



SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2030



LEUPHANA
UNIVERSITY OF LÜNEBURG

A UNIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATION

Leuphana University is committed to actively contributing to sustainable development through its activities in research, teaching and learning, knowledge transfer to society and the local business community, and the advancement of academic careers. Against the backdrop of interconnected crises – ranging from threats to democratic structures and geopolitical conflicts to climate change and biodiversity loss – we as a university are called upon to create spaces for critical reflection, collective learning, and science-based approaches to solutions in the spirit of sustainable development. In line with a Whole-Institution approach, we understand research, teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, campus operations, as well as governance and culture as closely interlinked areas for shaping this agenda.

Vision and Mission

Alongside humanism and an application-oriented approach, sustainability is firmly anchored in Leuphana's mission statement. As a result, the principle of sustainable development is inherent in all of the University's strategic management and development processes and is understood as a cross-cutting priority spanning research, teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, campus operations, as well as governance and culture.

Understanding of Sustainability

We understand sustainability as a “safe and just operating space for humanity,” drawing on the conceptual framework of planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009) and its socioeconomic complement, the Doughnut Approach (Raworth 2017). This understanding combines ecological integrity, social justice, economic responsibility, and cultural meaning and serves as the reference framework for our transformation.



Historical Foundations

Leuphana builds on a long tradition of institutional sustainability development (in chronological order):

- specialized undergraduate and continuing education programs in environmental and sustainability studies (since the late 1990s)
- research project Agenda 21 and University of Lüneburg (1999–2001)
- sustainability guidelines and EMAS certification (since 2000)
- research and development project Sustainable University (2004–2007)
- UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development (since 2005)
- regular sustainability reporting (since 2007)
- Leuphana Semester, including a mandatory sustainability module for all first-year bachelor's students (since 2007/08)
- Faculty of Sustainability, now School of Sustainability (since 2010)
- calculated climate neutrality for Scope 1, Scope 2, and parts of Scope 3 in accordance with the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol (since 2014)
- civic participation project Zukunftsstadt Lüneburg 2030+, in cooperation with the City of Lüneburg (2015–2022)

This wealth of institutional experience makes Leuphana a university that does not treat sustainability as an isolated concern but rather embeds it structurally and implements it through five concrete fields of action: research, teaching and learning, societal impact, campus operations, and governance and culture.



FIVE FIELDS OF ACTION – ONE COORDINATED STRATEGY



1. Research

Leuphana has an internationally recognized profile in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary sustainability research across the natural and social sciences and engineering, grounded in the respective disciplinary foundations. Researchers from different disciplines address a broad range of issues related to societal transformation, from climate, energy, and resources to governance, law, and migration, as well as education, management, culture, and digitalization. In a variety of formats, science links scholarship and practice together in research-oriented ways, including real-world laboratories, citizen science projects, and dialog-based knowledge-transfer initiatives. The advancement of researchers at different stages of academic qualification follows structured pathways for academic development. Research infrastructure and communication are continuously expanded, including in the areas of research data management and Open Science practices, strengthening the transparency, reusability, and impact of sustainability research.

Goals:

- Visibly consolidate interdisciplinary research profiles on sustainability across Schools – for example, through thematic clusters or interdisciplinary research collaborations and their presentation on the website.
- Establish the Leuphana Transformation Lab.
- Systematize and highlight impact measurement, (e.g., via the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) module in PURE).
- Targeted promotion of researchers' awareness of gender and diversity dimensions as well as inclusion.

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2. Teaching and Learning

Leuphana's Schools model – College, Graduate School, and Professional School – offers target-group-oriented teaching and learning environments for each level of qualification. Starting as early as college, personal development is a core component of the educational journey, fostering critical thinking, academic orientation and socialization, and an understanding of sustainable approaches to shaping the future. In particular, the Conference Week at the end of the Leuphana Semester provides the first university-wide academic space for exchange and dialogue, where students discuss the results of their sustainability research. Leuphana offers specialized sustainability programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and continuing education levels, while sustainability is also firmly integrated into the curricula of many other degree programs.

Goals:

- Systematically further develop sustainability competencies within the relevant curricula.
- Expand project-based learning methods (e.g., real-world labs).
- Integrate competencies in gender and diversity into curricula.
- Strengthen educational and professional development opportunities related to sustainability research.

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3. Public Engagement and Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer is understood today as a reciprocal process: knowledge flows from the university into society—and vice versa. Through its transdisciplinary approach, case-study projects, collaborations with the city and region, support for entrepreneurship, and public discourse formats, Leuphana acts as a catalyst for socially impactful sustainability transformations. Leuphana's understanding of sustainability-oriented knowledge transfer is guided by the concept developed by The German Society for Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions (DG HochN).

Goals:

- Expand long-term partnerships with local governments, the business community, and civil society.
- Further strengthen the start-up ecosystem for sustainable entrepreneurship – for example, through targeted support for sustainability-focused start-ups.
- Systematically quantify and communicate the impact of knowledge transfer.
- Take diversity and equity dimensions into account in knowledge-transfer activities.

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4. Campus Operations (Environmental and Social Sustainability)

As a campus university, we are developing the campus together as a social space shaped by sustainability—one that fosters encounters, learning, and a sense of community. In this respect, the campus itself serves as a “real-world laboratory” for sustainable practices in ecological, energy-related, mobility-related, resource-conserving, infrastructural, and social terms. The University promotes health, diversity, and participation through concrete measures. Beyond its ecological footprint, Leuphana also focuses its campus operations on its “handprint”: measures and structures are designed not only to reduce emissions and resource consumption, but actively to enable and reinforce sustainable practices (e.g., through standards, processes, infrastructure, and incentive systems). Specific sustainability concepts are already in place for the Library, the Media and Information Center, University Sports, and procurement and contracting.

Goals:

- Further develop the campus to enhance climate resilience, for example through unsealed surfaces and rainwater retention measures to mitigate heat and heavy rainfall.
- Develop sustainability concepts for additional facilities to improve their specific “handprints”.
- Further embed student engagement as a driving force for sustainable campus development.
- Expand open data monitoring for campus indicators.
- Strengthen and expand accessible, diversity-aware, and equity-oriented university structures and cultures.

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5. Governance and Culture

Sustainability is strategically anchored by the University Presidential Board and the School of Sustainability. The Senate Commission on Sustainability and the Sustainability Office together provide the operational framework. They monitor the goals and measures set out in the Sustainability Strategy and develop proposals for the university's sustainable advancement. The Student Sustainability Office serves as the central point of contact for students' ideas, research, and for expert advice. The office pools, structures, and makes visible students' knowledge of sustainability at Leuphana.

EMAS, dashboard data, and sustainability reporting ensure transparency and provide the basis for continuous improvement. The Office for Equal Opportunities and the university's professional and leadership development programs promote a culture of shared values, responsibility, and diversity. In implementing sustainability, the University understands itself as a learning institution.

Ziele:

- Further develop governance as a continuously learning system to translate insights from research and campus operations into strategic decision-making.
- Ensure transparent sustainability reporting via EMAS, the sustainability dashboard, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)/European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).
- Not only embed co-design structurally, but also anchor it more firmly in the culture, and actively put it into practice.
- Further develop organizational and leadership culture with a focus on diversity and gender equality.



