

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O WAIKATO

Sustainability Plan 2022 - 2026

Hei Timatanga Introduction

Sustainability is central to maintaining quality of life and for creating fair futures. A broad and multi-faceted concept, sustainability is when environmental, social, cultural and economic systems mutually reinforce and support one another into the long term. The University of Waikato is committed to putting sustainability at the centre of our operations, teaching and learning, research, and with the many communities we reach. It is vital that we develop practical and collaborative actions to pressing issues, such as climate change and social responsibilities. In 2022 a new goal – “Goal 6: Promoting sustainable futures by advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in every aspect of University operations” - was added to our University Strategy 2022 – 2026.¹ The Sustainability Plan supports and aligns to the University Strategy, Academic Plan, Research Plan, Māori Advancement Plan, Pacific Strategic Plan, and the Library Plan.

A core component of the Sustainability Plan is the importance it gives to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and our University motto Ko Te Tangata. The University acknowledges the unique status of tangata whenua as rightful kaitiaki with Te Ao Māori values and processes that are central to enabling sustainable use – and restoration – of cultural and natural resources, as well as knowledge and expertise in creating healthy environments and thriving communities. The Plan reflects our location in – and the mātauranga from - Waikato, Te Moana-a-Toi Bay of Plenty, Aotearoa New Zealand and Moana nui a Kiwa Pacific Ocean.

United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a useful global framework for us to measure our performance. The 17 SDGs and their associated 169 targets² were agreed by all countries at the United Nations in September 2015 and constitute a shared global transformative framework of development priorities to 2030. They aim to bring an end to extreme poverty, promote equity and inclusion, prosperity and well-being for all, protect the environment, provoke climate action, and encourage good governance, peace and security.

One way in which we measure our sustainability progress is via the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings,³ a global performance assessment of universities against the SDGs. A shortcoming of the SDGs and THE Impact Ranking exercise is the lack of focus on

1: https://www.waikato.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/764967/University-of-Waikato-Strategy-2022-2024_web-version.pdf

2: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202021%20refinement_Eng.pdf

3: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings#!/page/0/length/25/name/Waikato/sort_by/rank/sort_order/as/c/cols/undefined

Indigeneity.⁴ The Sustainability Plan must, therefore, go beyond UN global targets and prioritise the importance of tangata whenua and Pacific peoples within Aotearoa and across Moana nui a Kiwa. Key learnings from the Taskforce Report inform the Sustainability Plan. Further, as an institution, we have engaged in “high-level discussion about how indigeneity could be better valued in the Times Higher Education (THE) rankings in the future”.⁵

Te kōrero tāhuhu Background

Globally, the SDGs and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are highly relevant to the Sustainability Plan. Goal 16 relates closely to this Plan:

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.⁶

The Sustainability Plan acknowledges that Māori have unique rights under Te Tiriti and mana whenua status. The Sustainability Plan recognises the value and importance “in strengthening the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi within a university that sits on Waikato-Tainui lands and is surrounded by the presence and mana of the Kīngitanga” (University of Waikato, Report of the Taskforce, p. 1). It also recognises the important relationship with Tauranga Moana and Te Moana-a-Toi iwi (Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Pūkenga). We have a connection with Ngāi Tamarāwaho and Hūria Marae as a Poukai marae. It is within this context that the Sustainability Plan aims to foster an inclusive and transformative culture which enables Māori, alongside all students and staff (e.g. Pacific, international, first-in-family, disabled) to thrive.

Nationally, the University of Waikato is a member of Te Pōkai Tara / Universities New Zealand Sustainable Development Goals Expert Working Group, established in 2019.⁷ The main role of this group is to: a) make tertiary sector contributions to New Zealand’s Voluntary National Review;⁸ and, b) deliver successful SDG multi-sector Summits.⁹ In September 2021 at the third Aotearoa New Zealand SDG Summit our University signed the Aotearoa SDG Summit Declaration¹⁰ and we are the hosts for the 4th SDG Summit (planned for 2022 / 2023).

It is important that a Sustainability Plan contributes not only to actions needed to deliver on SDG 2030 targets, but that strategic plans and targets focus on creating a thriving and

⁴: Kawharu, M. (2015). Aotearoa: Shine or shame? A critical examination of the sustainable development goals and the question of poverty and young Māori in New Zealand. *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11(1), 43–50. Yap, M., & Watene, K. (2019). The sustainable development goals (SDGs) and indigenous peoples: Another missed opportunity? *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 20(4), 451–467.

⁵ University of Waikato, Report of the Taskforce, p.9.

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁷ <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/about-universities-new-zealand/expert-and-working-groups/sustainable-development-goals-expert>

⁸ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Peace-Rights-and-Security/Our-work-with-the-UN/Sustainable-Development-Goals/New-Zealand-Voluntary-National-Review-2019-Final.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.sdgsummits.nz/>

¹⁰ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFHHpKodTZwAFc9f9yn_fweX4A6ZTSSBQqpvwq_QGJpF_9ng/viewform

carbon neutral University. We need to take a long term perspective and scale action to required targets. Covid-19 has dramatically changed the tertiary education sector, and we have developed new ways to connect without relying as heavily on travel. We have an opportunity, now, to reflect on these changes and create new ways to teach, learn and research with reduced carbon emissions.

A recently released report from the Office of the Auditor-General (2021) *The Government's preparedness to implement the sustainable development goals*¹¹ provides further framing for our Plan. The report states that the Government "should clearly communicate what these [SDG] commitments mean, what action is needed, and how it will measure progress" (page 4). Therefore, our Plan acknowledges the necessity of action and transparent measures in order to track our progress.

The Sustainability Plan has six overarching objectives along with the associated lists of activities that will help enable us to achieve these objectives. The objectives have been designed to sit alongside the objectives of the other University Plans. It is important to note that the objectives are interconnected, not separate, as many solutions are needed to advance the SDGs.

Nga Mahi Objectives

Objective 1: Embed Māori and Pacific principles and values of sustainability in the University's values.

Objective 2: Enhance the University's environmental performance with the aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Objective 3: Prioritise research that promotes the UN SDGs, climate action, and the creation of sustainable environments and fair futures.

Objective 4: Increase the number of students who have opportunities to develop sustainability and climate change related knowledge and understandings of effective and innovative solutions.

Objective 5: Foster leadership of sustainability across all areas of the University.

Objective 6: Join with others outside the University in dialogue and action on the SDGs with the aim of helping us meet our goals.

¹¹ <https://oag.parliament.nz/2021/sdgs>

Object 1: Embed Māori and Pacific principles and values of sustainability in the University's values

The 17 SDGs identified through Agenda 2030 are all highly relevant to Māori and Pacific peoples. Indigenous perspectives, however, are missing in the Agenda and the importance of culture is absent in the SDGs. The universality of the SDGs are a partial view of what sustainable development means. It is vital that our Sustainability Plan rest on, and be informed by, Māori and Pacific peoples that offer a valuable perspective on sustainable development as inseparable from environmental, social and economic dimensions.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the foundation for equal, reciprocal, respectful and interdependent relationships between Māori and non-Māori. By acknowledging tangata whenua as kaitiaki, our University can be a leader in sustainable practice. Key values are: Tū ngātahi me te Māori (partnership with Māori); Mahi pono (acting with integrity); Whakanui i ngā huarahi hou (celebrating diversity); and, Whakarewa i te hiringa i te mahara (promoting creativity). These values – as well as the principles and values of Kīngitanga, Tauranga Moana, and Te Moana-o-Toi iwi - will guide our sustainability practice.

Māori and Pacific people share common tipuna - Maui, Hina, Rata, and Tāwhaki. There is also a shared heritage of voyaging within and across Moana nui a Kiwa. Pacific principles and values - highly relevant to the Sustainability Plan – include: “alofa/ofa/aloha (love, respect and really being in the presence of other human beings (Samoa/Tonga/Hawai’i), fakatokilalo (humility (Tonga)), collective outcomes and success, sautu (holistic and collective well-being (Fiji)), and tautua/kuleana (a leader’s responsibility for collective well-being and outcomes (Samoa/Hawai’i)).”¹² The concept of ‘the vā / wā’ (the relational space between people) is a pan-Pacific notion where secular and spiritual relationships are created and fostered.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Develop and implement professional development for all staff on Te Tiriti o Waitangi lead concepts of kaitiakitanga and sustainability
- Create a mātauranga-centred approach to advancing the SDGs in University operations, teaching and learning, research and engagement
- Promote the protection and guardianship (kaitiakitanga) over natural resources
- Engage in activities that enhance relationships (mana, tapu, mauri, rāhui), and a commitment to actively pursue fair futures

¹² The Pacific Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, p. 2.

- Recognise, value and promote Pacific worldviews that centralise Pacific principles and values (such as vā/wā (relational space between people)) within the University and beyond
- Strengthen partnerships with Pacific communities in Aotearoa and the wider Pacific region to address equity, climate change and justice for Pacific peoples.

Objective 2: Enhance the University's environmental performance with the aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Our University needs to continue to develop practical and collaborative actions to climate change and social responsibility. Organisational commitments and expectations, mitigation of environmental risks, ensuring environmental compliance, and creating a socially inclusive campus where all staff and students feel they belong are central to advancing the SDGs.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Increase biodiversity and action kaitiakitanga through indigenous plantings, pest management and researching biodiversity management practices on our campuses
- Use our campuses and regions as 'Living Labs' for teaching and learning, research, and outreach
- Reduce unnecessary travel and find ways to lower travel related (staff and student) carbon emissions while also recognising the importance of being globally connected, particularly for early career academics
- Encourage low carbon practices for conference attendance and research fieldwork
- Divest from carbon-intensive energy industries, especially coal and oil
- Continue to adopt energy renewables in campus operations
- Source low Global Warming Potential (GWP) refrigerants to reduce climate impact
- Monitor energy consumption to increase building efficiency and reduce emissions
- Reduce waste emissions by increasing recycling and reducing food waste
- Harvest rain water from roof spaces for irrigation and toilet flushing
- Construct new buildings in line with Green Star Building standards

Objective 3: Prioritise research that promotes the UN SDGs, climate action, and the creation of sustainable environments and fair futures.

The University of Waikato has four research pillars: excellence; impact; relevance; and, resilience. These pillars link directly to our need to have diverse research on sustainability and equity issues across all SDGs and at local, national, and / or global scales.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Encourage and support researchers who contribute to, or develop knowledge and understanding of sustainability, the SDGs, and climate emergency
- Offer contestable funds to support academic staff whose research advances SDG knowledge and its application
- Develop sustainability and SDG training for research students and supervisors that enhances the postgraduate experience and creates future sustainability leaders
- Support Te Kotahi Research Institute and the Pacific Research Hub to build research capacity on one or more of the SDGs in relation to Iwi, Māori, Indigenous and Pacific communities
- Create and fund summer scholarship SDG projects

Objective 4: Increase the number of students who have opportunities to develop sustainability and climate change related knowledge and understandings of effective and innovative solutions.

Our teaching and learning needs to align with SDG 4.7: “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”¹³

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Map and showcase existing SDG student learning options
- Review and improve student options for majors, minors and papers with SDG content
- Adopt a multi-scalar approach to educating for sustainability involving Indigenous and different frameworks for knowing and, the interdependence of culture, people, economy, and environment
- Offer more work-integrated learning sustainability placements that use our campuses and regions as ‘living laboratories’
- Create SDG scholarships for postgraduate students

¹³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

Objective 5: Foster leadership of sustainability across all areas of the University.

In order to have greatest impact, University staff and students need to understand the importance of sustainability in all that we do as an institution as well as knowing how to advance the SDGs.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Take a whole-of-institution approach to sustainability
- Create sustainability champions in each division, faculty, facility and service area
- Support sustainability champions to report on progress towards the advancement of SDGs at agreed meetings of various University groups
- Implement a student sustainability volunteering scheme and link to the Employability Plus Programme
- Collate and communicate SDG activities from all fields of action such as teaching and learning, research, administration, operations, and external engagement
- Revise the Environmental Sustainability Committee Terms of References to better reflect the need for a whole institutional approach to sustainability.

Objective 6: Join with others outside the University in dialogue and action on the SDGs the aim of helping us meet our goals.

As a leader within Aotearoa, Moana nui a Kiwa and global communities, the University has a responsibility to initiate and facilitate cross-sectorial SDG dialogue and action.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Take a shared approach to engagement and outreach focussing on sustainability, access to teaching, learning and research, and equity
- Engage locally and internationally outside of the university through our primary and secondary school networks, community groups, iwi, Pacific communities and partnerships
- Set up a Sustainability Hub to showcase our research to communities
- Be an effective and strong advocate for sustainability within our communities
- Support local authority initiatives to improve planning to reduce transport demand and encourage the uptake of cycling, walking, and public transport
- Establish dedicated outreach education activities for the wider community, including local residents and displaced people

- Establish partnerships with other organisations advancing the SDGs and be an active contributor to the Universities New Zealand's SDG Expert Working Group
- Engage with policy makers, NGOs, professions, industry and communities to promote the sharing of ideas, expertise and best practice on sustainability
- Host the SDG 4th Summit in 2022 / 2023