

1. Principles and Commitments

We are committed to delivering a food and catering offer that is:

- **Sustainable by design** – embedding environmental and social criteria into procurement, contracts and operations
- **Inclusive and accessible** – offering affordable, nutritious food that meets diverse dietary, cultural and lifestyle needs
- **Health-promoting** – supporting balanced diets and limiting ultra-processed foods
- **Transparent and accountable** – supported by monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement
- **Community-centred** - supporting healthy and nutritious diets, sustainability education, and community wellbeing through responsible food procurement and catering services.

Core commitments:

- Sustainability embedded in all catering tenders and contracts
- Alignment with approved procurement frameworks
- Commitment to reducing emissions, waste and single-use materials
- Focus on long-term sustainability outcomes, prioritising initiatives that deliver enduring impact rather than short-term or reactive trends
- Supporting ethical sourcing, traceability, and high animal welfare standards
- Annual monitoring and reporting of progress at a senior level

2. What We Are Already Doing

2.1 Sustainable Sourcing & Procurement

- Procurement decisions informed by the University [Procurement Policy](#).
- Use of [TUCO](#) and [APUC](#)-approved suppliers with strong sustainability criteria
- Use of **wholesalers** to reduce vehicle movements and emissions
- **Traceable sourcing**, including:
 - MSC-certified fish sourced from local supplier, with boat-to-outlet traceability
 - Meat with full **field-to-plate traceability (includes local suppliers)**
- Supplier requirements aligned with sustainability policy and continuous improvement expectations
- Use of suppliers demonstrating sustainability leadership (e.g. **Fresh Express and Coffee Conscience**)
- **Adaptive procurement**: including the use of bottled oat milk from local supplier Brose Oats during periods of peak demand, alongside the reintroduction of 4-gallon Pergal units in high-volume coffee shops and in support of summer programmes.

2.2 Food Standards and Menu Design

- Commitment to:
 - Always offering **plant-based options**
 - Reducing **ultra-processed foods**

2.3 Operations and Energy

Since 2015, Hospitality Services have reduced their electricity consumption by 40% and their gas usage by 30%, thanks to a phased replacement of gas appliances with electrical and more efficient models, with our year-on-year carbon emissions reduction targets of 5% having been met since 2015.

In 2024 Energy efficiency achievements were recognised through Green Kitchen Standard accreditation.

- Investment in **efficient, low-carbon kitchen equipment**:
 - Variotek, IPro, I hexagon systems (James Watt Building), Foster Gpro 2 fridges (1st in Scotland)
- Transition to **electric/induction cooking** underway – Reiber induction hobs
- High-capacity storage to **reduce delivery frequency**
- Operational efficiencies:
 - Replacement of linen tablecloths with poly cotton that can be washed onsite and do not require ironing - mileage / energy savings

- Innovative layout of dishwashers / procurement of dual wash compartments - saving energy, water, enabling small and multiple loads in same footprint, water use
- **Granuldisc system** for pot washing (saving ~1 million litres of water annually, extended life of equipment and took away 6 double sinks), plus pressurizing supplier to develop biodegradable granules to remove microplastics from wastewater stream

2.4 Waste and Circular Economy

Since 2015 Food waste weights have decreased, thanks to a comprehensive food waste management plan which ensures that stock is rotated and food is cooked to order.

In addition:

- Established a dedicated [Waste Management Working Group](#) in 2025
- Waste reuse initiatives:
 - Coffee grounds for compost use by landscape team
 - Kitchen oil - filtered to extend life then uplifted for biofuel Improving:
 - Investigation and review of food waste macerator effectiveness, proving that maceration partially flawed as particles of food waste reduced to microscopic and still discharged along with water.
- Ongoing monitoring of food waste volumes and trends.

2.5 Disposables and Packaging

- Long-standing use of **biodegradable disposable cups**
- **Additional charge on single use cups**
- >10 year trial of **reverse vending** in conjunction with Scottish Government and Circularity Scotland.
- Ongoing **review on further reducing or eliminating disposable cups**
- Introduction of alternatives:
 - Introduced pergals for milk in high volume areas (reducing 4pt plastic bottles)
 - Reusable takeaway container options

2.6 Transport and Logistics

- **Reduced deliveries** through:
 - Wholesaler use
 - Bulk storage capacity
- Contribution to emissions reduction through **efficient supply chains**
- Introduced the first **electric vehicles** on campus and have since been used for all on campus deliveries in Edinburgh

2.7 Community

Health and Wellbeing

- Support for:
 - **Foodbanks** ([UniRecycle initiative](#))
 - **Student-focussed support** initiatives, including gifting of items to resident students via our relationship with Dig in, support and funding for ResLife activities, and support for student societies, e.g. use of spaces or support of events like the Multicultural dinner. Employment of students through Unitemps.
 - **Gifted surplus** to requirement cold rooms and fridge to community projects in Glasgow via Coffee Conscience
 - Supporting the library on campus with brain food during exams
- Inclusive provision ensuring accessibility and affordability

Community Food and Growing¹

- Exploration or provision of:
 - Campus [allotment spaces](#) for staff and students (Borders and Edinburgh)
 - Supporting:
 - Volunteering
 - Wellbeing through time in nature
 - Community-building across campus

2.9 Communication & Engagement

- Have explored use of **Carbon labelling of food scheme** (Klimato, 2024)
- Developing **information posters** and revised labelling

2.10 Staff Training & Culture

- Training provided on **Sustainable practices**
- Building a culture of:
 - Continuous improvement
 - Staff engagement in sustainability initiatives

2.11 Recognition and Benchmarking

For 14 consecutive years, the University held the council's Healthy Living Award in at least one outlet on campus. The award scheme has been on hold since March 2020, when it was paused in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ Led by Landscaping staff with support from the Sustainability Unit and academic staff

In 2024, Hospitality Services catering outlets on the Edinburgh Campus achieved the Green Kitchen Standard, administered by the Soil Association's Food for Life programme, recognising best practice in waste reduction, energy management and sustainable kitchen operations. The University will seek continual improvement through annual reassessment and benchmarking against sector-leading standards where resources allow.

- **Green Kitchen Standard** achieved in 2024.
- Annual review and continual improvement approach.
- Investigation of additional external accreditation and benchmarking opportunities, including Fairtrade and vegan accreditation.

3. Forward Plan and Priority Actions

The University will continue to strengthen the sustainability of its food and catering services through targeted actions, measurable improvements, and enhanced reporting. Subject to available resources, the following priority areas have been identified.

3.1 Reduce Food Waste and Improve Resource Efficiency

Actions

- Develop measurable food waste reduction targets.
- Assess and implement food waste reduction initiatives, including evaluation of systems such as the Meiko BioMaster.
- Improve collection and reporting of food waste, recycling and emissions data.
- Strengthen waste segregation through improved signage and communications.
- Continue regular review of food-related waste through relevant governance groups and committees.

3.2 Reduce Single-Use Materials and Support Reuse

Actions

- Explore introduction of returnable cup schemes and review removal of single-use cups.
- Promote the use of reusable cups, bottles and containers.
- Maintain and promote campus water refill facilities.
- Set targets for reducing single-use materials across catering operations.

3.3 Support Sustainable Food Choices

Actions

- Continue to expand and promote plant-based food options, where appropriate and demand exists.
- Enhance visibility of sustainable food choices through menus, communications and campaigns.

- Expand campus growing initiatives where opportunities arise, e.g. orchard.
- Deliver targeted engagement campaigns to encourage sustainable food behaviours.

3.4 Strengthen Sustainable Procurement and Supply Chains

Actions

- Enhance supplier sustainability requirements and accountability through contract management processes.
- Improve monitoring of supplier sustainability performance.
- Explore alignment with recognised and incoming initiatives and standards, including Exchange for Change and other relevant sector frameworks.

3.5 Decarbonise Catering Operations

Actions

- Remove remaining gas ranges and fryers and replace them with electric or induction alternatives by 2027, subject to operational and capital planning requirements.
- Continue identifying opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of catering operations.

3.6 Communication, Reporting and Continuous Improvement

Actions

- Improve public visibility of progress through web content, case studies and communications.
- Report annually through existing sustainability, procurement and governance processes on:
 - Sustainability performance;
 - Progress against targets;
 - Food waste and recycling performance;
 - Food-related emissions;
 - Sustainable procurement outcomes.
- Undertake periodic internal review and maintain alignment with recognised sector frameworks and benchmarking approaches.

3.7 Developing Measurable Targets

As data quality and reporting maturity improve, the University will establish specific, measurable targets relating to:

- Food waste reduction;
- Single-use material reduction;
- Sustainable procurement performance;
- Catering-related emissions;
- Reusable cup and container uptake.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Hospitality Services are responsible for the delivery of catering on our Edinburgh Campus.

They will continue to lead and work closely with colleagues in estates, sustainability and marketing and communications to further develop and promote sustainable food initiatives at the university.

Further details of our Edinburgh Campus catering facilities can be found at: [Catering | Heriot-Watt University](#)