

Complete Policy Title

**Sustainability Policy**

Policy Number (if applicable):

Approved by

**Board of Governors**

Date of Most Recent Approval

**June 8, 2023**

Date of Original Approval(s)

**December 2010**

Supersedes/Amends Policy dated

- McMaster University Sustainability Policy, March 22, 2011
- December 2010

Responsible Executive

**Vice-President (Operations & Finance)**

Policy Specific Enquiries

[Office of Sustainability](#)

General Policy Enquiries

[Policy \(University Secretariat\)](#)

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*If there is a discrepancy between this electronic policy and the approved copy held by the University Secretariat, the approved copy prevails.*

**FORMAT:**

*If you require this document in an accessible format, please email [policy@mcmaster.ca](mailto:policy@mcmaster.ca).*

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## **PREAMBLE AND PURPOSE**

1. McMaster University aspires to transform its campus into a living laboratory for sustainability, accessibility and inclusion while also advancing its sustainable operations and growth.
2. This Policy provides a framework for using innovation, communication, and community engagement to integrate an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable consciousness into all aspects of the University's lifecycle. This process will foster the development of our learners, leaders, and decision-makers.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

3. To meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), the University developed the following principles to act as the foundation of its sustainability strategy. In considering its sustainability efforts, the University will:
  - a) apply a lens of Indigeneity;
  - b) enhance equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusive excellence;
  - c) recognize that sustainability work is a collaborative and evolving effort with a shared responsibility;
  - d) strive for innovative solutions, informed by the best available data and relying on our on-campus experts in their respective fields, tailored to our community; and
  - e) promote, communicate, and recognize sustainability successes in the University community.

## **SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK**

4. To support sustainability efforts on campus and the community, a culture of sustainability must be developed and fostered. To this end, the University has the following objectives:
  - a) Align sustainability efforts with other strategic objectives, including the Indigenous Strategic Direction Plan;
  - b) Increase awareness of sustainability throughout the community via a robust communication strategy;
  - c) Develop new engagement strategies with students, staff, faculty, visitors, and the broader Hamilton community; and
  - d) Create opportunities for the McMaster community to increase the understanding of sustainability on and off campus.

## **AREAS OF FOCUS**

5. Sustainability areas of focus are provided in this section. Accompanying each area of focus is a set of objectives that outline the actions to achieve the University's sustainability goals. Each area will have an assigned management representative responsible for implementation and annual reporting.

### **Net Zero Carbon Campus**

6. Consistent with its goal to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, the University is committed to reducing its energy consumption, implementing conservation programs, and promoting energy efficiency in all aspects of its operations. In alignment with this goal, the University has the following objectives:
  - a) implement the Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, exploring innovative approaches that include the use of renewable energy and low carbon technologies for our operations;
  - b) provide tools and information regarding best practices to promote energy conservation by the campus community; and
  - c) implement energy conservation programs to engage staff, faculty and students to practice energy efficiency.

### **Green Space**

7. The University is committed to maintaining a high degree of greenspace while limiting the use of pesticides, harmful chemicals and the need for irrigation. To ensure the responsible management of the University landscape, the University will, where possible:
  - a) plant native species that are disease, pest and drought resistant;
  - b) use organic pest control methods and fertilizers;
  - c) experiment with alternative paving methods that will incorporate vegetation; and
  - d) steward and manage our natural land properties to strengthen biodiversity and provide recreational, teaching and learning opportunities for the University community.

### **Transportation**

8. The University encourages sustainable modes of transportation and recognizes the need to balance the demands of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. In support of this goal, the University has the following objectives:
  - a) collaborate and coordinate with other community agencies and groups (e.g., Hamilton Street Railway, Cycle Hamilton, the City of Hamilton and neighbouring communities) to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation;
  - b) provide amenities to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transportation (e.g., bicycle lockers and racks, external emergency telephones, and pedestrian-priority campus walkways);
  - c) provide education to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety in and around the campus;

- d) identify and implement sustainable alternatives to University-owned vehicles where appropriate; and
- e) work with our suppliers, contractors and visitors to identify and implement sustainable alternatives for the transportation of goods and services coming into or around campus.

**Waste**

9. The University is committed to minimizing the amount of waste generated on campus. To advance this goal, the University has the following objectives:
- a) conduct an annual waste audit to measure the amount of waste sent to landfill and recycled;
  - b) publish waste audit data and related waste reduction work plan;
  - c) plan and coordinate campus initiatives to reduce consumption of all materials, with a focus on plastics and single-use items destined for landfill;
  - d) develop a campus-wide composting program that supports our waste management practices;
  - e) where possible, purchase reusable products and attempt to extend the lifecycle of goods where appropriate;
  - f) explore the use of digital information storage strategies that reduce or remove the need to use paper;
  - g) ensure responsible management of hazardous waste (from all campus activities, including research, teaching and operations);
  - h) ensure that products purchased at the University may be recycled by our waste management provider and ensure that recycling is widely available on campus; and
  - i) develop and implement effective programs and practices that support the above objectives.

**Water**

10. The University recognizes that fresh water is a non-renewable resource that needs to be conserved. The University will attempt to:
- a) reduce the quantity of water used and wastewater produced;
  - b) employ natural stormwater management procedures: ponds, rainwater systems, permeable paving, roof gardens and other mitigation strategies;
  - c) reduce landscape irrigation needs by planting native and drought-resistant species, where possible;
  - d) maximize water reuse across the University; and

- e) implement water recycling programs to use rainwater for landscape irrigation.

### **Education**

11. The University acknowledges its role as an academic institution to provide students with the tools to become sustainably conscious global citizens. The University also recognizes its role as a sustainable organization and is committed to promoting awareness and education, as well as engaging the University community in the collective responsibility to implement this Policy. To promote these principles, the University has the following objectives:
  - a) provide students, faculty, staff and administration with opportunities to increase their awareness and knowledge of sustainability;
  - b) provide students with internships and volunteer opportunities in the areas of sustainable development;
  - c) promote leadership roles among individuals from a variety of levels, providing support for sustainable initiatives;
  - d) promote interdisciplinary education and research across faculties and departments;
  - e) coordinate and cooperate with student groups, organizations, institutions, and surrounding communities pursuing sustainable programs and initiatives; and
  - f) apply research/demonstration projects to campus initiatives as part of academic programs (e.g., Engineering).

### **Health & Wellbeing**

12. In 2017, the University signed the Okanagan Charter, committing to integrating health and well-being into all aspects of campus life. In order to further health and well-being with a sustainability lens, the University has the following objectives:
  - a) ensure food and supplies are ethically sourced;
  - b) promote programs, groups and departments which support all areas of personal health, safety and wellbeing; and
  - c) recognize accomplishments and achievements of its staff, faculty and students.

### **Accountability**

13. Reporting to the Vice-President (Operations and Finance), the Director, Sustainability, and the Associate Director of the Academic Sustainability Programs Office will convene and co-chair the McMaster Sustainability Advisory Committee (MSAC), comprised of stakeholders from across campus. The MSAC co-chairs, with support from MSAC members, will monitor, champion, assess and report annually on the

implementation of the University's sustainability goals, as outlined in this Policy and within the McMaster Sustainability Strategy. This policy will be reviewed each year and reauthorized by the Board of Governors every five years.

## PROCEDURES

### **Strategy Development and Leadership**

14. The Director, Sustainability, and the Associate Director of the Academic Sustainability Programs Office will provide leadership for the strategic planning, development, promotion, education, communication, implementation and monitoring of programs designed to meet the University's desire for campus-wide, effective, long-term sustainability.

### **McMaster Sustainability Advisory Committee (MSAC)**

15. The MSAC consists of pan-university representation and reports to the Board of Governors through the Vice-President (Operations and Finance) and the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). The Committee holds open meetings on a regular basis. Meeting minutes are posted on the [Office of Sustainability website](#) in order to maintain transparency, accountability and engagement.

### **Sustainable Initiatives and Action Plan**

16. The MSAC co-chairs, in collaboration with MSAC members and with recommendations from the campus community and stakeholders, will develop annually a list of campus sustainability initiatives that align with the McMaster's Sustainability Strategy and commitments endorsed by McMaster in the Declaration, [Sustainable Development Solutions Network for Canada](#), the [Okanagan Charter](#), the [University and College Presidents' Climate Change Statement of Action for Canada](#) and the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). This list will be revised and updated each year and approved by MSAC.

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES PROCEDURES

- Hospitality Services Sustainable Procurement Policy (01-032021) <https://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2022/04/Hospitality-Services-Sustainable-Procurement-Policy-1.pdf>
- Hazardous Waste Management Program (RMM 502) <https://hr.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/01/RMM-502-Hazardous-Waste-Management-Program.pdf>
- McMaster's Okanagan Charter Committee. <https://okanagan.mcmaster.ca/>
- Energy Procurement Policy <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Energy-Procurement-Policy-2011.pdf>
- Sustainable Building Policy <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Sustainable-Building-Policy.pdf>
- Fair Trade Purchasing Policy for University Suppliers and Coffee Retailers <https://financial-affairs.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/fairtrade.pdf>
- Social Responsibility and McMaster's Investment Policy <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Social-Responsibility-and-McMasters-Investment-Policy.pdf>