The Open University of Sri Lanka

Annual Sustainability Report 2024

OUSL

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About Us

The Open University of Sri Lanka is committed to sustainable development by promoting education and community engagement, aligning its initiatives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals for a resilient future.

The Open University of Sri Lanka provides accessible, flexible distance education, empowering students from diverse backgrounds to pursue academic and professional development.

Aligning its initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Open University of Sri Lanka fosters a sustainable future. By promoting education, gender equality, climate action, and community engagement, OUSL is committed to building a resilient society that addresses global challenges

Through various programs and research projects, the university actively contributes to the SDGs, aiming to create a positive impact on local and global communities.

For more information, visit OUSL's sustainability page.

SDG 1 (No Poverty)

OUSL's inclusive education, scholarships, and outreach in underserved communities.

Program: Community Outreach and Scholarships

Providing educational scholarships to low-income students, enabling access to higher education, and conducting skill development programs for economic self-sufficiency in underprivileged communities.

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) offers several scholarship options to support students financially. Here are the key scholarships available:

Mahapola Scholarships
University Bursary
Enrolment Bursary
Government Scholarships
International Scholarships

Mahapola Scholarships:
These are government-funded scholarships designed to assist students from low-income backgrounds. They are awarded based on merit and financial need

University Bursary:
OUSL provides bursaries for students who demonstrate financial need. To qualify, students must have a minimum GPA of 2.0 and their family's annual income must be below a certain threshold (currently set at LKR 500,000)

Enrolment Bursary:
This is available for new students enrolling in the university and is aimed at those who need financial assistance at the start of their studies

Government Scholarships:
These are provided through various government programs aimed at promoting education in Sri Lanka

International Scholarships:
OUSL collaborates with organizations such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and the European Union to offer scholarships for international students

For more detailed information regarding eligibility and application procedures, you can visit the OUSL scholarship page on their website : The Open University of Sri Lanka ps://ou.ac.lk/scholarcal/).

SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)

Food security research, nutrition programs, and community agriculture.

Program : Campus community gardens that engage students in sustainable agriculture practices.

Promoting sustainable agriculture through community gardens on campus, nutrition education workshops, and initiatives supporting local food banks and food security research.

Through initiatives such as campus community gardens, sustainable farming programs, agricultural education short courses, and the Sahana Malla program, OUSL actively contributes to promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing food security. By fostering knowledge and skills related to sustainable farming, the university plays a vital role in building a more resilient food system in Sri Lanka. For more details about these initiatives, you can visit OUSL's Sustainability page and CESSD page.

Campus Community Gardens

The Open University of Sri Lanka has established campus community gardens as part of its commitment to promoting sustainable agriculture practices. These gardens serve as a practical platform where students and staff can engage in hands-on gardening activities. The initiative aims to cultivate various fruits, vegetables, and herbs, fostering a connection between students and their food sources while encouraging environmentally friendly practices.

By participating in the community gardens, students learn about organic farming techniques, crop rotation, and soil health management, which are crucial for sustainable food production. This experiential learning environment also raises awareness about the importance of biodiversity and food security, aligning with the principles of sustainable development.

Sustainable Farming Programs

OUSL offers various sustainable farming programs that focus on ecological practices and local food production. These programs aim to educate students and community members about innovative farming methods, such as permaculture, agroforestry, and integrated pest management. Through workshops and hands-on training, participants gain essential skills that enable them to implement sustainable practices in their own agricultural endeavors.

These programs often include collaboration with local agricultural experts and organizations, ensuring that the training is relevant to the specific environmental conditions and agricultural challenges faced in Sri Lanka. This practical approach not only enhances students' knowledge but also supports local farming communities by promoting sustainable agriculture practices.

Agricultural Education Short Courses

To further support agricultural education, OUSL offers short courses that cover various topics in sustainable farming. One such course is on Vermi Technology, which focuses on vermicomposting—a sustainable waste management technique that utilizes earthworms to convert organic waste into nutrient-rich compost. This method enhances soil fertility and supports healthy plant growth, thereby contributing to food security.
Other short courses may include topics like organic farming, hydroponics, and sustainable pest management. These courses are designed to provide participants with practical knowledge and skills that can be applied in real-world agricultural settings, empowering them to adopt sustainable practices in their own farming operations.

Sahana Malla Program

The Sahana Malla Program 2024, led by the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Studies (CESSD) at the Open University of Sri Lanka, provides essential groceries and support to cleaning staff and their families. This initiative, funded by contributions from OUSL staff, aims to ease financial burdens and promote well-being within the university community. Through the provision of basic food supplies and engagement activities, the program fosters a culture of care, recognizing the vital role of cleaning staff in maintaining a healthy campus environment.

SDG 3
(Good Health and Well-being)

Health workshops, wellness programs, and pandemic support measures.

Offering on-campus health and wellness programs, mental health resources for students and staff, and vaccination drives and hygiene initiatives in response to health crises.

Free Health Camp

The ***Free Health Camp for OUSL Permanent Employees***, held in October 2024, was a key wellness initiative supporting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Organized by the Open University of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the General Sir John Kothalawala Defence University Hospital, the camp provided free medical screenings, including tests for blood sugar, full blood count, liver function, and lipid profiles. This event highlights OUSL's commitment to fostering a healthy work environment and supporting the well-being of its employees, reinforcing its sustainable development goals through proactive healthcare measures.

Mental Health Workshop

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) hosted a **Mental Health Workshop** titled ***"Mental Health Challenges and Our Role"*** on October 24, 2024, organized by the university's Counselling Unit.

This workshop aimed to address mental health challenges, focusing on the importance of recognizing mental health issues like sadness, hopelessness, and fear. The event encouraged participants to understand that mental health problems are natural responses to various life events and emphasized the role of support in overcoming these challenges.

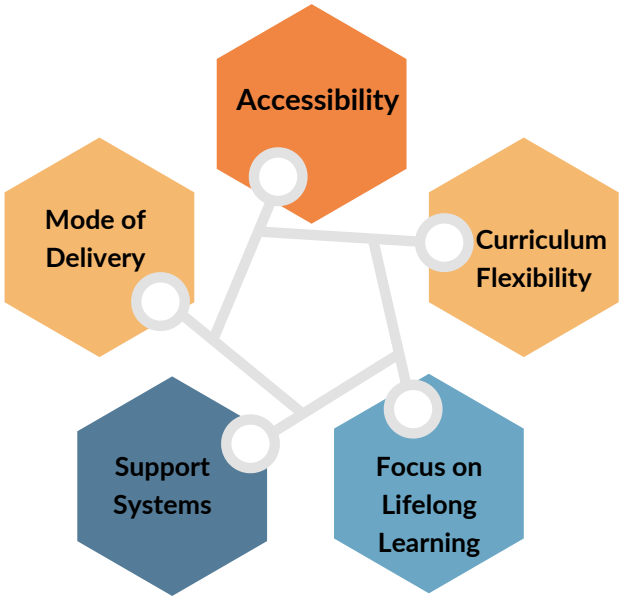
SDG 4 (Quality Education)

Emphasis on accessible, equitable education via distance learning.

Program: Equitable Education Accessibility
(SDG 4 - Quality Education)

Providing distance education for remote and marginalized communities, developing e-learning tools, and offering continuing education for lifelong learning.

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) emphasizes accessible and equitable education through extensive open & distance learning programs, ensuring that higher education is available to remote learners. This approach aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by breaking down barriers associated with traditional classroom-based models and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for diverse populations.



In 2024, The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is implementing several programs aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), "Quality Education." Here are some notable initiatives and courses that contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education, aiming to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all:

Foundation and Degree Programs: OUSL offers a range of educational programs from foundation-level courses to postgraduate degrees. This approach enables access for adult learners and young individuals who may not have had the opportunity to enter traditional universities, thereby supporting equitable access to quality higher education.

Short Courses and Certificates: There are various short courses offered in areas such as Early Childhood Development, Human-Centered Design for Youth Development Work, and Event Management. These programs are accessible to individuals seeking to enhance specific skills, offering flexibility and promoting lifelong learning. Flexible Learning Options: As a leader in open and distance learning, OUSL provides flexible learning formats that include online resources, printed study materials, and audio-visual aids. This model supports a wider range of students, including those who are employed or have other commitments, making education accessible and inclusive.

Research and Postgraduate Opportunities: OUSL also provides research programs such as the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education. These postgraduate programs contribute to educational research and capacity building, supporting the overall quality of education.

These initiatives reflect OUSL's commitment to SDG 4 by providing accessible and flexible learning opportunities that cater to diverse educational backgrounds and help reduce educational inequality across the country.

For more information, you can visit OUSL's official website: www.ou.ac.lk to explore specific programs and courses available in 2024. For an introduction to the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system, you can explore this link: Introduction to ODL System.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

Promote gender equality and empower all individuals, fostering an inclusive environment that supports equitable opportunities for all

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) supports gender equality through its Centre for Gender Equity/Equality (CGEE), which is committed to creating a fair and inclusive environment for all. The CGEE organizes training, workshops, and seminars on gender-related issues, addressing topics such as gender-based violence, educational equity, and workplace inclusivity. These initiatives are complemented by research on gender dynamics in Sri Lanka, providing a basis for policy development and community awareness.

For more information on gender equality initiatives at OUSL, you can explore their resources on the CGEE policies page and learn more about CGEE's broader efforts here.

Centre for Gender Equity/Equality
The Open University of Sri Lanka

The "Awareness Session on Gender Equity and Equality in Creating an Inclusive Work Environment" is scheduled for October 16, 2024, from 2 PM to 4 PM at the SDC Seminar Room. This informative session aims to enhance understanding of gender equity and equality in the workplace. Participants will explore the negative effects of gender- based misconduct, harassment, and violence, and discuss the repercussions these issues can have on workplace dynamics. Additionally, the session will provide practical strategies for fostering an inclusive and healthy work environment. Join us to contribute to a more equitable and supportive workplace culture.

SDG 6
(Clean Water and Sanitation)

Water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and sanitation improvements.

Program: Water Conservation and Management

The "Water Conservation and Management" program at The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) focuses on promoting sustainable practices for the effective use and management of water resources. This program aims to educate participants about the importance of water conservation, the challenges of water scarcity, and strategies for sustainable management. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical applications, students will learn about innovative technologies, policy frameworks, and community engagement approaches to enhance water resource management.

Program: Clean Water Initiative at OUSL

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is committed to improving access to clean drinking water through the establishment of ***Reverse Osmosis (RO) plants.*** These initiatives are designed to provide potable water to the university community and surrounding areas, addressing significant water quality issues. By implementing RO technology, OUSL aims to ensure that students, staff, and local residents have reliable access to safe drinking water, thereby promoting health and well-being. This initiative aligns with the broader goals of Sustainable Development Goal 6, which emphasizes the importance of universal access to clean water and sanitation

Program: Exposure Visit Programme on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector in Sri Lanka

In collaboration with AIT Extension of the Asian Institute of Technology, the Centre for Environmental Studies and Sustainable Development (CESSD) at the Open University of Sri Lanka organized an Exposure Visit Programme on the WASH sector from June 30 to July 9, 2024.

This program was designed for senior officials from the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) of Bangladesh and took place in several cities, including Colombo, Kandy, Dambulla, and Polonnaruwa. The primary objective was to provide insights into Sri Lanka's WASH sector, blending modern practices with historical context.

The program also facilitated knowledge exchange, equipping participants with skills to implement sustainable WASH solutions in their communities, thereby improving public health and environmental sustainability in Bangladesh. For more information, visit the OUSL CESSD WASH Programme page.

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)

Renewable energy projects and energy-saving initiatives.

Solar Remote Lab

IThe Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) has launched Sri Lanka's first solar remote laboratory, an innovative facility initiated under the EUSL energy program and funded by the European Union in 2020.

This project, completed over two years with an investment of around 6 million rupees, offers a dedicated space for university students and researchers to conduct experiments on solar panel characteristics while maintaining a comprehensive database of solar power generation and weather conditions.

The lab features three solar panel units—one indoors and two outdoors—allowing users to adjust the panels' orientation for specific experimental needs.

This design enables a wide range of experiments under controlled and uncontrolled conditions, facilitating the exploration of factors such as varying light intensities and load scenarios.

Additionally, the facility promotes inclusivity by being accessible online, enabling students, professionals, and educators from around the world to participate in experimental activities.

For more information about OUSL's sustainability initiatives, including the solar remote laboratory, visit the OUSL Sustainability page.

Promoting Sustainable Energy: OUSL's Solar Panel Initiative at the Colombo Regional Center

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is making significant strides in promoting renewable energy by introducing solar panel systems to its Colombo Regional Center. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to implement solar energy solutions across several university buildings in the future.

In addition to enhancing the university's sustainability efforts, the introduction of solar power at the Colombo Regional Center reflects OUSL's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and promoting environmentally friendly practices.

By investing in solar energy, the university not only aims to decrease energy costs but also to serve as a model for other institutions in Sri Lanka.

For more details on this project and other sustainability initiatives, you can visit the Open University of Sri Lanka's dedicated energy and climate change page here.

Energy Saving Practices

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is committed to sustainability through various energy-saving activities aimed at enhancing energy efficiency in its operations.

Key initiatives include the installation of energy-efficient lighting, optimization of heating and cooling systems, and promotion of renewable energy sources. These measures not only reduce energy consumption and operational costs but also minimize the university's environmental impact.

Furthermore, OUSL actively promotes awareness and education on energy conservation among students and staff, fostering a culture of sustainability within the university community. This comprehensive approach supports the institution's sustainability goals and sets a positive example for others in the region.

For more detailed information on OUSL's energy-saving activities and sustainability initiatives, visit OUSL Energy and Climate Change.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

Skill development and job opportunities for students.

Providing internships and job opportunities for students, organizing career fairs, and collaborating with industries to boost employability and sustainable economic growth

Enospire

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) has launched an exciting initiative called "Enospire," organized by the Career Guidance Unit. This program is designed to empower students by providing a platform where entrepreneurship, innovation, and inspiration come together. Enospire invites OUSL students to showcase their innovative business ideas through a Business Pitching Competition, encouraging them to present their concepts to a panel of judges.

Participants in Enospire have the opportunity to elevate their ideas and potentially turn them into reality. The program not only fosters creativity and entrepreneurial spirit but also serves as a launchpad for aspiring entrepreneurs looking to make their mark in the business world. By participating, students can gain valuable feedback, network with industry professionals, and refine their pitching skills.

For more details on Enospire and how to get involved, you can visit the Career Guidance Unit website or watch the Enospire video for insights on the program. You can also follow updates on their Facebook page.

Enospire Day 01

Enospire Day 02

Talent Lift

Talent Lift is a career fair organized by the Career Guidance Unit at The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). It provides students and graduates a platform to connect with potential employers across diverse industries. This event includes opportunities for participants to network, learn about different career paths, and attend workshops on key career skills such as resume building and interview preparation. Talent Lift aims to bridge the gap between academia and industry, enhancing employability and supporting economic growth through skill-building and networking opportunities.

Workshops

The Open University of Sri Lanka's Career Guidance Unit held various workshops in 2023, focusing on key career skills for students, such as CV writing, LinkedIn usage, career trends, leadership, presentation skills, and personal branding. Notable sessions included guidance on interview mastery and soft skills, led by experienced professionals from industries like insurance, manufacturing, and HR. For more details, visit the workshop page.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)

Technological advancements, research, and sustainable infrastructure.

Green Building

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) integrates sustainable practices into its building infrastructure, focusing on creating eco-friendly and energy-efficient spaces that minimize environmental impact.

Green Walls

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) has incorporated "green walls" as part of its sustainability and environmental initiatives. These installations are designed to bring natural greenery into university spaces, contributing to improved air quality, temperature regulation, and an aesthetically pleasing environment. Green walls align with OUSL's commitment to environmental responsibility, reducing the urban heat island effect and promoting biodiversity in built spaces. This initiative also serves as an educational tool, showcasing sustainable architecture for students and visitors alike.

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality)

Education programs to address regional inequalities.

"Akura" program

The **"Akura"** program, organized by students from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at The Open University of Sri Lanka, was held from August 1–4 at Naulla Pubbiliya Junior School. This initiative focused on enhancing the educational environment by donating books, restructuring school facilities, and conducting teaching sessions for the students. The program aimed to foster learning opportunities and contribute to the community's educational development.

SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Eco-friendly campus development and green spaces.

Kandy Nature Connect

As part of our commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), our eco-friendly campus initiatives include dedicated efforts toward green space preservation and development. This year, Kandy Nature Connect took center stage, an initiative aimed at integrating native flora into our campus environment, creating biodiversity-friendly zones that mirror Kandy's natural landscape. By cultivating green corridors, enhancing tree canopies, and installing nature trails, we foster both ecological balance and a tranquil environment for students, staff, and visitors. This initiative not only supports biodiversity but also serves as a green lung, helping offset carbon footprints and inspiring sustainable practices within our campus community.

SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)

Waste management and recycling initiatives.

Waste Collection Program & Shramadana Campaign

Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, the Centre for Environmental Studies and Sustainable Development (CESSD) at the Open University of Sri Lanka launched impactful initiatives focusing on waste management and sustainable practices.

The Waste Collection Programme, part of the university's 'Less Plastic Movement' campaign, established designated waste collection points across campus, enabling students and staff to responsibly dispose of electronic waste, plastics, paper, glass, and metals from both campus and home.

This initiative, held from October 3rd to 21st, 2024, included educational sessions on the 3R principles (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), fostering awareness about environmentally responsible waste disposal.

Further supporting SDG 12, CESSD organized a Shramadana Campaign on October 21, 2024, which engaged students and faculty in a community clean-up effort. Participants gathered and separated waste, which was then handed over to Cleantech Pvt. Ltd., an accredited recycling partner, ensuring all collected materials were responsibly recycled. These initiatives illustrate the university's commitment to sustainability through responsible waste management and community-driven environmental stewardship.

SDG 13 (Climate Action)

Carbon footprint reduction and climate awareness.

Tree Planting Program

In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 13, Climate Action, our institution is dedicated to reducing its carbon footprint through proactive climate awareness and green initiatives.

A major highlight this year was the Tree Planting Program, aimed at enhancing campus green cover while contributing to carbon sequestration efforts. By strategically planting native and drought-resistant tree species across campus, we strive to create a long-term carbon sink that not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also fosters biodiversity.

Accompanying these efforts were climate awareness sessions that engaged students, staff, and the community on the importance of reducing carbon footprints. These sessions emphasized practical steps individuals and institutions can take to mitigate climate change, further empowering participants to contribute to sustainable climate solutions. Through tree planting and education, we reaffirm our commitment to climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

SDG 14 (Life Below Water)

Efforts in water conservation and pollution control.

Rainwater Harvesting Systems

Supporting Sustainable Development Goal 14, *Life Below Water*, the Open University of Sri Lanka is advancing water conservation through the implementation of rainwater harvesting systems. Installed at the CRC and CESSD buildings, these systems efficiently collect and store rainwater, reducing reliance on external water sources and lowering operational costs. The harvested rainwater is repurposed for daily gardening, car washing, and toilet flushing, exemplifying the university's commitment to sustainable resource management. This initiative not only alleviates local water scarcity but also minimizes the environmental impact, aligning with global sustainability efforts to protect aquatic ecosystems.

SDG 15 (Life on Land)

Biodiversity preservation and ecosystem restoration.

Botanical Society (BOTSOC)

In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 15, Life on Land, the Open University of Sri Lanka is dedicated to biodiversity preservation and ecosystem restoration through various initiatives, including the establishment of a Biodiversity Garden and the active engagement of the Botanical Society (BOTSOC). Since its inception in 2010, BOTSOC has fostered a passion for plant sciences among students and staff by organizing activities that stimulate interest in botany and promote academic excellence.

The society serves as a platform for the exchange of ideas between academia and industry experts, facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing in the field of plant sciences. Through its efforts, BOTSOC not only enhances understanding of local biodiversity but also contributes to the university's commitment to fostering sustainable practices. Collectively, these initiatives play a crucial role in promoting ecosystem health and raising awareness about the importance of preserving our natural heritage

Butterfly Garden

At the Open University of Sri Lanka, the Butterfly Garden stands as a symbol of commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land), focusing on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration. This garden is not only a habitat for a variety of butterfly species but also serves as a valuable educational tool for students and visitors, raising awareness about local biodiversity and the importance of conservation efforts.

For more information on this and other sustainability initiatives at the Open University of Sri Lanka, you can visit OUSL's official site.

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

Governance practices promoting inclusivity and transparency.

As a leading institution in open and distance learning, the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is committed to creating an equitable learning environment that fosters justice, peace, and inclusivity. The university prioritizes accessibility to education for all, including underserved communities, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to learn and thrive, regardless of socioeconomic background, ethnicity, or gender. Through its diverse programs, outreach efforts, and initiatives focused on social responsibility, OUSL is dedicated to building an empowered society that champions fairness, ethical practices, and mutual respect—fundamental components for achieving sustainable development and a harmonious society.

In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, OUSL actively engages in programs that enhance students' understanding of social justice issues, ethical leadership, and community responsibility. The university integrates themes of social justice, equality, and peace into its curriculum to foster a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable society. By cultivating these values, OUSL aims to produce graduates who contribute positively to society and advocate for peace and inclusivity in both their personal and professional lives.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Collaborations with local and international partners for sustainable development projects.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals, the Open University of Sri Lanka actively engages in collaborative efforts with local and international partners to promote sustainable development. Notable initiatives include the International Research Conference, the International Conference on Circular Economy and Sustainable Ecosystems, and the Faculty of Engineering Technology Student Academic Conference and many more.

These conferences serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and collaborative research, bringing together scholars, industry experts, and students from diverse backgrounds to discuss innovative solutions to pressing environmental challenges. By fostering partnerships across borders, we not only enhance academic discourse but also work towards practical, sustainable outcomes that address global issues. These collaborations underscore our commitment to integrating sustainability into academic practices and driving collective action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.