

SUSTAINABLE EVENTS GUIDE



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

A Guide for organizing environment-friendly events at AKU



Overview

It has become more essential than ever to be environmentally conscious and take action to address the climate crisis, waste disposal, and ecological collapse. There are simple things we can do to minimize the environmental impacts of events we have at AKU year-round.

This is a living document and will serve as a learning and reference guide for you to implement more sustainable actions and apply an eco-friendly lens when organizing events of all sizes.

Types of events at AKU:

- Academic events: e.g. seminars, workshops, conferences, talks, lectures
- Administrative events: e.g. donor and board meetings, partner events, team meetings, departmental celebrations
- AKU-wide events: e.g. annual Convocation, Anniversary celebrations

What is a Sustainable Event?

A sustainable event is one that is designed, organized, and implemented in a way that considers the environmental, social, and economic aspects.

Incentives for organizers and Departments:

By making your events sustainable, you can:

- Display sustainability leadership to employees, partners, and the public.
- Inspire mindset shift and behavior changes in attendees and suppliers to benefit both the environment and local communities.
- Provide a more sustainable meeting environment for your employees and participants.
- Increase inclusion, environmental sensitivity, and accessibility that will likely lead to higher attendance and engagement rates.
- Reduce individual/departmental emissions footprint.
- Reduce cost to the university and emissions by:
 - Reducing unnecessary food and product purchases and waste,
 - Increasing productivity and efficiency,
 - Saving energy, water, and reducing supplies use and waste.



For more information, please contact the [Office of Environment and Sustainability](#).

CHECKLIST



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Here is a list of simple actions for organizing sustainable events:

Materials

- ☐ 1. Reuse past conference items or giveaways, wherever possible. Examples include badges, lanyards, pens, and unused notebooks.
- ☐ 2. Provide reusable name tags and lanyards and provide a drop-off site to collect them back at the end of the event.
- ☐ 3. Minimize swag – choose giveaways that are useful, locally and ethically produced, and minimally packaged.
 - Order limited quantity and design things in such a way that, if left over, can be used again at the next event – so avoid mentioning dates and names.
- ☐ 4. Ensure that no single-use plastic items are used during the event (bottles, utensils, cups, stirrers, straws, plates, or bags).
- ☐ 5. Encourage participants to bring their own notebooks and stationery.
- ☐ 6. Make your event paperless – send electronic copies of agendas and presentations to participants, as and when required.
 - If any printing is necessary, ensure all content is printed double-sided on recycled paper.

Outreach and Implementation

- ☐ 7. Prefer online marketing and promotion and refrain from printing or handing out paper flyers or outreach material.
- ☐ 8. Publicize AKU's commitment to sustainability in communications and outreach materials with potential donors, funders, presenters, and participants.
- ☐ 9. Assign at least one person to oversee sustainability practices in the event planning and execution.

Food and Water

- ☐ 10. Keep water pitchers and dispensers in the event and meal spaces and encourage participants to bring their own reusable bottles.
- ☐ 11. Order only what you need. Require RSVPs from invitees for every meal.
- ☐ 12. Provide at least one vegetarian option in the catering menu. It is encouraged to opt for all-vegetarian meals.
 - If serving meat, choose poultry over beef (see this [food choice graphic](#) for more info).
 - Opt for local and seasonal vegetables as much as possible.
- ☐ 13. Provide condiments and other food items in bulk instead of individually packaged.
- ☐ 14. Use only reusable cutlery and crockery when serving food.

Transport

- ☐ 15. Encourage or offer carpooling options to event participants.

Energy

- ☐ 16. Turn off all lights and electronics when not in use and enable energy-saving features when in use (e.g., dimmed screens).
- ☐ 17. Hold the event in a naturally lit room to minimize the use of artificial lighting during the day.
- ☐ 18. Monitor and adjust room temperature to conserve energy. We suggest a comfortable 26 degrees Celsius.



For more information, please contact the [Office of Environment and Sustainability](#).



CHECKLIST

Are you organizing a virtual event or conference and looking to make it even more sustainable? We have you covered!!

Virtual Events

- ☐ 1. Request attendees to turn off their webcams when not needed such as while others are presenting.
- ☐ 2. Request presenters to compress media files such as presentations and videos before sharing.
- ☐ 3. Remind attendees to delete unneeded emails and files after the event.
- ☐ 4. Encourage attendees to watch videos in standard definition (SD) instead of high definition (HD).

