

IUA Sustainability Working Group

Terms of Reference

Role of the IUA Sustainability Working Group (SWG)

The role of the SWG is to work collaboratively with universities to support and enable a holistic approach to achieving economic and environmental sustainability. Sustainability is the existential challenge of our age and major and rapid changes to current policies and practices are necessary for universities as with many other organisations.

As large multi-functional organisations, universities are faced with the challenge of mitigating and adapting to the impacts of current and future unsustainable practices that contribute to major planetary challenges such as climate change, ocean acidification and waste and biodiversity depletion. Specifically, as part State-funded organisations, universities must respond to an increasing range of government-led initiatives in relation to carbon and waste reduction across the economy and publicly funded agencies.

The SWG is responsible, subject to the advance approval of the IUA Chief Operations Officers Group , for:

Operational Sustainability focusing on operational GHG emissions, target actions are as follows;

- identify and agree a framework and methodology for the estimation of GHG emissions,
- establishment of baseline data in each university,
- coordination of sectoral responses to any government information requests,
- sharing of knowledge and expertise to support reduction of emissions and otherwise,
- agree shared actions i.e. reduce paper consumption via promotion of digital technology,
- identify potential collaborative actions across all HEI's (practice/process focused),

Sustainable Partnerships focusing on development and fostering of partnership and stakeholder engagements with the explicit objective of addressing sustainability challenges, target actions are as follows;

- Identify collaborative actions across all HEI's,
- Sharing of knowledge and expertise to enable implementation of major change projects,
- Define and agree a shared language re sustainability,
- Agree a shared vision of future objectives and actions.

Membership

The membership of this group will be drawn from the eight universities. All IUA working groups operate a chairing rotation, appointing one university to be the "chairing university" for all IUA working groups. In 2022, the Group will be chaired by the UCD representative.

Accountability

An annual work programme is to be agreed by the SWG and submitted to the IUA Chief Operations Officers Group for consideration.

The SWG will report progress at regular intervals to the IUA Chief Operations Officers Group. Individual members of the SWG are expected to report back as appropriate to their university, and will have the necessary understanding to reflect the views of their institution.

Ways of working

This Group will meet on a quarterly basis.

The Chairperson of the SWG may request an additional meeting of the Group to escalate or resolve issues which cannot be delayed until the next scheduled meeting of the group.

The Chairperson can, in consultation with other members of the Group, decide to invite external expertise to meetings of the Group in order to provide technical advice, if required.

Items for inclusion in the agenda will be generated by the Chair, in consultation with SWG members and circulated to the group.

Documents will be circulated as early as possible, but not later than 3 working days in advance of the meeting.

Non-members may be invited to attend the steering group meetings where particular insight or expertise is required. Invitations to attend will be cleared through the Chairperson.

Ongoing Review

The Terms of Reference of the SWG will be reviewed annually in light of best practice and in view of the evolving agenda on sustainability.