

HEFCE corporate social responsibility policy 2008-2014

1. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) for HEFCE is about how we align our activities with the expectations of our stakeholders in relation to our economic, social and environmental impacts. Our stakeholders include Government and the universities and colleges we fund, as well as our employees, suppliers, communities and society as a whole.
2. We published our first CSR policy in January 2006. This, our 2008-2014 policy sets out our overall aims, objectives and targets to continue our efforts in relation to CSR. It covers operations at our main office in Bristol and our small, central London office, plus the influence we have on the sector through our policies and services. It meets our commitments to CSR set out in the 'enabling excellence' theme of our strategic plan (HEFCE 2008/15). 'HEFCE CSR action plan 2008-2010'¹ sets out the actions we plan to undertake by March 2010 to meet the objectives and targets in this policy.

Aim

3. HEFCE aims to embed CSR into everything it does and to be a responsible public body.

Objectives

4. To this end we have set the following objectives:

Business ethics

Objective 1: Meet, and where possible, exceed all relevant legal requirements.

Objective 2: Behave with honesty and integrity in all our activities and relationships with others.

Objective 3: Act ethically and fairly at all times in our dealings with our stakeholders.

Objective 4: Maintain internal controls adequate to ensure standards are met.

Managing our environmental impacts

Objective 5: Maintain our certification to ISO 14001.

Objective 6: Continually improve our environmental performance wherever practicable and prevent pollution.

Objective 7: Make the most efficient and effective use of all resources, encouraging all staff to develop a sustainable approach to their work.

¹ The action plan is available at www.hefce.ac.uk under /About us/Corporate Social Responsibility.

Objective 8: Minimise carbon emissions from business travel by avoiding unnecessary travel and travelling by public transport unless there are reasons why this is not practicable or if there are other circumstances that would impede efficiency or effectiveness.

Objective 9: Encourage staff to use sustainable modes of transport to commute to work.

Objective 10: Identify and implement cost-effective energy and water conservation measures.

Objective 11: Reduce the amount of waste generated and disposed to landfill through a waste minimisation and recycling programme.

Objective 12: Manage our grounds in an environmentally and biodiversity-sensitive manner.

Procurement

Objective 13: Develop and implement a sustainable and socially responsible procurement policy that will include consideration of CSR in all tender evaluations.

Objective 14: Work with our suppliers to help us achieve our sustainable and socially responsible procurement policy aspirations in the delivery of our products and services.

Objective 15: Support the principles of fair trade and aim to purchase only fair trade tea and coffee for meetings through our catering provider.

Our people

Objective 16: Respect the rights and dignity of every employee and treat them fairly and without discrimination.

Objective 17: Promote the health and well-being of our staff.

Objective 18: Encourage team working and the sharing of knowledge throughout the organisation.

Objective 19: Provide a safe, fulfilling and rewarding career for all our employees.

In the community

Objective 20: Enable staff who wish to undertake voluntary activities to do so.

Objective 21: Enable our staff to continue to support at least one charitable organisation every year through voluntary fundraising activities, and to give them the time and opportunity to participate in charitable events.

Working with the sector

Objective 22: Make sustainable development a central part of our strategy for the future development of the higher education sector.

Objective 23: As part of our policy-making process, identify possible impacts on sustainable development and on equality and diversity. Where possible, take action to enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative ones.

Targets

5. As a non-departmental public body we have a role in contributing to the Government's commitments to sustainable development. Therefore, our targets are aligned with those set out in 'Sustainable operations on the Government estate' (SOGE)². Our baseline year is 2004-05 for waste and water targets as this is defined in SOGE. For our carbon emissions targets we have set a baseline year of 2002-03 because this is the earliest year for which we have data³. The 2010-11 targets set out in SOGE form our interim targets and we have extrapolated to define targets for 2014. Where we have already exceeded these targets we have set ourselves more challenging targets.

	2010-11 target	2013-14 target	Baseline position
Carbon emissions	To reduce carbon emissions from energy use by 12.5% relative to 2002-03	To reduce carbon emissions from energy use by 17% relative to 2002-03	337 tonnes ⁴
	To increase energy efficiency per m ² by 15% relative to 2002-03	To increase energy efficiency per m ² by 20% relative to 2002-03	299.0 kWh m ²
	To reduce carbon emissions from business travel by 5% relative to 2002-03	To reduce carbon emissions from business travel by 10% relative to 2002-03	241.8 tonnes
Commuting	To have 50% of staff regularly commuting to work by sustainable modes of transport ⁵	To have 55% of staff regularly commuting to work by sustainable modes of transport	33% in 2002-03

² Further information is available at www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/index.asp under What Government is doing/Estates management.

³ In SOGE the baseline year for carbon emission targets is 1999-2000.

⁴ In 2002-03 we purchased some green electricity from our supplier. If we were to account for this as zero emissions the baseline figure for 2002-03 would be 167 tonnes.

⁵ Sustainable modes of commuting include walking, cycling, public transport and car share.

	2010-11 target	2013-14 target	Baseline position
Waste	Reduce waste arisings by 5%, relative to 2004-05 levels To be recycling 60% of our waste arisings	Reduce waste arisings by 10%, relative to 2004-05 levels To be recycling 65% of our waste arisings	61.4 tonnes 28% in 2002-03
Water	Reduce water consumption by 70% relative to 2004-05 levels	Reduce water consumption by 75% relative to 2004-05 levels	4,224 m ³

Other targets

- To achieve level two or above across all five themes of the Sustainable Procurement Action Plan Flexible Framework by 2014⁶.
- To inform our suppliers of our CSR policy and our expectations of them in relation to this and for this information to be contained in 95% of our contracts (by number) by 2010.
- To continue to measure the well-being of our staff through the staff survey, ensuring that we continue to match or exceed the external benchmark on staff satisfaction.
- To participate in Business in the Community's Corporate Responsibility Index⁷ and improve our performance year on year.

Carbon neutrality

6. SOGE includes a target for the government office estate to be carbon neutral by 2012. For an organisation to be carbon neutral it must have zero net carbon dioxide emissions. This is achieved through a combination of reducing carbon emissions, using renewable energy and offsetting the remaining balance of emissions. An agreed UK government definition of carbon neutrality is due in spring 2009. When this guidance is available we will consider this and how we can work towards carbon neutrality by 2012.

⁶ Set out in 'Procuring the Future – The Sustainable Procurement Task Force National Action Plan', which is available at www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/index.asp under Publications/2006. The Flexible Framework identifies five key themes: people; policy, strategy and communications; procurement process; engaging suppliers; and measurement and results. These are in effect the key behavioural and operational change programmes that need to be delivered in each public sector organisation to deliver sustainable procurement.

⁷ Further information is available at www.bitc.org.uk

Implementation

7. CSR within HEFCE is overseen by a steering group that reports directly to our Chief Executive's Group (CEG). The CSR steering group is supported by two sub-groups:

- the CSR implementation group, which has the remit for implementing initiatives to improve our performance and meet the commitments in this policy
- the CSR data group, which is responsible for collecting and calculating data to monitor progress.

8. This policy and its implementation has the support of our union, the Public and Commercial Services Union.

9. 'HEFCE CSR action plan 2008-2010' sets out the actions we plan to undertake by March 2010 to work towards achieving the objectives and targets set out in this policy.

Monitoring and review

10. We will continually benchmark and evaluate what we do in order to improve our CSR performance. Progress is reported quarterly to CEG and our Board through the monitoring of our operating plan and subsequently on our web-site. Performance against this operating plan is published as part of the management commentary to our annual accounts. We also publish an annual CSR report⁸. Progress towards and the appropriateness of our targets will be reviewed annually and reported in our CSR report. We will revise our targets in 2014 or earlier if we exceed expectations.

Assurance

11. We will seek assurance of our CSR performance through periodic independent review of the methods used to calculate our environmental performance indicators and progress against targets. Reviews took place in 2002-03 and 2005-06 and the next is planned for 2008-09. As a government-funded body, HEFCE is required to have a formal internal audit service operating to Treasury standards. CSR is included within HEFCE's internal audit strategy. The need for an internal audit is on the basis of risk, with high-risk areas being audited more frequently. CSR, including HEFCE's environmental management system, will normally be audited at least once every five years. The next internal audit of CSR is scheduled for 2009-10.

⁸ Available at www.hefce.ac.uk under About us/Corporate Social Responsibility.