

Sustainability Policies & Codes of Practices

August 2020

Summary

Aston University is committed to integrating sustainability into all aspects of the three corners of our academic triangle. The University's Sustainability Strategy looks to integrate sustainability with three objectives that focus on campus emissions, our external stakeholders and within academic services. The University aims to deliver an excellent learning experience for our students, enhanced by the interaction with internationally recognised, relevant research, and linked to innovative support for local companies and engagement with schools and the community, involving students and staff in raising aspirations and attainment.

The following pages highlight the University's key sustainability policies and codes of practice that will help to support the Sustainability Strategy.

This document will be reviewed annually by the Sustainable Aston Working Group. Its content has been signed off by the University's Vice Chancellor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alec Cameron". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor

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The Sustainable Aston Working Group

The Sustainable Aston Working Group (SAWG) is an interdisciplinary group of academics, Go Green Champions, student representatives and professional support staff. Supported by the Executive, in May 2007, the Sustainable Aston Working Group developed a vision, Aston's Sustainability Aims, committing the University to the concept of sustainability in the three key areas of community, teaching and research. This was then further developed in June 2008, when SAWG established a Sense of Direction document, detailing key areas of focus for the future.

In 2014 the University was certified to ISO 14001, which is an internationally agreed standard that sets out the requirements for an environmental management system. This was followed by being certified to ISO 50001, an energy management system. This highlights that the University looks to mitigate all impacts on the environment as well as adhere to environmental legislation. SAWG are responsible for approving all documentation linked to these standards, looking for continual sustainable improvement, as well as identify areas of opportunity to strengthen our processes and procedures without effecting our core business.

Environment and Sustainability Policy

Through this policy we hope to support the University's Sustainability Strategy. This will be through the implementation of the environmental management system ISO 14001 in pursuit of sustainability and continual improvement. Within the higher education and local community Aston University aspires to become an exemplar for others to follow.

Commitments include:

- To fulfil all compliance obligations such as relevant UK, European and international legislative and regulatory guidelines, and strive to meet indicators and best practice requirements in respect of sustainability;
- To support continual improvement of the environmental management system to enhance environmental performance. This will be achieved by establishing demanding and measurable environmental performance targets, specifically related to energy, transport and waste, which are reviewed regularly and reported upon at least annually;
- Raising awareness within the Aston University community to ensure that everyone recognises and respects their environmental and ethical responsibilities and acts accordingly;
- Implement ethically and environmentally responsible procurement and financial management measures, policies and procedures and communicate these to suppliers, contractors and partner organisations;
- To protect the environment by preventing pollution through reduced waste, reduced emissions and responsible disposal;
- To encourage the use of sustainable transport through the implementation of a Travel Strategy;
- Embed sustainability into the curriculum, research, community, and culture of the University;
- Develop and maintain the estate and associated landscape with due regard to environmental impact and social value;
- Take a leading role in advancing the sustainability agenda in the West Midlands region, and develop meaningful local, national and international partnerships and networks; and
- Monitor, annually report and continually strive to improve our sustainability performance, through the setting and achievement of clearly defined objectives and targets.

Energy and Water Management Policy

Aston University is committed to the responsible use of its energy and water across all of its operations. The policy will not only meet legal requirements, and approved codes of practice, but strive to ensure that Aston is at the leading edge of good practice. This policy provides a framework for setting and reviewing energy objectives and targets.

The policy of the University is to control energy and water consumption in order to:

- Avoid unnecessary expenditure on utilities;
- Improve cost-effectiveness, productivity and working conditions;
- Reduce our carbon emissions from energy in line with national, sector-wide and institutional targets;
- Protect the environment; and
- Meet legal requirements.

In order to meet the above criteria, we are committed to a number of objectives:

- Continually improve energy performance through reducing our energy consumption and associated emissions in line with the figures set out in our Carbon Management Plan;
- Continually improve the energy management system;
- Minimise excess water consumption and continue to use water efficiently.
- Comply with applicable legal and other requirements, and strive to meet indicators and best practice requirements in respect of our emissions;
- Monitor our performance and publish an annual Sustainability report as well as reviewing the University's Carbon Management Plan on an annual basis;
- Utilise energy and water from sustainable sources where practicable, including incorporation of renewable and low carbon technologies into building development projects;
- Invest in projects and equipment to reduce energy and water usage across the University, support the purchase of energy efficient products and services that impact energy performance, and support design activities that consider energy performance improvement;
- Raise awareness amongst staff and students of the important contribution each member can make to energy and water conservation;
- Ensure that commitment is obtained from staff at all levels within the University on aspects of energy and water efficiency under their control; and
- Implement the Space Heating and Ventilation Code of Practice.

The University is committed to ensure the availability of information and necessary resources to achieve these objectives and targets. Responsibility for formulating and overseeing the Energy and Water Management Policy lies with the Sustainable Aston Working Group.

Biodiversity Code of Practice

Aston University is proud of our green campus and our Environment and Sustainability Policy states that we will “develop and maintain the estate and associated landscape with due regard to environmental impact and social value”.

Our Biodiversity Guidelines builds on this statement; highlighting our commitment to limit the University’s negative impacts on biodiversity on campus and in the locality, to preserve, and where possible, enhance the biodiversity (habitats and species) of the University campus.

The University will achieve this by upholding the following objectives:

- Raise awareness amongst staff and students of the importance of biodiversity on campus through events, displays and volunteering activities;
- Support the University Wildlife Group to protect species on campus.
- Incorporate the principles of conservation into estate planning and management, preserving and enhancing existing habitats where possible. In particular, operations should be timed to minimise impact on breeding, feeding and hibernating species;
- Identify opportunities to conserve and create new biodiversity habitats, with particular focus on native species and wildlife paths through campus;
- Work with new and existing partners to sustain and enhance biodiversity in the University and within the community;
- Ensure sympathetic management techniques continue to be used to avoid disturbance to wildlife, and to stimulate natural habitats and encourage native species; and
- Implement specialist protective measures for vulnerable species and monitor their population.

Sustainable Food Code of Practice

Aston University is committed to integrating sustainability into all aspects of catering to students, staff, visitors, conference delegates and leisure guests where practicable, whilst still supporting a thriving and competitive food industry.

We recognise our responsibility to carry out our procurement activities in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, and to incorporate environmental and social considerations into our service and procurement selection processes. We also aspire to improve the health of our catering customers by increasing choice and access to fresh healthy food, as well as providing relevant information to enable customers to make informed choices. We will support agricultural practices that are environmentally friendly, economically viable and socially responsible by the way we purchase consumables and will incorporate energy reducing methods and practices in all aspects of food production.

The University undertakes to:

- Promote good nutrition and encourage healthier food choices that have a positive impact on wellbeing;
- Raise awareness of a healthy diet;
- Use seasonal fruit & vegetables within the catering menus;
- Promote the highest standards of animal health and welfare;
- Ensure all fish purchased is MSC certified;
- Use only free range eggs;
- Reduce the environmental impacts of purchased water;
- Ensure ethically sourced products are available;
- Actively source local suppliers for produce where feasible;
- Reduce food waste;
- Reduce packaging, or use recyclable/compostable packaging where practicable;
- Seek alternatives to single use plastics where possible;
- Deliver improving environmental impact throughout the lifecycle of the product or service; and
- Contribute to achieving the University's carbon reduction targets.

The Sustainable Food Code of Practice will be supported by related codes of practice that reflect specific sustainability issues, in particular the Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice and the Sustainable Food Action Plan.

This Code of Practice will be implemented by the operational teams responsible for delivering catering services and monitored and reviewed by the Sustainable Aston Working Group (reporting to the University Executive) on an annual basis.

Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice

Aston University's Sustainability Policy states that we will "implement ethically and environmentally responsible procurement and financial management measures".

The Sustainable Procurement Code of Practice supports this statement and provides guidelines and objectives for achieving a sustainable procurement procedure that is embedded into the University's culture. It is recognised that our purchasing decisions have a large impact both inside and outside of the University and this Code of Practice aims to minimise any negative environmental and social impacts; to this end we will:

- Comply with relevant legislation;
- In the first instance, reduce the demand for goods and services by minimising waste and focusing on the re-use and recycling of existing goods;
- Review environmental risks and target high-risk contracts and high-expenditure commodities;
- Consider 'whole life' costs and impacts when assessing equipment for purchase;
- Make purchasing decisions based not only on economic factors, but also social and environmental factors;
- Take a cradle to cradle approach when purchasing and prioritise items that have higher recycled material content and materials can be broken down for reuse at the end of their life;
- Avoid the purchase of single use plastic where possible and work with suppliers to eliminate disposable packaging;
- Include relevant sustainability criteria within all tender exercises and supplier appraisals, where legally appropriate;
- Engage with suppliers to: Promote awareness, encourage suppliers to adopt similar policies and sustainable approaches in their supply chains, remove barriers to entry for SMEs and local suppliers, encourage development and promotion of new sustainable products, services and initiatives;
- Raise internal awareness of sustainability issues through the promotion and communication of relevant goods and information;
- Provide training on sustainable procurement for the appropriate people; and
- Monitor environmental, social and economic values, including modern slavery within our supply chain and communicate any concerns with our suppliers.

Waste Management Code of Practice

Aston University is proud of our green campus and our Environment and Sustainability Policy states that we will strive “To protect the environment by preventing pollution through reduced waste, reduced emissions and responsible disposal”.

Our Waste Management Code of Practice builds on this objective by aiming to reduce overall waste production and improve on recycling rates.

The University will achieve this by:

- Reviewing our purchasing practices with a view to minimising waste;
- Advising staff on the waste hierarchy (eliminate, reduce, reuse, recycle) and providing guidance on waste reduction techniques and reuse/recycling facilities/ initiatives;
- Providing adequate recycling facilities around campus;
- Reducing the use of disposable items where practical, including single-use plastic;
- Ensuring that waste is stored appropriately, safely and disposed of responsibly in line with legislation;
- Providing waste management training to colleagues on a regular basis;
- Monitoring and reviewing waste streams, practices and reduction targets regularly;
- Requesting waste minimisation and recycling information in line with targets in future waste management contracts; and
- Working with contractors and partners to ensure this Code of Practice is implemented across campus.

Document Review

Date	Reason for Change
5.7.17	Removal of Ethical Investment Policy. This is available elsewhere on the University's webpages and a link will be provided instead.
17.7.17	Updated Sustainable Food Policy
16.8.17	Updated Energy Policy to include framework for setting and reviewing objectives and targets
13.9.18	Annual review carried out. Changed policies to codes of practice. Added in extra lines relating to sustainable transport and plastic pollution. Linked to new University Strategy.
1.8.19	Changed the order of the policies. Aligned Energy and Water Policy with ISO 50001 requirements. Removed mention of Fairtrade from Sustainable Food and Sustainable Procurement Code of Practices.
29.07.20	Review of all policies including linking with new Sustainability Strategy, more emphasis on ISO 14001 and other changes to current practices.
27.08.20	Some adjustments including Modern Slavery within procurement section