

Staff and Student Sustainability Engagement Plan 2024-2025

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim

The University declared a climate and ecological emergency in December 2020. Following this a new Sustainability Sub Strategy (SSS) 2021-2028 has been created. Staff, student and stakeholder engagement is a vital component of our overall sustainability strategy. The aim is to engage with all university students, staff, visitors and stakeholders who all contribute to our energy and resource use, in order to reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (scopes 1, 2 and 3) and improve resource efficiency.

The aim of this document is to formalise our overarching engagement plan in order to aid us in tracking our progress; to enable students, staff, visitors and stakeholders to discover opportunities to engage in sustainability on campus and to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.

This document also outlines the University of Essex sustainability team's core activities for 2024-2025. It is subject to change but gives an overview of our main projects for the coming academic year.

1.2 Objectives

Our underlying objectives for student, staff, visitor and stakeholder engagement are as follows:

- To normalise the Sustainable Essex Awards (or equivalent) and to involve every department on campus.
- To encourage students to engage with a range of opportunities to learn more about sustainability and climate change, empowering them to make environmentally-friendly choices.
- To push for improvements in integrating education for sustainable development into the curriculum.
- To integrate sustainability as a core component of student and staff inductions.
- To increase and improve engagement opportunities with the Sustainability Sub-Strategy, Carbon Management Plan, Statement of Investment Principles and other key strategy and policy documentation.
- To collaborate with the Students' Union in a joint effort to improve sustainability on campus.
- To ensure that Trades Unions are presented with opportunities to engage with sustainability management.
- To collaborate with print and digital media teams (internal and external to the University) to promote sustainability on campus using best-practice marketing techniques.
- To increase the number of engagements through our social media channels.

2. Engagement Initiatives

2.1 Accommodation engagement programme (#LittleChoicesBigChanges)

Bringing engagement with students under one campaign, #LittleChoicesBigChanges encourages students living on campus to reduce energy use, increase recycling and save water, but will also target those living off campus to adopt sustainable habits. This campaign will target key dates throughout the academic year: Welcome Week, Christmas move out, January/February heating season and the end of the year move out, in addition to promoting sustainability on an on-going basis, in collaboration with key partners such as Essex Food.

2.2 Sustainable Essex Awards

The Sustainable Essex Awards programme continues to be a success at the University of Essex. New teams are recruited each year and the proportion achieving a Gold award has risen year-on-year since 2014. The programme commences in October and runs through to the award ceremony in June.

The Sustainability Team has redeveloped the programme for 2024-25 so that it brings teams closer to the priority areas of the SSS, and supports them in developing their own projects that are bespoke to their areas of work. We have also added a Platinum level, which encourages teams to develop collaborative projects with other teams internally, with external partners, and/or with students. The programme is also now open to groups of students to participate in as well.

2.3. Engagement Events

2.3.1. Welcome Week

Welcome Week 2024 will be from 30 September to 4 October, when we will be focusing on welcoming new and returning students to the university. The Welcome period presents a perfect opportunity to launch a marketing campaign to raise awareness about environmental issues and sustainability on campus. This will consist of stalls, informative handouts and face to face discussions involving members of the sustainability team. Activity for this will primarily be held on the Colchester campus; however, a similar event will be held at Loughton on 30 September and Southend campus on 4 October.

2.3.2. Sustainability awareness promotion

During the Autumn term we will deliver a sustainability awareness campaign which links to our 'reduce, recycle, protect' and our 'Little Choices Big Changes' initiatives utilising digital signage and social media channels. The dates for these activities are to be confirmed but will be scheduled for late October to mid-November.

2.3.3. Sustainability Awareness Week (3 – 7 March 2025)

Each year, the university hosts a sustainability-themed week (typically in March) where events take place to raise awareness about sustainability issues locally, nationally and globally. Past activities have included roof top tours to showcase our solar panels, guided tree walks around campus, cooking tips to avoid food waste, water saving initiatives, photo competitions and recycling information. The focus is on providing a range of information and activities to show students how they can make a difference, and the resources available both on and off campus to help them.

3. Engagement Opportunities

3.1. University Committees

Having student representatives on our committees is a valuable way in which students can engage with strategic decision-making at the University governance level. However, it is important that we ensure that students are engaged as active participants and not simply observers. One of our aims is to ensure that student committee members have the necessary support to confidently participate.

In 2020 we formed the Environmental Sustainability Action Group (ESAG), focusing on the cross-university response to the climate crisis. ESAG membership is drawn from all core areas of the university, recognising that every area has impacts and the ability to make change. The Students' Union Chief Executive and President are members to represent the student body. We also have members representing all Trades Unions on our campuses (UCU, Unite and Unison).

Student representatives are primarily on Senate committees; however, there is also some representation at Council. Below is a list of all university committees involved in sustainability, ethics, estates planning, finance and strategic decision making with student representation.

Council

1. People Supporting Strategy Committee
2. Resource Committee
3. Advisory groups of the University Steering Group (USG)
4. Joint Committee of the Council and the Senate

Senate

1. Education Committee
2. Ethics Committee
3. Research Committee

4. Action Plan 2024-25

Strategic Area	Action	Date	Owner(s)
Campaigns	Social Media campaigns	Ongoing	Sustainability Engagement Officer/ Engagement Assistant
	Sustainability Priorities awareness	September/October 2024	Sustainability Engagement Team
Campaigns continued	Welcome Week Stalls	October 2024	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant
	Sustainable Essex Awards launch	October 2024	Sustainability Engagement Officer/ Engagement Assistant
	Christmas Move Out	December 2024	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant
	Heating Season	January/February 2025	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant
	Sustainability Awareness Week	March 2025	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant
	Sustainable Essex Audits	April 2025	Sustainability Engagement Officer, Engagement Assistant, Student Assistants
	End of Year Move Out Period	May/June 2025	Sustainability Engagement Officer, Engagement Assistant
	Sustainable Essex Awards event	June 2025	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant
	Marketing	Updating the Sustainability Website	Ongoing

Marketing continued	Sustainability Newsletter	Ongoing	Sustainability Engagement Officer
	Maintain Social Media Pages	Ongoing	Sustainability Engagement Officer, Engagement Assistant
Education	Campus Walks	Ongoing	Sustainability Engagement Officer/Engagement Assistant/Grounds Manager
	Summer School in Sustainable Practice	June 2025 (TBC)	Dr Jane Hindley
Transport	Dr Bike service	Ongoing	Travel and Transport Officer
	Cycle to Work Day	August 2024	Travel and Transport Officer

This document is subject to annual review by the University of Essex

Signed by	Date	Next review date
Daisy Malt (Sustainability Manager)	26/05/2024	01/06/2025