Sustainable Food and Catering Policy

University of East London

Pioneering Futures since 1898

Vision

The University of East London (UEL) recognises the impact our food and catering services have on the wider climate, both through the direct impact of the services' provision and through the indirect impact on the behaviours of our staff, students, and visitors to our campuses. This policy seeks to set out a framework and vision for sustainable food and catering services across the University.

The Sustainable Food & Catering Policy forms part of the University's approach to tackling sustainability, as defined by our Sustainability Policy. The University is committed to reducing its carbon emissions in line with a Net Zero target of 2030.

As one of the leading Higher educational institutions in London, we at UEL have a responsibility and opportunity to positively impact the health and wellbeing of our staff, our students, our wider community and our planet. And, through our role in education, research, knowledge exchange, innovation and community engagement, we believe we have the potential to make a significant contribution to the long-term health improvement and sustainability of our society.

Scope

This policy applies to all catering outlets across the University estate, including those provided by external contractors, and to our hospitality services for the provision of catering for both internal outlets and for events and conferences. This policy will be reflected in any catering tenders and contracts, where appropriate.

This policy is supplemental to the University's Sustainable Procurement Policy. The procurement of food and catering services is expected to adhere to both policies.

In its Sustainability Policy, UEL commits to supporting the delivery of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The relevant SDGs to this policy are:

- **Goal 2: Zero Hunger**
- **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being**
- **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**
- **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**
- **Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**
- **Goal 13: Climate Action**

Objectives

The following objectives are set out for this policy:

Procurement (SDG 11,12,13)

- Increase the variety and availability of healthy, seasonal, organic and locally sourced food.
- Excluding fish species identified as most at risk by the Marine Conservation Society and choose fish only from sustainable sources such as those accredited by the Marine Stewardship Council.
- Purchase food from Red Tractor farming systems that minimise harm to the environment and enhance animal welfare.
- Purchase coffee and teas from those suppliers with Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance accreditation.
- Avoid purchasing products containing palm oil, where this is not possible due to purchasing constraints, and ensure products contain 100% sustainable, certified palm oil.
- Working with our procurement team to embed sustainability into our supplier contracts, ensuring suppliers meet commitments regarding carbon emissions and packaging.

- Supporting Fairtrade and ethical working standards through our contractors and supply chain.
- Incorporate climate-friendly menu provisions and supplier carbon reporting in tenders
- Our catering partner to explore opportunities to procure perishable items from regenerative agriculture supply chains.

Nutrition and Value for Money (SDG 2,3)

- Prepare perishable food daily using fresh ingredients by our chefs on-site at each restaurant.
- Ensure food offers a healthy diet providing essential nutrition: fluid, protein, vitamins, fibre and food energy.
- Ensure that catering services provide food options that cater to a variety of stakeholders and make sure users are appropriately priced to provide value-for-money food options for students, staff, and visitors.
- Set baselines and targets for reducing ultra-processed food.
- Explore price incentives for healthier, plant-based options and no or low processed food.
- Introduce mandatory nutritional standards that are openly accessible or can be presented when asked.

Environment (SDG 11,12,13)

- Proportionally reduce the sale of meat, fish and dairy products and promote vegetarian and vegan options.
- Reducing the use of dairy and meat-based menus by 40% by 2028. Start by reviewing the baseline within existing menus and report on the reduction progress year on year.
- Prioritise and incentivise reuse and work to phase out and eradicate single-use items (including cutlery and food service packaging) whilst meeting health, safety and accessibility needs
- Seek new solutions to reduce plastic packaging and introduce eco-friendly alternatives.
- Expand eco-friendly packaging to include closed-loop systems products (reusable container schemes like RECUP or OZZI).
- All outlets provide a discount for customers who use reusable food containers and cups and a surcharge for buying in a take-away container.
- Implement a carbon labelling programme with our catering provider to inform people about the carbon impacts of various food options, and to enable them to make environmentally conscious choices.
- Improving energy and water efficiency by investing in machinery, equipment, and processes in support of the UEL's Net Zero Carbon by 2030 target.
- Improve the quality of data on food waste, carbon emissions, and consumer choices.

Food Waste (SDG 12)

- Monitor and minimise food waste, both during the preparation of food and after, in the restaurants and outlets.
- Where appropriate and safe, offer reduced prices or donate unwanted food onsite through Too Good to Go.
- Ensure recycling of used cooking oil.
- Introduce food waste audits and publish annual performance data.

Social Value and Engagement (SDG 3,8,11)

- Plan out food and catering-based engagement programmes, like supporting Welcome week, Fairtrade week, Sustainability Festival, Seasonal Cooking lessons, and Veganuary, just to name a few.
- Ensure the catering provider is embedding social value into their operations, partnerships, and community engagement, like charitable partnerships, food waste reduction programmes, Living Wage accreditation and sustainability-focused training for employees.
- Partner with catering providers who can provide training & employment opportunities for the university community and residents via various programmes like work experiences and graduate programmes.

- Develop our relationships and understand more about local social enterprise organisations, the local catering and foodservice industry, to bring them onto the campus where appropriate or relevant.
- Providing free water fountains in or in a very close vicinity to all catering outlets to ensure access to drinking water.
- Allow staff and students to grow fruit and vegetables in UEL's Community Garden and explore opportunities to collaborate with our catering provider on the same.
- Engaging with the local community and working with student groups, charities to focus on food-based initiatives.
- Communicate our sustainable food commitments and campaigns with staff and students via Intranet pages, social media and Sustainability Newsletters.
- Strengthen links with local food producers like Community gardens, urban farms and allotments.

Monitoring and Accountability

- This policy will be reviewed at least once annually. Adherence to the policy commitments will be monitored on an annual basis and reported to the Estates and Facilities senior leadership team.
- We will publish our annual food and catering impact as a part of our Annual Sustainability Report, with key performance indicators for Scope 3 emissions, disposable vs reusable ratio, food waste, and community impact
- Seek holistic external accreditation that examines key areas like Sourcing, society and environment within one umbrella (e.g., Food Made Good).

Document	Sustainable Food and Catering Policy
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