



Waste & Resource Policy

Estates / June 2026

Waste & Recycling policy

Introduction

The Open University has committed to achieving net zero emissions from our energy use by 2030, and from all other indirect emissions no later than 2050. We affirm our commitment to continually reduce our environmental impact and associated scope 3 emissions through safe and effective waste avoidance and resource recovery management practices.

Target

The OU Waste and Resource Recovery policy aims to:

- maintain zero waste to landfill
- 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 Policy applies to all waste and recycling streams produced on the OU sites. Waste stream covered in this policy includes:

- Office waste – dry mixed recyclables (paper, cardboard, plastic and cans), glass, food and general waste / Refuse Derived Fuel
- Electronic waste – computing equipment, AV equipment and batteries
- Construction waste – timber, brick, concrete, glass, metal, globes
- Grounds – green/garden waste
- Hazardous waste

Version number: 1.2	Approved By: Director of Estates
Effective from: June 2026	Date of next review: June 2027

Objectives

The University applies the waste management hierarchy principles across all waste generation activities to continually reduce waste generated from its operations. All staff, students, consultants, and contractors are expected to collaborate to help deliver waste reductions and increase recycling rate.

The University commits to:

- Maintain net zero waste to landfill by continuing our energy recovery and recycling solutions across all the Nations and Locations.
- Apply the waste management hierarchy across all waste generation activities; prevention, minimisation, reuse, rebate, recycle, energy recovery and disposal
- Use the OU furniture re-use system for clearances and refurbishment work
- Reduce unnecessary single use plastics on our sites in collaboration with stakeholders such as labs, cleaning and catering contractors.
- Work with our existing suppliers to adopt circular economy approach where appropriate
- Apply circular economy approach to procurement process and tender specifications where applicable to avoid waste where possible and increase recyclability of products and packaging at end of life
- Work with our contractors and suppliers to reduce waste production and increase the amount of recycling taking place on each site
- Embed sustainable waste and recycling behaviours with staff and students through the Go Green program and SPARK tool
- Monitoring and reporting on waste production and disposal routes
- remain compliant with all relevant waste legislation

Linked policies

Policies, strategies and plans linked to the Waste and Recycling policy include:

- Waste and Resource Management Plan

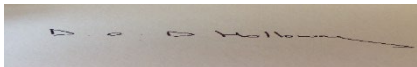
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- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Plan
- Environmental Sustainability policy
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy
- Biodiversity policy
- Sustainable construction policy

Monitoring and review

The Waste & Resource Policy is owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, and targets reported to the OU Sustainability Steering committee.

Signed By



Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Next review date: May 2025

Version History

Version Number	Date of change	Originator of change (title)	Description of change
1.0	May 2023	Head of Infrastructure	New Waste & Resource Policy
1.1	June 2025	Energy Manager	Reviewed with no change
1.2	June 2026	Energy Manager	Reviewed with no change

Next review date: June 2027

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