

UWE BRISTOL STATEMENT ON THE USE OF MATERIALS DERIVED FROM THE BODY COVERING OF ANIMALS.

In scope: This Statement covers the use, for any purpose, by the University of the Following Materials: animal skins, including leather, hides and other skins such as reptile skin; wool; mohair; cashmere and pashmina; and, feathers. In this document the term Skin Hair Feathers (SHF) will be used as shorthand for this encompassing definition.

Introduction

UWE Bristol's Environmental Sustainability Policy commits the University to minimise its impacts on the environment and to use its teaching, research, estates operations and supply chain to extend its influence through the lifecycle of our activities to derive both environmental sustainability benefits and business benefits.

UWE Bristol strongly supports research and teaching activities that meet the highest ethical standards, including that which involves animals. The University requires all activities involving animals, or animal by-products, whether undertaken by staff or students, to be based upon the underpinning principle of appropriate respect for life. The University expects all staff and students engaged in research and educational activities to comply with both the letter and the spirit of legislation, regulation, best practice and professional and ethical guidelines. UWE Bristol will always encourage, as part of research or teaching, the development of new understandings, methods, techniques or equipment to improve ethical practice, including animal welfare.

The University recognises that it is sometimes appropriate that SHF should be used. Sometimes there is no viable alternative, or the alternative is ethically less acceptable. Equally, the use of such materials in research and teaching can sometimes be justified. One example might be where such materials are used in conservation research, or where essential to teach students conservation skills. However, the University's aim is to restrict its use of these materials to those circumstances which can be clearly justified, in line with the 3 Rs (Replace Reduce Refine).

In this context, the University's position in relation to the use of SHF is as follows:

1. All SHF should be ethically sourced.
2. All research and teaching activities involving animals and animal by-products (ABPs) must have a *favourable opinion* from the University's Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee (AWESC) prior to these materials being brought onto UWE premises, or used by UWE staff or students under the auspices of UWE. For taught programme student research, obtaining this is the role of the Supervisor, but students will be expected to engage with this process, such that an application can be made at least six weeks before the start date of the proposed activity. This deadline is in line with all of UWE's research ethics committees.
3. The use of SHF will be genuinely exceptional, requiring specific justification. In the case of research and teaching, this justification must be made to AWESC. For low risk activities, such as the use of wool that complies with the relevant standards (see below) this will be a streamlined application process. However, as the University needs to register the use of ABPs with DEFRA, an application must always be made and the source of the material declared.

4. There are certain materials that, for reasons of legislation or regulation, or the excessive negative environmental or human health impact, or animal cruelty, which is highly likely to have been involved in their production, the University will not permit the use of by UWE staff or students, unless approved by relevant scrutiny. These are as follows:
 - Any part of an endangered animal, unless there is no alternative. Such use must be approved by AWESC as appropriate and within the law, before materials are sourced;
 - Fur, angora or rabbit hair unless approved by AWESC as appropriate and within the law. Whilst there is the potential for some research or teaching activities, such as use in conservation science, to provide such a robust justification, this will be subject to careful scrutiny, and will be likely to need a full Committee discussion.
 - Animal hair or feathers obtained from the plucking of live animals (including angora, mohair and cashmere/pashmina);

Sourcing of such materials will be kept under review, although animal welfare will always be a priority. Given the significant pressure that is likely to be brought to bear by the fashion industry, practice may improve, and it may be possible in the future to ethically source these materials.

- Merino wool sourced from a farmer which practices mulesing (clear evidence that this is not the case will be required).
5. All wool used must comply with the requirements of the *Responsible Wool Standard* <https://responsiblewool.org/>
 6. All feathers used must comply with the requirements of the *Responsible Down Standard* <https://responsibledown.org/>
 7. It will always be a requirement that leather used must have a fully UK only supply chain, or clear, unequivocal evidence that animal welfare, environmental, and human standards in the production of the leather are at least equivalent to that which would apply in the UK.
 8. Where recycled materials are being put forward for use in research or teaching, AWESC will judge these on a case-by-case basis, and will consider issues including age of the product, provenance, proposed use, compliance with the law and DEFRA regulations and justification.
 9. SHF have significant negative environmental, human and animal welfare costs. Use of these materials will therefore be strictly limited within the activities of the University. However, it is recognised that there are some uses which are at present largely unavoidable, such as safety footwear or medical equipment. For all other non-research or teaching uses, the University will not permit SHF which do not comply with these guidelines to be used. This will be incorporated in the *Design Guide*, relevant to new UWE infrastructure.
 10. The University encourages the use of innovative vegan products wherever possible.
 11. Training and awareness: where taught programme students will or may use SHF, they will receive information at the outset in relation to the University's requirements upon them in this respect; what is and is not permitted. This will include the background and rationale in relation to the law, and environmental, and human and animal welfare consequences of the use of these materials. Materials sourced by students will need to comply with UWE guidelines and approval processes before they are used, and all ABPs will be disposed of appropriately after use.

Statement approved by

UWE Sustainability Board. Date 10th February 2020

UWE Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee. Date 29th April 2020