

Waste Management Guidelines

2026

Dawson
— COLLEGE

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1. Executive Summary

Dawson College has made significant progress in advancing sustainability, both within Quebec’s college network and on the international stage. The College achieved Platinum status from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)—the first educational institution in its category to reach this level of recognition.

Dawson College continues to strengthen its waste management program through recycling, composting, sustainable purchasing, and source-reduction initiatives. Diversion rates have improved from approximately 25% in 2016 to 32% in the March 2026 waste audit. Waste audits indicate that a significant portion of the campus waste stream remains compostable, highlighting opportunities for further diversion.

2. Strategic Direction

The primary objective of the waste management program is source reduction: preventing waste before it is generated. Supporting objectives include maximizing recycling and composting, increasing community awareness, reducing contamination, strengthening sustainable purchasing, and monitoring waste performance through regular audits.

3. Progress Toward Waste Reduction Goals

Goal	Status
Three-stream collection system	Implemented campus-wide
Campus-wide composting	Implemented
Eliminate office waste pickup	Achieved
Sustainable purchasing awareness	Implemented through purchasing guidelines
Review contractor requirements	Completed
Reduce landfill waste by 40%	In progress

4. Waste Management System

Landfill waste, recycling, composting, hazardous waste, electronic waste, furniture reuse, and construction waste diversion form the foundation of Dawson's program.

5. Waste Streams

Landfill waste is managed by contracted providers; recycling includes paper, cardboard, plastics, metals and glass; composting includes campus, cafeteria, and landscape organics streams.

6. Hazardous and Special Waste

Hazardous materials are managed according to WHMIS requirements. Electronics, fluorescent bulbs, chemicals, and regulated materials are collected through approved recycling and disposal channels.

7. Waste Audit Results – Winter 2026

The audit identified excessive disposal of recyclable and compostable materials in landfill bins. Improved education and clearer sorting guidance remain priorities.

Waste Stream	Weight (kg)	Contamination	Rate
Recycling	8.0	4.0	50%
Trash	10.5	10.0	95%
Compost	6.5	1.5	23%

Overall diversion rate: 32% (8 kg diverted from 25 kg audited).

8. Key Challenges

- High contamination and improper sorting
- Space limitations for recycling storage
- Compost collection capacity constraints
- Improper nesting of materials
- Waste entering campus from surrounding commercial areas
- Confusion regarding changing recycling guidelines

9. Education and Communication Priorities

Deliver recurring awareness campaigns at the start of each semester, update signage as regulations change, provide clear disposal guidance, and reinforce waste-reduction behaviours across the campus community.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Track garbage, recycling, compost, electronics, batteries, cell phones, cigarette butts, and other diversion streams through spreadsheets, EnergyStar reporting, and periodic waste audits conducted once or twice per semester.

11. Conclusion

Dawson College has made meaningful progress in strengthening its waste management practices through the implementation of campus-wide composting, comprehensive recycling systems, sustainable purchasing initiatives, and the elimination of individual office waste bins. These efforts reflect the College's commitment to environmental stewardship and have contributed to gradual improvements in waste diversion and resource recovery.

At the same time, the Winter 2026 waste audit highlights that significant challenges remain. High contamination rates, improper sorting, limited recycling and composting infrastructure, and continued reliance on landfill disposal indicate that further action is required. Improving diversion rates will depend not only on operational improvements but also on fostering greater awareness, confidence, and participation among students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Looking forward, Dawson's success will be measured by its ability to move beyond waste management and toward waste prevention. By prioritizing source reduction, strengthening education and communication campaigns, conducting regular waste audits, and integrating sustainability into everyday campus culture, the College can continue to reduce its environmental impact and support its broader climate and sustainability goals.

Waste management is a shared responsibility. Through ongoing collaboration, accountability, and innovation, the Dawson community can build a more circular and sustainable campus—one where materials are used responsibly, valuable resources are recovered, and waste generation is minimized wherever possible.