

SUSTAINABLE SUSSEX



ETHICAL EDUCATORS

US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

WE WILL EMBED SUSTAINABILITY INTO ALL ASPECTS OF STUDENT LEARNING, EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH

We will achieve this objective through four key areas of activity that we refer to as our aims. Firstly, making students partners and innovators in sustainable development. Secondly, including sustainability in all degrees. Thirdly, being at the forefront of sustainable research practices. And fourthly, by supporting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Our key commitments in this area are summarised below and explained in more detail in the remainder of this section.

KEY COMMITMENTS: ETHICAL EDUCATORS

- Actively engage students, student societies and the Students' Union on co-delivering the outputs from this strategy and shaping future sustainability policy from August 2021
- Recruit recent Sussex graduates and current students to be paid members of the University Sustainability Team by August 2021
- Hold grand challenges and innovation competitions to support our students to create the sustainability solutions of the future by July 2021
- Conduct a review focused on promoting social impact in student entrepreneurship by September 2021
- Develop action plans in all Schools to deeper embed sustainability in the curriculum by August 2022
- Offer a new online interdisciplinary introduction to sustainability certificate course to all first- and second-year undergraduate students from August 2022 enabling each academic School to adapt the content into a School-specific 15-credit module from August 2023 if appropriate
- Directly link all of our student careers initiatives to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and monitor our impact by September 2021
- Gain Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) sustainable lab accreditation by August 2022
- Further embed sustainable research practices within all our research methods and processes by December 2023
- Achieve the goals set out in our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – Inclusive Sussex – by December 2025.

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS AND INNOVATORS



At Sussex we dare to be different and truly value the importance of student voice in co-creating a more radical and meaningful sustainable student experience.

We will **actively engage students on co-delivering all of the outputs from this strategy**. Recognising the great work done by the numerous sustainability related societies on campus, such as the Leave No Trace Society and Food Waste Café.

As an organisation, we will **collaborate closely with the University of Sussex Students' Union**. We will: proactively respond to student referenda on environmental issues; ask for advice from the independent Student Sustainability Committee; and hold citizen-style assemblies on contentious sustainability issues with current staff and students. This will start with a **citizen-style assembly on reducing meat consumption on campus by 2023**.

We will **recruit current Sussex students through our Student Connector Programme (and recent graduates through our Sussex Graduate Programme) to be paid members of the University Sustainability Team**. This will help to strengthen student voice and engagement in all that we do.

Students are a continuing source of innovation and new ideas for improving the world that we live in. For example, our recent Product Design BSc graduate, Lucy Hughes, won the global James Dyson Award in 2019 for developing a fish waste derived alternative to synthetic single-use plastic, following support and incubation at Sussex. We want to continue to harness the spirit of social and environmental innovation within our student body. So, we will **hold grand challenges and innovation competitions to support our students to create the sustainability solutions of the future**.

We are **launching our first grand sustainability challenge for students alongside this strategy**. First- and second-year students will be asked to work together in teams of up to six, to put forward innovative ideas for improving sustainable waste, water consumption, biodiversity and travel on campus in ways that can benefit the wider community and help aid Covid recovery. **Four teams will win a prize of £5,000 each to implement their ideas** and will receive incubation support from the University innovation team in autumn 2021 to help bring their ideas to life.

In recognition of the importance of students as sustainability innovators and early adopters we will also **conduct a review by September 2021 focused on how to promote social impact in student entrepreneurship**, including whether to extend entrepreneurship work to local under-represented residents.



▲ Product design graduate Lucy Hughes won a James Dyson Award for developing a bioplastic from fish skins that could replace non-biodegradable, single-use plastics.

SUSTAINABILITY TAUGHT WITHIN ALL DEGREES



Universities are uniquely placed to help shape – and be shaped by – the thinking of younger generations, organisational cultures and even geopolitical ideologies. For this reason, fully embedding the principles of sustainability within our curriculum is a practical way of helping to create a better future.

We actively listen to what our students want to learn in relation to sustainability. Our students have made it very clear that they want to see **relevant sustainability content provided through their chosen degree topic that matches their existing academic interests and will help their employability and impact in their chosen profession**. For example, this could include increasing renewable infrastructure content for engineering students, or offering psychology students options or content in relation to promoting environmental behaviour change.

That is why we plan to consult with students and staff **in each school** in the 2021/22 academic year to better understand **and identify options for embedding new sustainability content within each School's mainstream curriculum**. This will allow each School to develop and produce an **action plan by August 2022** for embedding sustainability in the curriculum, which can be approved as part of the planned University-wide curriculum review that is taking place in 2021–2024.



We will also pilot offering a **new interdisciplinary introduction to sustainability elective module to all undergraduate students from August 2022**. Students without electives would also have the choice of taking this module as standalone credential. This will be developed with a view to **enabling each academic School to adapt the content into a School-specific 15-credit module from August 2023** if appropriate.

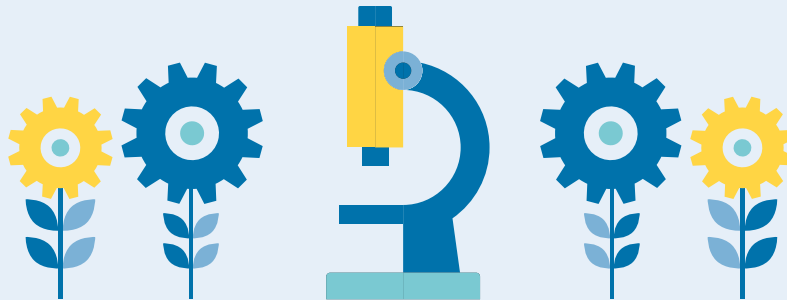
Once this module is established and evaluated we will **review its suitability to be offered to interested parties within the community** who are not current students. We will also **support schools to develop their own sustainability-related pathways**, where appropriate, for example sustainable food, water and agriculture. This will further strengthen our existing sustainable education offer.

We also understand that learning does not just start and end in the classroom. We are passionate about enabling students to gain practical work experience, placements and internships in the local community, in addition to wider field trips. That is why we are **directly linking all of our student careers initiatives to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals**. All of our internships, work placements and our new student consultancy to business are designed to empower students to create positive social, economic and environmental change.

We will also **continue to run really innovative practical sustainability courses as part of our pedagogic revolution**, such as our forest food garden and role models modules that see students actively improving biodiversity on campus and/or providing real-world mentoring in the community. This is one of the ways that we will continue to dare to be different and espouse our institutional values of kindness and courage.

◀ [Zoology undergraduate Robbie Hoar is learning about and taking part in creating a forest food garden on campus.](#)

SUSTAINABLE RESEARCH PRACTICES



We are a research-led institution. **Our research can and does help to advance the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. This can be evidenced by our University ranking in the top ten universities in the world by the *Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2021* against the UN SDG Goal 1: No Poverty.

We are at the forefront of work around climate action, biodiversity, sustainable food and the circular economy. We will also continue to be a **key enabler and supportive trusted partner in delivering sustainability both regionally, nationally and internationally**. You can read more about our research and the work of the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, Sussex Energy Group, STEPS Centre and others in our **dedicated sustainability research web pages**.

Yet, despite the enormous benefits we deliver through our sustainability research programme, we want to do more to demonstrate **global leadership** in how we embed sustainability in our research practices, both among fellow researchers and amongst our stakeholders.

We will do this by consulting with our academic community on how best to pioneer and **further embed sustainable research techniques and good practice** in all of our **research methodology courses, grant funding proposals, research ethics applications and research projects** in all disciplines by December 2023.

We will aim to include all stages of the research projects, from conception to monitoring, reporting and evaluation, with a focus on material consumption, energy use, transport and mobility, and advocacy and knowledge sharing.

We will also **consult with our academic community** this year **on how best to monitor the sustainability impacts of our research projects from September 2022 (both activities and outcomes)**. **And we will set progressive targets from September 2023 for environmental impact reduction and improved sustainability performance every five years, while maintaining a proportionate admin burden.**

We also recognise the risks that can be associated with certain laboratories in relation to the use of hazardous chemicals, single-use disposable consumables and energy- and water-hungry equipment. We want to guard against any unnecessary environmental impacts without compromising on the overarching net societal benefits of our research. That is why we are committing to **apply for sustainable lab accreditation through the LEAF scheme by August 2022**.

As a leading research institution, ultimately we will actively advocate and facilitate change within the Higher Education sector and our stakeholder communities to embed sustainability in research and engagement in line with our key organisational value of collaboration.

SUPPORTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lies at the heart of sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two specific SDGs, on gender equality and reduced inequality, show the importance of the intersection between equality and sustainable development.

We share this vision. That is why our parallel **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Inclusive Sussex**, aligns with our sustainability strategy and sets out high-level commitments and goals to **ensure we are an inclusive organisation and address any inequalities of outcomes and opportunity**.

Our progress in delivering these EDI goals will continue to be monitored by our Inclusive Sussex Programme Board. We will also support and co-monitor these interlinked strategies as part of our overall sustainability strategy and reporting processes.

Inclusive Sussex sets out several programmes related to disability, gender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex plus (LGBTQI+) and race. It contains specific targets to:

- Hold a **Race Equality Charter award by 2025**
- Become a **Top 100 Employer in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index by 2025**
- Become a **Disability Confident Leader by 2025**
- **Hold an Institutional Athena SWAN award** and for all Schools to hold Athena SWAN awards

These awards will provide independent verification that we are adopting good practice in relation to race, sexuality, disability and gender respectively.

We are also committed to **improving gender equality**. That is why we have a target to **halve the gender pay gap by 2024** and will **annually monitor and publish pay gap data** with a commitment to taking actions where gaps are identified

A newly created role of **Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion)** will lead work to deliver **Inclusive Sussex**. The post-holder will work closely with colleagues across the University. This will include staff from our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit, staff networks, steering groups and self-assessment teams – which are led by our four academic leads for equality (race, disability, gender, LGBTQI+).

We also operate a contextual **admissions policy, helping those students that are under-represented in higher education** access the University with lower grades. We continue to deliver programmes, such as our **Widening Participation activities, in schools, colleges and our community to help recruit students from under-represented groups**.

We will continue to work together across the University, bringing together colleagues in our EDI Unit, Widening Participation and Sustainability Teams and beyond to **align our overlapping equalities and sustainability agendas**.