

# Charter for Sustainability: Sustainable SUs



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# Introduction

The Sustainable SUs (SSU) is a ground-breaking coalition dedicated to propelling the green transition within the realm of food and beverage services across students' unions (SUs). With a resolute commitment to sustainability, SSU aims to unite SUs in fostering sustainable practices aligned with ambition that delivers choice, nutrition and affordable food service and retail solutions within a modelled Net Zero plan. By harnessing collective action and collaboration, SSU seeks to champion the adoption of low carbon, sustainably produced food and drink options, that also protects nature and biodiversity, thereby ushering in a new era of environmental responsibility and stewardship within our academic community.

Recognising the collective challenge facing the academic community in reaching Net Zero by 2050, A carbon foot printing, measurement and reduction project has been initiated to ensure that scopes 1, 2 and 3 are effectively measured in line with industry standards for both NUS Charity and charter members. The outcome will be a modelled approach to reaching net zero, with agreed actions, short term and long-term targets. This work will be science based and an overarching strategy achieved by Autumn 2024. Reporting templates, mechanisms and frameworks will be made available at this point to aid reporting requirements.

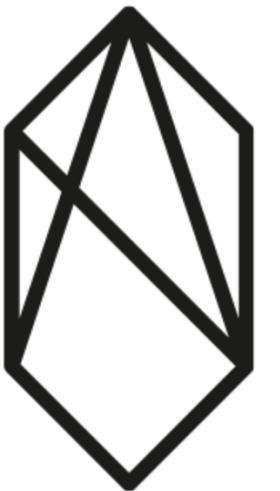
WWF research shows that diet shift is needed to unlock the transition to climate and nature friendly land use and agricultural practices and that a sustainable, affordable, socially acceptable diet is achievable under the LiveWell flexible diet, rich in plants with moderate amounts of meat & dairy. The WWF believes diet shift creates the opportunity for a transition to regenerative farming and frees up land for nature restoration and carbon sequestration.

# Founding members

SSU proudly showcases a distinguished array of founding members, featuring influential organizations like NUS Charity, SOS, and a consortium of pioneering SUs including UCL, Warwick, Nottingham Trent, Edinburgh, and York. Together, they have united to lead the charge towards sustainable food and beverage practices, laying the groundwork for broad acceptance and replication by other Student Unions. Their aim extends to influencing university policies as well.



Edinburgh  
University  
**Students'**  
**Association**



# Purpose

The overarching purpose of SSU is multifaceted:



**Facilitating Transition:** Sustainable SUs acts as a catalyst for Student Unions to transition towards offering low carbon, nature friendly, sustainably sourced food and beverage options. By providing resources, guidance, and collaborative opportunities, Sustainable SUs empowers students' unions to make informed decisions and implement sustainable practices. This not only reduces their environmental footprint but also aligns with the growing demand for eco-conscious consumption among students and the wider community.



**Enhancing Reputation:** Embracing sustainability initiatives through Sustainable SUs membership offers students' unions the opportunity to enhance their brand reputation and credibility. By actively demonstrating their commitment to environmental stewardship, Sustainable SUs members position themselves as leaders in sustainability within their campuses and communities. This fosters trust among students, faculty, and stakeholders, ultimately bolstering their standing as champions of sustainable practices.



**Advocacy and Lobbying:** Sustainable SUs provides a unified platform for Student Unions to engage in impactful advocacy and lobbying efforts. By leveraging collective strength and resources, Sustainable SUs members can effectively advocate for sustainability initiatives both within their individual institutions and on a broader scale. This includes lobbying for policy changes, securing funding for sustainability projects, and raising awareness about environmental issues. Through coordinated action, Sustainable SUs amplifies the voice of Student Unions, influencing institutional policies and driving progress towards sustainable campuses nationwide.

# Students' Union Sustainability Charter

Members of Sustainable SUs are bound by a comprehensive Sustainability Charter, a cornerstone document that articulates our collective dedication to advancing sustainability within students' unions ensuring readiness for legislative, social and economic change. This charter encapsulates a range of concrete commitments meticulously crafted to drive tangible progress towards our sustainability goals.



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# Charter Commitments

## Adopting Sustainable Practices:

Committing to implementing and promoting environmentally friendly practices within our operations, events, and initiatives. This includes reducing waste, conserving resources, and prioritizing renewable energy sources as far as our circle of influence extends.

## Fostering Collaboration and Innovation:

Facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing among students' unions to drive innovation, exchange best practices, and collectively tackle sustainability challenges. Encouraging the development of creative solutions and the exploration of new technologies to advance our sustainability agenda.

## Offering Sustainable Food and Beverage Options:

Ensuring that food and beverage offerings align with sustainable sourcing practices outlined in the better sourcing framework and transitioning food service and food retail to diet-shifting principles aligned with WWF Eating for net zero report. Emphasizing Plant-based options, reducing meat and dairy consumption and the environmental impact of our food services alongside ensuring food justice, choice and equity in food service systems and the collaborative supply chain.

## Advocating for Policy Change:

Using our collective voice to advocate and lobby for policy changes at both institutional and governmental levels that support sustainability initiatives, reduce carbon emissions, and prioritize environmental conservation.

## Promoting Environmental Education and Awareness:

Engaging students, staff, and stakeholders in educational initiatives that raise awareness about environmental issues, promote sustainable diets and lifestyles, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility within students' unions.

## Measuring and Reporting Progress:

Establishing transparent mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on our sustainability efforts. Regularly assessing our performance against established sustainability metrics and benchmarks, and striving for continuous improvement.

# Students' Union Sustainability Charter

## Commitments

These commitments underscore our unwavering dedication to fostering a culture of sustainability within students' unions and beyond. By collectively embracing these principles, we aspire to create positive, lasting impacts on our campuses, communities, and the planet as a whole.

To ensure continuous improvement and accountability, targets outlined in the Sustainability Charter shall be evaluated annually to align with the measuring and reporting process. Through this clause, Sustainable SUs commit to regularly reviewing and adjusting targets based on the outcomes of our monitoring and evaluation efforts. By recalibrating our objectives each year, we ensure that our sustainability goals remain relevant, ambitious, and responsive to evolving environmental challenges and opportunities. This iterative approach enables us to maintain momentum, drive progress, and effectively track our collective impact towards a more sustainable future.



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# Charter Commitments and Targets



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## Procurement Sustainability Target: Sourcing from NUS Services Assured Suppliers:

In further commitment to sustainability, Sustainable SUs pledge to fully source through a collective unified supply chain. To enable supply chain transformation and optimise sustainable sourcing by prioritizing NUS-assured suppliers, Sustainable SUs work together to expediate the change and also demonstrate their dedication to supporting ethical and environmentally responsible practices throughout the supply chain, which will require developing processes on how we integrate, screen and prioritize suppliers on a range of criterion; building a futureproofed approach to ethical sourcing through a fully unified approach.

This target underscores our collective efforts to promote fair labour practices, minimize environmental impact, and uphold high standards of social responsibility in our procurement processes with supplier assurance that includes net zero commitments and a balanced score card approach on 7 key principles of Climate, Animals, Workers, Tax Conduct, Company ethos, agriculture and packaging. Through this commitment, Sustainable SUs aim to leverage their purchasing power to drive positive change and contribute to the advancement of sustainable practices within the wider marketplace and by exerting pressure on suppliers and leverage collective purchasing power to drive change.

### Initial Target:

Members joining the charter agree to be fully compliant within two years of joining the Charter. This will involve on-boarding any local or regional suppliers that pass the supplier assurance.



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## Carbon Emissions Measurement and Publication:

Members commit to accurately measuring and transparently publishing their organization's scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions on an annual basis, through the charter approved scheme thereby fostering accountability and enabling informed decision-making. Members commit to only use third party agencies or consultants approved by SSU to ensure the data collection and measurement methodology is aligned to give an accurate and future proofed approach to collectively reaching net zero. The net zero reporting scheme will set a short term and a long term target to net zero by Autumn 2024 and members will be involved in the action setting process along with cost modelling for the collective supply chain.

Initial Target: Autumn 24

Date for completion:



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## Annual Environmental Statement:

Members undertake to annually update and publish an environmental statement outlining their sustainability policies, initiatives, and progress towards sustainability targets, ensuring transparency and accountability to stakeholders. This publication is in line with SSUs statement and is to be published with the student's union so as to be visible by it's members.

Initial Target: Compliant

Date for completion: Members joining the charter agree to environmental reporting In the first year after joining the charter



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## Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture:

Members commit to progressively increasing the proportion of food and beverage products sourced from sustainable agricultural practices. This target will involve a modelled agreement to source from a selected network of British Farms to reduce and eventually remove intensively farmed and ecologically damaging livestock and produce from the supply chain.

As part of this commitment members aspire to integrate organic products into their offerings. This commitment seeks to promote organic and biodynamic farming practices, which are inherently more environmentally sustainable than conventional methods.

## Initial Target:

This commitment will form an agreed weighting in the catering tenders. Members agree to provide representation to a working group to investigate ways to drive sustainable agriculture forward within the supply chain and member operations to determine robust, affordable and achievable targets.



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## Environmental Awareness Training:

Members undertake to provide appropriate environmental awareness and carbon literacy training to all staff, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute effectively to sustainability initiatives within their respective organizations.

Initial Target: compliant

Date for completion: Within one year of joining the charter.

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## Investment in Staff Qualifications:

Members commit to investing in the professional development of their staff by ensuring that the organisation is a member of IEMA, enhancing organizational capacity and expertise in sustainability management.

Initial Target: Compliant

Date for completion: Within two years of joining the charter.



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## Promotion of Vegetarian and Vegan Options:

Members pledge to promote vegetarian and vegan food options, ensuring these options are appealing and healthy whilst adopting a less but better approach to meat and dairy products offered on campus with the ambition of only selling responsibly reared animal produce. Members pledge to create an approach to menu development that aids the diet shift approach. This commitment aligns with principles of ethical consumption and supports a transition towards more sustainable dietary choices. In addition, all members pledge to ensure their supply chain honours the animal welfare policy set out in Appendix 1.

**Initial Target:** compliant

**Date for completion:** Within two years of joining the charter members aim for 50% of menus to be non-meat, with a collaborative joined up student education campaign to promote more vegetarian and low carbon eating. Members agree to work collaboratively on introducing menu nudging and choice architecture approaches in their operations.



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## Carbon Labelling and Student Awareness:

Members undertake to implement SSUs approved carbon labelling for all food and beverage products offered on campus, accompanied by a comprehensive student awareness-raising campaign aimed at promoting sustainable consumption practices and driving informed decision-making among consumers.

Initial Target: Compliant

Date for completion: Within one year of joining the charter.

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## Equal Pricing for Plant-Based Alternatives:

Members pledge to offer plant-based alternatives to dairy milk at the same price as dairy products for all hot beverages, thereby incentivizing sustainable dietary choices and reducing barriers to consumption of eco-friendly alternatives.

Initial Target: Compliant

Date for completion: Within two years of joining the charter.



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## Reduction of Single-Use Packaging:

Members undertake to minimize the use of single-use packaging and implement a mandatory charge for single-use cups. Charges are to be determined by individual members based on geographical and economic factors. This commitment aims to discourage the use of disposable items and promote the adoption of reusable alternatives, thereby reducing waste and environmental pollution.

Initial Target: Compliant

Date for completion: At least 50p within one year of joining the charter.



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# Member Benefits



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## Membership in SSU offers numerous benefits including:

Discounts on carbon foot printing , carbon labelling software and training and IEMA membership: Members are eligible for discounts on carbon audits and specialized training programmes aimed at enhancing staff and sabbatical officers' knowledge and skills in sustainability management.

Authorization to use SSU branding: Members have the exclusive authorization to utilize SSU branding and logos in their outlets and promotional materials, thereby showcasing their commitment to sustainability and aligning with a prestigious alliance dedicated to environmental stewardship. A certification scheme will be developed with member involvement.

Campaigning Toolkit: Members receive access to a comprehensive campaigning toolkit designed to facilitate advocacy and outreach efforts aimed at encouraging universities and other stakeholders to adopt and implement SUA commitments, thereby amplifying the alliance's collective influence and driving systemic change towards sustainability within the higher education sector.

Resources, reports and expertise from aligned expert organisations that fully support the charter and its members adding additional credence and support to the collective work.

Being an active part of creating the solution and leading the necessary change.



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# Appendix 1

## Animal Welfare Policy

Sustainable SUs' Animal Welfare Policy applies to all products sourced domestically and internationally. It is inclusive of all relevant species, including but not limited to beef, pork, lamb, poultry, dairy, fish, and laying hens.

All animal protein supplied to Sustainable SUs must comply with the Better Sourcing Framework. This framework sets out a basic, better and best approach to animal welfare.

As a starting point charter members should agree to meet basic animal welfare standards with the produce they sell within two years of joining the charter, set out as:

Meeting minimum guidelines, minimum EU production standards (poultry pigs and dairy). Minimum UK standards, Red tractor (chickens, pigs, beef and dairy)

Additionally, Sustainable SU Charter members agree work to timeline the following by forming a working group on animal welfare standards:

Working collectively to achieve a supply chain with a better standard of animal welfare set out in the better sourcing framework as:

Higher welfare, exceeding minimum UK standards, set out as RSPCA assured on all species, British Lion Mark eggs, Red Tractor indoor enhanced welfare, organic farmers and growers, EU organic farmers and dairy.

And where possible there is a stretch ambition to move to a Best standard of animal welfare as set out in the better sourcing framework as:

EU free range or organic, pasture for life, UK RSPCA Assured (free range and organic).

As an overarching ambition there is an intention to source produce with lower antibiotic footprints in line with better sourcing policies that do not involve intensive industrial production methods.

To implement this policy effectively, suppliers must:

- Demonstrate traceability and legality of all meat sources.
- Provide documentary evidence of accreditation to a farm assurance system.
- Transparently communicate any deviations from standards and seek support to meet them.
- Ensure transparency of performance against the collective animal welfare policy.

Sustainable SUs will:

- Communicate the Animal Welfare policy to all relevant stakeholders.
- Assign senior management oversight of the policy.
- Review and update the policy annually or as needed.
- Collaborate with suppliers to improve animal welfare standards.
- Cease trading with suppliers that persistently disregard the Animal Welfare policy.

The actions and targets in this charter will be reviewed regularly and updated in line with legislation and expert guidance to best achieve the charters agreed purpose and commitments.



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