

STARS 2.2 Summary of Changes

May 2019

Overview

This document outlines the changes from the STARS 2.1.3 Technical Manual to the [STARS 2.2 Technical Manual](#). Each credit or section is labeled to indicate the extent of revisions (“no changes”, “minor edits”, “substantive changes”, or “new”). Minor editorial changes and system-wide organizational changes are not listed below.

Report Preface

This section, previously called Institutional Characteristics, has been reorganized to better accommodate new content:

Introduction (*new*)

PRE 1: Executive Letter (*new*)

- New section (required to earn a rating, but optional for unscored reports) to allow participants to upload an executive cover letter before submitting a report.

PRE 2: Points of Distinction (*new*)

- New optional section to allow participants to highlight the sustainability programs, initiatives, or accomplishments they are most proud of.

Institutional Characteristics

PRE 3: Institutional Boundary (*minor edits*)

- New institution type added for *Other (non-higher ed.) institutions*.
- Additional guidance provided around selecting an institution type, including reference to UNESCO levels.
- A new feature added for *Museums*.

PRE 4: Operational Characteristics (*no changes*)

PRE 5: Academics and Demographics (*minor edits*)

- Definition of *employees* added with reference to internationally recognized terminology (*academic staff* and *non-academic staff*).

Academics

Curriculum

AC 1: Academic Courses (*minor edits*)

- Terminology revised to align with the language most commonly used by participants:
 - *Sustainability courses* has been changed to *sustainability-focused courses*.
 - *Courses that include sustainability* has been changed to *sustainability-inclusive courses* (or *sustainability-related courses*; participants are free to use either term).
- Language added to Measurement to allow an institution to exclude required courses for which the content is dictated by external bodies or legislation and not under institutional control, courses that are strictly practice-oriented, and departments that exclusively offer practice-oriented courses.
- Language added to Measurement requiring participants to document excluded course types in the “Data source(s) and notes...” field. Required reporting fields for exclusions have been removed.
- Definition of *sustainability challenges* edited to include AASHE’s definition of sustainability.
- Definition of *sustainability course offerings* simplified for clarity.
- Credit Example rewritten to provide examples of closely related courses in the same discipline side by side to further clarify how courses should be classified.
- Edits to Criteria and Measurement to minimize duplicative language.

AC 2: Learning Outcomes (*substantive changes*)

- To better distinguish between the levels at which sustainability learning outcomes may be adopted, institutional and divisional sustainability learning outcomes (Part 1) are recognized independently from the percentage of students that graduate from sustainability-focused programs (Part 2).
- Recognizing the diverse contexts in which participants operate, the two parts are scored together so that there is more than one way to earn full points.

- Partial scoring is introduced for institutional learning outcomes that are clearly supportive of sustainability, but not explicitly focused on sustainability. This change is intended to address participant concerns that learning outcomes that are closely associated with sustainability are currently unrecognized and provide space for institutions to report what they really intend to report rather than stretch to meet a single criterion.

AC 3: Undergraduate Program (*minor edits*)

- Definitions updated consistent with the Academic Courses credit.
- New definitions added for *Major, degree, or certificate program* and *Minor or concentration*.

AC 4: Graduate Program (*minor edits*)

- Definitions updated consistent with the Academic Courses credit.

AC 5: Immersive Experience (*minor edits*)

- Criteria updated consistent with the Academic Courses credit.

AC 6: Sustainability Literacy Assessment (*minor edits*)

- Criteria updated to recognize assessments for which a “substantive portion” focuses on student knowledge.

AC 7: Incentives for Developing Courses (*minor edits*)

- Updated terminology consistent with Institutional Characteristics.

AC 8: Campus as a Living Laboratory (*minor edits*)

- Criteria edited for clarity.
- The “Other” category is replaced with “Campus Engagement”.

Research

AC 9: Research and Scholarship (*minor edits*)

- A brief description of each individual’s research that justifies her/his inclusion is required. This will ensure that the public and AASHE staff reviewers have a clear understanding of why research has been classified as sustainability research.
- Terminology simplified to allow each institution to define who is considered to be a “researcher” as best suits its context.

- Definition of *sustainability research* updated to align more closely with the Academic Courses credit and better facilitate the process of identifying sustainability research based on published research interests and publication titles and abstracts.

AC 10: Support for Sustainability Research (*minor edits*)

- Credit title changed and language in criteria simplified for clarity.
- Definition of *sustainability challenges* added and definition of *sustainability research* updated.

AC 11: Open Access to Research (*substantive changes*)

- Criteria and scoring revised to provide multiple ways to earn points in response to participant feedback and recommendations from experts in the open access space.

Engagement

EN 1: Student Educators Program (*substantive changes*)

- New part added based on the number of hours worked by student educators (actual or expected) per student served by a peer-to-peer program. Intent is to address a second dimension of educator programs and better distinguish more robust programs from less robust programs.
- Applicability changed to allow institutions that don't have students enrolled for credit and attending the physical campus to mark it N/A.
- Reporting fields updated to capture the number of trained educators, hours worked, and website for each program.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement.

EN 2: Student Orientation (*no changes*)

EN 3: Student Life (*minor edits*)

- Minor edit to clarify intent.
- "Other" reporting field removed.

EN 4: Outreach Materials and Publications (*substantive changes*)

- Types of programs and initiatives consolidated to simplify reporting and minimize duplication with other credits.

EN 5: Outreach Campaign (*minor edits*)

- Reporting fields consolidated to simplify reporting.

EN 6: Assessing Sustainability Culture (*minor edits*)

- Participation by U.S. and Canadian institutions in the NSSE Sustainability Education Consortium is allowed to qualify as a cultural assessment.

EN 7: Employee Educators Program (*substantive changes*)

- New part added based on the number of hours worked by employee educators (actual or expected) per employee served by a peer-to-peer program. Intent is to address a second dimension of educator programs and better distinguish more robust programs from less robust programs.
- Reporting fields updated to capture the number of trained educators, hours worked, and website for each program.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement.

EN 8: Employee Orientation (*minor edits*)

- Definition of *employees* added.

EN 9: Staff Professional Development and Training (*minor edits*)

- Credit title edited.
- Definition of *non-academic staff* added.

Public Engagement

EN 10: Community Partnerships (*minor edits*)

- Language in criteria edited for clarity and greater international relevance.
- The “transformative”, “collaborative” and “supportive” descriptors are removed for simplicity.
- The distinction between *sustainability-focused* and *sustainability-related* partnerships is clarified in alignment with other credits.
- Definition of *civil society organizations* added.

EN 11: Inter-Campus Collaboration (*minor edits*)

- Criteria edited for clarity and to address common questions from participants.
- The “Other” category is moved to optional reporting fields.
- Definition of *employees* added.

EN 12: Continuing Education (*minor edits*)

- Language edited to align with the Academic Courses credit and address common questions from participants.

- Definitions added to align with the Academic Courses credit and the Undergraduate Program and Graduate Program credits.

EN 13: Community Service (*substantive changes*)

- A new part added to recognize institutions that provide incentives for employee community service.
- Applicability changed to all institutions.
- Added definitions of *employees* and *predominant student body*.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement to address common questions.

EN 14: Participation in Public Policy (*minor edits*)

- Clarifying language added to address common misinterpretations.

EN 15: Trademark Licensing (*substantive changes*)

- Partial points awarded to institutions that have adopted a labor code of conduct in licensing agreements, but have not joined a monitoring and verification organization to ensure compliance.
- Guidance added for institutions not located in the U.S., Canada, or the U.K.
- Applicability changed to allow institutions with minimal licensing revenue to mark the credit N/A.

Operations

Air & Climate

OP 1: Emissions Inventory and Disclosure (*substantive changes*)

- Revamped credit that now includes an institution's GHG and air pollutant emissions inventories. The intent is to simplify reporting by consolidating gross emissions reporting in a single place.
- SIMAP and the Climate Registry recognized as GHG accounting tools.

OP 2: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (*substantive changes*)

- Credit simplified by moving disaggregated GHG emissions reporting and points earned for conducting an inventory to the revamped *Emissions Inventory and Disclosure* credit.
- SIMAP and the Climate Registry recognized as GHG accounting tools.
- Non-additional carbon sequestration removed from scoring, consistent with SIMAP and WRI.
- REC/GO/I-REC reporting removed to ensure there is no double-counting.
- Offset categories aligned with SIMAP.

Buildings

OP 3: Building Design and Construction (*substantive changes*)

- This credit is placed before the O+M credit to help reinforce the difference between them.
- The proliferation of green building rating systems has grown to the point that it is not feasible to determine equivalence between them. Classification adopted that groups rating systems as either multi-attribute and single-attribute.
- Scoring for uncertified space simplified based on the multi-attribute/single-attribute scheme.
- Credit Example added to help institutions distinguish between multi-attribute and single-attribute frameworks.

OP 4: Building Operations and Maintenance (*substantive changes*)

- The proliferation of green building rating systems has grown to the point that it is not feasible to determine equivalence between them. Classification adopted that groups rating systems as either multi-attribute and single-attribute.
- Scoring for uncertified space simplified based on the multi-attribute/single-attribute scheme.
- Credit Example added to help institutions distinguish between multi-attribute and single-attribute frameworks.

Energy

OP 5: Building Energy Efficiency (*substantive changes*)

- Credit renamed to more clearly communicate its intent.
- Electricity units now requested in kilowatt-hours to help minimize data entry and conversion errors.
- Editorial changes to align better with SIMAP and address common misinterpretations.
- Source-site ratios updated consistent with US EPA Portfolio Manager.
- Definitions of *source energy* and *site energy* added.

OP 6: Clean and Renewable Energy (*substantive changes*)

- Electricity units now requested in kilowatt-hours to help minimize data entry and conversion errors.
- Green power options updated to reflect current market.
- *Clean and renewable energy sources* defined consistent with CRS/Green-e.
- Clarifying language added to address common questions and inconsistencies.

Food & Dining

OP 7: Food and Beverage Purchasing (*substantive changes*)

- Credit reorganized so there are no longer two different parts.
- Some detailed information and guidance moved from Criteria to Measurement.
- Criteria around sustainable and ethical production are explicitly focused on certified/verified farming and fishing methods. Exemption from the certification requirement is provided for NGO-recommended seafood and exceptional circumstances.
- “Plant-based” has been redefined to:
 - Address concerns from food service providers about the challenges associated with distinguishing “plant-based products” from “animal products”, specifically multi-ingredient products that may include animal-derived ingredients.
 - Help address concerns about awarding points for products like bottled water and soda by focusing on plant-based foods rather than products that are not meat/eggs/fish/dairy.
- A purchase that is both sustainably/ethically produced and plant-based is counted in both categories. Awarding points this way:
 - Allows the target to be set at 100 percent of dollars spent without negatively impacting scores. Based on STARS and Real Food data, it is estimated that institutions would earn, on average, 1 additional point over version 2.1, which would help address concerns that very low scores discourage participation.
 - Addresses feedback about sustainable/ethical animal products being double-counted in the current credit.
 - Helps address concerns about creating a perverse incentive to purchase cheaper meat rather than more plant-based foods.
- Institutions that don’t have dining halls or catering services are required to report on other types of outlets (e.g., franchises).
- The list of recognized certifications in Standards and Terms is reorganized to help participants focus on those that are most common and provide clearer guidance around allowable equivalents. Terms that are no longer strictly necessary to complete the credit (e.g., “farm-to-institution program”) have been removed.

[View Food and Beverage Purchasing Inventory.](#)

[View FAQ.](#)

OP 8: Sustainable Dining (*substantive changes*)

- Initiatives recognized elsewhere in STARS and “Other” category removed from scoring.
- Bullet points added to recognize inclusive and local purchasing and promoting plant-forward options.
- Definition of *small and medium-sized businesses* added.

Grounds

OP 9: Landscape Management (*minor edits*)

- Editorial changes for clarity.
- Rescue treatments using non-organic pesticides to control insect and disease problems that can cause significant harm are allowed in an organic program, providing there are no effective organic alternatives.

OP 10: Biodiversity (*substantive changes*)

- Definition of *areas of biodiversity importance* added to replace *environmentally sensitive areas*.
- Scoring changed so that full points are reserved for institutions that identify endangered and vulnerable species AND areas of biodiversity importance.
- More extensive disclosure required about species and level of extinction risk and the scope of an institution's biodiversity assessments.
- Optional field added to capture the estimated percentage of areas of biodiversity importance that are also protected areas.

Purchasing

OP 11: Sustainable Procurement (*substantive changes*)

- Expectations around a vendor code of conduct clarified (must exceed basic legal compliance).
- Commodity categories in Part 3 clarified.
- New consumable office products category added to include wood and paper products.
- "Other" category removed from scoring.

OP 12: Electronics Purchasing (*substantive changes*)

- Recognition of additional multi-attribute and single-attribute ecolabels added.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement.
- Definition of *ISO Type 1 ecolabel* added.

OP 13: Cleaning and Janitorial Purchasing (*substantive changes*)

- Recognition of additional ecolabels added.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement.
- Definition of *ISO Type 1 ecolabel* added.

OP 14: Office Paper Purchasing (*minor edits*)

- Clarifying language added to Reporting Fields.
- Additional guidance added to Measurement and Standard and Terms.

Transportation

OP 15: Campus Fleet (*minor edits*)

- Applicability changed to allow institutions that don't own or lease motorized vehicles to mark the credit as Not Applicable.
- Detailed guidance moved to Measurement.
- Reporting fields added for gasoline only and diesel only vehicles for transparency.

OP 16: Commute Modal Split (*substantive changes*)

- The two modal split credits are merged to more accurately reflect the relative proportion of students to employees.
- Applicability changed so that the credit applies to all institutions.
- Distance education and zero-emissions vehicles are recognized as more sustainable options.
- Definitions added for *distance education*, *employees*, *single-occupancy vehicle*, and *zero emissions vehicle*.

OP 17: Support for Sustainable Transportation (*substantive changes*)

- The types of programs and initiatives recognized reduced to simplify reporting and minimize duplication with other credits. The initiatives recognized are limited to those for which the impact may not be fully reflected in an institution's commute modal split.

Waste

OP 18: Waste Minimization and Diversion (*minor edits*)

- Language added allowing each institution to either include or exclude electronic waste (which is also covered in the Hazardous Waste Management credit).

OP 19: Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion (*no changes*)

OP 20: Hazardous Waste Management (*no changes*)

Water

OP 21: Water Use (*no changes*)

OP 22: Rainwater Management (*no changes*)

Planning & Administration

Coordination & Planning

PA 1: Sustainability Coordination (*no changes*)

PA 2: Sustainability Planning (*substantive changes*)

- Criteria are simplified to address concerns that the current credit has been time-intensive for participants and has a relatively high error rate.
- Points are awarded points for (1) having measurable sustainability objectives across the four STARS categories and (2) integrating sustainability into the institution's strategic plan (or equivalent).

PA 3: Inclusive and Participatory Governance (*substantive changes*)

- Edits to address points of confusion and simplify reporting.
- The requirements that stakeholders be elected and that staff representatives directly represent non-supervisory workers have been removed.
- Reporting is streamlined and made less susceptible to misinterpretation by asking about the numeric composition of the governing body rather than for descriptive responses.
- A new part recognizing gender equity in governance is introduced, a subject addressed in the SDGs that has not been well addressed in STARS.

PA 4: Reporting Assurance (*NEW*)

- New credit added to recognize institutions that engage in a comprehensive data quality and assurance process before submitting a STARS report.

Diversity & Affordability

PA 5: Diversity and Equity Coordination (*minor edits*)

- Anti-oppression, anti-racism, and/or social inclusion trainings added.
- Definitions of *anti-oppression* and *employees* added.

PA 6: Assessing Diversity and Equity (*no changes*)

PA 7: Support for Underrepresented Groups (*minor edits*)

- Minor edits made to clarify common areas of misunderstanding.

PA 8: Affordability and Access (*substantive changes*)

- Credit changed to be strictly performance-based. Qualitative information about support for low-income and non-traditional students is moved to Optional Reporting Fields.
- Criteria and Measurement substantially rewritten to reflect feedback from stakeholders and financial aid staff.

Investment & Finance

PA 9: Committee on Investor Responsibility (*no changes*)

PA 10: Sustainable Investment (*substantive changes*)

- Contextual variability is applied to weight the credit more heavily for institutions with very large endowments and less heavily for institutions with very small endowments.

PA 11: Investment Disclosure (*minor edits*)

- Minor edits made for clarity.

Wellbeing & Work

PA 12: Employee Compensation (*substantive changes*)

- Clarifying language added to address common questions and misinterpretations.
- An institution without wage data for its contractors may instead report the percentage of employees of contractors covered by collective bargaining agreements (i.e., union contracts).
- Definitions of *employees* and *significant contractors* added.

- The upper two tiers of scoring in Part 3 are removed.

PA 13: Assessing Employee Satisfaction (*minor edits*)

- Definition of *employees* added.
- Guidance about how to report representative samples vs. unrepresentative assessments is relocated to Measurement.

PA 14: Wellness Program (*substantive changes*)

- New part added to address smoke-free environments.

PA 15: Workplace Health and Safety (*substantive changes*)

- The credit is substantially revised based on stakeholder feedback to:
 - Recognize OHS management systems.
 - Remove scoring based on improvement from baseline.
 - Adopt GRI/OSHA terminology and definitions.

Innovation & Leadership

- Innovation and Exemplary Practice credits are grouped together and weighted equally at 0.5 bonus points each.
- Partial scoring added to many IN credits.
- The following new IN credits have been added:
 - Anchor Institution Network
 - Carbon Mitigation Project Development
 - Center for Sustainability Across the Curriculum
 - Community Garden
 - Diversity and Equity Recognition
 - Energy System Certification
 - External Reporting Assurance
 - Fleet Certification
 - Food Bank
 - Full-Time Faculty Employment (replaces Adjunct Faculty Compensation)
 - Health and Safety Management Certification
 - Laboratory Animal Welfare
 - Network for Student Social Innovation
 - Online Sustainability Course
 - Sanctuary Institution
 - Single-Use Plastic Ban
 - Social Enterprise
 - Student Living Wage

- Sustainability Office Diversity Program
- Sustainability Projects Fund
- Textbook Affordability
- Voter Education and Support
- Wellbeing Certification
- Work College

