

Waste & Resource Plan

Estates / June 2026

Waste & Resource Management Plan

Introduction

Managing waste responsibly is a key focus to our commitment to a sustainable estate. The Waste and Resource Management Plan details how waste and recycling streams are managed across all OU sites. We have been operating as a zero waste to landfill organisation since 2014.

Target

The OU Waste and Resource Recovery policy aims to:

- maintain zero waste to landfill for office / non-hazardous waste
- increase recycling rate to 90% of all waste by 2027
- eliminate avoidable single use plastic by 2030

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The Waste and Resource Management Plan applies to all waste and recycling streams produced on the OU sites across all 4 nations.

Waste management principles

Everyone working in or visiting any University location has a role to play to ensure waste created is dealt with in accordance with this policy. The waste management hierarchy must always be applied to focus on:

- **Prevention of waste** – only purchase what is needed, use less, keep products longer, use less material in design and manufacture.
- **Minimise waste** – which we cannot avoid, working with suppliers to reduce packaging
- **Preparing for Re-use** – by cleaning, repairing, refurbishing, donating to staff and or local organisations
- **Recycling** – close the loop turning waste into new substances or products, with packaging and products containing a high recycled content being recycled

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- **Energy recovery** – including refuse derived fuel and anaerobic digestion
- **Disposal** – as a last resort landfill and incineration without energy recovery

Environmental Compliance

The University has an obligation under Duty of care (Environmental Protection Act 1990) which requires organisations who produce, import, carry, keep, store, treat, or dispose of controlled waste to keep the waste secure and safely stored. The University has a duty to ensure any waste it produces is handled safely and within the law, and to ensure suppliers engaged to remove waste are appropriately licenced.

The Estates Catering & Cleaning Contracts team will ensure that waste contracts set up by the Catering & Cleaning Contracts team will have the appropriate registration and/or certification. The team will manage all duty of care waste transfer notes, which should be kept for 2 years for non-hazardous waste, and 3 years for hazardous waste consignment notes. Certificates of destruction for confidential waste are also managed.

Collection and Recording of Waste Data

The Estates team manages the recording of data, weights and waste categories relating to waste services across all University locations. This information will be used to provide statistical data on industry data such as EMR statistics, wherever possible actual weights will be used.

Performance to date

Through effective waste and resource management arrangements, staff engagement programs and waste avoidance processes, the Open University has achieved steady reduction in waste generation and consistently high recycling rates, 69% - 87%.

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In addition to onsite recycling streams, in 2014 the OU moved away from waste to landfill, and towards energy from waste contracts for non-recyclable wastes. Table 1 shows our waste management performance, since 2014/15 to 2023/24. The low waste figures in 2019/20 and 2020/21 is due to our response to COVID pandemic and restricted access to campus. Data from 2021-22 is the new business as usual profile, with staff and students working in a hybrid way.

During 2023/24 the overall volume of waste produced fell by 11% or 36 tonnes. It was also noted that the data relating to the nations and locations had been omitted from reports since 2019/20; this error had not been picked up due to changes in the way university staff worked both during and since the pandemic. This information is now included and reflects an additional 22 tonnes of waste from these offices.

In addition, the Wellingborough warehouse generated 51 tonnes less paper waste, changes introduced include paper waste being shredded on site and used as packing material. The change has impacted on the overall recycling rates, by <3%, the addition of waste from the nations and locations also contributed to the reduction in recycling.

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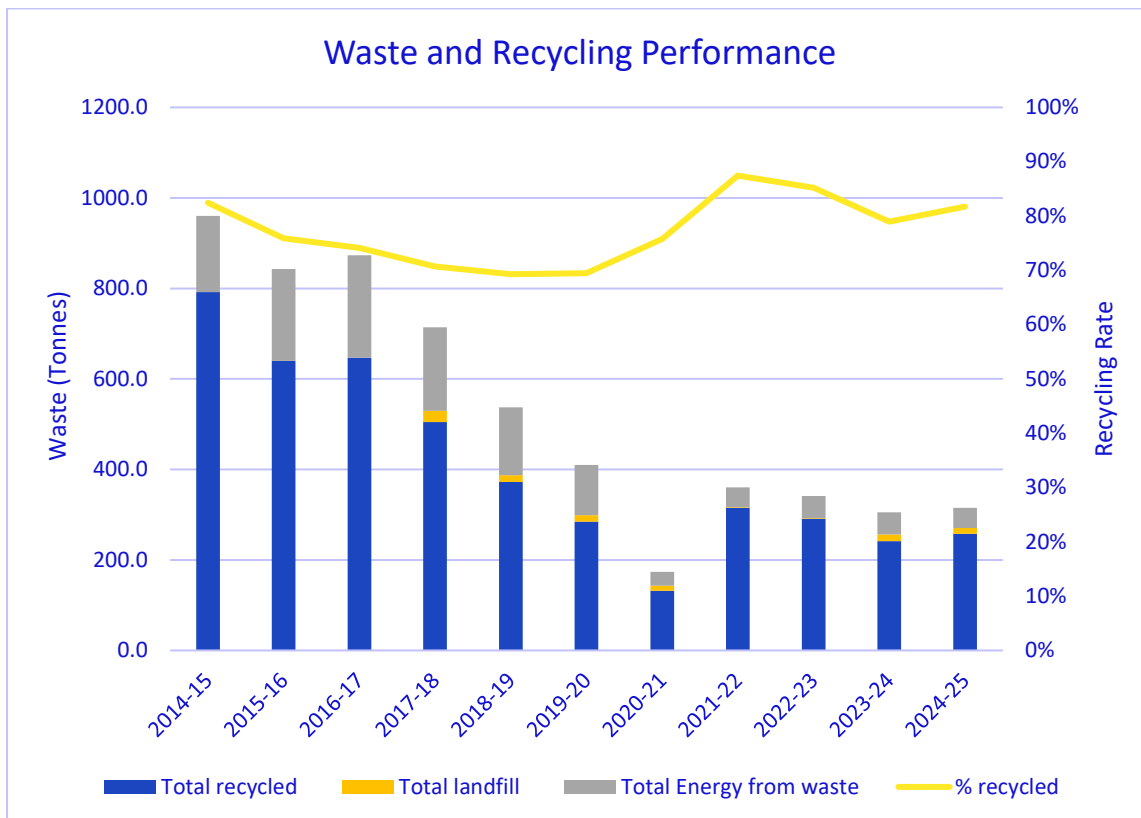


Table 1: Waste and recycling performance

Our achievements to date include:

- Less than 1% waste to landfill:** In 2014 the OU moved away from waste to landfill and towards energy recovery and recycling solutions for all streams.
- High recycling rate:** We have extensive resource recovery systems, with over 10 recycling streams. In addition, we have onsite dismantling processes to increase source separation of recyclable materials, such as metals and wood from furniture.
- Furniture reuse store:** The OU has a warehouse to store and reuse good quality office furniture and equipment. We aim to reuse / repurpose before recycling and disposal, we have ad hoc clear-outs, where furniture is donated to local charities.
- Cost effective waste solutions:** All waste streams are managed on an individual basis; this ensures we obtain the best-in-class provision for the best available rates. This approach ensures we

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utilise the most local sustainable end-of-life solutions and do not adopt the “one-stop-shop” approach.

Operational Procedures for recycling and waste disposal

Non-Hazardous Waste

Office buildings

Waste contracts are set up by the Estates team across all sites. The day-to-day management of the service at Nation sites and Locations is overseen by the local Support Services teams from each office. At Walton Hall, the service is managed by the Estates team.

Waste and recycling streams at each location

Table 2 details the recycling streams available in general / office type spaces across the sites and Nations.

	Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR)	General Waste/ Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF)	Confidential paper	Glass	Food	Batteries
Belfast	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Edinburgh	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Manchester	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Nottingham	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Cardiff	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wellingborough	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Walton Hall	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: office waste and recycling streams

Office waste disposal process

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The contract cleaning team across all locations are responsible for emptying internal and external waste bins. Waste and recycling are moved to a central storage point for collection by the waste provider.

Ad-Hoc Waste

For ad-hoc collection or request for new recycling stream the support services team email the request to Estates Catering & Cleaning contracts team and copy Estates Liaison. Estates will research and identify a solution, which will support the due diligence process and ensure accurate reporting of data.

Unwanted items can be returned to Walton Hall for reuse, donation, storage, and recycling. This process is reliant on either the portering team or dedicated furniture removals team attending site and bringing items to Walton Hall.

Contamination

Any contamination of waste and recycling streams should be reported to the Estates Liaison Line who will contact the relevant department and alert the Catering & Cleaning Team.

Estates wastes

There are dedicated recycling streams for maintenance and minor works type wastes at Walton Hall. These streams comprise of:

- Carpet tiles
- Fluorescent tubes
- Furniture
- Green waste
- Wood
- Metal
- Pops

Construction waste

All construction waste is the responsibility of the contractor to recycle and dispose of in accordance with their duty of care. Contractors are required to follow the OU's Waste & Resource Policy, including target to recycle 90%

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of construction waste. The University carries out checks at the approval contractor stage and to ensure that the contractor has the capability to dispose of the waste in accordance with the duty of care.

Furniture Reuse store

THE OU has a dedicated warehouse to store quality used office furniture and equipment. The process is managed by Estates Space Planning & Design team. When space is vacated, the Planning team ensures quality furniture is retained and stored for reuse in new space renovation projects.

Ad hoc requests for furniture

Units may request furniture items through the planning team.

Hazardous Waste Streams

Laboratory Hazardous Wastes are listed below and must be disposed of in accordance with the relevant procedures.

Waste Stream	Procedure
Chemicals – Walton Hall	Users are required to follow the dedicated disposal procedure and utilise the dedicated chemical store, the Chemical Safety Adviser should be aware of all chemicals requiring disposal.
Clinical – Walton Hall	There are limited number of specialist external clinical waste bins, these bins are used by the laboratory teams and should always be kept locked. Waste is sent to an NHS hospital and used to produce power for the hospital.
Radioactive Waste	Is stored in a secure location on site, disposal of this waste is managed by the Radiation Protection Advisor.
Explosive substances	users should contact the Chemical Safety Advisor.
Biological/chemical	drains are periodically emptied; the process is managed by the Estates team.

Table 4: Lab based hazardous waste process

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Estates Hazardous Waste

Waste Stream	Procedure
Light bulbs including fluorescent, LED and all other tubes.	Two specialist collection bins are located in the Meacham yard for the Estates team to use. Bulbs should be segregated into type (Fluorescent & LED and all other bulbs), packaging should be removed before loading into the container. A specialist waste contractor is used to process this waste.
Paint – all types	When there is sufficient quantity of paint a specialist I company will be requested to manage the disposal.
Waste oils	Bunded oils tanks are located at the back of Venables (by the green house), at the side of the Research Design and Engineering Facility and in the Meacham waste compound. Venables tank holds hydraulic oil, coolant and paraffin, the RD&E holds engine oil, coolant, hydraulic oil, and metal fines The bund in the Meacham yard holds used cooking oil. Only the departments producing this oil can use these facilities. Waste is collected by specialist suppliers, and the catering oil waste is recycled into bio diesel.
Electrical – Walton Hall	W aste E lectrical and E lectronic E quipment (WEEE) includes most products that have a plug or need a battery. Users should place waste for collection in the waste hold rooms & ask estates liaison to collect waste. For the nations and locations speak to your support services team. The warehouse team should request items be taken to Walton Hall. Fridges as of Dec 22 have a separate waste stream, where possible we operate an exchange system with our new fridge supplier of old one out new one in.

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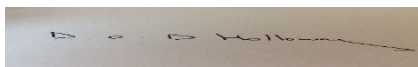
	The IT department manage the recycling of all IT screens and hard drives under a secure process managed by them.
Asbestos waste	Asbestos waste or other material presumed to contain asbestos will be disposed of by authorised contractors in accordance with the requirements of the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005. The disposal process will be fully documented; copies of completed Hazardous Waste Consignment Notes will be provided to the asbestos supervising officer and held for 5 years.

Table 5: Estates Hazardous Waste Processes

Monitoring and review

The Waste & Resource Policy and Plan is owned by OU Estates. The plan will be reviewed annually, and targets reported to the OU 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	Catering and Cleaning Contracts Manager	New Waste & Resource Policy and Plan.
1.1	June 2024	Catering and Cleaning Contracts Manager	Updated performance figures
1.2	June 2025	Catering and Cleaning Contracts Manager	Updated performance figures
1.3	June 2026	Catering and Cleaning Contracts Manager	Updated performance figures

Next review date: June 2027

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Appendix A – What and where to recycle

Table 3 details the recycling streams available, types of material accepted in the stream and how / where to find the bins.

Resource Stream	What is accepted	How / Where
Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastic bottles and containers Cans Non-confidential paper Cardboard 	Central colour coded waste and recycling bins are located throughout office areas
Refuse Derived Fuel (RFD) – General Waste	General waste that cannot be recycled is used to produce energy – Refuse Derived Fuel.	General Waste bins are provided internally and externally across the sites
Confidential paper	<p>Most departments shred their own confidential paper waste.</p> <p>For large quantities – confidential waste sacks or dedicated lockable bins can be requested from Estate liaison Line. When full, secure sacks and request porters to collect sack / bin.</p> <p>The payroll department can request ad hoc on-site shredding.</p>	Shredded paper can be treated as DMR.
Glass	Glass bottles only (broken glass, place in a cardboard box, tape up, label the box treat as general waste.	Green kitchen caddy bins are available in kitchens for empty glass bottles/jars
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and batteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appliances – microwaves, dishwashers, toasters, fans etc. 	IT items contact IT helpdesk to arrange collection / disposal.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT and AV equipment – personal computers, monitors, printers • Telephones & televisions • ** Specialist equipment – laboratory and medical devices • Fridge and Freezers – replacement of white goods are procured through suppliers who will supply the new item and remove / recycle the old. If workloads allow the portering team can supply and return white goods to Walton Hall. 	<p>Specialist equipment contact Estates Liaison to arrange appropriate disposal.</p> <p>All other WEEE items to be placed in the waste hold room (Walton Hall only).</p> <p>For Nations & Locations contact Support Services team</p> <p>WEEE container located in Meacham Yard</p>
Batteries	<p>Alkaline AA, AAA, button, square, single use. Remove packaging before recycling.</p> <p>All other batteries, lithium, lithium ion, lead acid, nickel cadmium & nickel metal hydride batteries, contact estates liaison line</p>	<p>Recycling bins in the Hub, MYB old café, Berrill self-serve café, Venables, Crowther. (Walton Hall)</p> <p>OUIW office</p>
Toner cartridges	<p>Empty cartridges should be returned to the Postroom for recycling.</p>	<p>Local solution in place at the Nations and Locations</p>
Media	<p>CDs and tapes.</p> <p>Users should identify if the media waste contains sensitive data.</p> <p>Ideally CDs should be taken out of the sleeve.</p>	<p>Request disposal through estates liaison line</p>

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	CDs and tapes are shredded with the waste being sent to a waste for energy plant.	
Coffee pod – Walton Hall	Accept all types of coffee pods	Pod bins are available at the catering outlets
Food waste – Walton Hall, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Manchester, Nottingham, Wellingborough	<p>Food scraps – including fruit and veg scraps, meat, bones , tea bags, coffee grounds.</p> <p>Tissues, compostable food packaging, wooden cutlery, are not accepted, please treat as general waste</p> <p>Waste at Walton Hall campus is sent for anaerobic digestion with energy being returned to the national grid.</p>	<p>All pantry food waste caddies are emptied by the contract cleaners, waste taken to a central hold.</p> <p>Walton Hall, waste produced from the catering outlets is recorded, weighed & taken to the central bins, for collection by our waste contractor.</p>
Used coffee grounds	<p>Grounds are used across the Walton Hall campus or sent for composting.</p> <p>Staff can request bag of grounds to take home for use in their gardens.</p>	Catering Hub – Café
Disposable takeaway cups	Whilst we promote the use of reusable cups each catering outlet has a dedicated takeaway cup recycling bin.	Takeaway cup recycling bin – Catering Hub & Berrill
Metal	<p>Break down equipment ensuring all types of metals are separated</p> <p>Financial rebates are returned to the University.</p>	Metal skip bin, at Meacham Walton Hall.
Wood	<p>Desktops, cabinets, pallets & wood off cuts.</p> <p>(The stream does not accept garden waste)</p>	Wood skip bin at Mecham yard

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	The waste is recycled to make pet bedding, reprocessed into chipboard, with lower quality wood used for biomass fuel.	
Garden waste Walton Hall	hedge cuttings, grass clippings, any garden waste produced from the grounds of the campus. Garden waste is taken to a local farm within Milton Keynes, composted and used on the farm as fertilizer.	Garden waste skip bin near cricket nets Walton Hall
Carpet Tiles	When tiles can no longer be re used bulk quantities are recycled; with the nylon yarn being made into new yarn and the backing used in the cement industry.	Dedicated bin - Estates manages process
Cardboard (Wellingborough warehouse only)	Cardboard. Cardboard waste is recycled into new cardboard. At other locations paper and cardboard is processed as part of DMR.	Dedicated cardboard compactor
Paper – Wellingborough	Any surplus paper material from course work, promotional events etc are stored. When there is enough the University approaches several different waste companies for their rebate rates, monies earned from selling this waste is used to offset the overall waste budget.	Paper is collected and stored in pallets for collection
Plastic wrappings (Wellingborough warehouse only)	The warehouse collects all pallet wrapping. When there is sufficient the University approaches waste suppliers for their best rebate rates. Monies earned from selling this waste is used to offset the overall waste budget.	Dedicated plastic wrapping bin

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Soft furnishings that may contain persistent organic pollutants (POP's)	Damaged or items for disposal should be taken to Walton Hall.	A dedicated secure container is in Meacham yard
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Table 3: What, how and where to recycle

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