

UWE Bristol

Statement on Use of Plastics

October 2018

UWE Bristol's Environmental Sustainability Policy commits the university to minimise its impacts on the environment and to use its teaching, research, estates operations and supply chain to extend its influence through the lifecycle of our activities to derive both environmental sustainability benefits and business benefits.

The university and its student union recognise that the use of plastic products is ubiquitous in modern society. Such use brings many benefits but the volume and variety of plastic products and poor reuse, recycling or disposal practices have significant and growing impacts on the environment. UWE Bristol intends to reduce the use of plastics across its operation.

To date, the university and the Student Union have carried out extensive actions on all levels to minimise the negative environmental impacts of plastics. Some examples include:

- a transition away from non-recyclable food packaging and single use beverage cups to compostable food service disposables
- the introduction of a 20p levy on hot beverages served in disposable coffee cups
- selling reusable keep-cups at cost
- elimination of plastic bags at the Fresher's Fair
- elimination of plastic straws in all catering outlets
- installation of plastic outdoor furniture made out of post-consumer plastic waste
- installation of a network of free water stations to reduce reliance on bottled water
- the Estates Design Guide states that all designs should be based on the principles of the circular economy which is "restorative and regenerative by design, and which aims to keep products, components and materials at their highest utility and value at all times."

Additionally, the university monitors its uptake of recycling activity and approximately 30 tonnes of plastic waste are recycled per year.

The following points refer to the university's next steps in relation to plastics:

1. The university will establish a baseline of its use of unnecessary, problematic plastic products from which the impact of future policy decisions can be judged.
2. The university will use its research and teaching activities to build awareness and engagement amongst students, employees, partners and the public about the issues associated with the use of plastic products.
3. The university will seek to work in partnership with the Students' Union at UWE, sector partners and other agencies and, where possible, will use its purchasing power to drive change and to promote and enhance the sustainable use of plastic products in the academic and operational activities of the university.
4. The university and the Student Union will encourage sector purchasing consortia to consider how single use plastics can be discouraged through the tender specification process and will

engage with the National Union of Students and sector environmental bodies to promote awareness and sector engagement.

5. The university and the Student Union will take consideration of the waste hierarchy, circular economy principles, the [Sustainability Plan](#) and the [Resource Management Plan](#) when making strategic decisions on the use of plastics.
6. The university and the Student Union will consider the lifecycle impacts of the materials it uses - including plastics - and in such consideration explore opportunities for student involvement via teaching, learning and research
7. The university and the Student Union will explore the potential to sign up to the UK [Plastics Pact](#) which would commit us to have the following in place by 2025: by 2025:
 - a. 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable
 - b. 70% of plastic packaging effectively recycled or composted
 - c. take actions to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use packaging items through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models
 - d. 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.
8. The university will ensure compliance with the legal requirements of the [Producer Responsibility Obligations \(Packaging Waste\) 1997](#) and exceed these requirements where possible.
9. This Statement will be reviewed annually by the University's Sustainability Board and monitored through the sustainability reporting processes of the university.

In addition to the action steps detailed above, in 2017/18 the University awarded Natalie Fee (founding Director of City to Sea – <https://www.citytosea.org.uk>) an honorary Degree of Doctor of Science, in recognition of her campaigning to protect the oceans from plastics and other avoidable wastes.

The university and Student Union are mindful that much of the plastics affecting the oceans is due to poor or non-existent waste management collections across the world. We are therefore also raising funds for waste management charity WasteAid UK (<https://wasteaid.org.uk>) who campaign to increase international aid to 3% of total spend in order for waste management to fulfill its potential as an engine for sustainable development

This position statement has been co-written by the University of the West of England and The Student Union at UWE. ⁱ

ⁱ UWE Bristol is working towards all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.