

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Committee on Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development

Guidelines for Sustainable Event Planning and Management

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is committed to sustainable development. Every year the University hosts a large number of events either on or off its campus. Some of these events could have a substantial impact on the environment if not planned considerately.

The Guidelines for Sustainable Event Planning and Management is developed in consultation with the relevant professional and administrative service units and maintained by the Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Office. It includes two categories: [Basic Guidelines](#), which are either already widely adopted or can be easily implemented; and [Advanced Guidelines](#), which are more challenging and are made available for those who would like to do more.

The following points deserve special attention and can also serve as an action checklist to facilitate advance planning and duty assignment. Please always refer to the full guidelines for implementation details and other environmentally-friendly suggestions.

- Go electronic and reduce paper consumption whenever possible and appropriate;
- Limit the number of handouts and souvenirs provided;
- Purchase fair trade or green products, and choose products without excess packaging;
- Do not provide corsages and, if name badge holders are used, choose reusable ones and collect them after the event;
- Do away with single-serving bottled water of 1L or below and avoid individually packed beverages and food items;
- Minimize disposables like dishware and utensils (e.g., by reminding guests to bring their own mugs, lunchboxes and cutlery);
- Do not use polyfoam meal containers and non-woven polypropylene bags;
- Help to protect threatened species by not serving or consuming the following food items: shark's fins, bluefin tuna, black moss, humphead wrasse, Hong Kong grouper and sturgeon caviar;
- Reduce food waste: avoid buffets, and order a 6-course menu for Chinese banquets;
- Adopt measures to reduce waste at source, facilitate waste separation and arrange in advance for the collection of recyclables and unconsumed food;
- Keep air-conditioner temperatures at 24–26°C during the summer months;
- Turn off lights, air-conditioners and equipment after use;
- Engage the services of social enterprises which employ the disadvantaged or minorities; and
- Encourage the participants to offset carbon emissions from their air travel.

(November 2022)

Guidelines for Sustainable Event Planning and Management:
Basic Guidelines

1. Go electronic

- 1.1 Use e-flyers for promotions and provide an e-registration option.
- 1.2 Create an event website that people can visit to download slides, handouts, transportation information and presentations (after the event), to minimize paper handouts.
- 1.3 Provide brochures, handouts and notes only to guests who either need or want them.
- 1.4 Print as little as possible, but where printing is necessary use recycled/FSC-certified paper using soy ink or other vegetable-based inks, and print on both sides. (Note: According to the University's [Sustainable Procurement Guidelines](#), recycled paper should be used for all in-house printing in A3 or A4 size. Most printing companies provide an option of recycled paper for printing. For a list of printing companies that use vegetable/soy ink, please refer to the [Business Unit's webpage on centralized tenders](#).)
- 1.5 Format handouts to minimize the amount of paper required. Where possible, print multiple pages on a single sheet of paper.
- 1.6 Use PowerPoint and whiteboards (which can be cleaned and reused) rather than paper flipcharts for discussions and presentations.
- 1.7 Conduct online surveys instead of paper-based evaluations after the event. They generate higher response rates, produce quicker results and minimize manual processing.

2. Purchasing

- 2.1 When buying goods in large quantity, avoid products with excess packaging. Where possible, choose products with recycled-content packaging.
- 2.2 Limit the number of handouts such as free pencils, or provide eco-friendly handouts (e.g., pencils with barrels made of recycled paper).
- 2.3 Do not use non-woven polypropylene bags, which are still in general use but are very difficult to recycle. If bags are necessary, they should be made with recycled or biodegradable materials.
- 2.4 When purchasing souvenirs, consider environmentally-friendly or ethical products with minimal packaging, such as crafts made by social enterprise artisans using discarded materials, fair trade products and service coupons.
- 2.5 Please refer to CUHK's [Sustainable Procurement Guidelines](#) for a list of commonly-purchased products and their recommended green specifications.

3. Activities and accessories

- 3.1 Do not provide corsages at events organized by the University. In exceptional circumstances, organizers may use their discretion.
- 3.2 Avoid activities such as releasing balloons, spraying confetti or flinging water which either waste resources or produce litter.
- 3.3 Avoid excessive decorations.
- 3.4 Print badges, placards and similar items on recycled paper.

4. Reuse and recycling

- 4.1 If name badge holders must be used, use them at more than one event, and remind guests to return them at the end of an event.
- 4.2 Provide a recycling service at the venue. For large-scale events, contact the Housekeeping and Building Management Section of the Estates Management Office at 3943 4049 one to two weeks in advance for large containers for collection of recyclables (especially plastic bottles and beverage cans) and recycling service.
- 4.3 Place used banners in a collection spot (please refer to the [document](#) for the recycling locations).
- 4.4 For large events, prepare [signage on recycling](#) in advance. If necessary, print messages on handouts. Make public announcements during the event to promote recycling and to advise participants of the recycling arrangements.

5. Food and drink

- 5.1 Disposables reduction
 - 5.1.1 Do not provide single-serving bottled water of 1L or below at events organized by the University.
 - 5.1.2 Employ a caterer who can supply reusable cups or glasses for drinks.
 - 5.1.3 Arrange the supply of water and beverages in a larger container or portable water dispenser and for guests' cups to be filled using a pitcher or container.
 - 5.1.4 Where appropriate, remind participants in advance to bring their own water bottles. Refilling locations can be accessed via the 'CUHK Mobile' app (both iOS and Android versions) or the online campus map on the CUHK website (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/english/campus/cuhk-campus-map.html>; check them out under *Facilities > Living Essentials > Water Dispensers*).
 - 5.1.5 Arrange with caterers to provide reusable cutlery, dishware, napkins and linen. If disposables must be used, choose recycled paper napkins and dishware with recycled content. Do not use polyfoam meal containers.
 - 5.1.6 Provide sugar, salt, pepper, cream and other condiments in bulk. Avoid individually wrapped packages, coffee stirrers and paper doilies.
 - 5.1.7 Do not provide straws. If straws are to be provided on request, use paper or reusable options instead of plastic.
- 5.2 Food choices
 - 5.2.1 Do not serve shark's fins (魚翅), bluefin tuna (藍鰭吞拿), black moss (髮菜), humphead wrasse (蘇眉), Hong Kong grouper (紅斑) and sturgeon caviar (鱈魚魚子醬) and other unsustainably-produced seafood. For more information, please refer to the relevant requirements under Annex B (Mandatory Products and their Specification) of CUHK's [Sustainable Procurement Guidelines](#) and the [Sustainable Seafood Guide](#) recommended by WWF.
 - 5.2.2 Offer low-carbon or socially-responsible food options such as vegetarian dishes and fair trade, organic coffee, tea or snacks. (**Note:** Growing grains or vegetables requires far less energy, water and other inputs than raising animals, and the production process also generates far less carbon emissions. For fair trade, organic products, more information on suppliers can be found in 'Additional Resources' at the end of these guidelines.)

5.3 Food waste reduction

- 5.3.1 For Chinese banquets, adopt a 6-course menu instead of an 8-course menu.
- 5.3.2 Avoid buffets if alternative arrangements are available.
- 5.3.3 Remind diners that they can request canteens to provide meals in smaller portions.
- 5.3.4 If large amounts of surplus food are anticipated (e.g., at a buffet, or if fewer guests turn up than expected), contact a local NGO in advance so that they will make arrangements to pick up the surplus food (the food must be untouched and packed in boxes for collection).

6. Transport

- 6.1 Explore alternatives to face-to-face meeting, such as conference calls, video conferencing, web-based meetings and webcasting.
- 6.2 Choose a venue convenient for public transport access and provide clear directions for those taking public transport.
- 6.3 Encourage the participants to offset carbon emissions from their air travel.

7. Energy

- 7.1 Liaise with the event venue's utilities manager beforehand to ensure that the temperature of air-conditioners is set at 24–26°C during the summer months.
- 7.2 Make sure lights, air-conditioners and equipment in unused rooms are turned off.

8. Awareness of social and environmental responsibilities

- 8.1 Where possible, support social enterprises that employ the disadvantaged or minorities.
- 8.2 Mention your event's green measures in your event website, publications and promotional materials. Share green information in your publicity material. Not only does this exhibit your commitment to environmental protection, it also reminds guests to do their part, like separating wastes for recycling.
- 8.3 Add the note 'printed with soy inks on recycled paper' or the FSC Certification No. on printed matter to help raise awareness and advertise your green credentials.

Guidelines for Sustainable Event Planning and Management:
Advanced Guidelines

1. Services

- 1.1 Include environmentally-friendly clauses in contracts (e.g., requirements to cease the use of polyfoam meal containers, recycle waste and record the amount recycled) where appropriate.

2. Purchasing

- 2.1 Share common event materials such as table cloths among offices whenever possible, particularly if your office does not host events too often, to use fewer materials and save money and storage space.

3. Activities and accessories

- 3.1 Designate a space for collection of unwanted souvenirs, so that they can either be reused or donated to charity.
- 3.2 Where possible, borrow potted plants for decoration instead of using cut flowers, or create decorations that can be given away (e.g., fruit bowls).
- 3.3 Keep noise levels at reasonable levels to minimize disturbance to people near the venue.

4. Recycling

- 4.1 Recruit volunteers to assist in providing instructions to event participants in recycling, such as giving demonstrations on source separation.

5. Food and drink

- 5.1 Where possible, ask attendees to sign up for meals ahead of time (and inform you of dietary requirements) so you can reduce food waste.
- 5.2 Check with caterers to use local, seasonal produce as far as possible.

6. Transport

- 6.1 Encourage delegates or guests to carpool.
- 6.2 Consider providing low emission or electric vehicles if transport arrangements must be provided.
- 6.3 For events held on campus, walking routes allow easy and convenient access to most places. Information on walking routes can be provided to participants to encourage walking (please refer to [this map](#)).
- 6.4 Make sure vehicles are fuel-efficient and appropriately sized for the event. Plan the transportation route to make most efficient use of vehicles.
- 6.5 Reserve parking spaces for the disabled and make sure they are able to access the venue.

7. Awareness of social and environmental responsibilities

- 7.1 Collect and share figures on green benchmarks, such as the estimated amount of recyclables collected and diverted from landfills, the number of trees saved, or the amount of water or energy saved. These will help to demonstrate the success of your green event. (Note: Some statistics and calculators that may be useful for calculating environmental impacts or benefits are listed in 'Additional Resources' at the end of the guidelines.)

8. Overall

- 8.1 If you want to excel in hosting events in a sustainable manner, consider purchasing carbon offsets. SRSDO will be happy to discuss with you on how to take this forward.

Guidelines for Sustainable Event Planning and Management:
Additional Resources

1. Resources on campus

Business Unit's webpage on centralized tenders

https://www.fno.cuhk.edu.hk/department/procurement/bus_centralized_tender/

Sustainable Procurement Guidelines

<https://www.srsdo.cuhk.edu.hk/images/documents/policies/sustainable-procurement-guidelines.pdf>

Walking trails

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/english/images/campus/walking-routes.jpg>

Recycling locations on campus

<https://www.srsdo.cuhk.edu.hk/images/documents/greentips/Location-of-Recycling-Facilities-on-CUHK-Campus.pdf>

Locations of water dispensers on campus

<https://www.srsdo.cuhk.edu.hk/images/documents/greentips/List-of-easily-accessible-water-dispensers-in-CUHK.pdf>

Tips on waste separation

<https://www.srsdo.cuhk.edu.hk/images/documents/greentips/Recycling-tips-poster-for-on-campus-recycling.pdf>

2. Seafood Choice Initiative (by WWF)

<http://www.wwf.org.hk/en/whatwedo/footprint/seafood/sci/>

3. A Waste Reduction Guidebook for Large Scale Event Organizers (by Environmental Protection Department)

https://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/sites/default/files/GreenEvent_Guidebook_Eng_201801.pdf

4. Social enterprises, fair trade products and related services

Why support social enterprises and fair trade? Besides providing products and services, social enterprises help achieve social objectives such as providing employment to disadvantaged groups. They also reinvest profits into the community and disadvantaged groups. Fair trade offers relatively stable and higher income to small producers of goods with highly fluctuating prices, so that these producers are not ruined by fluctuations and are able to support communities that can flourish on a long-term basis.

Some contacts for event-related social enterprise or fair trade products or services can be found in the 'Social Enterprise Directory' developed by HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre: <http://socialenterprise.org.hk/en/sedirectory>

5. Calculators and statistics

The following calculators and statistics are intended to provide a useful reference on the impact of your environmental activity. Some of them were developed outside Asia, and adjustment may be required in interpreting them for a specific Hong Kong context.

Carbon footprint calculators

Action Monitor (by Jockey Club Museum of Climate Change of CUHK)

<https://action-monitor.mocc.cuhk.edu.hk/site/game-rule-individual> (for individuals)

<https://action-monitor.mocc.cuhk.edu.hk/site/game-rule-organization> (for schools and organizations)

Low Carbon Living Calculator (by Environment and Ecology Bureau)

<https://www.carboncalculator.gov.hk/en>

Carbon Footprint Management Toolkit (by City University of Hong Kong)

http://www.cityu.edu.hk/aerc/CFT/cal_profile.asp

SME Carbon Audit Toolkit (by The University of Hong Kong)

<http://www.cityu.edu.hk/aerc/sme/index.asp>

Environmental impact calculators

Paper Calculator (by Environmental Paper Network)

<http://c.environmentalpaper.org/home>

Businesses ACT Paper Calculator (by RainforestMaker)

<http://www.rainforestmaker.org/lawyer-attorney-1685591.html>

Water Footprint Calculator (by The University of Hong Kong)

<http://www.socsc.hku.hk/jcwise/water-footprint-calculator/>

Statistics and figures

Online Carbon Footprint Repository (by Environmental Protection Department)

<https://www.carbon-footprint.hk/>

Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Hong Kong (by Environment and Ecology Bureau)

<https://www.climate.gov.hk/page.php?id=23>

Statistics for calculating paper use impacts (by Conservatree)

<http://conservatree.org/learn/EnviroIssues/TreeStats.shtml>

The Benefits of Aluminum Recycling (by ThoughtCo.)

<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-benefits-of-aluminum-recycling-1204138>

The Benefits of Paper Recycling (by ThoughtCo.)

<https://www.thoughtco.com/the-benefits-of-paper-recycling-1204139>