![University of Central Lancashire — UCLan logo (est. 1828)]

Strategic Plan 2021-2028 Sub Strategy

Sustainability

Priority 6
Future-proofing our University

May 2022

Vision

We will become the exemplar in UK higher education for our regional championing of environmental awareness. Our unwavering commitment to sustainability, health and wellbeing across all our campuses will become the benchmark for the UK university community.

To achieve this vision, we will sustain and enhance the wellbeing of people, places and the planet, recognising that they are interconnected and interdependent. We will protect and improve health, while also tackling the climate and ecological emergencies, promoting biodiversity, and supporting a just transition[1] to a greener future.

Objectives

We will:

1. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of every student, colleague, and community we serve. We'll create healthy spaces to support and promote mental, physical, social, and ecological wellbeing for all.

2. Take a 'whole university' approach to cultural and behavioural change in all areas and at every level of our work.

3. Minimise our consumption of our planet's precious resources by putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do.

4. Use sustainable, healthy design and technologies across our estate, creating greener spaces so our students and staff can enjoy nature and adopt healthier lifestyles.

5. Wherever possible, use sustainable local suppliers, carefully considering sustainable procurement and the provenance of supply chains.

6. Help graduates understand sustainability in the context of their chosen academic and professional fields so they can create better solutions, and a better future for all of us.

7. Encourage more engagement in sports and other activities to inspire healthy choices, lifestyles and pride in local communities.

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1   The term `just transition' is used to refer to the notion that justice and equity must form an integral part of the transition towards a low-carbon world…[with a] social and economic restructuring that addresses the roots of inequality. Source: Pinker, A. (2020, p9) Just Transitions: A Comparative Perspective. A Report prepared for the Just Transition Commission. Aberdeen: James Hutton Institute.

Approach and Activity

The University's activities in this area are far-reaching, and our influence extends beyond our campuses. A commitment to sustainability must shape our activities as we implement our Strategic Plan. Future-proofing our University must include bold and ambitious action to reduce our negative impacts on the environment, achieve year-on-year progress towards carbon neutrality, and be a force for positive change that supports wellbeing and sustainable development. Our work with colleagues, students and partners will have a lasting impact. We will endeavour to look at co-benefits, such as health improvements and carbon savings from active travel, whilst accepting there are compromises to be made in order to achieve our goals.

The governance of our sustainability journey is important, with robust decision-making checks and challenges. Clear and transparent internal and external communication will be a focus as we make progress towards the commitments to sustaining and enhancing the wellbeing of people, places and the planet and addressing the climate and ecological emergencies.

Eight in ten students consistently believe that sustainable development should be actively incorporated and promoted by universities.[2] The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals[3] cover economic, social and environmental objectives, and universities have an important part to play in tackling these global challenges. The young people participating in today's climate strikes and demanding climate and environmental action are our students of tomorrow. The focus of the world's media has been on COP26, with 200 countries agreeing the Glasgow Climate Pact to keep 1.5°C alive, but with the recognition that this requires concerted and immediate global efforts. All countries will be revisiting and strengthening their emissions targets to 2030, which demonstrates how important our path to net-zero will be, and the speed with which we need to make reductions.

Alongside this, it is important to reflect on the past two years. We will learn from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and from our experience of responding to an emergency and use this learning as a springboard to accelerate progress for human and planetary wellbeing. We will take radical action to reduce our ecological footprint, for example by embracing digital transformation and reducing our estate and travel-related carbon footprints.

2   Drayson et al, 2014. "Student attitudes towards and skills for sustainable development." Available at: student_attitudes_towards_and_skills_for_sustainable_development.pdf (heacademy.ac.uk)

3   THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)

Implement a 'Whole University' Approach

We will adopt a system-wide 'whole University' approach, embedding sustainability, health and wellbeing into all our activities, and prioritising cultural and behavioural change at every level across the University. We will integrate sustainability, health and wellbeing within every aspect of the our operations through policies, procedures and decision-making. We will develop methodologies to bring life-cycle analysis into decision making to ensure that the whole-life costs and impacts are fully considered.

Our University is part of a wider system, and we need to view institution-level policy and practice within the context of national and regional level policy and guidance, appreciating that human and planetary wellbeing are strongly influenced by upstream determinants outside of the control of our University as a single institution.

Place-based Leadership

We will strengthen sustainability as a cross-cutting research and innovation theme and ensure positive impacts on the wellbeing of people, places and the planet. We will champion the circular economy in the context of Preston City's trailblazing commitment to community wealth building, popularly known as 'The Preston Model', where feasible to do so. We will link our civic role as an anchor institution through the climate agenda.

By locating our University within its 'place', we can consider the impact on the wider community and facilitate a joined-up approach across internal and external services and initiatives. We will become the exemplar in UK higher education for our regional championing of environmental awareness. This will involve working with, and providing leadership to, various partners to develop approaches which champion sustainability and wellbeing across the region. We will build on our successful track record of projects such as Making Carbon Work (MaCaW), using our expertise to drive environmental improvements within local businesses. We will strengthen our research and innovation relating to sustainability and health, and ensure its translation into real-world impacts that benefit human and planetary wellbeing.

Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergencies

The Vice-Chancellor's Group agreed to declare a Climate Emergency in December 2019 and it is evident that this emergency is closely entwined with a wider ecological crisis[4]. The implications are clear: that we must take rapid action in order to stabilise temperature increase to 1.5°C to avoid irreversible loss of ecosystems alongside the wider destructive impacts of climate change. The longer we wait to take action, the more it will cost, and the greater the technological, economic, social and institutional challenges will be.

We will proactively pursue a 78% reduction in emissions to 2035 based on a $CO_2e/m2$ baseline of 1990 levels. We are embarking on a detailed decarbonisation plan, and once this has been produced in 2023 we will develop new, more stretching targets to 2028, including targets for Scope 3 emissions[5]. We will minimise consumption of our planet's precious resources by putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do. Focus areas

include decarbonisation of the estate and information and technology systems, digital transformation and enhanced space utilisation, green travel improvements, fossil-fuel divestment, sustainable procurement and life-cycle business processes.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing

We are proud to provide second-to-none support services, with an effective, whole-University approach, maintaining a consistent and joined-up support network, with an emphasis on early intervention. In 2020 we were ranked first nationally for the money we have invested into our student wellbeing services (Student Welfare League Table). We will be recognised as the leading University for supporting the mental, physical and social wellbeing of our communities by 2024, working towards Universities UK's Stepchange: Mentally Healthy Universities framework and Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter.

We will prioritise and actively promote the health and wellbeing of students, staff, and our wider communities. Health has been defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and is influenced by a wide range of environmental, social, economic, cultural, political, genetic and behavioural factors. We have long pioneered the 'Healthy Universities' approach and have provided leadership to this movement nationally and internationally over many years. Encapsulated in the 2015 Okanagan International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges, the approach is underpinned by 'whole university' and 'whole system' perspectives and seeks to create an organisational culture and learning, working and living environments that support wellbeing – thereby enhancing performance and productivity.

Working in collaboration with the Students' Union and partner organisations, we will harness this trailblazing history and implement evidence-informed actions to promote the health and wellbeing of students, staff, and our wider communities. Key inter-related focus areas include mental health, sexual health, alcohol and physical activity.

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4   The 2021 and 2022 contributions to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have signalled `code red for humanity', while the Intergovernmental Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 2019 Global Assessment Report concluded that around one quarter of the world's species are threatened with extinction due to climate change and loss of habitats.

5   Scope 1 emissions are from sources that are owned or controlled (eg fuel combustion, company vehicles, fugitive emissions). Scope 2 emissions are linked to purchased electricity, heat and team. Scope 3 are all other indirect emissions (eg purchased goods and services, sold products, transportation (up and down stream), business travel, commuting, waste, investments, leased assets and franchises. Source: Osborne, J., Hoggett, R., Fraser S. et al (2019) University of Exeter Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group White Paper. Exeter: University of Exeter.

Facilitate Sport and Physical Activity

We will develop the Active Campus project as a continuation of the Preston Campus Masterplan to help us to become one of the most active UK universities. The Campus Masterplan to 2021 has led to the development of state-of-the art spaces for studying, learning, innovating, reflecting, engaging and socialising. We will continue to prioritise the wellbeing aspects of spaces, both internal and external. We will focus on well signposted and digitally mapped Active Routes, Active Spaces (eg pop-up sports, games and social activities), Event Spaces and Courtyard Spaces. Appreciating the mental health benefits of physical activity, we will enable students and staff to take activity breaks and create social prescription pathways in collaboration with our Student Wellbeing, Staff Wellbeing and Occupational Health services.

Across all our campuses, we will prioritise cultural and behavioural change, alongside infrastructure development, to encourage physical activity, create new sporting opportunities, and facilitate green and active travel among students and staff, thereby enhancing sustainability and physical and mental health. We will make it easier to travel to, from and through our campuses on foot and by bike, provide training to build user confidence and explore cycle ownership and hire schemes.

In creating the University as a Centre of Sporting Excellence, we will play our part in creating, facilitating and delivering a sporting infrastructure that the community and the region can be proud of – while increasing equality of access and promoting inclusion through a charitable bursary scheme. We will strategically partner with sporting organisations to produce a more compelling and sustainable student experience and will continue to use sport and physical activity as a 'force for good'. We'll achieve this through volunteering opportunities which will enable students to make a difference to the University and local communities while also developing transferable employability skills.

Create Healthy Environments

In the past 18 months, the sense of urgency to become more sustainable has dramatically increased. The coronavirus pandemic has shown how to incorporate digital transformation into work and study. Sustainability and the way we manage our buildings and operations has an enormous part to play in achieving a net-zero future, including efficient space utilisation and consideration of rationalisation of the estate.

It is estimated that in the UK buildings are responsible for 25% of greenhouse gas emissions[6] and that 80-90% of the energy use of a building is from its operation[7], which creates a massive opportunity to maximise efficiency, using data as well as people's behaviour to make changes in the use of lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, machinery, IT and other equipment. By monitoring building performance and reporting on our carbon emissions, we can match our long-term sustainability goals with actions to monitor progress.

We recognise that health is created and nurtured in the settings in which we live our lives. We are committed to providing campuses that are safe, health promoting and sustainable. We will ensure that our campus buildings and surroundings are designed, constructed and maintained to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. We will prioritise the use of sustainable, healthy design and technologies across our estate – strengthening placemaking, enhancing the public realm, increasing biodiversity, facilitating 'biophilic' connectivity to nature, and enabling walking, cycling and the wider adoption of healthier lifestyles. As part of the Active Campus improvements, we will integrate Healthy Spaces, creating tranquil, green spaces where individuals can relax and enjoy nature and experience 'time out'. Such spaces will seek to utilise planting schemes to create sensory and calming environments.

Our Estates masterplan will consider the viability of sustainable redevelopment of existing stock through retrofit versus new build development and will seek to adopt best practice. We will design, construct and maintain buildings with reference to factors including indoor air quality, thermal comfort, temperature, humidity, visual comfort, daylight/artificial lighting, noise and acoustics, safety and security, interior layouts with active and inclusive design, connection to nature (biophilia) and location/access to amenities and outdoor space.

We will investigate the possibilities to embrace smart buildings, the Internet of Things (IoT) and integrated workplace management systems (IWMS) to generate and collect data with the goal of creating healthy buildings.

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6   Green Building Council, Whole Life Carbon Roadmap

7   Praseda et al, Sustainable Built Environment and Sustainable Manufacture in Encyclopaedia of Sustainable Technologies, 2017

Responsible Finance

There are three key priority aspects of Responsible Finance: divestment and investment; whole life cycle costing; and procurement.

Our Ethical Investment Policy details our divestment from Fossil Fuel investments. It is important to progressively prioritise socially and environmentally responsible investment (eg low carbon technology; climate-related research; businesses with positive social and environmental impacts).

In implementing our sub strategy to future-proof the University, it will be crucial to adopt a "cradle to cradle" philosophy which considers the whole life implication of investment decisions. Sustainability is an important investment area with opportunities for competitive advantage as well as supporting corporate social responsibility (CSR); environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG); regulatory compliance; risk management; and cost reduction.

We are committed to promoting Corporate Social Responsibility, taking account of the economic, social, environmental and equality impacts of our purchasing activity. We will put in place mechanisms to ensure that procurement processes are as sustainable as possible, scrutinising the provenance of supply chains and where possible using local suppliers – thereby reducing our carbon footprint and enhancing our civic role within the region.

The Government's social value model articulates the areas of priority focus for social value delivery in procurement, in the form of policy themes and outcomes. The policy themes are: Covid-19 recovery; tackling economic inequality; fighting climate change; equal opportunity; and wellbeing. We are part of a number of groups, including the North West Universities Purchasing Consortium and the Preston Model, where collective action plans and approaches are agreed to support each other in how we promote and evaluate social value. We are also looking at developing our own initiatives to promote sustainable procurement and this will include engagement with our supply chain to encourage opportunities and also the flow down of our Corporate and Social Responsibility priorities into the wider supply chain. We operate under the Public Contracts Regulations, so adopt the approach that social value is explicitly evaluated where the requirements are related and proportionate to the subject matter of the contract, and we will ensure that we include relevant changes to tender evaluation as public procurement changes as a result of the Green Paper: Transforming Public Procurement.

Carbon Literacy and Skills

We will strengthen our colleagues' carbon-literacy and integrate sustainability and green skills development into the curriculum across multiple disciplines so that our graduates are fired up and equipped to create sustainable solutions for a better and greener future. If we are to achieve the step-change needed to achieve our net-zero and wider ecological ambitions, we must combine meaningful shifts in organisational culture with increased knowledge and capacity to mobilise behaviour change among both staff and students.

We will continue to implement the Curriculum Framework so that every course embodies our shared characteristics, such as sustainability and green skills, digital literacy, wellbeing and interdisciplinary experiences. This will endow our graduates with the attributes they need to succeed in a changing, complex, globalised world. Our students will graduate with a solid understanding of sustainability and wellbeing, equipped with the passion, drive and competencies to develop and implement solutions that support the transition to a better, fairer and greener future. It is also vital to engage meaningfully with employers, shaping our curriculum to ensure that it's informed by industry knowledge and current, real-world challenges.

Performance Indicators

Performance indicator	Measure	Targets		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Carbon emissions	Scope 1 and 2 to reduce by 78% by 2035 based on 1990 levels	8,691 tonnes CO_2e for 2020/21	8,428 tonnes CO_2e for 2021/22	8.165 tonnes CO_2e for 2022/23
Carbon emissions	To produce a plan for Scope 3 emissions by 2023	Refer to Carbon Management Plan for interim targets		
Carbon literate colleagues	Number of certified members of staff / students	30	30	30
Decarbonisation Plan produced	Identified path to Net Zero	Establish targets		
Construction and refurbishment	Identifying the criteria to measure all refurbishments from 2022	Establish targets		
Emissions and discharges	Zero pollution incidents	Zero	Zero	Zero
Biodiversity	Production of new Biodiversity Action Plan for 2023	Establish targets		
Waste management	Recycled % (Current 4% recycled, but total 98% diversion from landfill)	4%	6%	8%
Travel and transport	Percentage staff travel car use ('car solo' and 'car share' combined)	55.5%	55%	54.5%
Travel and transport	Percentage staff travel 'cycle' and 'walk'	18%	18%	18%
Sustainable procurement	Investigate NetPositive	Establish targets		
Water	Reduction of water consumption (Target for 20/21 was 94,722m3. Actual 19/20 64,139 but covid year)	85,000	82,000	79,000
Education for sustainable development	Courses integrating Sustainable Development Goals	Establish baseline		
Responsible finance	Divestment and reinvestment	Ethical Investment Policy implemented		

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