



REDUCTION OF SINGLE USE PLASTICS POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's position in relation to the impacts of single-use plastics and the benefits of minimising the use of plastics to our environment.

2.0 STATEMENT

Plastic waste is one of the primary sources of pollution and biodiversity loss. The cleaning of rivers, oceans and cities of plastic waste has been attempted by many countries with varying degrees of success.

According to the UN, more than 430 million tons of plastic are produced each year – two thirds of which is intended for just a single use. Much of this ends up being discarded in general waste, littered into our natural habitats and, increasingly, oceans. The UN website, sharing data from the Ocean Conservancy, estimates that eleven million metric tonnes of plastic enters our oceans every year, on top of approximately 200 million tonnes already flowing through marine environments.

It's clear there's a significant need for change if we're to sustain our world for generations to come. But the plastic problem remains a complex issue. Cheap to produce, durable and endlessly versatile, plastic has become as much a staple of human life as clothing, eating and drinking (and, of course, plastic has become essential in each of these functions!). We can't remove plastic from the world entirely. Instead, we need to find smarter, more responsible and, most importantly, actionable ways to reuse what we have and avoid it ending up in our woodlands and waterways.

3.0 SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to all departments, faculties, and operations within Durham University, including academic, administrative, and support services. It covers all single-use plastic items used in university activities, events, and facilities, encompassing on-campus dining services, procurement, and supply chain practices.

Key areas addressed by the policy include:

Procurement and Supply Chain: Ensuring that departments prioritise suppliers who offer sustainable, reusable, or compostable alternatives to single-use plastics. All new procurement contracts should consider the environmental impact of single-use plastics, aiming to reduce or eliminate them in line with sustainability goals. This policy will extend to our supply chain, including outsourced activities, contracts, and suppliers.

Campus Operations: Reducing reliance on single-use plastics in all campus operations, including catering services, research labs, and administrative functions. This includes items like plastic cutlery, straws, cups, and packaging materials, encouraging the adoption of reusable or biodegradable alternatives.

Event Management: Implementing guidelines to minimise single-use plastic at university events, conferences, and gatherings. Organisers should promote reusable or sustainable options, integrating these practices into event planning and vendor agreements.

Awareness and Engagement: Educating students, staff, and visitors on the importance of reducing single-use plastics and promoting best practices in waste reduction. This involves campaigns, workshops, and resources to support the shift towards a plastic-free campus.

Monitoring and Reporting: Establishing metrics to track progress in reducing single-use plastic use, with regular reporting on outcomes and continuous improvement efforts.

4.0 WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES

With over 21,000 students and 4,500 staff members, the University produces up to 2500 tonnes of waste each year. Waste is generated through the residential Colleges, academic departments, catering outlets, professional service departments, libraries, museums and attractions, the Graham Sports Centre, Durham Student's Union, Green Lane Depot, and from capital building projects.

Whilst we are working to reduce the amount of waste we produce, it's important that every tonne of waste produced is managed in a responsible and compliant way. This strategy and the accompanying action plan, outline how the University will achieve this, in the most sustainable way possible.

We also continue to commit ourselves to sending none of our waste to landfill outside of where we are legally obligated to do so.

Within our Waste Management Strategy, we state our ambitions to reduce usage of disposable and single use items across the estate. We have removed straws and stirrers from all cafes and are always seeking opportunities to remove other items.

We want to extend these practices up our supply chain and are working on a refreshed procurement strategy to achieve this.

We track the amount of waste generated and recycled across the university, see the graph below for our progress over the last few years. These are reported to [HESA](#).

We will produce a graph of waste destinations, highlighting the progress against our institutional target of recycling 70% of our waste by 2042. We will offer a mixed recycling provision across the estate that includes metal, plastics, and card and paper.

5.0 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of this policy.

VERSION CONTROL

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Approved by:	Estates & Facilities
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