

**Kingston
University**
London

Sustainability at Kingston University



2021–26





1.0 Introductory messages

Professor Stephen Spier, Vice-Chancellor

The development of Kingston University's Sustainability Plan has been important enough that it was not pushed aside during the immense operational imperatives we faced during the pandemic. If anything, it confirmed for us how adaptable and resilient we are as an institution, which has given impetus to this plan and confidence in declaring its breadth of action. Giving sustainability our full attention is the right thing to do, and has significant support amongst staff and students. Our staff and students understand the scale of sustainability challenges and are clear about the importance of leadership and ambition in this area, as we re-imagine business as usual.

We are fortunate to be building on strong foundations. Kingston University has a history of sustainability leadership. We were home to one of the earliest dedicated academic centres of excellence for sustainability in teaching and learning, a dedicated sustainability team at the heart of university management established robust operational processes and innovative delivery that raised the profile of sustainability across the organisation. These pioneering approaches are now maturing. This plan commits us to embed sustainability across

all areas, building it into our ways of working and to collective responsibility for delivery. Our recent commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Accord, which I proudly signed, reflects the continued importance we place on sustainability and our role connecting agendas locally and globally.

Muna Ali and Yasmin Noor, Sabbatical Officers, Union of Kingston Students

The Union of Kingston Students has been involved in the development of this plan at every stage to ensure student perspectives are reflected and to demonstrate our commitment to working in partnership with the University during its implementation.

We know that students can support the delivery of this plan and that they are keen to be part of the solution. It is vital that the student voice is embedded in this plan, it is the next generation of Kingston graduates who will be most significantly impacted by the consequences of climate change; we owe it to them to do all we can to contribute to this important agenda.

2.0 About Kingston University



Part of the
Kingston
community
since 1899



Home to 18,949 students
including 4,995
international students



A top 40 UK university

4

campuses
in and
around
Kingston

1,912

members of staff



Annual income
of £191.7m

4 faculties



3.0 Sustainability at Kingston University

This plan reflects how we consider sustainability at Kingston University; as a critically important strategic challenge, an agenda requiring joined-up, future-thinking and innovative approaches and something that everyone needs to get involved with if it is to be delivered.

We have signed up to the United Nations Accord and are using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a way of demonstrating our contribution to sustainability.

This means our approach includes the environmental, social and economic impacts of our activities as well as how they relate to the University corporate plan. Our role as a civic university positions us well to understand how we can contribute to local communities as we respond to global challenges of climate change, ecological collapse and inequality.

Our plan is designed such that we can embed sustainability into operational areas and ways of working addressing the aims of the corporate plan.

We have identified clear ownership at the highest level for the delivery of all areas of activity and the mechanisms we will use to demonstrate progress. This is a whole-institution response.

We have used the following principles in developing our plan:

- Sustainability is complex and there are no simple solutions.
- We need to urgently reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and take action on climate change.
- We need to protect and conserve our immediate environment.
- We need to manage indirect impacts we have on people and planet.
- Everyone needs to be supported to play their part.
- We need to stimulate innovation and test new approaches.
- Sustainability needs building into our systems and processes.

4.0 Developing our plan

We have developed this plan with engagement and implementation in mind. We have been keen to proactively involve as many stakeholders as possible, to gather and learn from existing good practice and to build capacity. Engaged stakeholders will be critical to support the successful implementation of the plan over its lifespan.

This plan was developed in collaboration with staff and students.

This included:

60

Over 60 one-to-one conversations with key stakeholders from across the University and with representatives from the Royal Borough of Kingston

6

Delivery of six presentations to internal teams and groups including academics and representatives from the Union of Kingston Students

Holding three drop-in sessions for members of staff



Contributing and learning from the sustainability survey developed and delivered by the student Union of Kingston Students



Gathering insights from the communications team via polls and surveys

Thanks to everyone who has supported this development.

5.0 Introductory messages

Helen Laville, Provost

The ways our students and graduates make their mark on the world is our most significant contribution to our local, national and global communities. Ensuring they are equipped with knowledge, skills and experiences relating to sustainability and can respond to critical global challenges is a priority. Providing the highest quality teaching and learning is part of our core business and this plan outlines how sustainability will be fully embedded.

It will be my responsibility to ensure every student has the opportunity to explore sustainability in the context of their academic programmes, as they develop their personal and professional competencies and support them to understand their own potential to make a positive contribution to local and global challenges outlined by the SDGs.

Caroline Harries, Chief Financial Officer

The sustainability impacts we control relate to direct campus operations; how we heat and light our buildings, how effectively we utilise space and how our developments affect natural habitats and wildlife. We also have significant indirect impacts through our spending and investments. We need to ensure we take an active role to ensure they are managed in ways that are aligned with our sustainability ambitions and values.

It is my responsibility to ensure sustainability is delivered through our estate and operations, our spending, investments and strategic decisions. I will support staff to understand sustainability and how it relates to their role and responsibility. This will be achieved through our collective ownership and responsibility of the role we play in addressing sustainability. The decisions and choices we make do count and do have an impact. Sustainability will be at the heart of re-shaping our transition to new ways of working for both students and staff, as we emerge from the restrictions brought about by the pandemic.

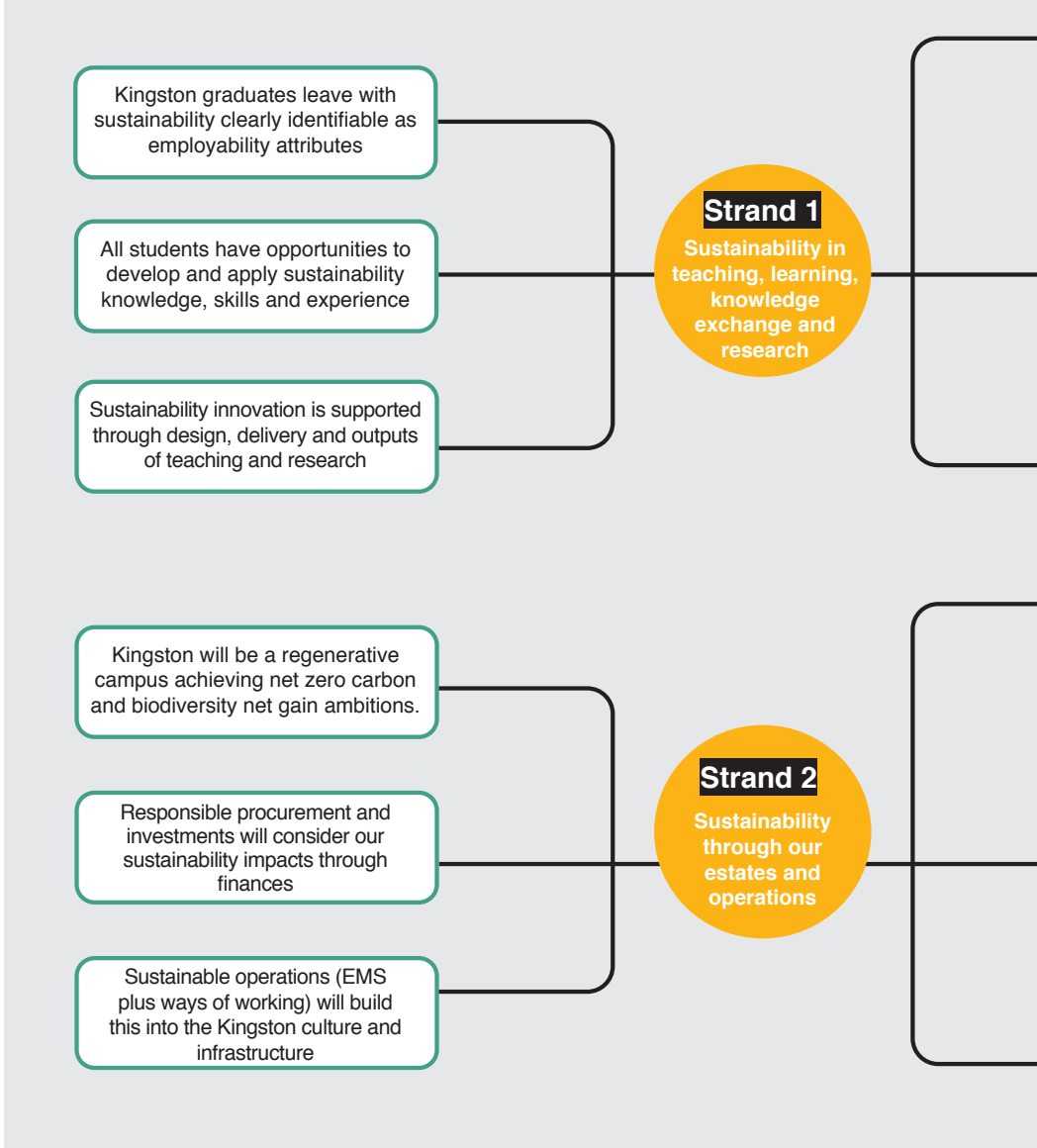


6.0 Overview of our approach

Our twin-strand approach considers our response to sustainability in relation to what we do (teaching, learning, knowledge exchange and research) and how and where we do it (our operations and estate).

Embedding sustainability means ownership of ambitions and targets is shared across the organisation.

The diagram below provides an overview of the key elements with the institutional partners and delivery mechanisms that will be used to drive progress.



key

Strands

Ambitions

Targets

Delivery mechanisms (and partners)

Sustainability in the curriculum

Students recognise they have developed sustainability skills and attributes

Academic frameworks, course planning and review processes (Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre)

Sustainability linking curriculum and communities

Sustainability is recognised as central to Kingston research and civic contribution activity

Graduate attributes and student engagement teams (Careers, Student Hub)

Sustainability through research, partnerships and knowledge exchange

Sustainability is a core element of our research, partnerships and knowledge exchange activity

Cross Faculty Research Network (Research and Innovation, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange)

A regenerative campus

Net zero carbon

A net zero campus by 2038

Biodiversity net gain

Implementation of the Kingston Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

Environmental Management System (EMS) (Estates and Sustainability)

Sustainable procurement and investments

Implement ISO2400 sustainable procurement guidance (FFL5)

Responsible procurement and ethical finance processes (Finance)

Staff development and ways of working

Sustainability is embedded into human resources and organisational development process and practice.

Staff engagement (HR and organisational development)

6.1 Strand 1: Sustainability in teaching, learning, knowledge exchange and research

Developing sought after graduates is the mission of the corporate plan. Demand for future graduates is likely to be linked to them demonstrating sustainability competencies as delivering national and international net zero carbon targets drives a green economy. (The [role of education](#) in addressing skills gaps has already been identified as of importance.)

For our graduates to leave with sustainability clearly identifiable as employability attributes, they will need to understand sustainability in the context of their academic programme, how it links to local and global challenges and have opportunities to contribute practically in ways that align this with their own interests and ambitions.

We will support this by embedding sustainability comprehensively across all faculties using innovation through design, delivery and outputs of teaching and research. Opportunities for students to connect the local and global by making meaningful contributions as they learn will be expanded and we will use sustainability as a driver for interdisciplinarity, co-development and curriculum excellence

Progress in this area will be driven by embedding sustainability into our:

- Course planning and review processes (LTEC).
- Graduate attributes and the work of our student engagement teams (Careers, Student Hub).

An academic-led *Sustainability Community of Practice* will support this by bringing together staff, students and other stakeholders (local, business, professional bodies etc) to ensure our approach contributes to our civic/place-based agenda.

6.1a Sustainability in the curriculum

Our targets Students recognise they have developed sustainability skills and attributes.

Objective Sustainability will be embedded in the academic cycle. Where the curriculum has strong links to the SDGs this will be transparent.

Sustainability is dynamic with rapidly changing theory, application and pedagogy. Our challenge is to support academics to respond to this pace of change to enable them to explore links between their subject areas and sustainability. Our approach is to create the frameworks that facilitate sharing of good practice and interdisciplinarity.

The *Sustainability Community of Practice* provides a focal point for academics active in this area to share approaches and resources in support of curriculum excellence.

- We will link the academic frameworks of Inclusive Learning, Employability and Sustainability to deliver significant co-benefits.
- A sustainable curriculum guide will be developed and delivered across all areas. Where the curriculum has strong links to the SDGs this will be transparent.

Links to SDGs



“Embedding sustainability into the curriculum is already happening in many areas. In addition to dedicated courses such as Sustainable Design MA, graphic design students have a module dedicated to exploring and applying principles of sustainability and bringing these into their work.”

6.1b Sustainability linking curriculum and communities

Our targets Sustainability is built into the place-based learning agenda.

Objective Sustainability is a significant part of the student experience and positions our students as community leaders and change agents.

Kingston University students can be agents of change in our local community, equipping them with sustainability skills, knowledge and expertise can unlock significant potential and position them as advocates for positive change. International connections mean that many students are also able to act as leaders in the global community.

Students provide an important 'bridge' with our local business and third sector communities through formal and voluntary placements. Using sustainability as a focus for these opportunities provides additional mutual benefit.

Links to SDGs



“ The Kingston University HackCentre brings together organisations with challenges and students who are supported to develop their creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Hackathons are aligned to the UN SDGs and offer powerful opportunities for both students and businesses. ”

6.1c Sustainability through research, partnerships and knowledge exchange

Our targets Sustainability is a core element of our research, partnerships and knowledge exchange activity.

Objective Sustainability is recognised as central to Kingston research and civic contribution activity.

Sustainability provides a powerful vehicle for communicating how research and knowledge exchange activity contributes to our place-based agenda making a positive community contribution. Research and partnerships that support economic recovery will be particularly important as local and business communities rebuild post-Covid.

Kingston has a wealth of skills, knowledge and expertise it can share with its communities and working in partnership around sustainability will be important to solving sustainability challenges. An informal cross-faculty network with a focus on sustainability research will support this by pro-actively making connections with community and knowledge exchange opportunities.

Links to SDGs



“ The Student Hub supports students to deliver projects directly with the local business community, students get real-world work experience through socially valuable projects. ”

6.2 Strand 2: Sustainability through our estate and operations

A regenerative estate is designed with the future in mind. A future where we are not simply managing our environmental impacts but managing our estate in ways that improve the environment, sustaining biodiverse habitats alongside amenity spaces that are valuable to human wellbeing. Achieving net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain will be central to creating a regenerative estate.

In addition to managing the impacts we have on our immediate environment we will effectively manage our indirect impacts. These include the impacts of our spending and investments which are known to be environmental, social and economic. This will mean making spending and investment decisions that align with our sustainability ambitions and values.

Supporting our staff and student communities to engage with our estate in ways that support sustainability will be critical to success in this area. We will need to build support and recognition for staff into our organisational process and practice. From minimising single use plastics to ensuring buying responsibly we will support staff to understand their role and get involved.

Progress in this area will be driven by our:

- Environmental Management System (EMS) (Estates and Sustainability) and the achievement of external certification
- Responsible procurement and ethical finance processes (Procurement and Finance) and the achievement of external accreditation

This will be supported by an empowered and engaged staff (HR and Organisational Development) and the facilitation of remote working, learning and teaching (IT&S) to ensure our approach embeds best practice across environmental, financial and social activity.

6.2a (i) A regenerative campus: net zero carbon

Our targets A net zero campus - achieve net zero scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by academic year 2038/39 and net zero scope 3 emissions by academic year 2050/2051.

Objective To develop and deliver a pathway to net zero carbon for the Kingston campus.

We need to significantly and urgently reduce our carbon emissions. We have reduced our operational carbon emissions by 62 per cent (from a 2005/06 baseline) through renewable energy procurement, improving usage data, delivery of energy efficiency projects, building control strategies and by utilising low and zero-carbon technologies and as local, national and global efforts to decarbonise accelerate we will need to scale up and adapt further.

Developing our approach into a **pathway to net zero carbon** will support this expected period of rapid transition and will require focused efforts that are supported by investment. Compliance, further improvements to energy management and investment for carbon reduction across the estate, including limiting the impact of new buildings will form the basis of the pathway.

Success in this area will be linked to the involvement of all staff as new ways of working will be required to meet carbon reduction targets.

Links to SDGs



“Sustainability and IT is at the heart of the Agile Working project which will see campus workspaces used more efficiently as well as enabling staff to work more flexibly.”

6.2a (ii) A regenerative campus: biodiversity and green spaces

Our targets Implementation of the Kingston University Biodiversity Action Plan (KUBAP).

Objective Kingston campuses are havens for wildlife with biodiversity net gain implemented on all sites with staff and students engaged, educated and supporting best practice.

The Kingston campus includes valuable, wildlife-rich habitats. A regenerative campus goes beyond simply meeting legal requirements by ensuring all biodiversity is protected and conserved. This needs to be delivered alongside the provision of good quality amenity green spaces that provide wellbeing benefits to our students and staff.

Our physical environment should reflect our sustainability ambitions which means sustainability and biodiversity net gain which goes beyond mitigation when developing our campus. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity not only ensures compliance with legislation but is vital for a civic university.

Links to SDGs



“ Dozens of biodiversity monitoring and engagement activities take place every year with opportunities for volunteers to get involved in conservation efforts on campus. ”

6.2b Responsible procurement and investments

Our targets Implement ISO2400 Sustainable Procurement guidance (FFL5) / maintain Fairtrade University status/deliver responsible finance/investment policy.

Objective We will use our purchasing power to support our sustainability ambitions.

The University buys a range of goods and services in order to function and each has a carbon footprint or cost associated with it. We need to understand and reduce these impacts to achieve our net zero campus ambitions. There are also unethical or environmentally damaging practices hidden in supply chains and investments and we also need to identify and minimise these.

We have identified that managing our indirect (or Scope 3) emissions is an important part of achieving net zero carbon as an organisation. This will mean building responsible procurement further into our procurement processes across the organisation. There are also links to waste management as many of the things we buy end up being disposed of. Considering innovative circular approaches will be linked into our ways of working.

Links to SDGs



“ Our responsible finance and investment policy ensures spending is in line with our sustainability ambitions, managing risk and maximising opportunities to make a positive impact. ”

6.2c Staff development/engagement and ways of working

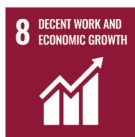
Our targets Sustainability is embedded into Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) process and practice and communications.

Objective All staff are supported to understand sustainability and their role in delivering this plan.

Our staff and the culture of the organisation are inextricably linked to the delivery of our sustainability ambitions. Ways of working evolve and the Covid-19 crisis has accelerated the speed of change. Sustainability will be part of our move towards a more agile workplace. Communications will be critical to success in this area.

Staff understanding sustainability and their role in delivering institutional ambitions is vital to the success of this plan, we are clear about the links between sustainability and our inclusivity ambitions and will ensure everyone is included as we embed sustainability into a new culture.

Links to SDGs



“ We are already making active links between sustainability and our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) activity. Collaboration across the staff networks will bring this to life and embed into Inclusive curriculum activities. ”

7.0 Implementation through innovation

We understand that successful delivery of this plan will require innovation as sustainability is embedded across all areas of activity. Creating the conditions for innovation and collaboration is being built into our approach to facilitate this.

Kingston is a pioneer of sustainability innovation (Education for Sustainable Development) and as we have identified, the dynamic nature of embedding sustainability into formal and informal curricula requires interdisciplinarity and creativity. Innovations will also be needed to solve some of the operational challenges of delivering net zero carbon ambitions.

The development of the Kingston University Living Lab will use sustainability as a vehicle to link community and operational challenges with curriculum excellence. **Innovative partnerships** built around sustainability will be encouraged and supported to drive delivery of our strategic ambitions.

8.0 Governance and reporting

Our commitment to the SDG Accord provides a framework for our reporting activity. We will map our sustainability contributions against the SDGs to demonstrate a local and global contribution.

Comprehensively embedding sustainability across the organisation means that responsibility for measurement and management of progress and targets will also be distributed. Performance indicators for sustainability will inform the institutional strategic KPIs – which are monitored by the Board of Governors.

An annual sustainability report will be produced to enable scrutiny and celebration of sustainability activity, this will include the involvement of students. A review of the Sustainability Plan will form part of this annual activity and will report into the senior leadership team and Academic Council.

