

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

1. Vision

- 1.1. The University of York will be an institution that:
- operates sustainably across the full range of its activities,
 - makes a strong contribution to the development of a sustainable world,
 - is innovative in achieving these objectives, and
 - enables and encourages its members to act in ways that promote sustainability.

2. Sustainability

- 2.1. Sustainability is about equity: a sustainable society is one in which there is equitable access to the Earth's resources both within and across generations. A sustainable organisation acts not only to ensure its own success but also to benefit the wider community and maintain a healthy natural environment.
- 2.2. The University Plan¹ recognises that to be successful in the long term, the University must achieve financial, social and environmental sustainability. The Sustainability Strategy provides a set of aspirations and objectives to help ensure that management decisions are taken in the light of an integrated framework, and financial planning is balanced with social equity and environmental accountability.
- 2.3. Sustainability is as much about changing attitudes and relationships among people as the relationship between people and their environment. Consequently the University seeks to embed sustainability within a culture that is aware, responsible and far-sighted.
- 2.4. The University's approach to sustainability will be based on the Five Capitals Model². This is a disaggregation of the 'triple bottom line' approach into five 'capitals' that are better-suited to a university's core activity of developing human and social capital through research, teaching, and interactions with business and society³.

¹ The University Plan <http://www.york.ac.uk/about/mission-strategies/> has four main objectives: Excellence, Internationalisation, Inclusivity and Sustainability.

² J. Porritt. [2005]. *The world in context: beyond the business case for sustainable development*. University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. Available from: http://www.cpsl.cam.ac.uk/Resources/~media/Files/Complete%20publications%20for%20download/The_World_in_Context.ashx

³ See OECD. [2010]. *Higher education for sustainable development: final report of International Action Research Project*. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/55/4/45575516.pdf>

Triple bottom line category	Five capitals category	Definition
Environmental	Natural capital	Natural resources (matter and energy) and processes that produce and deliver goods and services. They include renewable and non-renewable resources, sinks that absorb, neutralise or recycle wastes, and processes such as climate regulation that maintain life.
Social	Human capital	Individuals' health, knowledge, skills, motivation and capacity to foster and maintain relationships. All these are needed for productive work and the creation of a better quality of life. Human capital can be fostered through improving opportunities for learning, creativity, stimulation and enhanced health.
	Social capital	The institutions that help us maintain and develop human capital in partnership with others. Includes such institutions as families, communities, businesses, unions, educational and voluntary organisations.
Economic	Manufactured capital	Material assets that contribute to the production process or provision of services, including tools, machinery, buildings and infrastructure
	Financial capital	Unlike the other types of capital it has no intrinsic value itself, but represents a measure, sometimes incomplete, of the other forms of capital and is the traditional 'single bottom line' of business performance and success.

3. Aspirations

3.1. The University of York aspires to be a responsible member of the local, national and global community. We will contribute to a broader recognition of the benefits of sustainability through our learning and teaching, research and other activities. To this end we aim to:

- **Embed sustainability in the institutional culture:** promote sustainable working and living practices and make sustainability core to our structures, governance, decision-making and operational processes.
- **Create and disseminate understanding of sustainability:** lead in generating the knowledge to enhance sustainability in society and embed sustainability in the curriculum and professional development provided to the university community.
- **Achieve widespread recognition for best practice and innovation in sustainability:** be recognised as an exemplar of good practice in sustainability.
- **Enhance biodiversity and minimise our environmental footprint:** be more effective in our use of resources and make large reductions in use of natural resources, in carbon emissions and waste production.

4. Objectives

4.1. The Strategy will find expression in a series of objectives. These will be monitored regularly by the Sustainability Champions on the Senior Management Group, and reported on to the Senior Management Group and other appropriate university committees and through the University's website. This section sets out objectives that will enable us to fulfil our aspirations for sustainability. Some of the objectives can be delivered by being added to, or incorporated into, existing staff roles and institutional structures, while others will require new activities or investment.

4.2. An implementation plan, based on the Five Capitals, sets out the actions to be taken and the measures that will allow assessment of their success. In practice many of these objectives will be achieved by the development of policies that address specific aspects of sustainability. Some of these policies already exist but require further development to ensure that they fully reflect this strategy. A list of policies is appended to this Strategy.

RESOURCES	OBJECTIVES		
	AS A BUSINESS	IN THE FIELDS OF RESEARCH, LEARNING & TEACHING	AS A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY
NATURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce carbon emissions, energy use, water use and waste • Protect and enhance biodiversity • Manage harmful emissions • Make efficient use of natural resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed consideration of natural environment issues within taught courses and skills training • Provide opportunities for practical experience on projects related to sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote water efficiency • Promote recycling and re-use • Enhance biodiversity
HUMAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address sustainability in induction processes, professional development and training courses for staff and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share information on sustainability with students and staff • Encourage sustainable practices in research, learning and teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate key achievements in sustainability at all levels from the individual to the institution • Empower individuals and groups to promote sustainability and develop new environmental initiatives
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make strategy and policies relating to sustainability prominent on the website and in printed publications • Integrate considerations of sustainability into existing and new University administrative structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage research aimed at enhancing sustainability, including both fundamental and policy or user-focused research • Encourage research that provides lasting benefits in terms of developing social capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the University's sustainability aspirations widely both within and outside the institution • Work with local partners wherever possible to promote the sustainability agenda on and off the campus
MANUFACTURED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address resource conservation in estates planning • Seek to achieve high environmental standards in all new building and refurbishment work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the University's estate as a resource for the benefit of staff, students and the wider community through active research and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote nature conservation through habitat creation and enhancement on the University estate • Encourage sustainable forms of travel and alternatives to travel by staff, students and visitors
FINANCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that sufficient resource is devoted to addressing sustainability issues • Incorporate environmental impact in purchasing decisions • Develop a mechanism for offsetting emissions for business travel • Monitor progress against objectives and targets and publish information on this in an open and transparent way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of natural resources used in research, learning and teaching • Promote teaching and research activities that have a positive environmental and socio-economic value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with other universities and organisations over sharing services and purchasing in order to minimise environmental impact • Encourage collaborative initiatives with local communities to make efficient use of financial resources, and promote shared social capital

Appendix

Related Policy Documents

This list will expand as new policy documents are developed.

Carbon Management plan

<http://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/governanceandmanagement/documents/University%20of%20York%20Carbon%20Mgt%20Plan.pdf>

General Waste strategy

<http://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/sustainability/General%20waste%20Strategy%20V2.pdf>

Food Waste strategy

<http://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/sustainability/Food%20waste%20Strategy%20V2.pdf>

Heating and Cooling policy

http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/estates/operations/energy_management/08210%20Heating%20&%20Cooling%20Policy.docx

Travel and Transport

<http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/estates/transport/policies/Travel%20Plan%20Feb%202012%20+%20Appendices.pdf>

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