

TO
All staff within FSS

SUBJECT
Sustainability policy

FROM
Faculty Board

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CC

REFERENCE

TELEPHONE

E-MAIL

Part 1: Introduction

Sustainability within FSS

The FSS aims to make its activities sustainable in an environmental sense. This is in line with the new VU strategy (see the text box below), where sustainability is promoted in a broad sense.

The guidelines for sustainable work routines presented in this document brings together policies and best practices collected from different departments. Within FSS, we focus on sustainability in an environmental context; our focus is thus on reducing our carbon footprint and reducing a waste of resources.

Sustainability (3.0) in the VU strategic plan

Onze samenleving staat voor grote uitdagingen en omvattende vraagstukken. Denk aan klimaatverandering, aan de toenemende tweedeling, aan polarisatie. Of aan de druk op onze privacy in de informatiemaatschappij, of aan de dreigende uitputting van natuurlijke grondstoffen. Uitdagingen op het gebied van onze gezondheid en het gebrek aan bewegen, of de stress waaraan mensen blootgesteld worden. Dilemma's rondom robotisering en artificiële intelligentie. Of denk aan het gebrek aan zingeving dat veel mensen ervaren. Al deze grote thema's vragen om duurzame oplossingen. Als universiteit voelen we ons verantwoordelijk om bij te dragen aan deze oplossingen. Dat doen we door vraagstukken van het heden te adresseren zonder afbreuk te doen aan de toekomst. Dat past bij onze missie: verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor mens en planeet. Voor ons heeft 'duurzaam' een brede betekenis. Duurzaamheid gaat niet alleen om het milieu, maar ook om economische, menselijke, culturele en sociale aspecten. Want niet alleen natuurlijke hulpbronnen zijn schaars. Ook voor de VU zelf is duurzaamheid vitaal. We zetten in op het duurzaam en gezond functioneren van onze universiteit, onze gemeenschap, werknemers en studenten, en op het duurzaam en efficiënt inzetten van schaarse middelen. Wij meten ons succes bij het bereiken van onze ambities op het gebied van duurzaamheid aan de hand van onze bijdrage aan de Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) van de Verenigde Naties. (Strategie VU 2020-2025)

Vision and mission

Tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gases poses a major challenge for the world, and every individual. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam tries to contribute its share as well, amongst others by establishing the Amsterdam Society Institute (ASI) in May 2019. However, true to Goffman (1959) and Brunsson (2002), front stage initiatives as evidenced by formal policy initiatives are not necessarily in sync with what is happening backstage. In fact, there is frequently a 'difference between words and deeds, the eventuality that organizations may talk in one way, decide in another and act in a third' (Brunsson 2002: xiii).

The climate crisis is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity. Our vision is that universities have a key role to play in helping to secure a sustainable future, and our approach to research, teaching and other actions, should reflect this. The problem is and requires immediate action rather than endless discussion and suggestions.

As time is running out, we need to adapt rapidly. To adjust behavior rapidly, effective policies are required. This means that every sector, institution and organization in society has to invest time, creativity and money in finding ways to reduce its ecological footprint while striving for global (gender, class, racial, and cultural) justice in the process. This translates in the FSS mission:

To maintain a sustainable work ethic and to reduce our carbon footprint as an organization in a way that serves the interests of our employees and students within the faculty.

In achieving this overall aim we developed three instrumental objectives:

- 1) creating awareness on the urgency of the climate change amongst employees and students,
- 2) introducing concrete measures that help reducing our carbon footprint as an organization, and
- 3) monitoring and securing the implementation of these measures in our organization.

Part 2: Policy

Important definitions

Rules

An accepted principle or instruction that states the way things should be done.

Incentives

Something that encourages staff to do something a certain way.

Recommendations

Advice on what the best thing to do is.

Traveling internationally

Rules

- Only one intercontinental flight can be reimbursed every two years. Exceptions are possible with approval of the Management Team, if the resulting damage (e.g., to their career) is not acceptable or in case of necessary field work abroad. In cases of exceptions, the relevant project leader has to make a maximum effort to reduce travelling by plane.
- Flight tickets are allowed only if land-based public transport takes at least five hours or more.
- If flights cannot be avoided, carbon dioxide compensation becomes mandatory for flights that should be reimbursed by the department. To compensate you can use:
 - Klimaatwijosopvakantie.nl, a Dutch initiative by Milieu Centraal that calculates the carbon dioxide emission of your trip. Greentickets.app is a travel planner in which you can compare bus, train and plane travel in terms of costs, distance (in travel hours) and emission.
 - Use Atmosfair for carbon dioxide compensation (atmosfair.de).

Incentives

- Take the train (first class is fine) for European visits, even if that means higher travel expenses. The department reimburses the travel expenses if one has no other means to pay for travelling (grant funding, personal fund).

Recommendations

- Take direct flights, even if that means higher travel expenses, since they cause less carbon dioxide emission than flights with transfers. When the cost of a direct flight becomes disproportionately more expensive, sound financial considerations can prevail to choose a flight with a stopover.
- (Young) scientists are encouraged and (financially) supported in undertaking long-term research visits instead of attending multiple conferences or short visits.
- Make more use of the Skype and Zoom facilities and Video conferencing instead of traveling. The measures regarding the corona virus have taught us that facilities like Skype and Zoom provide good alternatives for traveling.

Commuting

Incentives

- The university offers free blue VU bikes as a costless and faster alternative to public transportation within the city. The blue VU bikes can be used between 9:00-17:00 o'clock.
- Choose cycling as a way of commuting.

There is an option to lease a bike according to the optional model for terms and conditions of employment. Per 1 January 2020, the fiscal exchange option has been increased to 1.500 euro

(including VAT). Besides that, you can use this sum to lease a bike.

If you are considering buying a special e-bike or speed pedelec, QicQ is a great opportunity to lease one. QicQ offers bikes of brands like Stromer and QonQer that are especially suited for longer rides. Their mission: As many people on their bikes, as much as possible, out of their car. This mission suits the green vision which underlies the commuting of the VU. At QicQ, you can buy or lease bikes. They will take care of the service and maintenance. You can rent a bike to test it for a week. QicQ also has a special landing page for VU employees.

Food and food waste

Rules

- All catering ordered via an FSS cost center to facilitate a meeting, drinks, lunch or other social events, must be vegetarian.
- During graduation, catering must be vegetarian.
- There are no water fountains in front of departments.
- No milk is being served during meetings and events, instead it is just juice and water.

Incentives

- Doggy bags are provided via Eurest for leftover food. These will be paper bags to minimize food waste.

Recommendations

- Only order vegetarian options with no or small amounts of dairy for meetings or events.

Waste

Incentives

- Only print materials you use several times. This is stimulated by handing out more VU iPads or laptops and by putting up stickers on the copying machines to create awareness.
- Improve how we separately collect different kinds of waste, for instance by having collection spots for batteries, glass and plastic in each department.

Recommendations

- Use reusable cups for coffee or other beverages. This is stimulated by the FSS handing out reusable cups.
- Ask FCO to stop refilling the non-reusable cups in the department (as was done in the sociology department).
- When printing your materials, print them not only on two sides, but also two pages on one side.

Electricity

Recommendations

- Switch off your computers and other electronic devices before going home.
- Limit data storage. Clean up your mail and directories regularly.

Create awareness

Incentives

- You are stimulated to take part in climate marches and/or strikes. Taking a day leave to attend the meeting (limited to one day per year) is unnecessary.

Recommendations

- Discuss sustainability and climate change in class as part of the curriculum in a way that fits within this curriculum.

Example from the Department of Sociology:

- Explore the sociological meaning of climate change and the role sociology has in combatting this. We will also consider whether we incorporate the theme of climate change into research grants.
- Explore the ways in which the climate crisis, related questions and solutions can become part of the sociology bachelor and master through embedding this into the already existing courses. The Education Director should provide guidance in terms of designing (elements of these) courses in one of our Education meetings

Another example could be:

- Turn one of the classes in SS4S into a class on sustainability.

Appendix 1 Sustainable development goals

