



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

In accordance with the strategic policy of the University of Iceland 2011-2016

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and by the University Senate on 1 March 2012

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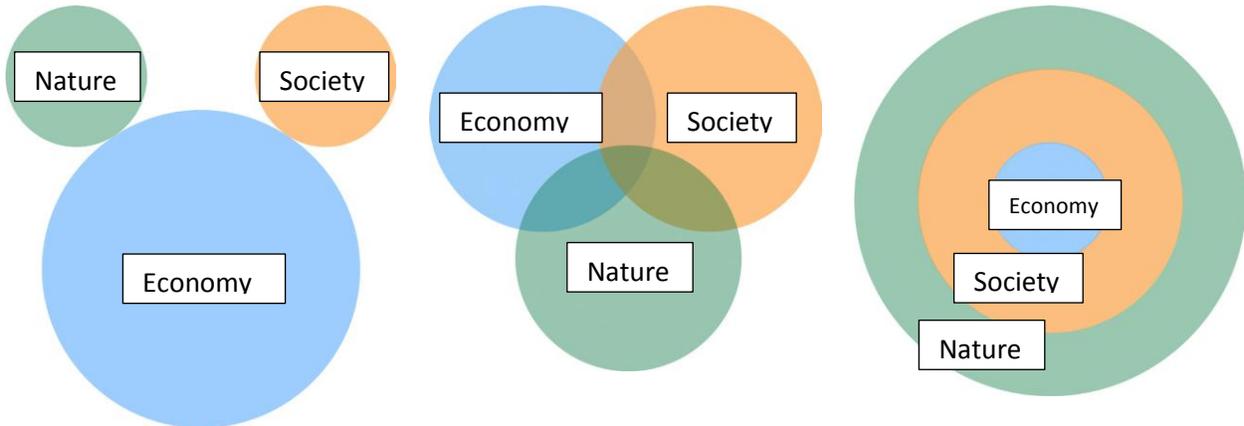
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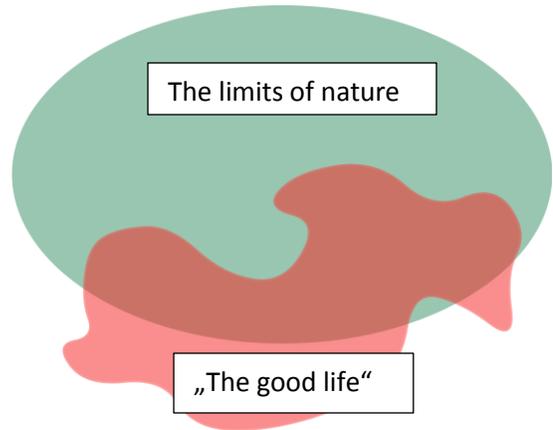
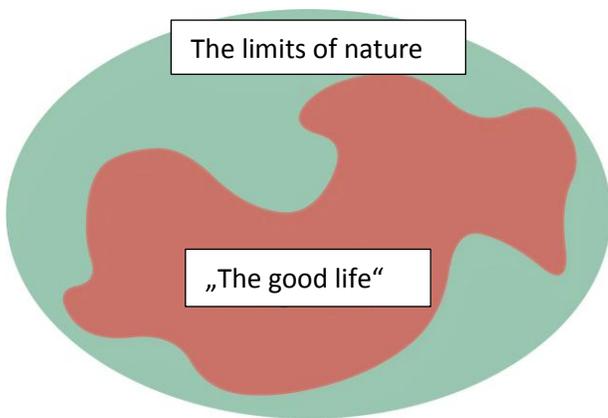
CONCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY



Before the concept of sustainability came to be, economics were often what mattered the most. If the interests of society and nature were in conflict with the economy, they had to give way.

In the 1987 Brundtland report *sustainable development* is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” The focus is such that the perspectives of society and nature are equal to that of economy.

A more holistic understanding of *sustainability* emphasises that economy and society are part of a closed system. Growth cannot extend beyond the definite limits of nature. Resources are limited and the ability of the environment to maintain vital processes is easily disrupted.



It is generally accepted that the current path of humanity bears clear signs of unsustainability. People’s ideas in the more affluent parts of the world about “the good life” have led to consumption far beyond what the earth can support. While part of humankind uses the earth’s resources in excess, others get less than their share.

The task of the people of earth is to change their thinking and their actions such that the limits of nature are respected both in word and deed. In this lies the core of the concept *sustainability*.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND, SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Sustainability is a vast concept. It comprises not only the environment, but also social justice, health and welfare, culture and economic livelihood. It revolves around awareness that nature sets the boundaries for human activities. It also involves acknowledgement that before all mankind lies the socially complex task of reconciling ideas and expectations about „the good life“ with natural limits.

The 2011-2016 policy of the University of Iceland states that the university will set an ambitious environmental policy and will build understanding and knowledge of sustainability both inside the university and out. The university can contribute to sustainability in three ways: Firstly, through the search for knowledge itself and the work of teachers and students within the university. Secondly, the University plays an important role in connecting scientific knowledge to the community in a responsible way. Thirdly, the University can serve as a model of sustainability through its own organisation, management and overall policy.

As a powerful and comprehensive research institution the University of Iceland can contribute to knowledge and understanding in the field of sustainability at the national and international level. All five schools of the University are involved in this. There are currently various relevant areas of research and teaching ongoing at the University. Education and research in the field of sustainable development often requires a cross-disciplinary approach and collaboration as well as depth and expertise in specific disciplines across all areas of knowledge.

Academic freedom in research carries an ethical responsibility to nature and people, that is, the earth and its inhabitants. In light of the fact that understanding of the concept of sustainability is still in formation, knowledge of sustainability is increasing and new information continually emerging, university researchers need to weigh and evaluate their choice of research fields.

It is significant that the results of scientific research in the field of sustainability find a channel outside the University so that the University and the community can work together purposefully and effectively. Faculty and students have an ethical responsibility to participate in projects, discussions and conferences about sustainability in Iceland and abroad.

The University of Iceland needs to provide a sound framework for sustainability and environmental issues in a formal manner in order to coordinate projects, encourage further work and monitor progress. To this end the sustainability and environmental policy of the University has set goals in eight categories. Each category is related to a particular aspect of the three-fold role of the university (see figure below).

On the following pages each category will be addressed individually. Goals are set, means of implementation and evaluation are defined and responsible parties are identified. At the end of the policy an assessment framework is provided that the different schools and units of the university can use to monitor their progress and set goals for themselves for the future.

<i>Research and teaching</i>	1 Research	2 Teaching and study programmes	3 Learning and teaching methods
<i>Social responsibility</i>	4 Daily life of university citizens	SUSTAINABILITY	5 Connections with society
<i>Internal organisation and management</i>	6 Organisation, design and management	7 Staff development and incentives	8 Overall policy

1 RESEARCH

One of the main goals in the policy of the University is to strengthen research. The concept of sustainability and the foundations on which it rests – the protection and use of the environment, human well-being, responsible economics and cultural and ethical human existence – are important areas of research that the university should pursue ambitiously if it wants to live up to its name as a 21st century research university. Scientific work within research institutions already deals with many of the issues related to sustainability. It is essential to look carefully at how current research related to sustainability can be strengthened, as well as how a greater breadth of research can be achieved concerning these issues and how new and diverse projects can be supported.

<p>Goal</p> <p>> The University's schools, faculties and research institutions identify and assess their ability to promote research within the field of sustainability.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Create a register of feasible projects, their objectives and possible participants.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>>The register is to be available in May 2013.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Faculties of science, deans of schools and faculties, heads of research institutions.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>> Increase in cross-disciplinary topics related to sustainability in graduate student research.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Graduate students get advice on topics related to sustainability and help in finding supervisors who are willing to undertake joint guidance.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> List with information on projects related to sustainability. > Number of projects dealing with sustainability.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Supervisors, faculty deans, faculties of science.</p>
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2 TEACHING AND STUDY PROGRAMMES

The University of Iceland is responsible for ensuring that its graduates have sound knowledge and belief in the importance of sustainable thinking, as well as the competence to actively participate in the development of society towards sustainability, both in their professional careers and personal life. In most areas the professional work environment of university educated people has changed greatly in recent years and understanding of sustainability and environmental issues, which builds on critical thinking, cross-disciplinary subject matters and ethical judgment, is increasingly important. Study programmes at the University must take this into account and ideally students in all faculties and programmes should receive education in this area. Deeper discussion of sustainability and related fields has to be made available to all. The University also needs to offer a particular degree programme in sustainability and the environment.

<p>Goal</p> <p>> Sustainability thinking and environmental issues will be placed on the agenda at the beginning of study for all new students at the University.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> At the orientation of new students time will be dedicated to discussion of sustainability and the environment in which the students' responsibility is stressed.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Sustainability as a topic on the agenda of new student orientation.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Faculty deans, administrators of new student orientation.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>> Interested students can build their knowledge and competences to deal with sustainability and environmental issues from a cross-disciplinary perspective.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> A cross-disciplinary introductory course on sustainability, environmental issues and ethics will be offered as an elective for all students and will be accredited in all programs.</p> <p>> Sustainability and environmental issues will be incorporated into other courses where relevant.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Introductory course on sustainability, environment and ethics in the course catalogue.</p> <p>> Number of courses in which sustainability and environmental issues are part of the course description and learning goals.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Deans of schools and faculties, heads of study programmes, course administrators.</p>
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3 LEARNING AND TEACHING METHODS

Experience shows that methods of learning and teaching matter just as much as content itself. This is clearly apparent when working with sustainability and environmental issues. Development of society towards sustainability will become reality with active participation of students and that they take responsibility for their actions. This is possible with increased emphasis on student participation—efforts to strengthen their action and feelings of responsibility towards education and work, in addition to them having the opportunity to choose for themselves subjects and take part in deciding how knowledge is gathered and disseminated. Diversity among students creates new demands. It must be ensured that learning competences are in line with the goals of sustainability education. The University of Iceland must intertwine a vision of sustainability with changed teaching methods because active student participation generates new ideas and solutions.

<p>Goal >The University of Iceland promotes dissemination of information about teaching methods and practices that have proven effective in sustainability and environmental education.</p> <p>Methods > Each school contributes materials for teaching methods and practices to an electronic database.</p> <p>Indicators > Database will be opened in May 2013.</p> <p>Responsibility >The Teaching Centre of the University of Iceland in consultation with faculty deans.</p>	<p>Goal > The University of Iceland places more emphasis on participatory learning.</p> <p>Methods > Teachers use practices that increase participation and motivate students.</p> <p>Indicators > Information in the course catalogue on teaching methods and assessment. >Attitude survey among students. >Information from teaching evaluations.</p> <p>Responsibility > The director of teaching, faculty deans, teachers, students.</p>
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4 DAILY LIFE OF UNIVERSITY CITIZENS

The university is a community of students and staff, and is one of the largest workplaces in the country. The everyday decisions of members of the university in their daily lives - about consumption, transportation, communication, etc. - determine much of the school's performance in environmental issues and sustainability. This also affects the health and wellbeing of staff and students. It has to be made as easy and economical as possible to choose environmentally friendly options and promote greater sustainability. Economic incentives can be used in order to create awareness, as well as a general change in outlook within the university community.

Goal

> The University of Iceland urges staff and students to commute to and from school in an environmentally friendly manner.

Methods

> Facilities for cyclists and pedestrians on the University campus will be improved.
> Transportation contracts with staff will be prepared.
> An arrangement will be made with the city bus company for more favourable terms for students.
> Fees for parking will be increased gradually and parking spaces reduced.

Indicators

> Ratio of environmentally friendly means of travel, gauged in annual surveys of travel habits.
> The area of land used for parking.
> Facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, such as paths and shower facilities.

Responsibility

> Facilities management, Student Council.

Goal

> University of Iceland arouses the interest of staff and students on how their decisions in daily life within the university community have an impact on their ecological footprints.

Methods

> A website will be set up with a calculator for "ecological footprints of university citizens."

Indicators

> Number of visits on the website.

Responsibility

> Marketing and Communications Department in collaboration with the study line in the Environment and Natural Resources.

5 CONNECTIONS WITH SOCIETY

The University policy reaffirms that it has a range of duties to society as a whole. In the area of the environment and sustainability these responsibilities do not only concern collecting and disseminating knowledge from the University to society, but also developing an interactive relationship in which the challenges society faces find their way into the work of the University. In connection with their studies students must have the opportunity to work with firms, organisations and institutions on projects related to sustainability. Teachers and other staff must also contribute to the promotion of sustainability through collaboration with other levels of education, firms, organisations or institutions in the community. Last but not least, the university should seek to promote as well as possible projects and research relating to sustainability.

<p>Goal</p> <p>>The University of Iceland increases cooperation with firms, organisations, municipalities and institutions, and increases the number of student projects in the field.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Contracts to be made for cooperation and student projects with various firms, organisations, municipalities and institutions.</p> <p>> Research centres of the University direct information about possible student projects in the field to the schools of the University.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Number of agreements on cooperation and student projects with firms, organisations and institutions.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Individual faculty members, research centres of the University of Iceland.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>>The University of Iceland participates in school development relating to sustainability and the environment.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Emphasis on continuing education, graduate education and counselling.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Number of projects and courses per year that the university participates in.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> The School of Education in collaboration with other schools.</p>
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6 ORGANISATION, DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

Environmental impacts from the operation of large institutions like the University of Iceland are large. The University's focus on sustainability can be seen clearly in the internal environment of its buildings, in the organisation of the campus and its connections with the wider environment. The University emphasizes green design of new buildings under certified standards. It is important that the school adopt certified environmental management systems and that its daily operations be under ongoing review, with sustainability as the goal. Organisation and design also influence people's well-being and health. The outer environment of buildings can be made more conducive to outdoor activities and areas where students and staff can sit down and enjoy the outdoors, each other's company and sunshine need to be taken into consideration. By promoting environmentally and socially certified procedures in food services the University sets a good example for the community.

<p>Goal</p> <p>> New buildings at the University are designed in an environmentally sound manner.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> All new buildings will be designed based on certified standards for environmentally friendly design.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Buildings in which certified standards have been followed.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Facilities management, committees for construction projects.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>> The University campus is improved.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Increase the number of areas where people can enjoy outdoor activities.</p> <p>> Improve walking paths as well as walkways between buildings.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Number of outdoor areas on campus.</p> <p>> Condition of walking and biking paths.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Facilities management.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>> Reduce the amount of waste from the University of Iceland and make the sorting of waste more systematic.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Good access to prominently placed garbage-sorting containers in all school buildings.</p> <p>> Include education on the waste sorting system in the University in all new student orientation and in reception of new employees.</p> <p>> Put information about the University's performance in sorting waste in a dedicated place about environmental issues on the University website.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Data on total amount of waste and proportion of sorted waste versus mixed waste.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Facilities management, operations managers of schools, administrators of new student orientation, the Student Council, the Student Union.</p>
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7 STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND INCENTIVES

Among the goals of human resource management of the University of Iceland is to give employees the opportunity to develop professionally and build their professional skills. With this in mind, and with regard to the importance of sustainability and environmental matters, it is necessary to ensure that the contributions of staff to these issues are valued. This applies not only to the work of academic staff in research and teaching, but also just as importantly to the contribution of other staff. Ideally University employees can use part of their working hours to develop innovations in the field of environmental and sustainability issues in research, teaching or other activities.

<p>Goal</p> <p>>The University of Iceland urges teachers and staff to build their knowledge and skills to address issues related to sustainability and the environment.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Presentations and seminars on sustainability and environmental issues for teachers and staff.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Number of presentations and seminars on sustainability and environmental issues and participation in them.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Deans of schools, heads of administrative divisions, operations managers of schools.</p>	<p>Goal</p> <p>> The University of Iceland encourages teachers and other staff to be engaged in discussions about sustainability and environmental issues both within and outside the University.</p> <p>Methods</p> <p>> Every year five noteworthy projects in the field of sustainability and the environment within the University are specially presented and one of them given an award.</p> <p>Indicators</p> <p>> Contributions from teachers are recorded in the annual report of academic staff and information gathered from interviews with other employees.</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>> Deans of schools, heads of administrative divisions, operations managers of schools.</p>
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8 OVERALL POLICY

The sustainability and environmental policy of the University of Iceland is created with all university citizens in mind—students and staff equally—and all of the school’s units. The University of Iceland aims high, but to achieve success in sustainability and environmental issues collaboration and collective responsibility are critical. The administration of the University must confirm its commitment to sustainability and environmental issues by coordinating the work of its schools and faculties in these policy areas. Clear goals must be set for research, learning and teaching, management and other areas with respect to sustainability on the basis of the approved policy. It must be ensured that the diverse matters included in the policy are managed by parties who have both a clear mandate and sufficient resources. Finally it bears repeating that the issues of sustainability and the environment are global in nature and the University can contribute by taking part in international cooperation and becoming party to international agreements.

<p>Goal > Ensure interaction between the strategic policies of the administration of the University, schools, faculties and institutions for collective responsibility and consultation on solutions.</p> <p>Methods > Establish a working committee on sustainability and environmental issues with representatives from all schools and from the central administration.</p> <p>Indicators > Working Committee of the University Senate appointed in the third quarter of 2012.</p> <p>Responsibility > University Senate, rector.</p>	<p>Goal > The University of Iceland commits itself to working towards the issues of sustainability and environmental protection.</p> <p>Methods > University of Iceland becomes a member of the Talloires Declaration . * > Individual schools apply for Eco-School certification.**</p> <p>Indicators > Signing of the Talloires Declaration. > The timetable for applications for Eco-School certification is available in each school of the University.</p> <p>Responsibility > Rector, deans of schools.</p> <p><small>*http://www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires.html **http://www.landvernd.is/grafeninn/default.asp</small></p>	<p>Goal > Each school and other units regularly review their progress in the categories included in this policy.</p> <p>Methods > Self-assessment will be made annually with the help of the evaluation framework, which each unit adapts to their needs.</p> <p>Indicators > Schools’ and other units’ positions in each of the eight categories.</p> <p>Responsibility > Working Committee of the University of Iceland, deans of schools.</p>
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FRAMEWORK FOR SELF-EVALUATION

In this draft of the sustainability and environmental policy of the University of Iceland we have tried to intertwine theory and practice. The credibility of the policy will build as cooperation among the many various organisational units in the University increases. The University community is very diverse and the views of the various units on sustainability will continue to be shaped as they work on projects in this area.

A specific self-evaluation framework (see next page) has been developed in order to facilitate schools and other organisational units to identify their position and progress toward increasing sustainability. The self-evaluation framework is divided into columns that correspond to the eight categories of the policy. Each category is divided into four stages.

On the top of each category of the self-evaluation framework there is a description of a desirable state ("target stage") that reflects the long-term goals of the University. To get to that stage the requirements of the first three stages must be reached (stage I, II and III). The "target stage" itself is always under review.

It is recommended that each school, institution and unit use the self-evaluation framework to assess their own position in relation to sustainability and environmental issues. In further work the units can make a plan for what steps they need to take to get closer to the "target stage". It is proposed that this be done yearly over the next 3-4 years so that the University continues to move forward as a whole. Responsibility and initiative is thus distributed, without losing sight of common goals.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT—FRAMEWORK FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Target stage	Powerful research on sustainability and the environment is found in many areas, often in cooperation with partners outside the university or foreign universities.	Coverage of concepts related to sustainability in all study programmes. Various kinds of cross-disciplinary education about this material offered both on undergraduate and graduate levels.	Interest and needs of students determine much of the subject matter in courses. Participatory learning is emphasised and education builds on students' direct experience.	Staff and students become aware in daily life that the University is at the forefront of sustainability in Icelandic society. Staff and students who use eco-friendly transportation are systematically rewarded. Transportation contracts are made with staff.	Schools, institutions and faculties take initiative on projects that strengthen the connection between the University and society and are designed to support sustainability both in the local community and internationally.	The University has adopted certified environmental management—a system for managing buildings and other operations. Emphasis is placed on using environmentally and socially certified supplies and multiple use materials in all operations.	Staff contributions to environmental issues and sustainability in academic work or other work within the University or in society is valued and rewarded.	The University confirms its commitment to environmental and sustainability matters.
Stage III	Staff and students form research groups around particular topics in the area of sustainability and the environment.	Certain study programmes relate particularly to sustainability issues. Individual courses on sustainability are offered in each school and are open to students of other schools.	Subjects in courses dealing with sustainability and the environment are partly determined by needs and interests of students. Participatory learning is frequent and/or service with the community outside the University.	Management of student housing is organised with sustainability and the environment as the goal. Students and staff have the opportunity to use public transportation at low cost.	Schools and faculties participate in various projects in the local community which strengthens connections between the University and firms that work in the spirit of sustainability.	All new buildings are designed according to certified eco-standards. Disposable containers and utensils are not used in food services.	All staff members are given the opportunity during work hours to participate in activities that promote sustainability.	Sustainability guidelines are developed for research, teaching, teaching methods and operations. An action plan for policy implementation has been approved. Indicators have been defined and a status report is prepared annually.
Stage II	Faculty work together on research in the areas of sustainability and the environment and individual students are part of such projects.	Some courses are particularly related to sustainability issues. Student can attend such courses regardless of their faculty. Coverage of issues related to sustainability in some courses in all five schools.	When issues of sustainability are discussed, the needs and interest of students is taken into consideration. In education related to these issues, students get experience outside the University, in the field or in the community.	Staff and students are able to adopt working habits that support sustainability and environmental awareness in education and work. There are facilities at the University for those who walk or cycle.	The University establishes networks between institutions, firms and other parties who work in gathering and dissemination of information about sustainability. Systematic support for conferences about the issues and for teacher and student exchanges.	Sustainability is systematically considered in organisation and design of the University campus. Efforts are made to keep disposable materials in food services to a minimum. All waste within the University and in student housing is sorted.	Various support is available for those who take initiative to work with sustainability by changing current work habits or promote such work.	A particular policy on sustainability and the environment has been developed and approved by senior management. All new buildings are designed according to ecological design standards.
Stage I	The research interests of individual faculty are in the area of sustainability and the environment.	Subjects related to sustainability and the environment are part of certain courses.	The importance of sustainability and environmental issues is presented to new students and information about these issues is presented by experts.	General information about sustainability and environmental issues is available to all. Staff and student have access to eco-friendly transportation options.	Individual staff members work on opinions and audits about sustainability and environmental issues for public institutions and the private sector.	Efforts for sustainability in management are visible to staff and students, such as sorting waste and saving paper.	Individuals who want to participate in projects related to sustainability and the environment and work units that encourage staff to participate in such projects are generally incentivised.	Objectives relevant to sustainability and environmental matters appear in official policy.
	1. Research	2. Teaching and study programmes	3. Learning and teaching methods	4. Daily life of University citizens	5. Connections with society	6. Organisation, design and management	7. Staff development and incentives	8. Overall policy

