Waste Reduction, Reuse & Recyling Guidelines

Ref: QA202: Waste Reduction & Recycling Guidelines
Version Number: 3
Issue Date: 31/10/26
Review Date: 31/10/28

Table of Contents

1.

Purpose

2.

Scope

3.

Legal Framework

4.

Guidelines for individual waste streams

- 4.1 General Waste
- 4.2 Mixed Recycling (Paper, Plastics, Glass, Cans, Cardboard)
- 4.3 Organic Waste
- 4.4 Confidential Waste
- 4.5 Hazardous Waste
- 4.6 Electrical Items & Batteries (WEEE)
- 4.7 Glass & Aluminium
- 4.8 Printer Cartridges

5.

Reduction of Plastics & Disposable items

6.

Guidelines Governing Outsourced Providers

7.

Measuring & Monitoring Landfill & Recycling rates

1. Purpose

The Waste Reduction, Reuse & Recycling Guidelines form part of the University's sustainability framework and is essential in supporting the University's Sustainability Strategy, Learn, Live, Lead 2026-30. The University adopts the 'waste hierarchy' of prevention, reuse, recycling, other recovery and disposal. The University implements processes, procedures and initiatives that ensure compliance with environmental legislation and best practice and which encourage waste producers to reduce the overall waste that they produce, and prevent waste production wherever possible.

We are committed to supporting the UNs Sustainable Development Goals as agreed to by the UN Nation states in 2015. In particular these set of guidelines are focused on SDG12: Responsible Consumption & Production.

The University has a robust and comprehensive recycling infrastructure and all staff and students are encouraged to make use of these facilities in order to help recycle as much waste as is possible.

These guidelines also include the need to consider end of life disposal costs and environmental impact when making procurement decisions including the construction of new or refurbished buildings.

They also aim to ensure that we are complying with regulation, legislation and best practice in order to minimise the risk of immediate and future pollution or harm to health when carrying out operational activities.

2. Scope

These guidelines apply to all staff, students, contractors and catering partners who produce waste on campus. It is applicable across the entire campus including student residences which is home to over 1800 students. It also seeks to provide guidance for procurement decision in relation to ensuring waste reduction is a key decision making criteria when making purchasing decisions.

3. Legal Framework

The policy has been developed within the context of:

- Waste Management Act 1996
- Waste Framework Directive 2008
- Packaging Waste Directive (1994)
- Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2021
- EU Waste Framework Directive 2018
- Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022

4. Waste Stream Management Policies

4.1 General Waste

The university achieved a zero waste to landfill target in 2018 with help from our primary waste contractor Barna Recycling. The university will ensure that this policy is maintained and be stipulated in future tendering criteria for waste contractors.

Every effort must be made across campus to reduce the amount of general waste being produced. Through ongoing education & awareness campaigns, in collaboration with national & local bodies such as mywaste.ie, Galway City Countil etc., we will aim to encourage our community to reduce the waste the produce and be mindful of this when it comes to all purchasing decision.

4.2 Mixed Recycling

Ample mixed recycling bins are supplied around campus both internally & externally. These bins are coloured Blue and can receive plastics, glass, cardboard, aluminium cans and paper.

The University operates a **Binless Office Policy** - students and staff must bring any waste to the nearest recycling station located in communal areas. A paper recycling tray is provided on each desk in teaching venues and offices.

All catering partners must provide recycling options in their venues and they should be clearly signposted & accessible.

4.3 Organic Waste

All Catering outlets must have a dedicated food waste stream in place for customers and also for kitchen staff. These bins must be clearly visible with adequate signage.

Catering partners must ensure that their staff are trained to ensure they know which items can be disposed of in the organic waste bins.

Catering partners must provide data on the quantity of organic waste produced. Since 2022, we have been collecting organic waste matter from our grounds team. This involves collecting leaves, grass cuttings and tree trimmings throughout the year and sending them to a large composting facility operated by our waste contractors Barna Recycling. This matter will be returned to campus as fertiliser for our flower beds.

4.4 Confidential Waste

The University has lockable consoles for staff to use for the day-to-day disposal of confidential paper based material. These consoles are emptied weekly by our dedicated confidential waste contractor DGD Shredding.

Each Unit/School/Discipline must liaise with DGD Shredding directly if they have additional shredding requirements outside of the consoles.

All paper which is shredded by DGD is sent to a paper processing facility to be recycled into new products.

4.5 Hazardous Waste

We have a detailed policy governing the managment and disposal of Hazardous Waste, which is titles QA109 Chemical Agent Inventories. This policy ensures there is a live register of all chemicals on site, how they are procured, managed and disposed of in accordance with legislation and lays out roles, responsibilites & monitoring requirements.

4.6 Electrical Items & Batteries (WEEE)

WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) is anything that has a plug or a battery and is at the end of its useful life. The disposal of WEEE is licensed in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations of 2005 and the subsequent Amendment 2008.

Requests to dispose of WEEE items should be made to our helpdesk at buildingsandestates@universityofgalway.ie, who will arrange collection. We will then bring the items to our large WEEE storage skip which is then collected by WEEE collection team on a weekly basis.

4.6.1 Vapes - These are a category of WEEE waste which carry some additional risk as they contain small lithium batteries which may present a fire risk. We no longer allow for collection and storage of Vapes inside buildings due to this risk, and instead we provide a large WEEE collection box for such items like these and smaller batteries, which is located by the bottle bank in the Orbsen car park.

4.7 Glass & Aluminium

Glass bottle recycling banks and an aluminium recycling facility are located on South Campus opposite the Orbsen Building and North Campus beside the entrance to Corrib Village.

Staff and students are encouraged to separate and collect glass & aluminium items and dispose of in these locations. Such items are much easier to recycle when segregated at source from the other mixed recycling stream.

4.8 Printer Cartridges

Each unit is responsible for their own printer cartridges collections/emptying. To arrange this contact your supplier. If Datapac is your supplier contact NUIGalway@datapac.com to arrange this (Contract Reference: CON210).

5. Reduction of Plastics & Disposable Items

The Government's Climate Action Plan, under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, requires that the University "Cease using disposable cups, plates and cutlery in any public sector canteen or closed facility, excluding clinical (i.e., non-canteen healthcare) environments, and in publicly funded advertising or broadcasting, where feasible." and "Progressively eliminate all single use items within the organisation and from events organised, funded, or sponsored." This is in line with the University of Galway Sustainability Strategy which aims to ban specific single-use plastic convenience items (including polystyrene food containers, cups and drinks containers), eliminate single-use plastics for water consumption and reduce single-use laboratory plastics and promote the use of green products/alternatives.

As of September 2024 the University has eliminated single-use cups from all campus catering outlets.

6. Guideines relating to Outsourced Providers

University of Galway wishes to work with service providers (restaurant/cafe/retail operators) who share our values when it comes to environmental responsibility. Providers who win a tender to operate one of our venues will be required to work with the Sustainability Office, Buildings and Estates Services plus other student/staff groups to find solutions to sustainability linked issues and/or to deliver environmental/ sustainability projects. As such, providers will be required to undertake the following actions:

- They shall comply with all reasonable stipulations of University of Galway aimed at minimising the packaging in which any products are supplied by the Provider to Customers during its performance of the Services;

- They will be required ensure the immediate decanting of all food and the removal of related packaging waste by food service supplier where possible at point of delivery;

- Disposing of waste in a hygienic manner in accordance with regulations;

- Ensure that crockery is utilised where possible and where not possible, all disposable containers, cups, napkins etc. utilised in the service will be compostable;

- Separate facilities for the storage of refuse will be provided and the continued cleanliness and tidiness of the area is the responsibility of the Provider;
- The ethical sourcing of eggs, fish and seasonal produce;
- The use of responsibility sourced products where possible;
- Must manage the treatment of fat, oil and grease (FOG) as well as any food waste in compliance with the Food Waste Regulations (S.I. No. 190:2015);
- The Contracting Authority will ensure that a facility is provided for the washing of reusable cups at the premises where possible
- Ceramic or longlife cups must be provided where possible as an alternative to reusable/take away cups.

In respect of refuse and swill removal, separate facilities for the storage of refuse and swill will be provided, with the continued cleanliness and tidiness of the area comprising the responsibility of the provider. The Provider must supply suitable segregated waste receptacles for customer use, which they will clear on a daily basis.

7. Monitoring

The University is required to collect data on various metrics relating to the volumes of waste produced on site. This information is collected from our waste contractors. General Waste & Recyclable waste on campus is measured via RFID Chip Devices fitted to the collection trucks, and each bin is weighed before disposal.

All waste contractors must ensure that they provide such data on a monthly basis so we can track and monitor performance.

Catering partners must collect this data from their waste contractors and forward to the university Building & Estates team.

This data is to be published on our website each month and will include the percentage of total waste which is recycled.