



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

## **UN Global Compact Communication on Engagement**

2019–21



## Statement of continued support

As Australia's first university, the University of Sydney has a tradition of developing leadership for good – shaping change to improve the lives of our immediate campus community and neighbours, as well as the local, national and international communities we serve.

I am pleased therefore to reaffirm the University of Sydney's support for the United Nations Global Compact, and to present our first commitment of engagement with an overview of activities from May 2019 to May 2021 that demonstrate our commitment to the compact's 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

At the heart of our efforts over the past two years has been the development, launch and early rollout of the University's Sustainability Strategy 2020: a commitment to a revitalised institutional focus on sustainability that delivers solutions to the interconnected problems facing our shared future. In this strategy and related initiatives, we embrace our moral obligation to inform and accelerate fair and equitable progress towards the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define environmental, social and economic imperatives to ensure peaceful and sustainable futures for all nations.

Our multidisciplinary approach to research and education already enables our staff and students to collaborate productively and successfully to develop solutions to complex issues facing Australia and the world, and we placed second globally among universities in the 2020 Times Higher Education Impact ranking based on our success in delivering the SDGs. But we recognise our duty to do more.

During the period we developed our institutional sustainability strategy, the devastating bushfires of the 2019–20 Australian summer were swiftly followed by the COVID-19 pandemic – the role of universities in responding to crises such as these is paramount. As we navigate our way through and beyond the pandemic, we are grateful to express our continued support for the UN Global Compact and our commitment to supporting its principles through our research, our education and our operations.

**Professor Stephen Garton AM**  
**Vice-Chancellor and Principal**

# Overview of the University of Sydney

As Australia's first university, the University of Sydney has a proud history of global leadership in education and research and inspiring people from all backgrounds to contribute to real-world change.

Our [international rankings](#) reflect our sustained track record of excellence and global reputation – we are regularly ranked in the top 50 universities worldwide (QS World University Rankings 2020).

We offer an exceptional range of disciplines – more than 400 areas of study – and our community includes more than 70,000 students, 8000 permanent and fixed-term staff and [350,000 alumni](#) in more than 170 countries.

We engage with partners across industry, government, non-profit and community sectors to answer the biggest questions facing society, business and our communities worldwide.

The University realises that progress and contribution to the SDGs and UN Global Compact cannot be done in isolation. One way that we engage with the UN Global Compact is by being active members in SDG and sustainability networks, including:

- Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS)
- UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

In June 2021, the University will submit its first submission to the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS), a program under the globally recognised AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education). STARS is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. This is one of the initiatives under our [Sustainability Strategy](#), published in 2020. Another key institutional strategy published in 2020 was [One Sydney, Many People](#), which outlines our commitment to creating higher education and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and valuing Indigenous culture.

Modern slavery breaches the most fundamental freedoms and human rights of individuals and is never acceptable in any of its forms. As a higher education institution occupying a unique space at the intersection of public and private enterprise, we recognise the important role the University, and the sector, can play in the global effort to eradicate modern slavery.

In 2021, the University published its inaugural [Modern Slavery Statement \(2020\)](#) outlining its commitment to respecting human rights and taking meaningful action to address modern slavery. Incorporating the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), our 2020 efforts focused on understanding risks and developing a clear policy and due diligence framework for identifying and addressing modern slavery.

## Our education and the Global Compact

Together, all our faculties contribute to education in areas related to the principles of the Global Compact. The University's [graduate qualities](#) play an important role in equipping our students with the competencies they will need to work effectively to become leaders in the 10 principles enshrined in the compact.

We offer undergraduate majors relevant to the broad field of sustainability in specialist degree programs, such as the Humanitarian Engineering major in the Bachelor of Engineering, and our students in liberal studies or selected other degrees can enrol in more than 100 majors that either directly support sustainability concepts (e.g. [Environmental Studies](#) and [Wildlife Conservation](#)) or can be tailored to a sustainability focus. For example, in our [Politics](#) major a student can select units relevant to sustainability such as human rights, environmental politics and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Politics.

The University also incorporates Industry and Community Project Units (ICPUs) into its curriculum that allow students and industry partners to work together to solve real-world problems in organisations. Recent examples that align with the UN Global Compact and SDGs include:

- Impact of climate change (with QBE)
- Creating a renewable energy future (with AGL)
- Transforming businesses for sustainability (with Bain & Company)
- Transforming lives in need – sustainable communities in developing nations (with Clayton Utz and Communities Assist)

At a postgraduate level, our Master of Sustainability, first offered in 2010, is a multi-faculty interdisciplinary degree that addresses core aspects of economic, social and environmental sustainability. This interdisciplinary approach differentiates it from other sustainability-related degrees and is its most cited advantage among graduating students. The University has also offered a Master of Human Rights program for more than 10 years, and from 2022 will offer a Master of Social Justice across three streams: development studies; peace and conflict studies and human rights.

The University of Sydney Business School became a signatory to the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) in February 2016, and an Advanced PRME signatory in May 2019. This commitment reflects our drive to build awareness of the SDGs and of the UN Global Compact and its principles while illuminating, and suggesting responses to, the emerging opportunities, problems and challenges that will feature in current and future business environments. In May 2020 the Business School published its second [PRME progress report](#).

More information on how and where we deliver education on the SDGs and the UN Global Compact principles can be found in our [2020 SDG Progress Report](#).

## Our research and the Global Compact

We have world-leading academics who collectively enable a unique trans-disciplinary consideration of multiple aspects relating to the principles addressed by the Global Compact, covering the human, scientific and technical dimensions of the challenges we face, and the mental, physical and ecological health implications. We encourage the expertise of scholars from many disciplines to work together to find sustainable solutions, and their research is addressing some of the world's biggest issues, such as climate change, human rights, planetary health, and injustice.

Researchers across the University work on aspects of the SDGs. Our Sustainability Strategy aspires to bring together sustainability-themed research at the University of Sydney under one banner, the SDGs, as a common language and platform to develop solutions to global issues and bring thought leadership to areas defined in the UN Global Compact's 10 principles. The graph below shows an approximation of academic output already relevant to the SDGs.

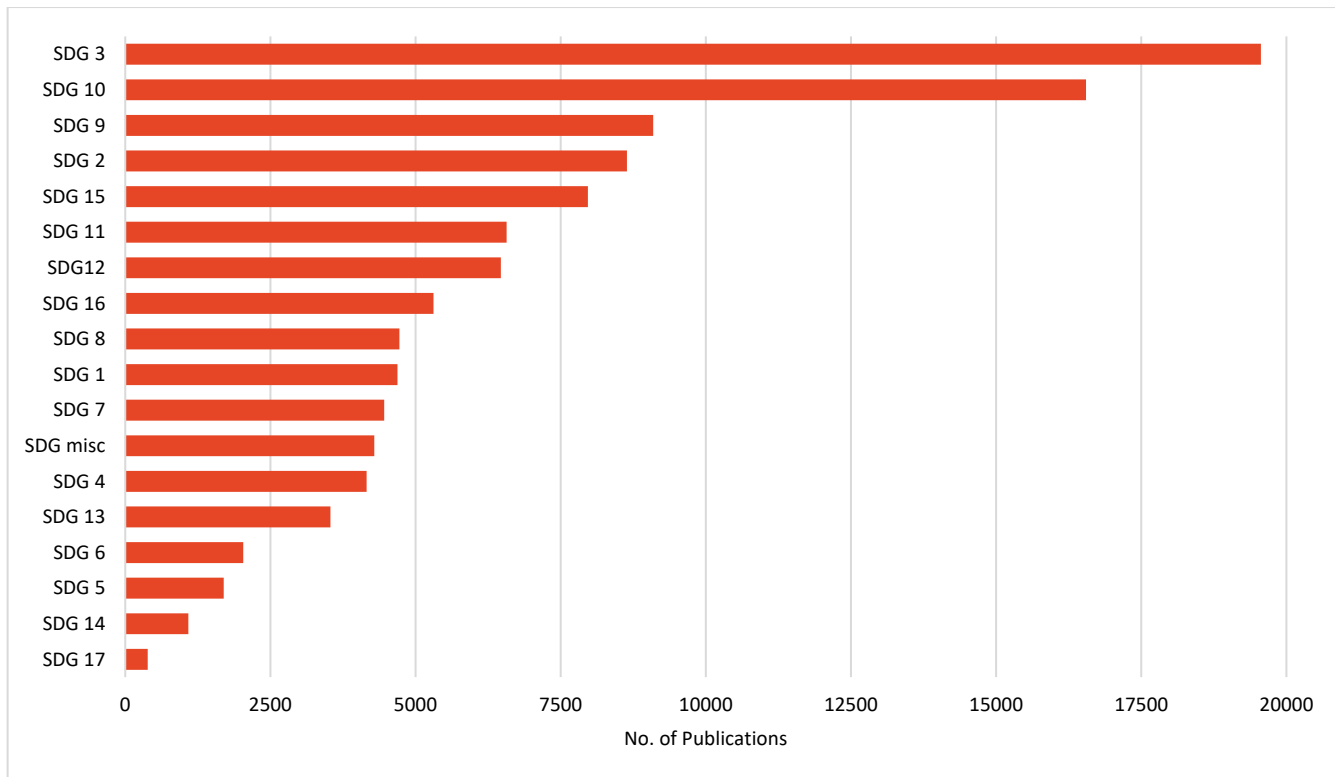


Figure 1: Number of research publications (2014–19 as aligned to the SDGs).

As a place of research and education we recognise the particular role universities can play in the global effort to eradicate modern slavery. Our researchers are applying academic and research expertise to help inform the world's understanding of modern slavery and what we can all do collectively, to eliminate it. By using virtual reality as the medium of communication, the Open Analysis to Address Slavery in Supply Chains (Oasis Project, School of Physics) sets out to change the mindset and culture of global supply chain operators as well as consumer mindsets so that they no longer reward company inaction on modern slavery.

### Sharing our research

The sharing and promotion of teaching, research and knowledge is intrinsic to the University of Sydney's vision, and the University collaborates, shares and makes its research public through both subscription and [open access](#).

The University also collaborates and advises industry, NGOs and government agencies. It regularly provides input to government, parliamentary and other bodies and their policy processes that affect the University's operations. These submissions for the last five years are publicly available [on the University's website](#) in the interests of transparency. An example is the [UNESCO Survey for Universities](#) with information on the contribution of Higher Education to the SDGs and to the "leaving no one behind" mandate.

### Public access, outreach and partnerships

The University has several public programs which aim to create engagement and discussions around an unlimited number of topics, including those linked to SDGs and the principles of the UN Global Compact. In 2020 the [Connect For festival](#) was themed around the SDGs of good health and wellbeing, reduced inequalities, climate action and partnerships for the goals, and the idea of connections. The program was a celebration of innovation and impact and included public talks and podcasts, student innovation challenges and hack-a-thons, industry forecast forums and public installations.

To uphold our commitment to respecting human rights, the University took key steps to build staff and student awareness of modern slavery and partnered with Anti-Slavery Australia to



release online Anti-Slavery Awareness modules for both staff and students. The staff module is part of the University's suite of mandatory completion training and ensures all staff have a baseline level of awareness of what modern slavery is, modern slavery risks within the University's supply chain and operations and what they need to do to fulfil compliance requirements under the [Modern Slavery Act \(2018\)](#). The student module provides key information on how to identify risks and where students can go to access support both on and off campus.

By providing online anti-slavery awareness training to all its staff and students, the University has set a new benchmark within the sector. At the date of this report, more than 6000 staff and nearly 4300 students had completed the modules.

In addition, the University has collaborated with the higher education sector and externally to share knowledge and information and align our approach based on best practice, to share insights, learnings and tools and improve standards. This has included, for example, collaborations with the Australian Universities Procurement Network.

Other recent outreach events relating to the UN Global Compact's 10 principles include:

- A conversation titled [On hate and race politics](#) recognising the UN Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Professor Tim Soutphommasane and journalist Osman Faruqi had a timely conversation about hate and race politics in Australia and beyond, and the consequences for democracy worldwide.
- Chaired by Dr Alana Mann, Professor Hilal Elver, (United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food), Ronni Kahn AO, (Founder, OzHarvest) and Professor Mario Herrero, (CSIRO) [discussed](#) how can we make food security failsafe in the age of climate change and how can we achieve a sustainable diet.
- On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs (Former President, Australian Human Rights Commission), Hon. Elizabeth Evatt AC (Australian representative, United Nations Human Rights Committee, 1992-2000), and The Hon. Tanya Plibersek, MP (Former Deputy Leader of the Labor Party) [talked](#) about Australia's record on human rights.

The University has numerous domestic and international relationships, partnerships and collaborative agreements with many international organisations, bodies and educational institutions whose activities include disseminating principles linked to the Global Compact.

In particular, the University has a long-standing partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is itself a partner of the UN Global Compact. We renewed this partnership for a further two years in 2019. The University shares its academic expertise at the OECD Forum, held annually in Paris. At the OECD Forum in 2019, [our academics joined leading thinkers](#) to discuss issues and potential solutions to tackle intergenerational inequality.

# Activities and outcomes to support the Global Compact's 10 principles

The following sections describe how activities at the University of Sydney from 2019 to 2021 supported the UN Global Compact's 10 principles, and, more broadly, the SDGs, both in our internal operations and through our core business of education and research.

Since our inception in 1850, we have believed in education for all and leadership that improves lives in all the communities that we serve. Four clusters of values have informed the University's ongoing commitment to this belief under our 2016–20 Strategic Plan. Through those values – of courage and creativity, respect and integrity, diversity and inclusion, and openness and engagement – we recognise that our work is stronger because we value different and unique perspectives and refuse to limit people's pursuit of excellence on the basis of their background or circumstances.

## Human Rights

- *Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights*
- *Principle 2: Make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses*

The University of Sydney is committed to respecting human rights and is taking meaningful action when and where we can within the legal, policy, operational and management settings we control, and using our influence and leverage to effect change. As a higher education institution dedicated to the education and empowerment of future generations, addressing modern slavery goes to the moral heart of what we stand for as an institution.

During the reporting period we placed significant focus on developing the University's response to the Australian Government's [Modern Slavery Act \(2018\)](#). While we recognise modern slavery is a global complex problem, many of the risks and factors contributing to modern slavery extend far beyond the control and reach of any one entity.

As key a step towards understanding the University's modern slavery risks, and consistent with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights we developed:

- our modern slavery [due diligence framework](#) to identify where the University may be causing, contributing to, or directly linked to modern slavery through its supply chain and operations. When considering risks, we assess the risks we pose to people either through our own activities or through our contractual relationships with other parties.
- our [principles for taking meaningful action](#) to focus on risk-based due diligence that is fit for purpose, balanced, and embedded into our business-as-usual practices and
- our [four stage risk analysis](#) methodology.

These pieces of work helped to frame and support our efforts which culminated in the University publishing its first [Modern Slavery Statement \(2020\)](#) in May 2021. The statement outlines our commitment and approach to identifying and addressing modern slavery risks in our supply chain, operations, and investments. In 2020, we focused our efforts on delivering across the five key areas of our implementation strategy:

### Understanding the impact and risk of causing, contributing to or being directly linked to modern slavery by:

- Mapping our value chain including our suppliers, operational, research and teaching partners
- Establishing a modern slavery risk framework and developing a modern slavery supply chain risk register

- Developing a multi-year strategy for addressing risks and monitoring progress

#### **Reviewing and resetting our policy and legal settings by:**

- Developing and implementing our Modern Slavery Policy which underpins our efforts to embed human rights considerations into our business-as-usual practices by setting out our commitment and standards of behaviour expected of all staff, affiliates, suppliers, and partners.
- Updating key University policies and procedures to include modern slavery provisions
- Strengthening our contracts and templates to include modern slavery provisions

#### **Building capacity and staff awareness by:**

- Launching an anti-slavery awareness training module for all staff
- Delivering tailored training workshops to high-risk priority areas
- Delivering workshops to our controlled entities

#### **Supporting our students by:**

- Launching our bespoke anti-slavery awareness training module for students
- Providing on-campus student support and referral services through our Safer Communities Office

#### **Sharing lessons learned and collaborating with others by:**

- Collaborating with the Australian Universities Procurement Network
- Partnering with Anti-Slavery Australia

Our statement also provides the basis for continuous improvement as we track our progress against set outcomes and KPIs and continue to learn and grow as an institution committed to protecting human rights and preventing exploitation as articulated in our [multi-year strategy](#).

#### **Spotlight on relevant research and education**

In May 2021, Sydney Law School researchers [published a new benchmark](#) that holds a light up to companies, particularly financial services companies and their obligations towards human rights. They have developed a world-first Financial Services Human Rights Benchmark that assesses the performance of financial services entities (FSEs) across six human rights categories and five areas of impact.

A March 2021 [report by the Sydney Policy Lab](#) explored the workplace exploitation of migrants in Australia, which is exacerbated by limitations in the current regulatory and enforcement landscape. The report offers policy solutions for migrants who have been exploited.

Human rights scholarship is supported in a range of courses. For example, the University teaches a [Master of Human Rights](#) program, which helps students understand how human rights apply in various political, social, economic and environmental contexts. Emphasising the practice of human rights, these programs equip students with the ability to skilfully and effectively use human rights tools and language in order to achieve specific changes in the real world.



## Labour

- *Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining*
- *Principle 4: The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour*
- *Principle 5: The effective abolition of child labour*
- *Principle 6: The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation*

The University of Sydney upholds these principles by engaging in collective bargaining to agree the conditions of employment between the University and the majority of academic, professional and English-language teaching staff.

Through our Enterprise Agreement, the University is committed to employment practices that promote diversity and inclusion and help prevent and eliminate discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, age, physical or mental disability, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, trade union membership and activity, national extraction or social origin. The Enterprise Agreement also sets out the University's requirements in terms of leave provisions, both paid and unpaid, compensation for extra hours worked and processes in place for any work-related complaints and wrongdoing.

The current Enterprise Agreement, covering 2018–21, was developed by a negotiation process that involved representatives of the University and staff unions. Provisions in the Enterprise Agreement reflect the University's core values and commitment to:

- ensuring that staff of outstanding quality and international standing are attracted, rewarded fairly and reasonably, developed, retained and supported to contribute to our reputation nationally, regionally and internationally
- ensuring quality and sustainability in meeting the needs of our stakeholders
- providing a rewarding, fair, flexible and inclusive working environment for staff
- integrity, professionalism and collegiality in our staff
- improving gender equity in all work practices, including in relation to the allocation of work, and the implementation of policies to promote gender pay equity
- maintaining a healthy and safe working environment that is free from bullying and harassment including by ensuring compliance with all relevant work health and safety legislation and University policies
- ensuring that the University is in a strong position to face the challenges in the Higher Education sector and continue to achieve its strategic goals and priorities.

In 2021, the University of Sydney will engage in the next round of collective bargaining as the current agreement has a nominal expiry date of 30 June 2021.

Commitments in the Enterprise Agreement are supported in practice by a range of human resources policies, practice and promoted through staff networks. These include a Women at Sydney network, a Pride network, and most recently a Mosaic network, launched in 2019, that brings together and empowers staff from all cultural backgrounds.

A 2019 staff engagement survey highlighted the significant progress made in gender equity, with 81 percent of staff reporting favourably that the University is committed to achieving a gender diverse workforce, (with women representing 53.3 percent of senior leadership positions across the University). Also in 2019, we received the [\*\*Athena SWAN Bronze Institutional Award\*\*](#) as part of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Pilot Program. In 2021, the University was [\*\*named as a 'gold employer'\*\*](#) at the Australian LGBTQ Awards, which recognises Australia's top organisations for inclusion based on the results of the Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI). During the period the University also continued to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Framework 2019–21 to increase Indigenous representation and make the University an employer of choice. More

information about the University's commitment to support diversity, including in its workforce, are available on its [website](#) and in its [annual report](#).

#### **Spotlight on relevant research and education**

Our **Women and Work Research Group**, based in the University of Sydney Business School, offers a focal point for collaboration between leading scholars, business practitioners and policymakers to explore, understand and respond to all factors affecting women, work, employment, family and community. In June 2021, one of the key academics in the group, Professor Rae Cooper, was named President-elect of the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA). The WWRG has made significant contributions to both government and company policies about parental leave, women and leadership, flexible and equitable work arrangements and domestic and family violence leave. Recent work has included an overview of common themes emerging around the implications of COVID-19 on women's economic participation.

Our **Master of Labour Law and Relations**, a collaboration between disciplines in Business, Law and Political Economy, allows students to take units of study examining social, legal, psychological, ethical and strategic dimensions of human resource management (HRM) and industrial relations (IR) and the nature of discrimination in the workplace and the legal response to it in Australia including regulation and anti-discrimination legislation.

## Environment

- Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges
- Principle 8: Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility
- Principle 9: Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies

As highlighted above, a key activity for the University over the past two years has been the development, launch and early rollout of our Sustainability Strategy 2020: a commitment to a revitalised institutional focus on sustainability across our research, education and operations. At the same time, we made an **institutional commitment to action on climate change** (SDG13).

Responding to demand from our students and staff, and reflecting community expectations, the strategy places a particular focus on environmental sustainability, with a series of targets and commitments both to increase our academic activity in this area, and also to ensure the resilience of our campuses in the face of climate change and ensure we leave a more positive footprint as an institution.



Figure 2: Sustainability Strategy 2020 'at a glance'

Some recent examples of operational initiatives the University has undertaken to enable and promote greater environmental responsibility include the following:

- Increasing solar panels across our Camperdown/Darlington campus: we already generate 1.2 MWs of onsite renewable electricity, which is used to power buildings and sports facilities. Our new strategy commits us to 100 percent renewable energy by 2025, including increased onsite generation.

- In 2020, the University developed a new Biodiversity Management Plan, which outlines the University's pathway and actions to support biodiversity of fauna and flora across all of its campuses. The plan aligns with the University Indigenous strategy, *One Sydney, Many People*, and is the result of collaboration of staff and students across the University metro, regional and farm-based campuses.
- In May 2021 the University announced a new sustainable investments strategy as part of our commitment to climate action and our vision to create a more sustainable future. Engagement with the investment community is key to the new approach, and we have committed to increase investment in sustainable solutions and to exclude fossil fuel companies with inadequate transition plans from our investments. The new strategy builds on progress made over several years to decarbonise our share portfolio. Since 2014, when we first started measuring the carbon footprint of our investments as part of our environmental, social and governance (ESG) investment framework, we have reduced the carbon intensity and absolute emissions of our listed equity portfolio by 70 percent and 79 percent respectively (as of 30 September 2020).

#### **Spotlight on relevant research and education**

The University's internal campus operations team has partnered with **Professor Thomas Maschmeyer** to develop commercial uses of his **renewable energy Gelion battery** through the first real-world application of this technology into **solar powered benches** on our campuses.

The Advanced Capture of Water from the Atmosphere (ACWA) experiment, facilitated by **Professor Martijn De Sterke**, is currently being conducted on the roof of the University's School of Physics building. The experiment is testing whether large surfaces with incorporated nano- and micro-scale chemical patterns can capture water passively from the atmosphere and be used as a water source or as recaptured water.

We are trialling planters made from University of Sydney Associate Professor Abi Abbas's recycled material concrete. The concrete is made from a cement blend that incorporates fly ash and carbon dioxide waste from power plants, as well as glass.

**For more examples see <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/sustainability.html>**

## Anti-corruption

- *Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery*

The University of Sydney is committed to ensuring its operations are conducted according to high standards of ethical conduct and will not tolerate any form of wrongdoing. In 2021 the University completed a substantive review of its Code of Conduct for staff and affiliates (available through the University's [Policy Register](#)). Key changes to the code introduced in 2021 include:

- a Statement of Intent that references the University's values and defines an ethical framework
- updated references to relevant legislation and policies
- attention to policy gaps identified through the review process (for example, staff relationships with students)
- references to the [Charter of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#)
- clarification of the University's position on the acceptance of gifts
- a new section outlining the obligations of the University, staff and affiliates to ensure effective implementation
- a summary of the roles and responsibilities of staff and affiliates to ensure they are clear on where responsibility lies and where to direct queries or concerns.

Under the [External Interests Policy 2010](#), all academic staff and professional staff with decision-making responsibility are required to make an annual declaration of their external interests.

### Spotlight on relevant research and education

The University's [Integrated Sustainability Analysis](#) (ISA) team crunches huge, supply chain numbers to deliver insights that can reveal hidden environmental devastation, worker exploitation, child labour and corruption.

Our [Master of Public Policy](#) enables students to gain critical perspectives on the global, national and local levels of a rapidly changing policy environment with growing public scrutiny and complex challenges including migration, corruption, crisis management, governance and the environment.

# Contact

## **The University of Sydney**

[university.sustainability@sydney.edu.au](mailto:university.sustainability@sydney.edu.au)

[sydney.edu.au](http://sydney.edu.au)

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