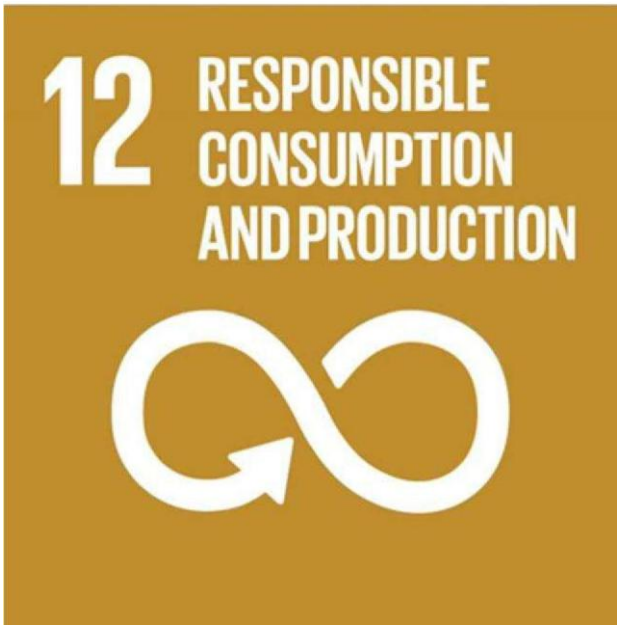
University of Suffolk



Responsible Sourcing Policy

2025 - 2030

May 2026

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1. Introduction

The University of Suffolk is committed to integrating sustainability into its core operations, including procurement. This Responsible Sourcing Policy complements our Group Instruction to Tender and outlines our pragmatic approach to sustainable procurement. This policy serves as a clear and practical framework, encapsulating our principles and approach to responsible, ethical, and environmentally conscious procurement practices.

Our primary aim is to minimise the environmental impact of our procurement activities. We recognize the potential environmental implications of procurement decisions, from resource extraction to product disposal. Through this policy, we commit to reducing our carbon footprint, conserving natural resources, and promoting a circular economy by giving preference to suppliers and products with strong sustainability credentials. Additionally, our wider Institutional policies seek to enhance social responsibility by supporting suppliers that uphold fair labour practices and ethical standards in their operations. These aims collectively reinforce our commitment to sustainable procurement practices that align with our institution's Sustainability Policy objectives that commit to:

- Achieve carbon neutrality for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, with a net zero target for remaining Scope 3 emissions by 2050,
- Work toward a zero-waste policy, defined as 5% or less going to landfill by 2030,
- Enhance the quality of habitat biodiversity on the Estates under which the University has management and operational function,
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations,
- Ensure sustainability is fully understood by staff, students and stakeholders and is embedded within all aspects of university strategy, planning and activities,
- Create partnerships at all levels within the University's sphere of influence that further the practice of sustainability, including prioritising working with partners and organisations that can help us achieve more sustainable outcomes,

And

- Ensure that sustainability and biodiversity opportunities are identified and implemented when considering land use, development, and construction practices.

2. Purpose

The University of Suffolk recognises the critical role of procurement in advancing its sustainability objectives and aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our Responsible Sourcing Policy is designed to provide a clear and structured approach to procurement practices that support our institutional goals while contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

Within the SDGs framework, several goals directly align with the core objectives of our Sustainability Policy, emphasising the importance of sustainable procurement that delivers both value for money and social value:

- Encouraging responsible consumption habits among procurement teams, which includes promoting sustainable and ethical products through procurement practices.
- Striving for efficient utilization of natural resources by choosing suppliers and products that reduce waste, eliminating single use plastic and minimise resource extraction.
- Supporting the transition from a linear "take-make-dispose" model to a circular economy, products are designed for longevity and recyclability.

- Procurement decisions can significantly impact a university's scopes 1, 2, and 3. We will be selecting suppliers' products and services that help reduce emissions and combat climate change.
- We will be selecting and supporting suppliers that have a carbon reduction plan
- Prioritising procurement practices that enhance climate resilience, such as sourcing materials and services that are less vulnerable to climate-related disruptions

- Promoting the procurement of products that are certified or verified to have minimal impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, helping safeguard life both on land and in the oceans.
- As part of our social value-driven procurement strategy, support suppliers or initiatives involved in habitat restoration projects, such as reforestation, beach cleanup, or coral reef restoration.

- Where practicable, prioritise suppliers that adhere to sustainable sourcing practices, such as sustainable forestry, fisheries, and agriculture.

- Choose second hand, repurposed assets where available and practicable,

- When procuring new products, look for those made from recycled or sustainable materials. To reduce demand for resource-intensive production processes that harm habitats.

We recognise that in order to achieve successful outcomes associated with this policy we will need to enhance the skills and knowledge of all staff with purchasing authority and will seek to work with the Higher Education Purchasing Association (HEPA) and procurement specialists to additionally support the management of goods and services that are either of high value, high volume, or high risk.; whilst continuing to ensure that all collaborative buying arrangements we enter into meet our own high standards.

3. Sustainability and Delivering Net Zero

The Tertiary Sector supports the delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and Net Zero Strategy, as laid out in the Department for Education (DfE) Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. This includes expectation about how each institute will meet legislative requirements and work in the context of:

- the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and UNESCO's 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) for 2030' which set out the key role of education in the successful achievement of the goals,

- the Paris Agreement and Glasgow Climate Pact, which are important steps towards keeping the goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius alive,

- Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) which includes taking action to empower society to engage in education and training,

- the UK Climate Change Act (2008) and National Adaptation Programme (NAP), which include action for education in adapting to climate change and require progress reporting against priority risks.

- UK government legislation to meet net zero by 2050- the UK is the first country to set legally binding carbon budgets, placing a restriction on the total amount of greenhouse gases the UK can emit over a 5-year period. In the latest, Carbon Budget 6, the UK legislated to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels,

- the Environment Act (2021) reflects the need to tackle climate change through nature-based solutions, following the close of the target's consultation in May 2022,

government will set statutory targets for air quality, biodiversity, water, resource efficiency and waste reduction, and a new target to reverse the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030, while the act also strengthens the biodiversity duty on public authorities, including the Department for Education,

3.1 The National HEI Landscape

In 2023 the Royal Anniversary Trust's report, Accelerating the UK Tertiary Education Sector towards Net Zero, provided an estimate of the Tertiary Sector's carbon footprint to be 18.1 Mt CO2e, with HE institutions contributing approximately 86% of this, and FE 12%. This report sets out a clear pathway for the sector to reach Net Zero *and* presents a Standardised Carbon Emissions Framework for Further and Higher Education (SCEF) as developed by the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges and The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education. This approach will be adopted across the Sector from 2024.

Universities serve as cornerstone institutions in advancing the UK's climate and environmental policy initiatives. Our research and expertise underpin a profound comprehension of climate change dynamics and the technological innovations essential for decarbonisation and enhancing resilience. Furthermore, universities are instrumental in cultivating a new generation of graduates equipped with the expertise and resolve required to address the climate crisis, molding the leaders of tomorrow dedicated to furthering public and environmental welfare. Beyond their academic pursuits, universities in England and Wales collectively oversee and manage over 52,000 hectares of property and developable land.

From 2024 Universities have agreed to:

- Set targets for scope 1 and 2 emission reductions which support the government's plan for reducing emissions by 78% by 2035 and achieving net zero by 2050 at the latest.

- Set a target for scope 3 emission reductions and other environmental targets beyond emissions as soon as possible.

- Ensure targets are visible on websites alongside information on how the university is addressing the climate emergency through teaching, research, leadership, local contributions and campus responsibilities.

- Clearly define how progress against these targets will be reported in a transparent, consistent, and understandable way, and work with official statistics providers to improve data collection.

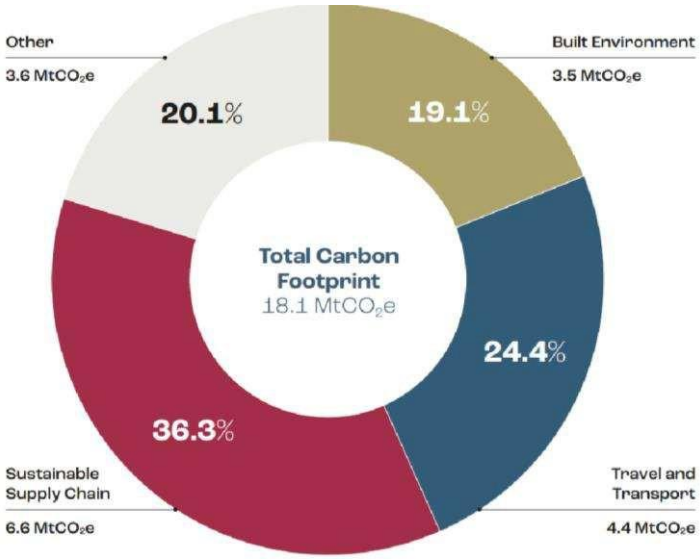
- Sign the UN SDG Accord or embed elements of SDG accord reporting into their existing reporting.

- Use the Climate Commission's Climate Action toolkit to assess how further actions through the university's policies and reporting could advance the UN SDGs and respond to the climate emergency.

3.2 Supply Chain

The Supply Chain is a significant source of emissions for the University sector, accounting for 6.6 MtCO2e, more than 36% of the sector's total footprint, see Table 1. Predominantly influenced by business services and IT. Using the sector wide reduction glide-path the University of Suffolk supply chain will need to deliver a 20% reduction in carbon by 2040.

Table 1: *Accelerating the UK Tertiary Education Sector Towards Net Zero: 2023*



As such Sustainable procurement plays a pivotal role in driving transformative change within the Higher Education sector, serving as an increasingly prominent means for achieving Net Zero policy objectives and securing cost savings. In the United Kingdom, all public procurement endeavors are mandated to deliver value for money and are subject to public procurement regulations to ensure fairness and transparency. The University of Suffolk allocates substantial budgets annually towards capital projects and the procurement of goods and services, with such expenditures prioritising sustainability and social responsibility as wider expressions of value for money and an essential aspect of our own carbon reduction and waste management plans.

The Universities sustainability policy frameworks and Institutional objectives for Net Zero, Biodiversity, Travel and Waste management reflect a strong commitment to reforming the ethical, environmental, and social dimensions of our investments and our approach and the corresponding Action Plans can be found here: https://www.uos.ac.uk/sustainability.

The university is **committed to achieving carbon neutrality for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030 and net zero for scopes 1,2 and 3 emissions by 2050**, with the strategic framework for delivering against this Carbon Commitment set out in the Universities Carbon Climate Action Plan and Procurement and Waste Management Plan.

In pursuit of its commitment to achieving net-zero emissions and progressing the UN SDG's the University places a strong emphasis on the sustainability of its procurement activities. It recognises that the choices it makes when selecting suppliers has a direct impact on all of its Scope emissions and has therefore adopted a Responsible Sourcing Policy that seeks to progress SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Procurement, and SDG 13: Climate Action to support procurement teams in effectively reducing emissions across Scope 3 and driving more sustainable purchasing decisions.

3.3 Carbon Reduction Plan

As an organisation committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, we place a significant emphasis on sustainability within our supply chain. In this regard, we require our prospective suppliers to have a well-defined and robust carbon reduction plan as an integral component of our partnership. Such a plan not only addresses the urgent global challenge of climate change but also aligns with our collective responsibility to work toward a sustainable future. By adopting and implementing a comprehensive carbon reduction plan, our suppliers contribute not only to our organisation's sustainability objectives but also to the broader commitment to achieving net zero scope 3 emissions.

All potential suppliers will be expected to provide, report on and show progression against a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP). Standardised carbon emission reporting is to be undertaken in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. All relevant Scope 1, 2 and 3 categories must be included and be part of the core reporting requirement, inclusive of the value chain of upstream and downstream activities associated with the supplier organisation's operations. For more information on reporting against a CRP suppliers are advised to use the government conversion factors https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/government-conversion-factors-for-company-reporting

3.3.1 Greenhouse Gas Reporting

The Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol categorises emissions sources into three distinct groups referred to as 'Scopes'. These scopes are defined as follows:

- *Scope 1:* emissions encompass direct greenhouse gas emissions originating from sources under the control or ownership of the reporting organisation. Examples include emissions generated from fuel combustion within boilers, furnaces, and vehicles.

- *Scope 2:* emissions account for indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with the procurement of electricity, steam, heat, or cooling services. These emissions are recorded by the reporting organisation since they result from the organisation's energy consumption.

- *Scope 3:* emissions encompass all sources beyond the boundaries of an organisation's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. Typically, Scope 3 emissions constitute a significant portion of an organisation's overall greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions span 15 distinct categories, although not all categories may apply to every organisation. They encompass emission sources both upstream and downstream of the organisation's operational activities.

For suppliers completing a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP), it is imperative to include UK-based emissions data for both Scope 1 and Scope 2. Additionally, the CRP should feature a selection of five specific Scope 3 emissions categories, which are as follows:

- Business travel,
- Employee commuting,
- Waste generated during operations,
- Upstream transportation and distribution,
- Downstream transportation and distribution.

This comprehensive approach to emissions accounting should ensures a thorough evaluation of a suppliers carbon footprint and enables targeted strategies for emissions reduction.

3.3.2 Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/21

In-Scope organisations are now required to verify that the supplier remains committed to achieving Net Zero prior to entering any contract awarded. This requirement is when procuring goods and/or services and/or works with an anticipated contract value above £5 million per annum (excluding VAT) which are subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

3.3.3 NETpositive Supplier Tool for Higher Education

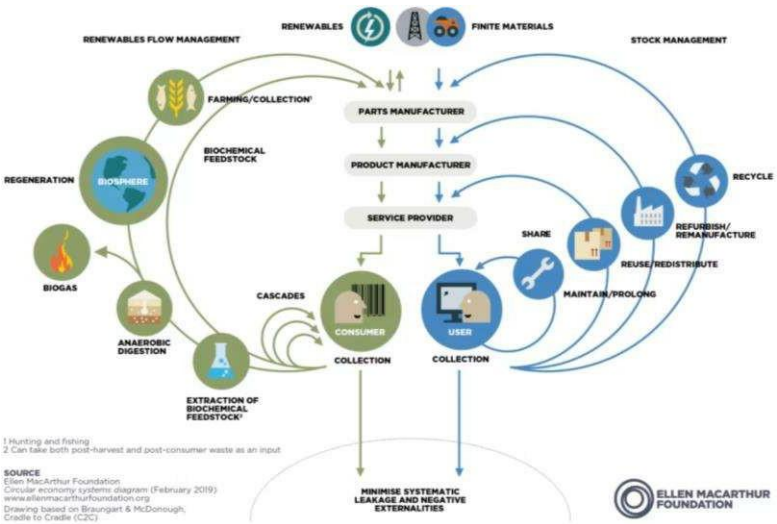
For those organisations under threshold, the University will expect prospective suppliers to sign up and commit to the Higher Education's NETpostive Supplier Engagement Tool. This tool has been created by the sector and is endorsed by the Southern University Purchasing Consortium of which the University is a member. The NETpostive engagement tool will enable the supplier to develop a free Sustainability Action Plan, which includes carbon reduction in line which will be viable and shared with all potential higher education customers.

Information on the supplier engagement tool can be found here
https://supplierengagementhe.net-positive.org/

4. Circular Economy

The circular economy is an economic model that aims to optimize resource utilisation by reducing waste and extending the lifespan of products and materials. In this approach, products, components, and materials are designed, produced, and used with the intent of maximising their value and minimising their environmental impact. Instead of the traditional linear "take-make-dispose" model, the circular economy (see Table 2} promotes strategies such as recycling, refurbishing, and remanufacturing to keep products and materials in circulation for as long as possible. Ultimately, the goal is to create a closed-loop system where resources are continuously regenerated, and waste is minimised, leading to increased sustainability and reduced pressure on finite resources.

Table 2: Circular Economy: Ellen MacArthur Foundation



We will look to place significant emphasis on the adoption of circular economy principles within our procurement decision-making, with due regard to value for money following a structured hierarchy designed to ensure that our suppliers meet these principles:

- *Design for Circular Economy (DfCE}:* The foundation of the circular economy hierarchy is the proactive approach of designing products, systems, and processes with circularity in mind. DfCE principles prioritise durability, repairability, ease of disassembly, and the use of recycled or renewable materials. This step aims to prevent waste and resource depletion by creating products that inherently promote sustainability and longer lifespans.

- *Prevention:* Building upon DfCE, our next priority is the prevention of waste and resource depletion through thoughtful design. This includes strategies to minimise

the generation of waste, reduce resource consumption, and enhance product longevity.

- *Reuse:* Following prevention, our hierarchy promotes the reuse of products or components, extending their lifespan through practices such as repair, refurbishment, or repurposing.

- *Recycling:* Recycling is the responsible collection and processing of materials to create new products or materials. It helps close the loop by reusing resources efficiently and reducing the demand for virgin materials and designing materials for recyclability.

- *Recovery:* If reuse and recycling are not feasible, the recovery of energy or other valuable materials from waste is the next preferred option. Techniques like waste-to-energy and energy recovery play a role in this stage.

- *Disposal:* The least preferred option, disposal, should only be considered when no other circularity strategies are viable.

The University acknowledges the pivotal role of product design in achieving circularity. It mandates that assets and products must be intentionally engineered for easy disassembly, thus facilitating efficient component separation to enable subsequent repair, reuse and recycling during their lifespan. This design philosophy aligns with the University's commitment to reducing environmental impact while concurrently optimising operational efficiency. Preferential consideration will be given to those suppliers who provide assets that are able to remain in the value chain and demonstrate circular economy features.

5. Zero Waste to Landfill

The University of Suffolk has embarked on a strategic endeavour to establish a Zero Waste policy, characterised by the ambitious goal of sending no more than 5% of its waste to landfill by 2030, while concurrently pursuing an overarching reduction in total waste arisings across all its operations and activities.

Zero waste, in this context, signifies an operational paradigm aiming to minimise waste generation and maximise resource efficiency throughout the institution's processes and activities. This initiative is of paramount importance as it aligns with broader sustainability objectives and addresses the imperative of reducing the environmental impact of waste disposal. Notably, this commitment extends to procurement practices, where the university seeks to source products and materials that are conducive to the goals of waste minimisation and resource conservation in keeping with the principles of a circular economy.

5.1 Single Use Plastic

The proliferation of single-use plastics has precipitated a growing body of scientific evidence highlighting the profound environmental and ecological consequences associated with their widespread use. These non-biodegradable polymers, designed for short-term convenience,

have engendered long-lasting ecological challenges, contributing to plastic pollution, habitat degradation, and adverse health effects in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

In accordance with the Environmental Protection (Plastic Plates etc. and Polystyrene Containers etc.) (England) Regulations 2023, also known as the Single-Use Plastics Regulations enacted by the UK Government, the university has taken proactive measures. Specifically, the institution has implemented a policy to discontinue the procurement of single-use plastic stirrers, straws, cutlery, plates, and single-use cups made from expanded polystyrene or oxo-degradable plastics, plastic food containers and other plastic cups for beverages, including covers and lids.

The University recognises the importance of addressing a broad spectrum of commodity groups. These include, but are not limited to, cleaning products, materials and printing for marketing events, and laboratory supplies. While these commodities may currently fall outside the purview of the Single-Use Plastics Regulations, we remain committed to reducing plastic use in the supply chain comprehensively. To this end, we will actively engage with supply chain partners to collaboratively identify alternative procurement solutions that can effectively eliminate single use plastic.