MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Digital sustainability at The University of Manchester

IT Services has committed to embed the principles of environmental sustainability into their culture, capabilities and operations, in order to improve the environmental sustainability of the technologies and services they provide.

IT Services will support students and staff through digital excellence to use IT sustainably. Additionally, they will collaborate with innovative partners to build our capabilities, procure sustainable technologies, reduce our energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

IT Environmental Sustainability Plan

The IT Environmental Sustainability Plan outlines how we will reduce the environmental impact of our technologies and services, supporting the University's commitment to net zero. Built around five pillars: governance, culture, capabilities, energy sustainability and sustainable sourcing, the plan embeds sustainability into decision-making, operations and procurement across IT Services.

The University has a dedicated IT Environmental Sustainability Manager based in IT Services.

Data centres

Our two data centres are 100% powered by market-based wind and solar electricity, which is backed by REGO certificates and third-party validation:

- Data centre supply certificate
- Renewable energy certificate

Procurement

Our IT Environmental Sustainability Plan includes a target to incorporate environmental sustainability questions into all full procurement exercises, with a defined minimum percentage weighting by 2028.

As our contracts for external suppliers and partners come up, we are including environmental sustainability questions in our assessments. We recently awarded the contract for the replacement of our network hardware to Softcat, who by demonstrating great commitment and effectiveness, scored highest of all the bidders on social responsibility and sustainability criteria.

Data transfer of the website

We use BrowserStack to test and assess our web pages. Whilst not a specific carbon-evaluation tool, it does make our webpages more energy efficient by identifying and fixing performance issues that would otherwise cause unnecessary high levels of data transfer, computation (server- and client-side), and rendering times.

Measuring and reducing emissions from digital infrastructure

The IT Environmental Sustainability Plan sets out our strategy on measuring and reducing emissions from digital infrastructure:

- Create a baseline energy consumption report and develop an action plan to reduce consumption and improve efficiency in 2026.
- Create a baseline utilisation report and develop an improvement plan in 2026.
- Incorporate energy efficiency and optimisation of utilisation into design principles that are owned by Enterprise and Business Architecture in 2026.
- Implement annual monitoring of energy consumption and utilisation and set KPIs from 2025/6 onwards.

Guidance on minimising energy consumption

Our engagement programme for staff and students, No Time to Waste, has guidance on minimising energy consumption from digital infrastructure including incentives to undertake a digital clean-up and how to use AI wisely.

AI guidance

The University has guidance on AI usage for staff and students that details the risks and recommended usage related to:

- Human accountability for output and declaring where AI has been used to generate output
- Intelligence risks from AI use
- Unreliability of AI output
- Privacy risks from AI use
- Legal risks of using AI
- Climate implications of AI

We have also published specific guidance on environmentally responsible use of AI.

The University has a mandatory AI course for all staff which includes a section on environmental sustainability.

Minimising e-waste

The University's approach to e-waste follows the 5 Rs framework. We purchase our IT kit from an EcoVadis Silver rated supplier, Converge, to reduce our upstream supply chain impacts.

Once in our possession, we sweat our assets through Hardware Asset Management then when devices are no longer of use to us, they pass through a hierarchy. Some usable devices are donated to our good causes, other usable devices are re-sold by our lifecycle management partner. The remaining material is stripped for components and then for materials. Any remainder which is flammable is burnt to generate electricity. We do this through Converge who are certified Zero avoidable e-waste to landfill

- View our metrics for our Converge partnership

All data on devices is securely erased in compliance with GDPR standards, giving complete confidence that sensitive information is protected throughout the recycling process. We run an annual IT kit amnesty week to help ensure that as much IT equipment as possible is reused, repurposed, or recycled.

Our IT Environmental Sustainability Plan commits us to:

- Increase device return rates of all IT equipment purchased and provisioned by ITS.
- Create a system to provide a second life for all eligible IT equipment in 2027.