

# University of Tasmania

## *Results of Student Sustainability Survey*

2018

### Sustainability at University of Tasmania

#### About this survey

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey since the first Student Sustainability Survey Results Report published in 2016. The survey is conducted every two years.

**The aim of the Student Survey** is to gain an insight into students' perceptions, aspirations, and behaviours on sustainability in general and on the sustainability performance of the University of Tasmania (UTAS). The survey results will inform the implementation of the University's strategies and will be used in the development of key performance indicators and the delivery of sustainability initiatives and programs.

The survey has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Ref: H0015525) and was conducted under the auspices of the UTAS Sustainability Committee. The 2018 Survey was distributed online from 8 - 22 April to a student cohort of 33,433<sup>1</sup> received 1,945 responses (~6% response rate with a 76% completion rate), compared to 33,217 and 1,752 responses (~5% response rate and 53% completion rate) in 2016. The survey consisted of a total of 20 questions to firstly help identify the demographic of student participants, then focused specifically on questions around perceptions, behaviour and engagement with sustainability personally and at the University.

Participation in the survey was promoted through bulk-emails, weekly newsletters, and via multiple students' clubs and societies Facebook pages including Fossil Free UTAS, UTAS Life Hobart, UTAS Cares, Mumford's Pride, Tasmania University Bushwalking Club (TUBC), and the Sustainability at UTAS group.

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<sup>1</sup> Student enrolments from University of Tasmania COGNOS data for April of each year.

## Who completed the survey?

### Age demographic

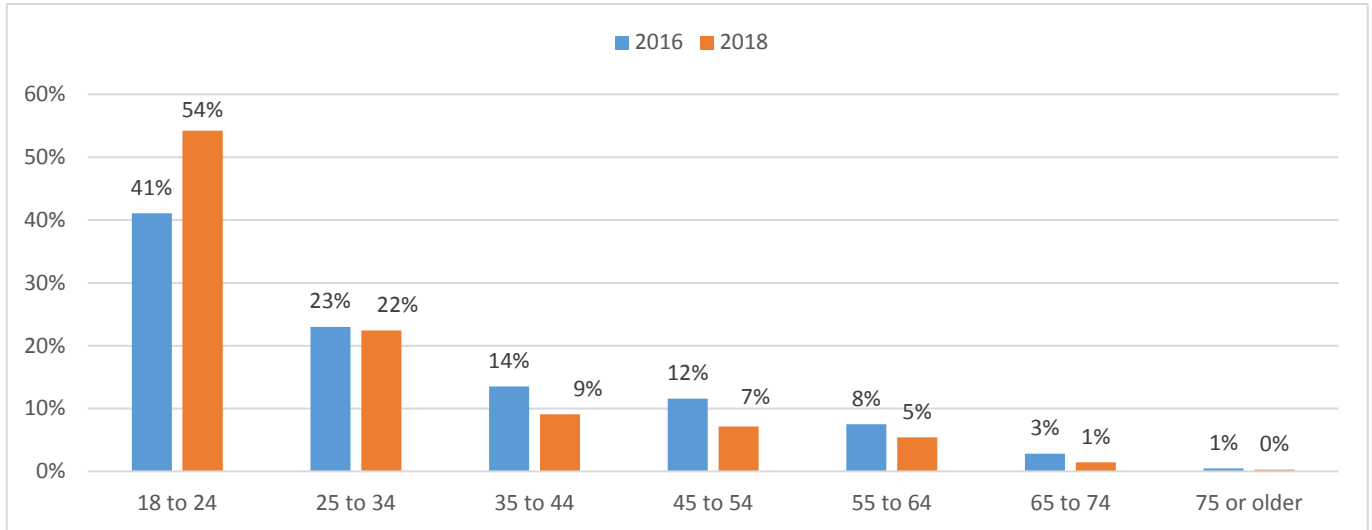


Figure 1: Age of respondents

Students aged 18 – 24 remain the largest portion of the survey response accounting for more than half of the survey demographic (Figure 1). While between 2016 and 2018 there has been a slight decrease in response rate across those aged 25 to 75 or older of 4.92 %, age cohort 18 - 24 exhibits an increase in response rate by 13.2%. From 2016 to 2018, the profile of respondents is getting younger and is in line with the fact that 18 to 24 is main age cohort of students at the University.

### Gender

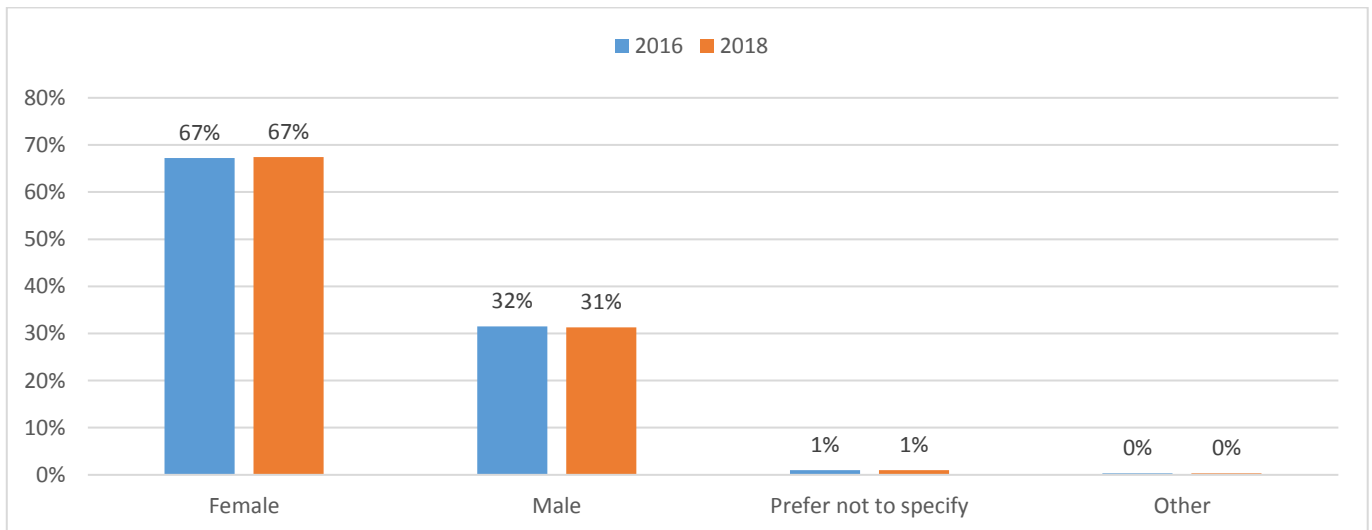


Figure 2: Gender Split of respondents

As for gender, both in 2016 and 2018, the proportion of female students responding far exceeds that of males, remaining at approximately 67% and 31%, respectively (Figure 2). While the proportion of those that identify as female or males within the student cohort explains much of this (60% and 40%, respectively in 2018 as per UTAS website statistics as at July 2018), results indicate that gender may have a role in participation of this survey.

### Level of study

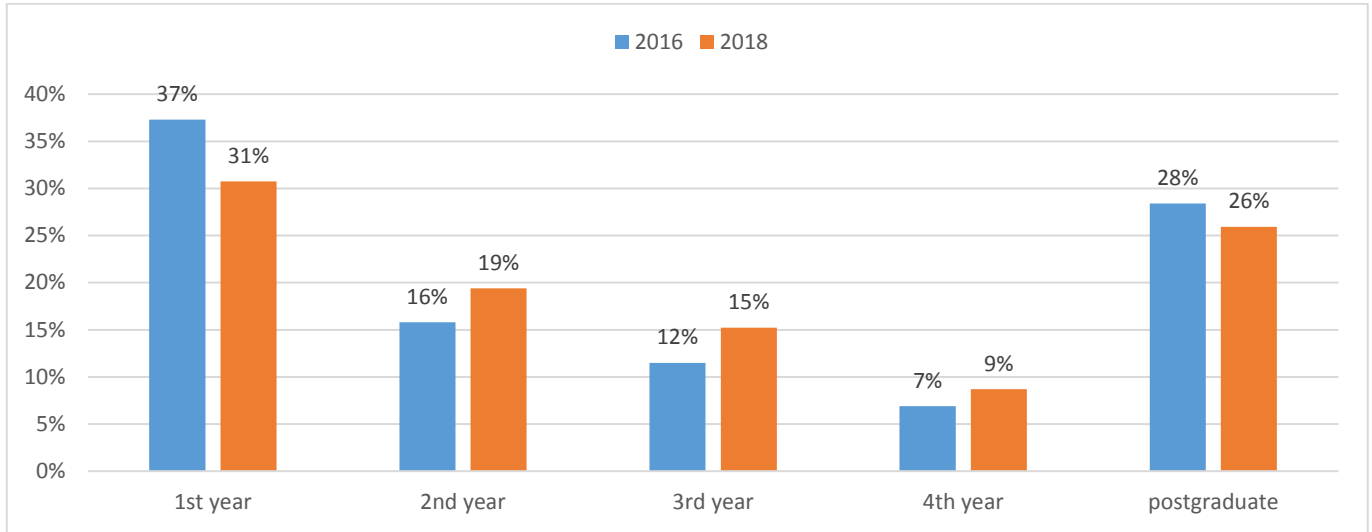


Figure 3: Respondents level of study

In 2016 and 2018, 1<sup>st</sup> year students, followed by post graduate students remained the highest participants to the survey (Figure 3). However, in 2018 there are proportionally more 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year students participating.

### Discipline

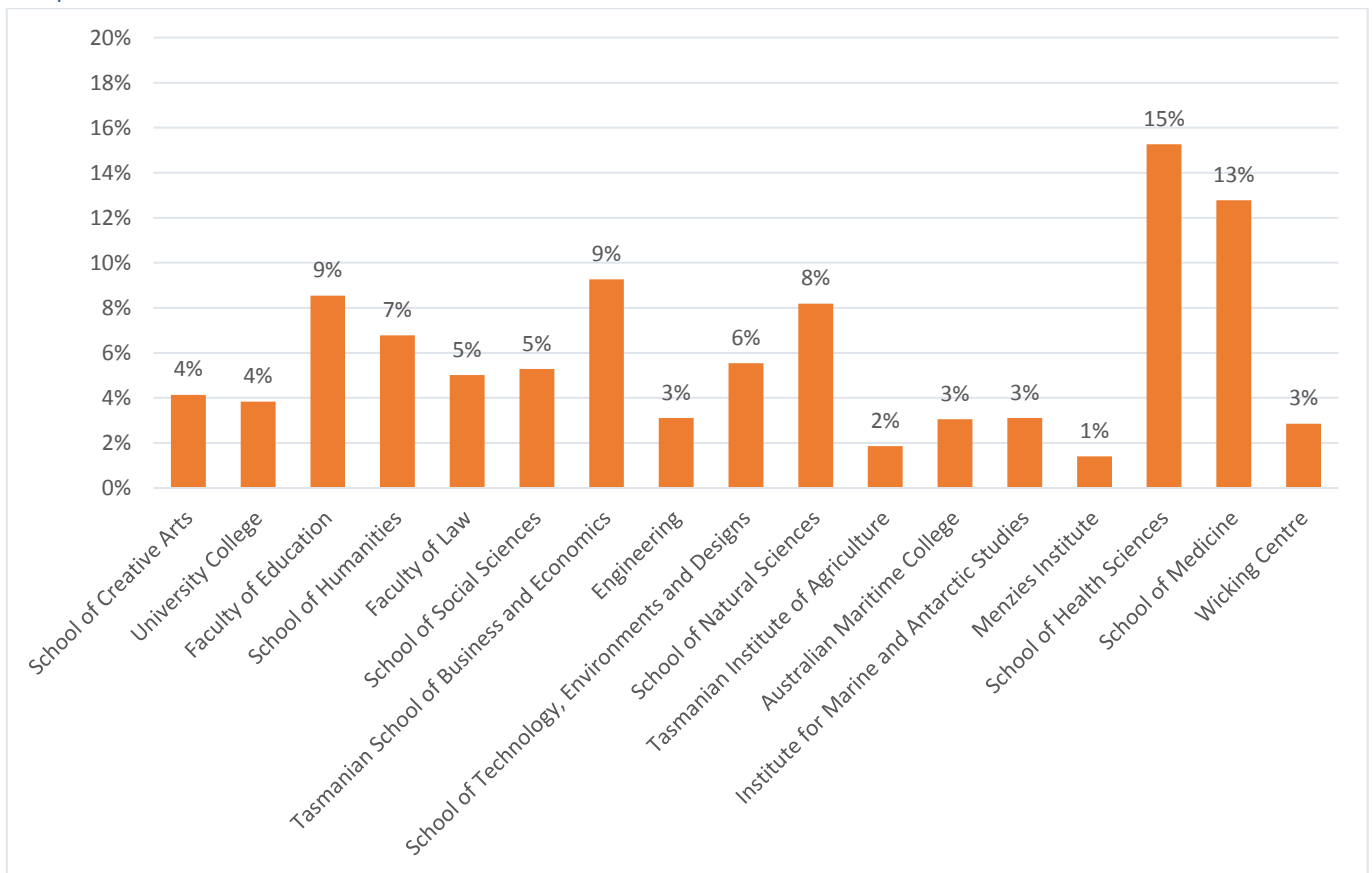


Figure 4: Discipline response proportion 2018

Faculty/School/Institute categories used in 2018 differ and are more detailed from those used in 2016 due to recent academic structural changes. Using these categories, Figure 4 shows that in 2018 School of Health Science and School of Medicine students accounted for just over 25% of respondents. Student from the Tasmanian School of Business, School of Natural Sciences and Faculty of Education each represent between 8.18-9.27% of respondents.

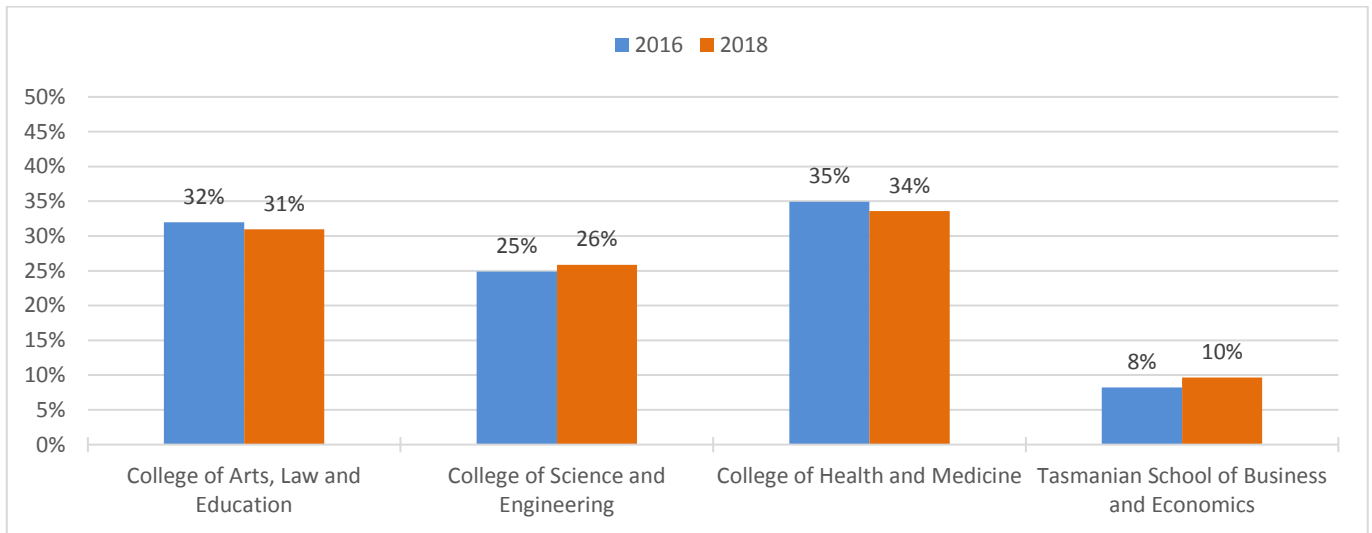


Figure 5: Participation by College Structure

Figure 5 compares changes between 2016 and 2018 using category distinctions for academic disciplines based on the current college structure. What is evident is that participation in the survey in 2016 and 2018 is fairly evenly spread between College of Arts, Law and Education; College of Science and Engineering; and College of Health and Medicine. Tasmanian School of Business and Economics have a lower share of respondents than the Colleges. However, proportional representation is in line with the actual number of students enrolled within academic disciplines of the college structure.

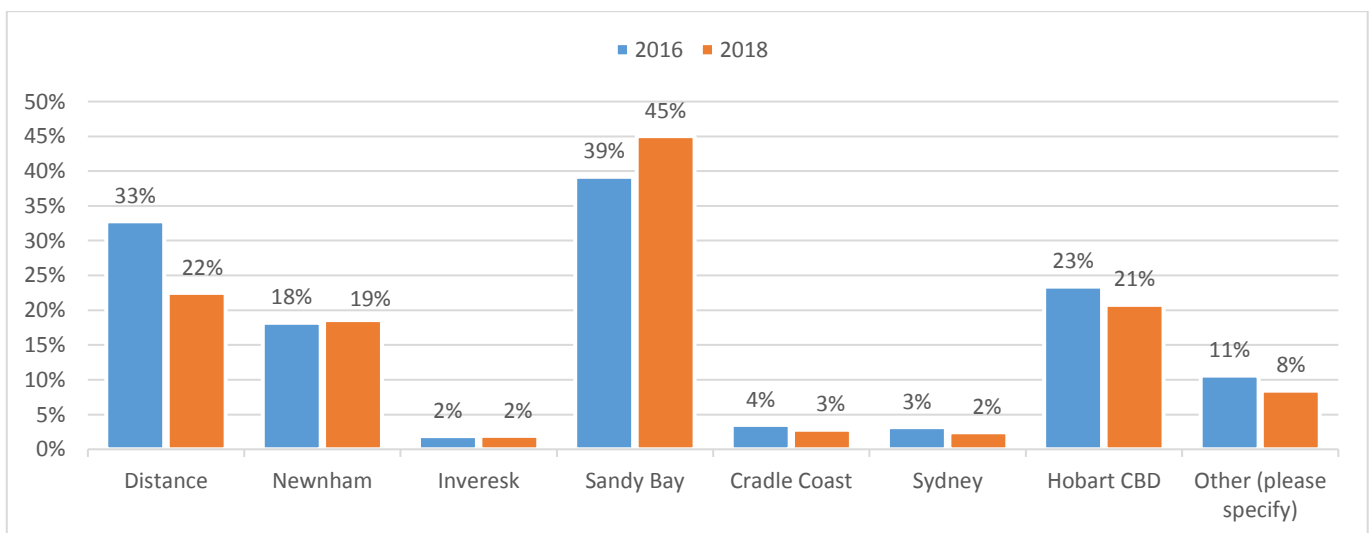


Figure 6: Participation by study mode and campus

Figure 6 highlights that participation expressed in terms of students' place of study has not changed from 2016-2018. As in 2016, in 2018 students from the Sandy Bay Campus represented the highest proportion of respondents followed by distant students, then students from Hobart CBD and Newnham Campus.

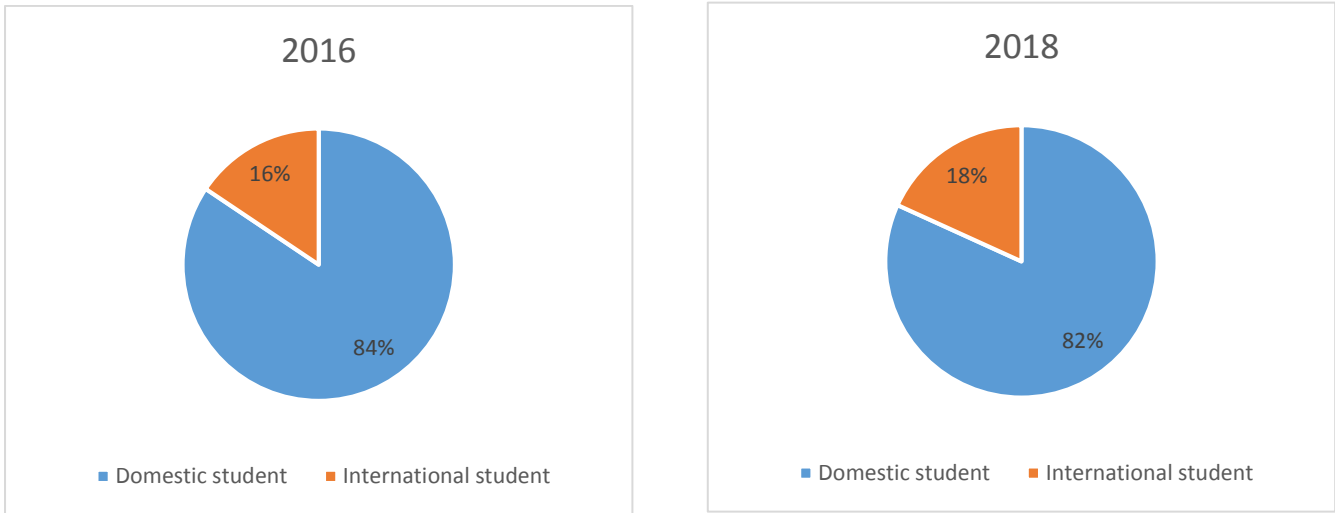


Figure 7: Participation by domestic/international students

Figure 7 shows that there has been a slight 2.61% increase in the proportion of international students respondents from 2016 to 2018. This is consistent with the growth intake and increasing proportion of international university placements over the years 2016-2018.

## Student practices

This section provides information on how sustainability is understood and embodied in the lives of the survey respondents.

### Paradigms of understanding

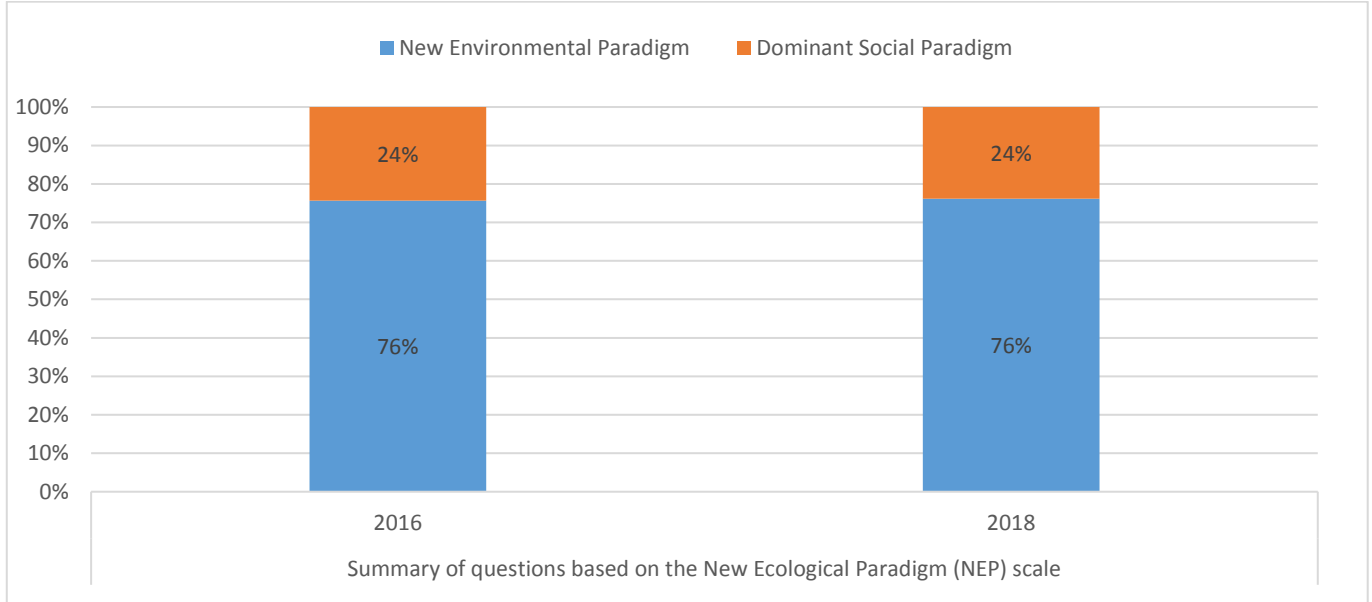


Figure 8: Consolidated response percentages from New Environment Paradigm survey questions

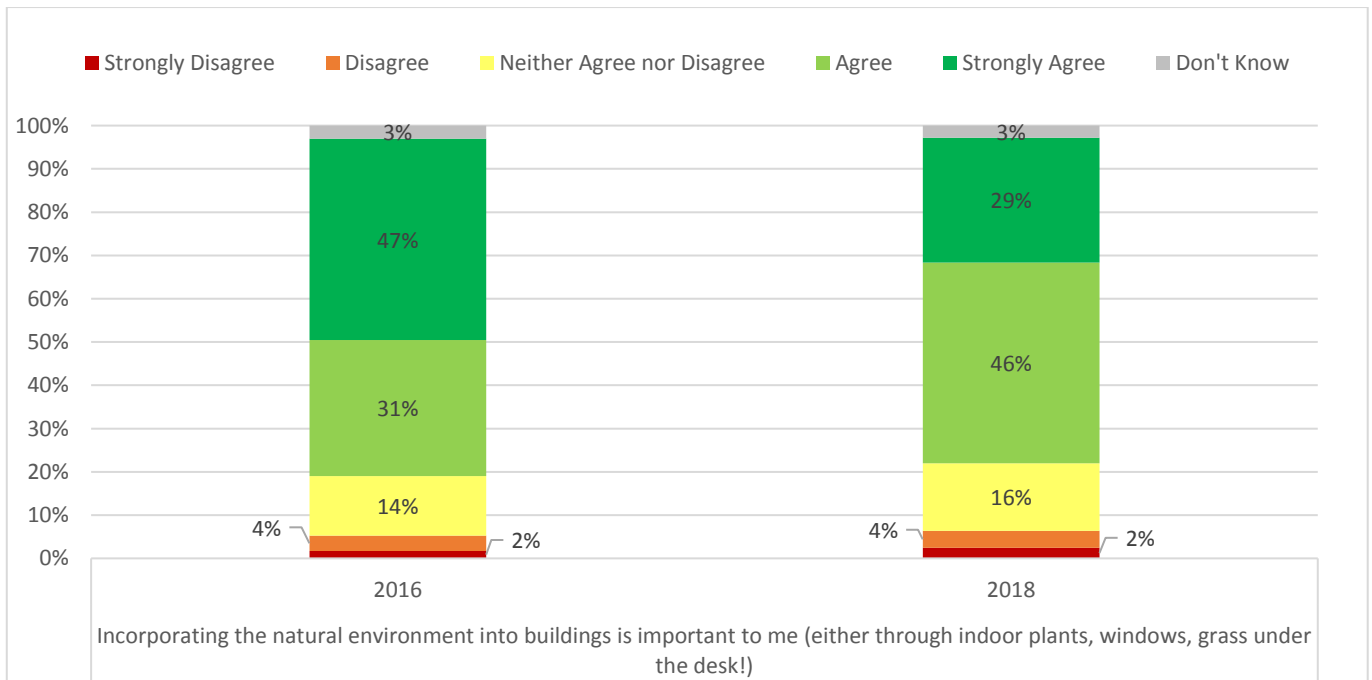


Figure 9: Proportion of students who view including the natural environment within buildings as important

The student survey included questions based on the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale. This scale makes explicit the degree to which participants hold anthropocentric (referred to as the Dominant Social Paradigm) or an ecocentric worldview (referred to as the New Ecological Paradigm). The later can be defined as worldview where

humans are seen as part of, and interdependent with nature and where nature is valued intrinsically. Whereas the former can be defined as a worldview where humans are seen as separate to nature and nature is only valuable in terms of the utility provided towards human purposes, needs and wants. Survey questions specifically focused on participant views on nature’s balance, impact of modifying the environment, natural resource and limits, economic growth, and control over and domination of nature. Respondents who answered in the *neither agree nor disagree* category were included in the response representing the Dominant Social Paradigm. Figure 8 presents the percentage of respondents that can be regarded as either aligned with the New Environment Paradigm or with the Dominant Social Paradigm using questions based on the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale. Highlighted, is that since 2016, 75% of respondents have maintained responses to questions based on the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale indicative of an ecocentric world view. An example of this is the importance given to incorporating the natural environment into buildings by respondents (Figure 9).

### Sustainability knowledge

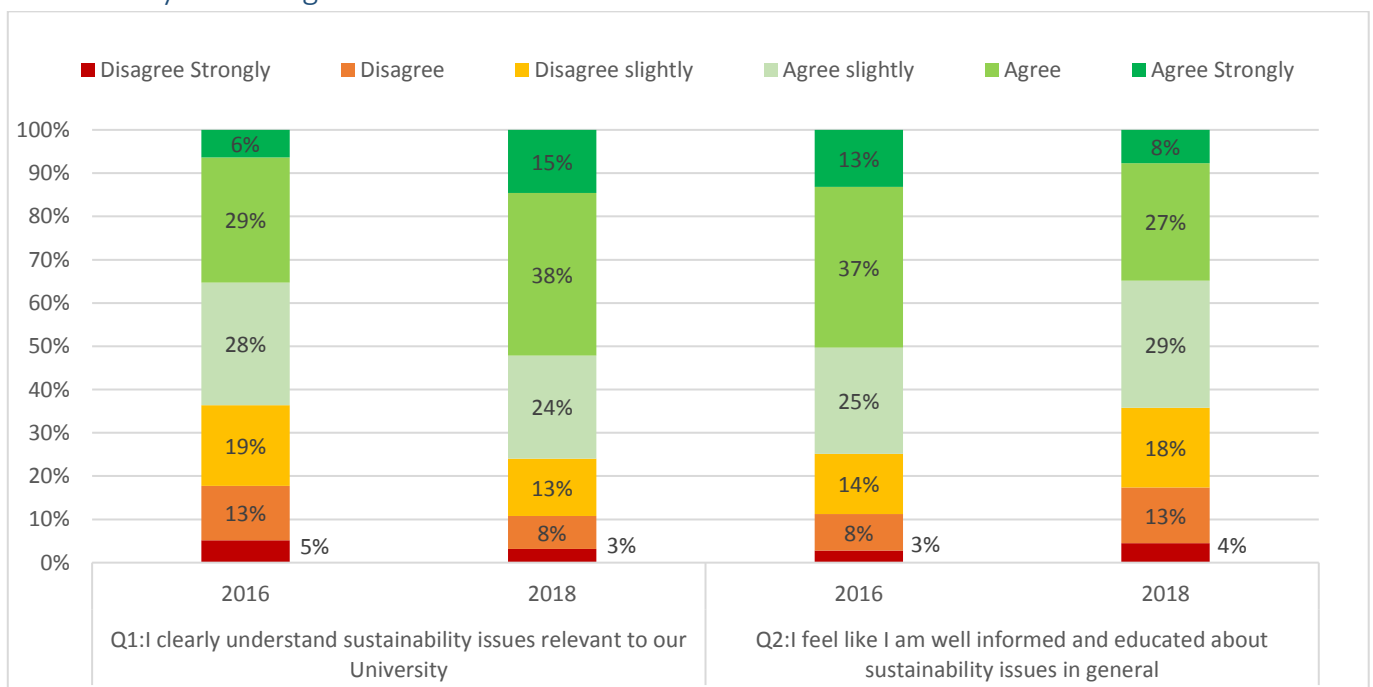


Figure 10: Percentage rating of respondents self-assessed understanding of general and institution specific sustainability issues

Figure 10 highlights the relationship between respondents’ perceptions of how well-informed they are about sustainability issues in general and specific to the University, as well as changes in perceptions from 2016 to 2018. The results show consistency in students’ understanding regarding sustainability in general, with around 65% of students having indicated that they are aware of what sustainability is in general and how it applies to the university. There has also been a 12.41 % increase from 2016 to 2018 in the proportion of students that clearly understand to some degree what sustainability means in the university context. However, across the same period students who noted that they were well-informed and educated about sustainability in general decreased by 10.67%. This indicates that students, while engaged with sustainability at UTAS, are now less equipped in regard to their sustainability knowledge in general relative to 2016.

## Sustainability behaviour and responsibility

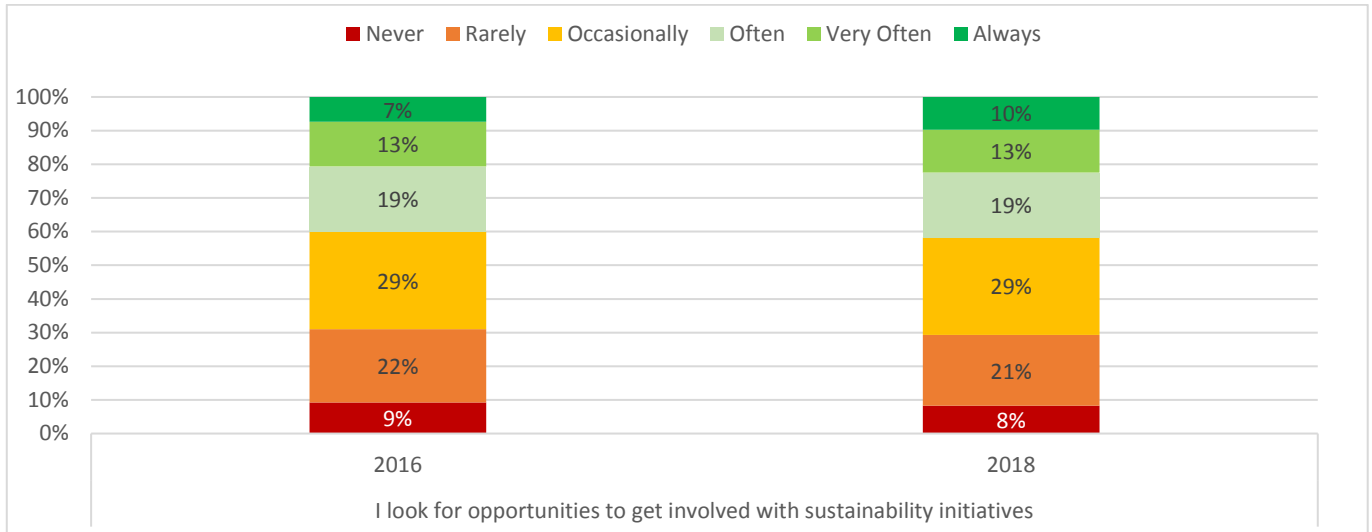


Figure 11: Percentage rating of respondents self-assessed responsibility towards sustainability (Outside of Study)

Figure 11 highlights that in 2018, 42% of respondents noted they *often*, *very often* or *always* look for opportunities to get involved in sustainability outside of study. This is similar to 2016, with 40%. While encouraging, there still remains a majority of students (58.24%) in 2018 who do not actively seek out ways to get involved with sustainability initiatives. However, when asked the question 'I actively encourage other people to adopt sustainable behaviours', 58.98% responded either *often*, *very often* or *always*. Responses to these two questions suggests that the majority of students, while confident in advocating for sustainability, are hindered somewhat in getting involved themselves. This may be due to perceived or real barriers making involvement difficult.

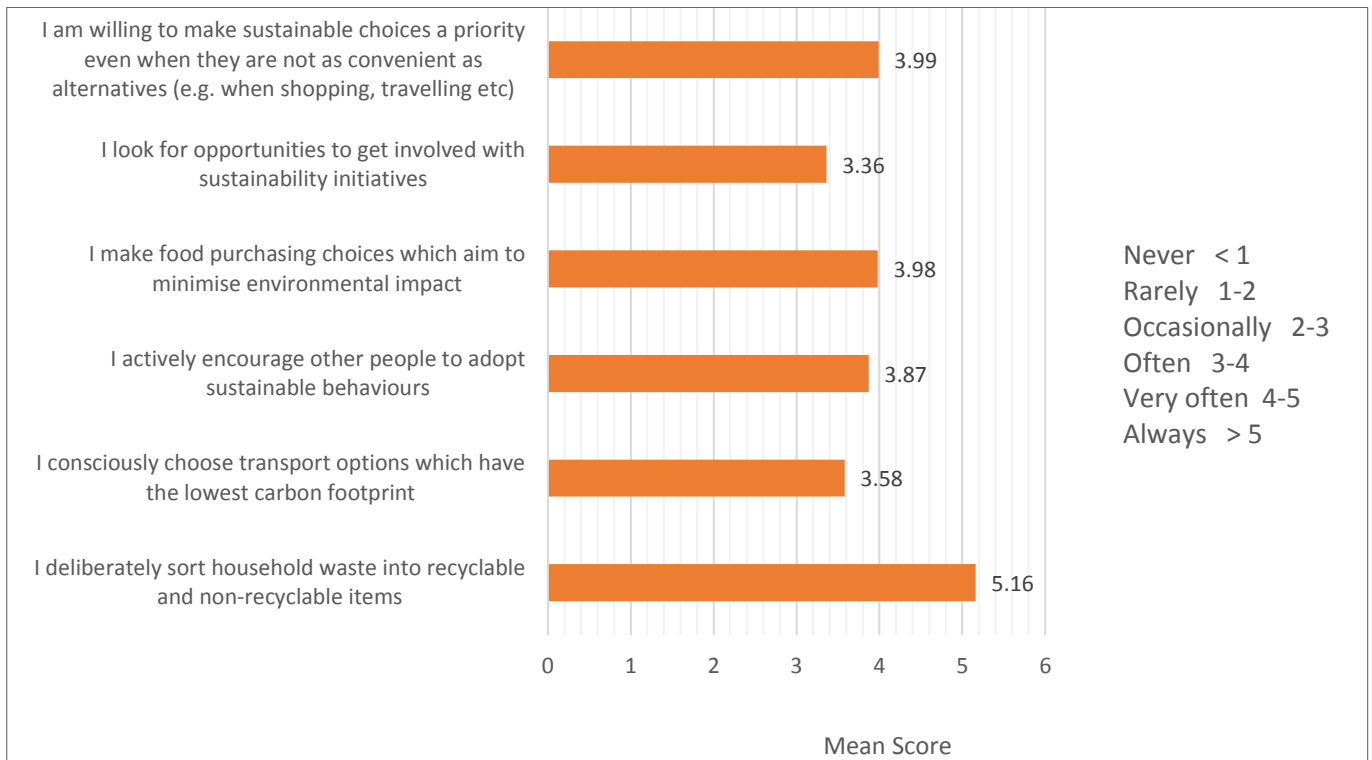


Figure 12: 2018 Mean Score for behaviours outside of university



This year an additional question ‘I am willing to make sustainable choices a priority even when they are not as convenient as alternatives (e.g. when shopping, travelling etc)’ was introduced to the survey. This gives a further insight into how students perceive responsibility towards sustainability. The question is created based on the qualitative results in 2016 where *convenience* exhibited as a major factor that impedes students’ sustainability behaviour. With a mean score of 3.99 (*often*), this could indicate that on average students integrate sustainability into their daily life even if it is inconvenient, which is in line with their majority ecocentric views. However, respondent reflections on actual practice seems to indicate otherwise. When looking at individual behaviours there seems to be higher mean scores for behaviours which are convenient and less so for behaviours which are inconvenient, supporting the view that convenience is still a real factor. For example, mean scores for the extent which a student recycles at home were 5.16 (*very often*) (Figure 12). Students may have a higher level of individual control in making recycling choices at home and or it may simply be the result of supporting infrastructure which makes recycling easy. The lower mean score for sustainable food purchasing choices (3.98 (*often*)) may indicate that this is harder to enact, as a result of a lack of environmental labelling and transparency and knowledge of impacts. In addition nearly half of respondents indicated that they *occasionally, rarely or never*, choose transport options with lowest carbon foot print. This may be due to the extra personal cost of doing so in terms of money needed to offset emission, and time taken to pursue lower carbon forms of transport. Here, time may be conceived in terms of effort needed for travel and in general time devoted to thinking through different options to be more sustainable.



Figure 13: Word cloud of the most frequently cited activities respondents suggested to reduce personal environmental impact of their campus activities in 2016 (1085 responses)



Figure 14: Word cloud of the most frequently cited activities respondents suggested to reduce personal environmental impact of their campus activities in 2018 (1112 responses)



Figure 15: Word cloud of the most frequently cited barriers to making change in 2016 (1057 responses)

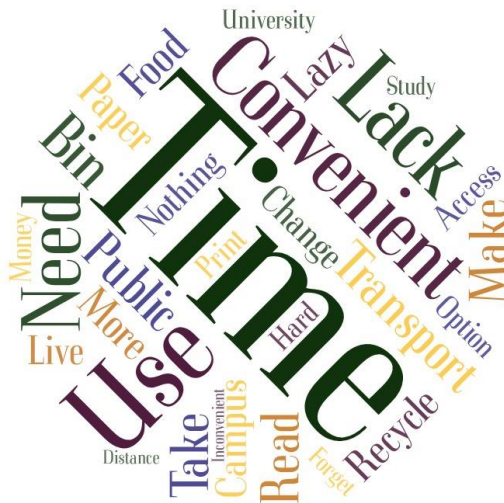


Figure 16: Word cloud of the most frequently cited barriers to making change in 2018 (1078 responses)

In 2016 and 2018 a set of questions focused on what actions student thought they could take in creating a more sustainable UTAS and what might hinder these action. Specifically the first question was ‘*What is the biggest change you could personally make in order to decrease the environmental impact of your direct campus activities?*’ Word clouds of the 30 most frequently cited words from responses to this question are shown in Figure 13 and 14. While reducing printing and paper waste has remained the most frequently cited action, recycling in general is now the next most frequently cited action, then sustainable transport initiatives such as driving less, catching public transport and walking to campus. Students were then asked ‘*What is the main thing stopping you from making that change?*’ Again word clouds with the 30 most frequently cited words from responses to this question are shown in Figure 15 and 16. In 2016 habit/desire or necessity to print reading materials when electric copies were available was the most commonly noted barrier, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> most noted barrier being lack of time. In 2018 lack of time and convenience is now the greatest barrier in students enacting sustainable practices at UTAS. Saving time to attend study, professional, and personal commitments by choosing the most convenient option featured strongly across all responses. Responses suggest that this has a large influence on why students drive instead of using public transport, cycling or walking to get to campus, and choose to buy food at campus in whatever packaging is offered (usually plastic) rather than prepare their own meals. Responses also suggest that a lack options and their effective

communication (e.g. the number and diversity of recycling bins on campus along with waste signage that is clear, frequent and comprehensive bus service, etc) also influence time taken to and inconvenience of pursuing more sustainable alternatives. Also interesting was the potential relationship between some barriers. For example, many student also noted social norms, habits, and preferences for using paper rather than reading and writing on screens. This could be linked to why some respondents have bags that are too heavy to make walking or riding long distances convenient, and in turn a make the preference for personal vehicle transport attractive.

## University practices

This section provides information on how students view the University’s current performance in respect to effort, leadership, infrastructure, education and engagement for sustainability. Outlined also is a summary of student views on what UTAS should focus on to become more sustainable.

### UTAS’s effort in sustainability

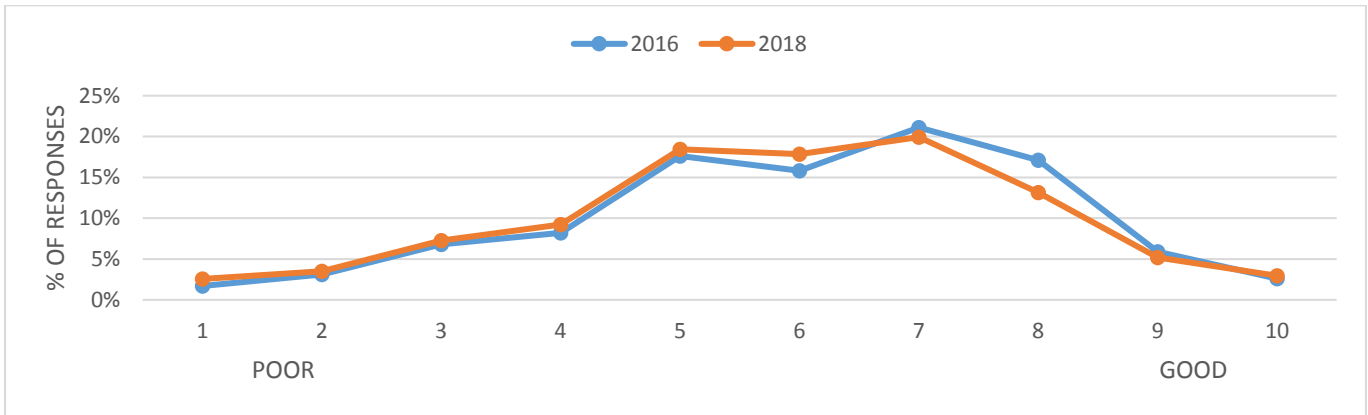


Figure 17: Student's rating of UTAS's current effort regarding sustainability

Figure 17 shows that when asked to rate the University’s overall effort towards sustainability, over half of respondents rated the university between 5-7 out of 10, with a mean score of 5.88. This is similar to the mean score of 6.08 for the same question in 2016. Of note is that while the majority of students viewed UTAS’s sustainability effort as above average, there is still a lot of room for improvement in meeting student expectations regarding a sustainable UTAS.

### Institutional Leadership

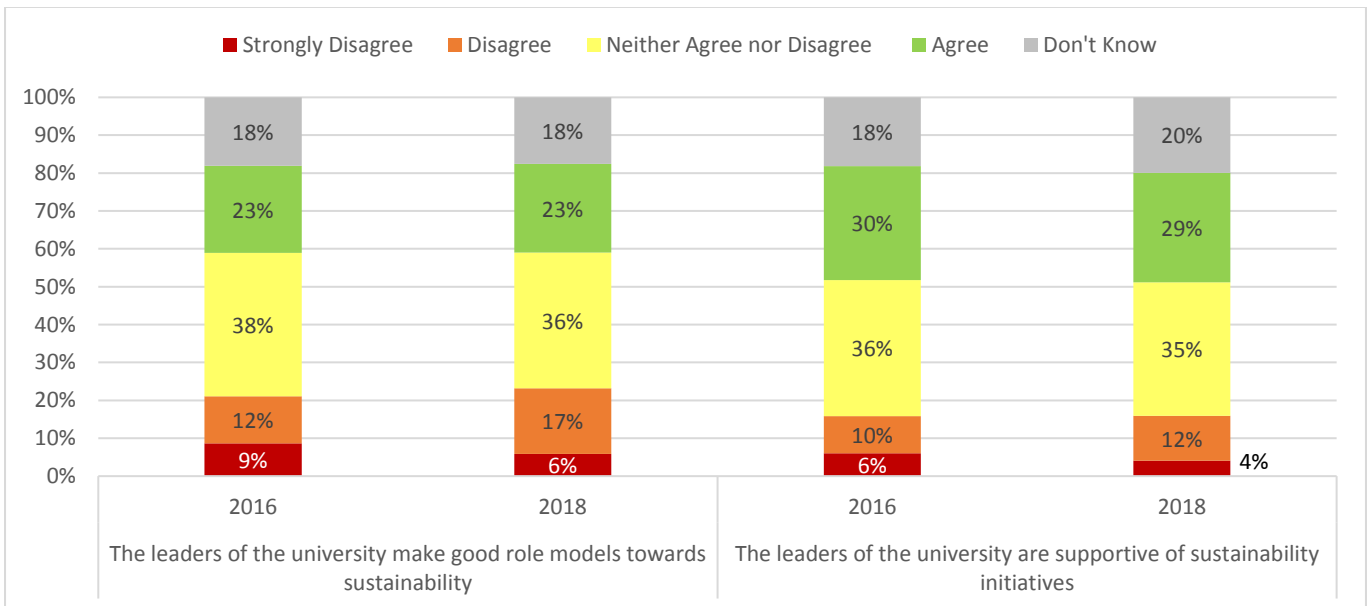


Figure 18: Perceived support for sustainability initiatives by leadership

In 2016 and 2018 over 50% of respondents answered either *don't know* or *neither agree nor disagree* to questions related to views on senior management support for sustainability and as role models for sustainability (Figure 18).

This indicates a lack of knowledge by students of how leadership are involved in the making of sustainability at UTAS. In 2016 and 2018 an almost equal amount of respondents (approx. 21 - 23%) answered *agree* or *disagree/strongly disagree* when considering leadership as role models of sustainability. However, in the case of perception around leadership being supportive of sustainability, around 30% *agreed* compared to around 15% who *disagreed/strongly disagreed* for both years. This seems to indicate that students, while unaware to ambivalent about university leadership in terms of their actual practices for sustainability, are unaware to slightly positive about the support they provide to enacting sustainability.

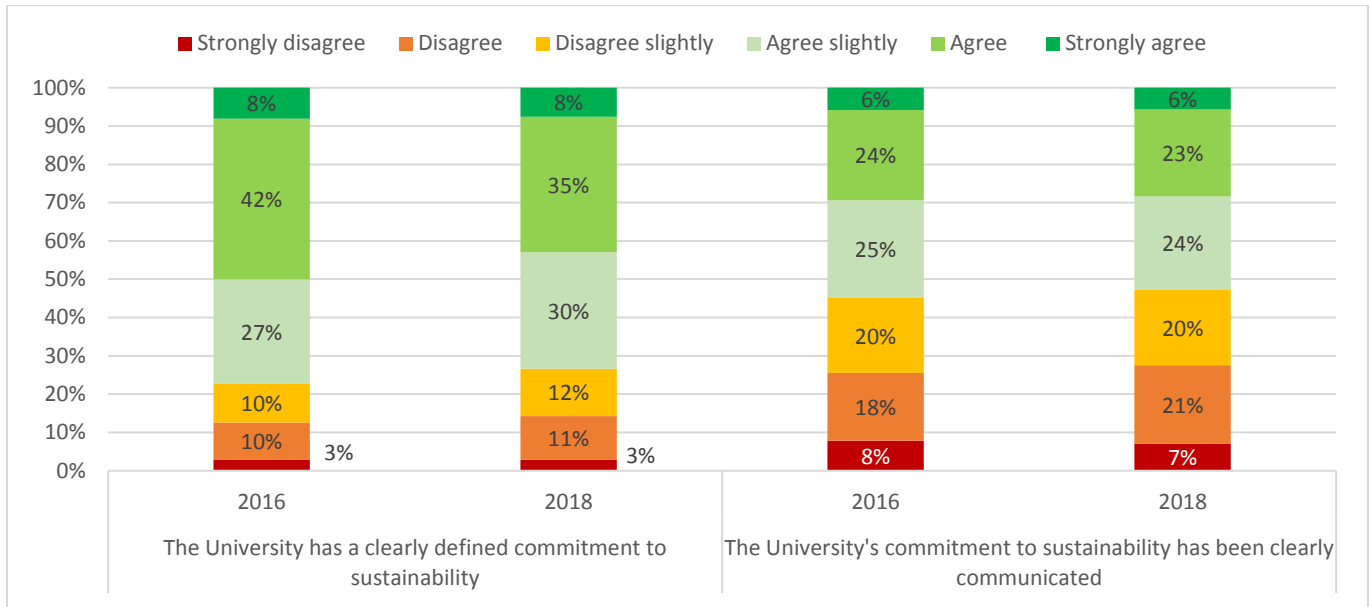


Figure 19: Student perception on university commitment to sustainability

Figure 19 considers student views on the University having a defined commitment to sustainability and also how clearly this has been communicated, shedding some light on why there might be a positive sense about University leadership in regards to support for sustainability initiatives. While there has been a 3.9% reduction between 2016 - 2018, almost three quarters of respondents believe the University has a clearly defined commitment to sustainability. However, for 2016 and slightly more so in 2018, it is almost 50:50 whether students believe this commitment has been clearly communicated. This is clearly an area that the university leadership could improve upon to further support and motivate student involvement with sustainable practices on campus.

## Facilities and operations

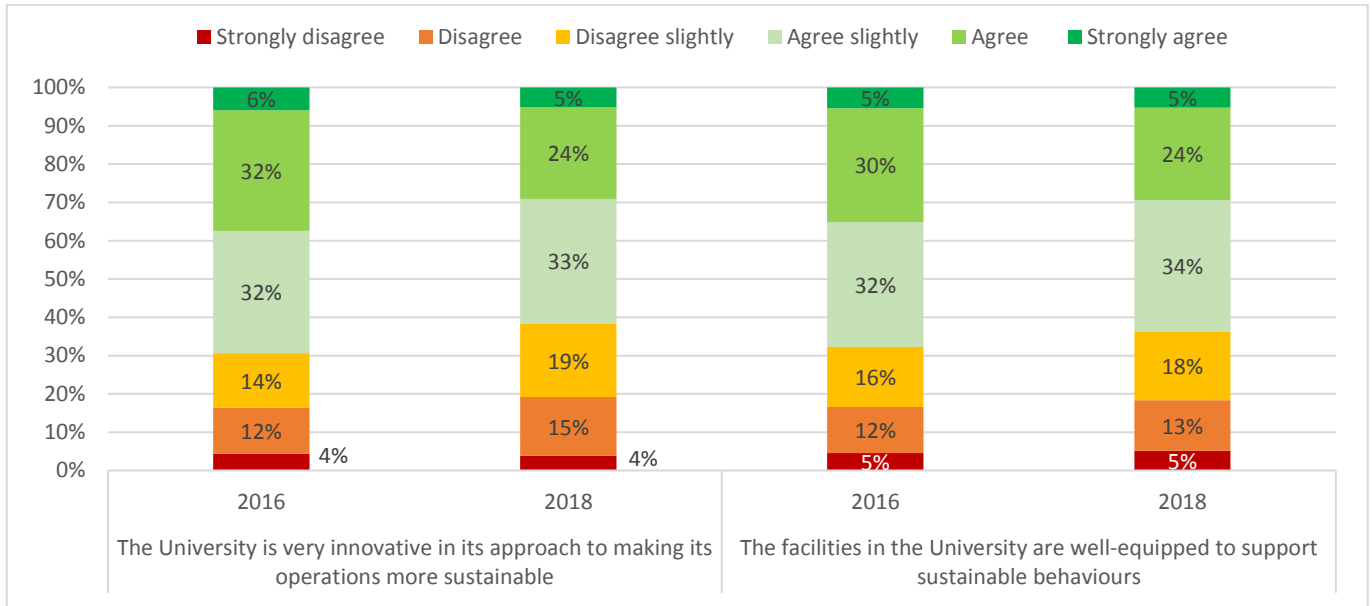


Figure 20: Student perception on operational innovation and whether facilities support sustainable behaviour

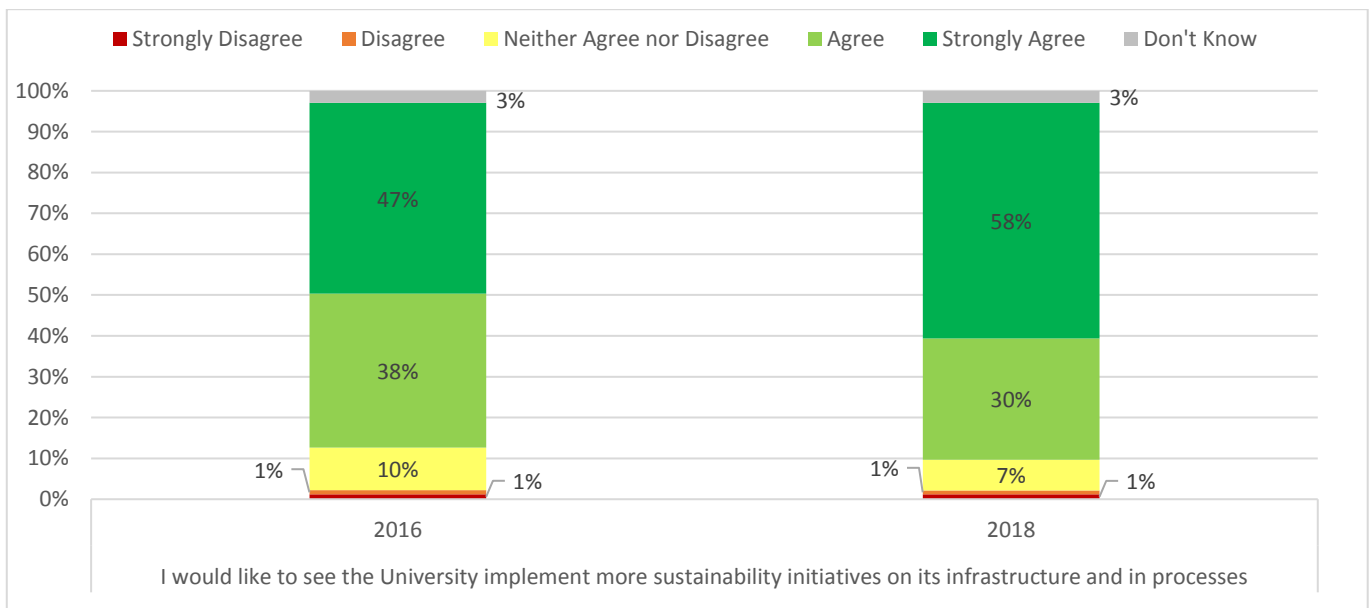


Figure 21: Student perception on the need for improvement within infrastructure and in processes

Figure 20 highlights that the operationalisation of sustainability at UTAS is deemed by a majority of students (approx. 69% in 2016 and 62% in 2018) as innovative. Furthermore, Figure 20 also highlights that a similar proportion of students also believe that the facilities of the university are supportive of sustainable behaviour (approx. 68% in 2016 and 64% in 2018). While this result is very reassuring of the commitment of facilities staff focused on sustainability, the reductions between 2016 and 2018 of students who hold these views are a cause for some concern. Also instructive is the even larger proportion of students who agreed at some level to the question ‘I would like to see the University implement more sustainability initiatives on its infrastructure and in processes’; approx. 84% in 2016 and 87% in 2018 (Figure 21).

## Teaching and learning

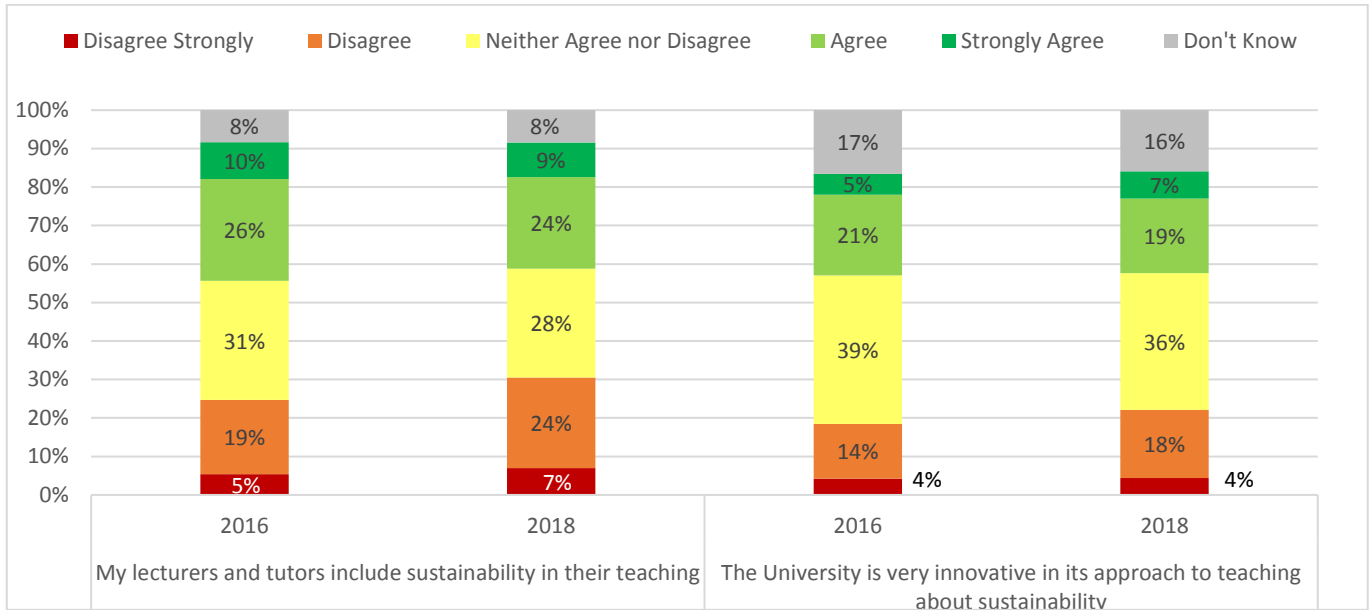


Figure 22: Perceived coverage and quality of teaching sustainability across the curriculum.

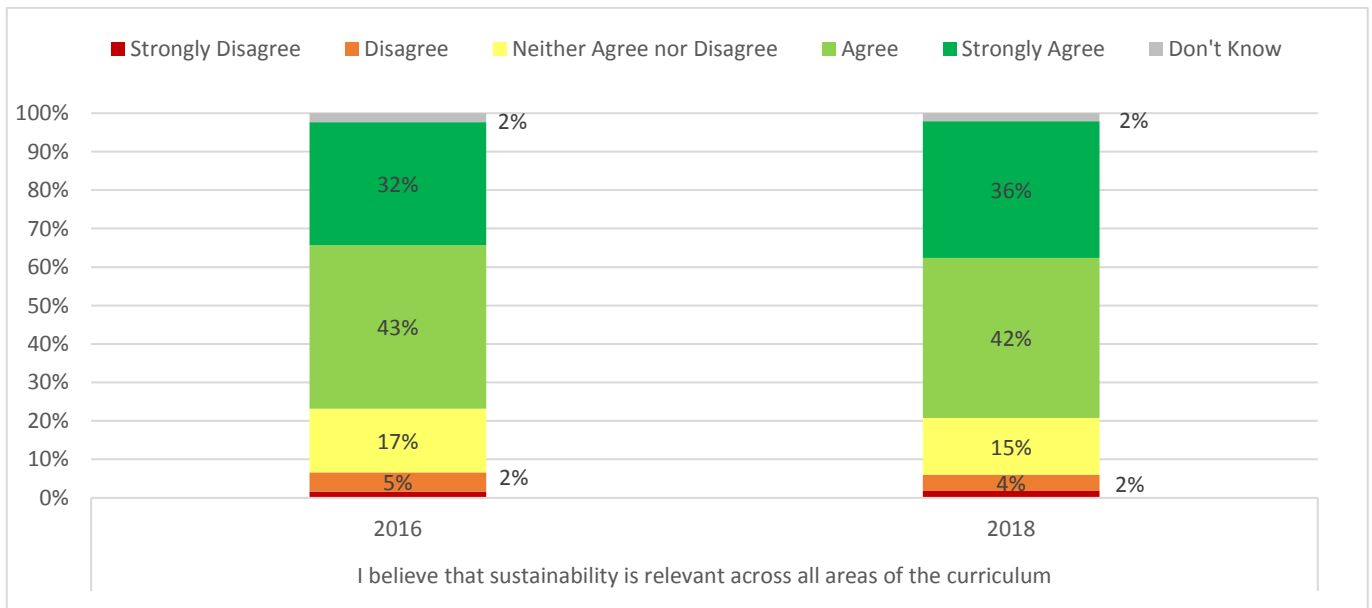


Figure 23: Student responses to inclusion of sustainability across the curriculum

Responses to the question 'My lecturers and tutors are engaged in sustainable practice' illustrates that the majority of students in 2018 (67.16 %) much like in 2016 are ambivalent or perceive a lack of coverage of sustainability within their selected course (Figure 22). Student perceptions on the quality in which education for sustainability is delivered within the curriculum showed similar results. In 2018, as in 2016, the majority of respondents (73.55 %) disagreed to some level or were again ambivalent that 'The University is very innovative in its approach to teaching about sustainability' (Figure 22). These observations are concerning given that Figure 23 highlights that in 2018 a total of 77.13% of respondents noted that they agreed to some level that they believe sustainability is relevant across all areas of the curriculum. This agreement is similar to when asked the same question in the previous 2016 survey (74.48%).

## Views about carbon neutrality and divestment

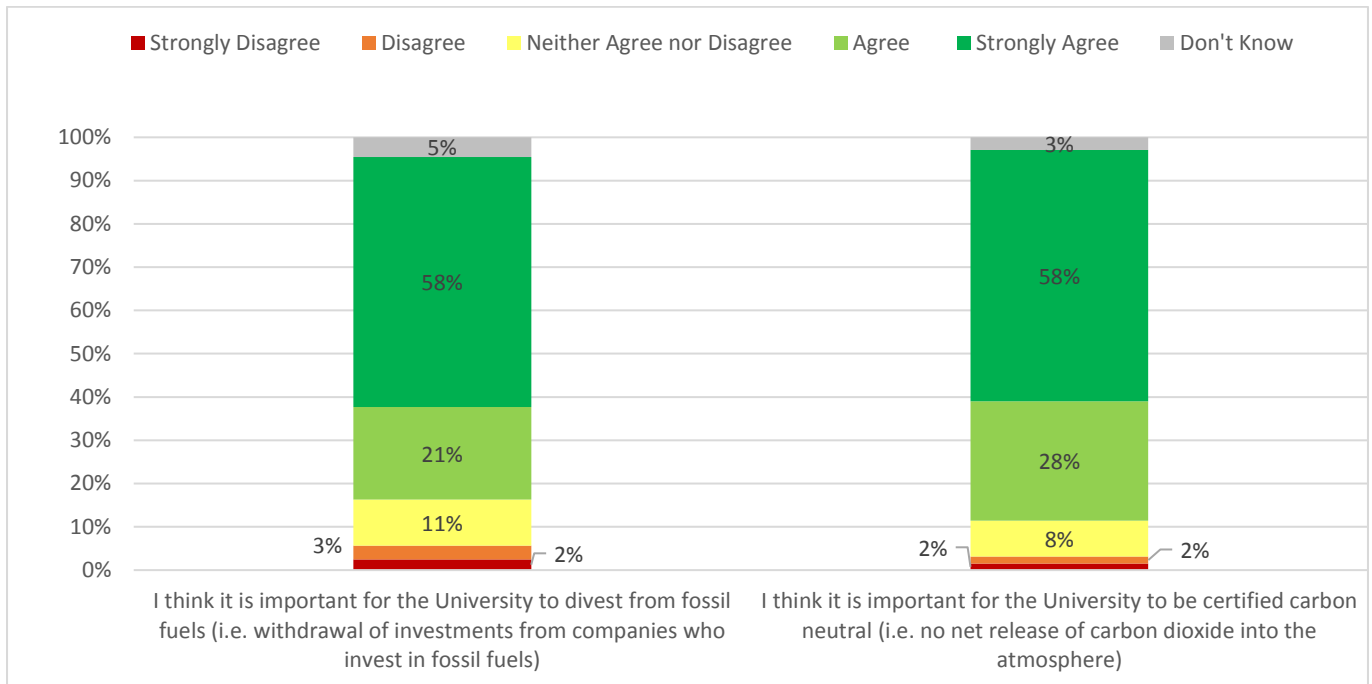


Figure 24: Respondents views on the university's carbon neutral status and potential divestment from fossil fuels (2018)

In 2016, 83% of respondents answered either *agree* or *strongly agree* when asked if it was important for the University to be certified carbon neutral. UTAS became carbon neutral in 2016 so asking the same question in 2018 revealed that 86% of student respondents view maintaining this commitment as imperative (Figure 24). Students also expressed that UTAS should go further in its action on climate change with the vast majority in 2018 answering either *agree* or *strongly agree* that UTAS should divest from fossil fuels (approx. 79%) (Figure 24).

## Student involvement in making a sustainable campus

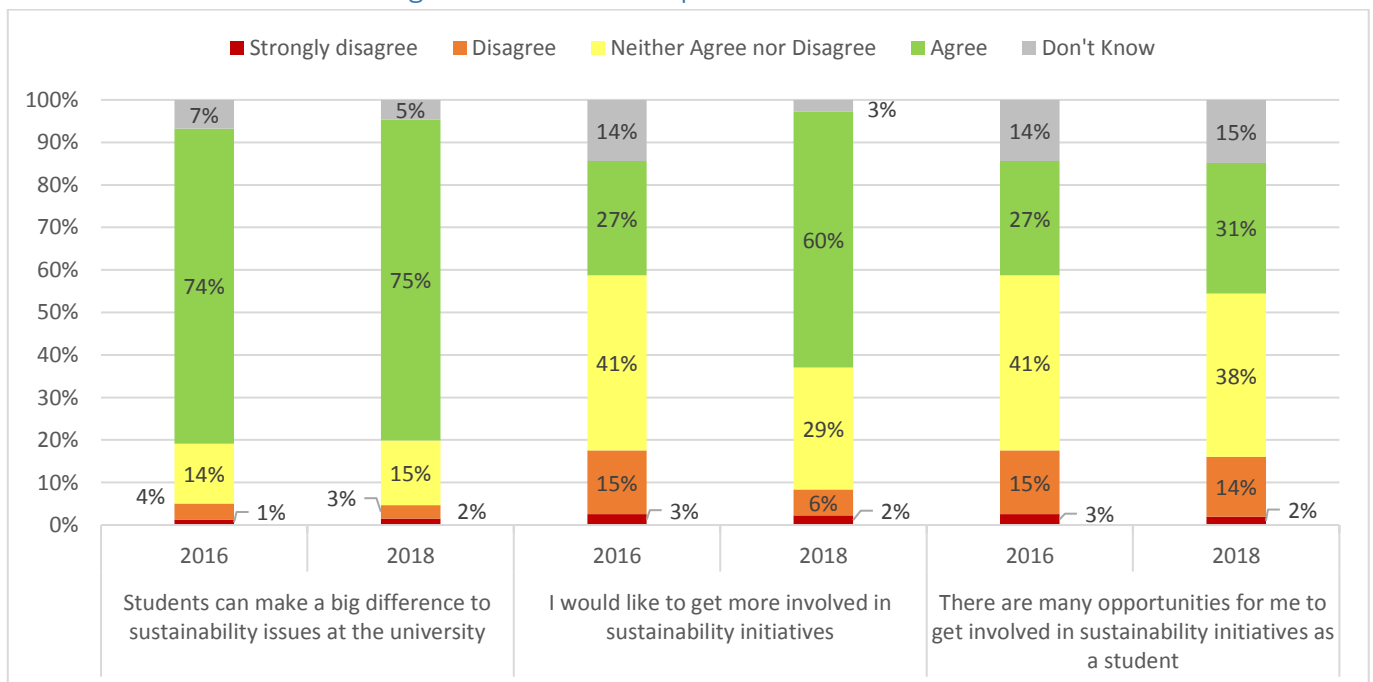


Figure 25: Respondent view on engagement with campus sustainability



Figure 25 represents student views on whether they believe they can make a difference to sustainability issues on campus, whether they would like to get more involved in creating a sustainable UTAS, and how abundant they consider the opportunities for involvement in sustainability initiatives are at UTAS as a student. The results indicate that consistently between 2016 -2018 over 70% of respondents *agree* that students can make a difference. 60.27% of respondent in 2018 indicated their desire to be more involved in sustainability initiatives, substantially up from 26.84% in 2016. However, less than 30.17% agreed that there were many opportunities to do so in 2018. The heightened want to engage in sustainability without feeling that there is reciprocal opportunity to do so highlights a need to further engage students in the making of sustainability at UTAS.

The most important operational change UTAS could enact.



Figure 26: 2016: Word cloud of student views on how UTAS could be more sustainable (top 30 most frequent words (1027 responses))



Figure 27: 2018: Word cloud of student views on how UTAS could be more sustainable (top 30 most frequent words (1034 responses))

Students were asked in 2016 and 2018 ‘What is the most important change the University could make in order to operate in a more sustainable way?’ Word clouds of the 30 most frequently cited words from responses to this question are shown in Figure 26 and 27. Responses in 2016 focused prominently on investment in renewable energy.

In 2018 responses focused on supporting students to enact sustainable practices, and the university committing to divesting from fossil fuels and reducing fossil fuel use. In addition, concerns over the management of waste at UTAS by Facilities Management and by food providers on campus was also a frequent element in student responses. Based on coding of all responses mentioning the word 'waste' the top six waste reduction action themes cited in 2018 are:

1. Phase out plastic at all university food outlets and provide re-usable alternatives.
2. Reduce paper waste
3. Increase waste reduction infrastructure (within and outside buildings)
4. Reduce food waste and encourage composting
5. Provide waste reduction education and increase waste reduction signage
6. Commit to Zero Waste