



## Arab Open University Sustainability/Climate Action Policy

Policy Title:	Arab Open University Sustainability/Climate Action Policy
Version Number:	1
Executive Owner:	University Council
Approving Authority	
Policy Review:	QAAAIS Committee
Policy Implementation:	AOU HQ and Branches
Policy Monitoring and Compliance:	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Departments at HQ and AOU Branches
Next Review Date	2025

## Policy Aim

The aim of the University Sustainability/Climate Action Policy is to integrate sustainability principles into all operations and foster a culture of environmental responsibility. Additionally, the policy seeks to educate and empower the university community to address climate change and sustainability challenges, positioning the institution as a catalyst for positive change.

## Policy Scope

The Policy encompasses all university operations and involves students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders. It addresses environmental, social, and economic aspects, aiming to mitigate climate change, conserve resources, and promote sustainability both on campus and in the wider community.

## Introduction

The university recognizes the significant role of Higher Education Institutions as catalysts of change and their role in contributing towards the implementation of the United Nation's SDGs. The Arab Open University realizes its responsibility to address the pressing global challenges of sustainability and climate change, as such, the university is committed to integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of operations, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering a culture of sustainability among students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community.

## Policy Statement

*Environmental Education and Awareness:* Improve literacy and awareness of climate change through sustained, active learning activities, connected to local problem-solving and people's behavior. Enhance awareness and understanding of the adaptation and mitigation of climate risk and environmental issues among the staff, students, and stakeholders.

*Energy Efficiency:* Reduce energy consumption through energy-efficient lighting, appliances, and heating/cooling systems. Explore and integrate sources of renewable energy sources into campus operations where feasible.

*Waste Reduction and Recycling:* Implement waste reduction initiatives, including recycling programmes, and minimizing single-use plastics. Develop educational programmes to encourage waste reduction and proper recycling practices among students, faculty, and staff.

*Water Conservation:* Implement water conservation measures, including efficient irrigation and water-saving systems. Promote responsible water usage and conservation practices among the university community through educational campaigns.

*Sustainable Procurement:* Prioritize the procurement of environmentally-friendly products and services, including recycled materials and eco-friendly cleaning supplies.

*Promote research and innovation aligned to SDGs:* To identify the environmental issues in local settings and pursue research on climate change and its impacts.

Collaboration and Partnerships: Foster collaborations across stakeholders, to leverage the expertise of environmental auditors, community organizers, industry professionals, and policymakers to support a more systematic and deeper understanding on issues of climate change.

Green Spaces: Preservation and enhancement of green spaces on campus.

Integrate environmental education and sustainable practices in continuing education: Impart Climate Change Education through the continuing education center, through formal and informal teaching approaches.

## Sustainability Committee

A designated Sustainability Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and coordinating sustainability initiatives across the university. The committee shall be formed comprising:

- University Rector as chair
- Procurement Office head - member
- Student Affairs Office Head - member
- Quality Assurance Unit Head - member
- Continuing education Head – member

The responsibilities of the committee are to:

- Regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the University's initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and adapt strategies through periodic audits to assess the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives and compliance with established standards to achieve the SDGs.
- Foster staff and student engagement by suggesting trainings for sustainable practices.
- Develop a transparent and comprehensive communication plan to inform stakeholders about the University's climate and environmental impact mitigation efforts.
- Regularly report on progress, achievements, and challenges in meeting the University's objectives and commitments to ensure accountability and transparency.

## Implementation

This Sustainability/Climate Action Policy shall be communicated to all members of the university community and shall be integrated into all relevant policies, procedures, and decision-making processes.

The procedures/ practices followed by the University are to:

- **Set specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) targets**: Develop targets aligned with the University's strategic goals
- **Develop an action plan**: Create a detailed roadmap outlining strategic initiatives that will enable the University to achieve its targets. Assign responsibilities, allocate resources, and establish timelines for implementation for effective utilization of resources and invest in effective monitoring and feedback processes and set feasible goals for the future.
- **Integrate sustainability into operations**: Embed sustainability considerations into the University's policies, procedures, and decision-making processes. Adopt sustainable practices in all the operations at all levels of the university, including education, procurement, water conservation, etc.

- **Invest in renewable energy:** Invest in renewable energy sources, such as clean energy, and SMART technologies, to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Promote sustainable transportation:** Encourage the use of public transportation, carpooling, and walking among the staff and students. Provide infrastructure, such as bicycle racks and incentives to support sustainable transportation options
- **Implement waste reduction and recycling programs:** Implement effective strategies and technologies to reduce waste generation, collect, segregate, and recycle waste.
- **Water Conservation and management:** Implement water conservation strategies by using low-flow fixtures.
- **Stakeholder engagement and Outreach:** Engage and collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to foster a culture of environmental responsibility and gather diverse perspectives and ideas.
- **Training courses and Research Projects:** Offer training courses on sustainable development to raise awareness. Engage in research and consultancy projects in areas connected to sustainable development and climate risk reduction, alternative energy research and innovation on clean energy and alternative energy sources.

## Review of policy

The policy shall be reviewed periodically to ascertain the effectiveness of the implementation of sustainability practices.

Regular reviews and updates of this policy will be conducted to ensure its effectiveness and relevance in addressing evolving environmental challenges.

## Acknowledgements

In developing this policy, the relevant literature was consulted. The policy is informed by the following sources:

- Harvard University Sustainability Plan: <https://sustainable.harvard.edu/our-plan/>
- Stanford University Sustainable Stanford: <https://sustainable.stanford.edu/operations/energy-climate/planning#:~:text=Expected%20to%20be%20published%20in,the%20impacts%20of%20climate%20change>.
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Climate Action Plan: <https://climate.mit.edu/climateaction/fastforward#:~:text=Achieve%20net%2Dzero%20carbon%20emissions,direct%20campus%20greenhouse%20gas%20emissions>
- University of British Columbia Sustainability Policy: <https://sustain.ubc.ca/resources/plans-policies-and-reports>
- University of Cambridge Sustainability Policy: <https://www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/policy>