

# **UQ** *Unwrapped*

## Sustainable Events Guide



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### Why should you make your event sustainable?

Events are a fantastic way to raise awareness about sustainability and foster positive change. They present a great opportunity to inspire attendees, including students, staff, suppliers and the local community.

As a leading educational institution, UQ has an obligation to demonstrate sustainability leadership across all its events.



# How to use this guide?

This Sustainable Events Guide has been developed to help event organisers run their events more sustainably. It features helpful resources for all event types, from small indoor meetings to a large outdoor occasions.

We're always on hand to help, so if you have any questions, queries or concerns, please contact [sustainability@uq.edu.au](mailto:sustainability@uq.edu.au).



# UQ Unwrapped Sustainable Events Certification



**UQ Unwrapped**  
SUSTAINABLE EVENT



We love to recognise your efforts and let people know what champions you are!

Earn recognition for your sustainability efforts by applying for Sustainable Events Certification.

1. Check out the Sustainable Events checklist [here](#). This list outlines minimum requirements for achieving UQ Unwrapped Sustainable Event certification.

*Tip: The earlier in the event planning process you begin using this checklist, the easier it will be to make and implement sustainable choices.*

2. Complete the checklist. If an action item on the checklist is not applicable to your event, select “N/A” from the dropdown.

*Tip: Ideally, the event should be certified beforehand so achievements can be promoted to attendees, but an event can also be certified after it has occurred.*

3. Once you’ve submitted the checklist to the Sustainability Office, our staff will review it.
4. If you’ve successfully completed all checklist actions, you’ll be awarded the UQ Unwrapped Sustainable Event Certification logo, which you can proudly display on all promotional items for your event. If you submit the form after the event has taken place, the event will still be listed as a “Sustainable Event” on the UQ Unwrapped webpage.



# Catering



- Use online registration to predict attendance and cater to final numbers.
- Provide reusable crockery and cutlery.

For smaller events, liaise with caterers to provide crockery and cutlery.

For larger events, consider a reusable cup system such as **Globelet**, where attendees pay a deposit for their cup that's refunded when they return the cup after the event.

Ask attendees to bring their own water bottles and reusable cups, and consider rewarding attendees for these actions — for example, create opportunities for them to enter competitions via social media.

- If reusable is not feasible, provide compostable service ware instead (although try to avoid biodegradable items, as they are generally not compostable).

For smaller events, liaise with caterers to provide compostable cups, plates, cutlery, etc., or purchase your own through **UQeMarket**.

For larger events, consider making it a policy to only allow compostable service ware. This keeps things simple for onsite organics collection.

- Let your caterer and suppliers know that you do not want single-use plastic items at your event (e.g. plastic stirrers, straws) because they are not recyclable or compostable. Serve condiments in reusable dishes or bulk containers at self-serve stations instead.
- Provide tap water for drinking.

For smaller events, liaise with caterers to provide jugs of water, or contact the Sustainability Office to borrow a water dispensers.

For larger events, hire UQ's mobile water refill station, contact the Sustainability Office for more information.

- Ensure at least 50% of the food is vegetarian (100% is even better!).
- Buy local and seasonal.
- Choose sustainably farmed meat and dairy and sustainable seafood.

For more information, visit the following links:

**Sustainable Table Guide**

**Sustainable Seafood Guide**

**[fairtrade.com.au](https://fairtrade.com.au)**



## ‘Green’ caterers?

Ask your catering company if they;

- ▶ offer reusable service ware, such as reusable tablecloths, napkins, glasses, cups, plates and cutlery – when reusable isn’t feasible, provide 100% certified compostable service ware.
- ▶ provide and service organic bins for collecting food scraps and compostable service-ware waste.



## Free water coolers...

UQ Sustainability has 20-litre water coolers available for use at on-campus events, and borrowing them is FREE!



Email [sustainability@uq.edu.au](mailto:sustainability@uq.edu.au)





## Waste and materials

- Organics: If you're using compostable food ware, make sure that you also put out organics bins to collect for composting. Ensure that organic bins are accessible and clearly signed. Download signage [here](#).

For smaller events, ask caterers to provide organic bins.

For larger events, order organics wheelie bins by submitting under the 'Waste' problem type in ARCHIBUS.

- If your event will generate drink container waste (e.g., bottles, cans), make sure that you also put out drink container refund bins. All funds generated will go to UQ's Green Fund. Ensure that bottle refund bins are clearly signed and strategically located. Order drink container refund wheelie bins by submitting under the 'Waste' problem type in ARCHIBUS.
- For larger events, recruit volunteers to monitor bins and educate attendees on which bin they should use to place

different types of waste. A Volunteer Waste Educator information guide can be found in Appendix A. If you don't have volunteers available, contact the UQ Volunteers Society at [uqvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:uqvolunteers@gmail.com) or email the Sustainability Office at [sustainability@uq.edu.au](mailto:sustainability@uq.edu.au)

- If you've over-catered, contact an organisation such as **Oz Harvest** to take away the good-quality leftovers.
- Reuse whatever materials you can. Use reusable rather than event-specific lanyards, badges, wristbands, signs and display materials, and set up a badge-collection basket near the exit door to encourage recycling.
- Avoid giveaways where possible. If giveaways can't be avoided check out our Sustainable Purchasing Guide on promotional materials [here](#) for more sustainable options.
- Use paper or reusable bags instead of plastic bags and always allow attendees to go bagless or use their own bag.



# Energy and Transport

- ▶ Select a venue with easy access via public transport and provide attendees with public transport travel routes
- ▶ Plan the event to ensure it is accessible to all members of the community.
- ▶ Where possible avoid requiring attendees to travel to the event and run a video conferencing/online event instead.
- ▶ For events on campus, consider using the intercampus bus between campuses.
- ▶ If you are hosting an event where people will be physically attending make sure you look into energy saving measures. Turn off computers, projectors and light when not in use.
- ▶ Utilise spaces with natural light/ventilation where possible.
- ▶ Avoid high carbon energy use by using mains electricity or renewable sources.



# Dressing the event

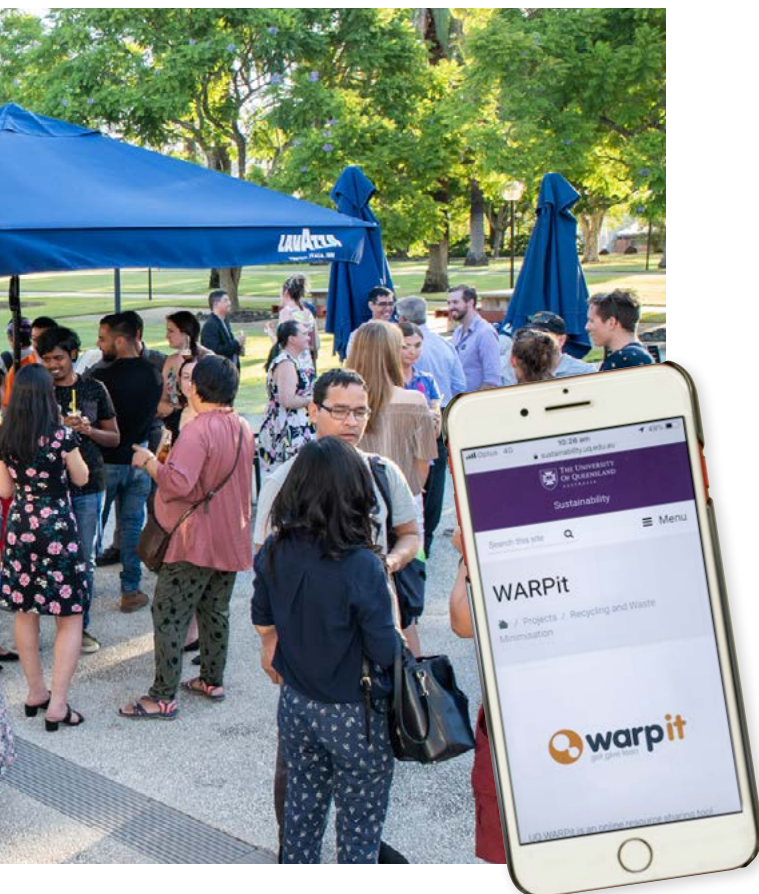
- ▶ Go paperless — distribute information (e.g., guides or leaflets) electronically instead.
- ▶ Avoid all single-use decorations, including balloons and streamers.
- ▶ Avoid single-use plastics, disposables or mass-produced items if you're providing freebies, instead consider products that can be reused.
- ▶ Provide experience gifts rather than giveaways — for example, tree planting or sponsoring a charity on behalf of delegates.







## Education and awareness



- ▶ Let attendees know about the environmentally-friendly practices in place at your event.
- ▶ Promote sustainability initiatives to your attendees prior to, during and after the event via digital media, announcements and direct communication techniques. Talking points can be found in Appendix B.
- ▶ It is always good practice to welcome guests to your event and include an Acknowledgement of Country to recognise Indigenous Australian people as the original owners and custodians of the land and waters on which your events are held.



UQ WARPit is an online resource -sharing tool that allows UQ staff to post unwanted items for donation or to claim items for work purposes.

# Let us know how you went

- ▶ Send an email to **[sustainability@uq.edu.au](mailto:sustainability@uq.edu.au)** and let us know:
- ▶ Did you eliminate all single-use plastic items? If so, did you use reusable or compostable alternatives?
- ▶ Did you implement organics bins or bottle refund bins?
- ▶ Did you recruit volunteers to assist with waste education?
- ▶ What other Sustainable event initiatives did you implement?
- ▶ How could the event improve its environmental and social impact next time?

Don't forget that spreading the word about what worked well and what didn't will help others improve the sustainability of their events.





## Appendix A.

### **Volunteer Waste Educator Information Guide**

As a Waste Station Monitor, you'll educate attendees on how to properly sort their waste items. Each bin is designated to collect a particular waste stream (see signage). Make sure whatever item is being sorted goes into the correct bin. Encourage attendees to think about the benefits of recycling and recovering valuable resources.



Information on what items go in each bin is outlined below. Contact the Sustainability Office if you're unsure about what can be recycled, composted or landfilled.

## Recycling and waste disposal information

### **General waste items are not recyclable or hazardous, such as:**



- ▶ plastic bags, packaging and wrappers
- ▶ disposable coffee cups
- ▶ Styrofoam cups and containers
- ▶ pens and pencils
- ▶ disposable plastic utensils and straws.

The general waste stream is collected and compacted before being transferred to an engineered landfill site.





## Co-mingled recycling

Co-mingled recycling includes recyclable materials such as:

- ▶ plastic bottles and containers (including yoghurt and takeaway containers)
- ▶ glass bottles and jars
- ▶ milk and juice cartons
- ▶ disposable coffee cup lids (not the cup)
- ▶ paper and cardboard.

Co-mingled recycling items are taken offsite to be segregated at a materials recycling facility, where they're placed in a sorting line and each type (e.g., plastic bottles, cardboard) is segregated out and bulked up. Once enough of these items have been collected, they're sent to manufacturers for reprocessing.



## Organic waste

Organic recycling includes compostable materials such as:

- ▶ food leftovers
- ▶ fruit and vegetables
- ▶ tea bags and coffee grounds
- ▶ meat and dairy
- ▶ tissues and paper towels
- ▶ contaminated paper (e.g., greasy paper bags, pizza boxes)
- ▶ compostable packaging and service ware.

Collected organics are taken offsite to a commercial composting facility, where they're processed into nutrient-rich compost.



## Appendix B.



### Sustainable event talking points for attendees and vendors/caterers

#### **Q. Sustainable event concepts and benefits**

A: A sustainable event aims to reduce its environmental and social impacts across the board, from location and transport to catering and waste generation.

Organising sustainable events not only minimises environmental and social impact, but creates meaningful change by leaving a positive legacy and hopefully inspiring those involved to live more sustainably.

#### **Q. Why try to make our event zero waste?**

A: A zero-waste event is designed to reduce or even eliminate waste going into landfill by preventing waste from being generated in the first place, and by diverting the waste that is produced from going to landfill via recycling and composting.

Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill conserves energy, reduces air, soil and water pollution, and recovers valuable resources that can be repurposed for other uses.

Food scraps and compostable packaging are used to create compost, and recycled materials prevent the need to extract new resources for new products.

#### **Q: Why do these plates and cups go into the compost bin instead of the recycling bin?**

A: These items are made of compostable materials (corn, bamboo, sugarcane bagasse, etc.) and can therefore be broken down by micro-organisms, eventually forming a rich soil that can be used to grow more plants.

These compostable service ware items are certified commercially compostable to AS4736 Australian standards, meaning that they will completely biodegrade within 120 days in a commercial compost facility. The end product is a non-toxic, nutrient-filled humus/compost. Composting thus creates an extremely rich and useful end product that requires less energy than recycling products.

#### **Q: Why is recycling better than throwing things away?**

A: Recycling is better than throwing resources away because it:

- a) conserves natural resources by reducing our need to mine or harvest raw, virgin materials
- b) uses less energy to create new products compared with the energy required to manufacture new products from raw (rather than recycled) materials.
- c) creates less air, soil and water pollution than manufacturing new products
- d) reduces the amount of waste going to landfill.

## UQ Sustainability

[sustainability.uq.edu.au](https://sustainability.uq.edu.au)



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