

A MESSAGE FROM NICK BRAITHWAITE



Dear Colleagues,

With my long-term interest in sustainability at the OU, I was very pleased to be given the opportunity earlier this year to become the VCE sponsor for sustainability. This bulletin is the first of a series of updates on

sustainability that we have planned in response to calls for a transparent, coordinated, inclusive and collaborative pan-OU approach to sustainability.

Sustainability is about meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. [The UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) express sustainability in the context of social, environmental, economic, global and future wellbeing. In VCE meetings in February, we agreed a high level of ambition to move the OU forward on sustainability and we made our initial commitment to [net zero by 2050](#). I say initial for two reasons: first because work is underway with the Carbon Trust to help us be more ambitious about our estate and second, because we also intend to make similar commitments for our core business areas – in our curriculum to support student success and in our research and public engagement to support knowledge creation and knowledge exchange.

In mid-March, I chaired an OU Strategy consultation event on sustainability. From your comments and feedback on this and other strategy consultations, and from observations gathered by our sustainability strategy adviser, Dr Victoria Hands, it is clear that across the OU there is a wealth of sustainability related work happening. Victoria has set out some headline findings and first step recommendations in this short [slide deck](#). We are acting on these recommendations as we create our new institutional sustainability plan which will launch with the OU Strategy later this year.

‘Open Account - your role in our future’ and SDG badging

We already know of SDG links to recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) impact cases and Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) projects. To gain greater impact from the full web of activity through coordinating awareness about ‘who is doing what’, I am launching ‘Open Account - your role in our future’ to capture more information. If you believe that your work directly supports one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals, I should be most grateful if you would ‘get it on our radar’ as a short ‘elevator pitch’ and link to further information using this [e-form](#). We will be sharing information on current and recent research projects with Kevin Shakesheff’s



office (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) and we'll also pass relevant information to the COP26 team (see below). We are equally interested in capturing where Sustainability features in our curriculum, so we plan to extend the database to cover that next.

To demonstrate support of the UN SDGs, we are working on an institutional badging system across faculty and unit web presences. The aim is to add coherence and credibility to claims of alignment with the SDGs. We will use the above process to identify opportunities and you can also [contact us](#) to request endorsement.

COP26

You will no doubt be aware that this year sees the COP26 talks under the joint Presidency of the UK and Italy, taking place in Glasgow. We encourage academic colleagues to join the [COP26 Universities Network](#) and participate in their work. OU in Scotland (OUiS), under the leadership of Derek Goldman, Knowledge Exchange Manager, is inviting contributions to a series of OUiS initiatives for COP26 - [see here for details on how to contribute to the OpenLearn's COP26 coverage](#). Our MarComms colleagues will support a coordinated 'one communications' approach across all channels. If you are participating in any activity, [please be in touch](#) so that we can amplify your voice and impact.

My vision is to draw on the OU's pioneering work on social and environmental justice to position us as the knowledge exchange/education provider of choice during the just transition to a sustainable society. I'm looking forward to our collaborative efforts to respond to the climate and ecological crises and to sustainability in general.

With optimism, Nick

Prof. Nick Braithwaite

Executive Dean, STEM Faculty and VCE Sponsor for Sustainability

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