

Sustainability Communications Strategy SOAS University

1. Introduction

This Sustainability Communications Strategy has been developed to reinforce SOAS University's broader commitments to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and global engagement. It outlines a structured approach to communicating sustainability-related initiatives, achievements, and opportunities across the university community.

The strategy is underpinned by SOAS's Net Zero Strategy and its ongoing work to meet obligations under the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System, contribute to HESA sustainability reporting, and support strong performance in higher education sustainability benchmarks including the People & Planet University League and the QS Sustainability Rankings.

This strategy is aligned with SOAS's institutional sustainability commitments across education, research and knowledge exchange, collaboration and engagement, social responsibility, and the local campus environment. It supports these commitments by providing a communications framework that amplifies their impact and encourages whole-community engagement.

Reflecting the distinctive identity of SOAS as a globally engaged university grounded in principles of social justice, equity, and inclusive education, this strategy promotes transparency, accessibility, cultural awareness, and collaboration in all messaging and engagement.

SOAS has established a strong reputation for sustainability leadership- including becoming the first UK university to divest from fossil fuels in 2015 and achieving ISO 14001 environmental management certification in 2016. These accomplishments provide a robust foundation upon which this sustainability communications strategy is built.

2. Strategic Vision and Objectives

Vision:

To embed sustainability as a shared value and everyday practice across the SOAS community through consistent, inclusive and impactful communication.

Objectives:

- **Raise Awareness:** Ensure the SOAS community is informed about sustainability goals, Net Zero commitments, and ongoing initiatives across campus. We will support staff and students about how they can integrate sustainable practices

into everyday actions, behaviours, and business practices. This will support SOAS's Sustainability Strategy.

- **Drive Engagement:** Build an active and empowered community where students and staff participate in sustainability efforts and share their own ideas and interests.
- **Promote SOAS's Identity:** Strengthen SOAS's reputation as a sustainability-focused, socially responsible institution, both within the university and for prospective students.
- **Celebrate Achievements:** Showcase sustainability success stories, led by students, staff, and the wider institution to inspire continued action.
- **Support Strategic Alignment:** Ensure all communications reflect SOAS's broader commitments to decolonised education, inclusive research, social responsibility, and a sustainable campus environment.

3. Target Audiences

- Current students (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- Academic and professional services staff
- SOAS Student Union (SU) and affiliated societies
- Prospective students and staff
- Alumni, the local community and beyond

4. Core Messaging Themes

All communications should align with the university's sustainability objectives and be adapted to suit different platforms and audience needs. Core messaging will be centred around the following themes:

- SOAS is committed to achieving a sustainable and just future.
- Climate action and sustainability are shared responsibilities they require collective effort, across the entire university community.
- Everyday actions contribute to wider institutional impact, and small changes matter.
- Sustainability is not a separate agenda, it is woven into how SOAS teaches, researches, operates, and engages globally.
- The university empowers its community, through inclusive, decolonised education and research to take meaningful and transformative action.
- Progress is continuous and collective involvement is essential to success.
- Ethical leadership, transparency and justice underpin all sustainability efforts at SOAS.

5. Communication Channels

Below is a list of channels that are owned or supported by internal communications at the university that can be used to increase awareness and engagement of sustainability initiatives at SOAS.

Staff

Channel	Frequency	Audience	Lead
Staff bulletin	Weekly by email	All staff	Internal comms staff team
MySOAS staff intranet news page	As required	All staff	Internal comms
All-staff emails	As required and in line with criteria	All staff	Internal comms
Digital screens	As required, ideally with a 'shelf life' of at least ten days. It should be broadly relevant to students as well as staff.	All staff and students	Internal comms/design
All-staff meetings	Every six weeks	All staff	Internal comms
Departmental comms	As required	Departmental staff	Departmental lead
New starter in-person induction	Bi-monthly (tbc)	New starters	HR (L&D)

Students

Channel	Frequency	Audience	Lead
Student news	Weekly by email	All students	Internal comms
MySOAS student intranet news page	As required	All students	Internal comms
All student emails	As required and in line with criteria	All students	Internal comms

Digital screens	As required, ideally with a 'shelf life' of at least ten days.	All staff and students	Internal comms/design
All-student forum	Termly	All students	SEER team
Instagram	As required	Prospective and current students	Marketing team
Student app	As required	All students (those who have chosen to download)	Internal comms

These are channels that are either owned or supported by internal comms. Additionally, students are communicated with extensively by the SEER (Student Experience, Engagement and Retention team) and members of academic staff.

6. Collaboration with the Student Union (SU)

The Student Union is a vital partner in achieving SOAS' sustainability goals.

Collaborations will involve:

- Joint planning and delivery of key sustainability events
- Support for student-led sustainability campaigns and initiatives
- Inclusion of sustainability messaging in SU society activities and events

7. Engagement Strategies

- Narrative and Storytelling: Share impactful stories from students, staff and alumni contributing to sustainability.
- Visual Communication: Use graphics, videos and photography to engage diverse audiences.
- Interactive Initiatives: Launch on campus engaging events such as sustainability quizzes, challenges and campaigns with tangible outcomes.
- Events: Facilitate inclusive events such as planting workshops where key messages of sustainability are shared through the event.
- Recognition: Highlight and celebrate sustainability leaders and initiatives across the university.
- Academic Integration: Spotlight research, modules, courses and dissertations related to sustainability.

8. Implementation Work Plan

This work plan outlines how the Sustainability Communications Strategy will be implemented in a targeted, measurable, and collaborative way. It identifies what will be promoted, when and how it will be communicated, who will be responsible, and how engagement will be monitored and improved over time.

This approach supports consistent messaging, continuous feedback, and behaviour change across the SOAS community.

9. Work Plan

9.1. Promotion Framework

What to Promote	When	Target Audience	Channels	Lead Responsibility
Sustainability goals and Net Zero plan	Term 1, start of academic year	Staff, Students, Prospective	MySOAS student and staff intranet news pages, induction materials, digital screens	Sustainability, Comms
Student-led initiatives and societies	Ongoing, linked to the SU calendar	Students	Student news, MySOAS student intranet news page, all student emails, student app	Student Union, Sustainability
Campaigns (e.g. Green Week, Earth Day)	Once per term	Whole SOAS community	Digital screens, staff bulletin, student news, MySOAS student and staff intranet pages, all student / all staff emails	Events team, SU, Sustainability
Case studies and success stories	Monthly	Internal and external	Staff bulletin, all-staff meetings, MySOAS student and staff intranet pages, student	Comms, Academic Departments

			news, Instagram	
Everyday action tips (e.g. waste, travel)	Weekly posts, themed campaigns	Students, Staff	Digital screens, MySOAS student and staff intranet pages	Sustainability, Comms
Volunteering & idea-sharing opportunities	Termly push	Students, Staff	All-staff meetings, all-student forum	SU, Student Services

9.2. Engagement Implementation Plan

Activity	Timeframe	Target Group	Lead Team/Staff	Target/Output
Launch induction campaign	Term 1 (Sep-Oct)	New Students	Sustainability, SU	Reach 100% of new students with sustainability welcome messaging.
Host 3 major campaigns/events per year	Termly	All	Sustainability, SU, Events	3 campaigns per year, each with 50+ engagements
Monthly success story features	Monthly	All	Comms, SU	1 case study/story published monthly
Idea-sharing and suggestions form	Launch Term 2	All	Comms, SU, Sustainability	30+ responses in first academic year
Sustainability newsletter/sustainability digest	Launch Term 1	All	Comms, SU, Sustainability	Bi-termly newsletter entry or blog post, reach all academic departments
Evaluate comms effectiveness	End of each term	All	Sustainability, Comms	Termly review of KPIs, update messaging and plans accordingly

9.3. Continual Improvement Approach

To ensure communications are effective and contribute to lasting behaviour change, the following cycle will guide improvement:

1. **Plan:** Align internal comms with key dates, campaigns, and university strategy
2. **Deliver:** Use appropriate channels and clear, targeted messaging
3. **Evaluate:** Collect metrics (open rates, engagement, feedback)
4. **Refine:** Adjust messaging, timing, or media based on findings

10. Conclusion

Sustainability at SOAS is a collective effort that depends on effective, transparent and inclusive communication. This strategy provides a framework for coordinated engagement that supports institutional priorities, fosters participation and amplifies the voices of the SOAS community. Through collaboration and innovation, the university can drive meaningful cultural change and reaffirm its position as a leader in environmental and social sustainability within higher education.