Staff, Student and Community Sustainability Engagement Strategy

Policy Number	
Version Number	3
Approval Date	01/07/2023
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Review Date	01/07/2026 (last reviewed June 2025)
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Introduction

Environmental sustainability should be an integral part of every individual's role and actions. The University supports its staff and students to take action for environmental sustainability by engaging with staff, students and the local community to embed a culture of environmental sustainability. Partnerships will be nurtured with people and organisations in pursuit of shared goals around sustainability.

This will be supported by:

- Empowering people to make change and take action, helping to promote opportunities to engage with sustainability.
- Prioritising processes and infrastructure that support positive environmental behaviour and decision-making.

Key performance measures:

- Engagement of staff, students and the local community in environmental sustainability issues and projects.
- Awareness of the complexity of sustainability issues after taking part in Queen's sustainability programmes.

Engagement is continually measured via our social media accounts and engagement with our content, attendance at events and programmes and participation levels and finally certification. Our engagement levels are monitored as part of ISO 14001. Feedback will be achieved via surveys, with awareness levels also being determined via this method. Our overall key performance indicators relating to energy use, waste generation and recycling, water use, and travel can be measured via progress against existing KPIs which is undertaken annually. All sustainability engagement initiatives are reported on to the Sustainability Engagement and Communications Group and University Sustainability Committee.

Objective and Targets	How and Resources	Individual/s Responsible	Timeline	Status
Objective – deliver phased lab sustainability programme across the university. Labs Accreditation Target: • 2021/22 (pilot phase) - 12 labs; • 2022/23 33% of all labs, • 2023/24 66% of all labs, • 2024/25 100% of all labs. Labs Award Level Target: • 2024/25 60% of all labs, • 2025/26 80% of all labs, • 2027/28 100% of all labs.	Identification of existing labs, targeted recruitment from the bottom up and top down, recruitment of an Academic Lead. Investment in the structured, accredited programme LEAF (Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework), providing staff and students with guidance and support in minimising emissions. Review the potential to incorporate students into the programme via the creation of a student audit programme in May/October. Funding for sustainable programmes (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff and PhD students	Assistant Sustainability Officer	Ongoing – launched in October annually	In 2021/22 12 Labs received Bronze LEAF Accreditation. A review to determine eligible labs was completed in 2022. In November 2022, the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences committed to all their eligible labs becoming LEAF Accredited by 2025. • 84 labs (spaces) recognised in 2024/25. Lab Sustainability Training took place in January 2025 (30ppl). Aim to create the student audit programme by May 2026.
Objective – deliver Green DiSC programme across the University. Target: • 2025/26 (pilot phase) – 6 labs, • 2026/27 33% of all labs, • 2027/28 66% of all labs, • 2028/29 100% of all labs.	Identification of eligible labs, targeted recruitment and investment in Green DiSC. Funding for sustainable programmes (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff and PhD students	Assistant Sustainability Officer	Ongoing	Undertaken pilot in 2025 with 6 labs. A review of eligible labs will take place during 2025/26.
Objective – embed environmental sustainability requirements of the UKRI Concordat for Sustainable Research and Innovation practice across all research activities.	Widening participation of sustainable lab certification programmes. Engaging with academics to prevent carbon outputs in a range of areas, including supply chains, project design and infrastructure.	Assistant Sustainability Officer	Ongoing	The university became signatories of the Concordat in February 2025. Ongoing reporting of Concordat information to begin in 2026.

Target: • Creation of a 'Concordat Tool Kit' by June 2026. • Publication of Business Travel Decision Tool by June 2026.	Provision of resources such as best practice materials and funding streams to enable academics to make informed sustainability decisions. Providing sustainable lab training to all lab users. Designing Introducing sustainability to early career researchers through annual sustainability workshops. Engaged with R&E to create a Sustainable Research Hub resource Audience: staff			
Objective – development of a staff programme that enables faculty's/schools/directorates to create their own Local Sustainability Action Plan (LSAP). Targets: • 2024/25 (programme launch) 3 School's. • 2025/26 100% Schools • 2026/27 100% Directorates	Review of existing programmes, investment in supporting software, branding of programme, recruitment from top down. Funding for sustainable programmes (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff and PhD students	Sustainability Programme Officer	Launched in October 2024	Review of programmes was completed, and plans were signed off by the Sustainability Engagement and Communications Working group in June 2024. New 'Local Sustainability Action Plan' (LSAP) Programme was launched in September 2024. 2024/2025: All school's engaged with 4 plans completed and published.
Objective – increase carbon literacy levels across the University. • Phase One - 2021/22 - delivery to 200 students. • Phase Two – 2022/23 - 400. • Phase Three – 2023/24 - 800.	Promotion of CLT to educational administrators, academics and SU. Roll out of free staff and student training sessions throughout the year to maximise opportunities. Funding for sustainable programmes (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff and students	Assistant Sustainability Officer Sustainability Programme Officer	Ongoing – launched in September annually	Ongoing discussions are taking place with relevant academic staff and dates will be agreed with facilitators (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful). Academics from a range of disciplines are involved – School of Biological Sciences, School of Natural and Built Environment, School of Dentistry, School of Medicine, School of Management and School of Aerospace and Engineering. <u>Figures:</u> 2021/22: 305 students, 35 staff 2022/23: 423 students, 112 staff. 2023/24: 1002 students, 74 staff

• Phase Four – 2024/25 – 1000 • Maintain levels at 1000 people from 2025 onwards.				2024/25: 896 students, 23 staff (ongoing) Dates for 2025/26 are currently being organised with schools and facilitators.
Objective – Provide funding source for students and staff to delivery their own sustainability projects on campus. Targets: • Fund £20k of projects over 12 months within the academic year. • Minimum of 10 projects funded per year.	Update Green Fund resources, organise communications and launch in September annually. Ring-fenced funding provided for Green Fund. Audience: staff and students	Assistant Sustainability Officer Sustainability Programme Officer	Ongoing – launched in September annually.	Relaunched every September, with money allocated by November. Figures: 2019: 22 projects 2020/21: 25 projects 2022/23: 18 projects 2023/24: 19 projects 2024/25: 11 projects 2024/25 projects include waste, biodiversity and engagement events. Green Fund will relaunch in September 2025.
Objective – Increase percentage of waste recycled and reduce volumes of waste generated. Target: • A minimum of 50% residential and non-residential waste recycled. • Two 'Circular Economy' events are hosted each academic year.	Focus on waste reduction initiatives and campaigns: • Roll out of the Queen's reusable '2 Go Cup' • Latte Levy • Lab Repair Fund • Launch of Equipment Sharing Database. Funding for sustainable programmes, Repair Fund and events (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff and students	Sustainability Programme Officer	Ongoing	Queen's reusable '2 Go Cup' was rolled out in 2023, on offer within large-scale events and conferences, to minimise single use waste associated with coffee cups. A 'Latte Levy' has been in place since late 2023, offering individuals 20p when they bring their reusable. In September 2024 the 'Repair Fund' was launched and has supported labs to repair vital equipment rather than purchasing/disposing. A range of events and campaigns are hosted around the 'circular economy' – such as European Week for Waste Reduction and Repair Week. Events include Repair Café, litter pick, talks, bike maintenance checks etc. Student's Union launched a Swap Shop (2024) and free Refill Pantry (2023) in One Elmwood to assist students during the cost-of-living crises, whilst aiming to reduce waste.
Objective - Increase uptake of Sustainable Travel across the University	Creation of a range of resources to supporting sustainable travel.			Range of resources to supporting sustainable travel: • Staff Travel Card • Cycle Plus Scheme

Targets: • 25% reduction in carbon associated with staff and student commuting by 2028. • 50% reduction in Business Travel by 2030 against 2018/19 baseline.	Publication of Sustainable Travel Guidance and revision of the Business Travel Policy. Develop a Travel Decision Tool. Audience: staff and students			• Liftshare • Freedom Cycles – onsite bike hub • Events and Campaigns • Cycle Parking Commuting - Baseline: 8400 tonnes CO2 (22/23) 2023/24: 7375 tonnes CO2 (12% reduction) Business - Baseline: 9450 tonnes CO2 (18/19) 2023/24: CO2 (42% reduction)
Objective - Increase awareness of biodiversity amongst staff, students and the local community. Target: • A minimum of 4 biodiversity events for staff and students to participate in every academic year.	Identify opportunities for enabling staff & students to participate in biodiversity enhancement projects – 4 new opportunities every academic year. Audience: staff, students and the local community.	Sustainability Programme Officer Assistant Sustainability Officer	Ongoing	2023/24 Events: • Bulb planting in November (4760 bulbs planted) – 10ppl • Tree planting in Malone – 146 saplings planted – 20ppl • Three litter picks – 150ppl 2024/25 Events: • YMCA Community Allotment Building Event – 15ppl • Herb Planter creation for Elms Accommodation – 5ppl • TCV Learning Summer Events – 27+ ppl (ongoing)
Objective - Increase engagement and involvement of local residents with sustainability programmes, initiatives and events within Queen's. Target: • Complete 3 community events per year.	Identify opportunities to engage with the local community with the Grounds and Garden Team, Community Engagement and Handy Helpers (SU).	Sustainability Programme Officer Assistant Sustainability Officer	Ongoing	• Community clean-ups – November and March. • Participants in the Belfast Million Trees program. • Community group involvement – YMCA, Friends of the Field • July 2025 – Green Week of Action: Bioblitz with Friends of the Field; Litter pick.
Objective – Integrate sustainability activities within existing courses. • Engage with 200 students through existing courses	Continue to engage with academics and course coordinators to ensure sustainability is embedded in key areas throughout campus. Audience: students	Assistant Sustainability Officer Sustainability Programme Officer	Ongoing	Engagement activities have taken place with the following courses over 2023/24: • MSc Construction Management (100 Students) • Future Ready Skills for Leaders Programme (50 students) • Future Ready Skills for Leaders Programme – New York (25 Students) • Welcome Sustainability Talks (400 students) • Net Zero PGCert (12 Students) 2024/25:

				• MSc Construction Management (100 Students) • Future Ready Skills for Leaders Programme – Amsterdam (25 Students) • Welcome Sustainability Talks (500 students) – September and January • Business Management (International) – 25 Students
Objective – Undertake a rolling calendar of events, campaigns and communication pieces. • European Week for Waste Reduction • Green Month • Student Sustainability Summit • Staff Sustainability Summit • Reach Sustainability and Arts Festival	Creation and continual update of calendar of events that includes key campaigns, engagement programmes, events, communication pieces. Audience: staff and students	Assistant Sustainability Officer Sustainability Programme Officer Sustainability Programme Officer Student's Union Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	In 2023, European Week for Waste Reduction was promoted via three key events: Autumn Clean Up (50ppl), Panel Discussion: Circular Economy – Fantasy or Reality' (45ppl) and Positive Volunteering (30ppl). Our annual Student Sustainability Summit was held on 30 January, providing students with the opportunity to raise their concerns around 4 key topics – food, finance, travel and education (62ppl). Green Month of Community Action was held in May – it involved a litter pick (40ppl), bioblitz with a local community group (12ppl) and a range of planting sessions (53ppl). In 2024, European Week for Waste Reduction was promoted via 2 key events: • Autumn Clean Up • Repair Café Our annual Student Sustainability Summit was held in January, providing students with the opportunity to raise their concerns around to QUB, government representatives, council and academics. The staff summit was held in March, with the hybrid event resulting in over 60 participants.
Objective – Review and incorporate best practice around sustainable construction. Target: • Host an annual Sustainable Construction Conference.	Sustainable Construction Manager coordinates annual conference. Each year a different theme is chosen to focus on. Funding for sustainable construction conference (5-year funding: 2023 to 2028). Audience: staff, students and wider sector.	Estates Manager (Sustainable Construction)	Ongoing - February	The first Sustainable Construction Conference was hosted on Wednesday 28 February (220 ppl). Second Sustainable Construction Conference was hosted on the 25 February (225ppl).

Objective – Continue to embed sustainability information into staff and student inductions.	Liaise with key groups to ensure sustainability is embedded in their communications – Student Affairs, People and Culture, Community Engagement and Accommodation.	Sustainability Team Community Engagement Team	Ongoing	• Included in International Student Welcome Talk to 500 students. • Embedded in 'Community Living Handbook' and the Accommodation handbook. • Attendance at all New Staff Fairs
Communications objective – creation of an Annual Sustainability Report. Target: • Annual Sustainability Report published annually (May).	Liaise with key stakeholders on the development of the 2023-24 Annual Sustainability Report. The report includes case studies, key performance indicators and an overview of our work to address and incorporate the UN SDGs across all of our activity.	Sustainability Programme Officer Sustainability Communications Officer	Completed	Published June 2025. The design and delivery of an internal communications plan for promotion of the report. The co-ordination and delivery of a video address to align with the report.
Communications objective - Support the implementation of the University's integrated Net Zero Communications Plan by coordinating sustainability focused campaigns and communications that align with the University's strategic sustainability objectives.	Maintaining the University's Sustainability website Creating social media content that raises awareness and inspires behaviour change Writing content for web, news stories, blogs, email, newsletters, profiles, speeches and printed collateral Producing engaging video content	Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	Ongoing effective development and maintenance of the University's sustainability website including the development of new and enhanced content such as designing and implementing a new dedicated UKRI Sustainability in Research web section, as well as introducing a new web calendar listing to promote sustainability events, in addition to a new sustainability blog showcasing staff and student voice. Ongoing effective social media content creation that raises awareness and inspires behaviour change, including gathering social media analytics for sustainability channels so insights can be generated to enhance future approached. Examples of written content includes a speech for the Reach'25 launch event on behalf of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Harnessing Arts, Culture, and Creativity for Climate Action; Vice-Chancellor's Foreword for the 2023-24 Annual Sustainability Report, and drafting content for the relaunched Sustainability Newsletter, and several news stories.
Communications objective – Successful implementation of	The design and delivery of a University wide travel survey campaign targeting all staff and students.	Sustainability Communications Officer	Completed	Staff completions generated by the campaign: 2,009 – the highest ever staff response rate achieved for this survey.

an Institutional Travel Survey 2025				This highly successful internal communication campaign was delivered entirely in-house, including all collateral production, at no cost, including staff time.
Communications Objective – Successful business partnering	To provide coordination to support consistent delivery of a high-quality service to colleagues and stakeholders in the development and delivery of sustainability communications.	Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	A proactive and supportive approach continues to be taken in business partnering relationships. A core focus on coordination across a wide range of areas, disciplines and stakeholders.
Communications Objective – relaunch the University's corporate sustainability ezine.	Design and implement an engaging ezine for students and the public to showcase examples of sustainability work across the University and enhance support and buy-in promoting complying actions needed to enable the outworking of the Net Zero Plan.	Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	• Successful development of a newsletter content plan to align with priority messaging • Content creation, including multimedia, blog and podcast content • Development of prize incentivisation • Development of a social media plan including collaboration with the Marketing team to implement paid promotion.
Communications Objective – Conduct a desktop review of the University's corporate sustainability webpages.	Refresh and update the website structure and content to enhance effectiveness and impact.	Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	A comprehensive desktop review has been conducted, this was a detailed and extensive mapping of the Sustainability and Estates web content, with a comprehensive spreadsheet produced setting out key recommendations for content removal, refresh and reconfiguration The recommendations generated through this desktop review and the associated discussions will be implemented to the live site in Summer 2025 and will deliver key benefits for the University's sustainability web presence, including audience engagement and SEO.
Communications Objective – raise awareness of sustainability issues and communicate sustainability achievements to students, staff, civic partners, and the wider public via a sustainability themed podcast.	Establish thought leadership and showcase the expertise and thought leadership of academics and other staff members, helping to establish the University as a thought leader in its field.	Sustainability Communications Officer	Ongoing	• The title of the podcast is 'The Ripple Effect', representing smaller issues becoming much bigger and deeper, not dissimilar to the climate crisis. • The podcast leverages four key opportunity areas; promoting climate optimism, leaning into climate solutions, making climate action personal, and making expertise accessible. • An ongoing multi-channel campaign is delivered to raise awareness of the podcast across the year to continue to embed awareness of the sustainability portfolio at Queen's.

				- Monthly discussions are featured during term time, so far we have completed podcasts focused around the power of art and sustainability, biodiversity, and volunteering for a greener future with internal and external stakeholders. - A podcast plan has been developed to include world-leading research experts, updates on the University's strategic sustainability priorities, and initiatives undertaken by students.