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| <b>Plastic Reduction Action Plan</b> | <b>December 2024</b>   |                                         |
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| <b>Approved by</b>                   | <b>Sara Lynch</b>      | <b>Head of Sustainability</b>           |
| <b>Review date</b>                   | <b>November 2025</b>   |                                         |
| <b>Next Review date</b>              | <b>November 2026</b>   |                                         |

At Queen's University, we are embedding circular economy principles across our campus, with a strong focus on the responsible use of plastics. By shining a light on what we throw away and asking *where is away*, we aim to help our community understand the urgent need to reduce plastic consumption.

We encourage everyone at Queen's to **Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, and Recycle** wherever possible.

Our Circular Economy Plan is guided by three core principles:

- **Eliminate waste and pollution**
- **Circulate products and materials**
- **Regenerate nature**

This Action Plan is designed to raise awareness of our circular economy journey and connect the many initiatives happening across campus. We want to help our students, staff, and wider community move from good intentions to meaningful action and make it easier to do so.

### **Rethink**

Changing mindsets is key. We are promoting alternatives to buying new and encouraging more sustainable choices. Training and support, especially in procurement and lab practices are central to this shift.

### **Reduce**

We are embedding circularity into procurement, catering, and waste management. This includes integrating sustainability into contracts and promoting reusable options across campus.

### **Reuse**

Our reuse initiatives include the WARP IT platform, the development of a Queen's equipment sharing portal, and donation drives to extend the life of useful items.

### **Repair**

Repair is often overlooked. We launched a Repair Fund and host workshops and events to bring repair culture to life, empowering people to fix rather than discard.

### **Recycle**

Recycling remains important but it must be done correctly. We are working to improve signage, education, and infrastructure to support effective recycling practices.

Queen's University is leading on a range of plastic research exploring new and different ways of making, using and recycling. Outputs of our research inform our ongoing approach to responsible plastic management and guide our actions.

[Polymer Processing Research Centre | Polymer Processing Research Centre](#)

| Focus                              | Opportunity to reduce                                                                                                                                                   | Our work so far                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Our actions & targets going forward                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Timeline |
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| Audit of plastic                   | Understand our waste streams and identify opportunities for reduce and reuse                                                                                            | Reviews of our waste data.<br><br>Mini Audits of hot stop areas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Conduct a University wide audit                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Nov 2026 |
| Plastic Bottles                    | With the support of our recycling partners we aim to recycle the plastic bottles we use on campus and have a clear bin system in place to collect this type of plastic. | <p>We are encouraging our staff and students to bring a reusable bottle to refill from our hydration stations across our campus. We have already replaced over 300,000 plastic bottles via our hydration station network.</p> <p>We have mapped our publicly accessible hydration stations across campus and this is available online.<br/> <a href="#">Sustainability   Campus Food, Drink and Retail   Queen's University Belfast</a></p> <p>Following a survey with our staff and students In Nov 2024 we have invested in new hydration stations in high footfall areas and improved signage with links to the hydration station map.</p>                                          | <p>We will continue to improve hydration station access across campus, improve signage and communicate with our community.</p> <p>Explore replacing the sale of single use plastic bottled water in vending machines with a hydration station – one location identified is at the Medical Biology Centre (MBC).</p> <p>We will liaise with our local Government Department DAERA on the proposed roll out of the deposit return scheme for plastic bottles and offer our campus for any pilot DRS prior to full roll out in late 2027.</p>                                                                                                                                              | Nov 2026 |
| Single use cups and catering items | We sell or use approx 300,000 single use cups each year which produces a large amount of waste.                                                                         | <p>With the support from our onsite Campus Food and Drink we have invested in a 2GoCup scheme which is used for large scale events/conferences at Queen's (insert stats).</p> <p>We have invested in a plastic free café in our new Business School and offer 2GoCup <a href="#">Sustainability   Campus Food, Drink and Retail   Queen's University Belfast</a></p> <p>We are working with our Recycling Partner to establish how we can recycle our current single use items that we use in our cafes and onsite campus food and drink.</p> <p>Campus food and drink have extended the times that they provide glasses in the bars on campus to reduce using single use glasses.</p> | <p>Single Use Plastic Cup Survey to roll out in November 2025 for staff and students to establish the barriers and challenges to using reusable cups. The findings from this survey will help shape our next steps to reducing our usage of single use cups.</p> <p>Communications to be shared on how to avoid single use cups on campus and the discounts and incentives on offer via our onsite cafes and food outlets for BYO.</p> <p>Support our cafes and campus food and drink to offer alternatives to single use and work towards phasing out single-use plastic in cafes and vending areas.</p> <p>100% of cafes/retail outlets to offer reusable options by end of 2026.</p> | Nov 2026 |

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|                             |                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Staff have access to kitchens to wash their own cups across campus.</p> <p>Students' Union and Queen's Accommodation have communal kitchens for students with reusable cups and encourage students to bring their own.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Work with Campus Food and Drink and our onsite cafés to offer reusable options for meetings and events taking place on campus – aim to make this the default option for each order placed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |          |
| Single-use plastic in labs  | Our labs use a lot of single use plastics both in teaching and clinical labs.                                                                        | <p>At Queen's we use the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) which is a certification scheme designed to enable staff and students to understand and improve sustainability and efficiency of their lab areas. LEAF contains toolkits and resources to help labs limit their single-use plastics.</p> <p>As of Oct 2025, we have 65 labs certified with LEAF – covering 115 areas.</p> <p>We have a Lab Community who regularly share best practice.</p> <p>We have carried out waste audits in the Labs to identify areas for improvement which has included signage, training, engaging suppliers and extra bins.</p> | <p>Continue to expand our LEAF certified Labs and encourage the sharing of best practice.</p> <p>Promote the procurement checklist – before you buy and the Sustainability Procurement Guidelines that will help embed this in future procurement and with suppliers of equipment for lab.</p> <p>Carry out a waste audit at our MBC site (key medical labs)</p> <p>Review and implement the recommendations from the audit carried out by the School of Nursing – report produced in Oct 2025.</p>                                 | Nov 2026 |
| Suppliers and Procurement   | We rely on our suppliers for much of our equipment but are often left with large amounts of packaging to dispose of through University Waste Streams | <p>We have developed a suite of documents to support our procurement going forward to embed sustainability and circular economy (CE) principles.</p> <p>We have recently launched our Sustainable Specification Guidance focusing on environmental aspects such as carbon reduction, waste management, and energy efficiency. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Before You Buy: Environmental Checklist</i></li> <li>• <i>Sustainable Specification Guidance</i></li> <li>• <i>Bank of Tender Questions</i></li> <li>• <i>KPIs</i></li> </ul>                                                            | <p>Embed new guidance across the University, faculties, and schools.</p> <p>Train staff on using the new guidance.</p> <p>Work with Suppliers to establish how they are embedding circular economy principles in their supply chain and what they are offering for alternatives to plastic packaging.</p> <p>Take advantage of Take Back Schemes for outdated equipment and packaging. These schemes involve suppliers taking back used items for refurbishment or recycling, reducing the environmental impact of procurement.</p> | Nov 2026 |
| Reuse of items – Stationary | Across the University we order lots of stationary, equipment, and furniture and on                                                                   | We have a reuse platform that all staff have access too called WARP It.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Undertake a marketing campaign on our Reuse Platform to ensure our community of staff (4500)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Nov 2026 |

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| Furniture Equipment          | some occasions, we have excess amounts.                                                                             | <p>This platform provides an opportunity for staff to share extra items that they no longer need with colleagues across the University. This reduces the amount we need to buy and saves money.</p> <p>In the last year we shared over 660 items which included stationary, lab equipment, cleaning equipment, and furniture via WARP IT.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | know about the service and the benefits of using this before they buy new.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |          |
| Staff and Student Engagement | The University has up to 4500 staff and 26,000 students. One of the largest student communities in Northern Ireland | <p>In 2024 we set up a Student Swap Shop for clothing/textiles and household items. This allows students to swap rather than buying new and encourages reuse.</p> <p><a href="#">SU Swap Shop   QSU</a></p> <p>We have donation stations dotted around the University to allow staff and students to donate their unwanted items.</p> <p>We also have a student Pantry providing weekly free essential items such as pasta, cereals, loose fresh fruit, and veg. The pantry encourages students to bring their own container for items such as pasta etc – reducing the amount of plastic packaging.</p> <p><a href="#">The Pantry: Free Refill Station   QSU</a></p> <p>At our Queen's Accommodation we have created a sharing/swapping area so students can donate items they no longer need for other students to use such as stationery, books, saucepans etc. This not only supports the cost of living but reduces unnecessary purchases/packaging and promotes reuse.</p> <p><a href="#">Sustainable Living   Accommodation at Queen's   Queen's University Belfast</a></p> <p><a href="#">Donation Stations</a></p> <p>During 2025 we launched a new programme for staff within each of our 15 schools and professional services.</p> | <p>We have recruited Student Sustainability Reps (Oct 2025) who will take on additional roles promoting awareness of sustainability issues amongst their peers and supporting sustainability initiatives across the campus.</p> <p>Host a range of events throughout the year for example European Week for Waste Reduction Nov 2025, Student Festival Jan 2026, and Repair Week Mar 2026 all focused on raising awareness of the 5Rs – Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle.</p> <p>We will continue to support and develop the Student Swap Shop, Pantry and Queen's Accommodation Sharing area and the Donate. Don't Dump campaigns.</p> <p>Continue to work with Schools and their staff on the Local Sustainability Action Plans and how this can support awareness and reduction of plastic waste and the 5R's.</p> | Nov 2026 |

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|                                     |                                                                                                                                                          | This is the opportunity for them to develop their own Local Sustainability Action Plan. One of the key areas is around facility management including a focus on procurement, waste, and resources.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |          |
| Volunteer clean-up initiatives      | Focus on the University Campus and surrounding community.                                                                                                | We have organised a number of volunteer clean up events at Queen's raising awareness on the effects of litter in our local communities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Organise Spring and Autumn Clean Ups.<br><br>Collaborate with local environmental groups. Hold 2 clean up events per year.<br><br>Collecting up to 40 bags of plastic waste annually.                                                     | Nov 2026 |
| Reach Festival at Queen's           | Reach Festival at Queen's began in 2024 and is designed to use the Arts to engage students, staff, and the wider community around sustainability issues. | The festival has considered sustainability within its operations and waste management and aims to avoid using single use plastics where possible.<br><br>The festival has brought awareness to a range of sustainability issues such as plastic waste and pollution in our local rivers, lakes and oceans.<br><br><a href="#">Art exhibition exploring plastic waste kicks off sustainability and arts festival at Queen's   News   Queen's University Belfast</a> | Continue to expand and develop the Reach Festival in 2026 with a focus on sustainability and reducing resources and waste.<br><br>The Festival is due to take place in April 2026.                                                        | Nov 2026 |
| Plastic Free events and conferences | Reduce plastic at events and conference                                                                                                                  | Achieved Green Meetings Gold standard<br><br>Accredited by Green Tourism                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Provide advice, training and guidance to event organisers on avoiding single use plastics.<br><br>Require sustainability checklist for all large events.<br><br>All university events >50 attendees follow plastic-free guidance by 2026. | Nov 2026 |
| Monitoring and reporting            | To inform progress, accountability and identify areas for improvement.                                                                                   | Detailed waste figures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Track plastic consumption and reduction initiatives.<br><br>Include metrics in the annual sustainability report.<br><br>Establish baseline by Jan 2026<br><br>Show measurable reduction annually                                          | Nov 26   |