

Have your say!

Sustainability Strategic Framework 2027-2032



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The University of Exeter is developing a Sustainability Strategic Framework to support our purpose of creating a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.

As sustainability activity has grown across the University, there is a need for a clear overarching framework that provides a shared sense of direction and aligns our ambitions across education, research, operations and partnerships.

It will replace the Environment and Climate Emergency Policy Statement adopted in 2019.

We are now seeking feedback from staff and students before the Framework is finalised.



What is the Sustainability Strategic Framework?

The Framework provides a shared strategic direction for sustainability across the University.

It brings together our sustainability ambitions, priorities and commitments into a single, coherent structure, connecting the many strategies, plans and activities that already contribute to sustainability.

Our approach is to embed and empower. The Framework is intentionally strategic in scope, while detailed commitments, actions and targets sit within supporting strategies and policies.

How has the Framework been developed?

An initial engagement phase in February and March 2026 gave staff and students an opportunity to share the sustainability issues most important to them, what the Framework should include and ideas for embedding sustainability across the University.

The draft Framework has also been informed through ongoing engagement with sustainability governance groups including the Advocate Climate Taskforce and the Climate and Environmental Crisis Board.

This feedback helped identify the sustainability issues most important to our community and has shaped the draft Framework's focus, ambitions, and areas for action.

The Framework at a glance



Our Sustainability Mission

Creating lasting environmental and social value through meaningful action across our education, research, operations and partnerships.



Strategic pillars

Regenerative Environment: Restoring and regenerating natural systems through climate action, nature recovery and circularity.

Transformational Knowledge: Generating, sharing and applying knowledge to address global challenges and create lasting positive impact.

Thriving People and Partnerships: Creating social value by fostering inclusion and belonging, strengthening partnerships and enabling people, communities and places to thrive.



Guiding Principles

- Whole-institution approach
- Inclusive and collaborative
- Evidence-based
- Grounded in global responsibility
- Meaningful action and sustainable value creation
- Empowering and enabling
- Brave and transformative



Further information on page 5

What will success look like?

- Our operations will be on a clear pathway to net zero and nature recovery
- Our staff and students will be empowered to make sustainable decisions
- Our research will address society's most pressing challenges
- Our education will share learning and opportunity
- Our partnerships will create shared value and lasting impact
- Our approach will be inclusive and equitable
- We will demonstrate measurable environmental, social and organisational impact
- We will be recognised as a global leader in sustainability



Further information on page 6

Contributing strategies and policies

Climate Strategy

Nature Positive Strategy

Research and Innovation Strategy

Responsible Procurement Strategy

Circular Economy and Sustainable Resource Management Strategy

Education Strategy

Enabling AI Strategy

Sustainable Procurement Policy

Sustainable Transport Strategy

Global Strategy

Exe-Tech Strategy

Sustainable Food Policy

Partnership Principles

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments

Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice Concordat

Investment Policy

What are we asking you about?

Before the Framework is finalised and launched, we would like to hear from staff and students one final time.

- Is the overall direction clear and supported?
- Does the level of ambition feel right?
- Do the priorities reflect the sustainability issues the University should address?
- Is anything important missing?
- What would give you confidence in the Framework's direction and delivery?
- How could you or your area contribute to meaningful action?

Your feedback will help us test and strengthen the draft before it is finalised.

How you can have your say

1. Review the **Draft Strategic Framework** and/or these summary slides
2. Complete the [survey](#) with your feedback
3. Join a 90-minute focus group to explore the Framework in more detail. See [website](#) for further details

Have your say by 20 November 2026

You do not need to be a sustainability expert to take part. Review the draft Framework, then share your views in the way that works best for you.



What happens to your feedback

Feedback from the survey and focus groups will be brought together and analysed to identify:

- Overall levels of support and confidence
- Common themes
- Areas that may need greater clarity
- Concerns or potential gaps
- Specific suggestions raised by participants

Your feedback will be considered as the Framework is finalised. Not every suggestion will result in a change, but the consultation will help identify what should be considered before the Framework moves forward.



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Strategic Pillars in detail



Pillar 1: Regenerative Environment

This pillar brings together our work in restoring and regenerating natural systems through climate action, nature recovery and circularity.

Climate Action – strategic commitments

- We will lead meaningful climate action locally, nationally and globally, using our education, research, operations and partnerships to support the transition to a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.
- We will reduce our carbon emissions from our baseline by 26% by 2030, prioritising reductions across our operations and value chain in line with our science-based approach.
- We will reduce carbon emissions by at least 90% against our baseline and address any residual emissions through inseting, achieving net zero by 2050.



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Nature Positive – strategic commitments

- We will enhance biodiversity and natural capital on our estates and areas of influence, increasing habitat biodiversity value by 20% by 2030, with a stretch goal of 30%, from a 2020 baseline.
- We will engage and connect people with nature, creating social value by increasing the benefits it provides for all our communities.
- We will embed biodiversity enhancement, environmental regeneration and sustainable water stewardship across our operations, supply chains and global activities.

Resource Use and Circularity –strategic commitments

- We will embed circular economy principles across all aspects of University life, transforming the way we design, use and manage resources.
- We will support the transition to a circular economy by reducing waste and maximising the value and lifespan of resources through reuse and repair.
- We will create sustainable value through responsible resource management, minimising environmental impacts while strengthening environmental, social and economic resilience.

Pillar 2: Transformational Knowledge

Transformational knowledge is central to creating a sustainable, healthy and socially just future. As a University, one of our most powerful and unique opportunities to create lasting positive impact is through the knowledge, education, skills, innovation and capabilities we generate, share and apply. This pillar brings together our: research and innovation; education; and engagement.

Research and Innovation – strategic commitments

- We will further strengthen our world-leading interdisciplinary research to continue to address the defining challenges of our time.
- We will continue to foster a collaborative and interdisciplinary research culture that enables bold ideas, supports innovation and brings together diverse expertise to address complex societal challenges.
- We will ensure our research creates lasting impact by translating knowledge into practical solutions, policy influence and innovation. Through initiatives such as Exeter Futures, research networks and global partnerships, we will create the conditions for research that delivers real-world impact.

Education – strategic commitments

- Through our curriculum and real-world experiences, we will equip our graduates with the knowledge, skills and confidence to address complex environmental and social challenges.
- We will cultivate climate and sustainability literacy across our community by providing learners with opportunities to receive personalised feedback on their sustainability knowledge while enabling staff and students to engage in social learning. We will also support staff to enhance their knowledge and embed sustainability into their education programmes.
- We will work in partnership with students to embed sustainability across formal and informal education, campus life and the wider student experience. We will do this by working closely with the Students' Guild, the Students' Union, the Athletic Union, student societies and SOS UK.

Engagement – strategic commitments

- We will embed circular economy principles across all aspects of University life, transforming the way we design, use and manage resources.
- We will support the transition to a circular economy by reducing waste and maximising the value and lifespan of resources through reuse and repair.
- We will create sustainable value through responsible resource management, minimising environmental impacts while strengthening environmental, social and economic resilience.

Pillar 3: Thriving People and Partnerships

- Thriving people and strong, trusted partnerships are fundamental to the University's ability to create sustainable value and realise our Purpose. We recognise that positive change is achieved through strong relationships, inclusive communities and meaningful collaborations within and beyond the University.
- This pillar focuses on creating social value through: fair and ethical practices; inclusion and belonging, and staff development.

Fair and Ethical Practices – strategic commitments

- We will embed environmental, social and ethical value into procurement, investment and partnership decisions, ensuring that our resources are used to create positive value for people, communities and the environment.
- We will work with suppliers, partners and investors who share our commitment to sustainability and responsible practice, using our influence to contribute to climate action, nature recovery and the transition to a more circular economy.
- We will build and strengthen our partnerships with governments, business, healthcare providers, communities and global institutions that share our commitment to sustainability, integrity and social responsibility.

Inclusion and Belonging – strategic commitments

- We will foster a University culture where everyone feels respected, valued and able to be themselves, creating an inclusive and accessible environment where people can thrive and succeed. This includes being part of delivering this strategy and all our sustainable value initiatives.
- We will widen access to education and opportunity, ensuring that people from all backgrounds can access, participate in and benefit from the opportunities provided by the University. We will specifically support access to sustainability education, supporting just transition and realisation of the UN SDGs.
- We will support the wellbeing, development and success of our students and staff, recognising that healthy, connected and empowered people are fundamental to creating sustainable outcomes for our communities.

Staff Development – strategic commitments

- We will support all staff to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to contribute to a sustainable future, regardless of their role or how long they have been part of the University community.
- We will foster a culture that empowers people to take meaningful action, encouraging creativity, innovation and continuous improvement to create environmental, social and organisational value through everyday decisions and activities.
- We will bring together people from across disciplines, professions and communities, using our expertise to inform our practice and develop new approaches that strengthen our contribution to a sustainable future.



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