

Waste Plan 2022-2030



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Overview of issues

An audit of public-facing waste bins was conducted on site of a sample of buildings in May and June of 2021. Amongst the many findings, the most striking were:

- We are only diverting two thirds of recycling by weight.
- Organics make up one third of landfill, with a further 15% being 'compostable' items that could easily be diverted.
- 78% of compostable packaging is being disposed of to landfill rather than to compostable packaging bins.

This Plan

This Plan was developed by the Sustainability Office with input from the Logistics team. It is designed to provide clarity regarding waste reduction initiatives.

Waste tonnages over time

It is important to understand that in the context of our total waste system, recycling and organics are now negligible components. Recycling, in particular, has decreased massively over the last seven years, largely as a result of the so-called 'China Sword' policy which has seen a significant shake up of the recycling industry internationally.

Greenwaste (grounds waste), coal ash and landfill make up the majority. Therefore, with respect to the 2021 audit, which focused on contamination of publicly facing waste streams, the waste stream to consider most closely is landfill. In addition, we note that greenwaste figures, which have climbed significantly since 2013 due to operational issues, is set to reduce somewhat. Coal ash, climbing as new buildings have come online, will be eliminated in 2023.

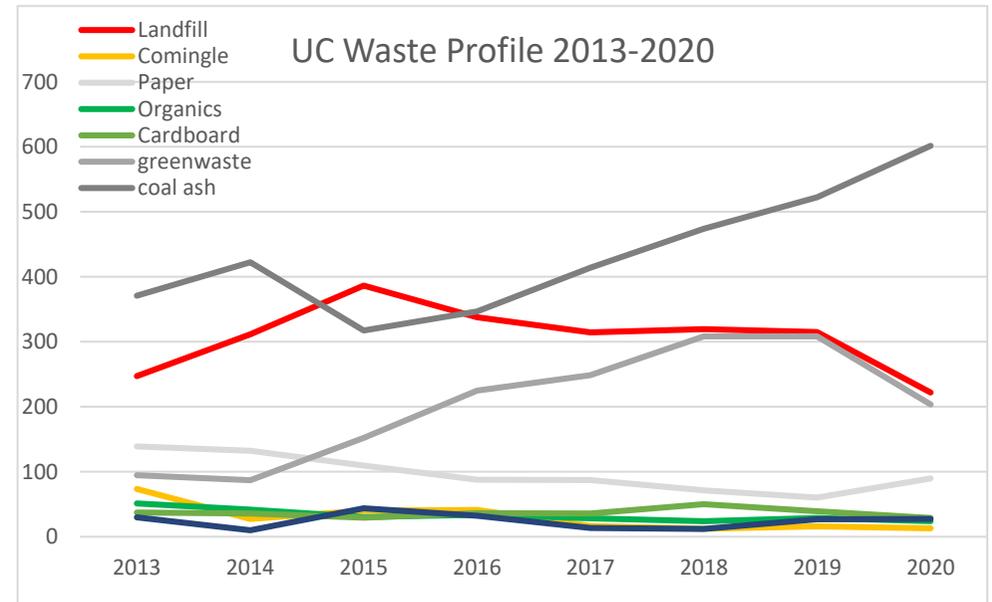


Figure 1: UC Waste Profile 2013-2020 (Absolute figures, Tonnes)

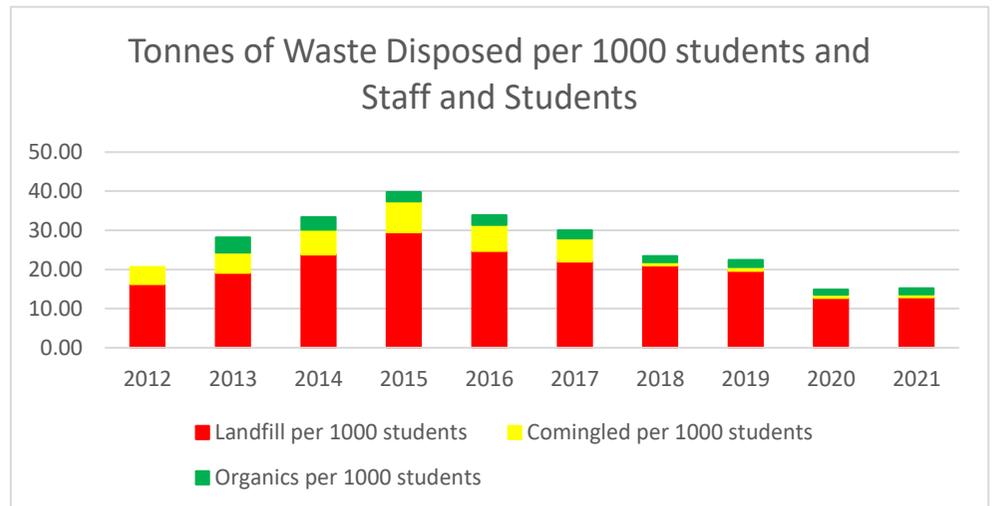


Figure 2: UC Waste Profile 2013-2020 (Tonnes per 1000 students and staff)

Diversification rates over time

As Figure 2 shows, landfill tonnage in absolute terms has been reducing steadily over time, since 2015. This is even the case as student and staff numbers grow (Figure 2). It is essential we continue this downward trend, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because landfill levies are increasing dramatically and will continue to do so over the next several years.

Contamination rates over time

The 2021 waste audit indicated that the gains seen in 2017 have been lost (Figure 3). The contents of the landfill bins and recycling bins have both become more mixed.

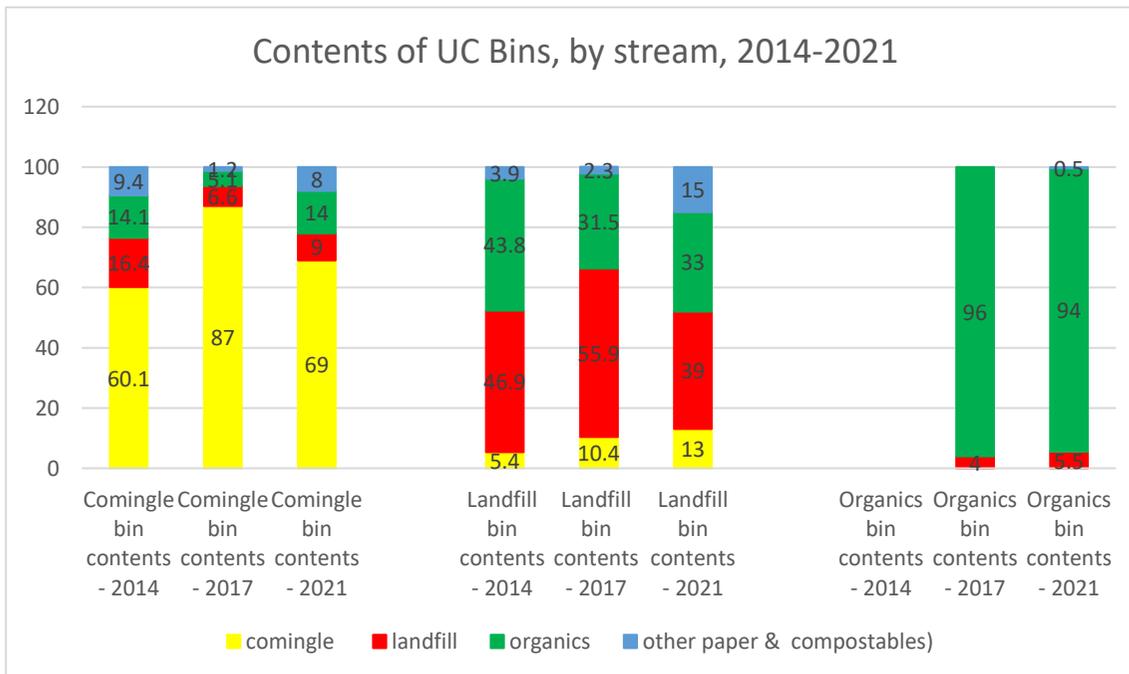


Figure 3: Contents of UC Bins, by Stream, 2014-2021

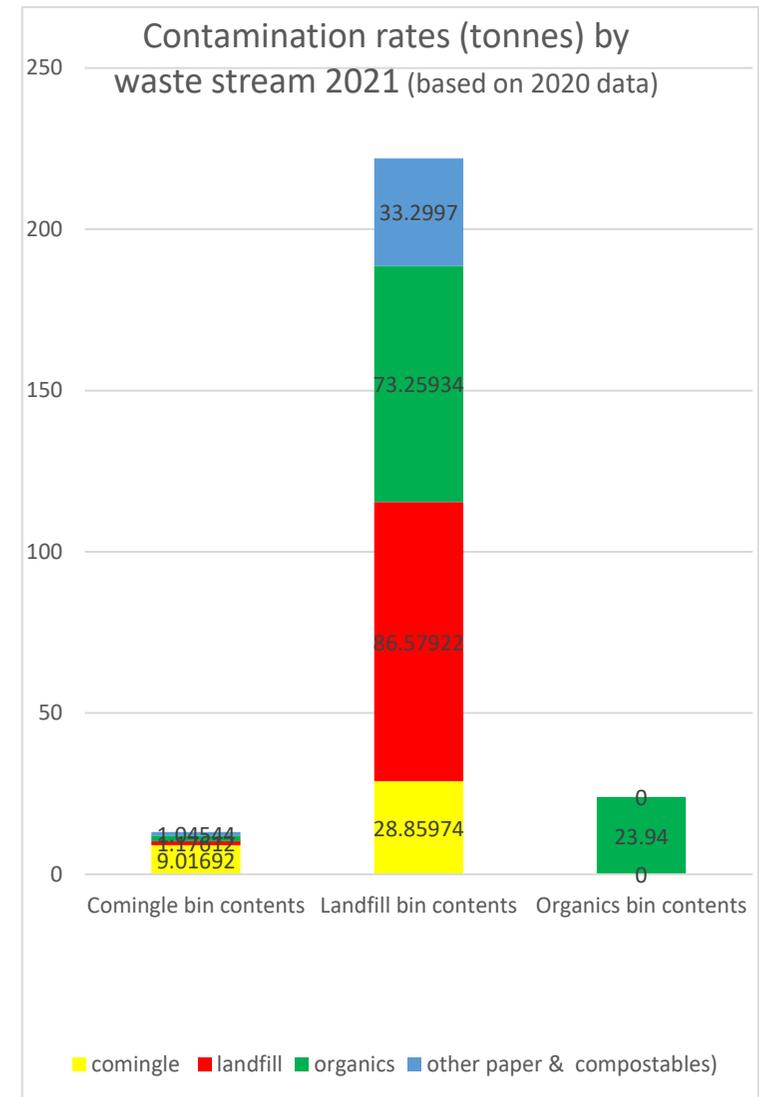


Figure 4: Contents of UC Bins, by Stream, 2014-2021 (Extrapolated to whole of UC)

Of particular concern is the growing amount of organics in the recycling bins, along with compostable packaging. Both of these items are contaminants that could cause the rejection of recycling loads.

Likewise, organics is more prevalent in landfill bins. Along with this, the vast majority (78%) of compostable packaging is ending up in landfill, which completely defeats the purpose of its introduction. The problem of landfill contents is far greater than either comingle or organics.

Strategy Blocks and the UC Waste Plan

The updated UC Waste Plan 2019-2024 does not contain firm targets, which impedes the ability to set strategy and stick to it. It is used here as a guide. The UC Strategic Vision, contained in the software Strategy Blocks, gives plentiful direction for waste reduction matters, along with firm dates. It does not contain many targets, except for a reduction of single-use plastic items by 20% by 2025, and increasing this to 50% by 2030. This is an important part of the picture, but targets for waste reduction need to be set that contextualise instruments such as procurement plans and lease arrangements that would control how much single-use plastic was brought onto campus.

Proposed targets are included here based on extensive discussions with our waste services provider and external waste consultant, and relevant UC staff.

In considering these targets, we have reviewed the projected growth figures for UC, and have built our targets around these. They show clearly that reducing landfill waste by 20% (by EFTS and FTEs) by 2030, we will still be disposing of the same amount of landfill waste. 20% reduction should therefore be considered a minimum target; we have proposed a 25% reduction by (2026). To achieve this, further investment will need to be made.

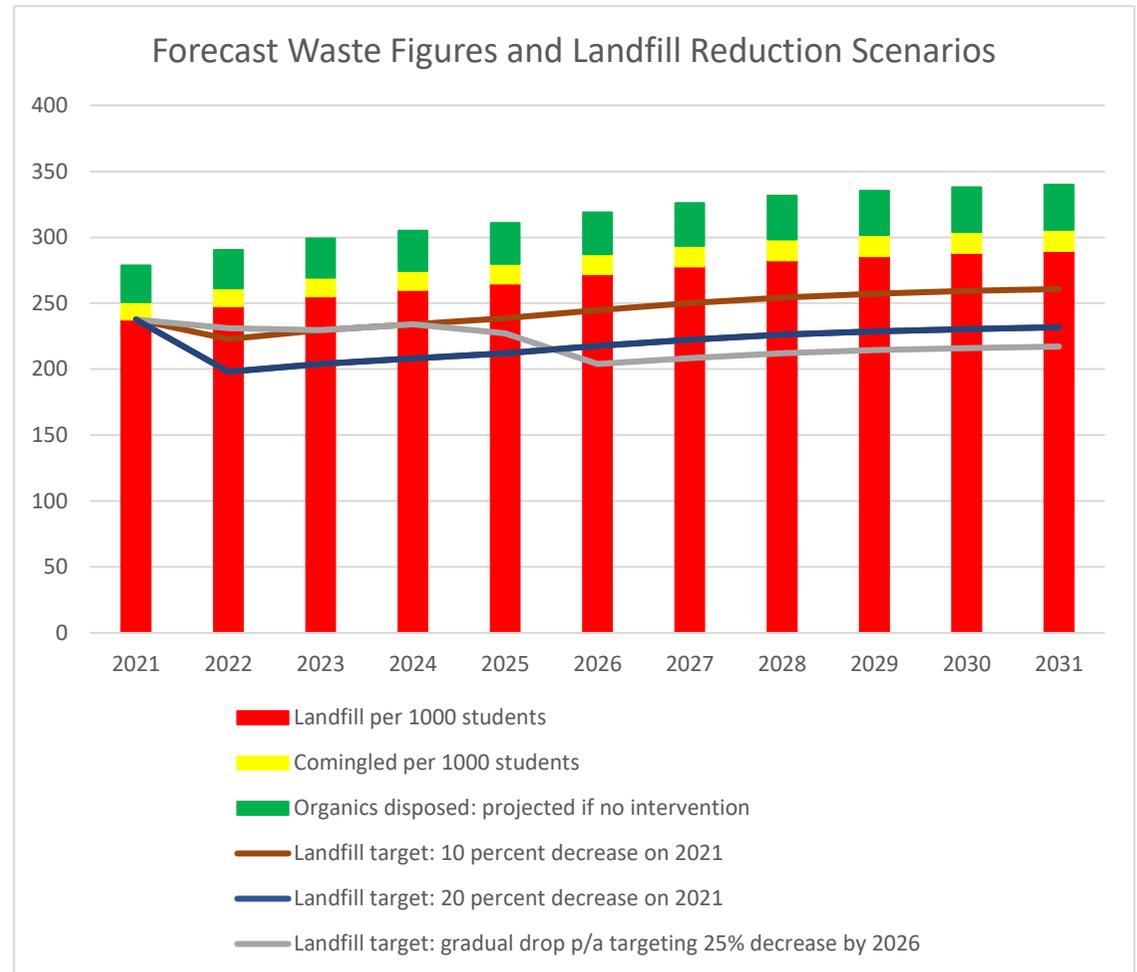


Figure 5: Projected Landfill, recycling and organics tonnages, based on projected increase in student and staff numbers, with proposed landfill reduction targets

Priority Areas

Proposed targets and suggested strategies

Target 1 Landfill waste stream to be composed of at least 75% 'clean landfill' by 2024 (i.e. a maximum of 25% of this stream to be made up of items that could have been diverted) (measured by annual audit)

- Work with café and food truck vendors to ensure they understand and comply with waste system
- Review UC purchasing
- Review café purchasing
- Ban polystyrene cups and clamshells
- Signage and campaign around compostable packaging and its proper disposal to be enhanced
- Increase number of compostable packaging bins around campus

Target 2 Contamination of comingled recycling stream to be no greater than 25% by 2024 (measured by annual audit)

- Recycling signage upgraded
- Implement communications plan, including video content

Target 3 Retain or improve on 94% clean organics stream by 2024 (measured by annual audit)

- Continue education campaign around organics
- Work to upgrade this system, as new options become available, including exploring and costing all logistical issues associated with any possible change

Target 4 Clean landfill rate drops by 25% by 2026 (measured against EFTS)

- Review food waste bin distribution and education, aiming to increase food waste diversion from landfill to organics
- Enhanced focus on waste education and promotions
- Work with our waste services provider and other players in the waste industry to identify further strategies to increase diversion rates

Target 5 Single use plastic bottle disposal drops by 20% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 (measured by annual audit against EFTS)

- Look to promote cans over plastic bottles
- Scope ban on plastic bottles
- Consider communications plan to help reduce plastics coming in from off site