



Title: Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) Policy	Author: P.Madhou	Date: 22.05.2025
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Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) guidance document

Background

Sustainability in research is important to reduce environmental impact, cut costs, and align with institutional and global climate commitments. In line with this, many major funders are beginning to require evidence of sustainability practices or formal accreditation as part of their grant application processes.

The Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) is a sustainability initiative designed to help laboratories become more environmentally sustainable while maintaining research quality. At the School of Health and Medical Sciences (SHMS), City St George's University of London, LEAF is run by Laboratory Services within Research Operations.

LEAF provides a structured, web-based platform where laboratories can access sustainability criteria, complete assessments, and measure their impact. Laboratories can log in to the platform, go through the sustainability criteria, track progress, and complete their assessments independently.

Research Operations funds an annual subscription for access to the LEAF platform, allowing all eligible laboratories to participate at no additional cost to individual teams. This subscription supports access to LEAF's tools, peer-review functions, calculators for tracking energy and waste reductions, and certification processes.

To be successful and achieve accreditation at any level (Bronze, Silver, or Gold), laboratories must complete and evidence at least 70% of the relevant criteria for that level.

1. Purpose

This policy aims to enhance the sustainability and operational efficiency of laboratories at SHMS by aligning with the LEAF standards. It provides a structured approach for laboratories to assess, implement, and monitor sustainable practices, contributing to the university's broader environmental objectives.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all research and teaching laboratories within SHMS, encompassing activities related to energy consumption, waste management, procurement, equipment usage, and overall laboratory practices.

3. LEAF accreditation Levels

Laboratories will be assessed and accredited based on their adherence to LEAF criteria, categorised into three levels:

- **Bronze:** Implementation of fundamental sustainability actions, such as proper waste segregation and basic energy-saving measures.
- **Silver:** Adoption of intermediate practices, including reduction of single-use plastics and improved equipment management.
- **Gold:** Exemplary sustainability practices, such as comprehensive waste reduction strategies and advanced energy efficiency measures.

Each level builds upon the previous, requiring the completion of specific actions across various categories, including waste, equipment, procurement, and research quality.

4. Audit process

4.1. Self-assessment

Laboratories must complete an annual self-assessment using the LEAF online platform. This includes documenting current practices and identifying areas for development. Laboratories may optionally use LEAF's calculators to track progress in reducing energy use, waste output, and associated costs.

To maintain accreditation, groups must confirm they are still operating to the same standards as their last certification. They may then resubmit the previous application form.

4.2. Peer review & accreditation submission

Following self-assessment, laboratories will submit their application for peer review. Trained colleagues will evaluate the implementation of LEAF criteria and provide feedback.

Reviews will usually take place in May each year, and groups will receive the outcome within two weeks.

Groups resubmitting the same application to maintain accreditation will also undergo peer review.

4.3. Continuous Improvement

Laboratories are encouraged to progress through LEAF levels over time, fostering a culture of continuous sustainability enhancement.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The LEAF team:

1. Lead the implementation of LEAF criteria and facilitate peer reviews.
2. Provide guidance, training, and support to laboratories throughout the LEAF process.
3. Oversee the accreditation process, ensuring consistency and integrity in evaluations.

All laboratory users, including staff, students, and visitors, are expected to:

1. Actively contribute to completing relevant LEAF criteria for the laboratory's target accreditation level.
2. Be available to participate in audits or peer reviews as required.
3. Participate in lab-wide efforts to reduce energy, water, and material consumption.
4. Properly dispose of waste according to lab guidelines (e.g., recycling, chemical waste).
5. Engage in training sessions or briefings on LEAF-related procedures when required.

6. Workshops and Resources

Research Operations will offer workshops and resources to support laboratories in understanding and implementing LEAF criteria effectively.

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7. Policy Review

This guidance document will be reviewed annually to reflect changes to the LEAF framework and to align with the university's sustainability objectives.

8. Reference

The CSGUL webpage- [The Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework \(LEAF\)](#)