






Higher Education Sustainability Assessment Frameworks Compared

The table below summarizes the major features of the three most widely used international higher education sustainability reporting and assessment frameworks. It is intended to highlight the similarities and differences between the platforms and help institutions decide which to participate in.

	 <i>a program of aashe</i>		 World University Rankings
Overview	The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) is a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance.	The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings measure global universities' success in delivering the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	The aim of the UI GreenMetric World University Rankings is to enable universities to measure and improve their implementation of sustainability policies and programs.
Recognition Type	Rating (four levels)	Ranking (top to bottom)	Ranking (top to bottom)
Eligibility	Open to higher education institutions, as well as other educational institutions such as museums, adult education centers, and secondary schools.	Open to higher education institutions that teach at an undergraduate or postgraduate level and are in good standing.	Open to higher education institutions.
Participation and Uptake	Voluntary. 1,000 registered institutions from 42 countries, of which 450 are either rated or actively pursuing a rating.	Voluntary. 860 universities from 85 countries in the most recent rankings. 768 in the overall ranking.	Voluntary. 780 universities from 85 countries in the most recent ranking.
Cost to participate	Free access to an online Reporting Tool. No cost to publish an online report and earn recognition as a STARS Reporter. A paid subscription is required to earn a Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum rating.	Free access to an online Data Collection Portal. No cost to be included in annual rankings.	Free access to an online survey. No cost to be included in annual rankings.
Cost to access participant scores and data	All scores and underlying data are freely available on the STARS website . Tools that facilitate analysis of the	All scores are freely available. The underlying data for all participants is accessible for a fee.	All scores are freely available. The underlying data for all participants is not accessible.

	data are provided for AASHE members.		
Administrator	The Association for the Advancement of Higher Education (AASHE), a US-based non-profit organization with a mission to inspire and catalyze higher education to lead the global sustainability transformation.	Times Higher Education (THE), a London-based for-profit corporation that also administers a variety of other higher education rankings.	Universitas Indonesia (UI), a state university in Jakarta, Indonesia.
Governance	Multi-level stakeholder engagement process that includes a steering committee composed of campus representatives that has decision-making authority over program criteria, advisory committees, and open public feedback mechanisms.	The methodology is developed by THE in conjunction with partners Vertigo Ventures and Elsevier, and with consultation and input from individual universities, academics, and sector groups.	Governed by UI with feedback from an independent review board and steering committee composed of national coordinators from member universities, and comments from participants.
Scope and Structure	<p>Focused around a broad and inclusive concept of sustainability and structured in 17 impact areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum 2. Research 3. Campus Engagement 4. Public Engagement 5. Air & Climate 6. Buildings 7. Energy 8. Food & Dining 9. Grounds 10. Purchasing 11. Transportation 12. Waste 13. Water 14. Coordination & Planning 15. Diversity & Affordability 16. Investment & Finance 17. Well-being & Work 	<p>Focused and structured around the 17 SDGs. Each SDG has a series of metrics that are used to evaluate the performance of the university on that SDG.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No poverty 2. Zero hunger 3. Good health and well-being 4. Quality education 5. Gender equality 6. Clean water and sanitation 7. Affordable and clean energy 8. Decent work and economic growth 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure 10. Reduced inequalities 11. Sustainable cities and communities 12. Responsible consumption and production 13. Climate action 14. Life below water 15. Life on land 	<p>Focused around environmental, social and economic sustainability and structured in 6 categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting and Infrastructure 2. Energy and Climate Change 3. Waste 4. Water 5. Transportation 6. Education

		<p>16. Peace, justice and strong institutions</p> <p>17. Partnerships for the goals</p>	
Methodological Transparency	Detailed criteria, definitions and scoring formulas are publicly available in the STARS Technical Manual .	The metrics (and weighting) for each SDG are publicly available on THE website .	The survey questions, guidelines and scoring formulas are publicly available on the UI website .
Methodology	<p>Participants complete credits and indicators and an overall rating is determined based on the percentage of available points earned. Credits that are not relevant to an institution are not counted against its score. In addition, an institution can claim bonus points for exemplary and path-breaking initiatives.</p> <p>An institution can also elect to publish an unscored report and forego a rating.</p>	Performance on each SDG is evaluated based on a series of metrics identified for each SDG. Universities must provide data on SDG 17 and at least three other SDGs to be included in the overall ranking. THE also publishes rankings by each individual SDG.	Performance in each category is evaluated based on a series of indicators and metrics. Participants submit evidence to support their claims. Reviewers evaluate the data and evidence provided and assign scores. The scores are counted and weighted to give a final calculation.
Process and Timeframes	A report may be submitted at any time and must be published at least once every three years to maintain a rating.	Annual reporting during a set period is required to be included in each year's ranking.	To be included, data must be submitted through an online system between May and October of each year.
Data Verification	Self-reported and subject to data accuracy mechanisms, including AASHE staff review, a public data inquiry process, and optional third party assurance.	Self-reported, except for academic publications, which are reported through Elsevier.	Self-reported and subject to data verification process by UI Green Metric reviewers.
Development	Updated according to a public technical development policy .	Metrics updated annually.	Survey updated annually.
Benefits to Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive public recognition for all participating institutions, including a public report on the STARS website and opportunity to be featured in AASHE's annual Sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive public recognition for top performers in each of the 17 SDGs and overall - Framework for compiling information on the institution's contributions to the SDGs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive public recognition for top performers - A web page displaying the institution's performance scores - Opportunities to benchmark on

	<p>Campus Index</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Framework for sustainability planning and goal-setting - Data sharing with external organizations to avoid redundant reporting requests - Support for stakeholder engagement is built into the process - Opportunities to benchmark on scores, performance metrics and specific data points and learn from best practices at other institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities to benchmark on scores and learn from best practices at other institutions 	<p>performance scores</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Free membership in the UI GreenMetric Network, which includes opportunities to collaborate and learn from best practices at other institutions
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Although these three frameworks are the most widely used, other assessment tools are also available. See [The Platform for Sustainability Performance in Education](#) for more information.