

Water Policy

Estates / June 2025

Water Policy

Introduction

The Open University (OU) is committed to minimising water usage in buildings and landscape through implementation of sustainable water management practices and water harvesting systems.

Target

We aim to:

- Reduce water consumption per floor area (m2) by 5% by 2028 from 2019–20 baseline
- Expand the water metering infrastructure
- Increase recycled water systems

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Water policy applies to all OU sites.

Objectives

The University will continue to implement measures to minimise water usage through:

- Upgrading to water efficient equipment as part of the maintenance program
- Implement water saving and water harvesting systems within all new builds and major refurbishments as appropriate
- Set a minimum water efficiency specification in mechanical and plumbing design standards
- Incorporate sustainable urban water design to buildings and landscapes in capital projects

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- Engage and embed sustainable behaviours around water usage with staff and students through the Go Green program
- Expand water metering to each building supply and water intensive equipment
- Identify areas of significant water use at the University and set appropriate objectives designed to reduce water waste
- Comply with all relevant water legislation.

Campus 2030

In latter end of 2023, the Open University launched the Campus 2030 programme to look at the case for change and the future of how we work at the OU Walton Hall campus, Milton Keynes. The programme actively investigates the business case for:

- A new central Milton Keynes campus and new academic model, which will be forward-looking and student-centred, including responding to student feedback about the need for flexibility and employer engagement; and
- outline designs for Walton Hall show how we could retain and refurbish our existing campus for the future, reducing our overall footprint and becoming more economically and environmentally sustainable for the decades ahead.

2025 Update

City Centre Campus Work provided helpful insights on how the University could potentially attract more full-time students via a new market offer. However, the scale of investment required remains a significant barrier. Therefore, future efforts to develop our strategy in the City Centre will be integrated into a [Civic University Agreement](#).

The Open University will remain at Walton Hall campus and currently reviewing long term space needs, sustainability targets, and a deeper exploration of commercial opportunities. Final decision expected to be made by early 2026.

As there is certainty that the OU will remain at Walton Hall future plans to improve water usage and monitoring includes water surveys and additional metering.

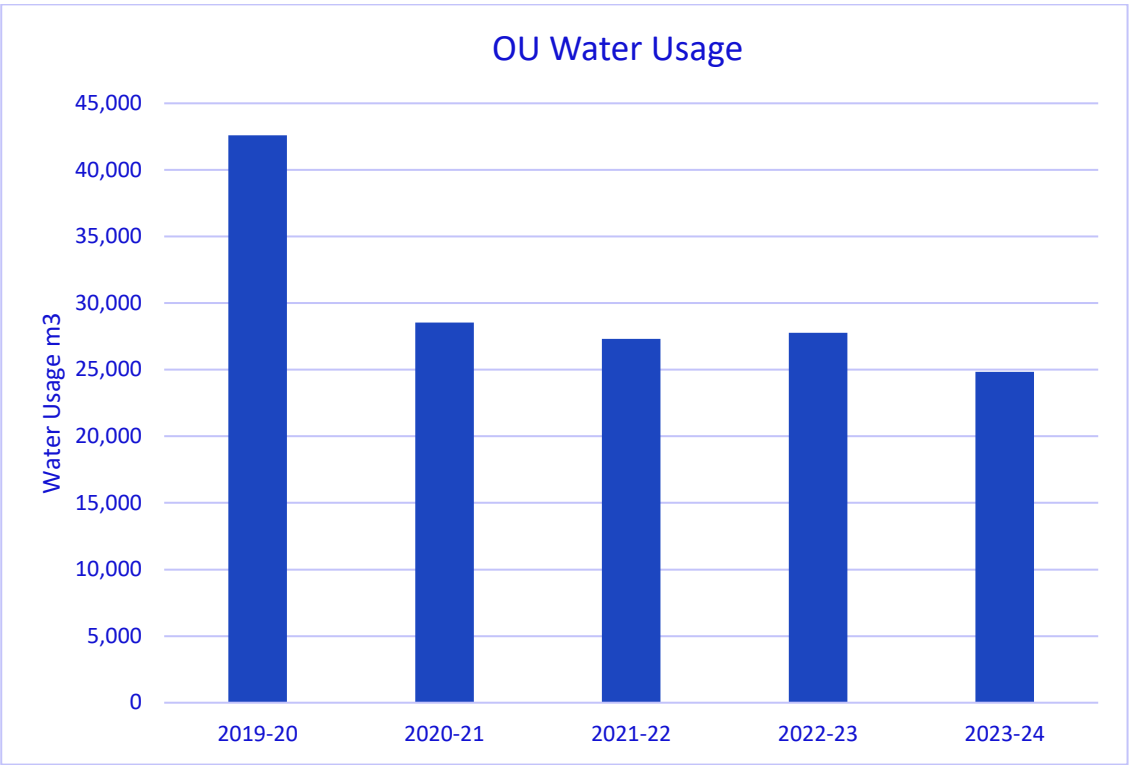
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Water Tracking

After the 30% drop in water usage from 2019–20 to 2020–21, the last few years’ water usage has remained static. Predominantly due to the hold on water efficiency projects pending outcome of the Campus 2030 decision.

Water efficiency projects implemented include:

- Consolidation and closure of spaces and buildings to better support dynamic hybrid working practices, improve space efficiency and water consumption



See Appendix A for historical water performance.

Linked policies

Policies, strategies, and plans linked to the Water policy include:

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Plan

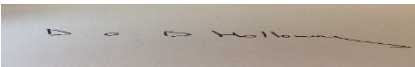
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- Sustainable Construction Policy
- Biodiversity Policy and Plan
- Waste and Resource Policy and Management Plan
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy

Monitoring and review

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

Signed By



Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Version History

| Version Number | Date of change | Originator of change (title) | Description of change |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------------|---|
| 1.0 | May 2023 | Energy Manager | New Water Policy |
| 1.1 | June 2024 | Energy Manger | Added Campus 2030 section and updated figures |
| 1.2 | June 2025 | Energy Manger | Updates Campus 2030 Water usage table |

Next review date: June 2025

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Appendix A – Historical Performance to date

Water is a precious resource, and it is important we continue to minimise our water consumption. Figure 1 shows our water usage from 2009-10 by net internal floor area, it can be seen water usage has reduced from 0.48m³/m² in 2009-10 to 0.26m³/m² in 2021-22. The spike that occurred between 2018-19 was due to a major leak in an underground mains pipe at the Walton Hall campus. The OU worked closely with the local water board to investigate, identify and resolve the leak. Since then, the main water meter was upgraded to provide daily meter readings, this allows better monitoring of trends and prompt identification of irregular usage patterns.

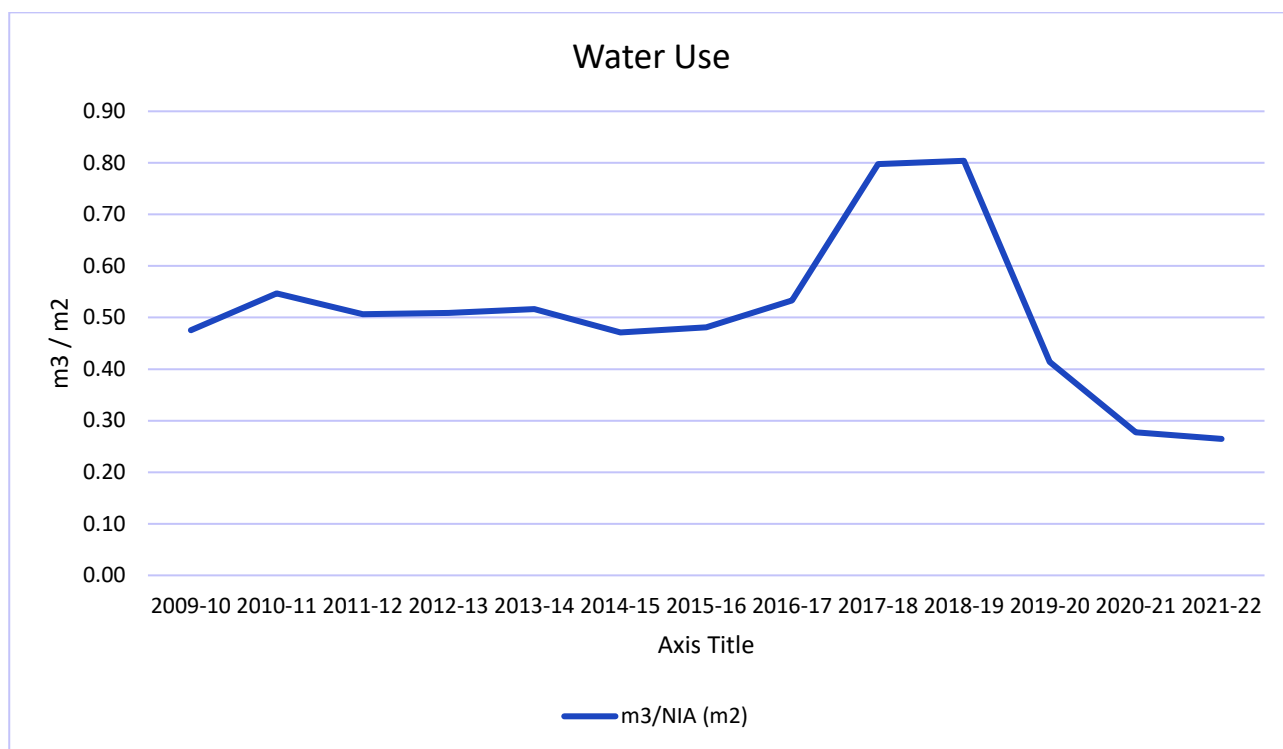


Figure 1: Water usage (m³/floor area – m²)

The new water target to reduce water usage per floor area (m²) by 5% by 2028 has the baseline set at 2019-20. This is a realistic 'business as usual' baseline because it is after the abnormal usage figures from the major water leak and prior to reduced usage figures from the COVID period where there was significant reduction of occupancy on campus.

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