

Water Policy

Estates / May 2023

Water Policy

Introduction

The Open University (OU) is committed to minimising water usage in buildings and landscape through implementation of sustainable water management practices and water harvesting systems.

Target

We aim to:

- Reduce water consumption per floor area (m²) by 5% by 2028 from 2019–20 baseline
- Expand the water metering infrastructure
- Increase recycled water systems

Scope

The OU operates sites across the four nations, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Water policy applies to all OU sites.

Objectives

The University will continue to implement measures to minimise water usage through:

- Upgrading to water efficient equipment as part of the maintenance program
- Implement water saving and water harvesting systems within all new builds and major refurbishments as appropriate
- Set a minimum water efficiency specification in mechanical and plumbing design standards
- Incorporate sustainable urban water design to buildings and landscapes in capital projects
- Engage and embed sustainable behaviours around water usage with staff and students through the Go Green program
- Expand water metering to each building supply and water intensive equipment

- Identify areas of significant water use at the University and set appropriate objectives designed to reduce water waste
- Comply with all relevant water legislation.

Performance to date

Water is a precious resource, and it is important we continue to minimise our water consumption. Figure 1 shows our water usage from 2009-10 by net internal floor area, it can be seen water usage has reduced from 0.48m³/m² in 2009-10 to 0.26m³/m² in 2021-22. The spike that occurred between 2018-19 was due to a major leak in an underground mains pipe at the Walton Hall campus. The OU worked closely with the local water board to investigate, identify and resolve the leak. Since then, the main water meter was upgraded to provide daily meter readings, this allows better monitoring of trends and prompt identification of irregular usage patterns.

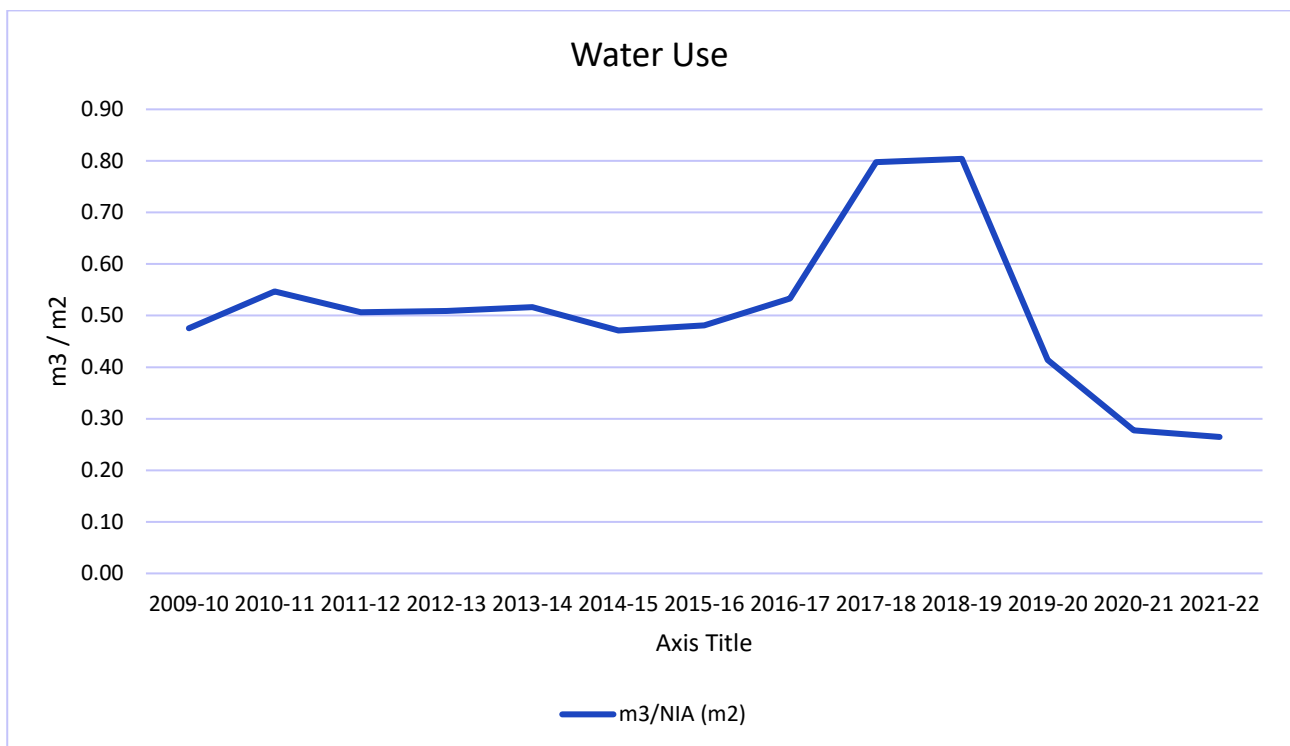


Figure 1: Water usage (m³/floor area – m²)

The new water target to reduce water usage per floor area (m²) by 5% by 2028 has the baseline set at 2019-20. This is a realistic 'business as usual' baseline because it is after the abnormal usage figures from the major water leak and prior to reduced usage figures from the COVID period where there was significant reduction of occupancy on campus.

Linked policies

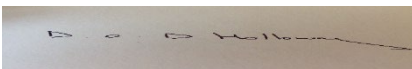
Policies, strategies, and plans linked to the Water policy include:

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Net Zero Carbon 2030 Policy and Plan
- Sustainable Construction Policy
- Biodiversity Policy and Plan
- Waste and Resource Policy and Management Plan
- Sustainable Food and Catering Policy

Monitoring and review

The Water Policy is owned by OU Estates. The policy will be reviewed annually, targets and consumption reported to the OU Executive Sustainability Steering committee.

Signed By

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Dorian Holloway'.

Dorian Holloway, Director of Estates

Next review date: May 2024