



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

White Paper on Sustainability

Five objectives for a Sustainable UvA

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Five objectives for a Sustainable UvA

White Paper on Sustainability
University of Amsterdam

Text in the Dutch version of this document is leading

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Main features

Vision

The UvA is a link between the present and the future. We lead the way in scientific and social innovations and we train the new generations of experts and leaders. We have a crucial responsibility in accelerating sustainable change in society and we want to be at the forefront as an institution with regard to sustainability. Unfortunately this is not yet the case.

Objectives

In order to increase our contribution to sustainability, we have formulated the following five objectives, on which we will work in the coming Strategic Plan period:

1. Towards a fair ecological footprint: Twenty-five per cent reduction in five years
2. The UvA has an active sustainability community
3. All degree programmes pay appropriate attention to sustainability
4. At the UvA, all students can develop and specialise to become pioneers in sustainability
5. We contribute to a sustainable world through our research

The above objectives form the core of our sustainability programme. We have translated them into concrete actions and objectives that fall within the responsibilities of various parts of the UvA.

By paying extra attention to sustainability in the coming years, we want to ensure that sustainability has a natural and appropriate place in our regular work and in the choices we make on a daily basis with regard to education, research and operational management. The point of departure is therefore that the activities are integrated into existing processes as much as possible.

Explanation of choices made

We have chosen the objectives and actions on the basis of the Green Paper on Sustainability drawn up previously and on the discussions held about it. These discussions and the comments on denkmee.uva.nl showed that:

- there is a great need for concrete goals, especially in operational management;
- we must lead by example in operational management;
- we must make the theme manageable, concrete, achievable and specific;
- proper addressing of sustainability across the breadth of research and education can make a major contribution and that there is enthusiasm for this;
- faculties want to take their own responsibility and implement our ambitions themselves;
- a framework and sufficient support must be provided at central level.

These, and other, arguments and ideas that were put forward in the feedback round were the guiding principle in rewriting the Green Paper to produce this White Paper.

Scope

This sustainability programme relates to green sustainability, also referred to as '*environmental sustainability*'. Issues relating to green sustainability affect many disciplines, from natural sciences and law to social sciences. There are important areas of overlap between green sustainability and other sustainability issues that are addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals. Units, faculties, institutes and degree programmes can address green sustainability in connection with other sustainability themes. This is desirable in many cases.

1. Towards a fair ecological footprint: 25% reduction in five years

Reason for this objective

Our operational management must correspond with our knowledge of the capacity of the planet.^[1] Sustainable operational management therefore means that the burden we place on the earth corresponds with its capacity and with the size of our institution.

In addition to the ecological footprint, the sustainability impact of our operational management includes the example we are seen to set and the pioneering role we can play in some areas. That is why we aim to serve as an example with regard to sustainable operational management and to pioneer sustainable solutions when suitable opportunities arise.

When will success be achieved?

- We will identify our ecological footprint and reduce it until it is in line with the capacity of the planet. For the coming Strategic Plan period (2021-2026), this means that in many areas we will, in principle, be aiming for a 25% reduction of the ecological footprint. The ambitions are explained in the appendix Operational Management Objectives to the Green Paper on Sustainability. The following are a few examples^[2]:
 - Our buildings will be natural gas-free^[3] and Paris-proof by 2040^[4]
 - The potential for sustainable energy generation on our own premises has been optimally exploited at all times and we research, with the municipality, the possibilities for installing a wind turbine in the Amsterdam Science Park^[5]
 - We will build in a circular, nature-inclusive and climate-proof manner^[6]

^[1] <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

^[2] With regard to the energy transition, our objectives have been researched and elaborated quite extensively. With regard to many other themes, we are still closer to the beginning and will have to investigate further how we can achieve our ambitions. Some objectives overlap because they are the result of the development of other broader objectives. Where possible, we include these more concrete objectives in this list because they are often more measurable and more enforceable than a general objective such as a 25% reduction of the ecological footprint. In addition, this makes it easier to understand the consequences of the objectives.

^[3] Amsterdam Science Park will be natural gas-free by 2025, the Roeterseiland Campus by 2030, and, after renovations, the City Centre Campus will only use gas for peak load. The UvA will be completely natural gas-free by 2040.

^[4] This means that energy consumption per square metre will be no higher than 70 kWh/year. 2040 is the aim of the UvA; 2050 is the goal following from the climate agreement. <https://www.dgbc.nl/publicaties/de-berekening-achter-paris-proof-9>

^[5] The potential will increase as technical possibilities increase and prices fall. Together with the City of Amsterdam, the UvA reserved funds in 2019 for area-specific sustainability ambitions in the ASP, such as a wind turbine.

^[6] Information on nature-inclusive and rain-proof construction: <https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/groen/flora-fauna/natuurinclusief/>, <https://www.rainproof.nl/wat-kan-ik-doen/gebouw>

- Twenty-five per cent reduction of ecological footprint of ICT services.
 - Hundred per cent collection and responsible processing of ICT equipment.^[7]
 - Fifty per cent reduction in CO2 emissions from banqueting (2022) and twenty-five per cent reduction in CO2 emissions from the food sold in the cafeteria by 2026.
 - Twenty-five per cent reduction in total consumption of materials.
 - Twenty-five per cent reduction of ecological footprint from purchasing
 - We will ban disposable water bottles.
 - Twenty-five per cent reduction in disposables in the cafeterias.
 - Fifty per cent reduction in paper consumption.
 - Fifty per cent reduction in the number of printers at the UvA.
 - Twenty-five per cent reduction in the purchase of furniture thanks to product life extension.
 - Twenty-five per cent reduction of the ecological footprint of our mobility
 - Representation of the progress towards these objectives through annual reporting and a dashboard on the website.
2. The UvA takes responsibility for pioneering when a suitable opportunity arises and communicates clearly on its pioneering projects.^[8]
 3. We act in line with local, national and international objectives.^[9] In addition, the UvA always acts in accordance with sustainability standards that are at or above the national or 'sector' average.^[10]

Services

Who does what?

- identify the ecological footprint of the services provided and show it in a dashboard;
- examine the possibilities for achieving the reductions referred to above, further develop objectives and measures into sustainability action plans that include a section addressing the expected costs and savings;
- implement the measures and report on this;
- if there are good opportunities to do so, start pioneering projects on themes on which the UvA can lead the way;
- communicate actively on the efforts, both on the successes and failures and on the lessons learned.

The objectives mainly apply to the units Facility Services, Real Estate Development and ICT Services. They propose the necessary measures referring to the main features described in the appendix 'Operational management objectives and actions'.

^[7] In order to achieve these objectives, agreements must be made with the contracted caterer. We will enter into discussions on this.

^[8] An example is the innovative approach of the UvA and the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) with regard to sustainable urban logistics via the hub ([slimenduurzaam.nl](https://www.slimenduurzaam.nl)). Thanks to their size, position in the city and available expertise, the UvA and the AUAS have a unique opportunity to pioneer in this area.

^[9] Examples are the climate agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or goals of the City of Amsterdam.

^[10] The Sustainability Benchmark can provide insight into some, but certainly not all, aspects of sustainability and how high the bar is nationally.

As far as the energy transition of our real estate is concerned, we have made a good start by recording our objectives and plans in the UvA Energy Transition Roadmap in the In hoofdzaak landen de doelstelling bij de diensten Facility Services,

Units are asked to estimate in the Sustainability Action Plan whether each measure is cost-reducing, cost-neutral, or cost-increasing, where possible indicating the amount of the cost increase or reduction. The savings from the cost-reducing measures should be used to finance cost-increasing measures where possible. This is explicitly taken into account when drawing up the budgets. Where this does not conflict with the natural moment for a measure, it is preferable to start with the cost-reducing measures. This enables us to keep the costs under control.

Faculties

- aim for a fair ecological footprint based on their commissioning practice;
- aim for sustainable consumer behaviour and energy savings;
- if there are good opportunities to do so, start pioneering projects on themes where the UvA can lead the way;
- communicate actively on the efforts, both on the successes and failures and on the lessons learned.
- Faculties and individual employees act as commissioning parties, customers and users in line with the jointly established sustainability objectives and intended measures. This means that sometimes they also have to make choices whose impact is felt. In favourable cases, sustainability is a matter of learning a different routine such as waste separation, but often sustainability also comes at the expense of an option that was previously preferred (such as air travel). In order to achieve a fair footprint, we will have to move away from environmentally damaging options in favour of more sustainable alternatives. In addition, we will have to use our furniture and equipment for longer. We will not make sacrifices regarding the primary process, and the total costs of operations do not have to increase as a result of sustainability. After all, more sustainable choices, such as product life extension, can also be less expensive. Sustainability sometimes means economising or making an extra effort, also to keep costs under control.

Green Office ^[11]

- encourages users to behave sustainably through campaigns, challenges etc., for example, with regard to waste separation and making sustainable choices in the cafeteria;
- links operational management issues to courses in which these can serve as case studies/practical assignments.^[12]

Communications Office

- coordinates communication on sustainability initiatives;
- actively seeks and publishes stories about making operational management more sustainable.

^[11] The UvA Green Office is a student-run platform striving to make the University of Amsterdam a greener place.
<https://www.uvagreengreenoffice.nl/about-us>

^[12] Based on the Living Lab model of the Green Office UU of Utrecht University

- Executive Board*
- establishes a central policy on official travel, which is interwoven into the UvA's systems and contracts.
- Executive Staff*
- monitors progress and facilitates the exchange of knowledge between the organisational units mentioned in this plan by, among other things, organising an annual conference or sustainability day.

More information on sustainability in operational management?

A detailed overview of the intended measures in operational management can be found in the appendix 'Operational management objectives and actions'.

2. The UvA has an active sustainability community

Reason for this objective

Networking is essential for an overarching theme such as sustainability. Only when we each know what the other is working on can we reinforce one another. Many parts of the UvA contribute to networking with regard to sustainability.

When will success be achieved?

- Events and developments relating to sustainability at the UvA can be found in the general newsletter and possibly also in a specific newsletter, on the website and on social media.
- All UvA students have the opportunity to take part in extracurricular activities to increase sustainability through the Green Office. The number of students active in the Green Office and the number of UvA staff involved in activities of the Green Office is growing every year.
- The UvA has several vibrant physical meeting places for sustainability, including Sustainalab at the Amsterdam Science Park. The Green Office is housed in a highly visible location.
- The UvA has a major conference on sustainability every two years.

Who does what?

Faculties

- include networking in the sustainability section of the strategic plan, including attention to promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and collaboration with partners outside the university;

Green Office

- programmes activities that are of interest to both staff and students and promotes these activities among both groups;
- provides a platform for all students who want to work towards sustainability, for example, by bringing them together, promoting initiatives, providing a platform and/or providing grassroots funding.

Communications office

- keeps interested parties informed on events and developments through newsletters, social media and the sustainability page.
- in this communication regularly refers to the Green Office for extracurricular sustainability activities.

Executive Board

- appoints a sustainability community programme director who focuses on strengthening the Green Office and other network initiatives aimed at sustainability;

Executive Staff

- provides a new visible location for the Green Office.
- works with Innovation Exchange Amsterdam (IXA), the Science & Business Foundation and Matrix Innovation Center on the development of a new ecosystem with a combination of offices and labs at the Amsterdam Science Park. Working title Sustainalab. The aim here is to create an ideal place for co-creation between education, research and entrepreneurship in the field of sustainability.

3. All degree programmes pay appropriate attention to sustainability

Reason for this objective

Increasing sustainability is not only a task for sustainability specialists and involved consumers; it is a task for everyone. By paying attention in the curriculum to sustainability in relation to the degree programme's own field of study and allowing students to participate in transdisciplinary contexts, they can later contribute as professionals in their specialisations, but with a broad perspective.

When will success be achieved?

- Faculties include a clear and ambitious section on mainstreaming sustainability in education in their strategic plan and implementing this.
- Each degree programme has a vision on sustainability in relation to its own field of study and, where necessary, ensures sustainability in the range of courses offered.
- We display all degree programmes with a clear link to sustainability on the UvA sustainability page with a brief explanation.
- Lecturers and curriculum developers are supported in integrating sustainability issues into courses and degree programmes through scholarships, workshops, networks and tools including theoretical case studies and practical assignments that can be incorporated into study programmes.

What are we going to do and who is responsible for what?

Faculties

- incorporate mainstreaming of sustainability into study programmes in the sustainability section of the faculty's strategic plan;
- stimulate the exchange of knowledge among lecturers by organising at least one meeting each year aimed at integrating sustainability into study programmes through the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) network.
- ensure that degree programmes have a vision regarding the common ground between the degree programme and (green) sustainability and that they adequately address this common ground, if it exists;
- provide information on the aspects of green sustainability in each degree programme for the UvA's sustainability page and ensure that the information on sustainability is clearly combined and communicated within the faculty;

^[13] If preferred, the mainstreaming of green sustainability can be combined with the mainstreaming of other (sustainability) themes such as SDGs across the board. This greatly increases the scope and size of the process.

^[14] If there is no relevant common ground, which is conceivable, 'appropriate addressing' can also mean 'no addressing'.

Degree programmes, institutes, lecturers

- have a vision regarding the common ground between sustainability and their own degree programme, how this is addressed in the curriculum and whether opportunities exist in this area.
- discuss this vision and any resulting adjustments with the Programme Committee.^[15]

Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) in conjunction with Teaching and Learning Centre

- develop a support programme for lecturers who want to integrate sustainability into courses along the lines of the IIS grants model.^[16] A participant in the programme can receive 80 hours plus coaching for a project/innovation aimed at sustainability in education with a transdisciplinary component;
- offer a workshop on increasing the sustainability of the curriculum, if desired with coaching after the workshop;
- share best practices, if possible with teaching materials on sustainability in education, through the online knowledge-sharing platform of the TLC. Possibly also in collaboration with the Green Office.

Green office

- starts the Living Lab programme, possibly in collaboration with the Amsterdam Green Campus, linking sustainability issues from the city to UvA courses, based on the Green Office model of Utrecht University;^[17]
- develops initiatives to encourage the integration of sustainability in education, such as a sustainable thesis award and/or a best practice award for mainstreaming sustainability in a programme.

Services

- provide study programmes with research questions and practical case studies through the Green Office Living Lab.

Communication office

- creates, using the information provided by the faculties, a web page showing the common ground with sustainability for each degree programme. This page is intended mainly to inform students and prospective students.
- refers to the website of the TLC, which offers tools that can be used to integrate sustainability into the curriculum.

^[15] The question of whether and how sustainability can be adequately addressed in a programme and where opportunities lie can be explored by means of a workshop offered by the Teaching and Learning Centre for this purpose.

^[16] Lecturers are given time and support. This therefore is not a scholarship in the usual sense of the word because the lecturer is not given any direct financial support: iis.uva.nl/en/expertise/iis-grant

^[17] <https://www.uu.nl/en/organisation/green-office-utrecht-university/get-involved/living-lab>

4. At the UvA, all students can develop and specialise to become pioneers in sustainability

Reason for this objective

So that students who have the ambition can develop into specialists and pioneers in sustainability.^[18]

When will success be achieved?

- All students are given the opportunity to become acquainted with sustainability during their degree programme, either in the core curriculum through participation in a minor or in a talent programme.^[19]
- To this end, all students can choose between at least two minors and a large number of electives focused on green sustainability.

Who does what?

Faculties

- pay attention to electives related to sustainability in the sustainability section of the strategic plan. This includes attention to the possibilities students have to fit such courses into their degree programme and to the development of these courses within the faculty;
- ensure that researchers appointed in connection with the theme of sustainable prosperity contribute to sustainability education.^[20]
- share information on sustainability courses and modules with the sustainability programme and the Communications Office, so that study programmes can also be easily found via the UvA sustainability page.

Degree programmes, institutes, lecturers

- develop elective education, where appropriate, which allows students to deepen their understanding of sustainability. This can also be postgraduate continuing education.^[20] The scholarship programme can be used to develop courses with sustainability or to integrate sustainability into existing courses.

Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS)

- facilitates the development of new courses related to sustainability through the scholarship programme;
- develops an interdisciplinary minor focusing on sustainability, the courses of which can also be taken as separate electives;^[22]

^[18] Opportunities for specialisation in sustainability are currently too limited, as is the findability of the options available. However, the existing options, such as the minor in Sustainability and Economics of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, are very successful. There is room for a broader range of options.

^[19] These can also be offered by other degree programmes.

^[20] The feasibility of this objective depends on the availability of lecturers. To ensure this, when allocating research funding for sustainability, for example within the framework of the research themes in the Strategic Plan, we will agree that research is also linked to education.

^[21] Postgraduate continuing education has a direct impact on professionals and their work, and reinforces contact with the professional field.

^[22] The choice of study programmes to be developed depends on the results of a feasibility study.

- organises a ‘create a course’ competition for the development of a course focusing on sustainability.^[23]
- Green Office*
- brings the range of courses and minors relating to sustainability to the attention of students, for example through social media, the Green Office website and/or the organisation of information meetings.
- Communications Office*
- creates, on the sustainability page, a special route for students who want to specialise in/study sustainability in depth: ‘I want study sustainability in more depth during my studies’, with a clear overview of the possibilities.
- Executive Staff*
- coordinates and facilitates knowledge sharing and reporting.

^[23] <https://iis.uva.nl/onderwijsontwikkeling/create-a-course-challenge/create-a-course-challenge2.html>

5. We contribute to a sustainable world through our research

Reason for this objective

Besides education, research and knowledge utilisation are our greatest leverage to accelerate sustainable change in society, and research funds are increasingly available in this area.

Sustainability issues call for disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and collaboration with partners inside and outside the university. Therefore, we ask institutes to consider their common ground with green sustainability and the opportunities that exist here. We use the common ground we bring to light in this way to better showcase and position our broad knowledge of the subject, for example by promoting collaboration within the UvA. This may reveal opportunities for strategic profiling on the theme. In the forthcoming Strategic Plan, we will focus on sustainability. This will create new opportunities for such profiling, also terms of financial resources.

We expect to be able to identify a wide range of common ground, opportunities and sustainability-related research, while there will also be areas of expertise without relevant common ground. In that case, reporting is not necessary.

When will success be achieved?

- Each institute has explored the common ground related to sustainability and the opportunities and responsibilities arising from this. In case of relevant interfaces, the results have been shared and, where appropriate, taken into account in the development of the research profile.
- Based on the outcomes, the possibilities for collaboration and possibly for the development of a research profile in the field of sustainability have been explored.
- It is clearly visible on the UvA sustainability page which institutes share which relevant common ground with green sustainability and which research is taking place in the field of sustainability.
- Application for funding for sustainability research is proactively supported so that we can respond optimally to the opportunities in this area.
- UvA research into sustainability is clearly visible and findable, also outside university circles.
- Green sustainability is an important part of the social themes according to which we present ourselves to the outside world, as a separate theme and/or as part of other themes.

Who does what?

Faculties

- ask the institutes to explore relevant common ground with sustainability issues, for example through the strategic plan, and retrieve the outcomes of this exploration.
- share the relevant common ground found for communication and networking purposes.
- take turns organising a symposium on transdisciplinary research into green sustainability. Possibly in collaboration with the Green Office and/or the Centre for Sustainable Development Studies.
- explicitly report, where applicable, on sustainability aspects in the annual reports of the research institutes and/or reports in Pure so that the information can be brought together.
- consider, where appropriate, strategic profiling regarding green sustainability as part of their research strategy.

Institutes, researchers

- identify in their strategy, during a strategy day or in another manner appropriate to the institute, the common ground between their research and sustainability, analyse which opportunities result from this and, provided there is relevant common ground, link the results back to the faculty.

IXA

- helps to expand sustainability initiatives at the UvA by identifying funding opportunities for research, establishing links with the business community and finding partners to bring research results to the market. In order to be able to improve support in this area, a contact person for business development and a contact person for subsidy advice have been appointed.

Communications Office

- provides an attractive overview of the UvA's sustainability research, based on the input from the faculties, giving an overview of the breadth of this research on the one hand, and highlighting the landmark projects on the other.

Executive Staff

- organises support in the form of tools (toolkit) and, if desired, workshops that faculties or institutes may use in exploring the theme;
- facilitates networking between the various institutes, within and between faculties^[24].

Executive Board

- works with several distinguished research professors or University Professors to reinforce the network needed to make sustainability a unifying theme.

²⁴⁾ It will be investigated whether this role can be outsourced or filled in collaboration with existing organisational units within the UvA.

Organisational aspects

Division of roles

We want to integrate sustainability into everything we do, which is why the responsibilities are divided among different parts of the UvA. We implement the objectives with our faculties, units and several 'central units' such as the Green Office, the Central Teaching and Learning Centre, the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, IXA and the Communications Office.

Responsibilities and coordination

Responsibility at faculty level lies with the faculty management. The consultation of operational managers acts as a Sustainability Programme Council to monitor progress of the programme throughout the institution. In the units, the responsibility lies with the director.

Decentralised sustainability plans

In order to ensure transparency and administrative attention and to embed sustainability in the regular processes, the faculties describe how they implement the objectives in a sustainability section in the strategic plan. Facility Services, ICTS and Real Estate Development make this transparent in their own Sustainability Action Plan. Joint Sustainability Action Plans can also be drawn up for certain themes. For example, Facility Services, Real Estate Development and the Finance Planning & Control department of the Executive Staff are already collaborating intensively on the theme of our buildings

Coordinators in each unit

Within each unit, one staff member serves as a sustainability coordinator.^[25] The task of the coordinator is to monitor and promote the implementation of the actions in the unit's Sustainability Action Plan and to exchange information with other units and the Executive Staff.

Coordination and exchange between faculties

Faculties monitor the implementation of the actions in the strategic plan and report on this in the quarterly reports. In addition, they safeguard cooperation on the theme, at least in the form of coordination of activities and exchange of information with each other, with the units and with the Executive Staff. The way in which this collaboration is shaped is worked out by the Operational Management directors.

Reporting

In the coming Strategic Plan period, in addition to the regular planning & control cycle, the developments will be discussed annually during a working conference on sustainability. This working conference is being organised to generate extra attention for the theme and to promote cooperation in the coming period. The conference will be organised in the week of 10 October (Sustainability Day) and will consist of a half-day session on research and education and a half-day session on operational management.

^[25] This does not have to be a new FTE, but implementing ambitions does of course require attention and therefore time.

The UvA uses examples in the annual report and on the website to communicate on issues in which we lead the way in education, research, valorisation and operational management, and also identifies itself in its annual report as a learning community that makes the challenges and dilemmas of the sustainability transition visible.

Financiën

For the costs of the energy transition in relation to our buildings, and the coverage of these costs, please refer to the separate memorandum. The attention that faculties and institutes pay to the objectives in this document must be internalised in the regular process and incorporated into the regular funding system. Units give their initiatives a place in regular budgets. Measures of units that lead to an increase in costs are only decided upon if they are coordinated with the faculties through the SLA cycle. For small incentives to encourage the desired changes, such as symposia and workshops, a structural budget item of 200,000 euros per year has been included in the long-term budget.

Sustainability in research and education can generate additional income, for example because research funds are increasingly available for research on this theme. To make operational management more sustainable, it is possible to make use of subsidies in some areas, such as Sustainable Energy Transition (SDE) subsidies for the generation of renewable energy.