



Universität
Bremen

The University of Bremen's Sustainability Strategy

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Overall Institutional Approach

Social responsibility and sustainable and climate-friendly action stand at the heart of the University of Bremen's activities. Our plan for sustainability is modeled on the comprehensive United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Social and ecological aspects, which we understand to be of equal value and not to be offset against economic aspects, guide us in the development of the University of Bremen.

We are proactively committed to achieving sustainable development and creating structures and conditions to permanently anchor sustainability, climate justice, and climate neutrality as cross-cutting issues in all fields of action and at all levels of the university. Moving towards an overall institutional approach to sustainability requires the committed involvement of all university members and students. This transformation will affect all areas of the university, including research, teaching and learning, campus operations, and the university's interactions with society. The pathways for this transformation are defined in this sustainability strategy, which will undergo continuous updates in consultation with the university's supervisory committees. The University Executive Board is responsible for implementing the measures resulting from this sustainability strategy, including ensuring that changes are made in a coherent and binding nature on all levels and in alignment with the university's mission statement. We are seeking a holistic approach to sustainability in higher education development, relying on the University of Bremen's aptitude as a reform-embracing university, where unconventional approaches and a creative community spirit have always been at the heart of its ongoing development.

As the University of Bremen, our aim is to transform our campus into one that is sustainable and contributes to climate justice, in addition to integrating sustainability into our research, teaching, and learning. In this way, we will live up to our social responsibility and bring our collective potential together to establish Bremen as a pioneer in sustainable development. This transformation process can only succeed as a collaborative effort of the university and its partner institutions and it requires a departure from habitual patterns of thought and action, and a willingness to break new ground in many areas. These different paths to transformation offer new opportunities and possibilities for the university. We recognize that the overall process will involve complex contradictions and tensions and are therefore designing the process in a way that is transparent, tangible, open, and respectful.

What have we already achieved?

- Update to the university's mission statement with a clear focus on sustainability, climate justice, and climate neutrality (2023)
- Environmental and sustainability guidelines since 2010
- Environmental and sustainability management (EMAS since 2004 and ISO 26000 certification)
- BMBF joint project "Bremen Goes Sustainable" of Bremen State's higher education institutions (2022)

Objectives:

- We will consistently align the university's strategic development with the implementation of this sustainability strategy.
- The measures resulting from the fields of action of this sustainability strategy will be anchored in the development plans and objectives of the organizational units of the University of Bremen in a detailed and timely manner.
- We view this strategy as a dynamic and self-reflective process. We will review and continually refine the implementation of the measures at appropriate intervals. We will make use of our diverse networks and institutional memberships, as well as the knowledge and skills we possess.
- We will make the ongoing development and implementation of the sustainability strategy a participatory and transparent process, and make it available to civil society as well. In this way, we will impart knowledge and skills that emerge from the university's sustainability transformation to members of society.
- At the state level, in cooperation with state higher education institutions and non-university research institutes, and in regional, national, and international alliances, we will advocate for binding measures to achieve the sustainability goals.
- We are committed to ensuring that sustainability, climate justice, and climate neutrality are given priority in the target agreements with the State of Bremen, in line with our overall institutional approach and our mission statement.

Shaping the Sustainability Transformation Together

The university will only be able to achieve its overarching transformation goals if its employees and students embrace change as an opportunity to shape the socio-ecological transformation in a permanent, continuous, and collective manner. We are aware that the changes will affect all areas of the university and at the same time will be accompanied by a societal shift toward greater sustainability. We also recognize that the actions to implement this sustainability strategy will be received differently by the members of the university in terms of ambition and speed of implementation. We accept this challenge as a joint task. Through constructive cooperation between the parties involved, we will identify contradictions, conflicts, and problems at an early stage, and find and pursue balanced paths for a socio-ecological transformation.

We see the diversity of students and employees, as well as their potential and perspectives, as an enrichment to this process. We will comprehensively develop changes in transparent participation processes, and particularly promote and support student engagement. As a university, we recognize that this also requires structural support for student engagement.

We are committed to ensuring that the university develops its working environment in a socially sustainable manner. Together, we will design a campus on which the members of the university treat each other with respect and equality. This presupposes that we as a

university create an environment that minimizes social stress, promotes mental and physical health, and supports the ability to actively deal with conflicts. To this end, we are critically examining the power and hierarchical relationships specific to universities, and are working to establish reliable structures, practices, and attitudes that support diversity and are anti-discriminatory.

What have we already achieved?

- Statute on anti-discrimination with extended, protective features that go beyond the General Equal Treatment Act
- Establishment of a Green Office to encourage sustainability-related student engagement
- Introduction of a core values compass for administrative and operational staff
- A multitude of services to promote mental health

Objectives:

- As members of the university, we are working together to create an inclusive working environment of respectful cooperation in order to shape the sustainability transformation.
- We are examining long-term and future needs for personnel planning that will maintain a balance between the tasks to be completed and the human resources available and ensure a healthy work environment for all employees.
- We are identifying ways to encourage student involvement in the university's sustainability transformation, and will implement these in a timely manner.
- The University of Bremen is permanently establishing a Green Office in which students, together with employees of the university, can support the implementation of the sustainability strategy operationally and substantively.
- We are establishing hiring processes (from salary evaluation and job advertising to contract signing and personnel development) that are fundamentally favorable and service-oriented.
- We are strengthening the compatibility of family and professional life, while also advancing equality, diversity, and inclusivity.
- We are expanding our mental health services for students and employees.

Research

We uphold academic freedom and seek to answer questions related to sustainability in both specialized and interdisciplinary research – in the natural and technical sciences as well as in the social sciences and humanities. Our research activities contribute to socio-ecological transformation and strengthen problem-solving skills as well as skills in cognitive thinking and flexibility. In doing so, we promote a transparent exchange of scientific data as the basis for a fair, comprehensible, and therefore more sustainable research culture. We support approaches to participatory and collaborative sustainability research that integrate those from different social areas and interest groups.

What have we already achieved?

- Development of new formats for intra-university research funding with a focus on sustainability
- Implementation of sustainability-oriented funding for the university's foundations
- Real labs: "Campus Goes Biodiverse," "Campus Energy Laboratory" as model projects for the integration of research, teaching, and campus development
- Establishment of internationally visible research on topics of sustainability and climate justice

Objectives:

- At the university, we will establish and expand means to identify and promote interaction and facilitate cooperation in the field of sustainability-related research.
- We will strengthen our competencies in participatory and collaborative sustainability research and build up advisory resources for this purpose.
- We will develop an open science culture as an essential conceptual element of a sustainable research strategy.
- We will seek to conduct research that is as resource-efficient and low-emission as possible in all projects and subjects.
- We will use our technical expertise to research and expand the implementation of the sustainability strategy.

Teaching and Learning

Actively shaping the transformation to a sustainable society requires unconventional, unbiased, and critical questioning as well as curiosity and social commitment. In degree programs at the University of Bremen, we help students to reflect on the impact of personal behavior and make decisions that lead to sustainable development. We are acutely aware of our responsibility toward future generations.

In order to grasp and work on the technical, social, ecological, and cultural challenges of our time, we teach skills in education for sustainable development (ESD) within and between disciplines. We work with teaching-learning scenarios that encourage in-depth expertise through their practical applications and complexity, as well as the reflections they elicit. We

promote interdisciplinary cooperation by bringing different research directions together, thereby setting new impulses and developing new solutions. A broad range of courses that can be studied internationally promotes competencies that enable students to successfully shape upcoming transformation processes, particularly in a global context. We see climate justice as an important factor for sustainable development and as an important teaching and learning objective.

What have we already achieved?

- Research-based learning as an interdisciplinary teaching concept since the founding of the university
- Sustainability-related courses offered in many degree programs
- Possibility of labeling courses according to their references to the UN sustainability goals in the course directory
- Establishment of the “Virtual Academy for Sustainability” with accessible, digital courses on sustainability topics
- Establishment of interdisciplinary and international bachelor’s and master’s degree programs with a focus on sustainability
- Sustainability content within the framework of university didactics
- Continuing support for the development of new teaching-learning scenarios

Objectives:

- We will anchor sustainability and education for sustainable development (ESD) in the teaching mission statement.
- We will establish ESD in as many degree programs as possible.
- We will develop the teaching and learning goal of climate justice both between generations and towards countries of the Global South in as many courses as possible.
- We will integrate sustainability-related content into the planning and accreditation process.
- We will anchor subject-specific and interdisciplinary general studies courses pertaining to ESD in all degree programs.
- We will offer an interdisciplinary sustainability certificate to recognize students’ work in this area.
- We will help students and teachers gain awareness for teaching that is resource-efficient.
- We will expand and consolidate further training courses for teachers on the subject of sustainability within the framework of university didactics.
- We will work to establish learning spaces and examination scenarios that enable students to develop and apply learning content in a self-determined and competence-oriented manner; we will establish service learning.
- We will further strengthen the Bremen model of research-based learning to teach problem-solving skills.

Knowledge Transfer and Community Commitment

The sustainability transformation requires a two-way (reciprocal) transfer of knowledge and technology between academia and society. As a transformative university, we see ourselves as making sustainability transformation the subject of research and teaching, but also as providing impetus for a societal sustainability transformation. As a university, we cooperate with our partners throughout society, which includes working in co-design formats. In this way, we make decisive contributions to the emergence and implementation of technological and social innovations that advance global society on its path towards sustainability.

We understand outreach to be a broad and always research-based exchange process that includes cooperation and dialogue between our employees in research and teaching and social representatives (from the regional to the global level). With this broad understanding, we as a university face the challenges that a sustainability transformation poses, while also engaging as a key player in the search for solutions in social transformation processes. We support and encourage our members in their activities so that scientific findings become transformation knowledge and are shared in transformation processes.

What have we already achieved?

- Transfer strategy with a broad understanding of transfer and the goal of contributing to sustainable development
- Transfer Advisory Board as a strategic advisory body to systematically involve the perspectives of social actors
- Development of new formats for social innovation (e.g. "Social Impact Challenge Weekend")
- Sustainability, climate protection, and climate justice as a separate category of the "Das Goldene Plietsch" prize of the University of Bremen Foundation

Objectives:

- We will intensify our cooperation with social representatives in the field of sustainability and create more permanent ways to exchange ideas.
- We will support transfer activities that promote a sustainable society, e.g. science-based start-ups with sustainable business models.
- We will promote the transfer of knowledge related to sustainability topics through open educational resources and cooperation approaches such as public engagement and citizen science, which we will expand.
- We will make our transfer activities for an effective sustainability transformation more visible.
- We will strengthen our science communication and thus increase our dialogue with social figures on science and sustainability.

Campus and Operations

As a campus university, we need a lot of resources, buildings, and space to operate. We intend to make our operations climate-neutral and sustainable and are therefore looking for innovative ways to achieve this goal. Increasing digitization opens up a double field of action: Digitized processes can reduce both the general resource consumption (Green by IT) as well as the resources needed for IT (Green in IT). Our goal is for the campus to be an ecologically and socially diverse place with a strong focus on creating an inviting and inclusive atmosphere. This also includes high accessibility by low-emission means of transport. Our strategy will consider many aspects of mobility that affect greenhouse gas emissions and will not solely focus on those caused by commuting, but also business trips and business excursions.

What have we already achieved?

- Permanent advisory group to the Director of Finance and Administration (formerly Sustainability Forum)
- Environmental and sustainability management (EMAS certification taking into account ISO26000) with annual environmental statement
- “Most recycling paper-friendly university” 2021 as well as repeated wins in the “Papieratlas” university competition
- Greenhouse gas balancing and own analysis of traffic between homes and university (commute traffic)
- CO₂-compensation of all university employee business trips possible
- Solar panels on several buildings, installed and operated by Solar Cooperative (UniBremenSOLAR eG)
- Green IT Housing Center for server infrastructures

Objectives:

Dealing with resources and sustainable campus operations

- Based on the already established greenhouse gas balancing, we will develop a binding climate neutrality strategy that includes time targets.
- For effective energy and resource management, we will improve the collection and evaluation of consumption data.
- We will test buildings for their heat and energy efficiency and continue building renovations accordingly, taking into account climate adaptation as well as greening of facades and roofs.
- We will protect and increase biodiversity on the University of Bremen campus.
- Considerations regarding sustainability will play a binding role in procuring services, purchasing and disposing of goods/objects, as well as in IT procurement, and procedures will be developed to prioritize sustainable alternatives.
- We will work with our campus partners to ensure sustainable operations of the individual facilities, including a sustainable food supply for the dining halls and cafeterias.

Mobility

- We are continuing to develop low-emission concepts in collaboration with stakeholders in the city and its surroundings, with a particular focus on promoting low-emission mobility to and from the campus through public transportation, cycling, and walking.
- Our university aims to promote national and international scientific collaboration, while minimizing the emissions and thereby the environmental effect of academic travel.