Imperial College Union
Sustainability Strategy 2024-2028

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Purpose: To outline the Union's strategy for sustainability 2024-2028
Decision(s): To note

1. Context and Purpose

The Board approved a new organisational strategy in July 2023, which was launched in October 2023. Sustainability is a core enabler that underpins Imperial College Union's mission of being a high performing Students' Union, and our ambition to contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future for both the University and the broader community.

The case for sustainability is clear, and the Union has the following drivers for its sustainability plan:

i. **Integrity as a value.** The Union believes is has a moral responsibility to be an ethical and sustainable organisation.
ii. **A student priority**. Students are clear in their expectation and ambition, which is for their Union to be proactively supporting the College to attain its commitments to sustainability, for the Union to have sustainability at the core of its own service delivery, and to support students to have an experience with sustainability embedded.
iii. **Supporting the University to be more sustainable.** To work effectively in partnership with our institution to support its drive for positive engagement with sustainability, and enabling students to be active change agents now and for the future.
iv. **We do not exist in a vacuum.** We recognise the social and environmental impact that stems from our organisation's activities and our members' actions on the world around us. We thereby have a responsibility to mitigate our negative impact and to enact positive change.

2. Definition

For the purpose of this strategy, it is necessary to define exactly what we mean by sustainability to ensure clarity of purpose. Sustainability means meeting the current needs of our community without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. We must all balance environmental, economic, and social factors to create systems that are resilient and enduring.

3. Consultation

The process for developing the strategy has involved a review of existing good practice and consultation with students, elected officers, union staff and college staff using the following method:

- Desk-based research of the sector including literature review of sustainability strategies from other UK students' unions and universities.
- Review of the people and plant green league criteria.
- Feedback session with students at the Union's Environment & Sustainability Forums.
- All student survey.
- Feedback session with the Union's sustainability staff champions.
- Feedback with College Director of Sustainability.

4. The Strategy

To achieve the Union's overarching vision and mission, ICU must be a sustainable organisation that is able to effectively collaborate and challenge Imperial College London.

The plan hopes to achieve long term system change in a complex operating environment where the Union is both in control of services and decisions, and at the same time a partner to a larger globally focused institution. To keep our end goal in mind we have developed a theory of change.

Impact A description of the long-term systemic change.	Imperial College Union operates as a model of sustainability, leading by example in its own services and community, and providing proactive collaboration and challenge to our institution.		
Long Term Outcomes. Measurable medium term results that stakeholders might experience, a consequence of achieving specific outputs.	The Union is effective at holding the college to account on their commitments to sustainability.	The services that the Union delivers have sustainability at the core.	Students are empowered to engage with sustainability across the Union, the College and wider society.
Outputs. Measurable building blocks that are necessary for the realisation of the outcomes. Immediate results of the activities.	The College is held to account for its Net Zero timeline and target by 2040 (for Scope 1 & 2 emissions). Education for Sustainability is delivered to all Imperial students by 2030. The College is transparent about its commitment to its Socially Responsible Investment Policy.	The Union can measure its annual carbon emissions (Scope 1, 2 & 3) across its services that informs its carbon reduction plan. The Union has and actively enforces an ethical partnership policy and an ethical procurement policy. The Union staff feel equipped and supported to contribute to sustainability at the Union.	All Union volunteers have relevant Sustainability training. There is a planned and impactful communication & engagement campaign for sustainability. Students strongly agree that the Union is proactively taking steps to be more sustainable.

Activity 2024/25 Actions and processes that require various inputs to bring about the desired output.	Interlinking with the Union's Influencing Plan to effectively advocate students' voices to the College. Staying in regular contact with College Director of Sustainability to ensure College is on track. Engaging in Education for Sustainability Committee to explore practical modes of delivering climate science education & skills development. Lobby for divestment.	Conducting a carbon audit for Scope 1, 2 & 3 emissions on the Union's activities & operations (including student group activities). Incorporating sustainability into the Union's annual report/audit. Undertaking the Green Impact Students' Union scheme. Developing the CSP Sustainability Framework Developing all internal policies, strategies and operational plans with sustainability practices in mind. Reviewing the Union's ethical partnership policy Creating an ethical procurement policy for the Union.	Creating a funding pot for sustainability initiatives & research. Delivering training for volunteers and officers on the Union approach to sustainability. Setting up a students' Sustainability Champions scheme. Developing a communications & engagement strategy. Developing a holistic health strategy for students.
Inputs. Resources required including people, time, systems, finances.	Financial Resources: Allocating funds for sustainability initiatives. Human Resources: Working with Union's sustainability champions. Infrastructure: Ensuring energy-efficient facilities. Partnerships: Collaborating with sustainability organisations. Delivery: Embedding sustainability into team level and staff objectives.		

5. Implementation

ICU recognise that contributions to positive change for a more sustainable organisation and University require continuous revision, critical assessment, and action. As a result, this strategy will be embedded in our existing and future work. The strategy will be owned by the Management Committee, and progress will be monitored termly. In addition, the plan will have an overall review on an annual basis; the plan's actions will be updated and renewed for each academic year with student and staff input.

6. Risks

The following risks have been identified to achieving this plan.

Risk Theme	Risk description	Impact (1-5)	Likely (1-5)	Score	Key controls and mitigating actions
Strategic risk	The plan does not align with ICUs vision and mission The plan does not give the organisation a clear strategic steer on issues pertaining to Sustainability The plan does not give the organisation clear targets or KPIs to follow The plan does not have the correct governance to facilitate it	5	2	10	Current Control The plan provides a clear vision for Sustainability, as well as measurable KPIs The plan aligns clearly with the Union's strategy Pending Control A detailed action plan with methods of measuring success Annual review of the plan to agree actions for the next academic year and monitor progress Building in KPIs and activity into balanced scorecards and operational plans Success against the plan will be monitored by Management Committee Annual report on the plan will come to Board Sustainability champion regular meeting and training
Financial risk	The Union does not provide the required financial resource to ensure that the outputs of the plan can be met. Sustainable practices cost more at least in the short term.	5	2	10	Current control The Union is able to facilitate much core work without a budget The Union has available budget for training and development, research, staff activity Pending control Utilise NUS purchasing consortium bulk purchase discounting.
Reputational risk	The plan is not seen as credible by Union staff or members The plan is not seen as credible by College	4	4	16	Current control The plan has been tested with staff whose role it is to deliver/facilitate sustainability The plan has been shared with relevant College staff for feedback. Pending control The plan will be tested with relevant student committee

Staffing risk	The Union does not give staff the relevant training, resources, space, and support to deliver the plan	3	3	9	Current control The Union funds training and development for staff and students Pending control Require staff to complete relevant training related to sustainability