



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

ACTION PLAN FOR CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY 2021–2023

Type of document:	Action plan
Date:	16 March 2021
Reg. no.:	FS 1.1-2259-20
Approved by:	Vice-Chancellor
Validity:	16 March 2021 – 31 December 2023
Field:	Buildings, IT, Environment and Safety
Office in charge:	Property Management Office
Replaces document:	New



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1. Description

The Vision for Umeå University states that the most vital task for the university is to meet the ever-changing demands and expectations of society and work towards building a sustainable society, as well as help contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a government agency and higher education institution, the university is expected to work actively and systematically with climate and sustainability in accordance with the Ordinance (2009:907) on Environmental Management in Government Agencies.

This policy document contains targeted goals and overall activities for the environmental sustainability work for the period 2021–2023 aiming at 2030. The action plan emphasises environmental sustainability, but the key areas Education and students, and Research and utilisation take a holistic sustainability perspective based on the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.

According to the steering document *Regel för universitetsgemensamma styrdokument*, a number of perspectives needs to be integrated into new and revised policy documents at Umeå University. Documents must also include an analysis of the consequences of the document from a gender equality perspective. The action plan has integrated a sustainability perspective, as well as a student, collaboration and work environment perspectives. Due to the contents of the action plan, internationalisation or accessibility perspectives have not been considered other than being indirectly included in the goals and activities of the action plan. This document is not expected to have any gender equality consequences at Umeå University.

1.1 Aim and objectives

The aim of this action plan, which includes institution-wide targeted goals and activities for environmental sustainability work for the period 2021–2023, is to increase the integration of the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda¹, the provisions in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) to promote sustainable development² and the climate targets of the Climate Framework for Higher Education Institutions³. The action plan contains goals for all 13 areas of the Climate Framework, emphasising the areas that have been identified as significant environmental aspects in the university's environmental investigation (FS 1.6.2-1565-19) that are also reflected in the university's environmental policy (FS 1.1-2187-19).

In line with the environmental policy, Umeå University's overall climate and sustainability goal for 2030 is to take action proactively and innovatively for a sustainable society and make sure that the goals of the 2030 Agenda are met. Other goals and activities derive from the priorities in the environmental policy and are divided into the following key areas:

- Education and students
- Research and utilisation
- Purchase, procurement and investments

¹ The 17 sustainable development goals are: No poverty; Zero hunger; Good health and well-being; Quality education; Gender equality; Clean water and sanitation; Affordable and clean energy; Decent work and economic growth; Industry, innovation and infrastructure; Reduced inequalities; Sustainable cities and communities; Responsible consumption and production; Climate action; Life below water; Life on land; Peace, justice and strong institutions; Partnerships for the goals.

² The Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, Section 5: "In the course of their operations, higher education institutions shall promote sustainable development to assure for present and future generations a sound and healthy environment, economic and social welfare, and justice."

³ The 13 areas of the Climate Framework for Higher Education Institutions are: Education; Research; External engagement and societal impacts; Students; Purchasing of goods and services; Business trips; Commuting; Energy consumption; Property portfolio; Food and food services; Waste management; Carbon sinks; Investments.



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- Property and campus
- Meetings and travels
- Chemicals and waste management

1.2 Activities and systematic approach

Activities in the action plan aim to contribute to the achievement of the goals in each key area. The responsibility to implement and follow up on these overall activities has been firmly established and, as far as possible, integrated into the regular operational planning, primarily within offices in the University Administration and strategic councils. When relevant, activities have been drawn up in consultation with property owners involved. The university's overall environmental sustainability work comprises, beside overall activities in the action plan, work on further and often more specific activities on all levels of the organisation.

To ensure that the environmental sustainability work is efficient, institution-wide activities are prioritised based on the following principles:

- Benefits to environment, climate and sustainable development
- Cost-efficiency
- Impact on research and education activities
- Administrative burden

The forms for the systematic environmental sustainability work are described in the Regulation for Environmental and Sustainability Work (FS 1.1-1773-20). The regulation contains recurring institution-wide activities, which are to be implemented with certain defined intervals, for instance, the environmental investigation, evaluation of compliance to binding requirements, internal environmental audits and follow up of this action plan.

As the action plan is based on the Climate Framework for Higher Education Institutions, the university is contributing to sustainable development goal no. 13 Climate action through several activities. Which other sustainable development goals each activity is expected to contribute to are presented under each key area below.

2. Education and students

Education, together with research, is the university's most important contributor to a sustainable transition of society. Umeå University is one of Sweden's biggest higher education institutions with over 35,000 students in around 150 study programmes and 1,300 courses as well as a doctoral education in 115 subjects with nearly 900 doctoral students. By integrating sustainability in education, students are provided with knowledge and skills to use as citizens and decision-makers when meeting sustainability challenges, present and future. University teaching staff has a key role in facilitating this.

In the 2020 follow-up of the university's environmental sustainability work, faculties stated that out of the 145 study programmes, 17 study programmes have a sustainable development focus, and 96 programmes have qualitative targets involving sustainability. Increasing the progression of the knowledge and skills that students should adopt over time is a challenge, as well as to include both knowledge and an educational approach.

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The knowledge and commitment of students and staff is an important resource in the university's environmental sustainability work.

Through activities in the key area Education and students, the university contributes to all 17 sustainable development goals.

Targeted goals for 2030

1. Sustainable development is integrated in education on all levels.
2. The knowledge and commitment of students and staff comes to use in the university's environmental sustainability work.

Activities 2021–2023

- Create awareness of and follow up the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals in education and doctoral education within the scope of the Quality System for Education.
- Develop information regarding the university's environmental sustainability work for students and staff.
- Offer professional development for staff regarding the university's environmental sustainability work.
- Work towards professional development of teachers with the objective of developing their abilities to integrate various aspects of sustainable development in courses and study programmes on all levels, including doctoral education.
- Implement educational conferences linked to the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- In dialogue with student unions, develop forms to make use of the knowledge and commitment among students in environment and sustainability issues.

3. Research and utilisation

Research, together with education, is the university's most important contributor to a sustainable transition of society. New knowledge is a condition for meeting the challenges of society. At the university, research is conducted in several research domains. An analysis made by the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) shows that 59 per cent of the academic production at Umeå University between 2015 and 2019 had bearing on the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. The greater part of the academic production both at Umeå University and in Sweden overall covers the goal Good health and well-being. Umeå University has a higher publication volume than the national average for several sustainable development goals, in descending order: Quality education; Gender equality; Life on land; Reduced inequalities; Good health and well-being; Climate action; Clean water and sanitation; Peace, justice and strong institutions; and Sustainable cities and communities.⁴ Internal analyses of the university's academic production, carried out by the Research Support and Collaboration Office, show that in comparison to some other large universities in Sweden, Umeå University has more active research regarding the goals Gender equality and Life on land.

⁴ The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (2020), Sweden's research targeting the Sustainable Development Goals, report 20:04.



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Higher education institutions also contribute to sustainable development through innovative knowledge-based solutions. Umeå University, through Umeå University Holding AB including subsidiaries and incubators, supports utilisation and commercialisation of innovations. Academic know-how often has the greatest impact in its interaction with society by coming to good use and creating innovations. The university is collaborating extensively with companies and organisations through both long-term partnerships and short-term projects.

Through activities in the key area Research and utilisation, the university contributes to all 17 sustainable development goals.

Targeted goals for 2030

3. The university's research on sustainable development must increase.
4. Knowledge of researchers and staff is utilised in outreach activities and in the university's environmental sustainability work.

Activities 2021–2023

- Create awareness of and follow up on the research conducted at Umeå University based on the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- The 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals are to be considered in the process of developing a quality system for research.
- Investigate the opportunity to introduce a system to classify the university's research projects (both internally and externally funded ones) based on the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- Implement research conferences linked to the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- Support an institution-wide platform for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research on sustainable transformation among others by facilitating for interdisciplinary events and meetings.
- Develop the external information of the university's sustainability research, research collaborations and research projects linked to environmental sustainability work aimed at partners and other stakeholders.
- Investigate the opportunity to develop an institution-wide scientific course for doctoral students and other interested staff about the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- Manage and participate in relevant collaborative projects and sustainability networks to strengthen the university's research, to contribute to regional and other community development and to help achieve the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals.
- Work towards sustainability being a priority in the university's strategic partnerships.
- Develop a sustainability perspective in the university's owner directives of Umeå University Holding AB.

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4. Purchase, procurement and investments

Purchase and public procurement are important instruments to reduce the university's environmental and climate impact, and to contribute to sustainable development. The university publicly procures and purchases a vast amount of products and services, and in 2020, the sum amounted to over SEK 330 million. Environmental requirements were set in half of the procurements, equalling the greater value of these procurements. However, there is potential to further systemise the environmental and climate aspects of the university's public procurements and purchases and to increase the consideration for social and labour law terms and conditions.

At the university, there are several restaurants, cafés and catering services. These operations constitute suppliers of the university's procured services as well as offer their services to university staff and students, among others. The university can contribute to reduced environmental impact from food and food services by setting environmental requirements on procured suppliers or by discussing sustainable and climate-friendly choices of food, equipment and articles with independent service providers.

Umeå University has access to donated funds for the funding of research and education in accordance with the terms and conditions set by the donators. The University Board is the legal trustee of the affiliated foundations with support of a procured asset manager. The administration must take place in accordance with the university's investment policy.

Through activities in the key area Purchase, procurement and investments, the university contributes to several sustainable development goals, primarily no. 12 Responsible consumption and production, but also no. 8 Decent work and economic growth and no. 15 Life on land, beside no. 13 Climate action.

Targeted goals for 2030

5. The number of procurements setting environmental and sustainability requirements must increase every year.
6. The selection of climate-friendly food and service options must increase.
7. The university's foundations and donated funds must be invested with consideration for environment and sustainability aspects.

Activities 2021–2023

- Develop and implement overall environmental and sustainability requirements for public procurements.
- Digitalise and automate key administrative processes and, if possible, make it easier to choose sustainable and environmentally sound options when purchasing.
- Analyse and provide information about the climate impacts of purchases.
- Encourage a more climate-friendly selection in dialogue with restaurants and cafés on campus.
- Develop the environmental and sustainability perspective in the university's investment policy for affiliated foundations.

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5. Property and campus

The university's activities are comprehensive and require suitable premises. Currently, rented premises cover a total area of over 230,000m². In 2020, the university used more than 28 GWh of energy, which corresponds to the energy consumption of 1,400 homes. To reach the goals of the Paris Agreement, the university needs to, together with property owners, continuously take energy-saving measures and invest in energy efficiency. The use of premises also needs to be optimised since building new and maintaining premises has a negative impact on the environment and climate. This can take place by increased sharing and utilisation, for instance. By making sustainable and climate-friendly choices of technology and materials for building, the environment and climate impact can be further reduced, as can the use of resources. The university's main campus, Campus Umeå, consists of vast green spaces and by managing and developing these, they act as so-called carbon sinks binding the carbon dioxide from the air. They also promote biodiversity.

Through activities in the key area Property and campus, the university contributes primarily to sustainable development goals no. 7 Affordable and clean energy, no. 11 Sustainable cities and communities and no. 15 Life on land, beside no. 13 Climate action.

Targeted goals for 2030

8. Climate impact from energy use must reduce every year.
9. University premises must be used more efficiently.
10. Biodiversity on Campus Umeå must increase.

Activities 2021–2023

- Map, follow up and optimise the use of university premises.
- Develop the booking rules for premises to promote more efficient use of premises.
- Map, follow up and optimise the energy use of university premises.
- Continue planned energy optimisation measures.
- Continue planned installation of solar cells.
- Include criteria for *Miljöbyggnad*⁵ and *Byggvarubedömningen*⁶ when building new and rebuilding.
- Overview principles for investment in premises or properties for sustainability aspects to be emphasised.
- Identify measures to increase biodiversity on Campus Umeå in dialogue with property owners and other stakeholders.

6. Meetings and travels

Meetings are an important element of the Umeå University's operations and create added value for both the university itself and its regional, national and international partners. Umeå University's

⁵ *Miljöbyggnad* is a Swedish environmental certification scheme for green buildings that ensures that the environmental performance of a building is inspected by a third party. The system is owned by Sweden Green Building Council who also conducts certifications. *Miljöbyggnad* measures 16 parameters, two of which are energy and indoor climate.

⁶ *Byggvarubedömningen* supplies criteria concerning chemical content and life cycle aspects of building materials with the purpose of contributing to building and maintaining properties using environmentally assessed building materials only. *Byggvarubedömningen* is a non-profit organisation owned by large constructors and property owners in Sweden.



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geographic location often leads to a need to travel by air. In 2019, university business travel generated over 4,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, which was constituted nearly entirely by air travel (>99.5 per cent). It is a challenge to satisfy the needs for and value of meeting others without creating high emissions of gases that affect the climate. During the pandemic, business travel has decreased remarkably and online tools for web meetings have been improved. Lessons can be learnt from this in the university's endeavours to continue to improve the forms for and the increased use of sustainable meetings. Commuting also has an important impact on the environment and climate, which is why the university, together with relevant stakeholders, should work to improve and develop the opportunities for sustainable travel to and from the workplace.

Through activities in the key area Meetings and travels, the university contributes to sustainable development goal no. 11 Sustainable cities and communities, beside no. 13 Climate action.

Targeted goals for 2030

11. Climate impact from travels must decrease.
12. The use of web meetings must increase.

Activities 2021–2023

- Provide a suitable infrastructure for sustainable and travel-free meetings.
- Follow up on the utilisation of web meetings.
- Implement the new regulation for business travel to promote sustainable travel.
- Develop a checklist for the organisation of sustainable events.
- Investigate the opportunity to establish an internal foundation for climate investments within the university's activities.
- Develop campus infrastructure for walking, cycling and electric vehicles.

7. Chemicals and waste management

Avoiding and limiting the spread of dangerous substances and being economical with resources is an important part of sustainable community development. Within the university, over 10,000 different chemicals are used, which all need to be handled safely. The use of chemicals at the university annually generates approximately 8,000 kilos of hazardous waste. By systematically working towards exchanging hazardous substances to less dangerous ones, for instance by setting requirements on the chemical content of products in procurement and purchase, the negative impact on the environment and human health can be reduced.

Beside hazardous waste, another 350 tonnes of other waste is annually generated at the university. Most of this waste is incinerated, either as sorted out or mixed out solid waste. Another large fraction is electronic waste. Additionally, reusing materials such as furniture, inventory and equipment can increase, especially when renovating and rebuilding.

To reduce the environmental impact from waste management, a functioning sorting of waste is needed. Such institution-wide separation of waste at source is also important to manifest to staff, students and visitors that the university takes environment, climate and sustainability issues seriously. By reusing furniture, inventory and equipment, more circular flows can be created to reduce the consumption of resources.

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Through activities in the key area Chemicals and waste management, the university contributes primarily to sustainable development goals no. 12 Responsible consumption and production, but also to no. 3 Good health and well-being, no. 8 Decent work and economic growth and no. 14 Life below water, beside no. 13 Climate action.

Targeted goals for 2030

13. The amount of combustible waste as well as hazardous waste must be reduced.

Activities 2021–2023

- Procure and implement a new chemicals management system.
- Investigate and introduce separation of waste on campus, from separation at source to waste management by contractor.
- Further develop the opportunities to reuse furniture, furnishings, and medical and laboratory equipment.