

Heriot-Watt Sustainability Engagement Plan (2025–2026)

Vision

To cultivate a university-wide culture of environmental sustainability that empowers individuals, strengthens community partnerships, and contributes meaningfully to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategic Objectives

Objective	Description
Inform	Raise awareness of environmental sustainability goals and opportunities across all campuses.
Advocate	Empower staff and students to lead and co-create environmental sustainability initiatives.
Collaborate	Build partnerships internally and externally to amplify impact of environmental sustainability initiatives and goals.
Celebrate	Recognise contributions and foster pride in environmental sustainability achievements.
Evaluate	Monitor progress and adapt based on feedback and data.

Approach

- **Whole-Institution Approach:** Embed environmental sustainability as an ethos across governance, curriculum, operations, teaching and engagement activities.
- **Values-Led Engagement:** Frame environmental sustainability as a leadership and ethical imperative.
- **Behavioural Change Focus:** Design purposeful campaigns and engagement activities that shift habits, not just awareness.
- **Inclusive & Accessible:** Ensure engagement opportunities are available in a variety of formats—including digital platforms, in-person events, and creative approaches—fostering equitable participation and meaningful involvement.
- **Global Legacy:** Align with SDGs and contribute to sector-wide transformation.

Key Initiatives

- Sustainability Champions Awards:
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/sustainability/our-community/community-engagement>
- Climate Advocacy Challenge:
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/sustainability/sustainability-research-and-teaching/learning-and-teaching/climate-advocacy>

Stakeholders

Internal Stakeholders

Students

- Sustainability societies, forum attendees, volunteers, award nominees
- Halls residents participating in Unirecycle
- Student societies and Forum members in creative sessions (e.g. comics, visual storytelling)

Academic & Research Staff

- Academics involved in curriculum initiatives
- Researchers participating in workshops (e.g. Sustainability in Research, LEAF labs)
- Global Research Institutes

Professional Services & Support Staff

- Facilities,
- Residential services,
- Laboratory and technical managers,
- Human Resources,
- Research and Engagement Directorate (RED),
- Global research, innovation and discovery (GRID),
- Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA),
- Chaplaincy (Unirecycle partner).

External Stakeholders

Community Partners

- Local food charities (Donations from Unirecycle days)
- Local schools (e.g. Schools taking part in the Climate Smarter Initiative)
- Community attendees and collaborators at public engagement events (e.g. Edinburgh Science Festival, Doors Open Day)
- Donation of technology (Edinburgh Remakery)

Sector & Network Groups

- The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) & EAUC Scotland
- Higher Education Institutions adopting similar frameworks

Influencers & Enablers

- University Leadership – for strategic alignment and policy support
- Communications & Marketing – amplifying campaigns and achievements
- Course Leads – embedding sustainability in teaching
- Technical & Estates Teams – operational execution and data tracking
- Sustainability Unit- facilitators

Engagement Framework

(See appendix for abbreviations)

1. Annual and regular Anchor Events

Event	Timing	Purpose	Lead(s)
Student Sustainability Award	April	Recognise student innovation	GES
Curricular project awards	May	End of Semester 2 recognition for sustainability projects embedded within the taught curriculum.	GES
Celebration Week	June	Showcase staff/student contributions	GES
Staff Champions	June	Staff awards for Sustainability individuals and teams	GES
Sustainability Summer Internships	June-August	Enable applied extracurricular learning using institutional data and focus areas	RED/GES
Get Set (Staff)	August	Meet members of staff and promote initiatives and opportunities for collaboration	GES/LTA
Welcome Week	September	Introduce students to sustainability societies and GES	GES, Student Societies
Global Sustainability Week	October	Amplify global issues and student-led action	VP Community and global campus student reps

2. Campaigns & Awareness

Campaign	Timing	Focus	Success Measure	Lead(s)
Waste Campaign	Autumn 2025	Reduce waste, promote reuse	Participation, waste metrics	GES
Energy Saving	Winter 2025	Heating efficiency, behaviour change	Energy reduction	GES, Estates

Unirecycle	June and August	Donation of items from halls	Volume donated	GES, Residential Services, Chaplaincy
Active Travel Survey	Ongoing	Promote sustainable transport	Survey responses	GES

3. Staff Engagement

Activity	Timing	Purpose	Lead(s)
LEAF Drop-ins	Ongoing	Establish support network, Support labs in achieving awards	GES (initially), campus lab reps
Information sessions	Ongoing	Progress updates to staff departmental meetings	GES
Workshops	Ongoing	e.g. climate advocacy, barriers to implementation	GES, RED
Focus Groups	Ongoing	Provide input into key documents and policies, e.g. Waste Management Plan	GES
Progress updates	Ongoing	Presentations and discussions with University Executive, Global Operations Executive and other University Committees	GES

4. Student Empowerment

Activity	Timing	Description	Lead(s)
Student Sustainability Forum	Monthly	Creative sessions, peer-led events	GES/Student Union
Student summer internships #1	Annual	Contributing to the Climate Action Framework	GES, RED, academic schools
Student internships #2	Ongoing	Working within the GES team to support key initiatives and gain experience in sustainability	GES
Focus Groups	Ongoing	Provide input into key documents and policies, e.g. Waste Management Plan	GES
Curriculum Talks	2025/26	e.g. "Shaping Tomorrow Together"	GES, EGIS, EPS, SoSS

Creative Collaborations	2024/26	e.g. student-led art projects	GES, HW Engage
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5. External Engagement

Activity	Timing	Description	Lead(s)
Edinburgh Science Festival	April	Showcase HWU sustainability research	HW Engage
Climate Smarter Schools	January	Judge and feedback role	Schools Outreach Team
Public Sector Climate Adaptation Network	On-going	Share HWU student forum model	GES

6. Evaluation & Impact

Method	Frequency	Examples	Purpose
Event Feedback	Post-event	Comments, brief survey	Qualitative insights
Participation Metrics	Ongoing	Attendance, sign-ups, nomination submissions	Track engagement levels
Committee Updates	Quarterly	Minutes, progress reports	Strategic alignment
Campaign Metrics	Post-event	Behavioural changes	Assess effectiveness

Appendix

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Details	Website
EGIS	Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society	https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/our-schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-and-society
EPS	School of Engineering and Physical Sciences	https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/our-schools/engineering-and-physical-sciences
GES	Global Environmental Sustainability team, part of the Heriot-Watt University Sustainability Unit	https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/sustainability/our-approach-and-strategy/governance-strategy-and-policies/our-team
GRID	Global research, innovation and discovery	https://www.hw.ac.uk/campuses/edinburgh/facilities/grid
GRI's	Global Research Institutes	https://www.hw.ac.uk/research-enterprise/global
HWEngage	Initiative to promote, support and stimulate public engagement activities at Heriot-Watt University	https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/research-futures/HW_Engage_Case_Study.pdf
LTA	Learning and Teaching Academy	https://lta.hw.ac.uk/
RED	Research Engagement Directorate	https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/research-engagement.htm
SoSS	School of Social Sciences	https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/schools/social-sciences.htm