SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY 2012 to 2022

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1. Introduction

Context
Sustainable development (SD) is concerned with ensuring that the physical environment remains intact so that human needs can be met. Sustainable development has emerged in response to concerns about the uneven distribution of wealth around the globe (of which the Millennium Development Goals are one expression – see (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/) as well as the state of the planet. In particular, current concerns focus on the threat to human wellbeing presented by climate change (see Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007, Stern, 2006) but at the same time concerns remain about the integrity of ecosystems (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; United Nations Environment Programme, 2007).

The scale and urgency of these issues are significant with social, ecological and economic issues being interlocked, complex and subject to discontinuities or tipping points. For universities, there is a need to continue both with discipline-specific research as well as to further develop new modes of intellectual investigation bringing together knowledge from many disciplines to engage with this complex, interlocking and ethically imbued problem set. The University develops teaching and knowledge exchange programmes to ensure that the knowledge we develop is transferred to those responsible for policy and user needs within society. The University wishes to deliver this agenda with the minimum detrimental impact on the environment and community, and with a focus on cost control. In addition, there is currently a pressing challenge to address a transition to a low carbon society within a short timescale.

It is within this context that this policy and strategy have been developed. The strategy presented here includes a statement of the University's understanding of sustainable development and expresses a number of aims and objectives to ensure that we can measure our progress.

University mission & strategic plan
The mission of the University of St Andrews is to achieve the highest international standards of excellence in scholarship, manifest in the quality of its research and of its graduates. These aims and aspirations are consolidated into a list of eight key strategic aims (www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/planning).

In paragraph 1.3.4 of the University Strategic Plan, the integrating nature of sustainable development is recognised. In particular, the plan states that:

“The University accepts the challenge of taking an integrated approach to sustainable development that includes use of renewable energy sources, energy efficiencies, attention to the environmental impact of its activities and development of distinctive programmes of teaching, research and knowledge transfer in sustainable development that are recognised as of international excellence.”

The sustainable development strategy outlined here supports the Strategic Plan and develops in more depth the implications of taking an integrated approach to sustainable development.
2. Sustainable Development

Scene setting
Sustainable development has been variously conceptualised with the key policy document in a UK context being the UK Framework for Sustainable Development (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The UK Framework for Sustainable Development

The UK Framework for Sustainable Development also resonates with the Scottish Government’s central purpose. In particular, the aim of the Scottish Government is “to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth” (Scottish Government, 2007). This aspiration is consistent with a desire to achieve a sustainable economy (that is, an economy that operates within environmental limits and results in a healthy and just society where people’s needs are met – see Figure 1). At the same time, such an outcome creates a context within which the needs of future generations can be secured.

The University of St. Andrews seeks to align its policy framework, strategic plan and action plans with the UK Framework conceptualisation of sustainable development. We see our policy, strategy and plan as outlining our contribution to the aspirations of Scotland and the UK in this area. We will deliver our contribution by focusing on our teaching, research and knowledge exchange as well as how we conduct ourselves in their delivery.
3. Governance

Governance Goals for 2012 – 2022
Currently the governance of sustainable development aspects associated with the impact of the University estate is clearly linked to sustainable development priorities. The governance of sustainable development priorities outside of the estates management, however, is not fully developed. Although this is the case, significant sustainable development initiatives are undertaken outside of estates supported by the commitment and enthusiasm of staff, Schools and Units.

The University proposes to implement the following governance structure to ensure that sustainable development is accorded the appropriate level of support and commitment within the institution.

Proposed Governance Structure
Leadership and responsibility for sustainable development will be incorporated, where appropriate, into the job descriptions and responsibilities of senior staff. This provides a clear signal of academic and operational leadership for this area and the importance of sustainable development to the University.

A Sustainable Development Group (SD Group) has been created to guide sustainable development strategies and actions within the University. This group will link senior management and governance of the University with implementation of the sustainable development vision. Moreover, this group will be the body that will be held accountable for this strategy.

The SD Group will report to PARC and will provide a link between the core contributors to achieving our sustainable development strategy. In addition, the SD Group will interact closely with Units to ensure that their actions support the University’s Sustainable Development Strategy 2012 to 2022. Appropriate representation drawn from existing committees will allow effective liaison. Moreover, there will be external representation that links the work of this committee to external stakeholders (such as local, regional and national government) as well as representation from our student body. The Master of the United College chairs this group. The SD Group will have the expertise to create improved delivery of sustainable development across the four areas of:

- Teaching
- Research
- Operations
- Community Engagement
The SD Group will lead on the following processes:

- Capacity building at an institutional level to ensure PARC, Court, the Principal's Office, Heads of Schools and Heads of Units are informed on sustainable development principles and can apply these appropriately to their work.
- Systematically engage with University committees to ensure sustainable development strategic priorities are incorporated within their processes where appropriate.
- Systematically engage with Human Resources to ensure all job descriptions, roles and responsibilities and performance evaluation processes, where appropriate, include sustainable development responsibilities.
- Work in partnership with Units within the University to ensure sustainable development strategic priorities are reflected in their activities.

4. Teaching and learning for sustainable development

There are several overarching strategies that guide the University’s strategy with respect to teaching and learning. This section considers specific issues that emerge in terms of supporting teaching and learning for sustainable development.

There are two layers of sustainable development education in the University: specific degree provision (at undergraduate and postgraduate levels) and education related to sustainable development within discipline-specific degree programmes. The University commits to continuing developments in both these areas.

Aims and Objectives:
1. Carry out a review of all current degree modules and programmes to ascertain the extent to which sustainable development issues are taught at the University.
2. Develop a suite of sustainable development-related degree programmes that build on the distinctive profile of the University of St Andrews and existing strengths in sustainable development teaching programmes.
3. Assess the desirability of a staff development programme to raise awareness of sustainable development issues among the teaching staff of the University and identify any further specific needs that arise from pursuing sustainable development teaching.
4. Encourage funders of education in Scotland and the wider UK to develop a supportive funding regime for sustainable development education.

Taken together, this work will allow the University to continue to develop a distinctive, interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development education. Moreover, the capacity to deliver this approach will be strengthened.

5. Research and knowledge exchange for a sustainable future

At the core of any University is a commitment to academic freedom and curiosity-driven research leading to world-class scholarship. The commitments to sustainable development build on that base and take it as a pre-requisite for excellence. Through the St Andrews Sustainability Institute, the University will aim to develop a
distinctive reputation for research and knowledge exchange in sustainable development, by greater integration of cognate research to create a critical mass of researchers, further development of relationships with external research stakeholders (including through knowledge exchange practices) and further development of the intellectual underpinnings of the emergent field of sustainability science.

**Aims and Objectives**

1. Map sustainable development research within the University and develop a research strategy that recognises the University’s strengths and further develops capacity in this area.
2. Further develop the University of St Andrews as a key intellectual partner in developing 'sustainability science'.
3. Develop our knowledge exchange capacity in sustainable development focusing on local, regional, national and global communities.
4. Develop systematic data on the environmental impact of research and knowledge exchange activities.
5. Examine the opportunities to minimise the negative impacts of our own research activities so that they can be pursued in a more sustainable manner.
6. Develop expertise in how intellectual activity (e.g. in the context of academic conferences) can be maintained and enhanced in a carbon-constrained world.
7. Engage with funding agencies to explore ways in which sustainable development research and knowledge transfer can be facilitated.

6. **Living within our environmental limits**

The University of St Andrews is committed to continuing to understand and improve its performance with respect to sustainable development within the principles of the UK Sustainable Development Framework (see Figure 1 above). Our objectives, set out below, act as high-level areas of focus that will be achieved using a set of annually reviewed targets. Our environmental framework is based on good governance; addressing specific significant environment impacts, i.e. energy use and generation; waste; water; transport and travel; focusing on the impacts of our core business of teaching and research and engagement with all members of the University community and wider stakeholders.

**Aims and Objectives**

1. **In Environment Management and Compliance**, to prevent pollution and ensure full compliance with relevant environment legislation now and in the future.
2. **In Resource Use**, to ensure prudent use of natural resources and specifically to reduce water consumption, to reduce energy usage and become carbon neutral for our energy use and to challenge our procurement practices so that goods and services are procured locally / regionally where possible.
3. **In Utilities Management**, to diversify our energy mix towards biomass and wind sources.
4. **In Waste Management**, to move towards zero waste to landfill.
5. **In Travel and Transport** to develop solutions that reduce travel and transport impacts generated by the University.
6. **In Changing Behaviour**, to achieve effective communication of environment and sustainability issues to all staff and students.
7. **Promoting a healthy and just society**

The University should aim to play a leading role in promoting a healthy and just society. This should include:

1. How we treat those with whom we engage directly within the activities of the University (such as employees, students, suppliers and our interaction with investors), including ethical procurement aspects.
2. How we interact with our local community of St Andrews.
3. How our teaching, research and operations point towards creating a sustainable society.

The latter impacts are covered under the relevant teaching/learning and research. In this section we focus on our relationships with staff, students and the wider community.

**Aims and Objectives**

**In the case of Staff to:**

1. Explore with Human Resources how sustainable development issues are related to and can be integrated with the delivery of the staff strategy.
2. Develop a programme of staff training that will create an opportunity to engage staff in the shift to a university with low-carbon usage and, more generally, in acting in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

**In the case of Students to:**

1. Build on the existing proposals to bring sustainable development awareness as a core part of the first-year student experience with the University.
2. Explore with Student Services how sustainable development issues are related to the student experience and can be integrated with this area of activity.
3. Further develop relationships with student societies which are focused on sustainable development to explore areas of synergy and mutual benefit.
4. Work closely with the Students Association and student services (such as recruitment and careers) to develop capacity to respond to sustainable development opportunities.

**For our local Community to:**

1. Develop jointly and then publish a vision of our understanding of inter-relationships around sustainable development issues.
2. Develop an action plan that will support community engagement and the sustainable development vision.
3. Develop a performance measurement system to guide the University’s activities in this area.
4. Conduct a study of the impact of the University of St. Andrews on the economy of St Andrews and to engage our local community in a dialogue about the significance and implications of the outcomes of that study.

**Within the University to:**

Ensure a consistent and ethically informed approach to investment, research funding and procurement.
8. Advocacy and civil leadership

In addition to the core mission of teaching and research, universities are an important source of leadership and advocacy within society. Given the complex and challenging transitions that the pursuit of sustainable development requires, there is an opportunity for the University of St Andrews to play a leadership role in this area within Scotland, the UK and beyond. Further, our leadership has and should continue to build capacity around sustainable development issues within the higher education.

Commitment:

The University of St. Andrews will seek to act as an exemplar of sustainable development practice and to promote the principles of sustainable development at a local, regional, national and international level.