

Recycling Myth Buster - FAQ

Recycling Bins

Why is it important to segregate waste for recycling at University?

Recycling your waste into the correct bin is hugely important, because when recycling bins are contaminated the quality reduces and it cannot be recycled. Items like disposables cannot be recycled and must be placed into general waste bins.

What are contaminated bins?

A good example would be disposing of items such as disposable coffee cups and food packaging in the food recycling bins. This must be avoided.

At home, I collect most of my recycling into one bag. Why do I have to separate recycling streams (plastic bottles, food, tins) on campus?

At home, you most likely have Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR), where you mix all of your recycling into one bin. This is because councils are looking for bulk waste rather than quality, which is sorted once it reaches the Materials Recovery Facility.

On campus, we do single stream recycling where we separate recycling into different items such as plastic bottles, food and tins/cans. This allows for better quality and improved recycling.

Disposables

Why can't disposables go into recycling bins?

Paper disposable cups also include a plastic lining which is virtually unrecyclable. Some companies do offer a recycling scheme for disposable cups (assuming all liquid has been removed), but at BCU we prefer to encourage the disuse of disposable cups, as avoidance is better than recycling. There is still a vast amount of energy used to make products and to recycle them after use. The ideal scenario is to avoid using single-use items altogether and opt for reusable options.

To stop using disposables, bring in reusable items such as a cup, water bottle, and food container.

Plastics

Why do we only recycle plastic bottles on campus and why are other plastics a problem?

This is because plastic bottles are made from Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET or PETE) and these can be turned into other recycled products, such as materials to add to tiles and even clothing. Other plastics are made from different grades, which are a lower quality and thus cannot be recycled on campus. If you add any plastics other than bottles to the bottle recycling bins on campus, this will cause contamination. The takeaway message is to reduce or avoid these lower grade plastics altogether. Reduce plastic bottles too, as avoidance is always better than recycling.

Where do BCU plastic bottle recycling waste go after they leave campus?

Veolia, our waste contractor, takes the plastic bottles from campus to a specialist recycling plant, and these are processed to make clothing and textiles.

Hidden Plastics - where can I find them?

It is scary but true, plastics can be found in so many everyday items and we don't even realise it. Here are some common products where hidden plastic can be found...

Chewing Gum, Clothing, Make Up, Disposable Coffee Cups, Drink & Tin Cans, Glass Jars and Bottle Lids, Glitter, Cigarettes, Produce Stickers, Tea Bags, Envelopes, Juice Cartons, Wet wipes.

Food Waste

Where does BCU recycled food waste go?

At BCU, leftover food from food recycling bins goes into a process called 'Anaerobic Digestion', which produces compost and gas.

The food industry has a huge environmental footprint, so although recycling leftover food is good, it isn't enough. The amount of energy, land, water and packaging used to get food on supermarket shelves is immense. On average one third of this is wasted or lost, while millions of people starve every day. We must reduce our waste and only buy what we need.

Tins and Cans

What are recycled tins and cans turned into?

Tins and cans are recycled to create more tins and cans.

Paper Waste

What is recycled paper turned into?

Paper from the recycled paper bins is taken by Veolia and processed to make sustainable packaging material.

Cardboard

Can we recycle cardboard on campus?

Yes. For small amounts, you can leave this near your department recycling bins. For larger amounts, contact the [Help Desk](#) to arrange a collection.

General Waste

Where does our general waste go?

General waste is for non-recyclable items. The good news is that none of our general waste goes to landfill, and is sent for [energy recovery](#). This is much better than landfill, but avoidance of waste in the first place is still vitally important. Our goal is to reduce general waste, and everybody has a part to play in this.