



The Open University of Sri Lanka

Green Policy

of the Open University of Sri Lanka

Green Policy of the Open University of Sri Lanka

Background

The fast diminishing natural resource base of the world, on the one hand, and the collapse of the cycles of nature, on the other, both as a result of human activity, have brought sustainability to the forefront of the list of global issues discussed during the past few decades. The world seems to be moving in a direction of shifting from oil and coal to renewable energy resources, to be promoting recycling and limiting the consumption of unnecessary consumer goods and to be opting for environment friendly infrastructure from constructing cities to buildings. Measures to reduce and mitigate pollution of water, air and soil are seem to be exercised more and more by institutions as well as states. Conservation of environment has emerged as an area study. Leading environment friendly lifestyles have become a topic being discussed. A lighter carbon footprint, the measurement of less carbon emission by an individual or organization, has emerged as a fashion statement of the modern man / woman.

Though this change described above seems to be the trend, the transition from unsustainability to sustainability, as it can be observed, is a slow process with mainstream affairs of the world remain environmentally unfriendly. Individual, institutional and country level initiatives to speed up this process of transition are important if damage done to the environment is to be kept within the limits of recovery. It is within this context the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) decides to go green.

Policy Principles

The overarching goal of the Green Policy of the Open University is to become one of the most environmentally sustainable universities in the island. This requires the transformation of the existing natural and built environment of the university to become environmentally friendly and gearing the teaching, research and advocacy functions conducted by the university to make Sri Lanka a sustainable country while promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles among the University staff (i.e. academic, non-academic) and students. To achieve this goal, active commitment of the university is required for the following policy principles;

1. Natural environment

Improve the visual environment of the OUSL as a green university (including the main campus as well as other regional and study centres) through conserving and enhancing biodiversity, managing solid waste and preventing air and water pollution

2. Built environment

Use green engineering designing as one main guideline when constructing new buildings and renovating existing buildings while giving preference to sustainable building materials wherever possible

3. Teaching

Introduce environment education and sustainability as a cross-cutting theme in education provided by all faculties and offer short and regular courses and programmes linked to environmental sustainability

4. Research

Promote more research on themes related to environmental sustainability

5. Advocacy

Raise awareness among university community in particular and among general public in general on the collective responsibility of building a sustainable world and also play a prominent role as the university in advocating sustainability in national-sectorial policies

6. Lifestyles

Promote low carbon, energy efficient, resource conserving and low polluting lifestyles among staff and students

Policy Strategies

The following strategies are used to realize policy principles identified above.

1. Natural environment

Improve the visual environment of the OUSL as a green university (including the main campus as well as other regional and study centres) through conserving and enhancing biodiversity, managing solid waste and preventing air and water pollution

1.1. Improve the visual environment of the OUSL as a green university through conserving and enhancing biodiversity within the premises of the university

1.1.1. Plant suitable varieties of trees in all spaces unused

1.1.2. Remove invasive species of plants

1.1.3. Conduct a survey of biodiversity and implement a biodiversity conservation plan

- 1.1.4. In collaboration with the relevant administrative authorities (e.g. Colombo and Kotte Municipal Councils and the UDA), develop the banks of the adjoining canal and the canal itself as a visually pleasing bio-diverse park from the Nawala-Nugegoda bridge to Nawala-Narahenpita bridge
- 1.2. Manage solid waste of the OUSL, both biological and non-biological, sustainably
 - 1.2.1. Introduce a system of solid waste separation as bio waste, electronic waste, metals, plastic/polythene, glasses and paper
 - 1.2.2. Using bio waste produce compost to be used as fertilizer for plants and trees and biogas to be used for labs and canteens
 - 1.2.3. Send electronic waste, metals, plastic / polythene, glasses and paper for recycling
 - 1.2.4. Dispose chemical waste using standardize chemical waste collection methods
- 1.3. Prevent air and water pollution in the premises of the OUSL by managing emissions and discharges
 - 1.3.1. Give up the practice of burning solid waste
 - 1.3.2. Introduce a system of reusing wastewater for washrooms and other sanitary purposes
 - 1.3.3. Introduce rainwater harvesting for the use of washrooms and for gardening
 - 1.3.4. Prevent pollution of the adjoining canal by managing discharges
 - 1.3.5. Introduce Bioremediation and Phytoremediation (e.g. floating islands of remediating plants species in the canal) methods to treat the polluted water in the canal.
- 1.4. Ensure that domesticated animals on OUSL premises are treated humanely and their populations controlled.
 - 1.4.1. Acknowledge that dogs and cats on all OUSL premises are a natural feature of the campus environment and community.
 - 1.4.2. Ensure that no dogs or cats on any OUSL premises will be euthanised or forcibly removed except in the case of danger to human life and security.
 - 1.4.3. In the event that it becomes necessary to euthanise or remove any dog or cat from any OUSL premises ensure that it will be done only by qualified Veterinary surgeons and in a humane manner.

- 1.4.4. In accordance with the strategy of Catch-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return ensure that all possible measures are taken to control the population of community dogs and cats on all OUSL premises and vaccinate them against rabies.

2. Built environment

Use green engineering designing as one main guideline when constructing new buildings and renovating existing buildings while giving preference to sustainable building materials wherever possible

- 2.1. Use green engineering designing as one main guideline when constructing new buildings
 - 2.1.1. Make the maximum use of natural lighting
 - 2.1.2. Make the maximum use of natural ventilation
 - 2.1.3. Use energy efficient technologies and arrangements for lighting and ventilation
 - 2.1.4. Use flushing arrangements that use water efficiently
 - 2.1.5. Use latest solar technology to supply warm water and to and fulfil at least a part of electricity demand of the building
 - 2.1.6. Minimize the use of air conditioning as much as possible
- 2.2. Convert existing unsustainable buildings to sustainable ones as far as possible
 - 2.2.1. When replacing existing fans, replace them with energy efficient fan arrangements
 - 2.2.2. When replacing existing lights, replace them with energy efficient lights
- 2.3. Use sustainability as one main guideline in all material purchases whenever possible

3. Teaching

Introduce environment education and sustainability as a cross-cutting theme in education provided by all faculties and offer short and regular courses and programmes linked to environmental sustainability

- 3.1. Introduce environment education and sustainability as a crosscutting theme in education provided by all five faculties
 - 3.1.1. Highlight sustainability in the existing course content whenever possible
 - 3.1.2. Introduce and conduct courses on the importance of environmental sustainability at initial levels of all degree programmes

3.2. Offer short and regular courses and programmes linked to aspects of environmental sustainability

3.2.1. Introduce and conduct short courses and certificate programmes on different aspects of sustainability targeting niche student groups (e.g. on eco-tourism, solid waste management, biogas production, environmental journalism, green construction, environment law, household and company level energy management, rainwater harvesting, micro and pico hydro electricity generation, small scale renewable energy systems, environmental activism, etc.)

3.2.2. Introduce and conduct undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (e.g. on environment science, renewable energy development, organic farming, etc.)

4. Research

Promote more researches on themes related to environmental sustainability

4.1. Promote academic staff and students of all faculties to conduct more research on themes related to environmental sustainability

4.1.1. Encourage and guide students to conduct undergraduate and postgraduate projects on aspects related to environment sustainability

4.1.2. Introduce and award a gold medal for the best sustainability related project

4.1.3. Mobilise research funding for intradisciplinary and multidisciplinary academic staff research related to sustainability

4.1.4. Introduce greening / sustainability as a separate theme in annual academic sessions

4.1.5. Establish a special annual award for the best paper on sustainability

4.2. Take a leading role as a partner in inter-university / inter-institutional research on themes related to environmental sustainability

4.2.1. Collaborate with other universities and institutions to conduct intradisciplinary and multidisciplinary sustainability related research

4.2.2. Conduct research on contemporary issues with major environmental concerns at national and regional levels where academic research is lacking

4.2.3. Organise symposiums on sustainability related themes

4.2.4. Launch a journal on environment sustainability

5. Advocacy

Raise awareness among university community in particular and among general public in general on the collective responsibility of building a sustainable world and also play a prominent role as the university in advocating sustainability in national-sectorial policies

5.1. Raise awareness among academic staff and students in particular, and among the public in general, on the need of a sustainable world and their individual and collective responsibility in building such a world

5.1.1. Organise lectures and seminars both inside and outside the university for raising general awareness

5.1.2. Organise guest speeches on special themes by inviting prominent individuals, both local and international

5.1.3. Organise film shows and film festivals

5.1.4. Play an active role in national and regional level campaigns to protect environment

5.2. Play a prominent role in advocating sustainability in national-sectorial policies

5.2.1. Network with other like-minded individuals, groups and organisations

5.2.2. Promote a research culture on conducting sectoral policy studies in sectors in which sustainability is a major concern

5.2.3. Develop environmentally sensitive sectoral policies through consultative processes (e.g. in transport, waste management, energy, agriculture, etc)

5.2.4. Advocate for government, regional administration and institutional acceptance of policies developed in alliance with network partners

6. Lifestyles

Promote low carbon, energy efficient, resource conserving and low polluting lifestyles among staff and students

6.1. Promote low carbon, energy efficient, resource conserving and low polluting lifestyles among academic staff, non-academic staff and students

6.1.1. Introduce a code of conduct for lighting, ventilation and computer use (e.g. switching off lights and fans when leaving workspace, use natural lighting and

ventilation whenever possible, minimise air-conditioning whenever possible, switching computers into hibernation mode when not working, etc.)

- 6.1.2. Promote waste separation
- 6.1.3. Encourage the use of the staircase than the elevator
- 6.1.4. Promote efficient use of paper (e.g. double side printing, reuse) and appreciate such performance
- 6.1.5. Encourage sustainable travel practices within and outside university (e.g. introduce a system of cycling for travel within the main campus, and a system of vehicle pooling for travel between regional centres as far as possible)
- 6.1.6. Form a students' club to organize activities to promote sustainability as a Lifestyle