CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY

Awareness Without Access: A Student Sustainability Audit at Amity University Mumbai

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Abstract

Universities often talk about sustainability, but they do not always know what their own students understand, practise, or expect from them. This project tried to find that out at Amity University Mumbai.

Over ten weeks, we conducted an anonymous survey on Jotform and received 100 responses from students across all four years of study and seven schools. We also walked around campus to see whether students' answers matched what was actually visible in day-to-day campus life. The study was linked to two UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 13, Climate Action.

Three issues stood out. First, only 15% of students rated their awareness of campus sustainability initiatives as very high. Second, 37% were unsure where the waste-segregation bins were located, while drinking-water quality was the most commonly reported concern, mentioned by 36% of respondents. Third, although 58% said they always segregated their waste, only 28% said they would definitely join a sustainability drive.

Our overall reading is that students are not necessarily unwilling to act. Rather, many do not have clear information, visible infrastructure, or enough organised opportunities to participate. We therefore suggest ten practical recommendations, arranged by cost and time, which the administration and student council could implement without major additional spending.

1 Introduction

A university campus works much like a small city. Thousands of students and staff move through it every day—eating, printing, charging devices, using water, switching on fans, and travelling to and from campus. So, whatever a university teaches about sustainability inside the classroom, the campus itself either supports that message or quietly contradicts it.

This project began as part of our BBA (Honours) community outreach requirement. We chose a campus sustainability audit because, as far as we could find, Amity University Mumbai had not previously conducted a structured, student-focused assessment of sustainability awareness and behaviour. Decisions about signage, bins, drinking water, and awareness campaigns appeared to be based largely on assumptions. We wanted to replace some of those assumptions with actual student feedback.

We kept the scope deliberately focused. We did not try to measure electricity consumption, waste tonnage, or other facilities data, since we did not have access to those records. Instead, we looked at the human side of sustainability: what students know, what they say they do, what problems they notice, and whether they would participate in organised initiatives.

Our main research questions were:

1. How aware are students of existing campus sustainability initiatives and green policies?
2. What do students say they do regarding energy, waste, water, and commuting?
3. Where do students see weaknesses in campus infrastructure?
4. Do responses differ by year of study or school?
5. What low-cost steps could follow from the findings?

2 Background

We did not conduct a full systematic literature review, as that would have been unrealistic for a semester project carried out by two students. However, we used three broad reference points to shape the survey and interpret the results.

The first was the AASHE STARS framework, which many universities use to assess sustainability performance. Its main lesson for us was that a meaningful sustainability assessment needs both operational evidence—such as energy, water, and waste data—and engagement evidence, such as awareness and participation. Since we could only collect the second type, we have been clear about that limitation.

The second reference point was UNESCO's guidance on Education for Sustainable Development. It suggests that sustainability-related behaviour change works best when it is repeated, locally relevant, and connected to visible action. A one-time orientation session is unlikely to create lasting habits.

The third was research on self-reported behaviour, which warns about social-desirability bias. People often give answers they believe are expected of them. For example, "I always switch off lights" is easy to claim but harder to verify. To reduce this problem, we kept the survey anonymous and compared responses with our own informal observations around campus.

Together, these references helped us frame campus sustainability as depending on both "hard" infrastructure—bins, water filters, energy systems—and "soft" infrastructure—awareness, habits, and willingness to participate. One without the other rarely works. A bin that students cannot find will not be used properly, and posters asking students to segregate waste will not help if suitable bins are missing.

3 Method

3.1 Survey design

The survey was created and hosted on Jotform. It had four sections: respondent profile, awareness, behaviour, and perceptions/suggestions.

We began with simple demographic questions before moving to more reflective questions. This was partly to make the survey easier to complete and reduce drop-offs. Most questions were closed-ended, using rating scales, yes/no/sometimes options, or fixed choices. We also included two open-text fields, one of which asked students for one suggestion to make campus more sustainable.

The survey was completely anonymous. We did not collect names or roll numbers. We only asked for year of study and school, because these were needed to compare responses across groups. Participa-

tion was voluntary, no incentive was offered, and respondents were told that the data would be used for an academic project and may be shared with the administration in aggregate form.

3.2 Sample and distribution

We aimed to collect an equal number of responses from each academic year. We achieved this exactly: 25% of the 100 respondents came from each year.

The survey link was circulated through class representatives and school-level WhatsApp groups. While collecting responses, we monitored the distribution and followed up more actively in groups that were lagging behind. The spread across schools was less even and largely reflected the size and accessibility of different student communities.

Table 1. Respondents by school (N = 100).

School	Share of respondents
AIB	29%
ABS	22%
AIBAS	20%
ALS	14%
ASET	9%
AIT	3%
AIIT	3%

Because recruitment happened through class channels and used year-based quotas, this was a quota-style convenience sample rather than a random sample. We therefore treat the findings as an initial diagnostic rather than a precise estimate of the entire student population.

3.3 Campus walkthrough

In the sixth week, we walked through the canteen, corridors, and water refill points. We looked at where bins were placed, whether signage was visible, and how the water stations appeared.

This walkthrough was informal. We did not score locations or take measurements. Still, it gave us a useful reality check on what students said about bin visibility and campus facilities.

3.4 Analysis

After checking responses for completeness, we calculated percentages for each closed question. We also cross-tabulated a few important indicators by year of study and school.

We did not conduct statistical significance tests. With 100 responses overall, and some school groups containing only three respondents, we felt it would be more honest to describe visible patterns rather than claim statistical certainty.

4 Findings

4.1 Awareness

When asked to rate their awareness of campus sustainability initiatives on a scale of 1 to 5, the largest group—36%—chose 3, the middle option. Another 26% chose 4 and 15% chose 5, meaning around 41% rated themselves at 4 or above. At the lower end, 8% chose 1 and 15% chose 2. Overall, only 15% described themselves as highly aware.

The other awareness-related responses showed a similar pattern. While 63% said they knew where the waste-segregation bins were, 37% did not. Similarly, 69% had heard of the university's green policies, but 31% had not.

In practical terms, roughly one in three students either could not locate the bins or had not heard about any green policy. For an institution that expects students to use both, that is a significant communication gap.

4.2 Everyday habits

Table 2. Self-reported everyday habits (N = 100).

Habit	Always / Yes	Sometimes	Never / No
Switch off lights and fans	36%	54%	10%
Segregate waste	58%	36%	6%
Carry a reusable bottle or bag	39%	20%	41%

Commuting patterns leaned heavily towards private transport. Around 46% of respondents said they travelled to campus in their own vehicle, while 23% walked, 20% took the bus, and 11% carpooled. In other words, nearly half the sample arrives alone or almost alone, which is the behaviour most directly connected to transport-related emissions.

4.3 Perceptions and willingness

Students' overall view of the campus's sustainability efforts was lukewarm. Around 45% rated it 3 out of 5, 23% chose 4, and only 7% chose 5. Another 7% chose 1 and 18% chose 2. Very few students were strongly negative, but very few were impressed either.

When asked to identify the biggest sustainability problem they noticed on campus, 36% selected water. This was well ahead of transport at 22%, waste at 16%, energy at 14%, and green cover at 7%. Another 5% selected "other."

The survey did not ask what exactly students disliked about the water—whether it was taste, cleanliness, temperature, or availability. That is a limitation of our instrument and should be explored in future research.

On participation, 28% said they would join a campus sustainability drive, 37% said maybe, and 35% said no. We need to be careful here: the question measured willingness, not past participation. Even so, nearly two-thirds of students did not rule out taking part. That group represents a real opportunity.

4.4 Differences by year

Table 3. Selected indicators by year of study (25 respondents per year).

Year	Rated awareness 4–5	Always segregates waste	Would join a drive
1st	48%	40%	28%
2nd	32%	56%	24%
3rd	52%	52%	36%
4th	32%	84%	24%

One might expect students to become more aware and engaged the longer they stay on campus. The data does not clearly support that.

First-year students reported higher awareness than second- and fourth-year students, possibly because orientation-related information was still fresh in their minds. Meanwhile, fourth-year students were by far the most consistent at segregating waste, with 84% saying they always did so, even though their awareness ratings were no higher than second-year students'.

This suggests that a student can develop a habit without necessarily feeling well informed about institutional initiatives. It also suggests that one orientation session in the first year is not enough; sustainability communication needs to be repeated throughout a student's time at university.

4.5 Differences by school

Table 4. Selected indicators by school.

School	Respondents	Rated awareness 4–5	Uses reusable bottle/bag	Commutes by own vehicle
ABS	22	40.9%	31.8%	45.5%
AIB	29	31.0%	44.8%	48.3%
ALS	14	42.9%	42.9%	64.3%
ASET	9	55.6%	44.4%	22.2%
AIT	3	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%
AIIT	3	66.7%	100.0%	33.3%
AIBAS	20	45.0%	30.0%	40.0%

The school-level results are not neat or easy to generalise. ASET stood out for relatively high awareness and low private-vehicle use. ALS showed the highest reliance on personal vehicles among the larger groups. ABS and AIBAS had comparatively low reusable-bottle use.

AIT and AIIT each had only three respondents, so one student's answer could shift their percentage by more than thirty points. We include these figures for completeness, but we do not draw strong conclusions from them.

5 Discussion

5.1 An opportunity problem, not an attitude problem

The clearest pattern in the data is the gap between how students view their own behaviour and how they view the campus. Questions about personal habits and willingness generally received more positive answers. Questions about infrastructure, information, and institutional effort received more doubt.

This suggests that lack of interest may not be the main barrier. A student who cannot find the correct bin cannot use it properly, no matter how willing they are. Similarly, a student who has not heard about a sustainability drive cannot be expected to participate in it.

The difference between 58% who always segregate waste and 28% who say they would join a drive is not necessarily contradictory. Segregating waste is a quick individual action, while joining a drive requires time, information, and someone to organise the activity.

That said, we should not overstate the willingness finding. It is still self-reported, and the 37% who answered "maybe" may not actually participate. A small pilot programme would be a low-cost way to test this.

5.2 Why targeting matters

Since neither year of study nor school predicts engagement in a simple, consistent way, a single campus-wide campaign may not be the best approach. It could spend effort on students who are already doing reasonably well while missing groups that need more support.

The data points to second- and fourth-year students as possible targets for awareness-related communication. For reusable bottles and vehicle use, ABS, AIBAS, and possibly ALS appear to be sensible starting points. Small school-level pilots would be cheaper and more informative than launching a large campaign immediately.

5.3 Connection to the SDGs

The findings on waste and reuse relate to SDG 12, which focuses on reducing waste through prevention, recycling, and reuse. The nearly even split on reusable bottles and bags—39% yes, 41% no, and 20% sometimes—shows that there is considerable room for improvement through simple nudges and better access.

The commuting and energy findings relate to SDG 13, Climate Action. With 46% of students using personal vehicles and only 11% carpooling, a simple carpool coordination channel could be a practical, low-cost climate action. Of course, a student survey cannot prove emissions reduction; it can only identify where opportunities exist.

6 Recommendations

We arranged our ten recommendations by expected timeline and approximate cost. The first three respond directly to the two biggest concerns in the data and require little more than signage, an existing survey tool, and a water test.

6.1 Within three months

1. **Repeat the survey every term using the same core questions.** This would allow the university to track changes over time using a free tool and existing student communication channels.
2. **Improve bin visibility.** Install clear signage and colour-coded segregation bins at high-traffic locations such as the canteen and main corridors. This directly addresses the 37% of students who were unsure where the bins were.
3. **Test drinking water at refill stations and share the results openly with students.** Water was the most common concern, but the survey cannot show whether the issue is real, perceived, or both. A test would provide clarity.

6.1.1 Three to nine months

4. **Make green policies more visible.** Use noticeboards, student clubs, orientation programmes, and regular reminders rather than relying on one-time communication.
5. **Encourage lower-carbon commuting.** Start with a carpool coordination channel and better promotion of existing bus options, especially in schools with higher private-vehicle use.
6. **Publish a termly sustainability calendar.** Activities such as clean-up drives and awareness weeks would give interested students something concrete to join.
7. **Run small school-level pilots.** For example, test a reusable-bottle initiative in one or two schools with low uptake before expanding it campus-wide.

6.1.2 After nine months

8. **Make the sustainability audit an annual exercise.** This would allow the university to track progress on SDG 12 and SDG 13 over time.
9. **Create a standing student sustainability cell.** A permanent group would ensure that sustainability work does not depend entirely on one batch of students.
10. **Include facilities data in future audits.** Electricity, water, and waste records would allow student perceptions to be compared with actual operational measurements.

If the administration can implement only one recommendation, we would choose the first. Without repeated measurement, it will be difficult to know whether any of the other actions actually worked.

7 Limitations

This study has several limitations, and the findings should be interpreted carefully.

The sample consisted of 100 students recruited through class representatives and WhatsApp groups. It was not random, and students who already care about sustainability may have been more likely to respond. Students outside these communication channels may be under-represented. School-level results are also based on small numbers, especially for AIT and AIIT.

The habit questions relied on self-reporting, so actual behaviour may be worse than what students reported. Our campus walkthrough was informal and could only partially address this issue. We also did not have access to maintenance records, water-quality reports, or utility data, so comments about infrastructure reflect student perception rather than direct measurement.

In addition, we analysed only one round of survey responses. We therefore cannot say whether these patterns would remain stable over time. Finally, the survey asked students whether they would join a

sustainability drive, not whether they had already done so. Any statement about participation should therefore be read as stated willingness, not confirmed behaviour.

8 Conclusion

Based on this sample, Amity University Mumbai students appear generally open to sustainability but not especially well informed about what the university is already doing. Many students also seem unsure where or how to act on their good intentions.

Only 15% rated their awareness as very high, 37% could not confidently locate the waste-segregation bins, and water quality was the most frequently mentioned concern. At the same time, most students reported reasonable everyday habits, and nearly two-thirds did not rule out joining a sustainability initiative.

The most useful conclusion is a modest one. Before launching a large campaign, the university should fix the things students can see but currently cannot find or trust: bins, water, and clear information. Then it should give willing students organised opportunities to participate.

Our findings come from a small, student-led survey and should be treated as a baseline rather than a final judgement. If the audit is repeated regularly, the data will become far more useful for tracking real change.

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