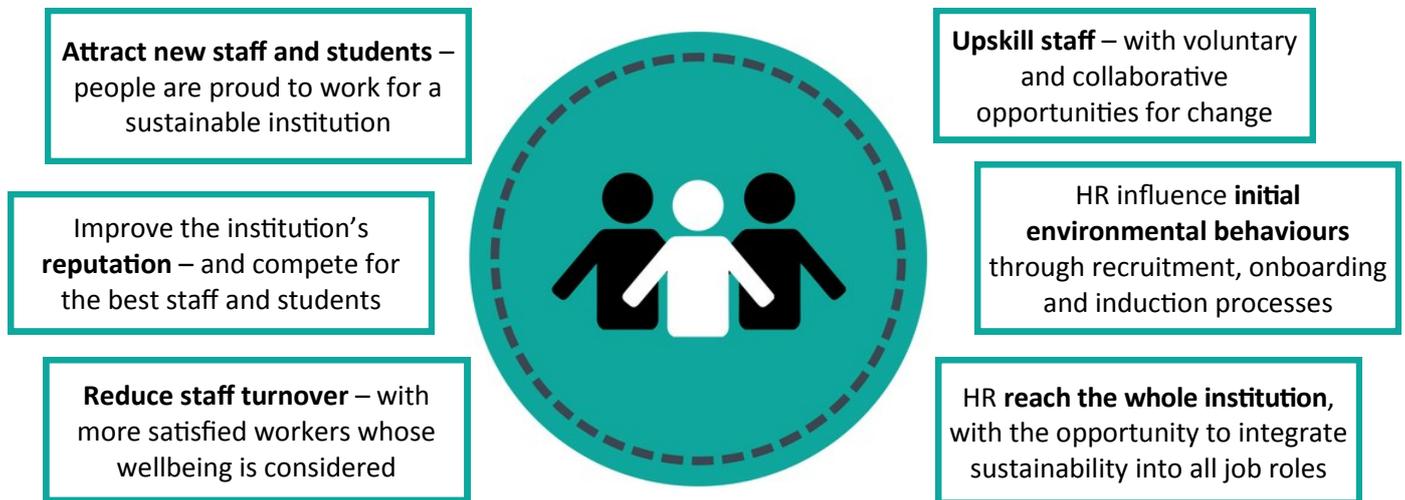


Sustainability and Human Resources Teams

Many sustainability teams recognise the value in engaging with HR teams, with common values and areas of activity such as supporting staff and student wellbeing. A strong culture for sustainability at your institution can be introduced to new employees through HR practices such as onboarding. There is also an important opportunity to formalise responsibility for sustainability through its inclusion in job descriptions or other methods.



Collaborative Project Suggestions

Communication

HR teams tend to consider sustainability issues to refer to predominantly waste and energy management, and struggle to see the relevance of the topic for their departments. When Sustainability and HR functions sit within the same department (rather than the norm of being separate departments) the levels of collaboration, particularly on environmental sustainability initiatives, have been seen to increase. >> **Getting Started:** Propose to hot-desk for a couple of days to sit within the HR team to better understand daily job functions and get to know the team better.

When communicating the sustainability of your institution, HR teams may require assistance in clearly differentiating current achievements and future goals in order to avoid greenwashing when promoting the institution to potential staff and students. >> **Getting Started:** Contributing to development of recruitment materials will ensure an accurate portrayal of your institution's green credentials.

HR provide more avenues for engagement through official, centralised channels

If HR and Sustainability teams are not working closely together the priorities and workload of the other team may not be well understood, creating challenges and divisions when trying to collaborate. >> **Getting Started:** Work with your HR team to map when periods of heavy workload usually occur for both teams throughout the year, and plan collaborative projects during times that suit both teams.

Studies have shown that if employees feel they work for an organisation that takes sustainability seriously they themselves are more likely to have sustainable practices at work, and may even be more productive.

HR professionals' work aligns closely with the institution's strategy, as decided upon by senior management. This means changes, like writing sustainability into job descriptions, may prove easy to make in one institution but difficult in another. Linking sustainability to your institution's strategy is crucial to embedding sustainability in HR practices. >> **Getting Started:** Use case studies to demonstrate that sustainability does not present a long-term risk but 'business-as-usual' could, and engage with development of new strategies to encourage explicit inclusion of environmental and social sustainability.

Recruitment

- Incorporating sustainability into recruitment practices is an opportunity to communicate your institution's sustainability efforts to an audience of potential applicants.
- Leaving an impression that your institution takes sustainability seriously can impact positively upon your institutions' reputation, even to those who are unsuccessful in their applications. Examples such as reducing paper usage and offering interviews conducted via videoconference (reducing the necessity for travel) can promote the sustainability credentials beyond employed staff.



>> **Getting Started:** Discuss with the HR team how interview processes work, highlight opportunities to improve the sustainability, and make sure that there are the capabilities (e.g. video conference facilities) to enable change.

Onboarding and Training

- Formalising the onboarding process (or "settling in" period) with sustainability in mind, including a formal sustainability orientation of the institution, is an important step in embedding sustainable behaviours in newly recruited individuals.
- Onboarding is effective when it is participatory: employees can be asked to make their own sustainability pledges and goals which they monitor. It has been identified that a top-down approach can lead to employee disengagement. A recommended course of action instead is to have employees identify problems and suggest their own solutions.
- Training courses in sustainability (online or otherwise) should be designed so that it is applicable to new starts as well as long-serving employees. A short introduction during onboarding, followed by training later when employees are settled in their roles is the most effective way of embedding sustainable practises.
- A focus on wellbeing and wellbeing training is crucial to ensuring employees are able to participate in sustainability activities and adopt sustainable working habits. This includes learning on stress, overworking, mental health, flexible working practices and active travel, among other topics.

For sustainability on-boarding to be effective, a plan involving timescales such as 30, 60, 90, 120 day check-in points will ensure sustainability is not forgotten while also allowing new starts to focus on adjusting to their new jobs

>> **Getting Started:** Work with the HR staff to better understand the current onboarding or training opportunities for new staff, there may be existing sessions in which sustainability could be embedded.

Formal Sustainability Responsibilities

- Sustainability can be written into job descriptions alongside health and safety and data protection clauses included for legal compliance. For example, employees would be required to have an understanding of sustainability, including an understanding of its impact on the institution. Doing so ensures every member of staff, from senior management down, incorporates sustainability into their day-to-day work and doesn't see it as someone else's responsibility.
- It is also possible to create non-binding guidance documents on sustainable or pro-wellbeing behaviours. These could be designed in collaboration with employees, who will be in effect designing their own voluntary code of conduct. This could later be adopted as formal policy.

Wellbeing is generally recognised as important, but the topic is not being explored in great detail by most sustainability teams



- New policies or local strategies must be developed and adopted with sustainability in mind. The effectiveness of new strategies should be assessed with sustainability professionals to gauge the extent to which this ensures the institution is truly adhering to its strategy on sustainability.
- A final formal option to consider is including sustainability in employee appraisals, which has proved effective in the private sector where sustainability is tied to employee bonuses.

>> **Getting Started:** Assess the current implementation of sustainability in department and whole-institution strategies and policies, and use these as examples when talking to your HR team about embedding it further within HR processes.

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