The University is recognised as an innovative leader in higher education for sustainability, across teaching and learning, research and our University operations. Across the University, cafés are operated by the University of Plymouth subsidiary, University Commercial Services Plymouth Ltd (UCSP), who also put sustainability at the heart of their operations. USCP have received many recognitions for their work on sustainability, including with a three-star rating from the Sustainable Restaurant Association in the Food Made Good report and ranking joint first in the UK for sustainable food in the People and Planet 2021 league table.

Continuing on the University’s and UCSPs journey on continual sustainability improvements, we are looking to work on a project to eliminate waste from disposable coffee cups. This form of waste has numerous barriers to being recycled, and even with disposable plant based alternatives there is no direct route for these items to be recycled. Along with this, the disposable cups present a confusing material for consumers to dispose of correctly, and often is misplaced into recycling, leading to contamination. We are therefore looking to implement a deposit-return scheme at the University cafés, whereby we can maintain the convenience of take-away hot drinks but remove the waste generated. We have built a list of criteria, highlighting that we need to ensure this remains affordable to students, commercially viable, and match our sustainability objectives. There are 10 cafés operated by UCSP at the University, and a further catering outlet within the students union (separately operated by UPSU) that we would aim to roll out a deposit return scheme to. We want to pilot the scheme before a full launch with a smaller number of deposit-return cups before the end of this academic year, so that we can achieve a full launch in September 2023.

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| **Criteria** | **Category** | **Detail** |
| Stackable | Logistics | We need the cups to be as space efficient as possible, as storage in the cafes is very limited. |
| Dish Washer Safe | Logistics | Material suitable for dishwashers, and will not impact on longevity |
| Recyclable at end of life | Environmental | Material must be recyclable when it does reach its end of life, at no additional cost, either in mixed recycling or a supplier take back scheme |
| Not virgin plastic | Environmental | We want these to be made from sustainable material, and not completely virgin plastic (so if plastic, must contain at least some recycled content) |
| Branded | Comms | We want to be able to brand the cups, so that if schools want to hand out cups with their own department on they can do so |
| Cost Effective (payback) | Cost | The cup must last long enough to pay back the cost relative to purchasing disposables. |
| Re-usable lid | Environmental | It must come with a re-usable lid |
| Durable (how many times can wash) | Cost | We want the cup to be long lasting, so that the lifecycle carbon emissions are smaller than disposable cups. |
| Cost of not returning  | Cost | We need the cost of the cup to be such that we can cover ourselves if it is not returned. |
| Continuity of supply | Logistics | We need to ensure that we are able to replace broken, or unreturned cups at a reasonable lead time. |
| Robust lid (screw top) | Logistics | We want the lid to be robust such that it avoids spillages |
| Supplier able to hold stock | Logistics | We want the supplier to be able to hold some of our purchased stock, as space for storage is extremely limited, that we can draw down from. |
| Locality | Environmental | We want to support local suppliers, and ensure transport carbon emissions are as low as possible. |