

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT 2020

We keep on working to make the University of Amsterdam
a greener place – also in times of Covid-19



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01 INTRODUCTION

The UvA Green Office was established in 2016. Since then, the Green Office has continuously increased its output of policy recommendations and projects to accelerate the sustainable transition at the UvA, especially with respect to environmental sustainability. The Green Office is a student-run platform integrated in the UvA's institutional structure. Together, four team leaders, one general manager and a number of voluntary student members work under the supervision of one central staff member (bestuurstaf), Ewout Doorman, and in extension under the board of directors (College van Bestuur) (CvB) of the UvA.

Over the past four years the UvA Green Office has overseen substantial growth in community engagement, resource allocation and fundamental changes around sustainability at the UvA. This growth had been planned and met by the Green Office based on the speed of climate change.

However, in the last 6 months all planned timelines and growth of the UvA Green Office have been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. The global pandemic has changed the way we live, study and work for all students and staff at the UvA.

The mission of UvA Green Office which states, “we integrate sustainability in research, education and make our campuses sustainable” remains valid during these difficult times. The UvA Green Office team understands that every day spent in the fight against climate change is vital.

Therefore, the Green Office continues its operations as much as possible despite the challenging circumstances.

Due to the nature of the current pandemic, operations such as sustainability on campuses and physical events became impossible to realize. Consequently, the resources from these operations were re-prioritized and re-invested into other operations which could better utilize these resources such as operations relating to research, education and online communications.

This report summarizes the efforts, obstacles, outcomes and successes of the UvA Green Office between February and July 2020.



Satyam Kathpalia,
UvA Green Office General Manager

02 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

ROLES

The UvA Green Office has four levels in its organizational structure, each performing its own role in working on the united vision of making the university a more sustainable place.

Supervision

The supervisor, Ewout Doorman, is the link between the UvA Green Office and the University of Amsterdam. The supervisor supports the Green Office wherever needed and makes sure it performs optimally and sufficiently within the university.

Management

The manager, Sat Kathpalia, is responsible for all the actions of the members of the UvA Green Office and makes sure everything goes according to plan. To achieve this, the manager determines the general strategy of the Green Office. In addition to this, the manager monitors the progress of the current projects and the work of the Portfolio Holders. The manager also decides on the expenses so that the allotted budget is used optimally.



Team leads

Team leaders are an essential part of the Green Office. Together, the five core members spend a considerable amount of time on devising the long-term strategy, and driving policy change at the UvA. In addition, they manage the Green Office members. They motivate members by organizing social events and provide opportunities to develop skills and knowledge, for example through workshops.

Members

The Green Office has members consisting of students. The members work on creating and implementing projects individually or in small teams. As the Green Office aims at increasing its impact, it encourages its members to take on projects themselves.

02 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

TEAMS



The UvA Green Office consists of four different teams. Each team, which consists of one team leader and 5-10 voluntary members, has its own focus and addresses a different part of sustainability within the University of Amsterdam (UvA). One general manager oversees the four teams and constitutes the link to the central UvA staff and partners.

During the academic year 2019/2020, the role of the manager is filled by Satyam Kathpalia (left), who is overseeing the work of the team leaders Feikje Visser (Campus), Leonard Furth (Community), Julia Dalibor (Communications), and Vincent Nalbach (Research & Education).

02 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

TEAMS



Campus

The Campus team leader aims to improve sustainability of the buildings and facilities of the university. This includes topics such as waste separation and reduction, catering and energy. In cooperation with Facility Services and other UvA parties, the sustainability at UvA's campuses is improved, and students are engaged in the progress.

Community

The Community team leader engages UvA staff and students in community building events, which foster awareness and sustainable behavior. This is done in coordination with external partners and with the other team leaders.

Research & Education

The Research & Education team leader promotes sustainability in research and education at the UvA. This means both engaging students and researchers, but also providing a platform for current initiatives. The team leader's activities include organizing symposia and Green Talks.

Communications

The Communications team leader is responsible for communicating the achievements and activities of the UvA Green Office, e.g. via the website, the blog or the monthly published newsletter. Also part of the job is the establishment of internal links between all teams.

03 OUR PROJECTS

3.1 CAMPUS

3.2 COMMUNITY

3.3 RESEARCH & EDUCATION

3.4 COMMUNICATIONS

3.5 OTHER



3.1 CAMPUS

As holds for the other UvA Green Office teams as well, for the campus team this semester has been a bit different than other semesters, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Unfortunately, this has also meant that many projects of the campus team were to be cancelled or put on hold, which has been the case for, among others, the planned waste event, the second-hand market for household appliances, the renting system project and the e-waste recycling project. Nevertheless, the team has certainly not been sitting around doing nothing. We have tried to still make as much sustainability progress as possible!

With the whole UvA Green Office, we organized an online brainstorm to think of ideas to keep the UvA Green Office running while staying at home. This has led to an increase in the amount of online content of all the teams. As campus team, we organized two online workshops, and an online trash-picking challenge.

DIY Worm Hotel Workshop

The campus team hosted two online workshops via Instagram. The first campus workshop was a DIY worm hotel workshop. In this video workshop, students could learn how to make their own worm hotel to start composting their kitchen scraps at home.

The workshop was posted on the 28th of April and can still be found online. In the video it is shown step by step how a worm hotel is to be made. In addition, the basics of home worm composting are explained.



The necessary items to build a worm hotel consist of general household appliances and are rather easy to find.

Therefore, it is an easy workshop for people to do themselves at their homes, without much preparation. The purpose of the workshop was to teach people more about the natural process of composting, and to motivate people to start composting their own kitchen scraps so that the amount of general waste can be reduced!

Kombucha workshop



The second green workshop was a DIY kombucha workshop. Participants could learn how to make their own delicious kombucha drinks. Kombucha is a fermented drink, which is nutritious and delicious while giving beneficial bacteria and yeast. We provided 12 kombucha starter kits which could be picked up at Alchemist Garden for free. All kits were reserved within no time! Before the workshop, an overview was provided with all the ingredients needed. On the day of the workshop, the 27th of May, a series of pictures and texts was released, which showed every step of the progress. With this workshop we provided an example of how to produce a food product yourself while producing hardly any waste!

Waste Collection

In the beginning of March, a waste collection event took place at Roeterseiland Campus. With trash bags, trash grabbers and enthusiasm we walked around campus to pick up trash lying on the ground or in the canal.

Sadly, we found out that this was quite a bit. In less than 2 hours, over 5 big bags of trash were gathered. Most of it being food packaging, coffee cups and a lot of cigarette butts. Although picking trash is not the nicest activity in itself, it was a lot of fun to do something good with a group of motivated people. By being visible at the UvA's campus, we hope to have inspired people to think twice about what they do with their wastes (and hopefully that will lead to fewer people littering on the streets!). Afterwards, we had some team-bonding over coffee and tea in the campus cafe.



To keep up with the good work during the quarantine, we decided to host a waste collection challenge via Instagram.

Anyone could participate by posting a picture, video or any other online content where they show that they helped clean up the streets around their home, for example during a walk in the park or to the supermarket. The best entry won a EUR 25 voucher for the zero-waste story Plastic Free Amsterdam.



Green Commitment evaluation

The Green Commitment is a document created by the UvA Green Office to provide student bodies related to the UvA guidelines on how to operate their organization sustainably.

To date, it has been signed by 19 parties. The first semester in which the Green Commitment has been effective, has ended. Therefore, we sent out an evaluation, in which we asked the parties to the Commitment to self-assess their efforts and progress regarding the sustainability guidelines of the Green Commitment.

From the self-assessments we learned that most parties have (partly) implemented the catering guidelines, by for example ensuring to have vegan options, using little packaging and trying to prevent food waste.

The most difficult topic seemed to be waste management.

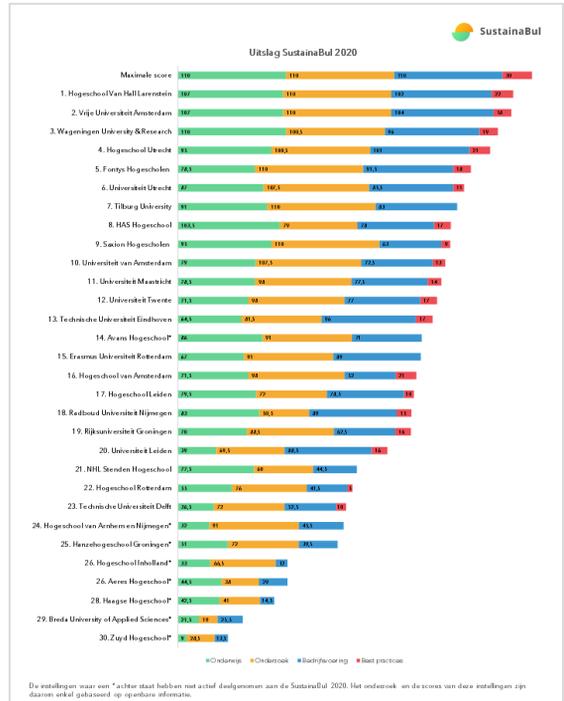
Although measures are being taken such as reusing decoration or providing plates and cutlery to prevent the use of disposables.

We will use the insights from the Green Commitment evaluation to see where more improvement can be made, and how we can help parties to the Commitment to operate more sustainably. We are looking forward to welcoming even more parties to the Green Commitment in the academic year of 2020/2021!

Sustainabul

Studenten voor Morgen, a national organization for Green Offices and other student initiatives aiming to make their higher education institutions more green, organizes a yearly sustainability ranking for higher education institutions: the Sustainabul. In the Sustainabul many themes are covered, including waste management, catering and energy usage. In addition to the policies and practices regarding the respective themes, higher education institutions can earn points by actively involving students and communicating clearly about their sustainability efforts.

The UvA Green Office campus team has worked on the entry of the University of Amsterdam, by providing Studenten voor Morgen with information about the UvA's sustainability progress and initiatives. Furthermore, we joined the ranking team of Sustainabul and helped with ranking the higher education institutions.



The University of Amsterdam was awarded a 10th place out of 30 participating institutions, with a total score of 2720 out of 3600. UvA scored the best on research.



3.2 COMMUNITY

For the second half of the year the **Community team** experienced two important transitions. First, the adaptation strategy to the new environmental circumstances in the course of the COVID-19 government policies. Second, dynamism with three new members: Giulia from Belgium, Nadia from Germany, and Rhea from Malaysia.

The three aims set out at the beginning of the year remained guiding yet were adapted to the new circumstances. Thus, the team worked to organize community building events, guide conversation across UvA domains, and collaborate with external partners.



The Community Team at the visit of the Fashion For Good museum in February 2020 (from left to right: Hazel, Florian, Susanna, Marilla, Leo, missing: Giulia, Julia, Nadia, and Rhea).



Panel discussion

In collaboration with the discussion platform BètaBreak, the Community Team organized a panel discussion titled *Facts and Fables in Environmental Sustainability Policy Making*.

The overarching themes politics and science were addressed together with the guest speakers Prof. Esther Turnhout from the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group at Wageningen University, the Director of the Amsterdam Sustainability Institute and Professor at the Vrije Universiteit, Phillip Pattberg, and Harry van Bergen, who is Policy Advisor at the office of Environment and Construction Supervision of the Gemeente Amsterdam. The interaction between the audience and guest speakers sparked discussion on the process of policymaking on the global level, and issues and coping strategies at the city level in Amsterdam.



Intreeweek

To be integrated in the digital set-up of the intreeweek 2020, the Community Team provided the information page about the Green Office. The website provides an overview of initiatives and organizations at the UvA, which are relevant for new students

Additionally, the Community and Campus team helped to connect the project group working on the design of the new waste management system of the UvA and the sustainability project group of the intreeweek board. The result is that the issue of waste and solutions to it to new students.

Community team going online

As part of the shift to online, the members of the Community Team increased the creation of social media content. This resulted in an online workshop on how to do a honey-yoghurt face-mask. The workshop was recorded by Susanna.

An article by Marilla introducing *Our Top 10 Picks for Sustainable Fashion Instagram Accounts* was additionally published in the Green Office Blog. Giulia compiled a list with free online courses about sustainability and recorded recipes for the Facebook and Instagram channel.

Originally in the context of setting up the Green Festival, Florian and Leo interviewed Rogier De Nijs. As a musician with the mission to raise awareness about the issue of plastic from production to waste, Rogier realizes projects with a political meaning. By transforming plastic waste into music the value of it is shown, along with the sheer mass of what our societies dispose of everyday and the destruction that it causes to our environment.

Community Team Events

As a team-building event, the Community Team visited the museum Fashion For Good.

This comprised the exhibition about the production and value chain of textiles including the documented experiences of workers in the sector. In addition, it provided a connection for future collaborations.

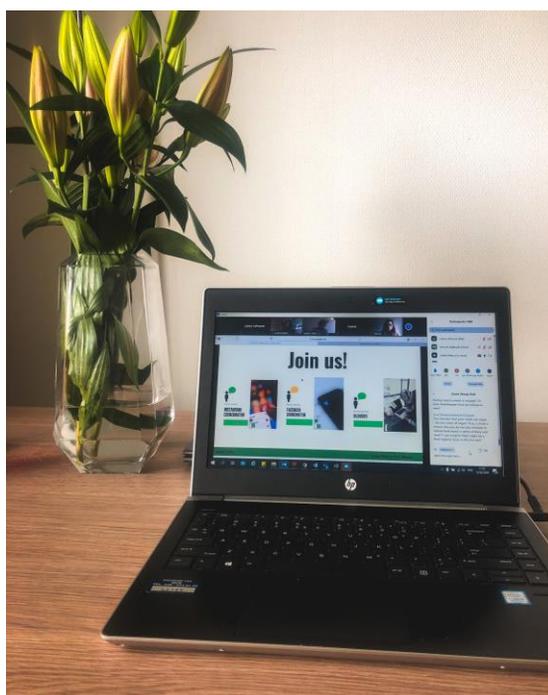
Two pub quizzes were planned and realized to get together as Green Office teams. Here, Green Office members and the board of SFSA entered into friendly competition, testing their knowledge in sustainability related and general knowledge questions.

Policy Proposals

The Community Team reviewed the outlines for the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan of the UvA and provided recommendations to align it with the objectives documented in the 2019 Green Paper. The recommendations were directed towards the Central Student Council, suggesting to increase pressure on the College van Bestuur (CvB) to prioritize sustainability in the outline of the Strategic Plan, and towards the CvB with the same objective.

A separate project resulted in the outline of the Dandelion project. Inspired from the Piedmont Project originally developed at Emory University in the United States, the proposal outlines a two-day workshop on how to integrate sustainability in the classroom. Accordingly, course coordinators, staff members and students who participated in the workshop can decide to commit time during the summer and submit a new or revised syllabus in August.

Thereby, the field of courses and programs that integrate sustainability widens, and the revision is based on expertise and personal experience. Altered course manuals can be rewarded with credit points or a monetary compensation. The relevance of the outlined procedure is to meaningfully integrate sustainability into our classrooms.



Career Day

The Green Career Day was planned to be the major on-campus event in the academic year 2019/20. We envisioned an alternative to the conventional career days by paying extra attention to sustainability related initiatives and organizations across all domains. Specifically, we wanted to provide the space for a diverse audience to consider the growing sector of organizations in the field, and opportunities that exist in Amsterdam and beyond it.



The initial format set out two days of program, consisting of speakers and workshops. Yet in response to the COVID-19 measures, the Career Day took place online. Members from all Green Office teams worked together with three members of the Board of SFSA.

Tasks were allocated to three teams. One focused on designing a booklet compiling 50 initiatives and organizations related to environmental sustainability. Another one focused on inviting speakers to the event. Furthermore, one team took charge of the organization of the technical side of the Career Day.

The event was planned and implemented on the 13th and 14th of May. On the first day, the programme comprised talks by Isabel Allen from Taste Before you Waste, an initiative in Amsterdam aiming to raise awareness about the amount of good food that is being thrown away every day and inform people about what they can do to prevent this from happening.

Roos Bernson as the Operations & HR Manager from Metabolic, discussing the organization and how they are working to transition the global economy into a sustainable state; and Vita Sligter from the Dutch NGO Urgenda introducing the organization, the career opportunities, and the project Grootouders voor het Klimaat.

On the second day, the speakers were Freek Swart and Fleur van de Wolfshaar from Green Giraffe, a specialist advisory boutique focused on the renewable energy sector; Heleen van Soest from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) introducing their work in the fields of the environment, nature and spatial planning; and Kelsey Walker from TheRockGroup, a sustainable consultancy firm based in Amsterdam, mapping out their theory of change and the project file on education.

With over 200 participants on both days it was a successful Career Day and overall great event at the end of the year.

3.3 R&E

Green Talks

Continuing the Green Office's guest lecture series, different Green Talks were hosted during the second semester.

However, the biggest change and challenge compared to the first semester was the cancellation of all public events. Thus, all Green Talks in the second semester consisted of recorded online interviews with a variety of guest speakers.



Inventory of Sustainability Courses

To give students and staff an overview of sustainability related courses offered at the UvA, the Green Office released its semi-annual inventory of Sustainability Related Courses.

Based on the official UvA Course Catalogue for the next academic year, courses related to topics of sustainability and climate change were selected to be presented in this guide.

All courses were sorted by the educational institutions and faculties to present students with possible options for their studies.

All included courses contain their title, including a link to the official UvA Course Catalogue, their obtainable credit points, the time they will be taught and their language. Additionally, all courses include a short description.

Staff Sustainability Network

During the year, multiple people working for the UvA reached out to us and showed interest in being more involved in making the university more sustainable, either by tackling issues in education or challenges on campus.

Therefore, we prepared a survey to collect information of interested staff to support the formation of a UvA Green Office Staff Sustainability Network, helping motivated staff to connect with other colleagues in their faculties. Additionally, the survey is also meant to collect input for a possible minor in sustainability at the UvA.

To increase the quality of the survey, we collected and incorporated feedback from different staff members.



3.4 COMMUNICATIONS

With the start of the global pandemic in March and the end of all physical teaching activities at the UvA campuses, the Communications team's main task was to set up digital communication channels for the Green Office in order to keep staff and students connected to the Green Office's work, also during the times of the pandemic.



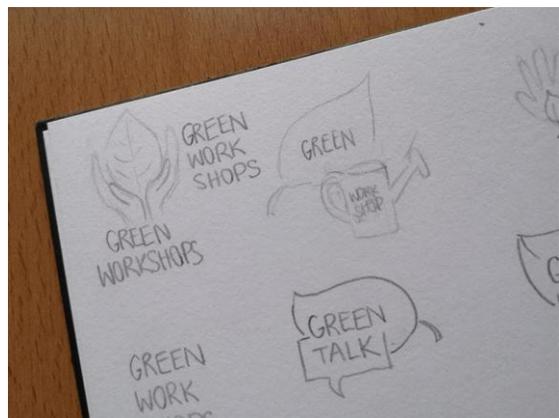
Part of this was to work out a digital strategy which involved a series of online formats that were posted via the Green Office communication channels such as the blog, Facebook, and Instagram. In close collaboration with all Green Office teams, online events and workshops were organized and implemented.

During this time, the Communications team functioned as the collaboration center which channeled the collective efforts of the whole team to keep the Green Office spirit alive and the followers engaged via social media.

Moving the UvA Green Office online

Part of the switch to the all-online-strategy was the development of a consistent stream of information to substitute the number of canceled on-campus activities. The communications team took over the task of coordinating all organized lectures, workshops, and events of all teams and ensured that all of them were aligned to the overall Green Office communications strategy. Internal communication channels such as Slack and Google docs schedules ensured that the whole Green Office team was kept in the loop about upcoming events.

Logo development Green Talk and Green Workshops



As part of the new online strategy, the Campus team developed a series of workshops and the Research & Education team developed a series of Green Talks. To complement the newly designed Green talks and Green workshops, the Communications team collaborated with a Design student in April and created logos for both new formats. Since then, both the Green Talks and Green Workshops are presented with individual logos, which are in line with the UvA Green Office Corporate Identity.



GO updates via blog posts and the GO newsletter

Also during Corona times, the Communications team shared insights about current Green Office projects via the Green Office newsletter and internal blog. While Communications team member Lena kept stakeholders informed about past and upcoming projects via the monthly-published newsletter, Communications team member Hanni took over the project management of the internal blog. By communicating with Green Office members from both the Communications team as well as from other teams, she ensured that regular updates about Green Office projects were communicated. In close coordination with Communications member and Social Media Manager Lucy, updates about both blog and newsletter were shared via Instagram and Facebook. This way, the communication with both internal and external UvA stakeholders was kept alive.

First Green Office Vlog

To close off the semester, the Communications team published their first ever Green Office vlog. In July, a 6-minutes-long clip went online, in which the Communications team takes their followers to their favorite green spots in and around Amsterdam.

In collaboration with partners of the Green Office green guide, the bakery and café Baking lab in Oost, the café Scandinavian Embassy in de Pijp, the second hand shop de Ruilhoek, the vegan restaurant SOIL, the recycling center in Zuid and the vegan soul food bar Mooshka were presented.

The aim is to introduce Green Office Instagram followers to the variety of sustainable spots around Amsterdam that are still open and accessible during corona times.

04 COMING UP



MEET THE NEW TEAM

While our General Manager Sat is continuing to stay in charge of the Green Office administration next year, an additional Operations Manager and four new team leaders are excited to take over the Green Office teams in 2020/21.



Hana Heyiova / Manager

As a current Master's student in Communication Science, I understand how important it is to get to know people's barriers to specific actions. Fulfilling the role of a manager for the UvA Green Office is one of my dreams come true, and I believe that my passion for sustainable living, pro-environmental action, and understanding people's different beliefs will serve me as the right drive-force. I'm looking forward to being on this journey alongside my fellow team leaders and Green Office members.



Tanja Henkel / Community team

Besides my communication science studies I meet up with friends, visit Pilates and Zumba classes, go hiking or stand up paddling. In general, I spend as much time as possible outdoors in nature, which is one of the reasons why I wanted to join the Green Office and make the UvA a more sustainable place.

MEET THE NEW TEAM



Emily Warner / Research & Education team

I am studying Urban and Regional Planning MSc. I firmly believe that an interdisciplinary and holistic approach is needed to address the current ecological challenges, and I am looking forward to putting this into practice whilst leading the Research & Education Team at the UvA Green Office.



Lucy Upton / Communications team

I'm a second-year sociology student at the UvA from New Zealand. I am so excited to stimulate a culture of sustainability at the UvA through my role as communications manager, and I hope to engage students through more exciting social media and grassroots content.



Zita Kosaras / Campus team

I am super excited to figure out together with the new Core Team how we can still make sustainability a top priority at university even in these strange times.

05 CONTACT US

UvA Green Office
Roeterseiland Campus
J/K, 1.33

www.uvagreenoffice.nl

Instagram: [uvagreenoffice](https://www.instagram.com/uvagreenoffice)

Facebook: [uvagreenoffice](https://www.facebook.com/uvagreenoffice)





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University of Amsterdam
UvA Green Office, Roeterseiland Campus
Valckenierstraat65-67
1018 XE Amsterdam
J/K 1.33

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Content: Julia Dalibor, Feikje Visser, Leonard Fruth,
Satyam Kathpalia, & Vincent Nalbach

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