

Single Use Plastic and Disposable Items Policy

1.0 Introduction

The University recognises our activities can have a negative impact on the environment, both locally and globally and we are committed to making sustainable development part of its operations, research and curriculum.

This policy will be reviewed by the Environment and Sustainability Team on a 3-year basis or amended in response to changes in future legislation and/or case law.

2.0 Ownership

The Environment and Sustainability Team owns and manages this policy on behalf of The University of Northampton.

3.0 Organisational Scope

This Single-use Plastic and Disposable item policy is a corporate policy and applies to all employees (and workers, as applicable) of The University of Northampton including any wholly owned subsidiaries, unless an alternative policy exists, subject to any qualifying conditions.

University activity including teaching, accommodation, research, administrative and operations are under scope of this policy, considering impacts from buildings owned, operated or leased by the University. All staff, students and contractors of the University must adhere to this policy.

4.0 Policy Statement

Single-use plastic is one of the largest contributors to environmental pollution across the globe and causes significant harm to wildlife and ecosystems. This problem can be reduced significantly with the controlled use and disposal of single-use plastic and other disposable items.

This policy forms part of and should be read in conjunction with the University's [Environment Policy](#).

The University of Northampton is committed to reducing the use of single-use plastic and disposable items throughout the estate and satisfies the UK Government ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds.

Our aim is to provide suitable alternatives where possible and to encourage our staff, students and visitors to choose re-useable options whenever feasible.

This is achieved by:

- Promoting the use of re-usable coffee cups by offering a discount on drinks purchased using re-usable cups.
- Providing water stations across all university buildings to enable free water for re-fillable bottles.
- Reducing the amount of Grab & Go plastic packaging / cutlery in our catering outlets where feasible and hygienic to do so.
- Drinks served without plastic straws

- The use of wooden drinks stirrers in catering outlets

Where the use of disposable items or single-use plastic is unavoidable, emphasis is placed on the correct disposal. All single-use recyclable items i.e. plastic bottles, containers, cartons, drink cans, etc disposed of on campus are placed in one of the mixed recycling waste bins. Plastic bottles and aluminum cans can be deposited in our Reverse Vending Machine located in the Market catering outlet. Coffee cups are also disposed of responsibly using the specialty coffee cup recycling bins. Recyclable waste is then collected and sorted by our waste management contractor and sent to the recycling facility for processing.

5.0 Definitions

5.1 'Single-use plastic' is defined as all products made wholly or partly of plastic, which are intended for single use and / or for a short period of time before being disposed of.

5.2 Disposable items are defined as any items other than those made of single-use plastic, intended for single use and / or a short period of time before being disposed of.

This policy forms part of and should be read in conjunction with the University's [Environment Policy](#).

6.0 Key Principles

The Single-use Plastics Policy focuses on the first four principles of the DEFRA Waste Management Hierarchy (2011) through:

- Encouraging the use of alternatives (Prevent, Reduce, Re-use)
 - Drinking cups
 - Re-fillable water bottles
 - Cutlery
 - Bags
 - PPE
- Educating staff and students in the correct way to dispose of single-use plastic items, i.e. they should be clean and dry and placed in the mixed recycling bin (Recycle)

In line with the guidance provided by the government's ban on plastic straws, our catering outlets are able to provide plastic straws on request to ensure that in instances where using a plastic straw is necessary for medical reasons, we are supporting the right balance between reducing environmental impact and protecting the rights of people with medical conditions and disabilities.

7.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- [Environment Policy](#)
- [Waste Policy](#)
- [Waste Action Plan \(as part of our liE Manual\)](#)
- [Carbon Management Plan](#)
- [Ethical and Sustainable Procurement Policy](#)
- [University Strategic Plan](#)

8.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment must accompany this document.

9.0 VERSION CONTROL

Author: Environment and Sustainability Team, Estates and

Campus Services Author Date: 29/10/2020

Approval Signatures: TU Liaison +

Sustainability Board Original Approval

Date: 17/11/2020 + 23/11/2020 Current

Status: APPROVED

Version Control: V2

Amendments: Updated links and formatting – 13/11/2025

Approval Signatures: ULT

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Template

Before carrying out EIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EIA Guidance and Notes. Additional training is available through staff development.

EIA forms part of the University's Impact Assessment procedure and covers policies, provisions, criteria, practices and activities, including the delivery of services and decisions, but will be referred to as policy/ practice hereafter.

An EIA should be completed prior decisions to implement new or change any existing policy/ practice and reviewed throughout the decision making or review process.

1. Policy/ Practice (name and brief description)

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2. Reason for the EIA

- ☐ Proposed new policy/practice
- ☐ Proposed change to an existing policy/practice
- ☒ Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
- ☐ Other (please state):

3. Person responsible for the policy/ practice

Name: Hollie Darby

Job title: Environment Advisor

Department/ Faculty: Estates and Campus Services

4. Groups the policy, practice applies to:

- ☒ Staff
- ☒ Student
- ☐ Parents
- ☒ Visitors/Public

5. Data and evidence used to facilitate the screening of this policy/ practice including internal and external metrics and qualitative and anecdotal evidence

Currently there is no data available to facilitate the screening of this policy.

6. Gaps in information/ evidence to allow proper assessment of the policy/ practice and how this will be addressed

We are aware that there are external studies that show that disabled groups have expressed upset with regards to the ban of plastic straws and potentially the removal of certain packaging materials, pre-prepared food which is packaged in plastic for

example can be a requirement for independent living. Therefore we ensure that plastic straws will be available upon request in these circumstances.

7. Groups who have been consulted with in the development / review of this the policy/ practice:

- ☐ Unions
- ☒ Staff networks
- ☐ HR
- ☒ ULT
- ☐ Internal experts
- ☐ External experts
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☐ Other (please state):

8. Potential/actual impacts of the policy/ practice on the following characteristics

Reviewed characteristic	Positive impact <i>A positive impact is one in which a person or people will experience an advantage or benefit.</i>	Negative impact <i>A negative impact is one in which a person or people will experience a disadvantage.</i>	Detail of impact <i>If there is no impact – you do not need to fill in this section</i> <i>Explain how the proposal will disproportionately impact people who share the characteristic and/or what the effect of that impact will be on those people. This section should be completed whether the impact is positive or negative. With positive impact, detail the actions you will take to promote the positive impact to the university in the next column.</i>	How will you mitigate or remove any identified negative impacts and/or promote any positive impacts? Can any identified impact be justified for business reasons? If yes, please explain why. <i>If an identified negative impact cannot be removed or mitigated, explain why this can be justified for business reasons. Where you identify negative impact which cannot be justified for business reasons, you should identify any changes you can make to your proposal which will mitigate or eliminate this.</i>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The ban of plastic straws can be a requirement for independent living and a necessity for various ailments.	Ensure plastic straws are available upon request in all catering outlets.
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact	

Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>No impact</i>	
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>No impact</i>	

9. Does the policy/practice eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in relation to any of the protected characteristics? N/A	
10. Does the policy/ practice have a positive or negative impact on advancing equality of opportunity in relation to any of the protected characteristics? No	
11. Does the policy/practice foster good relations and address prejudice in relation to any of the protected characteristics? No	
12. Adjustments made to the policy/ practice to counteract potential or actual negative impact. Yes	
13. Outcome <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No change required to the proposal– the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust. <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the policy/ practice proposal – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue the policy/ practice proposal despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated/or justified <input type="checkbox"/> Stop the policy/ practice proposal as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated/or justified.	
14. Approval	
Signed by policy/ practice owner Date: 12/11/2025	H.Darby

Signed by the faculty Dean/ Department Director Date: 14/11/2025	Anne-Marie Kilday <i>Anne-Marie Kilday.</i>
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