



SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The University of
business, practice
and the professions.

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This report presents a thoughtful account of our shared progress toward sustainability at City St George's. It highlights the work of colleagues across research, education, engagement, and operations, showcasing how our community is responding to one of the greatest challenges facing society.

There is overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change: it is real, it is human-driven, and its impacts are already with us. The extreme weather events we have witnessed, and the disproportionate harm they inflict on the world's most vulnerable, demand a response that is both systemic and sustained. As a university, we are uniquely placed to contribute through the creation of knowledge, the formation of future professionals, and the example we set in our own operations.

That is why we have launched a Sustainability Strategic Transformation Programme. It marks a step change in our approach and aims to embed sustainability through all that we do –

from curriculum design to carbon reporting. While our target to achieve net zero by 2040 is extremely challenging, we are working together to meet it.

This work is grounded in evidence and driven by values. It will involve difficult trade-offs and require individual and institutional change. However, I believe it is worth the effort. Indeed, it is the right thing to do.

I urge every member of our community to consider their role in this transformation. Whether through your research, your teaching, your choices, or your creativity – you have a part to play. Small actions, taken together, create real momentum. Let us take inspiration from the case studies that follow and continue to build that momentum, together.

Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein
President

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. Comprising 17 interconnected goals, the SDGs offer a comprehensive framework that encourages governments, businesses and civil society to work together toward a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable world.

Central to the SDGs is the recognition that economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social well-being must advance hand in hand. From tackling climate change and promoting quality education to fostering innovation and reducing inequality, the SDGs provide a global roadmap for collective action across sectors and societies.

As an organisation committed to making a positive impact, we align our efforts with these global goals. This annual report highlights some of our recent contributions (prior to becoming City St George's) to this shared agenda and how we are working to create meaningful change through innovation and partnership.



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“Universities are vital in tackling climate change. They are at the heart of innovation and, most importantly, are excellent spaces for multi-disciplinary research and cross-sectional thinking. That is exactly what we need to solve the climate crisis.”

Universities UK

It is increasingly clear that multi-disciplinary, cross-cutting research is vital; not only to understanding the complexity of the challenges set out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals but also to designing effective, long-term solutions.

City St George's is well positioned to make a meaningful contribution to these efforts. Our research community is engaged in advancing sustainable development across a range of fields, applying innovation, collaboration and real-world impact to some of the world's most critical problems.

The research highlighted in this report offers a glimpse into the breadth and excellence of work undertaken at City, demonstrating our commitment to confronting the current crisis and building a more resilient future.

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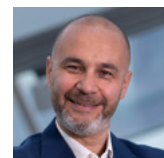
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Seeds of Inequity: Protecting farmers' rights in the intellectual property landscape

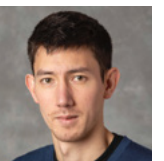
Professor Mauro Barelli, Professor Enrico Bonadio and Cheryl Dine, The City Law School

Research has shown that intellectual property laws protecting plant breeders often overlook the rights and interests of farmers. This imbalance not only disadvantages farmers but also poses wider risks for society, particularly in areas like food security and biodiversity. Building on this concern, the study explored the conflict between two types of seed systems: farmers' seed systems, which are based on freely sharing seeds and maintaining biodiversity, and commercial seed systems, which focus on profit and productivity through the use of property rights and contract law.

The research examined the tensions between two key international agreements: the 1991 International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, which underpins commodity seed systems, and the 2018 UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants

and Other People Working in Rural Areas, which embodies a human rights-based approach to seed governance. The UN Declaration recognises the long-standing practice of saving, replanting, and sharing seeds, notably a tradition that remains essential to the livelihoods of millions of farmers worldwide.

The study concluded that the current intellectual property approach to seeds is increasingly misaligned with international human rights standards that seek to recognise and protect farmers' traditional practices. Based on these findings, States were called on to adopt legal frameworks capable of striking a fair and equitable balance between the rights of plant breeders and the rights of farmers.



Transforming Food Systems: The local food action plan for Sheffield

Dr Christopher Yap, School of Health & Medical Sciences

Dr Christopher Yap is playing a pivotal role in transforming local food systems through his involvement in FixOurFood, a major UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funded research programme focused on creating healthier, fairer, and more sustainable food systems. As part of this interdisciplinary initiative, the Centre for Food Policy at City leads work on food policy and governance, driving real-world change in Yorkshire.

A standout achievement has been developing the Local Food Action Plan for Sheffield (2023–2030), one of the first such plans published in the UK. Spearheaded by a Dr Yap in collaboration with ShefFood, Sheffield's local food partnership, the plan brought together nearly 100 public, private, and third-sector organisations. It outlines 73 concrete actions,

addressing everything from food education and procurement policies to emergency food provision and sustainable growing practices.

City's approach, rooted in action research and stakeholder engagement, has had lasting impact. Thematic working groups created during the process continue to implement the plan's goals, and elements of the Sheffield model have already inspired similar initiatives in regions across the UK, including York, Shropshire and Leicestershire.

With academic outputs and a 2025 update to the plan recently published, City's work demonstrates how research can influence policy, empower communities, and catalyse systemic change in local food systems.



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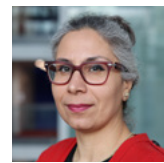
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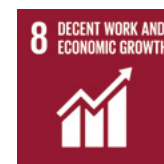
Dr Ladan Hashemi, School of Policy & Global Affairs

A pioneering collaboration between City's Violence and Society Centre, the University of Bristol, the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), and an Iran-based domestic violence NGO aims to address gender-based violence (GBV) in Iran. This two-stage partnership project seeks to establish an evidence-based platform for GBV prevention, using research to inform policy and stimulate public dialogue.

The first stage focused on developing a culturally sensitive and comprehensive survey to collect critical data on the nature and impact of both domestic and non-domestic GBV on women's health, well-being, and socio-economic conditions. A rapid review of existing tools, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) Multi-Country Study questionnaire, informed the adaptation and expansion of the survey to capture under-researched forms of violence in Iran, such as harmful practices and honour-based abuse. This was reviewed by Iranian frontline domestic violence service providers and women's rights advocates. Their feedback informed revisions that ensured contextual relevance and enhanced the tool's cultural sensitivity and appropriateness for use in gender-hostile settings, resulting in a robust, locally tailored instrument.

The next stage of the project will involve innovative data collection via social media to reach a wide and diverse population of women across Iran, including those often missed by conventional data collection methods. The collected data will be analysed with input from domestic violence practitioners.

The findings aim to influence policy, challenge harmful social norms, and support evidence-based legal reform. This research contributes to a broader international effort to combat domestic violence and drive systemic change for women in Iran.



From Policy to Protection: Strengthening anti-harassment efforts in media workplaces

Dr Lindsey Blumell, School of Communication & Creativity

A comprehensive study by Dr Lindsey Blumell and Assistant Professor Dinfin Mulupi (University of Maryland) explored the effectiveness of anti-sexual harassment policies within news organisations across eight Sub-Saharan African countries; Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The study engaged 575 media professionals and analysed 17 organisational policies, offering critical insights into policy implementation and impact.

Despite the presence of formal anti-harassment policies in many organisations, the research found no significant reduction in the prevalence of sexual harassment. Only 30% of those who experienced harassment reported it, and in just 42% of those cases did employers take action. Many policies lacked key components such as clear definitions, structured reporting mechanisms, and regular communication or monitoring protocols.

Importantly, the research identified training as a vital differentiator. Employees who received policy training were more likely to report incidents and significantly more likely to see their organisations respond. This finding reinforces the need for active policy engagement over passive documentation.

The study highlights the need for media organisations to go beyond merely having policies in place; they need to strengthen and improve these policies. Comprehensive training is vital and ensuring clarity in procedures, and actively challenging workplace gender norms must also be prioritised. These measures are essential for building safer, more accountable newsroom cultures across the region.



'Let's go to the land instead': Indigenous perspectives on biodiversity and the possibilities of regenerative capital

Professor Bobby Banerjee, Bayes Business School

Since colonization, land has been used primarily for capital accumulation through activities like mining and industrial agriculture. In contrast, Indigenous peoples have profoundly different relationships with the land, which are more relational than extractive. However, Indigenous knowledge and approaches have been subjugated by and systematically excluded from Western conservation policies, which are based on colonial modes of control.

To begin addressing this imbalance, Professor Banerjee and Associate Professor Diane-Laure Arjaliès (Ivey Business School, Canada) elaborated on a community-based participatory project with the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation community in Canada. The Conservation Impact Bond project was unique as it combined Indigenous and Western knowledges and aimed to restore ecosystems by

rebuilding relationships between people and the land based on kinship and respect.

Drawing from this project, the researchers proposed a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology that incorporated both Indigenous and Western perspectives. The implications of the findings could mobilise capital to serve collective rather than private interests, while promoting Indigenous resurgence and land regeneration.

The study concluded that moving from extractive models of capital use to regenerative ones is necessary for tackling the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. This transformation could be achieved by embracing a relational worldview, guided by the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing.

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“Sustainability isn't a subject that can be slotted in at the expense of another. Instead, it must be integrated across learning to prepare students for a future where social, economic, and environmental challenges intersect.”

Charlotte Bonner, CEO of the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC) and Laurence Frewin, Principal and CEO at South Devon College

Higher education plays a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the skills and values necessary to tackle today's global challenges. At City St George's, we are working to provide an education that not only fosters academic excellence but also empowers students to become leaders and innovators.

Integrating sustainability, critical thinking and interdisciplinary approaches across our curriculum, will be necessary to prepare students with both the knowledge and practical skills needed to drive positive change. We have highlighted how some of our programmes, partnerships, and student initiatives have created a dynamic learning environment, inspiring graduates to make meaningful contributions to society.

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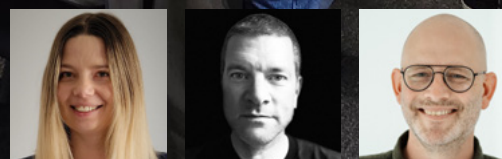
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Co-designing sustainability education: The creation of a new interdisciplinary sustainability module

Natalia Czuba and Dominic Pates, Learning Enhancement and Development
Dr Jed Odermatt, The City Law School

Learning Enhancement and Development ran a co-design workshop in April 2024 to develop a new interdisciplinary module focusing on sustainability. The workshop inspired active participation and highlighted what can be possible for educational offers when designed collaboratively by staff and students. Together, staff and students considered what the module should look like and how it would be taught. This and subsequent work involving input from across departments and schools resulted in the 'Sustainability and Climate Change' module to be led by Dr Jed Odermatt and taught by academics throughout the University's schools and departments.

Through this innovative and collaborative approach it will enable students to examine the scientific, economic, cultural, legal, moral and ethical dimensions of sustainability and climate change. Students will work in groups to address a real-world challenge set by an external partner and develop skills in critical thinking, problem solving and using technology.

The project was the successful recipient of a Teaching and Research Award from the University of London's Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE). This CODE award will enable the team to study the impact of the module's innovations, including group work assessment. Initially offered to law students, the aim is to widen the module to other programmes in future years.



Shaping the Future: Developing socially responsible professionals

Professor Rajkumar Roy, School of Science & Technology

The National Symposium on Developing Socially Responsible Professionals underscores City's commitment to developing professionals who are not only technically proficient but also ethically aware and socially responsible. In its fifth year, it brought together experts and stakeholders from academia, industry, charities and government organisations to debate different aspects of developing the next generation of professionals. The symposium emphasises the need for future professionals to be aware of the societal impacts of their decisions and to possess the skills to navigate complex ethical landscapes. Discussions this year explored diversity and unconscious bias, circular

economy, global sustainability programmes, and the ethical implications of emerging technologies.

The event concluded with a call to action for integrating social responsibility into medical sciences, business, law, computer science, engineering and mathematics curricula and professional development. A set of videos summarising the discussions and outcomes of the event were published, offering recommendations for educators, employers, and policymakers to consider in shaping the future of different professions.



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Global Classrooms, Shared Goals: Transnational learning and co-producing research for gender equality

Eraj Haidari and Professor Tamara Hervey, The City Law School

The Gender Equality and Law project is a unique collaboration between City and Udayana University in Indonesia, focused on enhancing education and research into gender equality and law. The initiative provides students from both institutions with a valuable learning experience in understanding how law can, and cannot, be used to tackle gender inequality, and the opportunity to engage in co-produced legal research.

For both City and Udayana students (and staff too), the project fosters intercultural collaboration and experiential learning, allowing them to develop a global and comparative perspective on gender equality law, to gain insights into diverse legal contexts, to benefit from global networking opportunities, and to strengthen their research and communication skills, all of which are essential for international careers. Project participants (students and staff) learned together through interactive online workshops, and asynchronous collaboration to produce blog posts and radio podcasts.

The transnational (across the world) nature of the project prepares students for global mobility opportunities and helps build confidence in their ability to tackle complex social challenges. Students also develop employability skills such as project management, cross-cultural communication, and legal research, empowering them to address issues like gender inequality in their own country and beyond.

In addition to creating long-lasting benefits for both student groups, this partnership will contribute to the understanding of the barriers to law schools to developing transnational legal education (the subject of Haidari's PhD) and demonstrate how legal educators can build capacity in their work on gender equality issues.



Food System Innovators: City educates the next generation

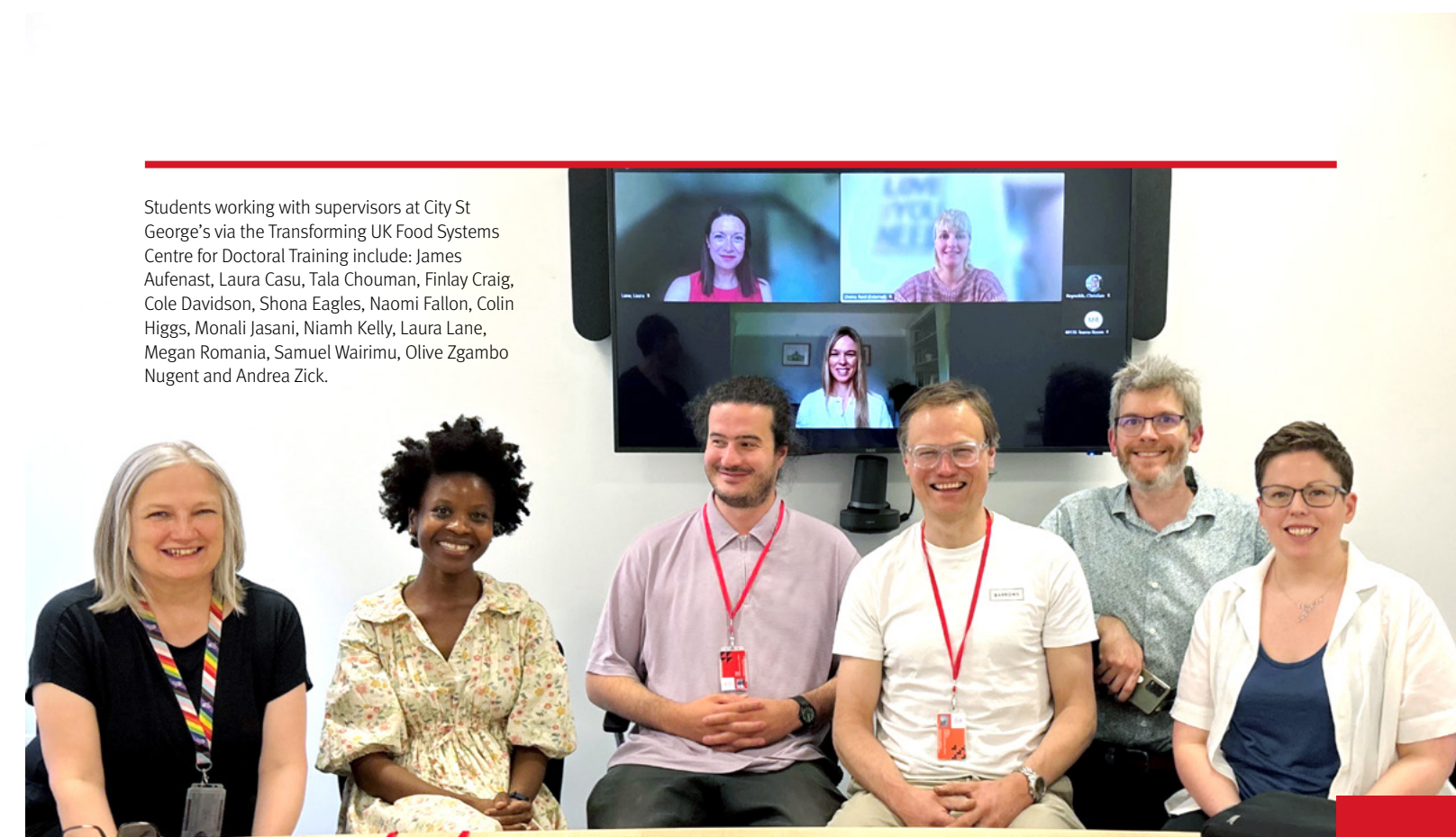
Dr Christian Reynolds and Dr Rebecca Wells, School of Health & Medical Sciences

City is a key partner in the UK Food Systems Centre for Doctoral Training (UKFS-CDT), a collaborative initiative aimed at transforming the UK's food systems. Led by the University of Greenwich, the UKFS-CDT brings together nine universities and research institutes, including City, to train over 60 interdisciplinary doctoral researchers by 2027.

City's Centre for Food Policy plays a pivotal role in this consortium, contributing its expertise in food policy research and education. The Centre's involvement ensures that doctoral researchers are educated and equipped with a deep understanding of policy-making processes and their impact on food supply and consumption.

The UKFS-CDT emphasises co-designed research projects, allowing students to collaborate with over 50 partners from government, business, and civil society. This approach fosters the development of solutions that are both innovative and practical, addressing the complex challenges of creating a resilient, healthy, and inclusive food future.

Through its participation, City is actively shaping the next generation of food system leaders and innovators, committed to sustainable and equitable food systems.



Students working with supervisors at City St George's via the Transforming UK Food Systems Centre for Doctoral Training include: James Aufenast, Laura Casu, Tala Chouman, Finlay Craig, Cole Davidson, Shona Eagles, Naomi Fallon, Colin Higgs, Monali Jasani, Niamh Kelly, Laura Lane, Megan Romania, Samuel Wairimu, Olive Zgambo Nugent and Andrea Zick.

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“To achieve sustainable development, technology, political regulations and financial incentives will not suffice – we need to change the way that we think and act, as individuals and as societies”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Tackling the climate and sustainability challenges of today requires collective action, collaboration, and a shared sense of responsibility. Engagement (with students, staff, partners, and the wider community) is fundamental to creating lasting change.

At City St George's, we recognise that sustainability must be a shared endeavour. Through active engagement, we empower individuals across our community to contribute to a more sustainable future. We continue to seek new ways to support engagement that drives meaningful impact both within and beyond our campus. As highlighted below, whether through student activities, staff-led initiatives, or partnerships with local communities and organisations, our collective efforts help to embed sustainability into university life.

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Samantha Alcock and Freya Thompson, Careers and Employability

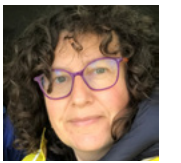
The Volunteering service works with over 140 organisations to provide students with opportunities to drive positive change for causes they care about. City students are passionate about many issues, and two areas in particular generate a lot of hours from students; education and healthcare.

Our student volunteers are keenly engaged in education-based volunteering, bringing their subject knowledge and leadership and communication skills to roles supporting disadvantaged children across London, and supporting young people in academic and personal development. In response to demand, we have expanded the number of education charities we work with, including welcoming new partnerships with [Light Foundations](#), [BeScience STEM](#) and [Cyber Champions](#) among others.

Healthcare is consistently a top area of interest, and with 40 partner organisations offering volunteering roles City students can support healthcare institutions and patients alongside their studies. Opportunities include befriending, hospital support and health research.

Students have also worked alongside staff to improve local green spaces around campus. These efforts contribute to cleaner, greener spaces for our communities.

Time and travel can be major barriers when volunteering especially for City's large commuter student population. We recognise that having the time to volunteer is a privilege, and we're committed to breaking down barriers so that every student has the chance to benefit from volunteering. As such, the Community Volunteering team launched a research project to expand volunteering roles in outer London boroughs, making it easier for even more students to participate and support their local communities.



More-than-Human: Engaging with partners to develop a multispecies Live Action Role Play

Dr Sara Heitlinger, School of Science & Technology

The More-than-Human Smart Decision-Making in Water Policy pilot project investigated novel methods for engaging with diverse stakeholders. It kickstarted a collaboration with policymakers and creative practitioners around river policymaking. The team developed a multispecies Live Action Role Play, to examine how emerging technology and data could enhance the participation of local human and non-human stakeholders in decisions impacting river ecologies. The team conducted a workshop by the River Lea, and created a short film. This work built on prior work of Dr Heitlinger and collaborating partner, Furtherfield and was developed with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

The project was a precursor to Dr Heitlinger's More-than-Human Sustainable and Inclusive Smart Cities (Mosaic) research, receiving a £1.6 million UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship award, and support from project

partners DEFRA and Arup. With urbanisation accelerating (half of humanity (3.5 billion people) live in cities) and contributing to global biodiversity decline, the research addresses the critical need to rethink how technology interacts with both human and non-human city inhabitants. The project prioritises inclusive, co-designed solutions developed in collaboration with communities, businesses, and policy organisations, and will use real-world "living labs" in community gardens, buildings, and waterways, to explore how smart city technologies (such as AI, sensors and data visualisation) can foster more inclusive, sustainable urban environments. By integrating the perspectives of people, plants, animals, and ecosystems, Mosaic aims to reshape urban policy and practice to create more resilient, equitable cities.



View the short film online
<https://morethanhuman.net/>

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Wellbeing@City: Championing staff health and resilience

Emily Deane, Organisational Development

City's Organisational Development team renewed and expanded their efforts to promote staff wellbeing. Working alongside internal partners and external organisations, the team delivered a range of initiatives to promote good health and wellbeing among colleagues — vital for supporting both staff and students.

On World Mental Health Day 2023, the team launched the Wellbeing@City Hub, providing a refreshed, central platform for wellbeing resources to support staff. In collaboration with the Charlie Waller Trust, a bespoke e-learning suite was also introduced, offering personalised support for self-care, staff management, and student wellbeing.

"It was extremely valuable to take some time to think about my wellbeing and get to know what there is at City to support this" – Wellbeing@City day attendee

Later in the year, over 250 staff members attended the Wellbeing@City day, engaging with resources from Organisational Development, Human Resources, Cordell Health, nutritionists, and wellbeing coaches. The event provided valuable opportunities for staff to connect, participate in wellbeing activities, and access practical advice. Positive feedback highlighted the event's impact, with staff describing it as "extremely valuable" and "a pleasure to attend."

Together, these initiatives have strengthened City's wellbeing culture, helping to embed support into everyday life and demonstrating a tangible commitment to staff health and resilience.



Exploring Global Challenges: Students present at the London Student Sustainability Conference 2024

Sustainability team, Estates, Environment and Facilities

The London Student Sustainability Conference 2024, hosted at Imperial College London, provided a dynamic platform for students to showcase their research and projects addressing global sustainability challenges. The Conference emphasises interdisciplinary learning and student-led initiatives. It offered attendees the opportunity to engage with pressing issues aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, fostering critical thinking and practical application of academic knowledge. Among the 57 student contributors, City students presented on topics ranging from food policy to gender equality and data analytics.

Beyond presentations, the event featured workshops, poster exhibitions, and networking sessions, enabling students to connect with peers, academics, and professionals dedicated to sustainability. Such interactions enhance students' experiences by bridging theoretical concepts with real-world applications, preparing them for impactful careers in sustainability and related fields.

The annual conference was collaboratively organised by City and nine other London-based universities, alongside the Student Delivery Group (SDG). The SDG initiative enables students from across London's higher education institutions to gain real-world skills and gives them a vital role in shaping the Conference, by bringing the student voice into all aspects of planning and delivery; from programme design and speaker selection to workshop delivery and promotional activities.

As founders, City's involvement in the conference underscores our commitment to integrating sustainability into the wider student experience, empowering students to contribute meaningfully to global environmental and social initiatives.



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“Sustainability is a key strategic agenda that enables institutions to thrive in a turbulent environment. It embodies the systems-thinking required to understand and resolve complex problems. It balances the financial health of institutions with social and environmental impacts, and it seeks to future-proof decision-making by taking a long-term view.”

The EAUC

Delivering on our sustainability commitments requires us to lead by example, ensuring that the way we operate our campuses reflects our values and ambition for a low-carbon, resilient future. Sustainable operations are fundamental to reducing our environmental impact and creating healthy, inspiring spaces for our students, staff and visitors.

As we work towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, operational improvements across our buildings, infrastructure and supply chains are critical. In parallel, we continue to prioritise investments that make our campus more efficient, accessible and adaptable to future challenges.

The actions and progress outlined in this report demonstrate our commitment to creating a more sustainable and resilient City, one that supports both the wellbeing of our community and the wider UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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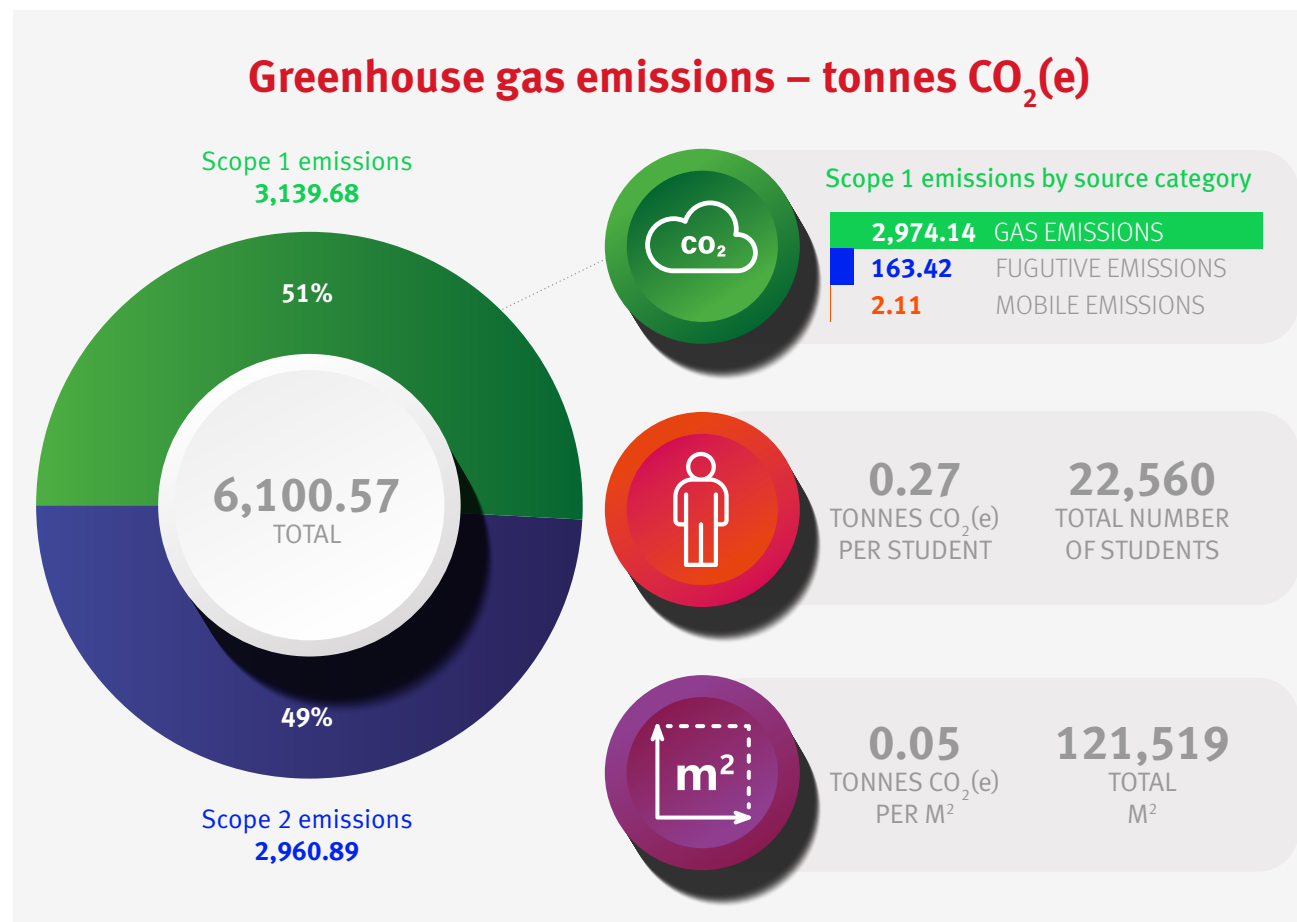
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Understanding Our Footprint: City's carbon emissions

Dermot Barnes, Estates, Environment and Facilities

The scope 1 and 2 carbon emission audit for the period from 1st August 2023 to 31st July 2024, details the University's direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions. Scope 1 emissions encompass direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by the University, such as on-site fuel combustion and university vehicles. Scope 2 emissions account for indirect emissions, such as from the consumption of purchased electricity, heating, and cooling.

The audit provides an analysis of the university's carbon footprint, serving as a foundational step in identifying key areas for emissions reduction. By quantifying these

emissions, City aims to develop targeted strategies to enhance energy efficiency and transition to renewable energy sources.

The findings from this audit, alongside work to measure scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from the University's activities, that occur throughout the value chain but are not directly controlled by the University) will inform the University's sustainability initiatives, guiding policy development and operational changes to reduce environmental impact, as is being developed through our Strategic Sustainability Transformation Programme.



Working Together for Net Zero: City joins sector-wide project to tackle supply chain emissions

Rachel Irvine, Estates, Environment and Facilities

The Net Zero Carbon Supplier Tool was developed by Nottingham Trent University, in collaboration with NETpositive Futures, to support the development of sustainable supply chains and advance the higher education sectors progress toward net zero. Following a period of testing, the Tool was formally launched in September 2023, with 32 universities participating in the accompanying Action Research Project (ARP).

In response to carbon reduction ambitions, City joined the ARP in order to improve our understanding and implementation of available methods for measuring and monitoring scope 3 emissions (indirect emissions from the University's activities, e.g. supply chain, travel), with a particular focus on 'Purchased Goods and Services'. The most common methodology for calculating the carbon impact of these emissions is the use of a spend-based model. Our objective was to explore the feasibility

and implications of moving from basic to intermediate data collection, as we continue to evolve our emissions reporting capabilities.

As part of the initiative, City, alongside other UK universities, engaged in an online peer learning community – sharing experiences, posing questions, and providing support through the complex process of supplier engagement and onboarding to the NETpositive Futures Tool.

The analysis of supplier-provided carbon data, combined with a detailed review of supplier action plans tailored to the higher education sector, has offered valuable insights into suppliers' progress on carbon reduction initiatives, as well as the challenges they face. The data gathered is critical in informing and shaping our strategy to reduce Scope 3 emissions.

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SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AT CITY ST GEORGE'S



This year (2024/25) marks a significant shift in City St George's progress of our sustainability agenda. Building on the foundations outlined in last year's report, the University has moved decisively from embedding sustainability as a cultural priority to undertaking a strategic transformation. In January 2024, the Strategic Programme Committee commissioned the development of the Sustainability Transformation Programme, providing a clearer, more ambitious framework for driving change and a bold step towards embedding sustainability as the golden thread running through every aspect of university life.

Our work since then has given us a clear, evidence-based understanding of where we stand and where we must go. I'm particularly

encouraged by the level of enthusiasm and commitment shown by staff and students throughout this process. As we move into the next phase, developing our Interim Sustainability Strategy, we will build on that momentum to shape a more sustainable, inclusive, resilient and responsible future for our university.

Thank you to all who have contributed so far. With your continued energy and support, I look forward to the next chapter of this important work.

Professor Richard Ashcroft

Senior Leadership Team lead for Sustainability and Chair of the Sustainability Board
Executive Dean of The City Law School

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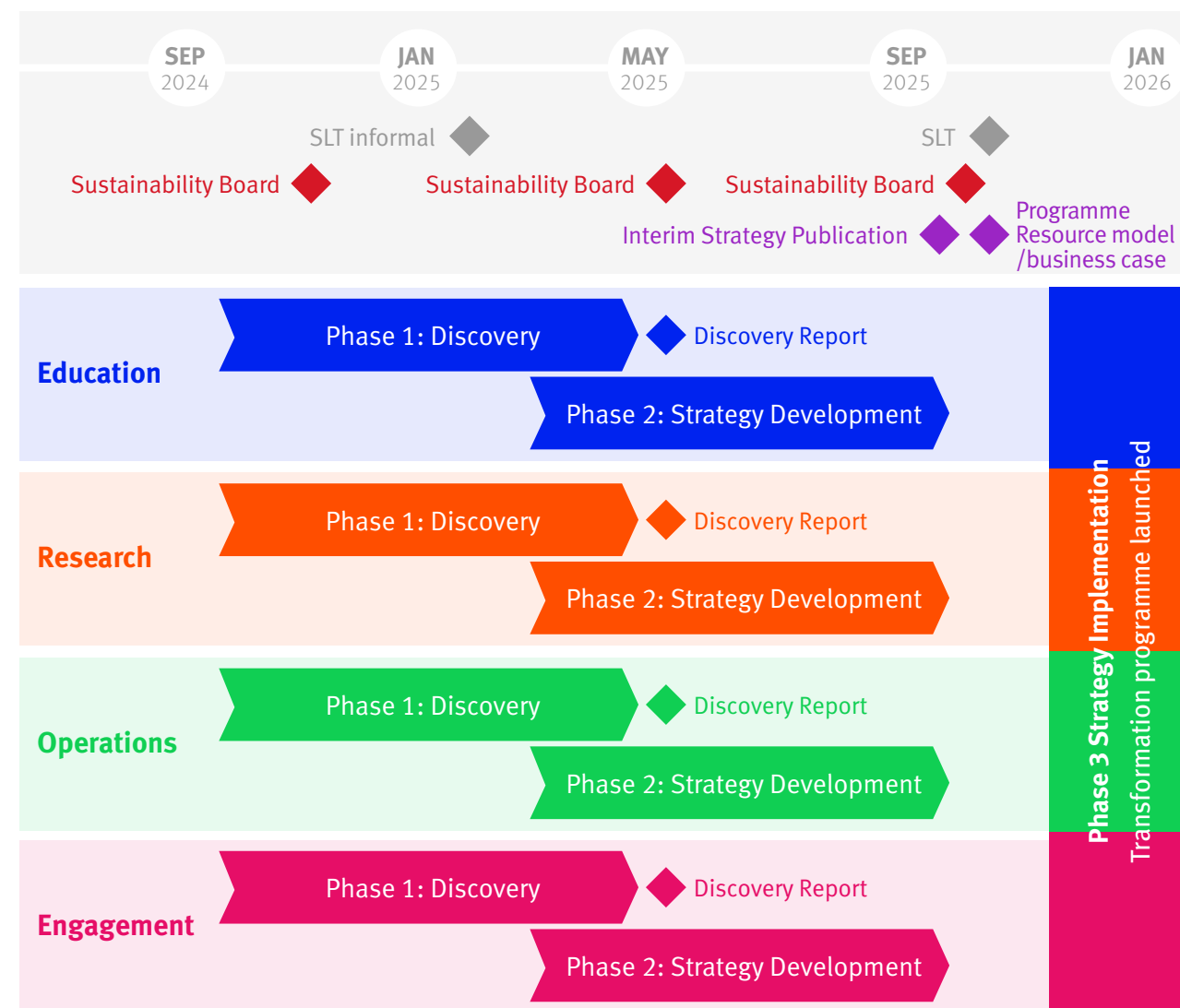
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Sustainability Transformation Programme Timeline

The graphic below represents the initial Sustainability Transformation Programme phases and key milestones commencing from September 2024 when workstream leads were designated and discovery commenced.



From Ambition to Action: Powering change through the Sustainability Transformation Programme

Originally developed from the “Culture” workstream of the University Strategy, the Sustainability Transformation Programme now operates as a fully-fledged strategic initiative. It is overseen by the Sustainability Board and sponsored by Richard Ashcroft, Senior Leadership Team lead for Sustainability. The programme is structured around the four core workstreams; Education, Research, Operations, and Engagement. Each led by a senior sponsor to ensure strong institutional alignment and impact.

The programme is being delivered in three phases: Discovery, Interim Strategy Development, and Full Strategy Implementation. Over the past year, the focus has been on Phase 1 – Discovery. This foundational phase aimed to generate a holistic understanding of current sustainability activities, challenges and opportunities across the institution. Through a mix of staff and student engagement (workshops, focus groups, surveys), desktop research and sector benchmarking, we have developed a nuanced picture of our current position.

Discovery has not only helped identify context-specific opportunities for change across the four workstreams but has also begun to build a cross-institutional coalition of the willing – those ready to champion and drive change. The insights gathered (and summarised below) will shape the Interim Sustainability Strategy and provide the basis for prioritising actions and resources as we move into Phase 2.

The Sustainability Transformation Programme represents a pivotal moment for City St George's, moving us from ambition to action.

Student insights

Student focus group participants shared their views on shaping an aspirational sustainability vision for City St George's. Key themes included collective responsibility, being an active part of the local community, and empowering individuals to drive change. Students expressed interest and optimism about creating meaningful impact but acknowledged barriers such as a disjointed university community, societal individualism, and the sometimes high cost of sustainable choices. They emphasised the importance of embedding sustainability into academic programmes and career pathways, and that student engagement could be most effective through hands-on opportunities aligned with their fields of study and future professions.

Staff feedback

The staff survey revealed that awareness of City St George's sustainability goals and initiatives remains low, with 89% of respondents only slightly or moderately familiar. This is reflected in the current perceptions of the University's sustainability performance, which are mixed and demonstrate there is plenty of scope for improvement, with only 11% viewing it as highly effective, while 36% sees it as moderately effective and 28% as less so. Despite this, there is strong agreement on the importance of sustainability for the University, with 81% considering it very or extremely important to the University's mission, showing a commitment to sustainability from across campuses, departments, and responsibilities. Staff suggestions for improvement focused on daily operations, such as recycling, lighting, and food, as well as education and engagement initiatives.

Embedding sustainability in education

The Education workstream at City St George's focuses on preparing graduates to lead in a climate-impacted world. As a university rooted in business, practice and the professions, it aims to create a distinct sustainability offering, working closely with industry on real-world challenges. This vision is already being trialled through the 'Sustainability and climate change' interdisciplinary module, which features collaborative, sustainability-focused assessments with external partners and will expand university-wide.

While strong sustainability education exists in pockets, current efforts are fragmented and reliant on individual staff interest. Staff and student feedback has shown a strong appetite for change, advocating for sustainability to be fully integrated across all programmes rather than treated as an optional extra.

Key recommendations include embedding sustainability into all academic and operational infrastructure, expanding climate training to all staff and students, and becoming a sector leader in a new regenerative economy. By aligning sustainability with its institutional mission and fostering interdisciplinarity, City St George's can equip its students not only with the knowledge but the authority to drive sustainable transformation across society and their professions.

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Advancing sustainable research

The Research workstream at City St George's focuses on two key goals: reducing the environmental impact of research activities and empowering researchers to advance sustainability knowledge with real-world impact. Research is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, with UK universities emitting an estimated 15 million tonnes of CO₂ annually. As such, improving research sustainability is a strategic imperative.

With major funders like National Institute for Health and Care (NIHR), Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK setting stringent sustainability expectations, institutions that fail to adapt risk losing funding. The new REF 2029 also embeds sustainability into assessment criteria, highlighting the growing pressure to align research practices with environmental goals.

City St George's is already making progress, with nearly half of its labs at the Tooting campus enrolled in the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) programme to reduce waste and energy use. However, more action is needed. Recommendations include mapping high-energy processes, refining procurement and travel policies, expanding LEAF membership, and aligning funding applications with sustainability criteria – ensuring City St George's is responsible and fit-for-the-future in how it conducts research.

Transforming campus operations for a net zero future

The Operations workstream at City St George's is central to achieving the University's commitment to net zero carbon emissions across scopes 1, 2, and 3 (i.e. direct and indirect emissions) by 2040.

While this target provides a clear direction, it also highlights the scale of transformation required across infrastructure, systems, and behaviours. The legacy infrastructure across campuses requires review and strategic updates to deliver efficiency, and modernisation of essential metering and monitoring systems are overdue. Additional challenges and opportunities will arise considering the dual-purpose nature of the Tooting site, and there we will work together with the NHS, our campus partners.

Beyond energy, the University's operations significantly impact areas such as waste, water, travel, and food. These also require clear definitions, targets, and resource plans to drive meaningful change.

Staff and student feedback revealed strong support for bold transformation, calling for every University decision to deliver positive outcomes for people and the planet.

To meet this ambition, key recommendations include adaptation and renewable energy feasibility studies, better data systems, and expanding sustainable procurement practices. Immediate priorities include lighting optimisation, energy efficiency training, water audits, and behaviour change initiatives. With strategic investment and cultural change, the Operations workstream aims to embed sustainability into every facet of campus life.

Embedding a culture of sustainability through engagement

The Engagement workstream is pivotal in building a sustainability-conscious culture across City St George's by actively involving students, staff, and the wider community. Its mission is to drive institutional and individual behaviour change, equipping graduates with the values and awareness needed to navigate and contribute to a world increasingly shaped by climate challenges.

As an outward-facing institution, City St George's recognises its role in responding to the climate emergency through meaningful engagement. However, current rankings from the People & Planet University League reflect a mixed picture. In 2024 City ranked 26th overall with 80% in Engagement, while St George's was 128th with 35%.

Clear ambitions have emerged from staff and student consultations, with a shared vision for transformative educational experiences that equip students with the knowledge, skills and values to champion sustainability and make a lasting impact on society, supported by dedicated staff who lead sustainable practices and innovative teaching.

Key recommendations include introducing student climate advocate roles, sustainability champions among staff, integrating sustainability into mandatory training, and increasing communication on environmental initiatives. The workstream aims to unify and energise the university community around a shared sustainability mission – ensuring all voices contribute to shaping a better future.

“Net Zero CO₂ emissions as well as deep reductions in other GHG emissions globally are required to halt further global warming. While it is now almost inevitable that warming levels will exceed 1.5°C in the next ten years, it may still be possible to limit warming to 1.5°C in the longer term, provided deep global emissions cuts begin immediately...Rapid action is crucial, and delays could have detrimental consequences such as stranded assets and rising costs.”

The Climate Change Committee, Seventh Carbon Budget Report, February 2025

CONFRONTING THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

That we have entered the Anthropocene (the geological era of humankind's influence on ecosystems and weather), is now generally accepted by scientists around the globe. Although there is some debate as to when this period began, there is no doubt that the intergenerational impacts will be profound, wide ranging, and are becoming more abundant with each passing day.

Alarm bells have rung far and wide. Discussions have been had and data provided in ample detail. In the words of the International Energy Agency*, the gap between rhetoric and action needs to close if we are to have a fighting chance of reaching net zero by 2050 and limiting the rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C.

City St George's has an opportunity to respond

to the broad ambition amongst our staff for transformation and to lean-in to the challenges ahead. We know that our net zero destination will take us on a formidable and complex journey and that we will need the collaboration and support of external partners and Government to get there.

As the University of business, practice and the professions, we take strength from our unique position at the nexus of economic, professional and clinical activity and know that the expertise and passion of our staff and students can transform our university and contribute to the solutions we need to see to make our planet a better home for us all.

Dermot Barnes,
Sustainability Programme Director

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City, University of London is an independent member institution of the University of London. Established by Royal Charter in 1836, the University of London consists of 17 independent member institutions with outstanding global reputations and several prestigious central academic bodies and activities.

Many thanks to all of our contributors.

City St George's Sustainability team are continually seeking the best ways to reduce the University's environmental impacts by collaborating with our student and staff community and forging new partnerships locally, nationally and globally.

We warmly welcome feedback, please send your comments and suggestions to sustainability@citystgeorges.ac.uk.