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How to improve sustainability inside higher educational institutions: A strategic plan for Qatar University

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Designing and implementing sustainable solutions means to take responsibility for the welfare of future generations as well as for our environment and planet. Positive approach towards sustainability should be an essential part of the ethical base of our lifestyle and actions. Moreover, sustainable development is a vital aspect of the educational agenda at all levels. Universities and higher education institutions have a great responsibility in promoting sustainable development, not only through the educational programs they offer, but also through the involvement of students and staff in the sustainability issues, by encouraging interaction with them. Universities should implement sustainable solutions and adopt sustainability in their future plans, and ultimately they should have an impact on the society and lead the way by offering knowledge, solutions through influential individuals. Indeed, most universities understood the responsibility and the extreme importance of shifting to more sustainable policies and plans, and most of them have started investing in green buildings future that includes, green building, greener practices and green products along with less environmental impact, and ways of engaging its faculty and students.

In the last few years the need for sustainable solutions for universities has rapidly increased. Many efforts have been dedicated to this issue, and now many universities have realized and implemented different plans that suit their needs and nature. These plans have achieved sustainable transport, energy, procurement, food services and many other issues.

In this research, a review of other universities' sustainability plans is used to derive a strategy aimed to improve sustainability inside Qatar University by introducing new solutions, evaluating current implemented methods, and assessing or promoting the use of services already in place. The sustainability plan is designed to deliver a strategic blue print to meet the future development at Qatar University campus via converting its operations, education and research activities towards more sustainable practices. The proposed plan is designed based on the collaboration of three university bodies (students, academics and administrative staff), and it is outlined in three main branches: operational; planning and administration; education and research. The plan identifies and maps the required action to build the initiative to achieve sustainable goals at QU, and proposes new ways to face the challenge of sustainability in academic campuses. The plan also helps in offering a benchmark model for peer higher education organizations inside Qatar, and for other institutions outside Qatar with similar conditions.

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