

Sustainability Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy outlines Victoria University's (VU's) framework to progressing its sustainability ambitions and practice through an enterprise-wide commitment to Protecting Country.

(2) Protecting Country underpins all that VU does – learning and teaching, its research and impact, campus operations and partnerships – as a public institution VU has a responsibility to respect and listen to Indigenous voices and standpoints, and to improve the health and wellbeing of local and global communities and the planet it shares.

Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(3) Nil.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to all staff, students, contractors, service providers, clients, customers and visitors when they are engaged in university activities and is applicable at all Victoria University locations whether in Australia or overseas.

Section 4 - Definitions

(5) **Protecting Country:** Protecting Country is about people, place and planet. It embraces the seasons, stories and creation spirits and connects First Nation peoples to place. Country is both a place of belonging and a way of believing, as well as contributing to the conservation of critical environmental and diverse cultural assets. It is a community-driven movement towards long-term social, cultural, physical and economic prosperity and sustainability.

(6) **Sustainability:** Encompasses interdependent dimensions of society, economy, human health and the natural environment. It comprises development that meets the needs of the present without impacting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(7) **Environmental Sustainability:** Means enacting conscious practices, behaviours and management which seek to engage with environmental landscapes within the capacity of our ecosystems' ability to regenerate, avoid compromising future opportunities, mitigate and adapt to man-made pressures such as climate change, and enhance social ecological resilience.

(8) **Net Zero:** Net Zero is a target to negate the amount of greenhouse gases produced by human activity, by reducing emissions and implementing methods of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(9) Victoria University (VU) is committed to Protecting Country, and developing Indigenous-led cultural, social and climate solutions.

(10) VU is a signatory to the [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network \(SDSN\) Higher Education Commitment](#). At every opportunity, through this commitment, Victoria University will:

- a. Support and promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- b. Undertake research that provides solutions to global sustainable development challenges;
- c. Provide educational opportunity for students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development;
- d. Ensure our campuses, sites and major programs are environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive;
- e. Report annually on VU practices and actions in support of the SDGs.

(11) VU is committed to achieving Net-Zero status as an organisation.

(12) The University recognises its responsibility for the stewardship of University environments, campuses and sites and is committed to enhancing the quality of life, wellbeing and prosperity for present and future generations. VU is committed to achieving a sustainability maturity level of Pioneering in Sustainability which sees the organisation exist to create value and benefits for society as well as actively engage and collaborate with the eco-system to tackle systemic issues.

(13) The following key principles will guide the incorporation of practices and actions towards sustainability to promote a healthy workplace and increase the resilience of the University to ensure a positive and viable future for the University and the communities it serves:

- a. **Protecting Country:** VU has a responsibility, in all that it does - its research, teaching, on its campuses and in its communities to improve the health and wellbeing of local and global communities, and the planet that it shares. VU acknowledges that First Nations peoples have long espoused the cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits embedded in the holistic relationship of Protecting Country. VU respects and embraces this perspective.
- b. **Ethical and Credible:** VU will deliver on the expectations of its current and future staff and students by taking the ethical responsibility to treat the climate crisis as an emergency and deliver real results.
- c. **Seize Opportunities:** The transition to Net-Zero will present many opportunities for the University, with funding, partnerships, anticipating policy shifts, and emerging research and innovation. By setting an ambitious target and achieving that, VU can maximise the opportunities as an early leader.
- d. **Demonstrate Leadership:** VU will demonstrate moral leadership to deliver what we know to be important. Society looks to universities to provide guidance and leadership, and the Net-Zero transition requires this.
- e. **Change the Future:** VU recognises that it can influence beyond the boundary of the university and transform people's lives and future workplaces through sustainability practices and impact in learning and teaching, research and engagement.

Strategic and Operational Planning and Action

(14) Through the Protecting Country strategic driver in the [Victoria University Strategic Plan 2022 - 2028](#), VU will plan strategically and operationally for sustainability. This will be done by:

- a. Explicit priorities and actions undertaken as part of our strategic and annual operational planning.
- b. Monitoring performance towards sustainability using accurate data for planning and reporting purposes.

- c. Ensuring that VU remains accountable in its commitment through regular, accessible and transparent reporting.

Sustainability Understanding and Knowledge

(15) VU will build an understanding of and share new knowledge of Protecting Country by:

- a. Intentionally engaging with students, staff and the broader University community regarding sustainability initiatives to grow engagement and awareness.
- b. Sharing knowledge and sustainable practices with students and staff, with particular reference to First Nations led solutions.

Campus Environments and Spaces

(16) VU will have campus environments and spaces that recognise and respect the custodians of the land and their commitment to Protecting Country, engage students and our communities with Indigenous cultural landscapes and with environmental action, and commit to sustainable practices through:

- a. the implementation of the Campus Master Plan, ensuring that there is a tangible connection to Country at all VU campuses and sites.
- b. Efficient use and management of University space and continual improvement of buildings to maximise space and efficiency consistent with the [Space Allocation and Management Policy](#).
- c. Minimising disruption to the natural ecosystem of each campus.
- d. Working closely with relevant First Nations people, honouring their knowledge and deep respect for Country, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through protecting and regeneration of native flora and fauna habitats on each campus.
- e. Designing, constructing and operating its built environment to the best practical environmental standards, including in the use of recycled and sustainable construction materials, low energy use design and greening of buildings (vertical and rooftop gardens), consistent with the [Built Environment Asset Management Policy](#).
- f. Ensuring water sensitive campus landscapes, gardens, building and urban design.
- g. Planting of regenerative edible gardens for showcasing and researching sustainable food production.
- h. Incorporating environmental, social and governance (ESG) targets, measures and reporting in its operations.

Sustainable and Responsible Resource Management

(17) VU will implement sustainable practices for resource consumption and management to promote these practices for our campuses, staff, students and communities to avoid, reduce, reuse and recycle through:

- a. Energy efficient, low carbon measures and renewables, including locally generated energy, wherever practicable;
- b. Adopting water efficient practices and technologies for reducing water consumption and for recycling, harvesting and reuse;
- c. Embedding management practices for waste and plastics minimisation and circular economies opportunities;
- d. Promoting and encouraging sustainable practices in daily working and study activities (including but not limited to forms of travel and transport to, from and within the University; and flexible work arrangements as per the [Employee Wellbeing - Flexible Work Arrangements Procedure](#));
- e. Incorporating sustainability considerations through its [Travel Policy](#);
- f. Ensuring VU exceeds any legal requirements for waste disposal and recycling practices, and measures and publicly reports the waste generated, the amount recycled and the amount sent to landfill or otherwise disposed.

Organisational and Financial Sustainability

(18) Financial sustainability, including being prudent with resources, is an imperative if VU is to continue to be agile, creative and reinvest for the future for long term viability.

(19) VU Incorporates environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations in investment practices, as per the [Investment Policy](#).

(20) VU Undertakes due diligence when engaging with contractors, suppliers, collaborators, business partners and others with whom VU engage so as to minimise the risk of modern slavery in VU's supply chain (see [Modern Slavery Prevention Policy](#)).

(21) VU pursues a sustainable procurement strategy that carefully considers VU's Ethical Model of Protecting Country and social and environmental sustainability in all purchasing decisions; as prescribed in the [Purchasing Policy](#).

Alliances, Partnerships and Community

(22) As an organisation, VU has a mandate to be sustainable. Through its connections with community and collaborations with allies and partners VU will influence and amplify this commitment and impact by:

- a. Contributing to the development and quality of life of the communities in both the West of Melbourne, Australia and internationally consistent with the [Victoria University Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#).
- b. Engaging ethically in a way that is consistent with the Major Alliance Framework, to enhance knowledge of sustainable living and provide opportunities to challenge and expand thinking in order to benefit the University and the communities it serves.
- c. Mandating Net-Zero reporting requirements with partners through VU's [Net-Zero Plan](#).

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

(23) VU provides a learning and working environment that promotes health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students and the broader University community, consistent with the [Health and Safety Policy](#) and the [Environmental Protection Act 2017 \(Vic\)](#).

Culture and Values

(24) As an organisation VU has an unwavering commitment to progressive inclusivity to ensure that every facet of the institution reflects diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality. VU will foster a culture of sustainability within the University community:

- a. Through its Values – to be Always Welcoming, Ethical, Shaping the Future and Together;
- b. Through the [Victoria University Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#) and strategic purpose VU is committed to embolden and support its students, colleagues, allies, partners, alumni and friends to shape not only their own futures but also the wider world in which they live; and,
- c. By recognising and fostering deep diversity as the foundation for collaboration and social progress, consistent with the [Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025](#); Bathelmun Yalingwa 2022-2025; and [Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy](#) and Procedures.

Learning and Teaching and Research and Impact

(25) VU's learning and teaching will deliver the workforce of the future and its research with impact will focus on delivering outcomes that benefit people, place and planet. To do this:

- a. VU will incorporate sustainability in relevant training, curriculum and pedagogical practice; and,

- b. undertake research that addresses the challenges industry and our communities face, aligned with key thematic areas as outlined in the [Research and Impact Plan 2023 - 2028](#).

Section 6 - Procedures

(26) Nil.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	13th December 2022
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Approval Date	13th December 2022
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
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