



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Waste Management Report

2026

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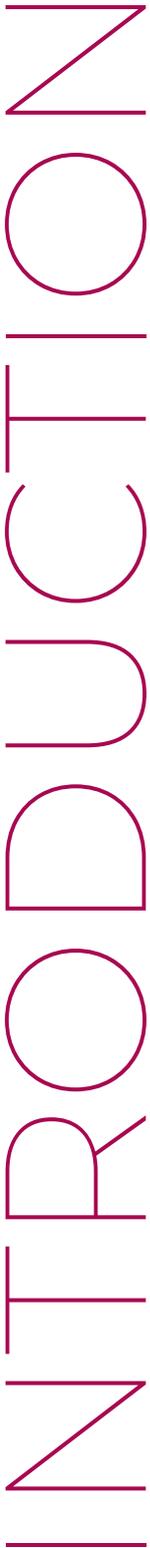
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Sustainability is a core pillar of the University of Galway Strategy. Our Sustainability team will soon be publishing an updated Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 which will outline some goals in terms of waste reduction, reuse and recycling. . The Buildings & Estates team will play a key role on this journey.

Waste management is a key priority for students and staff and perhaps the most visible day-to-day environmental issue on campus. Over the years we have worked hard to put in place benchmarks, collect accurate data and start monitoring how we use, recycle and dispose of waste on campus. In line with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG12) we are committed to **responsible consumption & production**.

We are proud to have retained 1st place in Ireland in the Times Impact Rankings for SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption) in 2025, the fourth year in a row!

Prior to 2021, our waste data was not presenting a full picture of waste on campus, as it did not include our Canteens and Student Residences, as these are managed by separate companies. However from the start of 2022 we have incorporated these figures to develop a whole of campus picture of the waste usage.

This report outlines the University's performance in the calendar year 2025, **current policies**, future **initiatives** and **commitments** with regards to sustainable waste management. By improving waste practices and behaviors we aim to conserve natural resources, make cost savings and improve waste awareness amongst our students and staff.

Performance Overview

Since 2022 we have unified all waste data collection across the entire campus. Before this we monitored the waste data at the Main Campus (Teaching venues, offices and labs) separately to the catering venues and student residences. This is enabling us to view the full picture of waste on campus and identify areas for improvement. After a dip in 2024 due to the onboarding of the new Dun Linn student residences and a reduction across our main teaching venues, our recycling rate is now back over 50%.

Whole Campus

After a drop in 2024, we refocused attention on the areas which performed poor and we seen our main campus recycling rate increase substantially, pushing the overall rate up to an impressive 51.5%. However there are still plenty of areas for improvement.

Overall Recycling Rate			
2022	2023	2024	2025
52%	51%	47%	52%



University of Galway Waste Data 2025

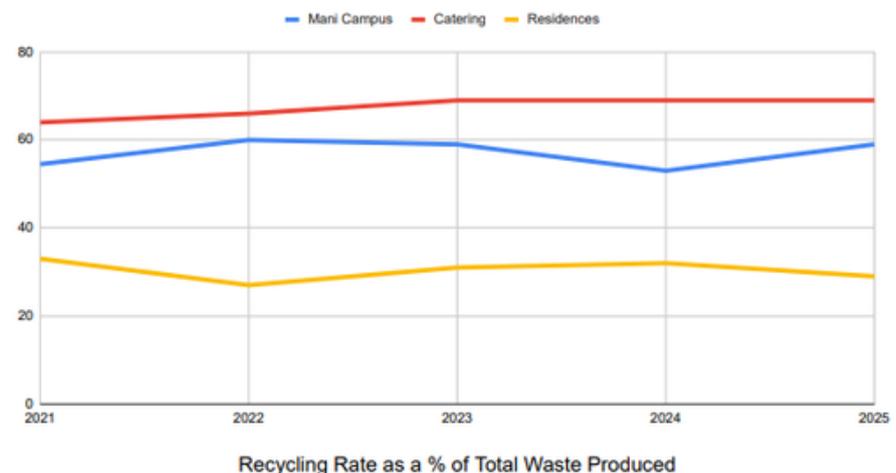
Overall Recycling Rate: **51.58%**

	Whole Campus Combined - 2025 Data													Avg. Monthly Weight
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Year To Date	
Waste Recovered	31,552	33,110	38,056	35,900	39,303	27,151	30,813	26,866	34,237	42,324	39,215	32,937	411,464	34,655
Mixed Recyclables	14,642	19,348	17,317	19,846	19,405	16,978	15,470	13,990	21,351	23,582	19,385	16,652	217,966	17,788
Glass	3,953	3,082	5,658	3,324	5,055	3,915	3,666	2,632	4,731	4,933	6,230	5,170	52,349	4,004
Organic / Green Waste	15,267	11,016	12,217	5,795	5,161	5,276	13,225	10,836	7,270	8,275	7,596	17,342	119,276	11,074
Confidential Shredding	5,540	2,240	1,090	1,780	1,740	4,810	8,150	4,350	3,790	1,250	2,420	1,750	38,910	2,663
WEEE	1,620	650	280	498	745	1,375	0	1,585	850	1,310	810	120	9,843	
Total	72,574	69,446	74,618	67,143	71,409	59,505	71,324	60,259	72,229	81,674	75,656	73,971	849,808	70,183
Recycling Rate	56.52%	52.32%	49.00%	46.53%	44.96%	54.37%	56.80%	55.42%	52.60%	48.18%	48.17%	55.47%	51.58%	

Breakdown of Performance by Area/Zone:

This chart shows the recycling rate per area over the past 5 years.

Performance by Area



Main Campus (Teaching, Research, Labs & Staff Offices)

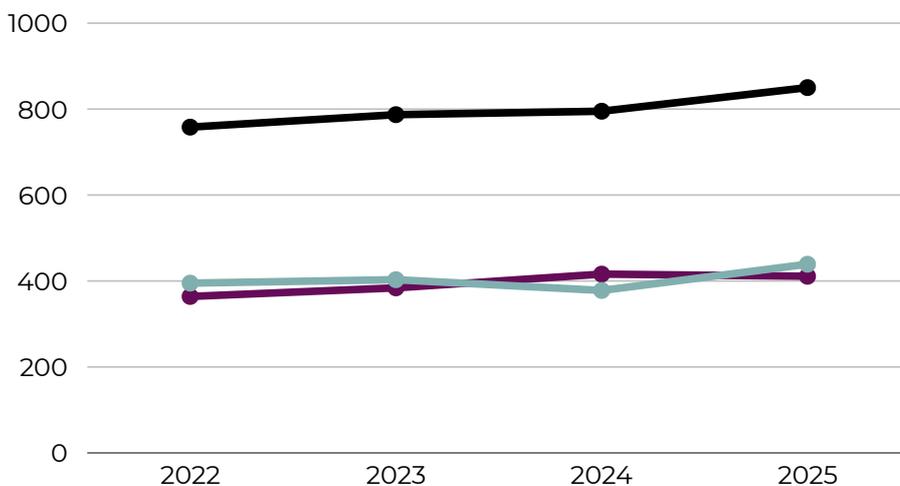
On the main campus, after a disappointing drop in recycling rate in 2024, we bounced back to close to 60% in 2025, after a renewed focus on lab and office recycling and each school and unit being encouraged to refocus their efforts.

General Campus	January	February	March	April	May	June
Waste Recovered	15,118	13,662	15,862	16,096	15,235	12,637
Mixed Recyclables	9,134	12,935	9,978	12,476	12,364	11,459
Glass	2,292	1,091	2,391	1,124	2,768	2,815
Organic / Green Waste	8,640	4,460	4,320	0	0	0
Confidential Shredding	5,540	2,240	1,090	1,780	1,740	4,810
WEEE	1,620	650	280	498	745	1,375
Total	42,344	35,038	33,921	31,974	32,852	33,096
Recycling Rate	64.30%	61.01%	53.24%	49.66%	53.63%	61.82%

July	August	September	October	November	December	Year To Date
12,067	10,881	15,354	18,967	16,652	11,816	174,347
10,040	8,732	13,093	14,862	10,617	9,138	134,828
2,269	1,852	2,198	2,253	3,632	3,292	27,977
5,380	6,420	0	0	0	0	29,220
8,150	4,350	3,790	1,250	2,420	1,750	38,910
0	1,585	850	1,310	810	120	9,843
37,906	33,820	35,285	38,642	34,131	26,116	405,282
68.17%	67.83%	56.49%	50.92%	51.21%	54.76%	59.41%

Waste Volumes

This chart demonstrated the total volume of waste produced in tonnes, the amount recycled and the amount directed to waste recovery.



Total Waste

Total amount of waste produced on campus

Waste to Recovery

General Waste sent to energy recovery facility

Mixed Recycling

Mixed recycling, glass, organic waste & WEEE

Restaurants, Bars & Cafes

Catering partners are required to abide by our Waste Management Policies and track the amount of waste they produce as well as the recycling rate. Each venue must provide for food & mixed recycling bins as well as general waste at a minimum and provide adequate signage. A lot of hard work has gone in to increasing the recycling rate across the bars, cafes and restaurants and this rate has remained steady at 69% in 2025.

Canteens	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
Waste Recovered	5,215	6,099	6,275	5,250	5,177	4,781
Mixed Recycling	3,646	4,786	5,327	4,846	4,178	3,651
Organic / Food Waste	5,316	4,983	5,545	4,377	4,055	4,594
Glass	840	700	1,890	1,330	980	630
Cardboard	635	750	860	860	305	325
Total	15,652	17,318	19,897	16,663	14,695	13,981
Recycling Rate	66.68%	64.78%	68.46%	68.49%	64.77%	65.80%

JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Year To Date
5,468	3,849	7,544	8,638	8,028	5,685	72,009
4,118	3,843	5,528	6,431	5,810	4,827	56,991
7,415	3,892	5,818	5,713	5,270	4,650	61,628
910	350	1,750	1,750	1,540	630	13,300
965	430	755	1555	1010	770	9,220
18,876	12,364	21,395	24,087	21,658	16,562	203,928
71.03%	68.87%	64.74%	64.14%	62.93%	65.67%	69.21%

Student Residences

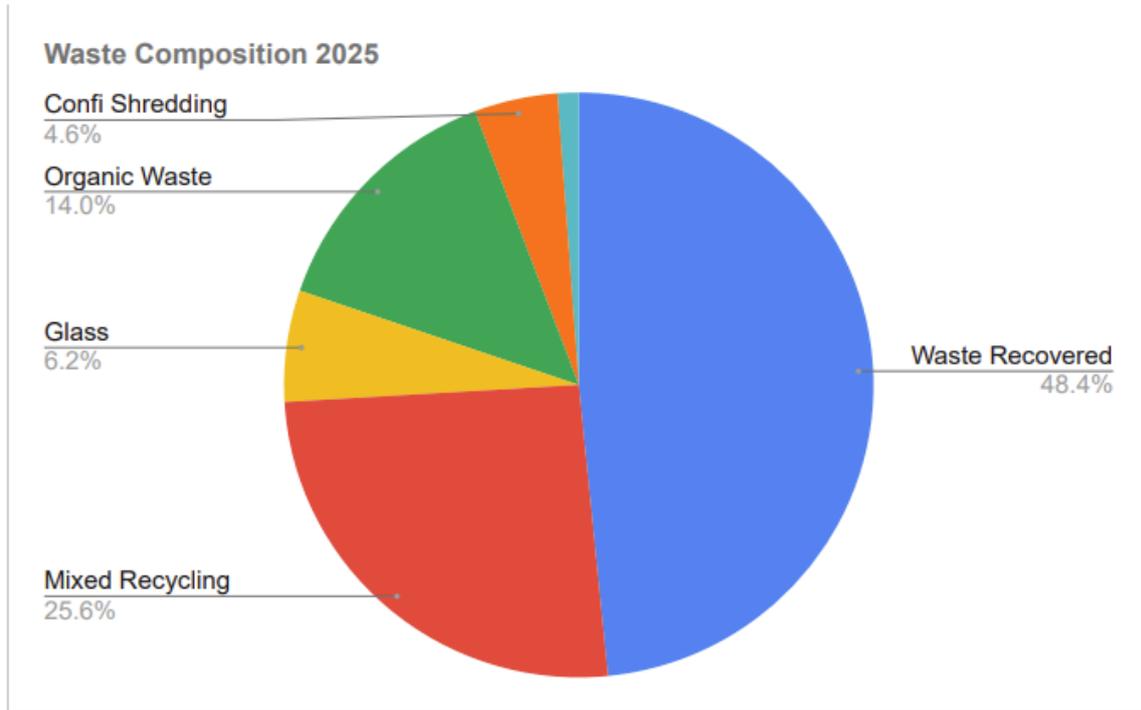
The student residences were included in our overall waste data for the first time in 2022. A new complex of 625 beds was added in September 2023 which increased the waste volumes produced. Despite the increased student numbers the total volume of waste reduced from 241 tonnes in 2024 to 231 tonnes in 2025, a significant improvement considering increased student numbers. The recycling rate has remained low, dropping to 28% in 2025 from 32% last year however the management team at Atalia are currently implementing several initiatives which should see this rate increase over the coming years.

Residences	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
Waste Recovered	11219	13349	15919	14554	18891	9733
Mixed Recycling	1862	1627	2012	2524	2863	1868
Glass	821	1291	1377	870	1307	470
Organic / Food Waste	1311	1573	2352	1418	1106	682
Total	15213	17840	21660	19366	24167	12753
Recycling Rate	26.25%	25.17%	26.51%	24.85%	21.83%	23.68%

JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Year To Date
13278	12136	11339	14719	14535	15436	165,108
1312	1415	2730	2289	2958	2687	26,147
487	430	783	930	1058	1248	11,072
430	524	1452	2562	2326	12692	28,428
15507	14505	16304	20500	20877	32063	230,755
14.37%	16.33%	30.45%	28.20%	30.38%	51.86%	28.45%

Waste Composition 2025

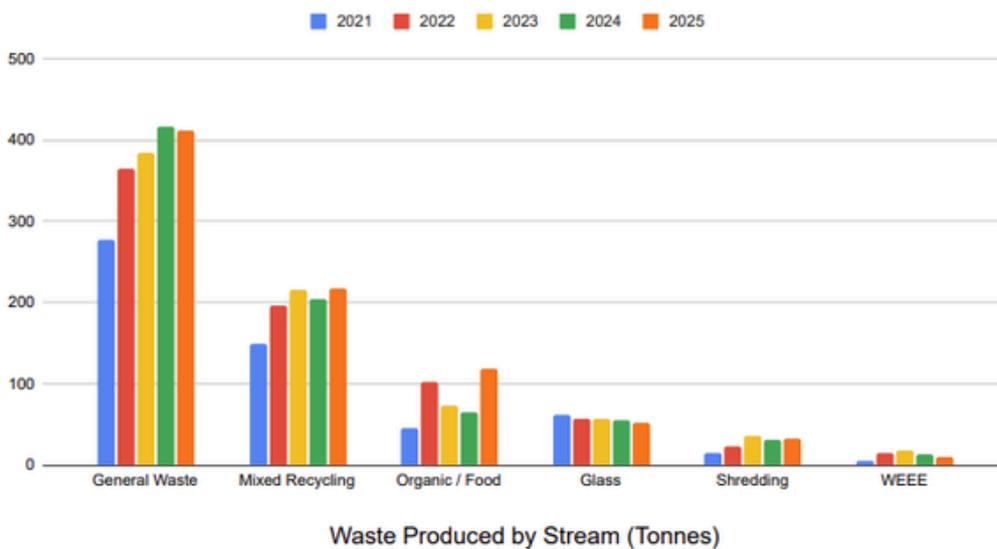
Breakdown of Waste Streams



Trend Analysis

Review of performance over the past 5 years by waste stream

Waste Stream Performance: Past 5 Years



51.5%

Our average recycling in 2024

CURRENT PROCESSES

Across campus, a huge volume and variety of waste is produced and managed by our internal team and external partners.



General Waste

Our primary waste contractors Barna Waste collect the general waste streams across campus, extract valuable materials at their local processing facility, then ship the remainder to a 'waste-to-energy' facility in Europe. This energy is captured for electricity generation.

Recycling

There are hundreds of mixed recycling bins internally and externally across campus. These are collected and then sorted into cardboard, plastic and glass, before being broken down / baled and shipped to specialist facilities for reproduction into new goods.



Organic Waste

At present we provide for organic food waste collection in our canteens, cafes and restaurants. Much of this ends up back at our waste contractor Barna Waste who operate the only large composting facility in the area. A substantial volume of food waste is collected both from the kitchens during preparation and leftovers from customers in the canteens.



Glass & Cans

Glass bottle recycling banks and an aluminium recycling facility are located on South Campus opposite the Orbsen Building and North Campus beside the entrance to Corrib Village. Our waste contractor collects and processes these locally.



WEEE Waste

WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) is anything that has a plug or a battery and is at the end of its useful life. The B&E team collect WEEE waste across campus. This process allows valuable resources including plastics, metals and glass to be recovered for further use in manufacturing, and ensures hazardous waste is disposed of safely helping to protect our environment.

Hazardous Waste

A wide variety of work is carried on across campus, especially in research buildings where different varieties of hazardous waste are produced. As such, each unit uses their expertise and takes responsibility for organising the safe disposal of the hazardous / chemical waste they produce.



Shredding

DGD Shredding are our contractors who facilitate the disposal of confidential material across the campus. Lockable consoles are available in each building where staff can dispose of confidential material. This is collected and processed by DGD at their Limerick facility.

Recycling Initiatives

Campus Wide Ban on Disposable Coffee Cups

Eliminating all disposal cups from September 2024

In September 2024, University of Galway eliminated single-use cups from all campus catering outlets. This follows the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate which requires public sector bodies to "cease using disposable cups, plates and cutlery". As part of this process, dishwashers and self-wash stations were installed in key areas around the campus. We are encouraging the campus community to:

- Bring your reusable hot beverage cup to campus. Cup washers have been installed throughout campus to help you keep your cup clean. All incoming first years have received a free reusable cup. Travel mugs can also be purchased at the SU Shop.
- Order your beverage in a ceramic mug, available in most campus catering outlets. Please leave the ceramic mug in the catering outlet.



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Reusable cups

In support of our sustainability mission, all campus catering outlets have stopped using disposable cups. Help us to reduce waste on campus with a reusable cup.



Use a ceramic cup.
Please leave the cup in the catering outlet.



Or bring your own reusable cup.
Try out the cup washers around campus.

Student Residences Initiatives

Atalia Student Residences DAC, which manages the student residences at University of Galway, has been making substantial efforts in the area of sustainability. Its first Sustainability Champion programme was launched ahead of the 2024-25 academic year and is proving to be a success. The team's role is to support Atalia in achieving its sustainability targets by increasing awareness amongst its 1800 residents and encouraging best practice in the area of sustainability.



- **New Signage:** A range of colour-coded bin signage was sourced, for display in all three villages, to create awareness and encourage sustainable behaviour around waste segregation.
- **Tent Card:** A tent card was designed and made available in rooms to promote sustainable behaviour amongst summer guests, with one side promoting the re-use of towels and the other encouraging mindfulness around water use.
- **Re-turn** bottle vending machine is up and running. Students can exchange their aluminum drink cans and plastic bottles for vouchers which can be exchanged for goods or cash in Day Today (Corrib Village shop).

Although total waste volumes are reducing, more efforts are required to encourage our student resident community to increase their recycling rate and reduce their waste where possible. We are continuously seeking to implement new initiatives such as the above that can empower our students to reduce their waste while living on campus.

Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2025

Rank	Name	Responsible consumption and production	Overall
17	University of Galway Ireland	91.2	91.3
30	University of Limerick Ireland	88.2	90.9
81	RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences Ireland	83.5	79.4-83.6
101-200	Dublin City University Ireland	74.0-82.3	83.7-89.4
101-200	University College Cork Ireland	74.0-82.3	83.7-89.4

The University of Galway retained its position as the number one University in Ireland for Sustainable Development and Responsible Waste Consumption in 2024. We dropped a few places to no.17 for Responsible Waste Consumption. Each year we submit to the Times Impact Survey our waste data and Waste Report, and from this they determine our performance in comparison to over 2000 other universities across the world.



We will be working hard to maintain and improve upon this ranking in the coming years, and becoming a global leader in the Responsible Production & Consumption category of the SDGs.

TARGETS

Review of 2025

University of Galway is committed to setting and achieving ambitious targets in terms of waste management. Lets start off by reviewing the targets set out in our 2024 Waste Report:

01

Increase Residences Recycling

At 28% the recycling rate at our student residences is still far too low and we hoped to breach 30% in 2025.. We will be working with the management company to introduce new infrastructure and awareness schemes to improve this figure dramatically in the next couple of years.

Not there yet!

02

Increase Total Recycling Rate to 55% by 2025

As the recycling rate on the main campus and restaurants is 60% and 65% respectively, we believe that by improving recycling at the Residences will help us achieve this target in the next two years. We achieved an overall recycling rate of 52% in 2025 which is a big improvement and step in the right direction.

Not there yet!

03

Reduce Total Volume of Waste by 5%

Our waste volumes actually seen a sizeable tick upwards in 2025, mostly due to increased volumes at the catering venues. Our Sustainability team will be working with catering partners, residences and schools to try to reduce total waste over the coming years.

Not there yet!

TARGETS

Targets for 2026

Below is our top targets for the calendar year 2025 coming up. We have kept last years targets as none had been reached, and added a further target relating to organic / green waste:

01

Increase Residences Recycling to 35%

We believe a concerted effort by resident students with support from residences management and Sustainability Office can help drive the recycling rate up substantially in the coming years. We would like to see an increase to 35% in 2026, and over 40% by 2030.

02

Increase Total Recycling Rate to 55%

As the recycling rate on the main campus and restaurants is 60% and 65% respectively, we believe that by improving recycling at the Residences will help us achieve this target and help us on our way to achieving 55% recycling rate in 2030.

03

Reduce Total Volume of Waste by 5%

We will be working with the catering partners and residences management to explore ways we can reduce the amount of waste across campus through various initiatives

CONCLUSION

The results of the waste data for the University of Galway in 2025 show a healthy improvement with an overall recycling rate increase from 47% to 52%. However, we do note a considerable increase in total waste volume, most of this being attributed to the catering venues. We also note a decrease in recycling rate from the student residences. Our focus in the coming years therefore will be to encourage more recycling in the residences and also to drive down the total volumes by working with the caterers and schools to find and eliminate waste at source where possible.

We will be carrying out a Waste Characterization Survey later this year and the results of which will help us to further hone our attention on waste streams that are not being recycled and ending up in the general waste.

The University has launched a new Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 and in it we will be committing to a 55% Recycling Rate target for 2030 and a total waste volume reduction of below 800 tones.

We look forward to working with our colleagues in the Sustainability Office, Heads of Schools, Residences Management and Catering partners to deliver these ambitious targets over the coming years.

We thank you for your continued cooperation in helping University of Galway to become a world leading green & sustainable campus through responsible waste practices

BUILDINGS & ESTATES

For further information on the details within this report or to discuss how you or your department can help us in managing waste on campus please reach out below.

Michael Wallace
Building & Estates
michael.wallace@universityofgalway.ie