

SOAS Sustainability Policy			
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<p><i>Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.</i></p>			

## 1. Scope

- 1.1. The scope of the SOAS Sustainability Policy applies to all SOAS activities.

## 2. Purpose and Overview

- 2.1. As a university with a global presence, our mission is to challenge perspectives and empower our community to find solutions to the issues facing our world. None more so than the threat of climate change. Therefore, this policy aims to ensure SOAS becomes the change we want to see by continuing to develop ethical and sustainable ways to deliver our mission and ensure a culture of sustainability is embedded in our operations, partnerships, teaching, learning and research and in the values and culture of our institution. This policy underpins the Sustainability Strategy (2025-2030) developed in 2024 and endorsed by the University as the foundation of all our sustainability efforts at SOAS. The strategy is composed of 5 key aims: education, research & knowledge exchange, collaboration & engagement, social responsibility and campus environment – all other sustainability programmes, including the 2040 net zero plan stems from these aims.
- 2.2. This policy will be reported on and reviewed annually in Sustainability Committee meetings.

## 3. Policy

To this end, SOAS are committed to achieving sustainability best practice standards and leadership in the higher education sector commensurate to the urgency of the climate crisis, and will:

- 3.1. Embed sustainability in the curriculum across the different colleges and disciplines and promote initiatives that enhance sustainability in academia and its approach to the development and delivery of learning and teaching.

- 3.2. Map SOAS research projects and outputs against the UN SDGs to highlight the impact of our sustainability-oriented research
- 3.3. Support researchers in developing sustainability-related research
- 3.4. Conduct all research in a manner that reflects awareness of environmental sustainability through responsible use of resources, transport, energy and materials
- 3.5. Increase SOAS investment portfolio supporting ethical and sustainability innovation and technologies, thereby complementing SOAS's divest from fossil fuels and other non-ethical investments.
- 3.6. Promote environmental responsibility and climate change awareness among the SOAS community, external partners and stakeholders, sharing best practice and encouraging collaboration.
- 3.7. Support and encourage initiatives that protect biodiversity and prevent pollution of our water, air and land ecosystems.
- 3.8. Create and promote opportunities for sustainability initiatives to thrive at the university
- 3.9. Reduce emissions-related energy use in key operations – including but not limited to information technology services, catering and building services, heating and cooling.
- 3.10. Reduce emissions related to business travel and commuting, support more sustainable modes of travel and implement systems to reduce demand/need for travel.
- 3.11. Reduce supply chain-related emissions for goods and services and adopt more sustainable purchasing practices including prioritizing whole-lifecycle approach for goods and services
- 3.12. Procure grid electricity from renewable sources of origin and install renewable energy for on-site use where possible.
- 3.13. Manage our property portfolio in a low-carbon manner that maximises resource efficiency and reduces environmental impacts, adopting sustainable refurbishment and standards and achieving minimum '[SKA](#) silver' rating for refurbishments, and '[BREEAM](#) Excellent' for new builds.
- 3.14. Improve sustainability of catering activities by providing balanced, ethical and seasonal lower carbon menu options and ensuring operations minimise waste production, increase reuse and recycling and consume less energy and water.
- 3.15. Reduce waste production by adopting zero waste strategies, reducing packaging from source, promoting a reuse culture and zero waste to landfill through correctly implementing the waste hierarchy Duty of Care.

- 3.16. Comply fully with all environmental legislation, regulations and agreements, and monitor and minimise environmental risks through effective implementation of our ISO 14001 Environmental Management System (EMS).
- 3.17. Recognise and take steps to address the carbon footprint associated with growing use and reliance on AI. AI has significant environmental consequences due to its resource-intensive nature, particularly increased electricity demand and water consumption. While the benefits of AI are undoubted, ensuring sustainable development, and continued impactful policy at SOAS will help reduce its environmental impacts.

#### 4. Policy Delivery & Governance Structure

- 4.1. Sustainability Committee – This committee has the overall responsibility for sustainability at SOAS including oversight of this policy, the sustainability strategy and the net zero strategy. The group reports into the SOAS senate twice a year.
- 4.2. Sustainability Working Group – This group functions as the advisory group on all things sustainability including sustainability in the curriculum, social justice and ethical values and the net zero strategy implementations. The group draws from expertise across the School and externally if required. The group reports into the Sustainability committee.
- 4.3. Net Zero Assurance Group – This group is tasked with implementing the net zero 2040 target in accordance with the ‘phased’ approach stipulated in the net zero action plan. The group consists mainly of professional services managers whose responsibilities align with the Scopes 1, 2 & 3 priorities of the net zero emissions reduction plan.



Figure 1 Sustainability governance structure

- 4.4. Following are the strategies that underpin the different components of this policy:
  - i) [Sustainability Strategy 2025 – 2030](#): The sustainability strategy underpins all SOAS sustainability and net zero initiatives. It emphasizes 5 priority areas;

Education (ESD, Accessibility), Research & Knowledge Exchange (Decolonised, co-created, sustainable partnerships), Collaboration & Engagement (student & local community, global action), Social Responsibility (social & ethical responsibility, workers & student wellbeing), Campus Environment (efficiency of buildings, spaces, operations & services).

- ii) [Bloomsbury Energy Consortium – Heat Decarbonisation](#): The Bloomsbury consortium, made up of SOAS, University of London and UCL are working to implement Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) to replace the gas fired combined heat and power system which currently provides heating to consortium buildings. This low carbon ASHP will decarbonise the existing heating system by up to 90% and significantly contribute towards SOAS net zero ambitions.
- iii) [Net Zero 2040 Strategy & Action Plan](#): SOAS net zero strategy and action plan commits the School to achieve net zero by 2040 across scopes 1, 2 & 3 against 18/19 baseline. The net zero action plan approaches emission reduction in 3 phases: Phase 1 – 7,347tCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030, Phase 2 – 332tCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2032, Phase 3 – 9,150tCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2040. This will cumulatively result in the elimination of 16,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e to hit our net zero target.
- iv) [ISO 14001 Environmental Management System \(EMS\)](#): SOAS is certified to the ISO 14001 EMS global standards; this commits the School to continuous environmental improvement, compliance to environmental legal requirements, pollution prevention and environmental protection. The ISO 14001 EMS certification is externally audited on an annual basis and all the above stated are also audited as part of this process. This therefore provides third party scrutiny and assurance for our policy actions, in addition to the environmental protection and legal compliance elements.
- v) [Communications and Engagement activities](#): behaviour and culture change are important components of SOAS sustainability objectives. Effective and wide- ranging comms and engagement programmes are key to this, not just for the SOAS community but also its external partners and stakeholders. This is achieved through a variety of media, e.g. newsletters, face-to-face & virtual meetings, inductions and training programmes.

## 5. Targets and Smart Objectives

- 5.1. Energy Emissions & Discharges: In line with Phase1 of the Net Zero Action Plan Scope 1 and 2 emissions and other fugitive discharges will be reduced by 1,625 tonnes, which is 9.8% of overall emissions footprint by 2030.
- 5.2. Travel emissions: Emissions related to travel will be reduced by 60% by 2030 saving 819 tonnes which is 5% of our overall emissions footprint. This is in line with the Net Zero Action Plan Phase1 reduction target.
- 5.3. Waste Management: Increase recycling capture rate to 60% by 2030 and reduce overall waste tonnage to 90 tonnes by 2030.

- 5.4. Water: Reduce water consumption by 20% by 2030 and increase greywater capture as supplement.
- 5.5. Sustainable Procurement/supply chain emissions: Capture emissions data for at least 60% of all contracted goods and services by 2030. And save 5,710 tonnes of emissions by 2030, which is 34% of overall emissions footprint.
- 5.6. Construction and refurbishment: ensure 60% of suppliers are reporting the emissions related to their supplies and services to SOAS by 2030
- 5.7. Biodiversity: Utilise at least 30% of available green spaces for (a) growing and cultivating plants that support pollinating organisms and insects, and (b) for allocation to staff and student gardening societies.
- 5.8. Community involvement: Collaborate with at least 3 neighbouring institutions by 2027 on sustainability initiatives on a long term/ongoing basis.
- 5.9. Curriculum: Develop and Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit which maps current provision and drives an action plan to embed sustainability into a curriculum framework. Map all SOAS programmes and modules against the UN SDGs to align and highlight the impact of our sustainability-oriented learning and teaching.
- 5.10. Learning and teaching: Develop and adopt a toolkit for embedding sustainability into learning and teaching, supporting staff across disciplines to embed sustainability into curricula, equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address global challenges. Train and develop learning and teaching leads to address sustainability education through their roles.

## 6. Monitoring, Reporting & Compliance

- 6.1. SOAS will measure policy performance against the various environmental aspects with the objective to reduce adverse impacts. Having an effective monitoring and reporting regime is fundamental to good environmental management. SOAS are currently able to measure environmental aspects such as electricity, heat, gas, water, waste and business travel. The benchmarking includes emissions & kWh per m<sup>2</sup> space; emissions per number of staff & students; and emissions per capital income.
- 6.2. The following are some of the tools and reporting frameworks applicable to SOAS:
  - i) ISO 14001 EMS – this is an annual third-party environmental audit that verifies compliance against the ISO 14001 standards. This audit encompasses all environmental aspects and related impacts relevant to SOAS, both measurable and non-measurable.
  - ii) HESA – this is compulsory annual reporting which allows SOAS to benchmark itself against other Higher Education institutions and to track its own progress using the archive of data collected through past HESA

reporting. It is an opportunity to gather key data which can help inform sustainability activities over the next year.

- iii) Energy Savings Opportunities Scheme (ESOS) – this is a mandatory energy assessment and reporting program which requires large organisations to conduct energy audits every four years to identify energy saving opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce emissions. Organisations who fall under this scheme will have 250 or more staff or have a turnover in excess of £44m.
- iv) Planon, Optimised Power B.I. & other reporting tools – these are the online dashboards where all SOAS utility consumption can be accessed and visualised. This includes all Scope 1 & 2 emissions (electricity, gas & heat) as well as some Scope 3 emissions (water, waste and business travel). Reports from the dashboard can be produced and reported to management, relevant committees and staff and student groups.