



Sustainable Food policy

Introduction

Birkbeck, University of London's Sustainable Food Policy outlines our commitment to providing a high-quality catering and hospitality service and reflects our core sustainability goals and net zero targets.

At Birkbeck, we recognize that we have a responsibility to make competitively priced, healthy food and drink options, that are sustainable, ethically sourced, and suitable for those with dietary requirements available to our students and colleagues as well as all external visitors to our restaurant and cafes. By introducing this policy, we aim to continuously improve our catering offerings while enhancing consumer awareness of healthy food and lower-carbon menu options.

Organisational scope

The Sustainable Food policy is a corporate policy and applies to all employees, direct or indirect, of Birkbeck's catering services.

The objectives and targets outlined in the policy apply to all our catering outlets across Birkbeck's estate, and to our hospitality team when catering for internal outlets and events and conferences. This policy will be reflected in any catering tenders and contracts where applicable.

Key aims

- Use local suppliers and seasonal ingredients where possible
- Encourage further uptake of plant-based options
- Reduce the overall carbon footprint of the food and drink served at Birkbeck
- Include catering statistics in Birkbeck's Sustainability Report to highlight our progress
- Work towards sustainability certifications in both the food we serve and our kitchen operations to ensure a system of continuous improvement is in place.



Responsibility

Policy owner	Associate Director – Food & Beverage
Kitchen and catering operations queries	Head Chef Food and Beverage Operations Manager
Sustainability advice and data	Sustainability and Energy Manager

The Associate Director – Food & Beverage has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Policy within Birkbeck's catering services, supported by the Head Chef, the Food and Beverage Operations Manager, and the Sustainability and Energy Manager.

Queries should be directed to the Head Chef and/or the Food and Beverage Operations Manager (relating to food or on-site operations) or the Sustainability and Energy Manager (relating to general sustainability information and data such as energy, waste, or water figures).

Responsibility for the operational implementation of this policy lies with the Head Chef and the Food and Beverage Operations Manager.

Guidance and advice relating to food sustainability will be provided in collaboration with the Sustainability and Energy Manager and the Procurement Team.

Procurement

Birkbeck's Catering Operations team, Head Chef, and Procurement team work closely with our suppliers to ensure that we receive the best prices and the most sustainable options either via direct partnerships or procurement requirements included in our tender processes. Previously, we have procured exclusively via TUCO; however, to allow us more flexibility in the future we will seek to move away from TUCO to gain further control over what we are buying rather than buying exclusively via TUCO's suppliers. This new approach should give us the opportunity to engage directly with more sustainable suppliers and then follow a procurement process that complements the sustainability aims of the department.

We will:

- Ensure that sustainability standards are embedded in all tenders and contracts

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- Continue using suppliers such as Angry Monk to reduce food waste and reduce costs
- Only procure fish certified by the Marine Conservation Society (MSC), and exclude fish species identified as most at risk by the MSC
- Ensure that all meat, dairy, and egg products are produced to high environmental, ethical and animal welfare standards, including Red Tractor certified UK produce
- Continue to purchase only free-range eggs
- Work towards only purchasing coffee, chocolate, and other relevant items from Fairtrade certified producers.

Energy

Birkbeck has recently switched away from gas to electric cooking equipment in the Terrace 5 restaurant and we now use no gas in any of our kitchens. This will support our net zero goals as we gradually work to remove gas across our whole estate. As a next step we will focus on energy use reduction and gradual introduction of further energy efficient equipment to replace end-of-life items.

We will:

- Aim to purchase the most energy efficient items to further reduce energy use when purchasing new electrical and electronic equipment
- Continue to monitor energy use across our whole estate and aim to sub-meter kitchens to understand how we can work to further reduce energy use in these areas
- Introduce new guidance for staff on energy management and ensure this is updated regularly, with reminders sent to catering colleagues.

Water

We report annually on water consumption across Birkbeck's estate. While we have not yet taken significant steps to reduce water consumption, we recognise that it is becoming a scarcer resource and that we will need to consider how we can conserve water in the future.



We will:

- Explore the use of water efficiency devices in our kitchens to see if these would be a good option for Birkbeck and if so, introduce items such as faucet aerators or flow restrictors
- Introduce new guidance for staff on water management and ensure this is updated regularly, with reminders sent to catering colleagues.

Waste

We report annually on waste produced across Birkbeck's campus, and have seen food waste more than halved from the 2023-24 to the 2024-25 financial year. We will ensure that food waste reduction processes are carefully managed to maintain these lower levels of food waste, and aim to reduce waste in other areas, particularly single-use disposable items.

We will:

- Encourage further adoption of re-usable water bottles and coffee cups to reduce the amount of single-use bottles and cups
 - Over the next 5 years we will phase out the use of single-use coffee cups in our restaurant and cafes
 - Over the next 5 years we will phase out sales of drinks in plastic bottles in our restaurant and cafes
- Continue to send our waste oil for recycling into biofuel
- Create daily chef's specials by using ingredients we already have available in the kitchen to reduce food waste
- Introduce new guidance for staff on waste management and ensure this is updated regularly, with reminders sent to catering colleagues.

Society

We recognise that the food we serve has impacts linked to health, the environment, and the economy. We are already making progress in reducing food waste, providing healthier options, and working with local suppliers.



We will:

- Improve employee and student awareness of the potential environmental and social effects of food and drink through appropriate information, guidance, and product information to help individuals select sustainable products and services
- Encourage further uptake of plant-based options by continuing to offer plant milk at no additional cost, offering at least one third vegan and vegetarian options daily and increasing this proportion over time, and continuing to offer a fully plant-based hospitality menu for events
- Ensure our menus are well balanced, portions are controlled, and we use healthier cooking methods while avoiding pre-made and frozen foods, as well as safely managing food
- Aim to purchase from local and/or organic suppliers where possible and cost effective.

Implementation and review

We will offer training and guidance to all catering staff to ensure all our colleagues understand the importance of this policy and the actions they will need to incorporate in their activities.

Refresher training will be offered regularly, and any guidance documents will be updated annually.

Specific metrics will be reported on annually as part of our Sustainability Report.

We will develop and regularly review progress towards SMART targets for energy, water, and waste.

This policy will be fully reviewed every 3 years.

Version control

Approval date	June 2026
Approved by	Matt Weston, Associate Director – Food & Beverage
Next review due	June 2029