

Post-Consumer Recycled Content Paper Policy

Policy Background

Responsible Position for Policy: Sustainability Manager

Office/Department Responsible for Policy: Office of Energy and Sustainability

Division Responsible for Policy: Facilities Operations, Procurement, and Auxiliary Services

Scope of Policy: The Policy applies to all faculty, staff, and students who purchase copy paper for Oberlin College and Conservatory.

Original Issue Date: August 15, 2024

Last Revision Date: N/A

I. Policy Purpose

(A) In March 2004, the Board of Trustees adopted the following general Environmental Policy Statement:

The core mission of Oberlin College is the education of its students. One aspect of such education is the demonstration by its actions of the College's concern for, and protection of its physical environment. Oberlin College must be a responsible steward of the environment. As such, the College will seek 1) to reduce the rate at which it contributes to the depletion and degradation of natural resources; 2) to increase the use of renewable resources; and 3) to consider other measures that can enhance the physical environment in which we live. The development of priorities and the implementation of decisions regarding energy production and use, the use and development of our grounds, facilities construction, modernization, maintenance, transportation, and materials use will be informed by the environmental impact they have. The President or delegated officials will periodically advise the community of the College's progress in this area.¹

(B) The Post-Consumer Recycled Content Paper Purchasing Policy (Policy) aims to regulate the purchase of copy paper at Oberlin College and Conservatory by outlining the requirements and the encouraged actions for such purchasing.

(C) The Policy will bring Oberlin College closer to its carbon neutrality goals by targeting products with lower carbon footprints.

II. Policy Statement

(A) All 8.5 x 11 white copy paper purchased for on-campus use, including letterhead, must contain a minimum of 30% *post-consumer* recycled content. Copy paper must also have Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification. The Policy encourages purchasing paper in bulk quantities, such as in 8 or 10-ream packs, to offset costs and reduce environmental impact.

¹ [Oberlin College Environmental Policy, March 2004](#)

- (B) Several commonly used platforms, including Staples and Amazon, have filters that can help guide the selection of products with sustainable attributes and 3rd party certifications. Staples offers the Eco ID program (<https://www.ecoidprogram.com>) and Amazon offers the Climate Pledge Friendly program. Please note that while many of the products listed under the Eco ID or Climate Pledge Friendly listed copy papers meet the requirements of this policy, it is not true of all copy paper. Please ensure that the copy paper selected contains a minimum of 30% post-consumer recycled content and is either FSC or SFI certified as required by the Policy.
- (C) The Policy encourages choosing the highest possible post-consumer recycled content of the appropriate copy paper but does not require any post-consumer recycled content above 30%.

III. Policy Scope/Eligibility

- (A) The Policy applies to all faculty, staff, and students who purchase copy paper for Oberlin College and Conservatory.
- (B) The Policy acknowledges that there are other types of paper purchased in various departments and for various reasons on campus aside from 8.5 x 11 white copy paper. The Policy encourages choosing the highest possible post-consumer recycled content of the appropriate paper but does not require it for paper other than 8.5 x 11 white copy paper.

IV. Definitions

- (A) Copy Paper: Paper for use in copy machines.
- (B) Post-consumer recycled content: The portion of materials used in a product that have been diverted from landfill and repurposed. Post-consumer content refers to materials that were already used by a consumer and recycled; Different from *pre-consumer* recycled content, [see definition for “Recycled content”]. The Policy requires *post-consumer* recycled content paper.
- (C) Recycled content: Recycled content usually means pre-consumer recycled content, which refers to materials recycled from manufacturer waste that has not previously reached consumers. “Post-consumer material is defined as waste material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product, which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. Pre-consumer material is defined as material diverted from the waste stream during the manufacturing process.”²
- (D) Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): The Forest Stewardship Council is an organization that certifies products according to social, economic, and environmental principles of forest management.
- (E) Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI): The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is a certification organization that promotes high standards of sustainable forestry and responsible purchasing in products.
- (F) Eco-ID: Staples’ sustainability program, encompassing multiple certifications and standards that make locating environmentally conscious products easier for consumers.

V. Administration

- (A) The administration of the Policy will be managed by the Office of Energy and Sustainability (OES). The Sustainability Manager is responsible for keeping the Policy up to date, coordinating a detailed review with all relevant stakeholders at least once every 5 years, and creating institutional guidelines to implement the Policy.

VI. Procedures

- (A) Reporting: Annually, at the close of the fiscal year, the Office of Energy and Sustainability will request and review reports from Amazon and Staples on the total amount of copy paper purchased by the College through ObieBuy.

² [US Green Building Council](#)

- (B) Enforcement and Non-Compliance: In case of non-compliance to the Policy, the purchaser will have a meeting with the Office of Energy and Sustainability to discuss the reasoning behind non-compliance and how to address it.
- (C) Policy Waiver: If a paper product is not available with the designated standard, the Sustainability Manager can review and waive the requirement. To receive a waiver, the department ordering the product may contact the Office of Energy and Sustainability. The Sustainability Manager will review the qualities of the product in question and may provide technical assistance by finding a suitable alternative, or waiving the requirement.

VII. Related Information

- (A) Related Policies:
 - (1) Oberlin College Environmental Policy - Approved May 2004
(https://www.oberlin.edu/sites/default/files/content/office/environmental-sustainability/documents/environmental_policy.pdf)
 - (2) Oberlin College Environmental Policy Implementation Plan - Adopted by the General Faculty of Oberlin College November 2015 (https://www.oberlin.edu/sites/default/files/content/office/environmental-sustainability/documents/environmental_policy_implementation_plan.pdf)
- (B) Other considerations for dissemination of information related to the policy
 - (1) The Office of Energy and Sustainability will coordinate an annual meeting at the beginning of each fiscal year with the Institutional Buyer. The purpose of the meeting is to review the Policy and discuss recommended revisions as needed. The meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss challenges and any non-compliance issues.
 - (2) The Policy will be posted on the OES website as well as posted in the Campus Digest at least once per year.

VIII. Approval Process

- (A) Frequency of Review: The Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Office of Energy and Sustainability in collaboration with the Institutional Buyer. The Committee on Environmental Sustainability will review the Policy every five years.
- (B) Review Process: If revisions or changes are recommended, the Sustainability Manager will manage the process.
- (C) Necessary Approval Constituents: Any changes to the Policy will need to be reviewed by the Committee on Environmental Sustainability and approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration and the Executive Leadership Team.

Signature: _____

Date: _____