ii. Having effective waste management controls
13. Actively promote the most environmentally friendly means of transport to Union employees and student groups.
14. Offer staff members the opportunity to purchase pedal cycles, whilst making savings through wages on Income Tax and NI through [cyclescheme.co.uk](https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk)
15. Continue its operational activities and development with thought to sustainability and ethical values in order to reduce the Unions impact on the environment and society.

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Compliance Guidance for Staff

Shops and venues will explore the use of **local food sources** where appropriate as a priority when considering food suppliers.

Shops and Venues will continue to expand the range of Fairtrade products for sale in shops and venues and will look to ensure that **Fairtrade alternatives are available across as many ranges as possible**.

Venues: All refreshments provided by the Union for complimentary use will be **Fairtrade (tea, coffee, hot chocolate etc.)**. **All tea, coffee & hot chocolate sold in the Union venues will be Fairtrade**.

Shops will **exclusively stock Fairtrade tea, coffee & sugar** within the product ranges, (unless products are produced in the UK.)

Shops: **clothing** offer in the retail outlets will consist of at least **51%** Fairtrade products.

Venues will **only use free range eggs** in its food.

Shops: will only **stock free range eggs** (or those of higher standards) and will continually look to find higher welfare options when sourcing animal products.

The union will encourage the use of refillable water bottles at our water fountains which will be maintained for staff and student access.

Venues: will continue to use reusable glassware or plasticware in favour of disposable plastic cups and shops will stock compostable or paper alternatives where possible **instead of plastic cups, plates or cutlery**.

Venues will continue to use compostable, cardboard or natural alternatives when providing take away boxes and **cutlery instead of polystyrene or plastic**.

Squeeze box will continue to use **plastic alternatives** for its smoothie range, take away boxes and cutlery and will continue to pressure and incentivise customers to use reusable cups for their drinks.

Shops will continue to use **biodegradable carrier bags** and will match or exceed the national carrier bag levy rate regardless of legislation. Profits from the sale of carrier bags will continue to be used to help provide environmental benefits.

All buildings will have instructions for staff on the shutdown of buildings including actions that help **reduce energy and water consumption**.

All staff will continue to reduce **office use paper**. All purchased paper will be FSC certified or better, as will all copier paper sold in the Union shops.

All staff will be responsible for their work stations/areas; making sure their offices and appliances are shutdown, windows closed, lights off, portable appliances switched off etc. when not in use.

All staff will be responsible for **reducing heating energy consumption** where possible and for appropriate waste segregation to support effective **recycling practices**.

All staff will ensure that energy efficiency is considered in the purchasing of **all new equipment** and will ensure that negative environmental impacts are minimised when undertaking building work/restoration.

All staff will contact the campus life team for the correct disposal of all **electronic items**.

The Union will continue to balance the policy requirements with the need to provide value for money and will be able to justify its choices to students.

Policy approved date: April 2023

Policy review date: April 2025

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Guidance for Students and Student Groups

The Students' Union works to educate our students on sustainable, Environmental and Ethical matters, lots of information can be found on our website www.staffsunion.com/makeachange/sustainability we encourage you to visit and get involved in our campaigns and surveys, your involvement and feedback is very important.

The Students' Union Sustainability, Environment & Ethics policy sets out what the Union will do in order to promote an ethical and sustainable environment for us all. The following are few tips that you can do to help too. As Student Group Committee members you will be faced with making decisions that can impact upon the environment and on other people.

1. Always ensure that your student group activities are legally compliant, if you are in any way unsure, you must seek immediate advice from the Student Engagement department.
2. Always ensure that your activities and events compliment the core values of the Union: including Being Actively Inclusive and Responsible.
 - a. Being inclusive means not tolerating any form of discrimination towards or from your members and ensuring equality for all. All Staffs students are welcome to join our groups and all members must be given the same and equal opportunities to be involved and have their say.
 - b. Being responsible means that we recognise the responsibilities we have towards our members and each other, the University and the wider communities we are part of. We ensure we understand the impact of our actions and actively seek ways of eliminating or mitigating any negative impacts or consequences.
 - c. Make informed purchasing decisions:
 - I. When purchasing items for your student groups, consider buying sustainable products; recycled paper, Fairtrade refreshments, chocolates, hoodies, T-shirts. The staff members in the Students' Union shops can advise you if you have any questions.
 - II. When ordering products, think about the energy it takes to deliver those products, can you use a supplier that is close by to reduce the delivery mileage and costs?
 - III. Do you really need to purchase something new? Can a suitable item be borrowed from or shared with another group?
 - IV. Don't buy balloons for your events.
3. Minimise wastage:
 - a. When purchasing items for your group, consider how much you really need to buy. Don't over order and leave yourself with wastage or items that cannot be re-used.
 - b. Use water from the tap or water fountains instead of shop bought bottled water.
 - c. Use and promote recycling facilities wherever possible.
4. Energy Efficiency
 - a. Turn the heating down on radiators if the room is too warm.
 - b. Close doors and windows to manage room temperature.
 - c. Turn lights and electrical items off when not in use.

- d. Use your laptop/PC's sleep mode to conserve energy.
- e. Use cloud storage – Decrease printing and use online document sharing applications, all students have a free OneDrive account
- f. When you do need to print - use both sides of your paper, and also use the back of discarded print outs as note-paper instead of buying fresh notepads.
- g. Don't print flyers and posters, this is not a sustainable way to promote your group. Instead, utilise the Union website What's On pages, social media and the Union venue screens.
- h. Recycle your WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment).
 - i. Batteries can be recycled at the Students' Union collection points.
- i. Save and reuse packaging and postal package envelopes rather than buy new ones.
- j. Avoid paper or plastic cups – bring your own mug to the venues when buying coffee, and use it to fill up at water fountains around campus.
- k. Try the Meat Free meal options available in the Students' Union venues.