



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA

TE HERENGA WAKA—VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

# Te Parahia: Sustainability Outcomes Framework 2023–2030

CAPITAL THINKING.  
GLOBALLY MINDED.  
MAI TE IHO KI TE PAE





## Introduction

'Parahia' is a Māori word that means to come out from behind a cloud, to shine clearly, and to clear away obstructions. Naming this framework 'Te Parahia' reflects the University's increased focus and commitment to 'shining a light' on our practices and supporting a sustainable future. At Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, we value environmental sustainability, both individually and collectively, and recognise that we have a moral imperative to do better. The University community is demanding that we do better. We have a long history of teaching and research in sustainability focused disciplines. The past two decades have also seen an increasing focus on improving our operational practices, engaging more with our communities on environmental sustainability issues and incorporating te ao Māori. This framework brings all the functions of the University together to maximise our contribution to a sustainable future.

## Why

Sustainability matters to our students, staff, and our communities. As a values-led university, our commitment to sustainability is a manifestation of our core ethical values of rangatiratanga, manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, whai mātauranga, whanaungatanga, and akoranga (respect, responsibility, fairness, integrity, and empathy). Our commitment to sustainability and wellbeing is one of our distinctive attributes. This framework is our collective guide to applying those values to achieve our sustainability goals.

There are a numerous environmental crises afflicting Papatūānuku (the earth mother) and Ranginui (the sky father)—climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and pollution to name a few—all created by humans. Yet it is the natural world that supports our lifestyles and our personal health and wellbeing. If we continue putting excess pressure on the world's natural systems, the planet will no longer be able to support and nourish us. We must adapt our way of living and find new solutions to return to a harmonious relationship with nature—one that is sustainable over the long term and is equitable for people across Aotearoa, the Pacific and the world. It is our responsibility as kaitiaki.

## About this framework

The Sustainability team works across the University to lead its contribution to a sustainable future. Their role is to support staff and students, facilitate connections, report on our sustainability performance, and celebrate our success. To achieve our sustainability goals, we encourage all our staff and students to contribute. The objective of Te Parahia: Sustainability Outcomes Framework is to provide clear and collective direction that everyone in the University community can choose to support and work towards.

Te Parahia was developed through many discussions, workshops, and reviews with staff, students, and community partners. It supports our Strategic Plan (2020) and is aligned with other strategies and plans so our sustainability outcomes can be integrated into our work, without becoming an additional consideration on the side. It is intended to be a living document and will be updated as necessary to stay ambitious and relevant.

The framework covers the five functional areas of the University: Learning and teaching, Research, Engagement, Operations, and Governance. It is important that all are included in this framework as it maximises our contribution to a sustainable future, both from academic outcomes and institutional practices, and promotes more coordinated leadership across the University. Although each area has been covered separately, many of the actions will contribute to more than one outcome. In each area we describe what the challenge is that we are trying to address, what opportunity that presents, and what work we have done so far that we can build on. This is then used to shape the target sustainability outcome in each area. The outcomes are deliberately aspirational and have a long-term perspective.

Our global sustainability challenges are immense, and time is of the essence. In drafting this framework, we have identified some significant actions to pursue over the next four years to take us towards our Target outcomes. Some of the projects identified are more strategic and would be led by key teams within the University, while others are contributions from any students or staff members. There is a role, big or small, for every staff member and every student, so we haven't assigned responsibilities for actions to specific teams or individuals. The framework maps a suggested path for achieving our desired outcomes, but each individual and team within the University community will know best how they can contribute.

At the end of each section is a description of success. For some aspects we can use robust and relevant data to quantify improvements in our performance, but other areas are difficult to measure or don't have relevant data available, so we will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches to measure our success.

## Scope

We recognise that sustainable development (and by extension, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals) encompasses not only environmental wellbeing, but also social, financial, and cultural wellbeing. The natural world supports humanity, which has established cultures and economies, and they impact the natural world. Therefore, we recognise that all our human systems are embedded in, and dependent on, the larger natural ecosystem.

Nevertheless, the University already has existing strategies, structures, and resourcing that champion the social, cultural, and financial aspects of sustainability—particularly in regard to our governance structures and operational practices. Our strategic plan sets the overarching direction for the University in delivering our shared purpose of research, teaching, and engagement that transforms lives: our core business delivers a social good. Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, *Mai i te Iho ki te Pae*—Māori Strategic Outcomes Framework, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute*, and *Pasifika Success Plans* guide our work on cultural inclusion and wellbeing. Our annual management plan and budget setting processes ensure the University's financial sustainability. To date, there has not been a guiding document to coordinate the environmental sustainability work happening across *Te Herenga Waka*, despite it being an area of distinctive academic strength. Hence, this framework will have a focus on environmental sustainability and the role people have in supporting it (which primarily align with UN Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 7 and 11 to 15). The outcomes should still support social, cultural, and financial wellbeing wherever possible, but the primary emphasis is on environmental sustainability and restoration.





## The Living Pā: Inspiration from our iho

Our iho, or essence, is that we are a global-civic university with our marae at our heart. The Living Pā project to redevelop our marae complex responds to this iho and provides an exemplar for how we can fulfil our responsibility as kaitiaki. Bringing together mātauranga Māori and sustainability philosophies, it is conceptualised and designed to achieve the highest environmental standards and to be a place for communities to reconnect with nature. In a single project, the Living Pā contributes to our sustainability outcomes across all five functional areas of the University, providing inspiration for us all:

### Learning and teaching

The Living Pā, and its sustainability features, will become a teaching tool for staff across the University. It will be a place of learning that cares for nature and the generations to come. We can share that intergenerational perspective across the entire University, supported by the curriculum opportunities of the Iho project, by teaching our students the principles of sustainability and how to apply them, so that the generations after them can thrive too.

### Research

The design of the Living Pā building has drawn on mātauranga Māori and sustainability research. The Living Pā will become a living lab and academic hub for applied sustainability innovation with an emphasis on supporting Māori research. The wider University needs to follow this lead in fostering an inclusive research community of sustainability expertise that creates positive impact for our community and for nature.

### Engagement

The Living Pā will become an international flagship, raising the bar for sustainable buildings in Aotearoa. It will foster collaborations among staff, students and our community by bringing people together in the building for learning, research, and events. The Living Pā project has captured the imagination of the University community. We need to generate the same enthusiasm across the University and our community to collectively respond to the global sustainability challenges we face.

## Operations

The Living Pā is grounded by its sense of place in the natural environment. It will help to regenerate nature as a carbon-positive, energy-producing building made from non-toxic materials without the need for city water or wastewater systems. It will shape the actions of the people within it to adopt sustainable practices, ensuring the whenua is nurtured. We must take inspiration from the Living Pā in the way we manage the rest of our campus infrastructure, while our staff, students, and guests on campus need to adopt more sustainable behaviours and choices.

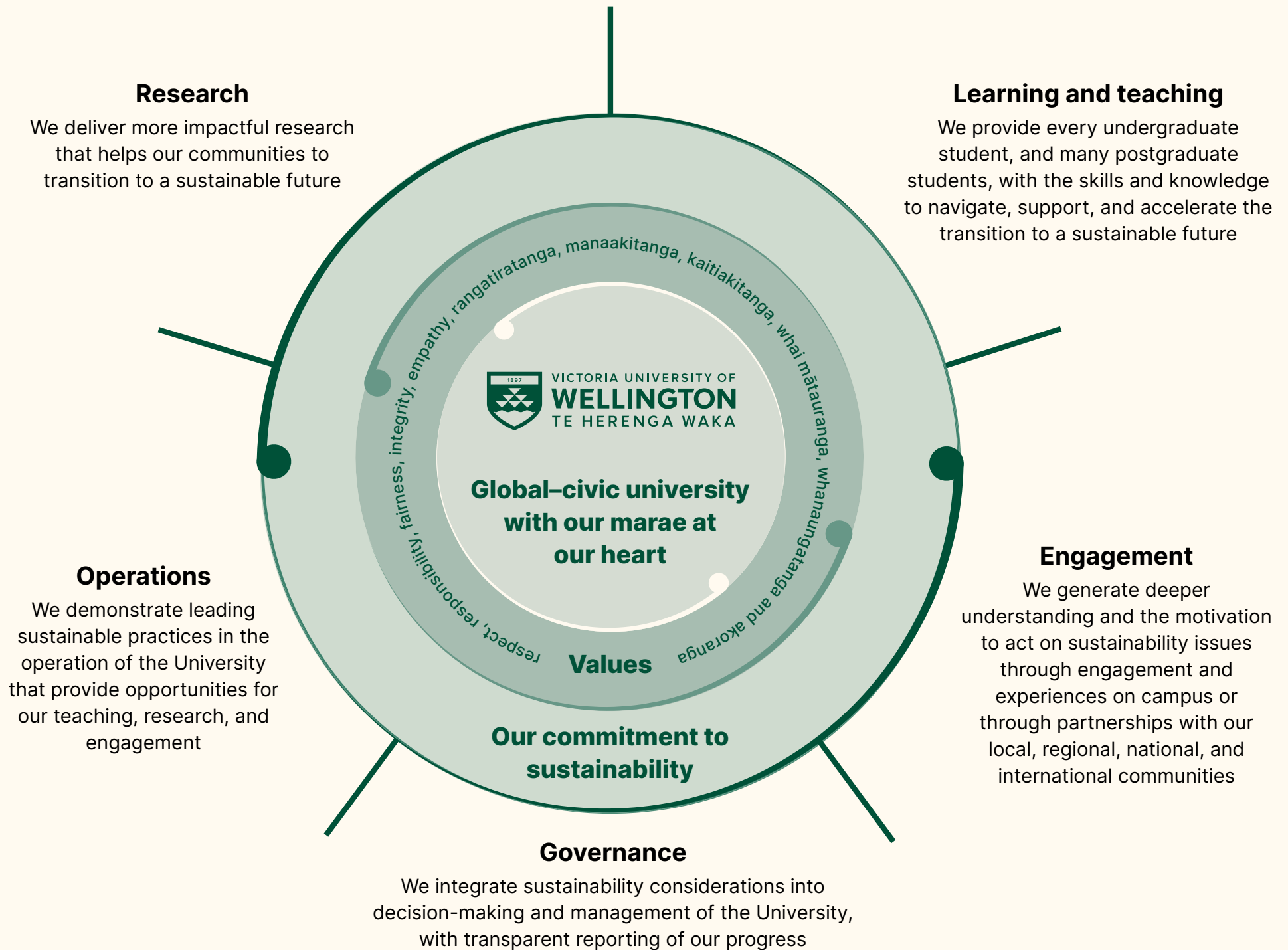
## Governance

Sustainability was central to the business case for the Living Pā, it was not an optional extra or after thought. The Living Pā was well aligned to our Strategic Plan as it spoke to our values and emphasised our iho and distinctive qualities. The Living Building Challenge certification for the Living Pā requires sustainability performance of the building to be closely monitored after opening, to ensure that the aspirations are delivered and delivered transparently. Putting sustainability as a central consideration for decision-making should be applied across the University, with reporting processes that track our progress and share it with our community.





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## Learning and teaching

Challenge	Every part of society will be impacted by environmental crises, so we need more people with the understanding and skills to address those challenges within every sector.
Opportunity	There is growing demand from students interested in learning about sustainability.
Highlights so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability-focused curriculum content is available in every faculty</li> <li>• Enrolments in sustainability-focused courses have increased by 94 percent since 2015 (up to 5,500 enrolments over 96 courses)</li> <li>• There is a growing number of sustainability-focused courses and programmes available to students</li> </ul>
<b>Target outcome</b>	<b><i>Every undergraduate, and many postgraduates, have the skills and knowledge to navigate, support and accelerate the transition to a sustainable future</i></b>
What we should do next	<p><i>Strategic actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an academic review panel to assess and report which courses include significant sustainability content</li> <li>• Embed sustainability skills and attributes in our graduate profile to reflect our distinctiveness, as part of the Curriculum Framework Review</li> <li>• Encourage every programme to provide relevant sustainability material and/or learning objectives in their curriculum to support the graduate profile</li> <li>• Identify and promote a featured list of existing, and potentially new, courses from across the University that have a strong sustainability focus as part of a suite of courses that showcase our iho and other areas of distinctiveness</li> <li>• Continue to provide specific majors/programmes/qualifications that are more sustainability focused</li> <li>• Grow and develop sustainability opportunities and content through the extracurricular Wellington Plus and Wellington International Programmes and ensure greater academic support of this student experience</li> </ul> <p><i>Voluntary individual staff and student actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate sustainability principles, issues, or actions into existing courses—either as a learning outcome or as a case study for applying learning.</li> <li>• Demonstrate sustainable practices in the delivery of teaching</li> <li>• Encourage students to investigate sustainability issues through self-directed study or assessment requirements.</li> <li>• Utilise existing sustainability-focused study resources.</li> <li>• Participate in the sustainability events and activities offered through Wellington Plus or Wellington International Leadership Programmes</li> </ul>
Measure of success by 2030	Sustainability will become embedded in the learning experience for every student, whatever their choice of study. Each year, we will significantly increase the sustainability content provided to students through the curriculum and extracurricular opportunities so that graduates are provided with sustainability skills and understanding. The sustainability-focused learning opportunities will be clearly identified and promoted to students across all faculties.

## Research

Challenge	The global transition to a sustainable future needs to be guided by evidence-based decision-making, supported by creative endeavours, new knowledge, and solutions that challenge the status quo, regenerate nature, and enable our communities to live within the planet's capacity.
Opportunity	As the impact of the environmental crises grows, the demand for sustainability-focused research and solutions is growing.
Highlights so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised world-leading researchers across several sustainability-focused disciplines</li> <li>• Address sustainability issues through several research centres, institutes, and chairs</li> <li>• Publish a growing volume of sustainability-focused research</li> </ul>
<b>Target outcome</b>	<b><i>We deliver more impactful research that helps our communities to transition to a sustainable future</i></b>
What we should do next	<p><i>Strategic actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a more effective internal process of tagging research and researchers that are focused on sustainability</li> <li>• Include emphasis on sustainability impact in internal research funding allocation, including the carbon levy contestable fund</li> <li>• Explore the potential for a trans-disciplinary sustainability-focused research institute or better connection between existing research centres and external stakeholders</li> <li>• Investigate and establish the most effective roles and structures to connect and promote sustainability-focused research across the University and with our partners</li> <li>• Increase sustainability-focused postgraduate research through targeted Master's and PhD scholarship funding and philanthropy</li> <li>• Place an emphasis on environmental solutions delivered as part of our research commercialisation</li> <li>• Facilitate regular networking opportunities for the community of academic staff and postgraduate students actively researching sustainability topics</li> </ul> <p><i>Voluntary individual staff and student actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue researching sustainability issues and seek interdisciplinary connections with colleagues or increase the application of research in the wider community</li> <li>• Encourage academic staff who are not actively researching sustainability issues to explore how their work can support sustainable impact</li> <li>• Explicitly signal, wherever possible, published research that includes sustainability issues to ensure it is promoted and recorded appropriately</li> <li>• Seek positive environmental impact through policy or practice through research conducted with external partners</li> <li>• Incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives and mātauranga Māori into sustainability-focused research wherever possible</li> </ul>
Measure of success by 2030	We will have an increasing number of examples where our research and our research partnerships with external organisations are making a positive impact on the wellbeing of our communities and nature. The volume of published sustainability-focused research recorded in SciVal will increase from 505 publications in 2020 to 1,000, with an emphasis on high-impact journals. The external research income for sustainability research, as measured by Dimensions, will rise from an average of \$17.2 million per year over the past four years to \$30 million.



## Engagement

Challenge	Every part of society will be impacted by environmental crises, so we need more people with the understanding and skills to address those challenges within every sector.
Opportunity	There is growing demand from students interested in learning about sustainability.
Highlights so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability-focused curriculum content is available in every faculty</li> <li>• Enrolments in sustainability-focused courses have increased by 94 percent since 2015 (up to 5,500 enrolments over 96 courses)</li> <li>• There is a growing number of sustainability-focused courses and programmes available to students</li> </ul>
<b>Target outcome</b>	<b><i>We generate deeper understanding and the motivation to act on sustainability issues through engagement and experiences on campus or through partnerships with our local, regional, national and international community</i></b>
What we should do next	<p><i>Strategic actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the visibility of sustainability initiatives on campus and opportunities to get involved on campus and at home</li> <li>• Grow the partnership with VUWSA and other student representative groups to expand student-to-student engagement on sustainability issues</li> <li>• Prioritise sustainability-focused research discoveries, events, and achievements for media releases and alumni engagement</li> <li>• Establish an external sustainability advisory panel, representative and reflective of our wider community, to support planning and engagement</li> <li>• Develop deeper and more formal partnerships with central and local government, research institutes, NGOs, business, and iwi on sustainability issues, emphasising our capital city and Asia-Pacific location</li> <li>• Work more closely with suppliers, landlords, and tenants on sustainability performance</li> <li>• Develop sustainability-focused professional development course offerings through Kāpuhipuhi—Wellington Uni-Professional Ltd</li> <li>• Connect with employers who recruit our graduates to understand what sustainability skills they need, highlight career pathways, and showcase the sustainability initiatives that make them an attractive future workplace for our students</li> <li>• Continue to incorporate and promote sustainability themes within our philanthropic campaigns</li> </ul> <p><i>Voluntary individual staff and student actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with sustainability events and activities offered through Green Impact, Sustainability Week, and student clubs</li> <li>• Collaborate with iwi, Pasifika communities, civil society, government, employers, and the public on sustainability issues through work-integrated or applied learning, research collaborations, public events, or conferences</li> <li>• Prioritise work with external partners that delivers tangible impacts in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals</li> <li>• Volunteer in the community using staff volunteer leave or, for students, as part of Wellington Plus and Wellington International Leadership Programmes</li> <li>• Increase academic comment and contributions on sustainability issues through the media.</li> </ul>
Measure of success by 2030	The sustainability knowledge and solutions we generate through our teaching and research will be developed and shared with our external stakeholders, with increasing examples of the impact it has generated. The reach of our engagement on sustainability issues will be expanded through increasing media coverage. Our students, staff, and community will be provided with more opportunities to engage in sustainable action and events as part of university life and will generate increased participation in programmes such as Green Impact, which will grow from 320 participants in 2020 to more than 800.

## Operations

Challenge	The day-to-day operation of our people and our facilities currently creates a negative impact on the natural environment. To ensure consistency with the sustainability agenda being advocated for through our teaching, research, and engagement activities, we also need to demonstrate best practice in minimising our environmental impact and ultimately regenerating nature.
Opportunity	We have already made good progress in improving our environmental performance and can see the value in it. It can support personal wellbeing, reduce operating costs, improve resilience, reduce risk, and provide real-world applications for our teaching, research, and engagement.
Highlights so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced carbon emissions by 50 percent between 2007 and 2021</li> <li>• Significantly reduced consumption of electricity, natural gas, water, and paper; and less waste sent to landfill</li> <li>• Enhanced biodiversity for the city and our campuses</li> </ul>
<b>Target outcome</b>	<b><i>To demonstrate leading sustainable practices in the operation of the University that provide opportunities for our teaching, research, and engagement</i></b>
What we should do next	<p><i>Strategic actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Living Pā and apply the lessons from the design and construction to standard campus development processes</li> <li>• Continue implementation of the Zero Carbon Plan, which targets net-zero emissions by 2030 and reduce gross emissions by 40 percent, including the introduction of post-pandemic air travel carbon targets</li> <li>• Deliver the sustainability objectives of the 2020 Campus Master Plan, which include reducing energy consumption, designing sustainability into new building and refurbishments, supporting sustainable transport options, minimising waste to landfill, conserving water, and enriching biodiversity on our campuses</li> <li>• Continue to support hybrid working and teaching to reduce travel demand</li> <li>• Ensure policies, incentives, and facilities support the use of alternatives to air travel</li> <li>• Explore sustainable financing for a portion of our borrowing</li> <li>• Provide operational sustainability projects and challenges as opportunities for applied learning through curriculum and research</li> </ul> <p><i>Voluntary individual staff and student actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose sustainable transport modes for commuting to and from campus or work/study from home</li> <li>• Fly less to reduce carbon emissions; consider the use of alternatives and combining activities to require fewer trips</li> <li>• Opt for sustainable food options at campus cafés, student accommodation, and catered functions</li> <li>• Avoid waste from single-use cups, packaging, printing, and stationery</li> <li>• Consider sustainability impacts when purchasing goods and services.</li> </ul>
Measure of success by 2030	We will be recognised for leading sustainable practice by both reducing our negative environmental impacts and increasing the regeneration of nature. By 2030, our gross carbon emissions will be 40 percent less than 2017. Our waste to landfill will be 75 percent less than 2017 and we will have established 36 hectares of regenerated native forest on public land.



## Governance

Challenge	To honour our commitment to sustainability we need to ensure it is factored into decision-making throughout the University and is transparently reported over the long term. While we are getting better at this, it is still not business as usual.
Opportunity	Good governance structures and allocation of responsibility will ensure that our sustainability goals in teaching, research, engagement, and operations will be achieved. Clear and transparent reporting will ensure we stay on track and build a reputation as a sustainability leader.
Highlights so far	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear commitment to sustainability in the Strategic Plan, with support from senior leadership</li> <li>• A central sustainability team to champion sustainability initiatives with a pan-University remit</li> <li>• An annual reporting process that publicly describes our sustainability performance, successes, and challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Target outcome</b>	<b><i>To integrate sustainability considerations into decision-making and management of the University, with transparent reporting of our progress</i></b>
What we should do next	<p><i>Strategic actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally allocate sustainability responsibilities to key roles and groups across the organisation</li> <li>• Incorporate sustainability considerations into key decision-making processes, including the business case template</li> <li>• Identify professional development needs and resources to build staff capability for integrating sustainability into decision-making in partnership with Kāpuhipuhi—Wellington Uni-Professional Ltd</li> <li>• Adapt our processes and practices to encourage individual and collective actions in support of our targeted sustainability outcomes</li> <li>• Introduce regular sustainability team engagement with relevant committees and management groups across the University</li> <li>• Review reporting processes to align with relevant external frameworks</li> <li>• Continue participation in significant sustainability rankings and ratings</li> <li>• Update relevant university policies to better incorporate our commitment to sustainability</li> <li>• Apply our Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute in sustainability decision-making</li> <li>• Seek input from the VUWSA Sustainability Committee and other student representative groups for sustainability planning; present annual sustainability reporting to them</li> </ul> <p><i>Voluntary individual staff and student actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role model sustainable practices and actions</li> <li>• Report examples of local sustainability success to the sustainability team and the communications team</li> <li>• Challenge the University, and each other, if we see examples where our commitment to sustainability is compromised</li> </ul>
Measure of success by 2030	Sustainability will be integrated into decision-making at all levels of the University and central sustainability planning will be informed by input from our community. Evidence of our sustainability performance improvement (or regression) will be effectively collated and transparently reported each year. The success of these actions, and the other areas of this outcomes framework, will continue to grow our reputation as a sustainability leader, grow a sense of pride among staff and students and, as a by-product, return us to the top 50 of the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking.



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