

HKUST Tree Felling & Planting Policy

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1 Introduction

The Tree Felling and Planting Policy at HKUST aims to provide guidelines and procedures for tree management on the HKUST campus.

The trees on the campus landscape of HKUST are some of our most valuable resources and a key to the attractiveness and beauty of our campus for residents and outsiders. They also hold biological and biodiversity value. HKUST places a priority on growing and maintaining campus trees as valuable assets.

HKUST recognizes that some of these valuable assets cannot be retained within a site boundary for a new capital project. However, we prioritize the creative reuse of these resources to ensure we take advantage of their full range of value. In past projects, for example, HKUST has harvested valuable hardwood for use in furniture, decorations, souvenirs, and landscape amendments.

This policy recognizes the importance of preserving the campus greenery, promoting environmental stewardship, and ensuring responsible tree management during construction projects.

2 Compliance and Responsibilities

1. All contractors and consultants engaged in development projects on the HKUST campus must comply with this policy and any relevant Hong Kong statutory regulations regarding tree felling and planting.
2. Contractors and consultants are responsible for ensuring that their activities do not pose a risk to existing trees outside of the project boundary and for implementing measures to protect trees during development.

3 Pre-Construction Phase

1. Prior to approving any tree felling work, HKUST requires the submission of a Tree Preservation and Removal Proposal (TPRP) to the Lands Department (LandsD), following the practice note¹ and guidance note² provided by the LandsD, and obtaining the necessary approval.
2. For plants on existing sites, contractors/consultants must identify, monitor and protect plant species classified as Critically Endangered (CR)/ Endangered (ER)/ Vulnerable (VU) in the IUCN Red List³, Forestry Regulations Cap. 96A⁴, and Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance Cap. 586 (Schedule 1)⁵ to ensure their preservation and promote species recovery.

¹ Processing of Tree Preservation and Removal Proposals for Building Development in Private Projects, Lands Administration Office, https://www.landsd.gov.hk/doc/en/practice-note/lpn/PN%206_2023.pdf

² Guidance Notes on Tree Preservation and Removal Proposal (“TPRP”) for Building Development in Private Projects - Compliance with Tree Preservation Clause under Lease, Lands Department, https://www.landsd.gov.hk/doc/en/practice-note/lpn/PN%206_2023%20Guidance.pdf

³ IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, IUCN Red List, <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

⁴ Forestry Regulations (Cap. 96A, section 3), GovHK, <https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap96A>

⁵ Cap. 586 Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap586?xpid=ID_1438403490651_001

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3. Contractors experienced in sapling surveys should be hired to survey within the project boundaries to identify native species of value for replanting elsewhere on the campus. The survey findings should be submitted to HKUST along with recommendations on the overall number and species type suitable for transplanting. Before any disturbing actions take place within the site boundaries, all identified saplings with transplanting value must be preserved.
4. A comprehensive tree felling plan including the details outlined in the approved TPRP, must be submitted to HKUST. Additionally, the plan should include the methodology of tree-felling work to ensure the maximum ability to upcycle organic materials obtained from felled trees.
5. Small native species saplings with high ecological value shall be carefully moved to other areas of campus for storage (in the HKUST nursery) or directly replanted within the campus.
6. The tree felling contractor must have prior experience in tree felling for the purpose of manufacturing timber planks for reuse in timber furniture or interior works (e.g., understanding how logs can be cut to maximize board feet of timber). HKUST shall be informed of the decision and alternative suggestions may be provided.
7. HKUST must be notified prior to the commencement of tree-felling work, and workers should be briefed, in the presence of HKUST staff, on the tree-felling requirements outlined in this policy, which they must strictly adhere to.
8. In the TPRP, a justification must be provided for felling any trees. Replanting should be prioritized before removal if the trees are in good health, and form, and possess high ecological/amenity value unless no immediate planting site is available within the campus boundaries.

4 Tree Felling Guidelines

1. Cut lines should be made as close to the base of the trunk as possible, approximately 100mm above ground level.
2. The natural form of the tree fork should be preserved.
3. Wood logs should be kept at a minimum length of 1.5 meters, preferably 2 meters or more.
4. Curved sections of wood logs should be cut through to maintain a straight shape.
5. The length of wood logs should not exceed the container length of the grab lorry/crane lorry.
6. A crane should be provided to transport 2m long tree trunk / branches to the road, for ease of delivery off-site to HKUST's designated recycler. This allows maximum reuse into timber furniture and interiors.
7. A designated area should be allocated for storing wood logs intended for upcycling.
8. Trees with branches and trunks exceeding 200mm (about 7.87 in) DBH⁶ shall be retained for upcycling purposes.
9. Trees with branches and trunks below 200mm (about 7.87 in) DBH shall be collected and sent to Y-Park.
10. Any other organic materials resulting from felled trees that cannot be upcycled or sent to Y-Park should be directed to the recycling skip located near University Road 1 Nursery.

⁶ Measurement of DBH (Diameter at Breast Height), AFCD, https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/con_tech/files/common/NCPN_No.02_measurement_of_DBH_ver.2006.pdf

11. Organic materials obtained from felled trees should be sorted according to their designated destinations and recorded, including their approximate volume, condition, visual representation, and location. The record and weight/volume data should be submitted to HKUST.
12. HKUST should be promptly informed of any additional organic waste generated or transported, and relevant records should be provided.
13. The area where tree felling work was done should be thoroughly cleaned afterwards.

5 Tree Planting Guidelines

1. Whenever trees are removed during construction, an equal or greater number of trees should be replanted within the project's scope or in designated areas approved by campus management.
2. The replanting plan should prioritize native or adaptive tree species that are suitable for the local climate and contribute to the overall campus biodiversity. The definition of native or adaptive tree species can be referred to Hong Kong Herbarium⁷.
3. The selection of tree species and the planting process should adhere to industry best practices and guidelines.
4. Invasive species listed in the IUCN Global Invasive Species Database's 100 of World's Worst Invasive Alien Species⁸ should not be included in the planting proposal.
5. Tree species selected shall have the ability to be used for a dual purpose such as the below:
 - Fruit trees with at least 30 productive years eg. Mango, Lychee, Longan trees
 - Hardwood for furniture or non-structural timber construction at the end of life eg. Acacia hybrid (mangium x auriculiformis), Jabon merah (*Anthocephalus macrophyllus*), Sengon or "Albasia" (*Paraserianthes falcataria*), Bamboo for laminated bamboo lumber (LBL) and Spruce-Pine-Fir (SPF) category
 - Carbon sequestration eg. Broadleaved species
 - Have fruits or flowers which provides habitats for small animals and insects (eg. birds, bees and butterflies)
 - If the tree species is invasive, even if they carry dual purpose, they should not be selected.
6. Where available, existing saplings of native species and exotic species with value shall be transplanted to a suitable site in HKUST.

6 Reporting and Documentation

1. Contractors and consultants should maintain accurate records of all tree-related activities, including tree surveys, felling permits, tree protection measures, and replanting efforts.
2. Regular progress reports should be submitted to the project manager, including updates on tree preservation and any incidents related to tree damage or removal.

⁷ Hong Kong Herbarium, AFCD, <https://www.herbarium.gov.hk/tc/home/index.html>

⁸ 100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species, IUCN GISD, https://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/100_worst.php

7 Training and Awareness

1. Contractors and consultants should provide training to their staff regarding the importance of tree preservation, tree protection measures, and the implementation of this policy.
2. This policy should be distributed in e-format to foster a culture of environmental responsibility and tree conservation among project personnel.

8 Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement

1. HKUST campus management and relevant authorities reserve the right to monitor compliance with this policy and take appropriate action in case of non-compliance.
2. Non-compliance with tree protection measures or unauthorized tree felling may result in penalties, project suspension, or legal action.

9 Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy should be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect new best practices, emerging technologies, and changes in local regulations related to tree felling and planting.

10 Conclusion

The Tree Felling and Planting Policy for Contractors/Consultants at HKUST highlights the commitment of HKUST to responsible tree management. By integrating sustainable practices, preserving valuable trees, and promoting tree planting, HKUST aims to create a greener and more environmentally friendly campus. Contractors and consultants play a crucial role in ensuring the successful implementation of this policy, and their compliance is vital for the long-term sustainability of the campus.