



Sustainable Construction Policy

Estates / June 2026

Sustainable Construction Policy

Introduction

The Open University (OU) is committed to a sustainable estate by managing the design, construction, maintenance and operation activities to reduce negative environmental and social impacts as far as possible. This includes working towards our Carbon Net Zero commitment and ensuring our buildings and operations are as efficient as possible. We also maintain our green spaces to promote biodiversity and wellbeing.

Target

Our target will be met by adopting Sustainable and Net Zero carbon design, construction, and maintenance principles.

New Buildings

- All new builds will target Net Zero Carbon 2030 requirements for embodied and operational carbon following LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide
- Establish appropriate carbon and sustainability targets at the feasibility stage and will be confirmed as part of the approval to proceed stage
- Integrate whole life carbon assessment to set carbon targets across all life cycle stages of the project
- Adoption of design for performance approach
- Carbon emissions will be measured against targets at the end of each stage of the design and construction process and subsequently when in use through the post occupancy evaluation process.

Refurbishments

All refurbishment works will:

- Incorporate energy and water efficiency measures to reduce associated energy, water and associated carbon emissions

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- Consider and promote equipment, materials and furniture with high recycled content and end of life recyclability/reuse to support circular economy principles

Additionally major refurbishment projects will:

- Target LETI Best Practice Retrofit energy targets where appropriate

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Sustainable Construction Policy applies to all OU sites. Project design team, engineers, consultants and contractors are to refer to this policy for any construction activities from new build, major refurbishments, minor works and maintenance projects.

Objectives

The OU will embed the sustainable construction principles by:

- All activities to contribute to Net Zero Carbon target
- Adoption of a design for performance approach where appropriate
- Whole life carbon measurements and agreed limits for new building projects
- Embed carbon impact assessment into capital projects across all scopes, scope 1 and 2 operational emissions and scope 3 embodied carbon
- Develop climate change adaptation measures across the estate
- Incorporate the principles of Sustainable Laboratories, where appropriate, in the design and operation of wet laboratories to deliver energy and water savings
- Manage buildings to promote environmental sustainability through its operations and physical structures
- Maintain the grounds in an environmentally sensitive way
- Provide a high-quality work environment to support the health and wellbeing of staff and students
- Consideration of circular economy principles in the selection of equipment, materials, and furniture with high recycled content and end of life recyclability

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- Comply with all relevant legal and legislative requirements relating to energy consumption and reporting

Linked policies

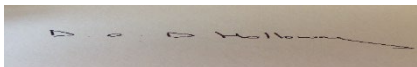
Policies, strategies, and plans linked to the Sustainable Construction policy include:

- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Plan
- Waste and Resource Management Plan
- Environmental policy
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy
- Biodiversity policy

Monitoring and review

The Sustainable Construction Policy is owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and targets reported to the OU Executive Sustainability Steering committee.

Signed By



Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

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Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	May 2023	Energy Manager	New Sustainable Construction Policy
1.1	June 2024	Energy Manager	Reviewed – no change
1.2	June 2025	Energy Manager	Reviewed – no change
1.3	June 2026	Energy Manager	Reviewed – no change

Next review date: June 2027

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