**GUIDANCE NOTE: BIODIVERSITY OFFSET PROPOSAL**

***Prior to any form of disturbance or development*** an approved Biodiversity Offset Proposal is required where removals to on-campus biodiversity are unavoidable.

All ground areas proposed to be affected by a project must be identified in the Biodiversity Assessment (refer to Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note[[1]](#footnote-2)).

Biodiversity Offset Proposals must be submitted to the University’s Sustainability Manager for approval. It is recommended that projects allow at least 10 business days for a response- either approval or further clarification or discussion.

Demolition and construction cannot commence until written approval has been received for all necessary Biodiversity Offsets relating to a project.

For the avoidance of doubt, all works required in the offset proposal are to be documented by the project consultants and incorporated into the project contract documentation.

A Biodiversity Offset Proposal for the purpose of these standards details all removals and corresponding offsets in the context of the University’s seven [**Biodiversity Baseline**](https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project)[[2]](#footnote-3) metrics (refer to Table 1 in Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note1) and any other information requested in the Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note1.

The University’s Biodiversity Offset method is designed to:

1. Incentivise the implementation of an [offset mitigation hierarchy](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/iucn_biodiversity_offsets_policy_jan_29_2016_0.pdf)[[3]](#footnote-4) where AVOID and MINIMISEoptions are fully explored before an offset is considered.
2. Support projects to achieve net gain of the Biodiversity Baselines as per Target 2 of the Healthy Ecosystems Priority of the [Sustainability Plan 2030](https://about.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/346214/Sustainability-Plan-2030.pdf)[[4]](#footnote-5), and
3. Support compliance with all relevant local, state, and federal planning & legislative requirements.

Biodiversity Offset Proposals must include the following:

1. A summary of the Biodiversity Assessment and an accompanying map which clearly outlines what biodiversity is proposed to be or may be removed by a project. The summary must include tallied ‘amounts of biodiversity’ under each of the University’s seven [**Biodiversity Baseline**](https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project)[[5]](#footnote-6) metrics (refer to Table 1 in Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note1) and any other information requested in the Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note1.
2. Offset proposals for each biodiversity area, asset or groups of assets (e.g., tree or garden bed area containing trees and plants) will require more detail than that required by Table 1 of the Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note. Site plans must clearly identify:
   1. Contextual and close-up maps/plans indicating locations and extents of each asset/ group of assets
   2. Photographs of each area/ asset/ group of assets
   3. All trees and plants to be impacted and their scientific/botanical name
   4. Measurements indicating the size and indicative age/ life stage of any tree or plant to be impacted:
      1. Trees = Canopy Width North to South (m); Canopy Width East to West (m); Canopy Area (m2); Tree Height (m); Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) (cm); Basal Diameter (cm); Life stage; Age (years)
      2. Plants = Height (m); Indicative footprint shape and size (m2); Life stage; Age (years)
3. Evidence of what has been explored and considered for the top two tiers in the offset mitigation hierarchy for each discrete biodiversity asset or group of assets included in point 1 above.
   1. AVOID: Outline of why impacts to identified on-campus biodiversity are unavoidable for project development. Demonstrate where impacts to biodiversity have been avoided through project design.
   2. MINIMISE: Outline measures that have been undertaken or considered to limit impacts.
   3. OFFSET: Outline of proposed offset or offset options (as per points below)
4. Offset Proposals must**:**
   1. Clearly show the location and extent of the proposed offset in a map/plan with an accompanying plant palette listing the species to be used, their quantities, lifeform (e.g. grass, shrub, tree etc.). Map/plans should indicate both size at installation and forecasted size at maturity (age at maturity should accompany this information).

Proposals must fulfill all criteria in Table 2 below in order to be approved.

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| ***Table 2. Biodiversity Offset Proposal Criteria.*** | |
| **Criteria** | **Description** |
| **Better than like-for-like offsetting** | Biodiversity Offset Proposals must demonstrate how the offset has improved upon what was removed. For example:   * Increased quantity and seasonal availability of food resources for local species * More habitat resources for local species * Excluding removed species that are known to be weedy from offsets. * Increased structural diversity of offsets |
| **Minimum 10% net gain of biodiversity** | Biodiversity Offset Proposals must demonstrate how offsets will reinstate **at least** 10% more than what was removed measured in accordance with the Biodiversity Metrics in Table 1 of the Biodiversity Assessment Guidance Note.  A 10% gain must be achieved to support the University’s ambitions to be Nature Positive by 2030 and to account for uncertainties related to offsetting. |
| **Offset Location** | Biodiversity Offset Proposals must demonstrate how the offset will be achieved within the project boundary. Where it is deemed not possible to include the necessary offset within the project’s boundary, proposed positioning of offsets must look to the next tier in the location hierarchy.  Offset Location Hierarchy =   1. within project boundary 2. adjacent to project boundary 3. within the same precinct as the project 4. within the same campus as the project 5. other campus 6. external.   Offsets proposed in locations 4-6 will be expected to exceed the 10% net gain target. |
| **Time lags between Project impacts and offset realisation must be minimised as feasibly possible.** | Biodiversity Offset Proposals must clearly articulate the time (in years) post project delivery that the proposed offsets are expected reach maximum size/ value/ ecosystem service provision.  Biodiversity Offset proposals must consider future campus planning as detailed in the latest campus masterplan.  Biodiversity Offset Proposals must demonstrate how their proposed offsets reduce the time lag between project impacts and offset realisation. Time lags should be minimised by:   * Implementing agreed offsets prior to commencing works or concurrent to construction. * Ensuring the anticipated size at maturity and the time to reach said size of plants and trees is considered when determining initial planting densities. * Sourcing more advanced plant or tree stock. * Transplanting trees or mature vegetation where possible. * Relocating habitat resources or introducing substitute habitat resources. For example:   + Relocating habitat logs or rocks/boulders from impacted area to offset area.   + Introducing new wildlife friendly water sources, where human water sources (that may have previously been utilised by biodiversity) have been removed or altered. |

1. *Refer Associated Documents section of Design Standards web page* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [*https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project*](https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [*https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/iucn\_biodiversity\_offsets\_policy\_jan\_29\_2016\_0.pdf*](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/iucn_biodiversity_offsets_policy_jan_29_2016_0.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [*https://about.unimelb.edu.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0020/346214/Sustainability-Plan-2030.pdf*](https://about.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/346214/Sustainability-Plan-2030.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [*https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project*](https://sustainablecampus.unimelb.edu.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-baseline-data-project) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)