

Report to:	Senate			
Date of meeting:	12 February 2025			
Report title:	Final Sustainability Strategy, and Terms of Reference for the Sustainability Committee and Sustainability Working Group.			
Agenda item:	SEN 24/25 4 003			
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Presented by:	Laura Hammond, DVC RKE			
Consultation:				
Department:	Governance			
Reserved or Open:	Open			
Status:	☐	Assurance	☐	Discussion
	☒	Decision	☐	Information
Executive Summary				
SOAS adopted a Net Zero Strategy in 2030. The Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 seeks to move beyond environmental commitments with regard to day-to-day operations and, instead, to embed Sustainability imperatives across the various dimensions of SOAS' mission including its Teaching and Learning, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Partnerships and Operations. Pursuing a "whole-of-institution" approach, the Strategy articulates an ambitious vision and a set of commitments for the institution. The Strategy has been developed via a broad consultative exercise and adopts a comprehensive definition of Sustainability seeking to promote an environmentally, socially and economically just future world. This strategy has been endorsed by the Senior Management Team and the Executive Board. Following Executive Board's review and endorsement of the draft Sustainability Strategy on 14 October 2024, a request was received to develop the governance and terms of reference for a Sustainability Committee that would report to Senate. In addition, the terms of reference for the Sustainability Working Group which will report to the Sustainability Committee has been provided for information.				
Recommendation(s) and Next Steps:				
Senate is asked to:				

- **Approve** the Sustainability Strategy
- **Consider and endorse** the proposed terms of reference for the Sustainability Committee that will report to Senate, and to **note** the terms of reference for the Sustainability Working Group

Financial Implications

There are no unbudgeted implications arising from this paper

Risks

There are no identified risk arising from this paper

Equality Implications

There are no equality implications raised



2025-2030 Sustainability Strategy

Version 1.4 (Final)
October 2024

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COMMITMENT

SOAS is committed to the values of sustainability, creating change for sustainability, and making sustainability central to all that we do.

SOAS is a world leading university in research and education for Africa, Asia and the Middle East through the lens of interrogating and understanding the planetary questions of our time.

Global challenges and the research of our academics on these inform the preparation of our graduates of the future with learning and teaching that includes understanding of the transnational character of climate change, political and social polarisation, and inequality.

As a research and teaching institution, our Vision as stated in our Strategic Plan is for:

Education “...preparing a new generation of graduates, professionals and citizens who are technically skilled, socially responsive and committed to the building of an equitable planetary community.”

Research “...knowledge bases that speak to the immediate and future concerns of all of humanity ...but also responsive to the marginalized communities of our world.”

Collaboration and Partnerships “... to build human and institutional capacities which are both local and planetary.”

Our Social Responsibility “...ensuring a socially just institutional community in which all our members experience belonging and are treated with civility and respect”.

Our distinctiveness is in being a small institution with students and staff from across the globe and in having the most diverse student and staff body of any higher education institution in the United Kingdom. Our student experience is interdisciplinary and inclusive. We aspire to being a sustainable development leader and to actively contribute to achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Aligned to the SOAS Strategic Plan, this Sustainability Strategy covers our institutional commitments for the five years from 2025-2030 and to a global sustainable future.

Professor Adam Habib

Vice-Chancellor

VISION

SOAS's Sustainability Vision is to address sustainability and climate justice imperatives locally and globally, now and in the future, with our education, research, collaboration and partnerships, social responsibility, and campus environment.

The whole of SOAS plays a role in sustainability. Over the last five years, SOAS academics increasingly have been focussing on global sustainability and climate change and justice issues and future implications in their research and teaching. In parallel, our staff involved in guiding management of our estates and operations have taken many steps for enhancements of our campus and operational environmental sustainability.

Our students are vocal in their concerns about sustainability. Going back to 2019, in response to our students' anxieties about the climate crisis, SOAS declared a climate emergency to officially recognise the gravity of the climate crisis and committed to accelerating measures to respond to climate change, and especially its effect on equalities and lives in the Global South. Actions decided for SOAS were to carry out a climate risk analysis and produce a new comprehensive action plan, and to integrate climate justice and education for sustainability across SOAS curricula.

SOAS now has a Net Zero Strategy launched in 2023 committing SOAS to becoming a net zero organisation by 2040 as "...part of ongoing work to integrate sustainability into our day-to-day operations, ensuring SOAS plays its part in the critical transition to a greener, fairer, and just society."

The Net Zero Strategy was initiated by the Sustainability Steering Group at SOAS. The Sustainability Steering Group is chaired and attended by members of the senior executive team and meets regularly to progress our sustainability work which has included the development of this Sustainability Strategy, including formulation of objectives and actions and measuring impacts.

With this new 2025-2030 Sustainability Strategy, SOAS is now implementing a broader whole of organisation sustainability strategy that fully embraces our sustainability vision including a culture of practice and process to facilitate implementation of the strategy.

Khadir Meer

Deputy Vice Chancellor Finance & Operations

INTRODUCTION

Strategy development

The strategy development builds on SOAS' ongoing sustainability work, its current actions and networks. SOAS' Sustainability Strategy will be the foundation for the new institutional Strategic Plan as well as all subsidiary policies and strategies, guiding and informing their creation and renewal. These strategies, plans and policies include, but are not limited to: Education Strategy, Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, Careers and Employability Strategy, and the SOAS Estates Strategy, which have played an important part in SOAS's sustainability contribution.

Flagship actions by SOAS for sustainability to date have included becoming the first London university to divest in fossil fuels in 2015, many contributions in climate change and sustainable development research, sustainability in learning and teaching, the Decolonising SOAS Vision including the Decolonising Research Initiative and Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching, the Net Zero Strategy commitment to becoming a net zero organisation by 2040, the SOAS Ethical Investment Policy and the SOAS Supply Chain Code of Conduct and Sustainable Procurement Objectives. In addition, SOAS holds ISO 14001 certification, the internationally recognised standard for environmental management system.

SOAS is a member of EAUC - The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, AdvanceHE, The Association of Commonwealth Universities, HESPA – Higher Education Strategic Planners Association, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) UK, and has programme accreditation through IEMA - Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. SOAS is a member of Bloomsbury Sustainability and hosts the Secretariat of The University Network for Strengthening Macrofinancial Resilience to Climate and Environmental Change.

The development of this Strategy involved processes of scoping, stakeholder engagement and consultation, review and reflection on current SOAS strategies, plans, policy and practice. The key theory or methodological approach that was used was Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) using visioning, systemic thinking, critical analysis and reflection, participation in decision-making and partnerships to actively involve multiple stakeholders across SOAS to achieve change for sustainability.

The Strategy was informed by and benefitted from the contribution of over 100 of our academic and professional staff members and students. Participation was arranged in four ways:

- [Sustainability@SOAS survey](#) - students and staff were invited to contribute to visioning for the SOAS Sustainability Strategy through email and weekly bulletin invitations to do an online survey with over 40 responses.

- **Student focus groups** - two student focus groups were organised and held with a total of 14 students across the two groups.
- **Key informant interviews** – over 30 key informants drawn from academics, professional services, library, students, estates and senior leadership participated in individual online interviews.
- **SOAS Sustainability Steering Group** - eight members were involved as partners giving critical feedback.

Development of the Strategy accordingly has been a process of learning that will continue in implementation, not only about SOAS' operational sustainability and systems thinking related to the curriculum and research, but also of cultural change and transformation. A whole of organisational learning process has been initiated with the SOAS community that will be ongoing.

The way we go forward

This 2025-2030 Sustainability Strategy has a timeline to 2030 for implementation of objectives and actions which is detailed in the SOAS Operational Action Plan for Sustainability.

Leadership within SOAS is key to the implementation of the Strategy ensuring that its aims have full operational support but holds central the active participation of students and staff, ensuring a 'whole of SOAS approach'.

Fundamental to the Strategy is the monitoring of progress with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measurement of impacts. Following the adoption of the Strategy by the institution, a formal governance structure will be instituted which will be tasked with developing an Action Plan and clear Key Performance Indicators. These will be used for internal and external reporting to ensure effectiveness and learning within the institution as well as ensuring that targets have clear, measurable indicators for reporting in accordance with key standards and rankings including ISO 14001, ISO 26000, EAUC Sustainability Leadership Scorecard, The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, People & Planet University League, and QS Sustainability World University Rankings.

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONS: A REVIEW OF PRACTICE

Overview

Higher education plays a critical role in the promotion of sustainability as a response to the rise of concern “...catalyzed by mounting evidence of climate crisis, biodiversity loss, pandemic disease and further systemic issues in unprecedented times of urgency, uncertainty and threat” (Sterling 2021, p.1). Many higher education institutions (HEI) globally have adopted sustainability positions over the last two decades or more.

Yturzaeta (2023) has identified the drivers for HEI sustainability as:

- “the concern for people, planet, and profit in the institution over the short term”
- “pursuit of quality in the HEI’s education and operations”
- “sustainability leadership and the desire for institutional sustainability”
- “concerns for the institution’s general reputation and for people and the environment beyond its physical boundaries”
- “sustainability challenges in society and the desire to contribute to sustainable development goals.” (p.104).

While Galán-Muros (2023) in the UNESCO SET4HEI (Sustainable Evaluation Tool for HEIs) observes:

- “There are powerful internal and external reasons for driving an HEI towards sustainability, many of which tap into the HEI social responsibility. The internal reasons are mostly related to the achievement of more relevant curricula, more impactful research and better management and administration. Externally, the HEI could position itself as an engine to tackle the most pressing social, economic and environmental problems that humanity is facing together with industrial, governmental and social stakeholders.” (p.9)

Sustainability has been broadly described by EAUC as relating to: “leadership and governance”, “partnerships and engagement”, “learning, teaching and research”, and “estates and operations” (Appleton 2017a; EAUC and AUDE 2022). Reports and reviews to date provide insights relevant to the development and implementation of sustainability strategies. The most important aspects considered in the creation of the SOAS strategy are discussed below.

Defining HEI sustainability

How individual HEIs define and communicate their sustainability positions has been examined by many including Ruiz-Mallen and Heras (2020) who comment “There is no questioning about the ubiquity and ambiguity of the term sustainability as a critical concept for social change across disciplines and institutions... trajectories of sustainability that rely on different values, processes and understandings of the changes and transformations required for sustainability.” (p.3). Harvey et al. (2022) comments, “because sustainability has many meanings across different contexts, a

clear understanding can be a challenge” (p.182). Bien and Sassen (2020) recommend “the need to give meaning to the imprecise concept of sustainability, which happens in a specific context by multiple stakeholders...”, “the need to deal with hidden contradictions and tensions that lead to barriers of change due to power perceptions, institutional structures and networks...”, and “the need to provide interpretational flexibility in order to provide opportunities to discuss sustainability in diverse academic traditions...” (Bien and Sassen 2020, p.2). Ultimately, Bien and Sassen (2020) caution not to ignore the dynamics of change management in implementing a sustainability strategy.

Key structural and strategic dimensions for HEI sustainability

The organizational characteristics or leading practice criteria needed for HEI sustainability implementation have also been evaluated. A EAUC commissioned research paper by Appleton (2017a) advises HEIs adoption of sustainability is best done via the processes listed below:

- “incorporate sustainability within the mission, vision and values
- this must be supported by the strategy practically applied through policy monitored with appropriate metrics... KPIs
- a dedicated academic lead is crucial in...enabling effective communication between areas... [including] the academic/professional services divide
- an academic lead heading the approach to sustainability within the areas of teaching and research...
- the student voice must be listened to and recognised as a driver of change... allowing grassroots initiatives to build support and engagement from the bottom-up...”

Other important aspects identified are the organisational structures or models that institutions adopt to implement their sustainability strategies and actions. The research finds that many strategies are overseen by a dedicated sustainability office leading a ‘whole of organisation’ approach, whilst others have a decentralised implementation structure or in some cases strategies are estates office or student-led (Appleton 2017a, p.7).

Transformation towards HEI sustainability

Sanches et al. (2022; 2023) have proposed an organisational method to reposition a HEI for sustainability based on HEI experience reported in the literature and then tested in a Sao Paulo HEI. Their steps for repositioning and structuring a HEI for sustainability are shown as follows:

- “Include sustainability in the institutional vision and mission
- Formalize the institution’s sustainability through an official document
- Adhere to international declarations, formalizing HEIs’ commitment to sustainable development and the SDGs
- Include sustainability in the declarations of institutional principles and values, as well as in the code of ethics
- Integrate sustainability in the strategic plans

- Implement an operational structure – “green office” or “sustainability” – with staff, students and faculty members
- Unfold the strategic plan for sustainability into action plans
- Adopt a system to manage the incorporation of sustainability into HEI actions (indicators; monitoring evolution)
- Develop an integrated sustainability communication system aimed at each stakeholder group
- Establish partnerships with other sustainable HEIs (benchmarking; networking)
- Implement procedures to sustainability assessment and reporting
- Ensure the physical, human and financial resources for the achievement of the planned actions
- Internalize the process of ISO14001 (environmental) and 26000 (social responsibility standards).” (Sanches et al. 2022, p.927)

Further, the literature highlights the fundamental importance of sustainability in HEI as going further than being an add-on but should aim towards transformation as articulated by Sterling (2013a) (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Sustainability tensions in HEIs: Add-on or transformation? (Sterling 2013a)

Add-on approaches	Transformative approaches
• Defined issue relating mainly to estates and resource use • Principally an environmental issue • Requires add on, or reformative approach • Involves a few key disciplines • Is an additional agenda, easily accommodated • Has clear goals, measurable	• Broad relevance to all aspects of HE operation and provision • Also encompasses social relations, justice, ethics, economic viability etc. • Requires holistic and transformative approach • Implications for most disciplinary areas and requires interdisciplinarity • Is an overarching agenda and challenges existing policy and practice, involving organisational change • Emerging and contested area

Sanches et al. (2022) and Sisto et al. (2020) emphasise the fundamental importance of incorporating in sustainability the strategic plan and strategic planning process of an HEI and cite cases of the lack of success with sustainability implementation across HEIs of universities that adopt sustainability strategies without incorporation of sustainability in their strategic plans.

Teaching and learning via an Education for Sustainable Development approach

Focus on the role of universities and colleges to “Educate for Environmentally Responsible Citizenship” is part of the 10-point action plan in the Talloires Declaration initiated in 1990 which has been signed by over 500 higher education leaders in 50 countries (ULSF 2024). UNESCO has been the leading agency promoting Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) since the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

In the United Kingdom, recent recommended strategies to support curriculum design for ESD include those by AdvanceHE (2024) Framework for Education for Sustainable Development, the UK Quality Assurance Agency funded research, A Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating Education for Sustainable Development in Higher Education (White et al., 2023), and the QAA and AdvanceHE (2021) Education for Sustainable Development guidance that built on the Future Fit Framework of Sterling (2012).

Many HEIs in the UK and internationally use an Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approach for their sustainability teaching and learning e.g. see University of Gloucestershire (2012). ESD is an ongoing learning process which actively involves multiple stakeholders in change to achieve sustainability. It involves five key components:

- “Visioning (imagining a better future)
- Critical thinking and reflection
- Participation in decision-making
- Partnerships and
- Systemic thinking” (Tilbury and Wortman 2004, p.11)

Internationally, UNESCO has been influential with leadership and guidance via the ESD for 2030 Global Network (2023), Education for Sustainable Development: A roadmap (UNESCO 2020), Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development (2020), and Education for SDGs: Learning objectives (UNESCO 2017). In Europe, UNECE has led Capacity-building workshops for facilitating national reporting on implementing the new implementation framework of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (2021–2030) in December 2023 and January 2024.

Living labs

Living labs originated in universities in the early 2000s and have become an effective interdisciplinary mechanism for HEIs to implement collaborative sustainability research and teaching. Hadfield et al. (2023) have examined how living labs are organised in universities internationally through 18 case studies. They found living labs generally have four interacting characteristics:

- “A research process involving co-design and interdisciplinarity, experimentation and social learning in a real-world setting, and a focus on stimulating innovation and systems change.
- A teaching practice whereby students learn from and participate in applied research and industry engagement.
- Integrated campus management involving experimentation with, and innovative utilisation and management of, campus environments and specific built, natural, and digital assets.
- A partnership and engagement model for multistakeholder industry collaborations to address global challenges on and off campus.” (p.4)

Hadfield et al. (2023) emphasise that:

“The value proposition for university living labs centres on achieving research impact, enabling experiential learning for students, and integrating stakeholders and activities across institutional silos.” (p.3)

Conclusions

Many issues influence sustainability in HEIs. The review highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that encompasses the whole of the HEI. This review also underscores the importance of adoption of an organisational sustainability strategy and that sustainability is a dynamic process of change. Learning from the experiences of how sustainability has been adopted by HEIs from a leading practice perspective underpins the development of this strategy.

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY AND OUR STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

Defining sustainability at SOAS

SOAS Sustainability Definition: SOAS defines and upholds sustainability as a core organisational value embodying the importance of a future world that is environmentally, socially and economically just and recognising the imperative for maintaining ecological integrity and changing unsustainable practices.

Consultation with academics, professional services staff, senior management and students highlighted the importance of defining what sustainability means in the context of SOAS and how a sustainability strategy can best be implemented across the institution.

The SOAS definition for sustainability is in line with our mission to develop local and global knowledge, international perspectives, engage in robust debate, and teach the necessary skills required for students to become global citizens who can make an impact in a changing world. SOAS's aims for research, education, collaboration and partnerships, social responsibility, and campus environment are underpinned by the objectives of social responsibility and environmental justice aimed towards attaining more equitable global and local futures.

Contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

This Strategy is designed to achieve a better and more sustainable future through contributions to the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through teaching, research and knowledge exchange. It endeavours to ensure that SOAS minimises its footprint on the environment and promotes peace and justice.

A whole of SOAS approach

The Sustainability Strategy embodies a transformative, holistic and enhanced focus on sustainability with defined actions, objectives and targets that will require the active support of all the whole of the SOAS community.

This Sustainability Strategy's implementation will need a whole of SOAS approach - to be contributed to by collective efforts from across the SOAS community. It will apply to all parts of SOAS activities and campus facilities including colleges, schools, departments, centres, institutes, business and support units.

Students will be at the heart of the Sustainability Strategy, including student representatives in sustainability decisions and actions as well as supporting the Student Union in developing sustainability initiatives. A survey conducted by student-led education charity ‘Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK)’ found that 89% of students agreed their place of study should actively incorporate and promote sustainable development, 82% would like to see sustainable development actively incorporated and promoted through all courses (SOS-UK, 2023).

Principles

This Sustainability Strategy sets out the commitments and actions for taking forward our mission to continue the work achieved so far and to further transform SOAS into a sustainable university. Our commitments are underpinned by four principles.

- **Governance** – Providing visible and credible leadership and working collectively across academic and professional services to adopt processes within the institution which facilitate effective and efficient systems and processes for embedding sustainability practices
- **Resourcing** – Investing in the future by embedding resourcing for sustainability within institutional budgets.
- **Participation and Voice** – Including SOAS students and staff in shaping sustainability initiatives and having a stake in major decisions and implementation.
- **Communication and Reporting** – Embedding processes of communication about sustainability across SOAS together with communication of reporting that measures the impact of actions on commitments. Reporting will involve establishment of initial baseline data points to effectively evaluate the impacts measures or key performance indicators (KPIs) of the Strategy.

ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS FOR SOAS SUSTAINABILITY



The SOAS Sustainability Strategy seeks to enhance and extend existing strategies, policies and plans associated with teaching and learning, research, operations and estates to include all aspects of sustainability. The SOAS Sustainability Strategy focuses on commitments in five priority areas: Education, Research and Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration and Engagement, Social Responsibility and the Campus Environment. It provides an overarching approach, sets goals and actions, establishes processes and a culture of practice within the institution to achieve a more sustainable future.

Our aims and commitments to our principles of sustainability include:

- **Education:** To ensure our students gain the skills and competencies to actively contribute towards the building of an equitable and just planetary community and protecting the environment through accessible and empowering education experiences rooted in SOAS' decolonising knowledge approach.
- **Research and Knowledge Exchange:** To undertake research that is co-created through partnerships for sustainability, decolonised and contributes to solving global challenges through change of mindsets and discourses, policies and practices for sustainable development.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** To facilitate the contribution of students and staff to our local community's sustainability and to support global action on sustainability.

- **Social Responsibility:** To ensure social responsibility through institutional management, teaching, research, services and partnerships that support equality, diversity, inclusion, wellbeing and a healthy sustainable campus environment for all students and staff, and to contribute to social justice and sustainability locally and globally.
- **Campus Environment:** To embed environmental and ethical practices across the whole university and to ensure that all staff, students and visitors can work and study comfortably and make sustainable and ethical choices whilst on campus.

These commitments are further described in the remainder of this Strategy. In the following pages, the interconnectedness between each commitment becomes clear underscoring the importance of a holistic or ‘whole of SOAS approach’ to sustainability.

Education

SOAS offers many undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and modules that include sustainability and climate change learning and teaching through the lens of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. SOAS is dedicated to decolonising the curriculum within the university, seeking to redress all forms of disadvantage associated with racism and colonialism.

Vision

Our **Sustainability Education Vision:** To ensure our students gain the skills and competencies to actively contribute towards the building of an equitable and just planetary community and protecting the environment through accessible and empowering education experiences rooted in SOAS’ decolonising knowledge approach.

Commitments

- Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes.
- Ensure all teaching staff are trained in Education for Sustainable Development.
- Implement processes for mapping, reviewing and tracking progress on Education for Sustainable Development in all modules and programmes offered.
- Expand access to higher education through distance learning.

SDGs contributions



Research and Knowledge Exchange

Research at SOAS is deeply and uniquely rooted in understanding the political, social, economic, historical and cultural dynamics of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and their diasporas. Critical approaches to environmental change and sustainability cut across many disciplines at SOAS and intersect with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding environmental inequalities of race, gender, class, and age, the governance of natural resources, as well as climate change vulnerability, adaptation, and resilience are vital contributions of SOAS academics to informing and promoting sustainable change.

Vision

Our **Sustainability Research Vision**: To undertake research that is co-created through partnerships for sustainability, decolonised and contributes to solving global challenges through change of mindsets and discourses, policies and practices for sustainable development.

Commitments

- Map all SOAS research projects and outputs against the UN SDGs to align and highlight the impact of our sustainability-oriented research.
- Conduct all research in an environmentally sustainable and just manner and minimise the impacts of our research through responsible use of resources, transport, energy and materials.
- Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research.
- Share the sustainability knowledge we develop internally and externally to allow us to have a greater impact in the world.
- Build research collaborations on sustainability innovation in partnership with other research institutions, civil society, government and business.

- Depending on resource availability, establish one or more Living Lab centres to co-create research with our students that has sustainability research impact, enabling experiential learning for students, and integrating researchers' activities across SOAS and with partners externally.

SDGs contributions



Collaboration and Engagement

SOAS is committed to creating change for the better, for communities locally and globally. SOAS has partnerships with governments, UN and multilateral agencies, non-governmental organisations, business and higher education institutions.

SOAS's current participation in sustainability networks include: AdvanceHE, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), EAUC The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) UK, Bloomsbury Sustainability, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) UK, and The University Network for Strengthening Macroeconomic Resilience to Climate and Environmental Change.

Vision

Our **Sustainability Collaboration and Engagement Vision**: To facilitate the contribution of students and staff to our local community's sustainability and to support global action on sustainability.

Commitments

- Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs.
- Champion student voice and facilitate student-led sustainability projects

- Partner with the community local to SOAS to support and enrich local social and environmental initiatives.
- Facilitate a sustainability community outreach program for students.

SDGs contributions



Social Responsibility

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is structured around five strategic pillars which guide implementation: Governance and Accountability; Legal Compliance; Representation; Student Experience and Outcomes; Belonging. SOAS is signatory to the Can't Buy my Silence pledge, is a certified 'Living Wage' university, affiliate member of Electronics Watch Purchasing Consortium and monitors equality of pay and conditions between in-house and outsourced staff.

SOAS is a diverse community committed to access to higher education for all and works in partnership with several organisations to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and underrepresented groups can benefit from outward mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes that can be derived from Higher Education.

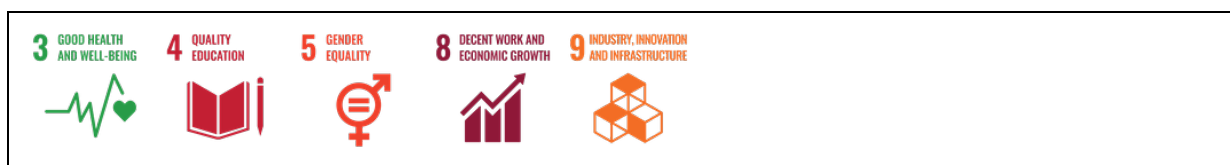
Vision

Our **Social Responsibility Vision**: To ensure social responsibility through institutional management, teaching, research, services and partnerships that support equality, diversity, inclusion, wellbeing and a healthy sustainable campus environment for all students and staff, and to contribute to social and environmental justice and sustainability, both locally and globally.

Commitments

- Assess campus culture from the lens of socially responsible values, behaviours and beliefs associated with sustainability.
- Support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of staff and students.
- Care for workers and students by aligning sustainability initiatives with the SOAS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Ensure that SOAS' Ethical Investment and Banking Policy applies strong environmental, social and governance principles.
- Showcase, share and communicate information about campus sustainability initiatives within SOAS and externally.

SDGs contributions



Campus Environment

The campus environment comprises the fabric of the buildings and their embedded resources and energy, the operational concerns of climate impacts and resilience, carbon reduction, energy efficiency, waste and recycling, travel, purchasing, food, water efficiency, biodiversity and community impact.

SOAS is committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all business relationships. We seek to undertake due diligence in the supply chain, to ensure economic, social and environmental considerations are made at every point in the purchase of goods or

services, construction and refurbishment. SOAS also takes mitigating steps to help manage the risks of modern slavery and trafficking. SOAS is committed to investing in sustainable choices in construction and refurbishment.

Vision

Our **Vision for Sustainability for the Campus Environment**: To embed environmental and ethical practices across the whole university and to ensure that all staff, students and visitors can work and study comfortably and make sustainable and ethical choices whilst on campus.

Commitments

- Embed systems for carbon mitigation to meet SOAS' commitment to reach net zero by 2032.
- Ensure that resilience is at the heart of climate change management, ensuring that SOAS buildings can cope with the impacts of climate change and to mitigate the impact on workers and students in campus buildings.
- Ensure that staff, students and visitors experience a healthy and sustainable environment and can make sustainable and ethical choices during their time on campus.
- Contribute to positive sustainability outcomes for the supply chains which SOAS engages in directly and indirectly.
- Improve biodiversity around SOAS' campus and buildings.
- Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges.

SDGs contributions



APPENDIX 1 SOAS SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY UN SDGs IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL	SOAS Sustainability Strategy Commitment
1 NO POVERTY 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research.
2 ZERO HUNGER 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research.
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	• Research on good health and well-being • Education for good health and well-being • Support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of staff and students.
4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Ensure all teaching staff are trained in Education for Sustainable Development. • Implement processes for mapping, reviewing and tracking progress on Education for Sustainable Development in all modules and programmes offered. • Expand access to higher education through distance learning. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. • Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs. • Support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of staff and students.
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. • Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs. • Support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of staff and students.
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges.
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. • Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges.
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	• Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. • Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research.

	- Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs. - Support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of staff and students.
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	- Ensure that SOAS' Ethical Investment and Banking Policy applies strong environmental, social and governance principles. - Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges.
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	- Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. - Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research.
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	- Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. - Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges. - Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. - Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs.
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	- Ensure that SOAS' Ethical Investment and Banking Policy applies strong environmental, social and governance principles. - Contribute to positive sustainability outcomes for the supply chains which SOAS engaged in directly and indirectly.
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	- Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. - Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. - Embed systems for carbon mitigation to meet SOAS' commitment to reach net zero by 2032.
14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	Reduce environmental impacts of the campus and monitor and report emissions and discharges.
15 LIFE ON LAND 	Improve biodiversity around SOAS's campus and buildings.
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	- Embed Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum of all programmes. - Support all researchers including early career researchers in developing sustainability research. - Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs.
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	- Share the sustainability knowledge we develop internally and externally to allow us to have a greater impact in the world. - Build research collaborations on sustainability innovation in partnership other research institutions, civil society, government and business. - Establish one or more Living Lab centres to co-create research with our students that has sustainability research impact, enabling experiential learning for students, and integrating researchers' activities across SOAS and with partners externally. - Partner with governments, UN and multilateral agencies to support local, country and regional attainment of the UN SDGs.

APPENDIX 2 SOAS SUSTAINABILITY STEERING GROUP MEMBERS 2024

Name	SOAS Role
Andrew Goodman	Director of Estates & Programmes
Professor Elisa Van Waeyenberge	Dean, College of Development, Economics and Finance
Tawnya Cheatheat	Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions
Professor Graeme Were	Dean, College of Law, Anthropology and Politics
Professor Tom Tanner	Director, Centre for Development, Environment and Policy
Emma Keenan	Head of Procurement
Ola Bankole	Head of Sustainability
Brian Cronin	Continuous Improvement and Net Zero Lead

APPENDIX 3 STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Stakeholder participation

The development of this Sustainability Strategy was informed by and benefitted from the contribution of over 100 of our academic and professional staff members and students. Participation was arranged in four ways:

- **Sustainability@SOAS survey** - students and staff were invited to contribute to visioning for the SOAS Sustainability Strategy through email and weekly bulletin invitations to do an online survey with over 40 responses.
- **Student focus groups** - two student focus groups were organised and held with a total of 14 students across the two groups.
- **Key informant interviews** – over 30 key informants drawn from academics, professional services, library, students, estates and senior leadership were invited to participate in individual online interviews.
- **SOAS Sustainability Steering Group** - eight members were involved as partners giving critical feedback.

The participation process occurred during July and August 2024. Use of online facilities for most of the participation allowed for greater involvement over the university summer break.

Sustainability@SOAS survey

The Sustainability@SOAS survey was circulated across SOAS in July and August 2024. 48 responses were submitted from students, academics, professional services, library, and estates. Detailed results are presented in Appendix 3.

Key findings are:

- 85% of respondents said it is ‘extremely important’ for SOAS to have a Sustainability Strategy.
- 83% of respondents said it is ‘extremely important to involve students and staff in SOAS’ sustainability initiatives. 15% said it was ‘quite important’.
- 42% of respondents were ‘aware of any sustainability initiatives currently implemented in SOAS’ while the remainder were not aware of any initiatives.
- 13% of respondents said they ‘have a forum to raise your concerns around issue of sustainability at SOAS’ while 46% said they did not.
- Respondents said the ‘top priorities in the university’s sustainability strategy’ should be:
 - Reducing carbon footprint (58%)
 - Supporting social equity and inclusion (37.5%)
 - Conducting impactful research on sustainability (33%)
 - Embedding sustainability in the curriculum (31%)
 - Guaranteeing sustainable investment (27%)
 - Improving waste management and recycling (27%).

The findings of the survey highlight the high priority that students and staff place on sustainability at SOAS, the importance of a Sustainability Strategy, and significantly, that students and staff wish to be involved in initiatives. It is also clear that students and staff are not always aware of the actions SOAS is currently taking to address sustainability in the institution. Evident in survey responses are issues such as difficulty in making sustainable choices on campus, lack of forums for people to raise concerns about issues relating to sustainability at SOAS and a desire to see sustainability issues embedded in teaching and learning, catering, waste management, and the campus environment. Students and staff have articulated great interest and have made valuable suggestions which will continue to inform sustainability actions as part of an ongoing process and outcome of the SOAS Sustainability Strategy. In addition, communication is key, not only to publicise what action is being taken by SOAS, but also to more clearly identify and articulate how work across the institution connects to key sustainability indicators such as the SDGs.

Student focus groups

The [student focus groups](#) of one hour duration discussed the importance of having a sustainability strategy at SOAS and the benefits and challenges of incorporating sustainability into the curriculum. They proposed making sustainability a compulsory part of the program. They expressed concerns about the lack of awareness of students regarding sustainability initiatives at SOAS and the need for better communication and visibility of sustainability initiatives to provide recognition of the positive sustainability work already happening at SOAS. Students in the focus groups suggested various sustainability initiatives, including energy-saving measures, reducing water consumption, and promoting reuse and recycling, composting centres, plant-based food options, improving staff treatment, workshops on consent and sustainability for students, student-led gardens, community volunteering opportunities, and practical projects to increase student involvement in sustainability. Students believe that having a sustainability strategy would enhance their future employability and promote a sense of community and environmental responsibility among SOAS students. The student focus groups also discussed the challenges of fostering a sense of community and responsibility.

Key informant interviews

Open-ended key informant interviews to gain views and insights from across SOAS were held in July and August 2024. The prompts that guided the 29 half-hour interviews conducted are listed in Appendix 2.

[Overall](#), key informants underlined the importance of the role of universities in leading change and setting the agenda for sustainability. They emphasised the need for and benefits of, but also the challenges of implementing a unified sustainability strategy, the

incorporation of sustainability into the curriculum, and the importance of and need for better communication and awareness within the institution. Key informants emphasised the importance of allocation of financial resources for sustainability, making trade-offs, changing institutional culture to achieve sustainability goals, and accountability. They also discussed specific areas of focus, such as procurement, waste reduction, and community engagement. They highlighted the value of education for sustainable development, skills development, collaboration, and workplace sustainability. Overall, the conversations stressed the complexity of addressing sustainability in higher education and the importance of taking an active stance on sustainability.

The **student** key informant perspective was that all areas of sustainability are interconnected and interdependent and that the SOAS focus should be on widening the scope of sustainability and incorporating biodiversity. They discussed the lack of awareness and communication regarding sustainability initiatives at SOAS and the importance of incorporating education for sustainable development across the curriculum. They underlined the need for better communication and recognition of the positive work already happening at SOAS. The financial challenges for SOAS of implementing a sustainability strategy were acknowledged but they emphasised that sustainability is in the interests and identity of SOAS as a place that tackles pressing issues.

Academic key informants emphasised the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainability for SOAS, the challenges and benefits of incorporating sustainability into the curriculum, and the importance of addressing areas like climate change and resource use. They also discussed the potential resistance to sustainability initiatives and the need for support and professional development for academics. They also highlighted the importance of workplace sustainability, global cooperation, ethical investment, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Overall, the conversations highlighted the complexity of addressing sustainability in higher education and the importance of clear strategies, communication, and collaboration.

The **professional services** key informants highlighted importance of sustainability for SOAS and the importance of sustainability as a core value for institutions. They focused on areas such as procurement, cloud computing, reducing travel, waste reduction, education, and utilisation of green spaces. They emphasised the need for a unified sustainability strategy, staff training, effective communication, and collaboration across all departments and areas. Their conversations also touched on the benefits of incorporating sustainability into the curriculum for students. The professional staff key informants also discussed challenges, such as lack of awareness, and highlighted the potential benefits of sustainability initiatives, including improved reputation and funding opportunities.

Strategy development review process

Members of the Sustainability Steering Group at SOAS were invited to review the draft in early September 2024 and give feedback in the strategy visioning and drafting process through meetings and email feedback.

Submission to the SOAS Executive Board for approval of the Strategy was in October 2024 with a Sustainability@SOAS launch on 23 October 2024.

APPENDIX 4 SUSTAINABILITY@SOAS SURVEY RESULTS

A strategy or policy that seeks to engage and impact the whole of an institution should endeavour to understand the perspectives and experiences of the members of that institution. The SOAS Sustainability Strategy will affect all aspects of working and studying at SOAS, therefore in addition to interviews and focus groups a survey was circulated across SOAS between July and August. 48 responses were submitted from academics, professional services, library, students, estates and senior leadership.

Responses to the survey questions are shown below.

Question 4: In a sentence or two, how would you define a 'sustainable university'?

Qualitative responses from survey respondents

A University committed to continually seeking out and acting on ways to reduce or eliminate the negative impacts of its activities, whilst consistently considering how to increase activity which positively benefits the planet and those that inhabit it.
Paperless, balance of WFH and On campus activity to reduce need for travel / reduce emissions potentially, online learning.
A university that considers environmental and ethical impacts across all its activities, from the day-to-day to more strategic matters/ decisions.
It is a university that has, at the core of its operations, concrete measures a) to mitigate damage to the environment, in particular climate change and b) to promote global social justice, in particular the development gap between the Global North and Global South.
A sustainable university is one which is financially stable in ways that minimise harm to social or natural ecologies, that shows an alignment between its core teaching and research values and the ways in which it is run, and that centres the voices and wellness of its community.
One that ensures that its operations meet sustainability criteria in all areas, one that contributes to and enhances local and global communities in ways that enable and foster sustainable practices, knowledges and relationships and one that produces graduates who have the agency and knowledge to be able to pursue sustainable professional and personal livelihoods proactively.
Carbon neutral, or working towards. Ethical, responsible.
A university with a small environmental (direct and indirect) footprint that incorporates sustainability into teaching, research and knowledge exchange.
A university that embeds sustainability teaching and training for all students and staff (e.g. in their daily lives, while conducting research, considering sustainability in their research/work projects including travel), and that offers incentives to adopt the more sustainable options (e.g. not printing flyers; taking a train to a conference even when it takes longer or it's more expensive than flying). Also offering more vegetarian/vegan/km zero food options than animal products. And lastly a university that engages with the local community to support sustainable solutions (e.g. funding community gardens or bee hives, conducting research on these etc).
A sustainable university is one in which the actions of today's members (staff, students, alumni) enhances, or at least does not detract from, the opportunities of future generations. This applies within the university (ensuring that it continues to provide world-leading teaching and research with excellent facilities) and beyond (ensuring that the university does not degrade the social and natural environment within which it exists).

A university with: - a low carbon footprint - recycling bins - textbook/book recycling system - mostly using green energy sources (e.g. solar panels)
A university that does not unduly add carbon to the atmosphere or deplete and undermine the wellbeing of staff and students.
One which is carbon neutral or better across all activities, even taking into account the travel of all staff and students; one that identifies, supports and promotes sustainable systems across all areas of human activity.
One that goes beyond the common sustainable measures but reflects on itself and introduces plant based diets
Commitment to low carbon travel, give staff the time and funds to travel by train to conferences etc, facilitate travelling by bike etc. Vegan campus and reusable bottles, cups crockery etc. Divesting away from fossil fuels, active investments in renewables. Social equity and inclusion. This is a big question... so the answer is not exhaustive.
Fair, equitable, inclusive and ecologically responsible
Sustainable products, investments, and services with the community mindset to match.
An organisation committed to deliver long-term education and research opportunities to its students, staff and external stakeholders through a healthy financial management.
A university that knows how to keep good staff in, and how to make students spread the word to gain more students
A university that helps reduce the use of fossil and carbon resources, and enhances the tools for reducing environmental footprint.
One where sustainability is baked into every decision and every action.
A sustainable uni has sustainability fostered on in its activities including teaching and learning, research, community outreach, global engagement, services, estates, and promotion of well-being of all staff and students on campus.
one that puts meaningful and effective sustainability at the top of every agenda in strategic, planning and operational matters
One that looks after and doesn't waste the earths resources
One that teaches and learns about sustainability, embedding sustainable practices in the core of its operations.
An educational institution that instructs toward sustainable environmental practises both at the university and socially, at home.
A university which can provide good educational services globally in form of distance learning , using minimal energy for conservation.
An institution that practices sustainability in everything it does - as inclusive of teaching as of estates management. An institution that can, literally, sustain the society around it so that it may continue to add value to it - this means ecologically as well as politically, socially.
For me this would be an institution that integrates sustainability into its policies, operations, curriculum, research initiatives, and community engagement activities. These universities commit to minimizing their environmental impact and fostering a culture of sustainability among students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community. It would include:

Environmental Impact Reduction: Sustainable universities focus on reducing their carbon footprint, conserving water, managing waste responsibly, and using renewable energy sources. They often aim to achieve net-zero carbon emissions through various means such as energy-efficient buildings, solar power installations, and sustainable transportation options.

Curriculum and Education: These institutions incorporate sustainability into their curricula across diverse disciplines, enabling students to understand and tackle global environmental challenges. This may involve offering degrees in sustainability-related fields, incorporating sustainability into all areas of study, and promoting research in environmental science, clean energy, conservation, and sustainable development practices.

Research Contributions: Sustainable universities invest in research that advances global sustainability goals. They support interdisciplinary research on issues like climate change, renewable energy, water conservation, and sustainable agriculture, and often collaborate with other organisations and industries to develop innovative solutions.

Campus Operations: They implement sustainable practices in campus operations, including green building standards, energy-efficient utilities, sustainable food services, waste reduction programs, and recycling initiatives. The goal is to create a living laboratory for sustainability.

Community Engagement and Outreach: Sustainable universities actively engage with local and global communities to promote sustainability. This includes outreach programs, partnerships with local governments and businesses, and public service initiatives that encourage sustainable practices.

Administration and Governance: These institutions incorporate sustainability into their governance structures. This might include having dedicated sustainability officers, committees focused on sustainability issues, and policies that ensure institutional practices align with sustainability goals.

Student Involvement: Encouraging student involvement in sustainability efforts is a key focus. This may be through student-led initiatives, sustainability-focused events, clubs, and organizations that contribute to a sustainable campus culture.

Monitoring and Reporting: Regular monitoring and reporting of sustainability metrics are crucial.

University of Copenhagen in Denmark is a good example to follow.

One that takes seriously - as evidenced in its policies, practices and commitments - its responsibility a) to operate in an environmentally friendly way, b) to educate students about the importance and reality of climate change and related societal challenges, c) to undertake research to help address these challenges, and d) to promote and champion sustainable causes as they relate to its core areas of research, teaching and professional operations.

Carbon neutral and committed to ethical and environmental practices.

A space where all (staff, students, admin) critically engage and commit towards full implementation of a plan of work with explicit targets for achieving net0, and to facilitate transitioning towards domestic (UK) and global food systems that guarantee sustainable production, distribution/supply and consumption, in compliance with the three Rio Agreements (CBD, Climate Change and Desertification) and the SDG.

A sustainable university cares about people and the environment, just as much as it cares about doing research.

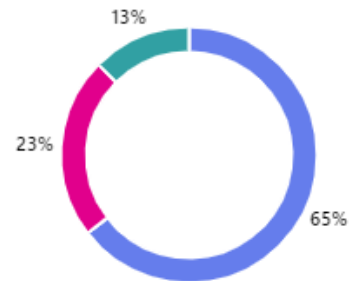
Aware and active about energy and resource use, maintains and expands green spaces with native plants and trees, properly manages waste (composting organic waste, implementing dry toilets where possible, discourages single use items), push agenda on being sustainable and understand regenerative practices.

A university that mitigate environmental and human rights risks AND also create positive impacts in these areas. Some of concrete examples are below.
One that is economically sustainable, creates a fair and equitable community where everyone feels safe and has a voice, and lastly minimizes waste and energy usage and where possible utilises clean or net zero technologies.
From an online student perspective I would think any effort which enhances green action and messaging. Resource efficiency is key starting at university canteens, syllabus, campus activities, participating in advocacy and lobbying, and where possible influencing decision makers for more sustainable action.
A university that can embed sustainability in its operations (such as reducing its carbon emissions, transitioning to renewable energy, engaging with communities on sustainability) as well as its curriculum.
In business terms; one that provides students with more than 20% of electives in the prospectus vs actually delivered electives.
In environmental terms; low carbon footprint across scopes 1, 2 and 3 and low waste.
A university that goes for sustainable at all levels and steps, to have something like an ongoing reminder that the university has and promotes sustainability values. i am a distance learning student so can't say much for the daily life in the university, but I would like to see more on how the university participates in promoting sustainability and especially in London as part of a consortium of universities and experts.
One that is sustainable across its value chain: upstream (sustainable third party goods and services, i.e. cafeteria), own services (energy use, water, carbon footprint), downstream (not sure what this would look like for a uni, think about how sustainability impacts all courses taught).
Needs to be financially, ethically and environmentally sustainable
A sustainable university is one that embeds future-thinking and inclusive considerations in its operations, teaching and learning and research.
One that minimises its impact on the environment.
A university that embeds sustainability in all its curricula and does not invest in any unsustainable practices/initiatives.
A university that conducts research and provides teaching on sustainability and at the same time reduces its environmental impact.
A university that is dedicated to adopting sustainable practices for a greener future.
A focus on recycling and a consciousness on using environmentally friendly products

5. How important do you think sustainability is for SOAS?

48 Responses

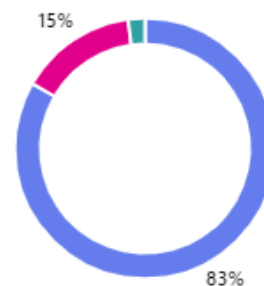
Extremely important	31
Quite important	11
Neutral	6
Minor importance	0
Not important at all	0



6. How important do you think it is for SOAS to involve students and staff in its sustainability initiatives?

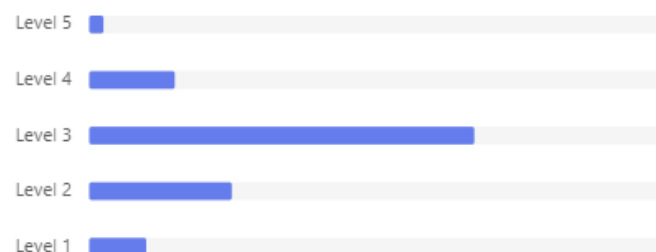
48 Responses

Extremely important	40
Quite important	7
Neutral	1
Minor importance	0
Not important at all	0



7. How would you rate SOAS' current efforts in promoting sustainability? (5 stars = EXCELLENT; 1 star = POOR)

48 Responses



8. Which of the following aspects do you associate with sustainability for universities? (Select all that apply)

48 Responses



9. Are you aware of any sustainability initiatives currently implemented in SOAS?

48 Responses

- Yes 20
- No 28

More Details



Question 10: If yes, please specify.

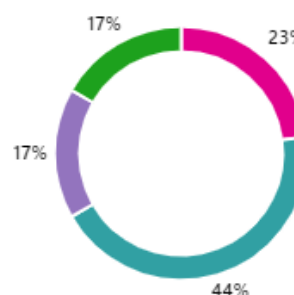
Qualitative responses from survey respondents

Sustainable procurement, Net Zero Action plan
SOAS Economics Sustainability Working Group Dear all, The first meeting of the SOAS Economics Sustainability Group will take place on Monday 30 January at 5-6pm (room TBC). If you wish to join the group, please add your name here by 25 January: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tUWZDs2APj_O2IN97WmrUmgwlpv3vPwIJW_zxKzw86A/edit?usp=sharing The group will consist of UG, PGT and PhD students and its aim is to investigate a broad range of environment-related issues and give the opportunity to students to read papers and exchange ideas on the links between economics and ecological sustainability. If you have any questions, you can reach me at yannis.dafermos@soas.ac.uk . Best wishes, Yannis Dafermos
Electricity derived from solar panels on SOAS roof; sale of excess solar electricity; encouragement of recycling; automatic taps in washrooms; equitable global partnerships; inclusion of social justice issues in curriculum; decolonisation of curriculum; mandatory CPD training on race, diversity and inclusion.
review of modern slavery approaches, energy efficiency initiatives, mainstreaming sustainability in curriculum
Net Zero strategy
SOAS Economics Sustainability Working Group
I'm aware of the net zero strategy, including the planned transition to a new community heating and cooling system powered by green electricity.
Water fountains, vegan options on campus; cafes incentivising reusable cups.
Introduction of recycling waste hubs, net zero strategy
Net zero strategy, estates management, procurement
Food waste and recycling
The last thing I heard about was literally from the last decade - it was the replacement of our electricity infrastructure and installation of solar panels on the roof of the Old Building. I only know about this because I had been trawling old websites and SU publications for research on institutional history,
Net Zero policy
I am aware of our sustainability committee, our ethical investment policy, work going on in the estates team to reduce our carbon footprint, the Bloomsbury Heat and Power initiative, our research into many of the UN SDGs, and our ethical careers commitments.
The washing up liquid in the staff common room is eco-friendly.
I am aware of the sustainable procurement policy and the ethical investment policy implemented by the university.
There has been considerable work since July 2020 to ensure we are financially sustainable, there is still work to do in terms of people and staff management, and we have committed to net zero by a specific date
Sustainability-related studies offered by the university

11. Do you find it easy to make sustainable choices on campus during your average day at SOAS?

48 Responses

Always	0
Most of the time	11
Sometimes	21
Rarely	8
Never	8



Question 12: What would you like to see change at SOAS regarding sustainability?

Qualitative responses from survey respondents

Mandatory education / training for staff and students on what sustainability means (many seem to focus only on environment).

The removal of single use plastics

Better recycling

Local food suppliers + in season menus

Better use of our green spaces (wild flowers, no mow may etc.)

Water reduction measures (limits on toilet flush etc.)

Better heat management - many times windows are wide open and the heating is on.

initiatives to reward those who proactively embed sustainability initiatives in their work.

Better engagement with the local community and neighbouring Universities.

Reduce use of plastic and paper in canteen move back to use of washable plates and cutlery

Overall better capturing of what we are already doing and where this is happening and a review of our sustainability actions around travel and procurement. At some point bringing in sustainability in a discussion on the use of AI and cloud technology and use of energy for this would also be important.

1. Discussions have begun around sustainable (and ethical in a wider sense) choices in terms of investment, academic links, etc. But it would be good to see those discussions developed, with participation invited from a greater proportion of the SOAS community (not merely one or two committees). Incorporating ethical and sustainability issues into academic links will always be complex, given SOAS's particular regions of interest. But it would be good to work out, as a community, what approaches we can/should take now that go beyond our legal obligations; similarly, which we can aspire to in the future (and how to get there).

2. Include clear incentives in the SCR cafe for use of non-disposable cups, just as there are in the SU shop.

3. The removal of rubbish bins from offices, although well intentioned, has been unhelpful. It is not always practical, when I have lunch at my desk, to have to walk down a corridor to throw away a sandwich wrapper or fruit peel.

Move to vegetarian food offerings only, maximising energy efficiency and reduce carbon footprint, adopt real approaches against modern slavery embracing local campaigns like justice4cleaners, stop confrontational styles of management and embrace compassionate leadership towards staff and students, align branding and teaching with managerial choices and actions
more joined-up thinking, more visibility of what we already do, leadership
Less flying without good reason
Reduce Scope 3 emissions
Answer above + maybe more bins for coffee cups and more incentives to use water bottles/coffee cups (e.g. giving a reusable cup to all students when enrolling, as part of a student package). Involving the student and staff community more in sustainable decisions and strategies.
Air travel (by students and staff) accounts for over 90% of the GHG emissions associated with the university's activities. The university must develop a strategy to reduce this as much as possible. This could include: increased reliance on remote conferencing instead of in-person; increased use of remote teaching methods and exams; creation of global hubs so that not all students have to travel to London to receive a SOAS education; offering compressed 2-year undergraduate programs in order to reduce travel requirements for overseas students; encouraging overseas students to return home less often during the academic year, perhaps by creating incentives to stay in London during the vacation periods; funding academic research on how to reduce the environmental impact of overseas students and international research projects.
- book recycling system - more green energy sources (solar panels?) - more recycling bins (best put next to ordinary waste bins to encourage people to sort their rubbish before throwing it away)
More attention to staff wellbeing
More radical and ambitious thinking about what sustainability means and what SOAS should do about it.
There are mainly meat based diets in the cafeteria and hardly any awareness in regards to plant based diets, even from staff. This needs to change if we truly want to have an impact. People from so many nations and religions are at SOAS and there is little to no understanding on the impact of their food choices.
Fully vegan campus.
I feel like 'social equity and inclusion' is an aspect of sustainability often overlooked . Especially, when it comes to members of staff that are not academic or professional services. I have seen/ heard of catering staff or cleaning staff not necessarily treated very fairly by their managers.
Encampment dependent, a better use of the green space - perhaps the introduction of wild flowers for biodiversity?
Financial choices 'more' informed by our vision and 'less' by market dynamics.
Human resources development instead of having new staffing every now and then
More and better green spaces, sun powered energy, etc.
Small simple things: more accessible recycling. Returning bins to offices would be a good start. Better information for staff and students. And better education on sustainable practices and ways of working, because this knowledge sometimes seems to be lacking. Better regulation of heating. At the moment there are many offices that sit empty for much of the time and which are constantly heated so that they are very warm. This seems hugely wasteful.

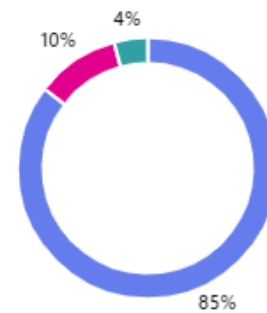
Teaching and learning about sustainability for all students in all programmes and professional development for all staff both academic and service staff
Recycling is pitiful - Staff and students don't recycle properly, there's always non-recyclable material in the recycling bins. There are no compost bins that I can find, but all the cafes and canteens give us compostable plates, cutlery, boxes etc. It's madness to be putting these into general waste
more plants and flowers to encourage biodiversity and encourage more insects - I believe the green spaces at the front do not belong to SOAS? we could have some planters? More information about sustainability as I don't know what is currently going on
A system-based approach to sustainability that helps us better understand our impacts, how we can be more responsible and how we can innovate.
An institution that sustains itself at the expense of the world around it has got something fundamentally wrong, be that in its strategic decision making or in the axioms along which it operates - the 'concept' of the institution itself. It is literally the duty of a public body, regardless of how commercialised the sector may be, to operate as a positive, sustainable part of society. A failure to do this in any respect - financially, but most importantly socially and environmentally, - is a failure of governance, and shouldn't be taken lightly. As a part of institutional sustainability, the student and academic communities would like to see the implementation of a complete programme of transparency measures regarding our governance, processes the details of which are at the moment almost completely inaccessible. The University's failure to publish even basic minutes for meetings within the required period, as well as up-to-date lists of trustees, committees, and even comprehensive org charts, leaves the decision-making process at the head of the institution functionally opaque even to those with a specific interest in proceedings. Egregious attempts to circumvent Student Union representation in committees, as reported on by the SOAS Spirit, leads to a situation where the disconnect between Trustees' decision making and the realities of the institution becomes great enough so as to precipitate serious breakdowns in the functioning of the University. Be that the very public failure of Trustees to negotiate with protesters on a range of demands, the bungled employment of deeply unprofessional security personnel, poorly handled pay disputes, a lack consultation on estates changes, and even Professors' accusations that their academic freedom has been curtailed. These gross failures are only those visible to an undergraduate - those above me in the institution, in many places, have very long and detailed lists of the ways that the Board of Trustees and the Director have failed us. The litany of failures of governance we have seen this year alone constitute a fundamentally unsustainable way of running a University and, until we can change the way the University is lead, SOAS will not be able to sustain itself, let alone the world it claims to serve.
I am a distance learner so hard to answer, my previous time at SOAS was 20+ years ago. But being in London I would say there is a huge opportunity to influence policy regarding sustainability within the London ecosystem.
Increased and more joined up communications around sustainability, and more visible championing of sustainability causes, especially at an institutional level.
More information available on both the intranet and the public website, and for this information (links to Policies etc) to be regularly reviewed and kept up to date.

Divestment in companies, banks and corporations that trade in arms, hydrocarbons and/or that promote or continue to investment in research and business that counter/contradict action towards net 0, conservation of biodiversity, full implementation of human rights of indigenous peoples, or that are unengaged or have no plan to facilitate achievement of SDGs
A compost bin and garden. A big discount if you bring your own mug and tupperware to the canteen.
I'm an online student so please disregard my answers for in-person questions above (I chose to middle options to not skew your results). Due to online studies, I don't know what the current state of SOAS' sustainability is.
More could be done on social sustainability aspects: inclusion for both on and off-campus students,
More opportunities to engage in sustainable activities or events throughout the academic year. Greater awareness of the university sustainable practices. Transparency from any sustainable groups or committees and the involvement of students in these groups.
More communication on action regarding sustainability
More info and awareness raising among students, having focus group discussions with students on what can improve and experts on the matter to talk to students. Especially on the focus group discussions, I believe it can increase participation and commitment, if done properly
Stop replacing manual tech with items that require fuel - you now need electricity to wash your hands and to flush a toilet: there are manual solutions for both of these - why implement electrical
Any chance of influencing UoL to reduce the number of times they use a leaf blower:) /mow the grass? A particular low point was seeing a person mowing the patch of [soil] between torrington square and soas - the area had had containers on it for some time in 2022-23 - when the containers were removed, a gardner came and "mowed the grass". There was no grass. He was mowing soil. Presumably using a good litre of petrol to do so. Similarly the leaf blower dude is out there on a regular basis, leaf or no leaf.
Insulate the windows, walls etc. reduce or eliminate portable heaters.
Don't throw away serviceable items.
I would like to see sustainability as part of learning and teaching and research.
Don't know enough about it, as a distance learner (hence the answer "never" above.
More engagement and communication with regards to sustainable practices
0 waste in the kitchen.
Water conservation efforts known to students & staff.
Maybe a larger awareness. I haven't seen any initiatives though I am sure they have been put into place

13. How important is it for SOAS to have a Sustainability Strategy

48 Responses

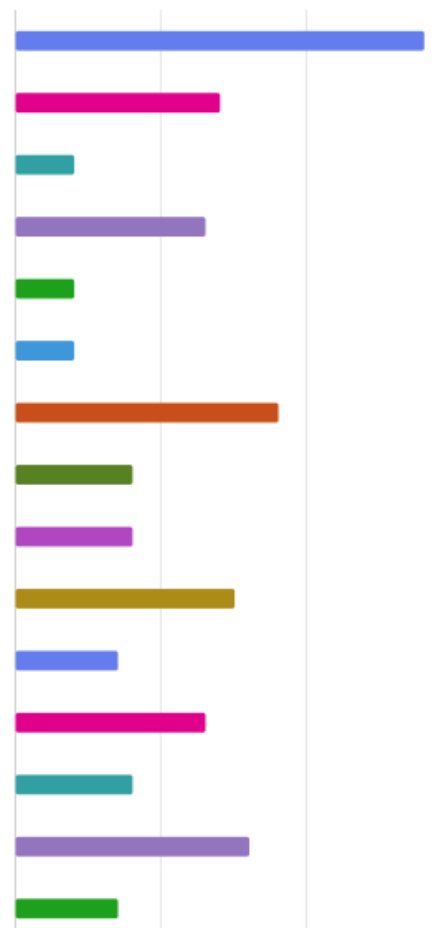
Extremely important	41
Quite important	5
Neutral	2
Minor importance	0
Not important at all	0

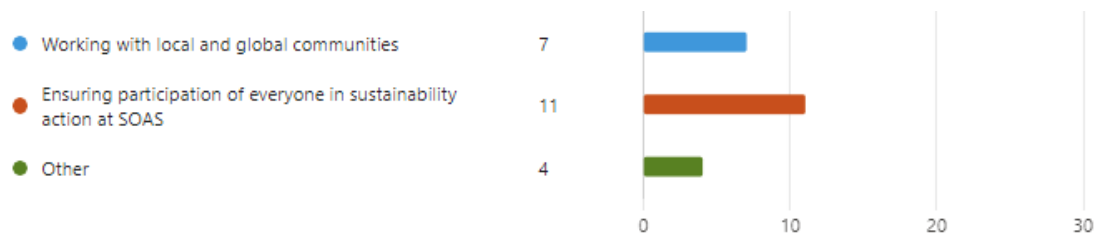


14. In your opinion, which of the following should be the top priorities in the university's sustainability strategy? Choose 3.

48 Responses

Reducing carbon footprint	28
Improving energy efficiency	14
Enhancing biodiversity	4
Improving waste management and recycling	13
Conserving water	4
Contributing to environmental protection	4
Supporting social equity and inclusion	18
Ensuring economic sustainability	8
Guaranteeing sustainable procurement	8
Embedding sustainability in the curriculum	15
Improving health and wellness	7
Guaranteeing sustainable investment	13
Offering sustainable food choices	8
Conducting impactful research on sustainability	16
Enhancing green spaces	7





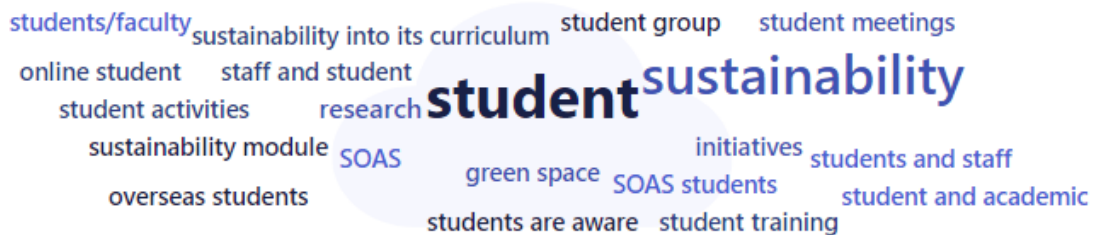
15. Do you feel you have a forum to raise your concerns around issues of sustainability at SOAS?

48 Responses



16. Are there specific actions or initiatives you would like to see included in a SOAS Sustainability Strategy?

48 Responses [Update](#)



Question 16: Are there specific actions or initiatives you would like to see included in a SOAS Sustainability Strategy?

Qualitative responses from survey respondents

A firm commitment to staff and student training (mandatory e learning on the topic as well as what SOAS is doing) Regular agenda item for all board meetings (Executive Board, Board of Trustees etc) Sustainability requirements included in job specs Clear plans to achieve specific goals with regular reporting (via Boards) Achievements celebrated and shared widely (Green Gown awards etc.).
Reduce use of paper and plastic
It would be useful to better understand whether we are capturing what we are currently doing in any way at the moment. Perhaps some sort of stock-take of initiatives and data would be helpful?
sustainability starts from aligning managerial goals with socio-environmental goals.
linking research and teaching to SDGs. More visibility of what SOAS is doing. More spaces for conversations.
Reduce Scope 3 emissions and the environmental footprint of financial investment
1) Having all students take a mandatory sustainability module when they start at SOAS, and a sustainable prize e.g. students committed to travel more sustainably. Offering to offset some of the money involved in traveling e.g. for study abroad year, if it is in Europe, offsetting some of the cost only if taking trains rather than flying 2) Only offering plant-based food at cafeterias and canteens. I'm not vegetarian but I'd welcome the initiative - if you have the option to have animal products, you are much more likely to choose it over plant-based.
Air travel (by students and staff) accounts for over 90% of the GHG emissions associated with the university's activities. The university must develop a strategy to reduce this as much as possible. This could include: increased reliance on remote conferencing instead of in-person; increased use of remote teaching methods and exams; creation of global hubs so that not all students have to travel to London to receive a SOAS education; offering compressed 2-year undergraduate programs in order to reduce travel requirements for overseas students; encouraging overseas students to return home less often during the academic year, perhaps by creating incentives to stay in London during the vacation periods; funding academic research on how to reduce the environmental impact of overseas students and international research projects.
- more green energy sources - transparency and encouragement surrounding the initiative so that everybody is aware of it
SOAS could be a showcase for sustainable ideas from around the world, thereby showing what we can learn from often less-developed countries and enhancing its own sustainability whilst visibly fulfilling its mission.
An all plant based cafeteria. It's the most inclusive diet and it helps to bring down the carbon footprint, set an example for others and shows real commitment for change.
Sustainable travel that is not generic but thinks through issues of social inclusion and equity as well.
Wellness and health: I know that staff had access to therapy via some online portal at some point but I felt a bit wary to use it because so much information had to be given that somehow I didn't

feel safe using the service. So maybe giving us access to therapy sessions where we trust our confidentiality will be respected would be good.
As before, better use of the green space - perhaps the introduction of wild flowers for biodiversity. Also, if not a thing already, maybe a student group to feed into the strategy - could be a student club introduced at welcome week. That way students can feed into the group, and they can feed into staff/student meetings so voices are heard.
How to invest profit to enhance sustainability
encouraging recruiting internally, those who feel belonging and have been immersed in SOAS life, can be the best to invest on
Green spaces, reusable water bottles given to staff and students (either free or very lowly priced), plastic bags exchange point (for customers at the stores, for instance).
Perhaps a forum for staff and students to contribute. And to share ideas and good practice. Energy efficiency should be built in to any building and development work.
much stronger communication about sustainability to all on campus and externally sustainability in the curriculum required professional development for all staff
Sort out recycling and composting
See above. A system-based approach.
Green space. Mental health support. More marketing.
As a part of institutional sustainability, the student and academic communities would like to see the implementation of a complete programme of transparency measures regarding our governance, processes the details of which are at the moment almost completely inaccessible. The University's failure to publish even basic minutes for meetings within the required period, as well as up-to-date lists of trustees, committees, and even comprehensive org charts, leaves the decision-making process at the head of the institution functionally opaque even to those with a specific interest in proceedings.
I wouldn't limit to the 3 choices above as many are interlinked, so many of the topics should be covered looking at the socio-political ecology in which SOAS sits.
A dedicated sustainability officer for the School that is an employed professional services staff member (rather than just someone with an existing full-time post who is given the responsibility/title on top of or as part of their existing work).
Review and update the ethical investments policy, publish sustainability efforts/initiatives (including the strategy) on the SOAS website.
Investment/Divestment strategy. The strategy should also include a research component in order for enlarging our input into COPs of Rio Conventions (Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification)
To have a green pension.
- Composting and looking to include human waste management like dry toilets. - Enhancing green spaces with more native trees and plants, potentially creating wildlife corridor with nearby communities if possible. Look for strategic locations for more green areas, like car parks or other fully concreted areas. - Reducing energy and water use to the minimum. - Prioritising minority groups in decision making, participation, involvement. - Go beyond sustainability to look at regenerative practices in communities and built environments. - Designing walking and biking friendly campus.

- Divesting from following industries: fossil fuel, agrochemicals and conventional agriculture, and mining. - Providing funding for students to start own socioenvironmental initiatives on campus.
Some key initiatives I would like to see are: -carbon action - SOAS having its own carbon neutral target + students/faculty initiative to change behaviours (assuming procurement and traveling are part of SOAS's Scope 3, a lot seem to be available as options) -social equity and inclusion - hard to see the current status now, being an online student, but probably we could move away from being antagonistic and to healthy, constructive criticism to achieve equity and inclusion both on-campus and off-campus
Having an annual sustainability week where staff can showcase their research, the university can provide updates on progress on any actions/metrics to be held accountable, student activities/events and external speakers from around the local community and those that are producing impactful research.
Thinking of future generations I would think that a sustainability module should be mandatory for all SOAS students. A minimum understanding of climate change should be introduced to ALL.
Communication
As a university, SOAS can act as a multiplier for sustainability and the related values. This is why those multiplier-activities (mostly downstream, such as embedding sustainability into its curriculum & impactful research, and social inclusion (which can be seen both as up- and downstream)) need to become the core of its strategy, whilst also addressing the other elements, such as carbon footprint or biodiversity.
Student retention and completion are vital to our continued existence as an institution - and similar on research side. Both of which are underpinned by excellence in managing staff and having the right staff and retaining staff for a suitable amount of time By operational excellence too
Embed sustainability in the curriculum
Increase research, engagement and support in sustainability; Offer all students the opportunity to study sustainability; embedding sustainability in the University's governance and decision-making
We spoke about a workshop which I think would be quite useful as it would insure all students are aware.

APPENDIX 5 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Sustainability strategies, plans and initiatives

1. In your opinion, what are the most important areas of sustainability or sustainable development initiatives that universities should pursue?
2. What strategies or initiatives are you aware of that SOAS has adopted that contribute towards sustainability of our organisation?
3. Can you suggest other areas of sustainability that SOAS should be actively involved in?
4. Can you suggest areas of sustainability that SOAS students could be actively involved in?
5. What is your opinion about the value of incorporating Education for Sustainable

Interchange this question with staff training where relevant.

B. Implementation

6. What benefits and challenges do you think there would be in implementing a unified strategy for sustainability at SOAS? Operational and buy in from all
7. How important is it to you that your workplace takes an active stance on sustainability in their institutional policy?

Interchange this question where relevant with:

How important is it that SOAS prioritises sustainability and what resources are likely to be available for sustainability actions?

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Terms of Reference:

Sustainability Committee

The role of the Sustainability Committee is to ensure there is an integrated, proactive approach to Sustainability across the institution that is informed by best practice, and supports the achievement of the University's values, objectives and strategy.

The Committee will steward and work in close partnership across the institution to develop a culture of practice and process to facilitate streamlining of Sustainability considerations across the university. This will be achieved through the Committee's oversight and responsibility of the SOAS Sustainability Strategy to be implemented across teaching and learning, research and our operational environment.

Reporting

The Sustainability Committee will report to the Senate twice a year. The Sustainability Committee will report to the Executive where there are matters that are related to policy and/or financial allocations), and to endorse recommendations prior to formal approval by the Senate.

Membership

The membership of the Sustainability Committee will comprise:

Chair

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

Ex-Officio Members

- College Deans
- Director of Estates and Programmes
- Head of Planning
- Head of Sustainability
- Director of Global Learning and Teaching
- Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange
- Director of Marketing, Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Communications
- Director of People
- Director of Finance and Procurement
- SOAS Student Union Sabbatical Officer
- 2 elected members of Senate

Secretary

The secretariat will be provided by the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange

Meetings

The Committee will normally have two ordinary meetings per annum, and the quorum will be a third of members.

Standing Committees

The Sustainability Committee will appoint and approve the Terms of Reference for the Sustainability Working Group and will receive regular reports from this group and approve.

The Committee will also have close linkages with the group delivering the Net Zero Strategy and will receive a progress report at each meeting.

Terms of Reference

The Sustainability Committee will have the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) Act the delegated authority within SOAS to oversee the implementation of the Sustainability, and Net Zero strategies – recommending agreed objectives and targets to meet the agreed commitments
- (b) To champion and develop a culture of Sustainability within the institution through collaboration and engagement across the wider SOAS community
- (c) To lead on the stewardship of all the interventions delivered as part of the Sustainability strategy, requiring a clearer mapping of what a “whole-of-institution” commitment to social justice entails, that would cross a number of other institutional workstreams and strategies. Some examples may include the Access and Participation Plan, a strategy for scholarships and strategy for Student Advice and Wellbeing.
- (d) To ensure the Sustainability agenda remains a priority and highly visible within the institution, the development of institutional strategies, through regular communication and engagement across the SOAS community, and is embedded in the operations of the institution
- (e) To consider strategic communications internally and externally, publicising key initiatives or progress on Sustainability / Net Zero Strategy delivery
- (f) To advise and update Senate on the progress made in delivery of the Sustainability Strategy against agreed commitments and target indicators
- (g) To consider and advise on the development of policies, procedures and guidance documents to ensure Sustainability is considered and embedded in operation of the institution

- (h) To monitor SOAS' position and ranking on university league tables focussed on Sustainability, including People and Planet, QS Sustainability, and THE impact
- (i) To receive reports and updates from the Sustainability Working Group and the Net Zero Working group to oversee implementation of these strategies, and to review potential risks and issues that may impact on agreed delivery timescales
- (j) To support the Sustainability Working Group to unblock any obstacles impacting on delivery of the Strategy

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Terms of Reference:

Sustainability Working Group

The focus of the Sustainability Committee is to deliver the commitment set out in the SOAS Sustainability Strategy across the five domains of Education, Research, Collaboration and Engagement, Social Responsibility, and Campus Environment.

Reporting

The Sustainability Working Group will report to the Sustainability Committee twice a year. The Sustainability Working Group will report to the Executive where there are matters that are related to policy and/or financial allocations to fully inform recommendations to the Sustainability Committee

Membership

The membership of the Sustainability Working Group will comprise:

Joint Chair

- Dean CoDEF
- Director of Estates and Programmes

Ex-Officio Members

- Head of Sustainability
- Head of EDI and Wellbeing
- Head of Procurement
- Communications
- 3 academic representatives (one per College)
- Representative from Planning Department
- 3 college student representatives (UG/PG)
- Head of Research Development and Delivery
- Head of Education Strategy

Secretary

The secretariat will be provided by **TBC**

Meetings

The Committee will normally have five ordinary meetings per annum, and the quorum will be a third of members.

Terms of Reference

The Sustainability Working Group will have the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To work as a multidisciplinary group to develop actions and plans to implement the commitments set out in the Sustainability strategy
- (b) To champion and encourage a culture of Sustainability within the institution, to ensure this agenda is prioritised and embedded in the operations of the institution
- (c) To advise and update the Sustainability Committee on the progress made in delivery of the Sustainability Strategy against agreed commitments and target indicators
- (d) To consider and advise on the development of policies, procedures and guidance documents to ensure Sustainability is considered and embedded in operation of the institution
- (e) To escalate any risks or issues that may impact on the quality or timeliness of delivery of the Sustainability strategy
- (f) To develop systems in which to measure and monitor the impact of Sustainability interventions and ability to report progress against agreed targets

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