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Stephen Greaves, Recycled Paper Advocate, WRAP

Furthermore, no price premium has been incurred in switching to recycled paper. Although a small price differential was initially encountered during prospectus production, this was subsequently eliminated. “Recycled paper today doesn’t cost any more than virgin grades, so there’s nothing to lose in making the switch,” Sarah Wightman observes. “Overall, going recycled has been a very positive, straightforward exercise that’s significantly contributed to our sustainability objectives.”

Next Steps

The University of Gloucestershire’s future plans include exploring the scope to increase percentages of recycled content where appropriate. It will also press ahead in implementing complementary changes such as the minimisation of paper usage across the University.

Consideration is also being given to extending the use of iconography that denotes the recycled content of the paper publications are printed on. This will maximise the marketing benefits and raise awareness of the university’s commitment. In addition, opportunities for encouraging other universities to switch to recycled paper will be pursued through the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium’s Sustainability Advisory Group, which is chaired by Sarah Wightman.

How can the Recycled Paper Advocacy Team help you?

The advocacy team provides free advice and support to organisations considering moving to a sustainable procurement policy by:

- explaining why there is a need to procure recycled content paper;
- outlining the benefits of such a move;
- helping to dispel concerns about quality and cost;
- advising on product availability/suitability;
- facilitating trial material where appropriate; and
- providing technical support as needed.

The team is made up of eight advocates based across the country, all with paper and print backgrounds, providing a mix of relevant skills and experience. The team delivers sound technical knowledge of both the paper and print markets, providing balanced and unbiased advice.

About WRAP

WRAP works in partnership to encourage and enable businesses and consumers to be more efficient in their use of materials and recycle more things more often. This helps to minimise landfill, reduce carbon emissions and improve our environment.

More information on WRAP’s work can be found on www.wrap.org.uk



CONTACT

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Learning to benefit from recycled paper.

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Sarah Wightman, Procurement & Contracts Manager, University of Gloucestershire



University of Gloucestershire

The University of Gloucestershire, which achieved university status in 2001, has around 1,000 staff and 9,000 students. Encompassing four sites in Gloucestershire and one in East London, the University specialises in teacher training, arts and humanities, business and sport related studies and environmental sciences.

It is the first university in England to have secured full ISO 14001 environmental management accreditation across the whole institution. Its commitment to the environment is pursued, for example, through composting, the recycling of items including paper, cardboard, cans and ink cartridges, the purchase of 'green' electricity generated from renewable energy sources and, substantial investment in transport to discourage car use.

A Green Commitment on Paper

The University has three main paper requirements. Each year, more than 60,000 copies of its postgraduate and undergraduate prospectuses are produced by external print contractors, along with a range of other publications. Its in-house reprographics facility has used 16 million sheets of copying paper during the last three years and significant levels of photocopying are also undertaken at departmental level.

In 2000, as part of its policy of embracing sustainability, the University switched to a paper with 100% recycled content for departmental photocopying, and 50 tonnes/year of this paper is now used. "But we were also keen to make progress in terms of externally printed publications and those produced by our reprographics print room," explains Jill Stuart, Head of Marketing and Design at the University.

Prospectuses and other regular high-profile publications, for example the University's Annual Report, Strategic Plan and Awards Plan, were natural targets for change. So too were letterheads and smaller, less regular print jobs with short lead times such as one-off flyers and brochures.

The Issues

Selecting and Working with External Printers

"We recognised that, as we moved forward, there were some key issues to address, particularly where high print run, one-off jobs were concerned," Jill Stuart comments. "Specifically, we needed to be certain that sufficient supplies of competitively priced recycled paper of suitable quality would be available to meet our needs."

In May 2005, while preparing to produce prospectuses on recycled paper for the first time, the University was contacted by the Recycled Paper Advocacy Team at WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme). The University was eager to harness WRAP's expertise to help ensure its requirements could be met, and particularly to assist with framing a new print tender specifying a minimum 75% recycled content paper that would be used for all externally printed publications.

As well as providing the University with information on the different recycled papers available, WRAP reassured external printers that most paper merchants could now supply a range of recycled papers of the appropriate quality and at the right price. As samples were obtained for thorough testing, it quickly became clear how rapidly the paper industry had changed to meet this growing demand for recycled products.

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The University's prospectuses are now produced using 70 tonnes/year of silk paper with 80% recycled content, and a range of other publications have also been printed on 80% recycled paper. "Generally, we don't stipulate the exact brand of paper to be used on each job," says Sarah Wightman, the University's Purchasing Manager. "We simply specify the paper's weight and a minimum recycled content. The printer then selects an appropriate paper, stocked by their supplier, that will most suit the job and their machines. We are happy to be consulted and suggest proven products where necessary."

The University's reprographics print room is now using 50 tonnes/year of 80% recycled copier paper. "A key part of the process was to reassure the print room that recycled paper would perform just as well as virgin grade papers," says Stephen Greaves of WRAP. Trials of five recycled paper grades were therefore undertaken to assess reliability and overall performance.

"When introducing recycled paper, it's vital to engage and involve people, whether in-house staff or external contractors," says Jill Stuart. "Sometimes negotiation and discussion is needed to identify a way forward that everyone is happy with." Promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience between designers and printers (e.g. regarding a paper's performance, such as ink absorbency) has also been shown to have valuable benefits.

Meeting the Challenge on Quality and Cost

Initially, there were some widespread concerns that recycled paper might be lower in quality than virgin grade paper, and that problems might arise when running it through old printing and copying equipment. However, it soon became clear that the quality of recycled paper has improved enormously in recent years. As a result, there has been no negative effect on the appearance of publications produced using recycled paper and no technical difficulties have arisen during the printing and copying process.

The Benefits

- **introducing recycled paper for externally printed publications and reprographic/departmental photocopying is diverting in excess of 500 tonnes/year of paper from the waste stream;**
- **use of recycled paper is playing a valuable role in helping the University to achieve its sustainability objectives;**
- **using recycled paper has not resulted in any additional cost, compared with using paper manufactured from virgin pulp;**
- **switching to recycled paper has helped close the loop on paper recycling at the University by complementing its extensive, well-established collection system for used paper; and**
- **appropriate inclusion of relevant logos and/or wording on publications printed on recycled paper is contributing to greater awareness of recycling-related opportunities.**