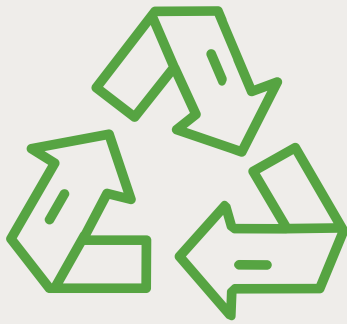


UQ *Unwrapped*

Sustainable Events Guide



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.

A sustainable event takes measures to minimise its environmental impact by adopting best management practices.

By following the steps in this guide, you will

- > Lower the carbon footprint of your event
- > Reduce energy consumption and waste generation at your event
- > Eliminate single use plastics

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

The UQ Sustainability Strategy 2021–2025 sets the direction for UQ’s sustainability efforts over the next 5 years, outlining ambitious targets for contributing to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals.



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 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.

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UQ Unwrapped Sustainable Events Certification



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 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. If you’ve successfully completed all checklist actions, you’ll be awarded the UQ Sustainable Event Certification logo, which you can proudly display on all promotional items for your event



1 Venue

Can you swap to a virtual venue?

- > Consider hosting a virtual event, going virtual will drastically lower emissions compared to in-person gatherings.
- > What about a hybrid event? If your event draws people from all over, consider having regional hubs instead of all in one location. This can eliminate the carbon emissions from air travel while maintaining the benefits of in-person collaboration.
- > If you really need to keep it in-person, consider hosting your event in person only every other year.



The largest source of emissions for any event is almost always participant travel.



2 Transport to and from your event

- > Provide attendees with public transport travel routes.
- > Encourage attendees to travel by walking, cycling, e-mobility, train or bus.
- > Provide information on how to sign up for a go card for out-of-town attendees and encourage the use of **Translink's journey planner**.
- > Use the intercampus bus service for travel between campuses.
- > Encourage the purchasing of carbon offsets for air travel to and from the event.



3 Energy use

- > Turn off computers, projectors, and light when not in use.
- > Use connections to grid power wherever possible over generator power. If you do need to use a generator, use biodiesel (>20%), solar power generators or modern fuel saving generators where possible.
- > Use as much natural light and natural ventilation as possible.
- > If you need a PA system, get advice about how much amplification you need. There is no need for more than a few speakers if you have a small crowd.
- > By making use of LED lighting in your event lighting display you can significantly reduce your energy use.
- > Manage and monitor lighting or equipment to ensure that the use is optimal, including use of timers and turning off equipment when not required and at the end of the event.



4 Catering

- > Use online registration to predict attendance and cater to final numbers.
- > Let your caterer and suppliers know that you are looking for low carbon/ carbon neutral services.
- > Provide reusable crockery and cutlery where possible.
- > 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 you are serving coffee at your event, consider using **Green Caffein** — a reusable cup swap and go system. Contact the **Sustainability Office** for more information.

- > If reusable is not feasible, provide compostable service ware instead (although try to avoid biodegradable items, as they are generally not compostable).
- > Request that no single-serve packets are used at your event (e.g., coffee stirrers, tea in foil bags, sugars, butter), because they are not recyclable or compostable. Serve sugar, salt and condiments in reusable dishes or bulk containers at self-serve stations instead.



- > If you are planning to have food trucks at your event, The **mobile vendor guide** has been developed to assist both event organiser and mobile food vendors eliminate single use plastic items at UQ events.
- > 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 cooler.

For larger events, hire UQ's mobile outdoor water refill station.

- > Provide **Fairtrade** beverage options, including tea, coffee, and sugar.
- > Consider your food choices: provide a large range of locally sourced, vegetarian choices that minimise environmental footprint.

For more information, visit the following links:

[Sustainable Table Guide](#)

[Sustainable Seafood Guide](#)

fairtrade.com.au



'Green' caterers?

Ask your catering company if they;

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

Free water refills



UQ Sustainability has a 20-litre water cooler and a mobile water refill station available for use at on-campus events and borrowing them is FREE!

Email sustainability@uq.edu.au



- > source locally grown and 'in season' food.
- > provide low carbon/carbon neutral services.

5 Waste and materials

- > Provide recycling and organic bins at your event. Ensure that bins are accessible and clearly signed. Download signage [here](#).

For smaller events, ask caterers to provide bins. If using compostable service ware, make sure organic bins are provided.

For larger events, order wheelie bins by submitting under the 'Waste' problem type in ARCHIBUS. Refer to our [Event Bin Guide](#) for more information.

- > If your event will generate beverage container waste (e.g., bottles, cans), make sure that you also put out bottle refund bins. All funds generated will go to UQ's [Green Fund](#). Ensure that bottle refund bins are clearly signed and strategically located.

- > For larger events, recruit volunteers to monitor bins and educate attendees on which bin they should use to place different types of waste. If you don't have volunteers available, email getinvolved@uq.edu.au to recruit some.
- > Plan ahead and arrange with local community groups and social enterprises for pick-up of surplus food (e.g. [FareShare](#), [Oz Harvest](#)), or compost where feasible.
- > 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.
- > Go paperless. Send out the materials digitally to reduce print collateral. If you need to print out event collateral, make sure to choose FSC 100% recycled paper.



6 Dressing the event

- > Avoid all single-use decorations, including balloons and streamers.
- > Avoid giveaways where possible. If giveaways can't be avoided check out our **Sustainable Purchasing Guide** on promotional materials for more sustainable options.
- > Keep signage designs generic so that can be used for other events. Chalkboards allow you to change the message without discarding the sign after the event.



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.



7 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.
- > Complete the **UQ Sustainable Events** checklist and proudly display your certification logo on all event promotional material.



Appendix A

Volunteer Waste Station Monitor role

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.

Volunteers should be provided with an easy reference tool for what can and cannot be recycled or composted at your event. Contact the Sustainability Office if you are unsure about what can be recycled, composted or landfilled.



Recycling and waste disposal information

General waste



General waste items are not recyclable or hazardous, and include:

- > plastic bags, packaging, and wrappers
- > disposable coffee cups (non compostable)
- > Styrofoam cups and containers
- > pens and pencils
- > tissues, napkins and paper towels (unless being collected separately within organics stream)
- > disposable plastic utensils and straws
- > compostable packaging and food waste (unless being collected separately within organics stream)
- > biodegradable coffee cups



The general waste stream is collected and compacted before being transferred to an engineered landfill site. Engineered landfill sites generate power using the methane created by the decomposing waste.

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.



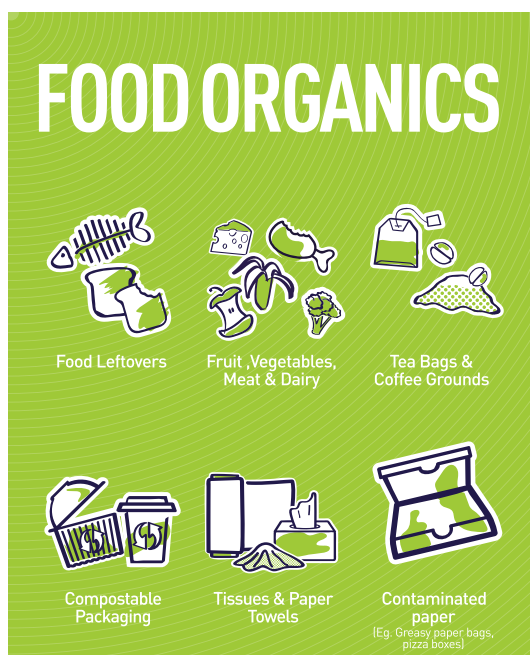
Co-mingled recycling items are taken offsite to be segregated at a materials recycling facility, where they're placed in a sorting line and each type (e.g., plastic bottles, cardboard) is segregated out and bulked up. Once enough of these items have been collected, they're sent to manufacturers for reprocessing.

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.

Container refund bins



Container refund bins accept:

- > glass and plastic drink bottles
- > aluminium cans
- > liquid paperboard cartons (poppers)



Collected bottles are taken offsite to be sorted, processed and sold to recyclers. The recyclers then turn the containers into new glass and PET bottles, aluminium cans and other items like food packaging and plastic-based construction items.

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 lower carbon emissions at our event?

A: Events can generate large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, leaving behind a big carbon footprint. The benefits of lowering our event's carbon footprint include the opportunity to publicly demonstrate commitment to climate change and sustainability, inspire participants to take action by choosing low carbon options in their own lives, and save money through reducing energy consumption.

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: What's the benefit of using compostable food service ware?

A: 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



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