Department for Education

Manchester Metropolitan University: Leading the way in sustainability in Higher Education

Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met) has long been recognised as a leader in sustainability within the UK Higher Education sector. Ranked consistently in the top five of the People and Planet University League for over a decade, the University holds accreditations such as ISO 14001:2015 and Responsible Futures, demonstrating its commitment to environmental and social responsibility across all aspects of its operations, teaching, research, and partnerships.

In 2022, Manchester Met launched its Leadership in Sustainability Strategy (2022-2026), an enabling strategy aligned with its broader 'Road to 2030' vision. This strategy outlines ambitious goals to integrate sustainability throughout the institution and make meaningful contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The University's annual Sustainability Reports provide a comprehensive overview of progress made towards these goals, and this summary highlights achievements under the four Department for Education (DfE) action areas: Climate Education and Green Skills, Net Zero - Decarbonisation, Resilience - Adaptation, and Biodiversity.

Strategy overview: Leadership in Sustainability

Manchester Met's Leadership in Sustainability Strategy is structured around four long-term goals:

- Leadership in Sustainability: Embedding sustainability as a strategic priority across all university functions.
- Academic Innovation and Impact: Equipping students and staff with sustainability knowledge and skills and delivering impactful research that contributes to the world's sustainability agenda.
- Sustainable Campus and Practices: Creating a low-carbon, resource-efficient, and resilient campus.
- Engagement and Partnerships: Amplifying sustainability impact through local, national, and international collaboration.

Each goal is supported by 16 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 22 associated targets up to 2026/27[1].

Climate Education and Green Skills

Manchester Met has made significant strides in embedding sustainability into its curriculum and professional development pathways.

[1] Manchester Met's target for scope 1 and 2 carbon reduction is -44% by 2025/26.

- Our target is to embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate change education in 100% of courses. In 2024/25, 87% of courses include ESD and 34% include climate change education.
- Our target is that at least 90% of students are satisfied with opportunities to gain sustainability knowledge and skills as part of their course. In 2024/25, nearly 80% of students reported this to be the case.
- Manchester Met co-chairs the Greater Manchester Civic University Green Skills Working Group and hosted the Green Careers Mission, where students from five universities co-developed solutions to real-world environmental challenges, showcased at the Greater Manchester Green Summit, demonstrating regional leadership in climate education, youth engagement, and green skills development.
- The University supported Greater Manchester's ambition to become a Carbon Literate city-region by delivering Carbon Literacy training to staff and students. Through its 'Teach Carbon Literacy' programme, it expanded its champions network to support academics to embed Carbon Literacy into taught courses and promote sustainability across the curriculum.
- The University was established as the North West hub for the Climate Ambassadors scheme to support climate action in education, backed by £2 million of funding from the DfE.

Net Zero - Decarbonisation

Manchester Met is committed to achieving zero carbon for Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2038.

- Our target is to be a net zero carbon university by 2038. In 2023/24 the University had reduced its scope 1 and 2 emissions by 32.1%, moving the university closer towards its near-term reduction target of 44% by 2025/26.
- We have continued implementation of our Carbon Management Plan, including energy efficiency upgrades, low-carbon heating systems, renewable energy procurement and the delivery of a flagship decarbonisation retrofit at our Birley energy centre. This is anticipated to reduce annual gas consumption by over a quarter, and carbon emissions by up to 1,500 tonnes annually.
- We have made progress on Scope 3 emissions reduction pathways, with actions focused on sustainable procurement, travel, and waste management.
- All our new buildings achieved or were on track to achieve a BREEAM[2] rating of 'Excellent', and major refurbishments projects met SKA[3] Silver rating standards.

[2] The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method is an established method of assessing, rating and certifying the sustainability of buildings.
[3] An environmental assessment method, benchmark and standard for non-domestic refurbishment projects.

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Resilience - Adaptation

Recognising the increasing risks posed by climate change, Manchester Met has considered and embedded a number of climate resilience aspects across its operations.

- The University conducted a comprehensive climate risk assessment, concentrating on the direct physical impacts of climate change, specifically flooding and heat stress on the Manchester City Centre campus.
- Adaptation measures were integrated into building design and refurbishment projects, including flood mitigation, passive cooling, and green infrastructure.
- Water conservation initiatives led to a 19.4% reduction in water consumption per m^2 in 2023/24.

Boosting Biodiversity

Manchester Met has taken proactive steps to enhance biodiversity across its urban campus.

- The University is the Higher Education partner of the DfE National Education Nature Park, supporting trainee teacher development and engaging students in nature-based learning.
- Green spaces across campus have been improved to enhance biodiversity, improve air quality, and provide wellbeing benefits for students, colleagues and the local community including the redevelopment of All Saints Park which introduced 16 UK native and naturalised trees and wildflower meadows with more than 30 species of flowering plants.
- The University welcomed the award-winning 'Chained to Tech' garden to its Birley campus. Originally showcased at the 2023 RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, the garden explores the impact of technology addiction on mental health. Now permanently installed on campus, it serves as a tranquil space for education, research, and community wellbeing.

Manchester Met has a longstanding commitment to embedding sustainability across all that we do, and this is now more important than ever. Thanks to the commitment of our staff, students and partners, we have made progress towards many of our goals. But we know there is much more to do. If you would like to find out more, please visit https://www.mmu.ac.uk/sustainability.