University of Hertfordshire

Environment and Sustainability Framework

2023 - 2028

University of
Hertfordshire **UH**

UH ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

We are facing a global environmental crisis, and the University of Hertfordshire is responding to this challenge. With almost 3,000 staff, 30,000 students, and a campus covering over 200 hectares, we are committed not only to reducing the environmental impact of our estate and activities, but also to instilling a sustainable mindset across our communities, embedding the principles of sustainability as a recurring green thread across our institution and beyond. Our impacts, aims and objectives are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals Framework, and while our focus is on the Environmental pillar, we recognise the interconnected nature of the broader sustainability considerations and as such work closely with our partners across the university to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach.

The UH environment and sustainability framework is:

- Set around 4 key impact areas,
- Delivered through 4 pathways,
- Implemented through area management plans,
- Managed through externally audited Environmental Management System (EMS) ,
- Governed by the Environment and Sustainability Steering Group,
- Reported on annually through the Annual Performance Report.

ASPECTS AND IMPACTS

Our Sustainability framework is set around 4 key impact areas;

Climate Change

The direct and indirect production of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change

Biodiversity

The loss of habitats and biodiversity as a result of construction and land use

Waste & Resources

The creation of waste ending up for treatment, in landfill or as pollution. The depletion of raw materials

Sustainable Communities

Failure to equip our community with the mindset, skills, and knowledge to thrive in and contribute to a sustainable future
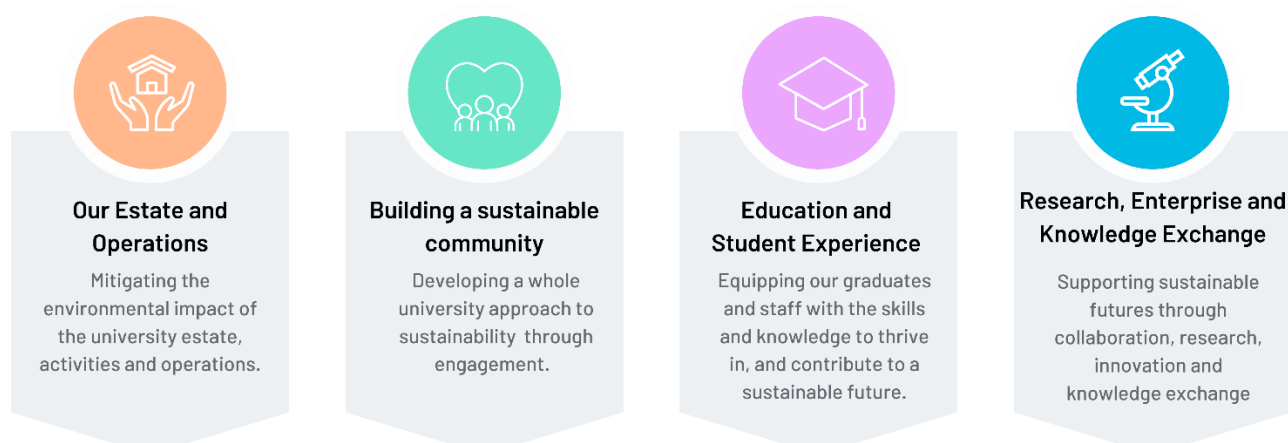
COMMITMENTS

To mitigate the environmental footprint of the university's activities and operations, we have made various commitments relating to the four impact areas above. As set out in our Environmental Policy, the university is committed to:

- Preventing Pollution
- Complying with environmental legislation
- Striving for continual improvement
- Reducing its impact on the climate by becoming Net Zero by 2050
- Protecting and enhancing Biodiversity
- Reducing the impact of its waste and resources utilisation
- Building a sustainable community through education, student experience, research, enterprise, and global engagement.

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY

By bringing together stakeholders and local plans from across the university, we can take a holistic and embedded, yet targeted approach to sustainability. Our four pathways reflect the scope of our impact, reach, and influence, and provide a framework for delivering our aims and objectives.

Our Estate and Operations

Mitigating the environmental impact of the university estate, activities and operations.

Building a sustainable community

Developing a whole university approach to sustainability through engagement.

Education and Student Experience

Equipping our graduates and staff with the skills and knowledge to thrive in, and contribute to a sustainable future.

Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange

Supporting sustainable futures through collaboration, research, innovation and knowledge exchange

PATHWAY 1: REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF OUR ESTATE AND OPERATIONS

The Estates 2035 vision recognises the role that our buildings and spaces play in protecting the environment. The Sustainability Framework underpins decisions taken on construction, infrastructure, space development, and soft services, and sets out our approach to mitigating the impacts associated with the university's activities and operations, including:

- Greenhouse gas emissions from energy and heating
- Emissions, carbon, and particulate pollution from transport, commuting and business travel
- Greenhouse gas emissions and waste arising from construction and refurbishment
- Biodiversity loss from construction and space utilisation
- Waste generated on campus including hazardous waste, household waste, clinical waste, food waste, and bulky waste
- Emissions, waste and resource depletion arising from the products and services be buy (including catering)
- Water consumption

In order to reduce the environmental impact of our Estate and Operations we have committed to:

- Reduce the University's negative impact on climate change through our Climate Action Plan
- Reduce carbon emissions derived from energy consumption
- Encourage sustainable travel to and from the University and between campuses through our travel plan
- Take account of Sustainable Construction Principles in university new builds and refurbishment projects
- Protect and enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats on our campuses through our Biodiversity strategy
- Reduce waste production, promote resource efficiency, and encourage circular economy principles through our Waste and Resource Management Plan
- Reduce the environmental impact of the University's procurement processes and supporting responsible procurement through our Sustainable Purchasing Policy.
- Reduce water consumption and improving water efficiency through our water management plan.
- Prevent pollution by managing and reducing emissions to air and discharges to water through our EMS.

All out plans and commitments can be found on our Environment and Sustainability pages.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The University of Hertfordshire has committed to becoming net zero by 2050. By adopting an integrated approach and setting ambitious targets, the University aims to reduce its carbon impact in line with science-based targets[1] while empowering positive action within the community.

Our Net Zero Action Plan sets out the university of Hertfordshire's approach to addressing the climate crisis, and provides detail and clarity around our intentions and commitments. The plan considers both positive and negative climate impacts across all pathway areas, and sets out our approach to mitigate, or indeed harness these. It includes actions that need to be taken in the following areas in order to meet our targets:

- Energy
- Travel and transport
- Procurement
- Construction
- Engagement

RACE TO ZERO

As part of our commitment to carbon reduction, we have pledged to the United Nation's Race to Zero global campaign, which aims for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates good jobs, and unlocks inclusive, sustainable growth.

Objective: To reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and its associated impact on climate change

> **Target:** 78% reduction in scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2035, net zero by 2050

ENERGY

The generation of energy derived from fossil-fuels such as coal, oil, and gas, emits harmful greenhouse gases and contributes to global warming. In the face of the current climate crisis and increased volatility in the energy market, the University of Hertfordshire therefore has a moral, financial, and legislative responsibility to reduce its energy use consumption and associated emissions.

The University of Hertfordshire has developed a decarbonisation plan to reduce its carbon emissions from energy in line with our Race to Zero commitments and carbon KPI. Our aims

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[1] Greenhouse gas emission reductions required to comply with the Paris Agreement and to stay within 1.5 C temperature rise. 90% of reductions are required to be absolute, with the remaining residual emissions being neutralised through offsetting or carbon capture.

and commitments can be found in our Energy Policy, with more information detailed in our Net Zero Action Plan.

Objective: Minimise the impact of our energy use on the environment

➤ **Target:** To achieve reductions in carbon from energy against our 2022 baseline of 85% by 2035 and 95% by 2050.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Commuting and business travel can make up a significant part of scope 3 emissions and must be addressed as part of our journey to Net Zero.

Objective: To reduce the impact of staff and student travel and commuting on the environment

➤ **Target:** This will be published in the 2023 – 2028 Travel Plan

COMMUTING

The University of Hertfordshire Travel Plan aims to reduce the organisational impact from transport, whilst providing cost effective and sustainable travel options to its employees, students, resident, and visitors.

The travel plan sets out the university's commitments to:

- Reduce the environmental, social, and business impacts associated with transport
- Implement measures to encourage sustainable modes of travel
- Make the campuses more accessible
- Reduce the impact of delivery transport
- Collaborate with external partners to develop sustainable travel solutions
- Monitor and report on data and progress

UNO BUS

The university of Hertfordshire owns Uno Bus, a bus company with a fleet of 105 buses across 3 depots in Cranfield, Northampton, and Hatfield. It operates around 47,000 service miles per week in Hertfordshire and North London, and also operates 2 TFL contract routes in central London. It carried 2.64 million passengers in 2022-2023.

As fuel derived emissions from the bus service contribute to our Scope 1 emissions, these need to be considered in our Net Zero Action Plan. While many of the buses are already electric, as well as all ancillary vehicles, reducing these emissions will be a priority over the coming years. UNO Bus are drawing up plans to become Net Zero by 2050, which will

consider challenges such as cost, technology, logistical, and practical issues. This plan will be published in due course.

BUSINESS TRAVEL

Reducing emissions from business travel will come to play an important in decarbonisation strategies. We are working with our partners how to reduce emissions from travel and how to capture data as accurately as possible. Our Sustainable Business travel plan will be published soon.

WASTE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Effective waste and resource management is crucial for sustainability and responsible resource consumption. Efficient waste management ensures proper disposal, recycling, and reduction of waste within the university, while adopting a circular economy involves reusing, repurposing, and recycling materials to extend their lifespan and reduce waste. This includes composting organic waste, promoting reusable products, and encouraging responsible consumption among students and staff. Embracing a circular economy not only reduces environmental impact but also brings opportunities for innovation, cost savings, and the development of a greener and more sustainable university campus.

The University's Waste and Resource Management Strategy is based on the principles of waste hierarchy which sets out the order in which waste management measures should be prioritised based on environmental impact. With prevention and reduction being the preferred options, all stages of a product's life cycle need to be considered, which means embedding sustainability at the procurement phase too. Our sustainable procurement policy aims to not only help reduce the amount of waste produced, but also to ensure that products and services purchased align with our waste management, carbon reduction and social values.

Objective: To minimise the impact of waste generated at UH on the environment

- ➢ **Target:** Year on year reduction in waste measured by:
  - Total Waste
  - Waste / FTE
  - Total waste recycled %
  - Total waste to landfill %

PROCUREMENT

The University of Hertfordshire recognises the impact that procurement processes can have on the environment, not only directly through the purchasing choices it makes, but also indirectly through its ability to influence and educate buyers and suppliers. Procurement has implications not only for waste and resource management, but also for the climate and biodiversity considerations. The university is committed to embedding the principles of sustainable procurement as set out in the Sustainable Purchasing policy, by encouraging all relevant staff to:

- Consider the necessity of a purchase
- Understand the environmental impact of purchases
- Ensure sustainability is considered in tender processes
- Ensure that contractors comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Ensure that suppliers environmental credentials are considered in the appraisal process
- Alternative sustainable options will be explored
- Liaise with suppliers to encourage sustainable good practice
- Educating suppliers and staff on the university's sustainability objectives
- Apply whole-life cost approach to purchasing considerations
- Choose suppliers that can demonstrate sustainable commitments where possible.

Objective: To audit all existing and new suppliers for environmental commitments

WATER

Water consumption carries a negative environmental impact, not only from the emissions it generates to move, treat, and use the water, but it can also deplete water from natural ecosystems if used excessively.

The University of Hertfordshire is committed to water management measures which, in addition to meeting all legal requirements and approved codes of practice, minimise water wastage and optimise the use of water saving and harvesting technologies where possible.

Objective: To minimise water usage and waster losses across the estate

- ➤ **Target:** To keep water consumption below 13m^3
  To reduce water consumption year on year (m^3/fte)

BIODIVERSITY

With three campuses covering in excess of 200 hectares, protecting and enhancing Biodiversity is a key priority at Herts. From ancient woodlands to amenity grassland, lakes to a pinetum, the University of Hertfordshire has a variety of habitats, providing numerous opportunities for conservation and enrichment.

Our overarching approach to biodiversity is set out in our Campus Biodiversity Strategy, while dedicated operational actions plans detail land management policies and procedures at specific sites and campuses.

Objective: To protect and enhance Biodiversity

➢ **Target:** To achieve net gain (green space % as m^2)
To increase the biodiversity on campus (number of species)

NATURE POSITIVE UNIVERSITIES

In December 2022 we pledged to become a Nature Positive University as a founding member. Nature Positive Universities was founded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and University of Oxford in partnership with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The initiative was launched at the Montreal COP15 in December 2022.

Nature Positive means restoring species and ecosystems that have been harmed by the impacts of a university and its activities, and enhancing its positive impacts on nature. This refers to everything a university does, from its teaching and research work to the operations and supply chains that keep it running. Becoming a Nature Positive University will involve establishing a biodiversity baseline, setting targets and actions, and reporting on progress annually, all of which we aim to deliver through our Biodiversity Strategy (tbc).

HEDGEHOG FRIENDLY CAMPUS

In a bit to help conserve wildlife and enhance habitats, The university of Hertfordshire participates in the Hedgehog Friendly Campus programme, and is proud to have achieved Silver status in 2022.

ENGAGEMENT

All the aims and commitments within the Estate and Operations pathway are supported by engagement initiatives to help raise awareness and galvanise our community around a common purpose. More information can be found in the next Pathway.

PATHWAY 2: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Empowering our staff, students, and wider community with the skills and knowledge to not only face the emerging environmental challenges, but to also play an active role in building a sustainable future, is an integral part of our sustainability strategy. Our engagement programme offers opportunities to learn, share, celebrate, and participate in sustainability activities on campus and beyond, galvanizing our community around a common purpose.

Staff have the opportunity to join a sustainability staff network and to take part in competitive initiatives that help make the workplace more sustainable, as well as other events such as littler picks, biodiversity walks, and volunteering sessions. We also deliver a sustainability induction for all new members of staff, and offer various levels sustainability training as part of the university's professional development programme, such as carbon literacy.

Students can earn GoHerts points by volunteering with us through the Sustainability Advocates programme. We also offer a number of other engagement opportunities such as environmental audits, litter picks, conservation work, craft sessions as well as awareness pop-ups and educational sessions throughout the year. We also support the Sustainability Student Society by collaborating and offering advice, as well as the Student Union to help embed sustainability into societies' terms of reference, code of conduct, and accreditation.

Objective: To instil a sustainable mindset within our staff, student, and wider communities

Progress will be measured by participation rates, absolute and %.

> ➢ **Target**: A 50% participation rate of BAME and under-represented groups

PATHWAY 3: EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

By equipping our students with the skills and knowledge to meet the demands of a changing world and to drive positive change through future careers, we are empowering a generation of sustainability-driven citizens and leaders. Whether through the taught curriculum, informal learning, careers advice, or the Go Herts award, all students have the opportunity acquire new skills and develop a sustainable mindset.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Graduate Attributes are the skills and qualities students should develop during their programme and throughout their student life. Their focus is to develop and enhance employability, and to give students the skills and knowledge to thrive and succeed in their future endeavours. The University of Hertfordshire Graduate Attributes were established in 2011 and have been updated following a consultation with our students in 2022. Among the six graduate attributes there are two that link specifically to Sustainability:

- Sustainability driven
- Globally minded

There graduate attributes will be embedded into all courses and programmes, and will inform the wider student experience agenda, ensure teaching and learning is relevant to students' priorities and the world they will be graduating into.
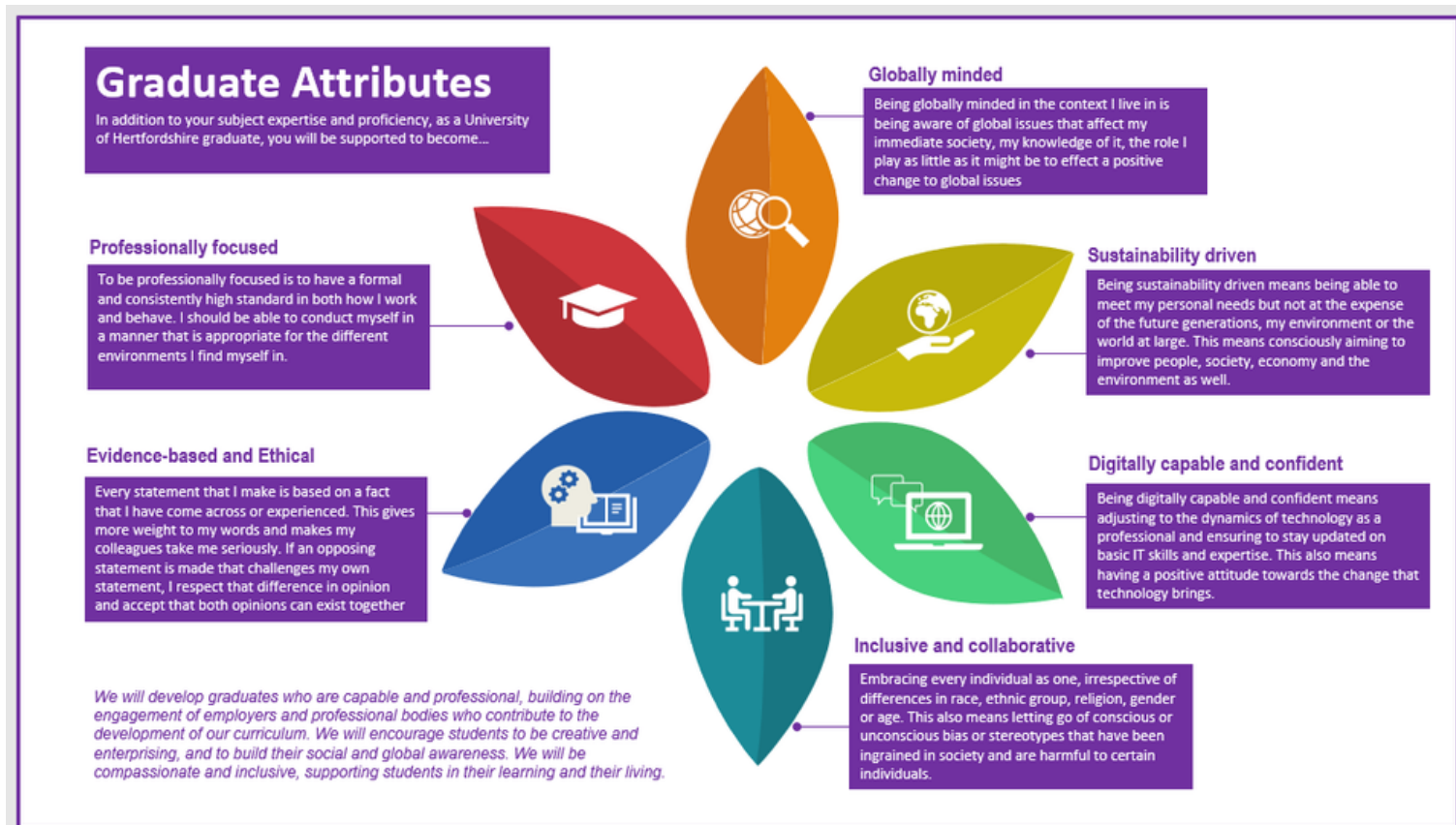
GREEN SKILLS

The green jobs market has grown incredibly rapidly over the last few years to keep up with central, local, and sector commitments to Net Zero. While this is positive news for social, economic, and environmental purposes, it has highlighted acute skills shortages across the sectors it most urgently needs to decarbonise as programmes to upskill and reskill workers have not been able to keep track.

The University of Hertfordshire is helping to close this gap, not only by embedding the sustainability driven graduate attributes into all academic programmes, but also by working with employers to understand their specific workforce needs and develop innovative apprenticeship and short courses to upskill and expand knowledge and workplace effectiveness in this area.

PATHWAY 4: RESEARCH, ENTERPRISE, AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

At Herts, we're committed to increasing our understanding of climate change and sustainability and empowering communities and businesses all over the world to take purposeful action to protect our planet through our research, enterprise and innovation activities.

Achievements and case studies can be found in our Environment and Sustainability Annual Performance Report. (Link to website)

RESEARCH

Research by the University of Hertfordshire is increasing our understanding of climate change, creating sustainable solutions to environmental challenges, and empowering people to take purposeful action to protect our planet.

The Centre for Climate Research addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing society. The Centre focuses on understanding the impacts from climate change on our society and in developing adaptation and mitigation strategies to aid the United Nations' sustainable development goals. C3R is a unique initiative that crosses all academic Schools of Study at the University of Hertfordshire, and cuts across all research themes. It brings together nearly 50 academic and research staff, making C3R one of the largest research centres at the University.

The **Centre for Future Societies Research** carries out interdisciplinary investigations into complex ways of making our future world a better place. The Centre consists of nearly 120 academic and research members of staff, bringing together an exceptionally diverse collection of knowledge and expertise to help increasing our understanding solutions for better future societies. The Centre links to the six university research themes of food, global economy, health and wellbeing, heritage, cultures and communities, information and security, and space.

ENTERPRISE AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The University of Hertfordshire is committed to embedding sustainability principles within its Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange programmes and initiatives. By providing access to our research expertise, infrastructure, and business support know-how, we help develop sustainability-driven entrepreneurial ventures, collaborate with students, graduates, and businesses partners on R&D, skills development, and innovation.

Our aim is to empower the business community and other key stakeholders in our region and beyond to take purposeful action to protect our planet. Through our knowledge exchange work, we're collaborating with partners around the world to bring about impactful partnerships and sustainable innovation is at the core of our engagement with the aspiring

entrepreneurs, businesses, and other organisations of all sizes that we support. We proactively bid for opportunities that can help us drive positive sustainability outcomes and sustainability is embedded into our tendering process. Recent successful examples of such programmes include two Design Exchange Partnerships paving the way for a green transition, an African KTP looking to foster sustainable agriculture and 'Build Back Better' (Community Renewal Fund) that aimed to empower SMEs to incorporate sustainability into their business models and operations.

Sustainability is also a key theme in our student, graduate and business facing events, such as Global Entrepreneurship Week and the Green Careers Fair. Sustainability is also embedded in all of the business-focused programmes we run, including the Herts Sustainability Accelerator and our 12-months Business Incubator Programme.

We have clearly articulated our commitment to embedding sustainability principles across our various enterprise and knowledge exchange activities, in our Sustainability Action Plan, which sets out objectives, actions, targets and KPIs, including incorporating Sustainability training into departmental induction and sustainability-focused data trackers into departmental activities when feasible.

By leveraging collective knowledge and fostering collaboration, both locally and across the world, knowledge exchange can help find practical solutions, implement sustainable practices, and create positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes.

COMPLIANCE & REPORTING

EMS

We have an externally accredited Environmental Management System (EMS) to in place to ensure we meet and effectively manage our legal, internal, and external environmental compliance obligations, and strive for continual improvement. Our EMS currently holds Eco-Campus Platinum status and is ISO14001:2015 certified.

GOVERNANCE

To ensure the successful implementation of our sustainability agenda, we have established a robust governance structure that brings together stakeholders and management commitments from across the university. This ensures accountability, coordination, and strategic decision-making at each level, ultimately driving the integration of sustainability principles throughout our institution.
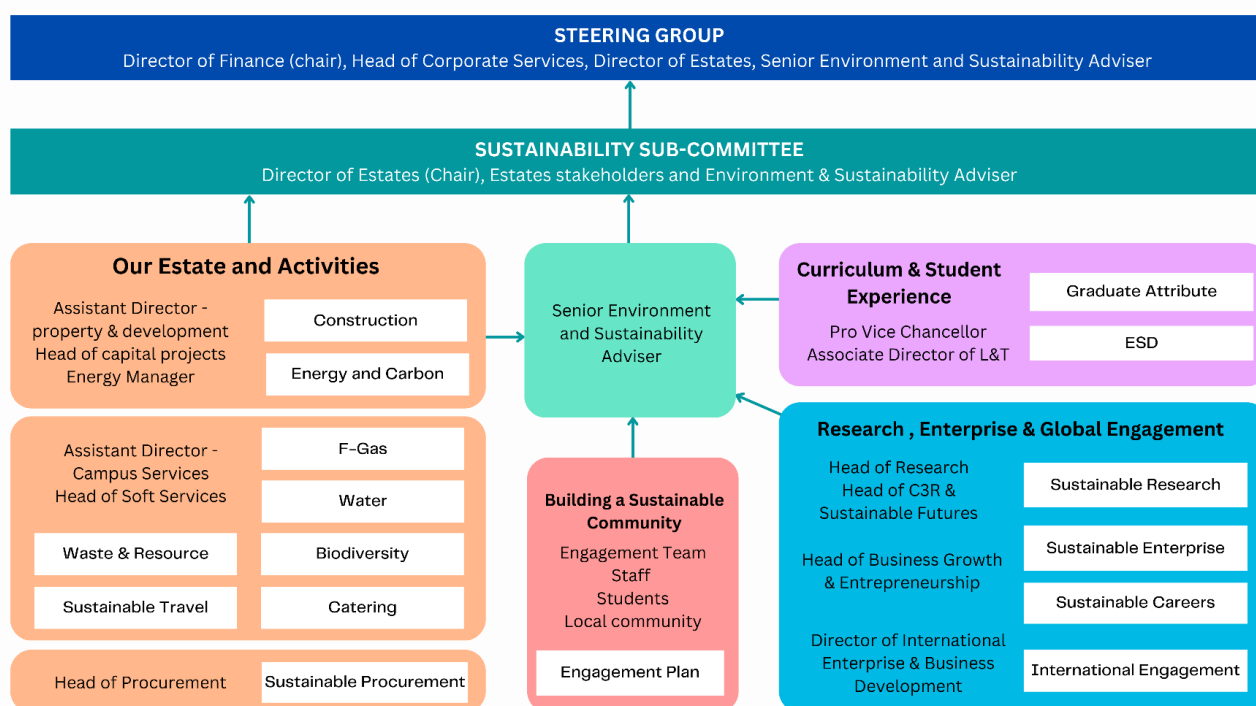
ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Environmental and Sustainability performance across all pathways is reported on annually. This will include outcomes from the management review, an update on the pathways and objectives, as well as any relevant data, case studies, achievements, and challenges. The annual performance report is published and available externally.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date Published / Amended	Author	Details
1	06/05/2023	Senior Environment and Sustainability Adviser	New Document