Biodiversity Policy 2025 - 2028

1. Introduction

Biodiversity encompasses the variety and variability of life on Earth, including all species of plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms, the genetic differences within these species, and the ecosystems they form. Healthy biodiversity ensures ecological resilience, supports ecosystem services, and contributes to well-being, climate regulation, and food and water security.

2. Policy objective

This policy sets out our commitment to preserving, enhancing, and promoting biodiversity across our estate. We will embed biodiversity considerations into grounds management, infrastructure projects, educational provision and community engagement.

3. Our estate

We have two primary campuses: the Strawberry Hill Campus and the Teddington Lock Sports Campus. Both sites are rich in historical and environmental value, benefitting from protective designations including Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Area status, and Metropolitan Open Land. These protections form a strong foundation for our biodiversity objectives.

4. Trees and planting

We maintain a diverse tree stock of native and non-native species, with careful stewardship prioritised through regular professional arboriculture assessments. Dead or dangerous trees are replaced with species that align with biodiversity goals, prioritising native varieties to strengthen local ecosystems. Enhancements include understory planting, deadwood retention for invertebrate habitats, and the expansion of micro-woodlands where feasible.

Landscape planting has shifted from purely ornamental species to pollinator-friendly and edible varieties such as fruit trees, herbs, and native perennials. The grounds team actively selects plant species for their ecological value, supporting insect life cycles and providing food sources for birds and mammals.

5. Wildflower meadows and habitat creation

The University has established wildflower meadows on campus perimeters and sloped areas, maintained through annual or biannual cutting and removal of arisings to encourage diverse flowering. These meadows increase invertebrate populations and act as stepping stones for pollinators. We continue to assess other underutilised spaces suitable for additional habitat creation, including log piles, bug hotels, and hedgehog corridors.

6. Green roofs and urban greening

The green roof atop the Sports Hall supports sedum, wild strawberries, and drought-tolerant species, creating vital habitat in a previously unused space. Managed by a specialist contractor, the green roof is monitored for condition and biodiversity value. Future capital developments will incorporate green infrastructure wherever practicable, including living walls, rain gardens and sustainable drainage systems.

7. Wildlife conservation

Our campuses are important refuges for urban wildlife. We support this by installing and maintaining bird and bat boxes, retaining habitat-rich areas, and maintaining minimal disturbance zones. Sightings of foxes, bats, woodpeckers, and hedgehogs are common, and efforts are made to ensure their continued presence.

Oak processionary moths, where present, are controlled using manual removal methods. Pesticide use is avoided entirely except where legal or ecological requirements dictate an exception for invasive species.

8. Chemical use and soil health

We have transitioned to a herbicide-only protocol for essential areas, mainly hard surfaces and specific sports surfaces, with strict controls on application. No general pesticides are used. Wetting agents are applied selectively on sports fields to reduce water usage and mitigate nitrate leaching.

We are committed to soil health through composting green waste, minimising turf stripping, and avoiding compaction through designated vehicle access and protective matting where necessary.

9. Water conservation

Although there are no formal water bodies on campus, proximity to the Thames and seasonal wet zones means we remain vigilant to runoff and water quality. Efforts include:

- limiting over-watering through smart irrigation and soil moisture monitoring;
- employing mulch to retain moisture around planting;
- promoting drought-tolerant species in landscape design.

10. Waste and resource management

All green waste at the Strawberry Hill campus is composted or chipped for reuse as mulch. At the Teddington Lock sports campus, where on-site processing is limited, waste is carefully sorted and collected to prevent contamination. Litter is proactively managed, and staff, students, and visitors are encouraged to minimise plastic use and recycle appropriately.

11. Education and engagement

We take pride in our role as an educator of future generations. Biodiversity and sustainability are embedded in teaching within the School of Education and across multiple degree programs. We will continue to:

- promote biodiversity awareness through signage, workshops, and student projects;
- involve students and staff in habitat creation and monitoring;
- embed sustainability and ecological literacy across the curriculum.

12. Continuous improvement

This policy is a living document and will be reviewed regularly. Progress will be tracked through the Sustainability Group.

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