

ACU Waste Strategy

2023-2025

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1. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this plan is to detail how ACU will reduce the mass of waste that it generates annually. The plan's scope includes objectives and targets, data collection and reporting, tasks and initiatives, and the new national bin standard for ACU.

1.1. OVERVIEW

1. Lower greenhouse gas emissions

- a. A reduction in tonnes of waste sent to landfill will lower ACU's greenhouse gas emissions (most greenhouse emissions from waste are attributable to waste in landfill)
- b. Waste is responsible for around 3% or 250 - 300 tonnes of ACU's greenhouse gas emissions
- c. This outcome supports ACU's aim to reach net zero emissions by 2040;

2. Operational cost savings

- a. In the five years to end 2022, ACU spent around \$1 million on waste collection by waste contractors but this figure does not include the full set of waste management costs.

3. Improved reputation

- a. Reduced waste volume will improve ACU's reputation as an environmentally-responsible organisation among groups such as students, staff, other Universities (through the TEFMA annual survey), and investors in the ACU Sustainability Bond.

2. Objectives and targets

1. The objective of ACU's waste management strategy is to reduce the amount (tonnes) of waste that the University generates.
 - a. The baseline year for this plan is 2019, when ACU generated 681 tonnes of waste (including 400 tonnes of landfill)
2. Waste management targets will be set for each calendar year and added to section 8 of this plan.

3. Background

In 2019 ACU generated 681 tonnes; 402 tonnes, or 59%, was sent to landfill. In 2022, ACU generated 379 tonnes of waste and sent 202 tonnes, or 53%, to landfill.

As at 2023, ACU collects waste for each of the following materials:

1. Alkaline batteries
2. Cardboard
3. Cell phones
4. Coffee pods
5. Comingled recyclables
6. Confidential waste (paper containing confidential information)
7. Electronic waste
8. Fluorescent lighting
9. Food waste
10. Garden waste
11. Landfill waste
12. Office paper
13. Printer cartridges

4. Waste data management and reporting

4.1. DATA SOURCE

ACU's waste contractor supplies ACU's National Sustainability Manager with a spreadsheet containing the following data, each month, for each waste stream:

1. The date of collection
2. The volume of waste collected
3. The mass of waste collected
4. The cost of each instance of waste collection

4.2. DATA MANAGEMENT

The data is uploaded to the ACU Data Hub's Waste and Recycling dashboard showing each of the following, for each waste stream, for each campus, by month and year:

1. Waste costs
2. Waste tonnes
3. The ration of waste costs to waste volumes
4. Performance against annual waste targets

4.3. DATA REPORTING

All ACU staff will have access to the waste and recycling dashboard and ACU will report its waste management data annually to the following third parties:

1. The Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association, and
2. The Times Higher Education Impact Ranking

4.4. WASTE MANAGEMENT TASKS AND INITIATIVES

Annex B lists the current year's waste management priorities, projects and tasks.

5. Plastic waste minimisation plan

5.1. OVERVIEW

Plastic waste is major source of immediate and long-term environmental damage. ACU aims to progressively reduce its consumption of plastic and to continuously improve its diversion of its plastic waste from landfill. This plan details the actions that ACU is taking and plans to take to minimise its demand for plastic.

5.2. PLASTIC SOURCES

The main types of plastic goods that ACU consumes are as follows:

1. Single use plastic such as beverage and takeaway containers and other foodware;
2. Laboratory items such as pipettes, specimen jars, syringes, catheters, and blood collection tubes;
3. Office supplies, such as pens, laminated wrapping, folders, hole punchers, sticky tape and its dispensers, file dividers, glue sticks, clips and clamps, whiteboard markers, and pencil sharpeners, bin liners,
4. Event waste, such as plastic bags, promotional items, foodware, balloons, bin liners and some decorations
5. Toner cartridge casings

5.3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this plan are as follows:

1. Identify the scope of ACU's plastic consumption:
 - Audit the quantities and cost of plastic goods purchased by ACU
 - Audit the longevity, recyclability or reusability of plastic goods purchased by ACU
2. Identify the business needs that require ACU to purchase of each major type of plastic goods;
3. Identify more sustainable types of goods to meet ACU's business needs;
4. Develop the business case for replacing plastic goods with more sustainable goods
5. Progressively procure more sustainable goods to replace plastic goods purchased by ACU / implement process changes to minimise or eliminate plastic products

5.4. KEY PROJECTS

This plan identifies the following projects to reduce plastic demand and increase the rate at which plastic waste is recycled on ACU campuses in the period 2023 – 2025.

Plastic goods audit

1. Conduct a desktop audit of ACU non-salary expenditure to identify the main types of purchased plastic products and their cost
2. Conduct an observational audit of those products to determine their longevity, recyclability and reusability

Business needs review

1. Identify the business requirement(s) met by the main types of purchased plastic products
2. Identify alternative market offerings to those plastic products and/or identify alternative processes to minimise or eliminate the requirement for ACU to purchase those plastic products
3. Develop the business case for replacing plastic products with more sustainable products
4. Collaborate with ACU business units and Faculties to implement a new process or procure more sustainable products

5.5. MONITORING AND REPORTING

Data collection

Refer to section 4, Waste Data Management and Reporting, for details of ACU's waste data collection and reporting. Where required, specific data collection tasks will occur to support targets.

Review

This plan will be reviewed biannually, in Q1 and Q3 of each year. The National Sustainability Manager will conduct the review in collaboration with representatives from Facilities Management, Marketing and External Relations, and ACU clubs and societies.

6. Disposable waste minimisation plan

Disposable items such as single-use plastics and other non-recyclable materials pollute the air, water and soil and deplete natural resources. As part of its commitment to sustainability, ACU will progressively minimise the use of disposable items on its campuses as multiple-use and long-life products become available to replace disposable products, and as new ways of working enable ACU to reduce its consumption of disposable items.

Aim

This plan aims to reduce the use of disposable items used by the university in its operations, and by staff, students, contractors and visitors while on campus.

Objectives

Communicate:

- Ongoing supply of information to students, staff and contractors about the environmental impacts of disposable items and the university's aim to minimise its use of disposables.
- Promote specific initiatives to reduce or eliminate disposable items from campus operations and student and staff campus experience.

Identify sustainable alternatives:

- Continuously engage with suppliers to identify reusable alternatives to disposable items commonly used at ACU or by its contractors.
- Engage with suppliers through ACU's procurement function to communicate ACU's preference for reusable items.

Leverage campus design to reduce demand for disposables:

- Work with key ACU staff and stakeholders to ensure that campuses are supplied with facilities, infrastructure and services that reduce demand for disposable goods. Examples include drinking fountains to reduce demand for disposable water bottles and the rationalisation of bins to reduce demand for bin liners.

Foster community and supplier collaboration:

- Partner with local organisations, businesses, and government to identify opportunities to collaborate on projects that reduce demand for disposable goods or ensure their reuse and recycling.
- Develop shared plans with university contractors to reduce their use of disposable items in the delivery of their services to the university.

Support low-waste campus events:

- Collaborate with events staff, facility managers, and student groups to develop plans and procedures that deliver low-waste events as standard on campus.

Measure, monitor, evaluate and revise:

- Establish a baseline of priority disposable items to reduce or eliminate, monitor progress toward those reduction and elimination goals, evaluate program effectiveness, and revise the program as required.

7. Hazardous waste management plan

Hazardous waste is any waste that has the potential to harm human health. Accordingly, managing hazardous waste is crucial to ensure the safety of students, staff, visitors and the environment. The following plan outlines key steps to effectively manage hazardous waste at ACU:

Hazardous Waste Identification:

Develop an inventory of hazardous waste sources in ACU operations and identify staff appointments with responsibility for managing the handling, storage and disposal of that waste.

Hazardous Waste Minimisation:

- Promote the reduction of hazardous waste generation through efficient processes and product substitution.
- Implement proper inventory control to reduce over-purchasing and waste.
- Encourage the use of less hazardous alternatives when possible.

Hazardous Waste Storage:

- Designate and secure storage areas for hazardous waste.
- Ensure proper labelling and segregation of different types of hazardous waste.
- Provide adequate containment measures to prevent spills or leaks.
- Maintain a log of waste generation and storage.

Training and Education:

- Develop and provide training programs for staff, faculty, and students on the safe handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste.
- Emphasize the importance of adhering to regulatory requirements and safety protocols.

Hazardous Waste Disposal:

- Contract with authorized and licensed hazardous waste disposal facilities to ensure proper disposal.
- Establish clear procedures for packaging, labelling, and transporting hazardous waste to the disposal site.
- Keep records of waste disposal activities for compliance and reporting.

Emergency Response:

- Develop and communicate emergency response plans for hazardous waste incidents, including spills and leaks.
- Provide the necessary equipment, such as spill kits and personal protective gear.
- Conduct regular drills and training exercises to prepare for emergency situations.

Recordkeeping and Reporting:

- Maintain detailed records of hazardous waste management activities, including waste generation, storage, and disposal.
- Ensure timely reporting of hazardous waste data to regulatory authorities.

Review: This plan should be periodically reviewed, updated, and adapted to evolving regulations, technologies, and best practices in hazardous waste management. Compliance with legal requirements and a commitment to safety and sustainability should be at the forefront of the university's approach to managing hazardous waste.

8. Waste targets:

2023:

Objective: reduce total waste generation

Target: limit total waste generation to no more than 435 tonnes

Objective: reduce greenhouse emissions from waste generation

Target: implement food waste collection at all campus cafes and in all staff kitchens

2024:

TBC

2025:

TBC