



Sustainability Strategy

2020–2026

“The earth [is lent to us] for our life; it is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who come after us as to us; we have no right by anything that we do or neglect, to involve them in unnecessary penalties”

John Ruskin in *Seven Lamps of Architecture*

Building on success

- In 2019 ARU declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency
- Our sustainability-linked research has been shortlisted for numerous business awards and was recognised in the REF2014 for its impact.
- Our Academic Regulations include, as a course level learning outcome, a requirement that all our courses include sustainability, which is supported by our Education for Sustainability team and monitored by our Academic Registry.
- We have reduced our carbon emissions per floor space by 45% since 2005 by investing in our buildings, new heating, cooling, lighting and computing technologies, and engaging our staff and students to adopt greener behaviours.

Strategy Governance

- The Sustainability Strategy Group, including student representatives, will be responsible for the monitoring and governance of this strategy and will keep under continuous review the appropriateness of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and recommend updates as required
- The Sustainability Strategy Group will report to the University Executive Team (UET) and the Finance, Employment and General Purposes (FEGP) group, which will oversee the Sustainability agenda on behalf of the Board of Governors
- Six-monthly monitoring reports on performance against our internal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be considered by FEGP
- An annual submission to an external sustainability benchmark such as the THE's Impact Rankings will be made
- A communication plan will be developed and launched to support this strategy and ensure our ambitions are well understood by all our stakeholder
- By 2026 all University strategies will support the delivery of our Sustainability Strategy.



Goal I: Our Students

Goal owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

We will be known for equipping our graduates with the knowledge, skills and agency they need to address the challenges of sustainability including the climate and ecological emergency.

By 2026 we will:

- Ensure that all our students can say positively how sustainability is an integral part of their overall education
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate how they have developed graduate capitals through engagement with sustainability
- As part of our commitment to be a healthy University, actively support our students' mental health & wellbeing through opportunities to engage with nature, reduce ecological anxiety and contribute to a sustainable future
- Provide open spaces for dialogue and debate on sustainable futures within the student journey
- Champion our students in their wider political actions which align with the strategy.

KPIs:

Now:

- All courses to report on how they are demonstrating the sustainability learning outcomes requirement within our academic regulations and for Academic Registry to provide an annual report on to Education Committee
- Students to report that they have been able to engage positively with sustainability learning in their overall education
- Work with the Student Union to provide opportunities for students to make sense of the declaration of the climate and ecological emergency and to assist their development of emotional resilience and agency
- Ensure our commitment to sustainability is integral to our student recruitment with an explicit mention of sustainability in our open days, brochures and online
- Offer training for our wellbeing teams on eco-anxiety.

By 2026:

- All Ruskin Modules will use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a reference framework
- Have a visible and tangible set of inspirational examples, which are celebrated annually, of our students becoming responsible global citizens
- Ensure sustainability forms a key element of our next Education Strategy and Employability Strategy.



Goal 2: Our Research & Innovation

Goal owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)

We will increase our research output related to sustainability, both in quality and volume, to ensure we are recognised for our world-leading innovation and impact as part of a new University wide Sustainable Futures Research and Innovation Theme.

By 2026 we will:

- Be visible and world leading in our research and innovation engagement through key partnerships and compacts working together on key sustainability challenges
- Launch a dedicated and visible route through the ARU website into the sustainability research and innovation community including a commitment to championing open source access to our research publications and data
- Continue to invest in building a strategic focus through a University wide sustainability research theme
- To have a confirmed process for screening potential research funders and innovation partners against our sustainability commitment.

KPIs:

Now:

- To launch a University wide Sustainable Futures Research and Innovation theme, with the Global Sustainability Institute at its heart, to drive forward and significantly enhance our research capacity in this space
- Launch a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Working Group, reporting to the Research and Innovation Committee, to support capacity building across ARU
- To be visible and active members of 10 international research and innovation consortia relating to the SDGs
- Set up a system to track our research and innovation outputs and impacts against the SDGs to provide a baseline
- Set up a system to track our international collaborators on research outputs (such as papers) to provide a baseline.

By 2026:

- To be leading 5 international consortia or partnerships in major research or innovation projects and be members of 20 consortia relating to SDGs
- To double the number of our academic papers published annually (from a 2020 baseline) that include joint authorship from developing country partners
- For all of our research funders and innovation partners to have been screened against our sustainability commitment
- Strengthen the review of the environmental and social benefits and risks of research projects through the research and innovation funding proposal development process, with specific reference to the SDGs and negative environmental impacts.

Goal 3: Underpinning Operations

Goal owner: Chief Operating Officer

We will be a showcase for our commitment and expertise in sustainability.

By 2026 we will:

- Be innovative in developing ideas for the circular economy through ensuring that every pound generated by ARU and the Students' Union is increasingly spent in our local communities, including service support
- Ensure all our operations, from procurement to staff, account for our full commitment to sustainability including social and environmental considerations.
- Ensure our financial assets are used to support solutions to the climate emergency including working with our pension providers.

KPIs:

Now:

- Develop an energy efficiency portfolio of projects
- All cross-campus meetings to allow video conference and remote joining (e.g. MS Teams)
- Launch a map of recycling points on campus, improve the labelling of recycling bins and improve the options for waste recycling of all types
- Introduce a meat levy on Mondays, provide a hot nutritious vegetarian/vegan menu each day, and have information at points of serving on the environmental impact of most offerings
- Standardise all disposable cup pricing (additional charge for non-reusable)
- All meetings to be paperless (subject to any reasonable adjustment requirements)
- Strengthen our management of travel to reduce scope 3 carbon emissions
- Review our procurement frameworks and processes to prioritise local procurement and value for money.

By 2026:

- Agree a Zero Carbon by 2045 holistic master plan including agile working, education provision, estates, investment, procurement and purchasing, water and waste management, and travel, without the use of carbon offsetting
- For our HR strategy to reflect our ambition towards sustainability including in recruitment, training and appraisal processes
- All electricity purchased from zero carbon sources where this purchase leads to a real increase in investment into those sources
- To have exceeded a 10% overall energy saving compared to 2019 baseline
- Change travel expense policy to promote shared car journeys, public transport or electric vehicles between campuses
- Change travel expense policy such that the university will prioritise ground travel (e.g. rail) over air transportation for journeys less than 750 miles

- Reduce meat consumption on campuses by 50%
- To have increased our recycling rate to 60%
- Ban all sale of single use plastics by 2022
- To have implemented and reviewed a set of procurement frameworks and processes that underpin the commitments in this sustainability strategy
- To use internal carbon pricing to inform financial decisions assessed to have significant carbon impacts.



Goal 4: Our Community

Goal owner: Vice-Chancellor

We will work alongside our local communities, supporting them to develop their understanding of sustainability and create social structures that can lead in sustainability.

By 2026 we will:

- Empower staff and students, in partnership with the Students' Union, as 'climate and ecological crisis' ambassadors through volunteering and other activities such as supporting teachers and local schools to develop their knowledge of sustainability through in-school talks and workshops
- Engage and collaborate with local groups, including councils, political parties, businesses, HEIs and civil society to collaborate on making our local communities more sustainable
- Work with students, staff, the unions and the local community to re-create our campus estate as an embodiment of place-based education, through restoring and expanding wildlife habitats, allowing people to reconnect with nature and encouraging learning.

KPIs:

Now:

- Plant 2,000 trees in appropriate places this academic year and establish an ongoing programme of care and maintenance
- Significantly enhance the biodiversity on the Chelmsford campus through an installation in partnership with the Eden Project and showcase this at the British Science Festival.

By 2026:

- 200 schools to have had a visit from a staff member or student volunteer on an aspect of the SDGs
- For the proportion of staff using their 2 days per year (pro rata) to volunteer for local community projects to have increased
- To have appropriately planted 10,000 trees and have a robust process in place to monitor their growth and survival rates
- Through our purchasing to have created or maintained 100 local employment opportunities
- Use our campuses to support continuing professional development, lifelong learning and community group engagement to ensure an additional 5,000 footfalls per year
- For new campus infrastructure to be designed with our local community at its heart.