

The University of Manchester and its Students Union is committed to [eliminating avoidable single-use plastics from catering, labs and stationery by 2022](#).

This Action Plan maps out our progress so far and our targets to achieve by 2022.

Focus	The challenge	Our work so far	Our actions to 2022
Plastic bottles	We recycle around 47 tonnes of plastic bottles each year. A better solution is bringing a reusable bottle to refill from our campus water dispensers.	We have mapped our <a href="#">publicly accessible water dispensers</a> on our <a href="#">Sustainability Map</a> to encourage our staff and students to refill their reusable water bottles. Many of our Food on Campus outlets are also displayed on the <a href="#">Refill</a> app.	We will improve water dispenser provision across campus and produce high quality signage for drinking water facilities.
Hot drink cups	We sell over 732,000 hot drinks each year, which produces a large amount of waste.	We've introduced a 20p charge on all disposable cups in Food on Campus outlets. This avoided more than 35,000 cups from landfill in January and February 2020.  These profits go towards local sustainability and community projects.  The charge has contributed to an increase in reusable cup sales by 36%.	We will increase the number of drinks sold in reusable cups in our outlets and will continue to research initiatives such as coffee cup recycling and the possibility of reuse schemes.
Plastic straws	We use an estimated 8.5 billion plastic straws every year in the UK.	Since 2019, all plastic straws have been removed from Food on Campus outlets and student Halls of Residences. Our outlets now use compostable or paper straws.	We will continue to promote the avoidance of plastic straws and consider alternative materials, in line with Government policy.
Single-use plastic cups in student bars	Large numbers of single-use plastic cups are used in our student bars, especially during peak times.	We have introduced reusable cups in our Fallowfield campus bar Squirrels, switching to a completely plastic-free drinks service.	We are working towards introducing reusable cups in more bars across campus.
Plastic cutlery	In 2018/19 we purchased over 400,000 items of disposable cutlery for use across our Food on Campus <sup>1</sup> outlets.	All visible plastic cutlery has been removed from the Market in University Place.  Our food hall in University Place, the Market, has removed all university-supplied plastic cutlery from public view.  In 2019/20 we bought 178,000 items of disposable cutlery across our Food on Campus outlets, a reduction of 55%.	We are working towards removing visible plastic cutlery from all Food on Campus outlets.
Halls of Residences	Reusable water bottles given to all students in University owned halls of residences since 2011.	Since 2011, we've distributed 68,000 reusable water bottles to all students in our University-owned Halls of Residences.	It is now much more commonplace for students to have their own reusable water bottles. We will highlight where reusable bottles can be filled on campus via the <a href="#">sustainability map</a> and provide additional water dispensers where necessary.
Single-use plastics in labs 	Laboratories are heavily reliant on single-use plastics. Reducing these consumables is difficult due to issues of contamination, sterility and cost-effectiveness.	The School of Biological Sciences launched a project to reduce the amount of plastic in their undergraduate teaching laboratory classes. The ' <a href="#">Plastic 6R</a> ' approach (refine, reduce, reuse, refill, replace, recycle(d)) has been applied to 12 practical classes and saved more than 37,000 pieces of plastic annually. This initiative was the <a href="#">2020 winner</a> in the Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability category of our Making a Difference Awards.	We will expand this procedure across all our teaching laboratories and adapt it for research laboratories.  We will also adapt the 6R approach to home, campus and workplace environments.
Labs suppliers' initiatives	Laboratories rely on suppliers for much of their equipment, but are often left with large amounts of packaging to dispose of through University waste streams.	We are working with our labs suppliers to promote takeback schemes for excess packaging and recycle frequently used items such as pipette tips. <i>E.g. StarLab backpack returns, Promega and NEB polystyrene box returns.</i>	We will continue to promote sustainable initiatives across our laboratories and work with our suppliers to further reduce single-use plastic.

<sup>1</sup> Covers Food on Campus outlets, Taste Hospitality and AMBS catering

Stationery	Our departments order large amounts of stationery each year, which can sometimes become unused and expensive.	We have regular stationery amnesties, to reduce the procurement of unnecessary materials including plastic, as well as avoiding their disposal and associated costs. Remaining stationery is donated to charity if it cannot be reused internally. As of January 2020, we have held two successful events so far.	We will run additional stationery amnesties and promote products with circular economy potential where possible. This will reduce the amount spent on buying new stationery across our University.
Freebies at events	Single-use plastics are often used at events for convenience and cost-	Our Careers Service has made great progress on reducing plastic at their events. In February 2020, their My Future Festival removed plastic bottles from exhibitors' lunches and used paper bunting instead of balloons.	We will promote plastic-free events across the University and encourage sustainability in event planning and waste management.
Single-use plastic cups in staff areas	Frequent events such as meetings, interviews and conferences mean that many single-use plastic cups are provided for visitors to use with our water dispensers. This produces large amounts of waste and financial costs for departments.	We encourage our departments to replace their single-use plastic cups with reusable alternatives, for events, meetings and for visitors to use. This reduces costs and associated waste.  Several departments have already stopped ordering plastic cups and now use reusable glasses.  We are working to stop the purchase of plastic cups, and to promote or provide the use of alternatives, particularly for staff.	We will reduce the number of plastic cups purchased for use with water dispensers, especially in staff areas.
Research into plastics	Much research is still needed in the fight against plastic pollution, such as looking at the ways to reduce consumer demand for plastic.	The University of Manchester is leading on the UKRI funded ' <a href="#">Rethinking Resources and Recycling</a> ' project which is one of eight research projects funded through PRIF (Plastic Research Innovation Fund) that will explore new and different ways of making, using and recycling. This multi-disciplinary collaboration targets both the technological and societal contributions to the 5 million tonnes of plastic waste being generated in the UK annually.  The <a href="#">Sustainable Materials Innovation Hub</a> (SMI Hub) led by the Henry Royce Institute has also been set-up to support SMEs from across Greater Manchester to develop innovative solutions to develop a more sustainable approach to plastics use and lower their carbon footprints.	Outputs of our research will inform our ongoing approach to plastic reduction and be shared with students and staff.
Staff and student engagement	The University of Manchester has more than 12,000 staff members as has one of the largest student communities in the UK.	Our <a href="#">award-winning 10,000 Actions</a> and <a href="#">Team Actions</a> platform encourages staff and students to make small commitments in their daily lives, including reducing their plastic consumption through individual and team-based actions.  10,000 Actions is the UK's largest environmental sustainability initiative for staff in higher education.	We will expand the 10,000 Actions platform to students from 2021.
Manchester Museum	Many gift shop items arrive in plastic packaging or are designed to be single-use products.	Our <a href="#">Manchester Museum</a> is taking actions to reduce its plastic, including selling soft toys made from recycled plastic bottles and encouraging suppliers to eliminate plastic packaging.	The gift shop will stock products that are 'planet and people friendly' including reducing plastic within all stock and operations.
Want not Waste Shop	Zero waste living can be expensive and inaccessible to many people.	Our <a href="#">Want not Waste shop</a> sells a selection of zero waste products, including spices, pulses, grains and sugar, helping you to avoid excess plastic packaging. Customers can bring their own containers or bags to fill up products and pay by weight or item. This can help reduce both cost and food waste.  The Want not Waste team received four awards at the 2020 Making A Difference Awards, including the student winners of the <a href="#">Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability</a> .	We will continue to promote the Want not Waste shop to all staff, student and members of the public. Their team of volunteers has increased to 30 volunteers in the last 12 months.  The shop's volunteers continue with their aim to make zero waste living affordable and accessible to all. They also educate and share skills via free workshops and sharing meaningful content on their social media. + <a href="#">Recycle4GM guest blog on Want not Waste</a>
Jodrell Bank Bluedot Festival	Many events, including festivals, can have large environmental impacts.	Since its inception, the annual Bluedot Festival has considered sustainability within its operations and waste management. As well as other sustainability initiatives, the festival has a zero waste-to-landfill policy and uses no single-use plastics.  The Bluedot Festival Sustainability Programme was celebrated for their <a href="#">Outstanding Contribution to Environmental Sustainability</a> in our 2020 Making a Difference Awards.	We will continue to reduce plastic at Jodrell Bank.
Data collection	Data to demonstrate impact of single-use plastic reductions and inform future interventions.	We have eliminated 250,000 pieces of avoidable single-use plastic to date. Data has been provided from the initiatives above.	We will collate figures to demonstrate our impact, to submit data to support single-use plastic reductions visit the <a href="#">single-use plastic reporting form</a> .