

University of Hertfordshire Health, Welfare and Sustainability in Food Policy 2023

The University of Hertfordshire is committed to creating a healthy and sustainable catering operation aligned with the institutional Environment and Sustainability Framework and Wellbeing Strategy.

Scope:

This Policy is focused on the provision and procurement of food in all the catering outlets within the main University campuses as well as our hospitality provisions across the entire university:

College Lane

- Forum – including Food Court, Shop, Starbucks and Subway
- Café Rore
- Gallery Café
- LRC café
- Spectra Café

De Havilland

- Food Court
- Café Sport
- Café Ambition

This policy sets out aims and objectives for the period 2024-2029 as well as targets that can assist in monitoring its implementation based on our strong sustainability principles. This policy will be reviewed each year and is the foundation for the University of Hertfordshire Sustainable Food Action Plan.

Aims:

The key aims of the policy are as follows:

- To source food with high environmental, local, seasonal, and ethical standards across our entire operation
- To offer customers healthy and sustainable food options regardless of their dietary restrictions
- To monitor and reduce the carbon footprint of the food we offer
- To reduce waste arising from our food operations, including food waste and single-use serveware.
- To maintain communication and transparency with the university students and staff

Commitments and targets:

As part of its pledge to offer a healthy, sustainable, and ethical catering service, the university is setting a number of commitments across all activity areas of its operations. Progress against these commitments will be reported on in the University of Hertfordshire Environment and Sustainability Annual report.

Food and Sustainability standards

To explore, work towards, achieve and maintain food standards that promote sustainable, ethical, healthy, and socially responsible catering practices where possible.

Communication

To engage with stakeholders at all levels and ensure that our catering commitments are both representative and clearly communicated through various channels.

Ethical sourcing

To source food from supply chains that demonstrate a similar commitment to ethical sourcing where possible.

Environmental impact

To reduce the environmental impact arising from our food offering. This will consider ingredients, transport, supply chains, and packaging. The carbon footprint of our menus will be measured, and steps will be taken to reduce this impact. Low-carbon and plant-based food choices will be promoted through awareness and incentives.

Meat and dairy

To use ethically and sustainably sourced meat and dairy where possible, as demonstrated by relevant certification and scheme participation. To use meat and dairy ingredients in line with our carbon reduction commitments.

Fruit and veg

To include seasonal produce in our catering offering, and purchase our fruit and vegetables under schemes that promote healthy and sustainable sourcing where possible.

Fish

To use ethically and sustainably sourced fish where possible, as demonstrated by relevant certification and scheme participation.

Eggs

To only use free-range eggs in meal preparation, and to source free-range eggs in the supply chain where possible.

Palm oil / soya products

To ensure our palm oil is sustainably and ethically sourced where possible.

Water

To provide free water sources in our catering outlets and offer reusable bottled water. To reduce water consumption in all our catering operations.

Food Choices for the UH Community

We will offer a wide range of food choices for our community, considering religious, cultural, and dietary requirements. We will promote sustainable food choices through environmental impact labelling on all our foods, more sustainable food options, and engagement and awareness initiatives.

Nutrition

We will strive to provide and promote healthy options containing with wholegrains, fruits and vegetables. We will continually review the nutritional quality of our food and work towards reducing the amount of salt, sugar, and fats in our offering.

Catering supply chain

We will encourage our catering partner to work, where possible, with suppliers that demonstrate high ethical, social and sustainable good practices and to work with local and SME suppliers where feasible.

Energy

We aim to be as energy-efficient in our operations as possible. We will measure and report on energy utilisation, and will take steps to improve efficiency where possible in line with our Net Zero Action Plan.

Waste management, serveware and packaging

We aim to reduce waste arising from both food and packaging within our catering provision by phasing out single-use, offering reusable where possible, and working with suppliers to reduce packaging and waste in the supply chain. We have committed to reducing food waste by 30% by 2030.

Sustainable Procurement and Tendering

The University of Hertfordshire will embed the principles of this policy into all future catering and food-related procurement activity, contract renewals, and tender exercises where appropriate.

The University will seek to ensure that suppliers and catering partners demonstrate a clear commitment to sustainable, ethical, and socially responsible practices throughout the tender process and contract lifecycle.

Tender evaluation criteria will, where appropriate, include consideration of:

- Environmental sustainability and carbon reduction commitments
- Waste reduction and circular economy initiatives
- Ethical sourcing and traceability
- Animal welfare standards
- Sustainable packaging and reduction of single-use items
- Support for local suppliers and SMEs
- Modern slavery compliance and responsible employment practices
- Ability to provide transparent sustainability performance data and reporting

The University will encourage suppliers to align with recognised industry standards and certifications relating to sustainable food, environmental management, and ethical sourcing.

Contract specifications and performance management arrangements will include relevant sustainability objectives, KPIs, and continuous improvement measures to support delivery of the commitments outlined within this policy.

Sustainability performance and innovation opportunities will form part of regular contract review meetings with catering partners and suppliers.

Governance and Reporting

The healthy and sustainable food policy will be referenced in relevant UH policies and management plans including:

- Wellbeing strategy
- Environment and Sustainability Framework
- Net Zero Action Plan
- Waste and Resource Management Plan
- Biodiversity Strategy

Progress against policy objectives and targets will be reported on in:

- Environment and Sustainability Annual Performance Report
- Net Zero Progress Report
- Waste working group meetings
- Catering contract meetings
- Estates Sustainability Sub-Committee

Target and KPI	Action	November 2025 update
Standards and Accreditation		
Food for Life (FFL) Served Here bronze standard	Achieve and maintain by 2026 *produce feasibility study by 2025	
Green Kitchen Standard	Achieve and maintain by 2026 *as above	
Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Sustainable Fishing guidelines *MSC? MCS can be actioned.	Achieve and maintain by 2028	
Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)	Explore criteria & economical investment required for accreditation 2025	
Good Egg Awards	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
90% score or above for the university on Sustainable Food section of the People and Planet (P&P) University League rankings	Embed criteria into action plan (new criteria out early 2024 but as mostly linked to existing commitments) *Explore new criteria or aim to embed by 2025	24-25 P&P scoring to be announced early December. 23-24 P&P score is 30%.
Fairtrade University Accreditation	Achieve and maintain by 2025	Costs £1,700+VAT for a 2-year membership.
Communication		
Sustainable Food Working Group	Set up TORs end of 2025	In place and have reviewed TORs.
Recruit Environment & Sustainability officer	Recruit by 2026	In place.
Recruit Student Engagement officer	Recruit by 2026	On hold.
Conduct customer surveys - feedback/focus groups undertaken throughout the year to obtain feedback on menus, prices, quality, sustainability, and choice	Surveys or focus groups to include sustainability questions by 2025	
Sustainability performance to be published through E&S team	Quartering sustainability update meeting starting October 2024	
To provide positive promotion of sustainable food and healthy eating options and benefits as least once a week during term time.	Weekly highlighted offering from September 2024	
Provide training and education and promote recipes encouraging healthier & sustainable food	Provide monthly demo/taster events with recipe cards from 2025	
Ethical Sourcing and Employment		

Provide opportunities for Employment to UH Students	Report on number of student hours employed by 2025	
Provide opportunities for volunteering, work experience & training to all catering staff	Report on *social value initiatives by 2025	
Fruit and Veg		
Fruit and Veg: Ensure that our hospitality menus include seasonal produce and report on this activity.	Create seasonal hospitality offering from September 2024 Required that 20% of the menu reflects seasonal local availability of ingredients	
Environmental Impact		
All catering staff to undertake training in Protecting the Environment & Sustainability	Course added to training package for all team members by 2025	
Measure and reduce the environmental impact of our food	90% of food items produced on site have carbon labelling by 2026 ¹	
Promote lower carbon footprint dishes by highlighting lower carbon footprint dishes on menus	All printed menus on hot counters to have highlighted best choice for lessening environmental impact	
Meat and Dairy		
Reduce meat content in our meals and offerings to support sustainable food consumption	Baseline established by end of 2024 Measure % increase from baseline yearly	
All non-halal meat will be Red Tractor Farm Assured or sourced from suppliers who can demonstrate equivalent welfare standards.	100% of red tractor sourced meat for non-halal	
Where possible, increase RSPCA assured poultry.	%50 of all raw poultry products purchased to be RSPCA assured.	
Ensure milk alternatives to cow's milk is offered at same price.	Scheme running from 2024	
Fish		
Monitor changes to the Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) Good Fish Guide and will not serve any products on the red list of 'fish to avoid'.	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
We will serve a range of fish, particularly beyond the Big 5	Achieve and maintain by 2025	

(prawns, cod, haddock, salmon, tuna).		
Ensure tinned tuna where provided is achieve dolphin safe status	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Eggs		
Only use free range eggs in kitchen production	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
Ensure all premade products purchased use free range eggs	Achieve and maintain by 2029	
Soya / Palm Oil		
Only use products containing palm oil which has Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)	Achieve and maintain by 2028	
Only use soya products that are certified by the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) or ProTerra	Achieve and maintain by 2028	
Water		
Not provide single-use bottled water in the hospitality service.	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
Hospitality water to be provided in reusable water jugs	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
Make free drinking water available at all catering outlets (UH put in fountains in all outlets)	Achieve and maintain by 2027	
Reduce water consumption of the catering operation in the main production kitchens	Create baseline by 2025	
Food choices		
Maintain regular contact with Staff and Student groups to identify any on-going specialist dietary requirements of the student & staff base	Achieve and maintain documented meetings by 2024	
Provide footprint data in both food courts.	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
List vegetarian food first on menus above meat-based choices.	Achieve and maintain by 2025	
Promote a move to plant based diets, by reducing the	Achieve and maintain by 2025	

meat content of meals, in favour of vegetables.		
Make vegan choices available as standard in vegetarian options; at least 50% of offering will be vegetarian and 50% of this offering will be vegan (25%) as well as on hospitality offerings	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Ensure plant-based milk is clearly signposted and offered at coffee points, at same price as cow's milk. Vegan milk alternatives always served with hospitality tea & coffee bookings	Achieve and maintain by 2024	
Nutrition		
Offer fresh, healthy meal options in all catering outlets and hospitality & reduced amount of ultra-processed foods.	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Use healthier cooking oils and cooking methods. Remove hydrogenated fat and other unnecessary additives from all food and ingredients	Achieve and maintain by 2028	
Promote dishes containing a high proportion of wholegrain foods, fruit and vegetables	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Nutritional information on food available on request.	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Supply chain and SMEs		
Use local and SME suppliers where feasible	Report on by 2026	
Available on request for catering suppliers, policies on; Modern slavery Sustainability CRS	Available from 2025	
Energy		
Reduce energy consumption of the catering operation in the main production kitchens	Metering to be installed by UH 2026	

Aim to purchase higher rating appliances when replacing equipment, where feasible	Ongoing	
Waste and Packaging		
Track all food waste created within the catering production & waste from non-sales. Ensure all remaining food waste is disposed of through digestion, composting or energy recovery and no material will be sent to landfill	Tracking to be available from 2026	
Improve waste streams in food outlets to ensure data can be collected.	Continuous improvement plan for waste streams to allow for ever more useful data and increased recycling rates	
Offer discounted short-life products for sale through Too Good to Go and Wipe Out Waste	Available from 2025	
Make non-disposable options available and clearly advertised for all catering offers at the University & Provide reusable mugs, cutlery, plates and cups in the refectories	Available in all outlets by 2026	
Sell hot and cold reusable cups in all catering outlets Promote the use of reusable cups via discount schemes	Achieved and maintained from 2025	
Ensure where disposables must be used then they are to made from environmentally friendly products or recyclable	Achieve and maintain by 2026	
Work with suppliers to reduce packaging and use reusable packaging.	Ongoing improvements with suppliers	
Ensure Surplus coffee grounds are collected for processing into biofuel, composting responsible use of coffee ground waste, or offered to customers as fertiliser	Available from 2025	

Version	Date	Author	Detail
1	01/07/2023	Peter Kousoulou / Nanna Blomquist	New document