



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

# Environmental Sustainability Policy

Policy Volume	E: General Institutional Policies & Protocols
Policy Chapter	E.1 RU Environment
Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	RU Environmental Committee
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Chairperson of RU Environmental Committee
Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals	1998; 2015
Revision History: Approved Reviews	First revision approved: 07 September 2015
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	Every 5 years.
Next Review Date	2020

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## POLICY PARTICULARS

<b>Policy Title</b>	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY
<b>Policy Statement</b> (State in a single paragraph the policy mandate and how this relates to the University Mission and Vision)	Rhodes University recognises its integral relationship with the socio-economic and biophysical environment, and that embracing sustainability as a critical focus of its operations and decision-making as well as in teaching, research and community engagement, will improve human well-being and environmental health within the university and in the broader community. This policy embraces a social-ecological interpretation of sustainability where practices and actions are viewed in terms of their benefit with regard to protecting and improving the well-being of interacting social elements – including quality of life, cultural, economic and political concerns, and biophysical elements – including the natural and built environments. Rhodes University is committed to enhancing the environmental focus of its of teaching and research, reducing its ecological footprint in terms of infrastructural development and use of environmental goods and services, facilitating more sustainable energy, waste and water management and usage strategies, and actively engaging with its constituency in order to promote sustainability
<b>Reason for Policy</b> (What this policy aims to achieve)	Rhodes University aims towards environmental sustainability best practice.
<b>People affected by this Policy</b> (All units of the University)	All areas of the university.
<b>Who should read this Policy</b> (People who need to heed this policy to fulfil the duties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculties and academic departments.</li> <li>• Support divisions/sections.</li> <li>• Student representative council.</li> </ul>
<b>Website address/link for this Policy</b>	<a href="http://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/">www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/</a>

## RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

<b>University Policies and Documents</b> (such as rules/protocols/guidelines related to this policy)
Rhodes University Budget, Procurement Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Community Engagement Policy, Disability Policy, etc.
<b>Other Documents</b> (Legislation/Regulatory requirements/Organisational Reports)
The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) – with special reference to section 24 – as well as the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (NEMA), National Water Act 36 of 1998 (NWA), Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 43 of 1983 (CARA) and associated legislation, and the recommendations in the third Report on Governance in South Africa (King III) and National Climate Change Response White Paper (2011).
<b>Forms and Tools</b> (documents to be completed in support of this policy implementation)
Policy template for the policy itself.
Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation, to be developed and negotiated with stakeholders, following approval of this policy.

## POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

TERM & DEFINITION
<b>Sustainability:</b> this policy embraces a social-ecological interpretation of sustainability where practices and actions are viewed in terms of their benefit with regard to protecting and improving the well-being of interacting social elements – including quality of life as well as cultural, economic and political concerns – and biophysical elements of the environment – including natural resource conservation and waste emission minimization.
<b>Efficient:</b> refers to the adoption of sustainable approaches – including reduced levels of detrimental or polluting inputs – in order to maximise technical and environmental efficiency and hence a sustainable carrying capacity. Benefits include enhanced reputation of the university, long-term cost-savings through improved efficiencies, and improving employee and community health and well-being.
<b>Responsible:</b> refers to the principle of corporate environmental responsibility and associated requirements, namely, to support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
<b>Pollution:</b> refers to the act or process of discharging harmful waste substances that contaminate water, soil or air.
<b>Hazardous:</b> refers to anything that poses a potential or substantial threat to human health or the environment, even in low concentrations.
<b>Carbon footprint:</b> a broad measure of the impact of operational activities on climate change. It relates to the quantity of greenhouse gases produced through burning fossil fuels for electricity and travel, and through use of carbon products such as paper. The carbon footprint is a measure of all greenhouse gases produced and is expressed as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per annum (abbreviated as CO <sub>2</sub> -e).
<b>Ecological footprint:</b> a measure of operational demand in relation to the capacity of the environment to supply natural capital, without causing environmental degradation. It represents the amount of biologically productive land and sea area necessary to supply the resources a population consumes, and to assimilate associated waste produced by the same population.
<b>Water footprint:</b> the total volume of water consumed in running the university.
<b>Waste footprint:</b> the amount of waste generated, including packaging materials and food waste, in terms of left over items that are not reused, recovered or recycled.

## PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
<p>The principle of corporate environmental responsibility and associated requirements, namely, to support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges, undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility, and encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.</p> <p>Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable and affordable:</p>
<p><b>1. SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:</b> Promote, support and expand initiatives and programmes that lead to improved understanding, development and implementation of sustainability education and research across all faculties and disciplines.</p>
<p><b>2. WATER SUSTAINABILITY:</b> Promote opportunities, initiatives and measures that result in efficient management of the university's water resources, reduced use of mains water, and reduced pollution entering watercourses via storm water drains and sewers, in order to minimise the university's water footprint and improve the sustainability of increasingly scarce water resources.</p>
<p><b>3. ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY:</b> Promote opportunities, initiatives and measures that enable the university to</p>

manage and use its power supply efficiently, optimise and control the use of energy on campus in order to minimise its carbon footprint, in line with national and international emission reduction targets.
<b>4. SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT:</b> Promote opportunities, initiatives and measures that enable the university to minimise its waste generation wherever possible, promote re-use, recycling and composting, and apply responsible hazardous waste management, in order to minimise its waste footprint.
<b>5. BIODIVERSITY:</b> Promote opportunities, initiatives and measures to conserve biodiversity and enhance ecosystem functioning, and reduce the university's ecological footprint.
<b>6. SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL:</b> Promote opportunities for sustainable travel, including efficient public and communal transport, cycling and walking, in order to minimise greenhouse gas emissions and reduce traffic and parking congestion on campus.
<b>7. ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY:</b> Integrate development where possible with good municipal planning processes. Include environmental scoping in development plans and adopt sustainable building best practice wherever possible.
<b>8. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT:</b> Promote opportunities for sustainable procurement by purchasing products and contracting services that will assist in reducing the University's environmental impact.

## PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

(Actions and processes by which the objectives of the policy will be achieved.)

<p><b>DIRECTIVE 1</b></p> <p><b>SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION and RESEARCH.</b> Rhodes University faculties and academic departments initiate and develop, where appropriate, the environmental and sustainability focus in teaching, learning and research.</p>
<p><b>DIRECTIVE 2</b></p> <p><b>WATER SUSTAINABILITY.</b> Rhodes University aims to implement water sustainability measures to reduce its water footprint, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Monitor and minimise the university's water consumption.</li> <li>2.2 Review opportunities for reducing the use of mains water, and install alternative water systems on campus wherever feasible.</li> <li>2.3 Plant indigenous flora to reduce water usage.</li> <li>2.4 Promote water efficiency practices to all the university's stakeholders.</li> </ol>
<p><b>DIRECTIVE 3</b></p> <p><b>ENERGY SUSTAINABILITY.</b> Rhodes University aims to implement energy sustainability measures to reduce its carbon footprint, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Monitor and minimise the university's electricity consumption.</li> <li>3.2 Implement the best available energy technology for all new buildings and in existing structures wherever possible and affordable.</li> <li>3.3 Promote electricity efficiency practices and reduction of the university's carbon footprint to all stakeholders.</li> </ol>

#### **DIRECTIVE 4**

**SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT.** Rhodes University aims to implement sustainable waste management, including:

- 4.1 Minimise (reduce and/or recycle) wherever possible the university's solid and liquid waste streams at all discharge points on campus.
- 4.2 Use recycled products wherever feasible.
- 4.3 Identify and minimise hazardous wastes on campus.
- 4.4 Apply systems for safe and environmentally responsible disposal of wastes (hazardous and general) that cannot be re-used or recycled.
- 4.5 Work towards minimising paper use through promotion of double-sided printing and use of online systems, iPads and other efficient technologies.
- 4.6 Promote waste reduction practices to all the university's stakeholders.

#### **DIRECTIVE 5**

**BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION.** Rhodes University supports biodiversity conservation, to reduce its ecological footprint, including:

- 5.1 Minimise wherever possible the university's impact on natural ecosystems.
- 5.2 Plant indigenous flora wherever possible.
- 5.3 Promote biodiversity conservation to all the university's stakeholders.
- 5.4 Promote the reduction of the university's ecological footprint to all stakeholders.

#### **DIRECTIVE 6**

**SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL.** Rhodes University promotes sustainable travel, including:

- 6.1 Support the use, wherever possible, of efficient public and communal transport, bicycles and walking, and car-sharing – especially with regard to work-related travel and use of university vehicles.
- 6.2 Discourage unnecessary use of both private and university vehicles during the day, thus reducing traffic and parking issues on campus.
- 6.3 Liaise with the local municipality with regard to shared public transport strategies.
- 6.4 Promote sustainable practices and invest in technologies required for university stakeholders to engage in practices such as Skype meetings and video conferencing.
- 6.5 Encourage university stakeholders travelling internationally to contribute to the RU Green Fund as a way of offsetting their carbon emissions.

#### **DIRECTIVE 7**

**ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY.** Rhodes University promotes organisational sustainability, including:

- 7.1 Support integrated planning on a university-wide basis in order to harmonise the natural and the built environment, and create spaces that are ecologically and socially acceptable to all.

#### **DIRECTIVE 8**

**SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT.** Rhodes University promotes sustainable procurement, including:

- 8.1 Support opportunities for sustainable procurement by purchasing products and contracting services that will assist where possible in reducing the University's environmental impact.

#### DIRECTIVE 9

**COMMUNICATION.** Rhodes University features environmental and sustainability concerns in the context of the university's communications, including:

- 9.1 Stakeholder and media engagement.
- 9.2 Staff involvement – encourage staff to play a greater role in the implementation, maintenance and assessment of the policy.
- 9.3 Student involvement – encourage students to play a greater role in the implementation, maintenance and assessment of the policy.

#### DIRECTIVE 10

**MONITORING AND LIAISON.** Rhodes University monitors environmental and sustainability concerns on campus, as follows:

- 10.1 Liaise and facilitate representation within university departments, sections and divisions to promote implementation of this policy in terms of the principles governing it.
- 10.2 Continue to oversee and promote the RU Environmental Awards and RU Green Fund.
- 10.3 Advise on general programmes or projects related to environmental and sustainability concerns.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

The key responsibilities of each party regarding this policy are as follows:

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>ROLE 1 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP:</b>	<b><i>RU Senior Management.</i></b> Rhodes University senior management addresses environmental and sustainability concerns as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Continue to uphold the university's environmental responsibilities in its vision and mission statement, "to play a leading role in establishing a culture of environmental concern by actively pursuing a policy of environmental best practice".</li><li>1.2 Continue to uphold the university's responsibilities as a signatory of the Talloires Declaration.</li><li>1.3 Promote an environment which is healthy, safe and conducive to excellent scholarship and provides good working conditions.</li></ol>
<b>ROLE 2 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OPERATIONS:</b>	<b><i>RU Infrastructure, Operations &amp; Finance Division.</i></b> Rhodes University Infrastructure, Operations and Finance Division manages the implementation of the principles governing this policy as applicable to infrastructure, operations and budgeting.
<b>ROLE 3 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY TEACHING AND RESEARCH:</b>	<b><i>RU Faculties and Academic Departments.</i></b> Rhodes University Faculties and Departments initiate and develop, where appropriate, the environmental sustainability focus and content in teaching and research.

<p><b>ROLE 4</b> <b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY LIAISON:</b></p>	<p><b><i>RU Environmental Committee.</i></b></p> <p>The RU Environmental Committee provides a forum for review of the policy; liaison is initiated and input coordinated – according to the requirements of all RU policies – as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Draw on assistance from expert individuals and/or units within the university, and invite consultation with key stakeholders.</li> <li>4.2 Actively seek out and learn from the best practices of other higher education institutions.</li> <li>4.3 Receive input and recommendations, reach consensus on key concerns, thus assisting in creating a strong unity of purpose.</li> <li>4.4 Promote sustainability best practice through, amongst others, building the RU Green Fund and the administration and profiling of the RU Environmental Awards.</li> </ol>
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## CONTACTS

Direct any questions about the policy to the RU Environmental Committee. The office bearers are listed in Appendix A.

## REVIEW PROCEDURE

<p><b>Actions and processes by which the policy will be reviewed</b></p>
<p>The Environmental Committee will regularly review this Policy as may be required by legislation, organizational changes and other considerations, or at least every five years. The committee will use the university procedures, protocols and templates and the revision process will involve consultation with key stakeholders in order to receive input and recommendations, reach consensus on key concerns, and achieve a strong unity of purpose.</p>
<p><b>Communication of the review process</b></p>
<p>The Environmental Committee will engage stakeholders through <a href="mailto:Toplist@lists.ru.ac.za">Toplist@lists.ru.ac.za</a>, <a href="mailto:environment@lists.ru.ac.za">environment@lists.ru.ac.za</a>, <a href="mailto:enviroreps@lists.ru.ac.za">enviroreps@lists.ru.ac.za</a>, <a href="mailto:societychairs@lists.ru.ac.za">societychairs@lists.ru.ac.za</a>, <a href="mailto:studentnews@lists.ru.ac.za">studentnews@lists.ru.ac.za</a>, etc.</p>
<p>The Environmental Committee will request the Web Unit to establish a counter at <a href="http://www.ru.ac.za/environment/policy/about">www.ru.ac.za/environment/policy/about</a> and/or at <a href="http://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies">www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies</a> to monitor how many website ‘hits’ the policy receives.</p>

## APPENDIX A:

RU Environmental Committee office bearers 2015:

Area of Concern	Contact Person	Telephone	Email
Chairperson: Environmental Committee	Prof Hugo Nel	046 603 8301	h.nel@ru.ac.za
Infrastructure & Operations	Executive Director: Dr Iain L'Ange	046 603 8125	execdirector.iof@ru.ac.za
Food Services	Manager: Mr Simon Wright	046 603 8805 / 5099	s.wright@ru.ac.za
Grounds & Gardens	Acting Manager: Mr Philip Crous	046 603 7209 / 5162	p.crous@ru.ac.za
Finance Division	Mr Raymond Harris	046 603 8834	raymond.harris@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns - Geography	Prof Fred Ellery	046 603 7453	f.ellery@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns – Microbiology, Biochemistry	Prof Jo Dames	046 603 8443	j.dames@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns - Journalism	Mr Harold Gess	046 603 7134	h.gess@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns - Chemistry	Dr Rosa Klein	046 603 8802 / 8014	r.klein@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns - Botany	Dr Anusha Rajkaran	046 603 7401	a.rajkaran@ru.ac.za
Environmental concerns – Library	Ms Thandiwe Menze	046 603 7338	t.menze@ru.ac.za
Environmental education	Environmental Learning Research Centre: Dr Ingrid Schudel	046 603 7271	i.schudel@ru.ac.za
Environmental Science	HOD: Prof Sheona Shackleton	046 603 7009	s.shackleton@ru.ac.za
Information Technology	Ms Tracey Chambers	046 603 8290	t.chambers@ru.ac.za
Safety Health & Environment Office	Ms Nikki Kohly	046 603 7205	n.kohly@ru.ac.za
Student environmental concerns	SRC Environmental Councillor SRC Community Engagement Councillor RU Green		srcenvironmental@ru.ac.za srccommunity@ru.ac.za rhodesugreen@gmail.com
Makana environmental concerns	Environmental Manager: Mr Ndumiso Nongwe	046 603 6056	NdumisoNongwe@makana.gov.za, n.nongwe@gmail.com