

# Reading SU Sustainability Policy

## 1. Purpose of policy

This policy provides an overview on how Reading SU operates sustainably, with the intention of contributing to sustainable goals as outlined in the Strategic Operating Plan. This policy will outline Reading SU's commitments to environmental sustainability, why this is important and how we will measure our progress. It will also ensure that we align our goals with those of the University acting in accordance with both missions.

Reading SU defines sustainability as environmental, economic and social responsibility. We will meet the needs of current students without compromising the needs of future students. Adaptations to the processes outlined in this document may be made for the purposes of enhancing sustainability.

This policy does not include any specific measures or targets, these will be detailed in our Sustainability SMART Action Plan.

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## 2. Accessibility statement

Reading SU firmly believes that any new measures introduced to promote sustainability should take the accessibility requirements of its staff and students into account. Reading SU will not implement measures that create significant barriers for the disabled communities, including but not limited to D/deaf and hard of hearing, neurodiversity and those with mobility restrictions, and will allow flexibility on all aspects of this policy to enable any accessibility requirements to be met. Staff and students who have concerns about complying with any of the initiatives outlined in this policy are strongly encouraged to contact Reading SU, where a staff member will be more than happy to discuss making reasonable adjustments to suit your requirements.

## 3. Energy and Utilities

Reading SU is committed to promoting sustainability through a number of energy reducing initiatives. On top of this, the organisation will look to utilise more renewable energy sources in the future.

Unless stated below, we aim to meet the University's targets relating to energy and utilities.

**3.1 Room temperatures** – we will ensure temperatures are maintained sensibly.

Reading SU will aim to keep its offices within a temperature range of 16-24°C.

**3.2 Portable heaters or fans** – we will not permit the use of portable heaters or fans unless faults to the building's heating system are causing the office temperature to drop below the recommended minimum of 16°C or exceed 24°C.

**3.3 Staff responsibility** – staff will be encouraged to take responsibility for lights and appliances within their office space.

## 4. Waste and Recycling

Our work will be guided by four main principles which we will prioritise: prevent, reduce, reuse, recycle. Reducing our waste and improving our recycling will have a positive environmental impact on campus and save money on environmental costs, thus improving the facilities and experience we can offer students.

Unless stated below, we aim to meet the University's targets relating to energy and utilities.

**4.1 Charitable reuse schemes** – we will support charitable reuse schemes on campus.

**4.2 Signage in the building** – we will provide clear signage to make it easy for staff and students to dispose of their waste appropriately.

**4.3 Bins** – we will ensure that there are a suitable number of bins in all areas of the building, including paper recycling, other recycling, cigarette bins and general waste. We will ensure that our outlets are provided with appropriate bins to dispose of their waste correctly.

**4.4 Packaging** – we will work to ensure that the majority of the packaging we receive is recyclable and where appropriate, is recycled. We will encourage external outlets and providers to dispose of their packaging responsibly and ensure they are aware of the bins we have in place to do so.

We train our student staff to appropriately dispose of packaging.

- 4.5 **Events & club nights** – we provide our student staff with training to dispose of waste correctly as well as the correct equipment and tools.  
We will ensure that extra provision is provided during big events such as Welcome Week, Varsity and Summer Ball to cover the sudden increase in waste that is being produced.
- 4.6 **Cleaning equipment** – we will use biodegradable cleaning chemicals and consider sustainability when moving cleaning contracts.  
We will research into providing more sustainable cleaning equipment that will reduce levels of waste e.g. single use blue roll.
- 4.7 **Plastic** – our plastic cups are currently recyclable but single use. We will continue research the alternatives available and where feasible will provide reusable cups e.g. small events and meetings.
- 4.8 **Personal responsibility** – we will encourage staff and students to take personal responsibility by providing clear and accessible information for how they can dispose of their waste.
- 4.9 **Batteries and printer cartridges** – staff and students are able to drop off their used batteries and printer cartridges at the Reading SU reception to be appropriately disposed of. We will work to promote this more with our staff and students.

## 5. Reading SU staff travel

Our commitment to sustainability is much broader than the actions we complete inside our building. We will support our staff in choosing more sustainable travel options wherever possible. Improving our staff travel sets an example and demonstrates a personal responsibility and commitment to being more sustainable.

- 5.1 **Work business** – where appropriate, staff will be encouraged to choose the most sustainable form of travel to conferences and events.  
We will look into ways we can prioritise sustainability by building it into our decision-making processes when booking travel to conferences and events. Before hiring, staff must consider alternative methods of transport for business travel.  
We will encourage our student groups to use public transport over private vehicle hire.
- 5.2 **Domestic flights** – our staff will not use flights to travel to mainland destinations.  
Any special circumstances should be raised with a Manager and will be considered on a case by case basis.
- 5.3 **Public transport** – staff will ensure that public transport is the preferred method of travel for work business. This can include buses, trains, trams, taxis and car share schemes.  
Staff must investigate alternative public transport options before personal or hire cars are used for work business travel.
- 5.4 **Staff travel to work** – where appropriate, staff will be encouraged to choose the most sustainable form of travel to work.  
We will look into ways we can support sustainable staff travel to work. This will include finding ways to promote an internal car share scheme and adopt other available schemes such as cycle to work.  
Reading SU will ensure that travel options are outlined in our staff handbook and managers will be encouraged to discuss this with staff annually.

**5.5 Travel expenses for business travel** – where there is an option to take the train but a car is used, mileage payments will be capped to standard-class rail fare payments, e.g. if travel is required and the rail fare is £15, if a car is used staff won't be reimbursed for more than £15 even if the mileage payment is higher.

Any special circumstances should be raised with a manager and will be considered on a case by case basis.

Evidence will be required when submitting a claim.

**5.6 Working from home/Flexible working** – where appropriate, staff will be encouraged to consider this option and will be supported in understanding how it can be utilised. For example, considering the possibility of staff arriving later to work to avoid spending longer in traffic.

**5.7 Health & wellbeing** – we will look into ways we can promote the health, wellbeing and environmental benefits of walking or cycling amongst staff and students.

## 6. Food & drink

Improving the sustainability of our food and drink not only has a positive impact on the environment but captures our values of being diverse and inclusive for all staff and students. We want to provide a place where staff and students are given a variety of options and can feel confident that the food and drink they are consuming is as sustainable as it can be.

**6.1 Sustainable food products** – where appropriate, we will purchase and serve food that is:

- Locally sourced
- Organic
- Seasonal
- Free-range
- Back British Farming
- MSC certified
- Fairtrade
- Where possible, we will source ethically

We will be more transparent by improving the ways in which we make staff and students aware of the food they are eating by increasing the information provided on our website and in the building. Where purchasing and serving these options isn't possible, we will explain to students why this is the case.

**6.2 Vegan & Vegetarian food** – we currently provide a selection of vegetarian and vegan food in our catering outlets.

We will continue to improve and increase the range of vegetarian and vegan food we provide in our catering outlets to support students in having the freedom to make better choices.

We will encourage our external outlets and providers to improve and increase their range of vegetarian and vegan food.

**6.3 Fish & seafood** – we will not serve food that contains endangered fish.

We will not buy fish that has been caught and sold unsustainably.

**6.4 Oil** – all oil in our kitchen is recycled; money vouchers are provided in return which is then put back into the kitchen for future purchases.

**6.5 Drinks** – where appropriate we will source sustainable alcohol and soft drink products, including the packaging they come with.

- 6.6 Meetings and events** – all of Reading SU's meetings and events will offer vegetarian and vegan food as the default option, meat options will need be specifically requested.  
We will ensure that the standards we create throughout the year are upheld during big events such as Welcome Week, Varsity and Summer Ball.
- 6.7 Menus** – we will adapt our menus to highlight the more sustainable food options to encourage students to make better choices and help them understand what the better choices are.
- 6.8 Deliveries** – we will order food and drink in bulk where appropriate in order to reduce number of deliveries, whilst considering the reduction of food waste.
- 6.9 Crockery and cutlery** – where appropriate we will provide reusable crockery and cutlery in the building.  
Please refer to our Sustainable Crockery and Cutlery policy for detail on our commitments to providing sustainably sourced bar and catering consumables and external outlets.

## 7. Governance

Reading SU is committed to maintaining a consistent governance structure to support its environmental ambitions, with accurate documentation and correspondence relating to sustainability.

- 7.1 Sustainability and Ethics Committee** – Reading SU will implement and maintain a Sustainability and Ethics Committee, which will be managed internally.  
The committee will meet on a monthly basis and be composed of staff members from each department as well as a student representative, in the form of the Environment and Ethics Part-time Officer or a similar role (see below for more information).  
This committee will be chaired by the Reading SU President with the sustainability staff lead acting as secretary.
- 7.2 Sustainability Champions** – Staff members of the committee will be expected to act as Sustainability Champions for their departments and ensure sustainable practice is adopted wherever possible.  
Sustainability Champions are expected to ensure their respective departments adhere to the principles outlined within this policy and will provide relevant updates regarding this to the committee. They will also offer an important channel to pass the feedback from staff in their respective departments.  
The Reading SU President and the sustainability staff lead will both lead on sustainability as Lead Sustainability Champions. There will be a demonstrable commitment to sustainability from senior staff within the organisation. A senior staff member will be allocated as a sustainable lead.
- 7.3 Job descriptions and staff contracts** – we will ensure that sustainability is referenced in the job descriptions and contracts of all new staff starters, including student staff. Good sustainable practice will form part of the training for all new staff, including student staff, and opportunities to pursue additional opportunities in sustainability may be offered to staff members where appropriate.
- 7.4 Training and development** – we will provide staff with opportunities to develop skills pertaining to sustainability where appropriate. This training will be done digitally where possible.
- 7.5 Strategic Operating Plan** – we will ensure that the SOP includes substantial reference to sustainability and is used as guidance in our decision making.

- 7.6 **Student Representation** – Reading SU will continue to endorse sustainability through the use of student representatives, either in the form of the existing Environment and Ethics Part-time Officer role, or similar roles in the future. Student representatives will attend relevant Reading SU and University committees and working groups where appropriate.
- 7.7 **Sustainability audit** – an annual audit will be completed by the sustainability staff lead and the Reading SU President to identify areas of good sustainable practice as well as key areas for improvement. Each department's Sustainability Champions will feed in to this and provide any relevant information.
- 7.8 **Ethical banking practices** – we will research into how we can source all supplies of financial products and services such as auditors, banking and insurance services from organisations that can show the same commitment to sustainability as ourselves and also, if relevant, who have an ethical investment policy.

## 8. Procurement

Reading SU will demonstrate its commitment to sustainability by maintaining sensible measures relating to procurement.

- 8.1 **Electronic disposal** – we will ensure that our electronics are disposed of in a responsible and ethical manner.
- 8.2 **Technology and software** – we will work to maintain up to date technology and software.  
We will work to ensure technology and software available to staff is appropriately up to date to prevent any unnecessary printing.  
We will ensure that we consider the energy efficiency of any new electronics devices.
- 8.3 **Multifunctional electronics** – we will research into how we can fully utilise multifunctional electronics, such as multifunctional printers, to reduce the number of electronics that are in use at any one time.
- 8.4 **Staff uniforms** – we will research into providing uniforms that are certified via Fairtrade or a similar ethical accreditation scheme.
- 8.5 **Merchandise** – we will research into providing stock in the merchandise store that is certified via Fairtrade or a similar ethical accreditation scheme.
- 8.6 **Single-use items** – we will research into identifying and reducing the single-use items we utilise and, where appropriate, provide reusable alternatives.
- 8.7 **Food and drink** - Reading SU will research into supplying more ethically sourced food and drink within its commercial venues, as well as at Reading SU affiliated events where appropriate. This includes food and drink items that are Fairtrade certified or are accredited under a similar ethical accreditation scheme.
- 8.8 **Deliveries** – Reading SU will research into decreasing the number of individual deliveries by ordering in bulk, whilst taking into consideration storage space and shelf life restrictions. Reading SU will also consider this in relation to potential food waste, and how we can ensure it is minimised.
- 8.9 **Cleaning products** – Reading SU will research into providing ethical sourced hand wash and cleaning products in the building.

## 9. Resources

Reading SU is committed to providing resources that not only aim to enhance the student experience but support all staff in delivering those opportunities. We live in a digital world and need to utilise the resources we have available without compromising the accessibility and inclusivity of our Students' Union.



**9.1 Promotional materials** – we will research into how our promotional materials can be more sustainable.

Certain materials will not be allowed within the venue or at events (unless an external private booking) including helium and balloons

We will research into purchasing banners that are made out of more sustainable material, ensuring they do not contain PVC.

**9.2 Printing and photocopying** – we will carry out a review to find ways to minimise the amount of printing that our current internal processes require, such as the processes in HR, Finance and Student Opportunities.

Where appropriate, financial records will be maintained electronically rather than printing hard paper copies.

We will monitor the levels of printing and photocopying from each department and each individual. Line managers will work with their departments to set targets depending on how much their role demands printing and photocopying.

We will encourage our external outlets and providers to consider whether they can reduce their printing and photocopying.

All printers will be set to automatically print in black and white. Where appropriate, staff and students will be encouraged to print in black and white.

All printers will be set to automatically print double sided. Where appropriate, staff and students will be encouraged to print double sided.

**9.3 Dating leaflets** – where appropriate, promotional leaflets won't be dated so they can be re-used. When a leaflet needs to be dated, staff will need to justify this decision and this will need to be approved by their line manager.

**9.4 Paper** – we will purchase and use recyclable paper only.

**9.5 Receipts** – paper receipts will only be provided on request in our catering outlets.

We will research into ways we can practically provide digital receipts in our catering outlets instead of paper, e.g. quieter periods of the day.

We will encourage staff to submit their expense receipts digitally to the Finance department.

**9.6 Petty cash** – we will research into ways that petty cash forms can be completed digitally, unless paper copies are requested for accessibility.

**9.7 Technology** – we will work to ensure staff are provided with the necessary technology to allow them to work more digitally.

**9.8 Digital handbooks** – the staff handbook will be provided in a digital format unless a paper copy is requested for accessibility.

**9.9 Paperless meetings** – unless requested for accessibility, all meetings will be paperless, including paperless agendas. This will also include interviews where possible.

We will encourage our student groups to hold paperless meetings, including paperless agendas, unless requested for accessibility.

**9.10 Stationery and Office supplies** – we order all our supplies from Frasers Office innovation who demonstrate their commitment to minimising impact on the environment in various ways.

Where appropriate, we will only buy eco-friendly stationery and office supplies.

We will aim to reduce the number of deliveries for stationery and office supplies.

We will encourage external outlets and providers to look into their stationery is sustainable.

## 10. Ecological Impact

Reading SU will endeavour to monitor its ecological impact to prevent any significant damage to the natural environment.

- 10.1 **Minimising pollution** – Reading SU will take steps to ensure pollution is minimised on its premises, including forms of light pollution, noise pollution and litter. We will continue to monitor noise during Union nights as per our licensing requirements. We will commit to minimising its environmental impact by preventing water pollution wherever possible. Reading SU members may face disciplinary action if adjudged to be littering during Reading SU events. This extends to student groups affiliated with Reading SU.
- 10.2 **Greenhouse gas emissions** – we will work towards targeting a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by working towards utilising more renewable energy resources in line with the University.
- 10.3 **Assessing impact** - all Reading SU events that take place outside of the Reading SU building will require completion of an ecological assessment to ensure they are not significantly impacting the natural environment in a negative manner. Any event organised by Reading SU and its members that is deemed to present significant negative environmental impacts may be prevented from taking place. In some cases, event organisers may be asked to show they have considered the ecological impacts of their event, and how they intend to minimise the effects.
- 10.4 **Negative impact** – Reading SU will not endorse or support events organised by third parties (including the University) that are adjudged to have significant negative environmental impacts. Reading SU maintains the right to prevent activities from taking place on its premises that are considered harmful to the environment.
- 10.5 **Student groups** – student societies and sports teams are expected to consider their ecological impact and may face disciplinary action if found to be causing significant unnecessary harm to the environment during group activities.
- 10.6 **Local community initiatives** – Reading SU will work to support local initiatives that promote biodiversity.
- 10.7 **Staff volunteering** – Reading SU will endeavour to share volunteering opportunities amongst staff, specifically those related to sustainability, community and conservation. Staff will be permitted to volunteer with these groups in line with the voluntary work allowance set out in their respective contracts. Staff will be encouraged to speak to their managers about using the volunteering time available to them whilst taking into consideration the needs of Reading SU.

## 11. Student Opportunities and Student Representatives

While this policy applies to all staff, students and external providers who are using our building there are particular aspects which are more relevant for Student Representatives and Activity Groups. These are:

- Travel
- Training
- Fairtrade
- Guidance on recycling, room booking, heating etc.
- Accreditations and awards
- Governance



- 11.1 **Student engagement** – Officers will be expected to engage their relevant student groups with this policy, identify areas that may apply to that student group and encourage them to follow the commitments that have been laid out.  
This includes, but is not limited to: Student Voice Members, PTOs, Academic Reps, Club and Society Committees.
- 11.2 **President candidates** – candidates will be encouraged to consider how sustainability could be incorporated into their manifesto when running for the role of President.

## 12. Compliance

Compliance with this policy is required by all Reading SU staff and external suppliers will be encouraged to comply and implement.

Student Opportunities will incorporate sustainability into the Knights Accreditation Scheme for student groups. Academic Representation will seek to incorporate sustainability into its Reading SU Rep Reward and Recognition Scheme. Reading SU will continue to incorporate sustainability into its SU Awards and Excellence Awards.

We encourage all external providers and outlets to follow this policy. By using our space, you are agreeing to follow the steps in place, where appropriate, to ensure sustainability.

Reading SU will ensure that when we are in collaboration with others they are taking steps to comply with this policy too. This includes, but is not limited to, the University, Reading Borough Council, the local community, People and Planet and Oxford Brookes SU.

Reading SU will aim to engage with local and national sustainability initiatives.

## 13. Communication

While taking these actions is important, it is also important that these are communicated to staff and students. Reading SU commits to continually communicate with students on what steps it is taking to ensure a high standard of environmental sustainability. This will be communicated via social media, emails and other Reading SU channels.

Alongside these requirements Reading SU will be transparent in actions taken to improve sustainability across the building and staff team. Student feedback will be considered on attitudes to sustainability to guide our policy review. Where there are decisions that would incur major sustainable change for the organisation, Reading SU will seek student consultation before making a final decision.

**Last reviewed: August 2025**

**Next review: August 2026**

**Officer responsible: President**