

# STARS 3.0

---

## Point Allocation

January 2024



This document outlines the methodology used to allocate points in the [Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System](#) (STARS) Technical Manual, version 3.0.

## Methodology

Members of the STARS Steering Committee (SC) and AASHE staff members who participated in the development of STARS 3.0 (v3.0) were invited to complete a spreadsheet-based exercise to weight the four categories included in STARS, the impact areas nested within each of the four categories, and the specific indicators included within each impact area. Ten SC members (including two AASHE staff representatives) and one additional AASHE staff member completed the exercise.

A public survey was conducted concurrently. The survey invited respondents to weight the four categories included in STARS, weight the impact areas nested within each of the four categories, and provide comments explaining their approach toward the exercise. 59 individuals completed the survey.

Participants in both exercises were provided with the following guidance:

Allocate points based on the following considerations

To what extent does the performance required to earn full points for each category, impact area or indicator:

- Prepare people (e.g., students, employees, or communities) to meet sustainability challenges?
- Contribute to ecological and human health and mitigate negative environmental impacts?
- Contribute to racial equity, social justice and other positive social impacts?
- Represent singular sustainability achievements or impacts that are not captured elsewhere in STARS?

In allocating points, consider the breadth/scope, depth/scale, and certainty of these impacts, e.g., how many people are impacted, how deeply they are impacted and how likely those impacts are. For the purposes of this exercise, assume that all credits and indicators are applicable.

As these questions indicate, the focus in allocating points is on the impact, not the difficulty, of achieving the targets (i.e., the performance required to earn full points). Some sustainability initiatives may be very difficult to implement but yield negligible impacts. Conversely, some projects that are relatively easy to implement have significant impacts. Assigning points based on the difficulty of earning full points would create a perverse incentive for institutions to focus on the most challenging projects or initiatives, which may not have the most meaningful impact.

The STARS Program Manager analyzed the results of both exercises and presented the data to the SC. Based on the SC's discussion and guidance, the following steps were then taken to allocate points across the new version:

1. A target weighting at the category and impact area level was established based on the average of A) the results of the SC exercise and B) the existing STARS 2.2 (v2.2) point allocation. The public survey results were referenced to confirm/determine the desired trajectory of change from v2.2.

2. Assuming a minimum value of 1 point per indicator and extrapolating upward based on the target weighting, the total pool of points to be allocated was set at 250.<sup>1</sup>
3. The total pool of 250 points was allocated across the indicators in v3.0 based on the average weight each indicator was assigned by the SC. Each indicator was allocated a whole number of points, which resulted in a range from 1 to 8 points per indicator. For comparison, the range in v2.2 is 0.5 to 8.

The public survey results were referenced to help determine the direction of travel when rounding. Minor adjustments were then made to improve alignment with the target weighting at the impact area level and to address anomalies that were more likely due to the methodology used than to the intention of survey respondents or the SC.

It was not possible to align with the target weightings precisely due to significant variations in the number of indicators per impact area. For example, Procurement & Waste is weighted slightly more heavily than the established target primarily because it includes a high number of indicators relative to other impact areas such as Food & Dining and Transportation, which are weighted slightly less heavily than their targets.

4. The SC reviewed, discussed and approved the point allocation.

---

<sup>1</sup> An alternative approach based on a 1,000 point scale was also developed. Although attractive from a mathematical perspective, this approach exhibited several weaknesses. In particular, the use of such a dramatically different scale seemed likely to make communicating and understanding the scope of change from v2.2 and the process of adapting to the new version more challenging.

# Results

Table I. Point allocation summary

	Points v2.2	% of total	Public survey	SC exercise	Target	Points v3.0	% of total	% Change
<b>Academics</b>								
Curriculum	40	19.5%	15.3%	16.0%	17.7%	45	18.0%	-1.5%
Research	18	8.8%	9.8%	9.7%	9.2%	23	9.2%	0.4%
<b>Engagement</b>								
Campus Engagement	21	10.2%	15.0%	10.7%	10.4%	25	10.0%	-0.2%
Public Engagement	20	9.8%	8.1%	10.3%	10.0%	25	10.0%	0.2%
<b>Operations</b>								
Buildings & Grounds	20	9.8%	6.2%	6.1%	7.9%	20	8.0%	-1.8%
Energy & Climate	21	10.2%	8.4%	9.4%	9.8%	26	10.4%	0.2%
Food & Dining	8	3.9%	5.3%	5.3%	4.6%	10	4.0%	0.1%
Procurement & Waste	16	7.8%	5.9%	6.8%	7.3%	20	8.0%	0.2%
Transportation	7	3.4%	5.0%	4.9%	4.2%	10	4.0%	0.6%
<b>Planning &amp; Administration</b>								
Coordination & Planning	9	4.4%	5.9%	5.5%	4.9%	11	4.4%	0.0%
Investment	8	3.9%	4.4%	4.4%	4.2%	10	4.0%	0.1%
Social Equity	10	4.9%	5.9%	6.1%	5.5%	14	5.6%	0.7%
Wellbeing & Work	7	3.4%	4.8%	4.9%	4.1%	11	4.4%	1.0%
	<b>205</b>	<b>100.0%</b>				<b>250</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

## Table II. Point allocation by indicator

Category	Impact area	Credit	Indicator	Points
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Course Offerings	Percentage of academic departments with sustainability course offerings	8
Academics	Curriculum	Undergraduate Programs	Percentage of undergraduate qualifications awarded that have sustainability-focused learning requirements	7
Academics	Curriculum	Undergraduate Programs	Institutional sustainability learning outcomes for undergraduate students	4
Academics	Curriculum	Graduate Programs	Percentage of graduate qualifications awarded that have sustainability-focused learning requirements	4
Academics	Curriculum	Applied Learning	Applied learning for sustainability program	4
Academics	Curriculum	Graduate Programs	Graduate programs with sustainability-focused learning requirements	4
Academics	Curriculum	Undergraduate Programs	Undergraduate programs with sustainability-focused learning requirements	4
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Course Offerings	Support for academic employees to integrate sustainability into the curriculum	3
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Course Offerings	Published sustainability course listings	3
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Literacy Assessment	Sustainability literacy assessment design and administration	2
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Literacy Assessment	Percentage of students assessed for sustainability literacy	2
Academics	Research	Sustainability Research	Percentage of academic departments engaged in sustainability research	8
Academics	Research	Sustainability Research Center	Organized sustainability research center, institute, or unit	6
Academics	Research	Responsible Research and Innovation	Recognition of integrated, community-based, and extra-academic research	3
Academics	Research	Sustainability Research	Incentives for sustainability research	2

Academics	Research	Responsible Research and Innovation	Support for open access publishing	2
Academics	Research	Responsible Research and Innovation	Published ethical code of conduct for research	1
Academics	Research	Responsible Research and Innovation	Inter-campus collaboration for responsible research and innovation	1
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Co-Curricular Activities	Percentage of students that participate in sustainability activities	5
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Staff Engagement and Training	Percentage of employees that participate in sustainability activities	4
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Outreach and Communications	Sustainability outreach and communications	3
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Co-Curricular Activities	Sustainability-focused co-curricular activities	2
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Co-Curricular Activities	Student sustainability organization	2
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Outreach and Communications	Percentage of campus stakeholders reached through sustainability outreach and communications	2
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Staff Engagement and Training	Sustainability-focused training for employees	2
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Staff Engagement and Training	Staff sustainability network or engagement program	2
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Sustainability Culture Assessment	Sustainability culture assessment design and administration	1
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Sustainability Culture Assessment	Percentage of students assessed for sustainability culture	1
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Sustainability Culture Assessment	Percentage of employees assessed for sustainability culture	1
Engagement	Public Engagement	Civic Engagement	Percentage of students that participate in civic engagement programs	4
Engagement	Public Engagement	Community Partnerships	Partnerships to support underrepresented groups and vulnerable populations	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Continuing Education	Continuing education offerings in sustainability	3

Engagement	Public Engagement	Civic Engagement	Support for public policies to advance sustainability	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Inter-Campus Collaboration	Inter-campus collaboration for sustainability	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Community Partnerships	Sustainability-focused community partnerships	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Community Partnerships	Community partnership assessment	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Shared Facilities	Publicly shared facilities	2
Engagement	Public Engagement	Civic Engagement	Employee community service program	1
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Building Operations and Maintenance	Percentage of existing buildings managed for sustainability performance	5
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Building Design and Construction	Percentage of new floor area designed and constructed to green building standards	3
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Ecologically Managed Grounds	Ratio of ecologically managed green space to total managed green space	3
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Ecologically Managed Grounds	Organic landscaping/grounds services	2
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Water Use	Potable water use per person	2
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Water Use	Potable water use per square meter	2
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Water Use	Ratio of water recovered/returned to water withdrawal	2 or 1 <sup>2</sup>
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Water Use	Systems for water recovery and return	1
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions inventory and disclosure	4
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions per square meter	4
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions per person	4
Operations	Energy & Climate	Energy Use	Percentage of energy from renewable sources	3
Operations	Energy & Climate	Energy Use	Energy consumption per square meter	3

<sup>2</sup> Based on the level of water stress for each institution: 2 points if high and 1 point if medium or low.

Operations	Energy & Climate	Energy Use	Energy consumption per person	3
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Adjusted net greenhouse gas emissions per square meter	2
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Adjusted net greenhouse gas emissions per person	2
Operations	Energy & Climate	Energy Use	Percentage of electricity from on-site or certified renewable sources	1
Operations	Food & Dining	Dining Service Procurement	Percentage of food and beverage spend that meets sustainability criteria	6
Operations	Food & Dining	Dining Service Procurement	Percentage of dining service spend with social impact suppliers	2
Operations	Food & Dining	Food Recovery	Food recovery program	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Sustainable Procurement System	Percentage of bid solicitations that identify sustainability considerations	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Sustainable Procurement System	Average weight given to sustainability considerations in bid appraisal	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Sustainable Procurement System	Percentage of contract spend with social impact suppliers	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Waste Generation and Recovery	Percentage of non-hazardous waste diverted from disposal	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Sustainable Procurement System	Supplier code of conduct	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Waste Generation and Recovery	Non-hazardous waste generated per person	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Waste Generation and Recovery	Non-hazardous waste generated per square meter	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Materials Management	Surplus and reuse programs	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Materials Management	Single-use disposable plastics program	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Purchased Goods	Percentage of cleaning products spend that meets sustainability criteria	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Purchased Goods	Percentage of electronics spend meets sustainability criteria	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Purchased Goods	Percentage of furniture spend that meets sustainability criteria	1



Operations	Procurement & Waste	Purchased Goods	Percentage of office paper spend that meets sustainability criteria	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Waste Generation and Recovery	Percentage of construction and demolition waste diverted from disposal	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Materials Management	Electronic waste management	1
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Materials Management	Hazardous waste management and disclosure	1
Operations	Transportation	Commute Modal Split	Percentage of students and employees using more sustainable commuting options	6
Operations	Transportation	Campus Fleet	Percentage of fleet vehicles that are electric vehicles	2
Operations	Transportation	Air Travel	Air travel reduction and mitigation	2
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Commitments and Planning	Measurable sustainability objectives	3
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Commitments and Planning	Public sustainability commitment	2
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Sustainability Coordination	Coordinating committee, officer, or office for sustainability	1
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Commitments and Planning	Climate resilience assessment and planning	1
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Institutional Governance	Student participation in governance	1
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Institutional Governance	Academic staff participation in governance	1
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Institutional Governance	Non-academic staff participation in governance	1
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Institutional Governance	Community participation in governance	1
Planning & Administration	Investment	Investment Holdings	Percentage of the investment pool allocated to positive sustainability investments	4 or 2 <sup>3</sup>
Planning & Administration	Investment	Investment Holdings	Investment holdings disclosure	2 or 1 <sup>4</sup>
Planning & Administration	Investment	Sustainable Investment Program	Sustainable investment policy or committee	2

<sup>3</sup> Based on the size of each institution's investment pool: 4 points if \$1 billion (USD) or more and 2 points if less than \$1 billion.

<sup>4</sup> Based on the size of each institution's investment pool: 2 points if \$1 billion (USD) or more and 1 point if less than \$1 billion.

Planning & Administration	Investment	Sustainable Investment Program	Negative screening and divestment	1
Planning & Administration	Investment	Sustainable Investment Program	Investor engagement	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Institutional Climate	Support for students from underrepresented groups	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Institutional Climate	Support for employees from underrepresented groups	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Affordability and Access	Number of paid work-hours per year required to meet the average net price of attendance for low-income students	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Affordability and Access	Percentage of students that are low-income	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Racial and Ethnic Diversity	Ethnic diversity index	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Racial and Ethnic Diversity	Percentage of marginalized racial, ethnic, and/or Indigenous groups equitably represented among students	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Racial and Ethnic Diversity	Percentage of marginalized racial, ethnic, and/or Indigenous groups equitably represented among employees	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Student Success	Percentage of marginalized racial, ethnic, and/or Indigenous groups with equitable completion rates	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Student Success	Completion rate for low-income students	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Student Success	Completion rate for students with marginalized gender identities	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Gender Parity	Percentage of students with marginalized gender identities	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Gender Parity	Percentage of employees with marginalized gender identities	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Affordability and Access	Legacy and donor admissions	1
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Institutional Climate	Institutional climate assessment	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Pay Equity and Living Wage	Percentage of employees that receive a living wage	3
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Student wellbeing and assistance programs	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Employee wellbeing and assistance programs	1

Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Pay Equity and Living Wage	Internal pay equity assessment	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Employee Rights	Percentage of employees eligible for paid all-gender family/medical leave	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Employee Rights	Number of weeks of paid maternity leave	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Employee Rights	Published measures to protect employee rights	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Pay Equity and Living Wage	Percentage of significant contractors that pay a collectively determined or living wage	1
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Smoke free environments	1
				250

Table III. Point allocation by credit

Category	Impact area	Credit	Points v3.0
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Course Offerings	14
Academics	Curriculum	Undergraduate Programs	15
Academics	Curriculum	Graduate Programs	8
Academics	Curriculum	Applied Learning	4
Academics	Curriculum	Sustainability Literacy Assessment	4
Academics	Research	Sustainability Research	10
Academics	Research	Responsible Research and Innovation	7
Academics	Research	Sustainability Research Center	6
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Co-Curricular Activities	9
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Staff Engagement and Training	8
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Outreach and Communications	5
Engagement	Campus Engagement	Sustainability Culture Assessment	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Community Partnerships	9
Engagement	Public Engagement	Civic Engagement	8
Engagement	Public Engagement	Continuing Education	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Inter-Campus Collaboration	3
Engagement	Public Engagement	Shared Facilities	2
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Water Use	7 or 6 <sup>5</sup>
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Ecologically Managed Grounds	5
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Building Operations and Maintenance	5
Operations	Buildings & Grounds	Building Design and Construction	3
Operations	Energy & Climate	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	16
Operations	Energy & Climate	Energy Use	10
Operations	Food & Dining	Dining Service Procurement	8
Operations	Food & Dining	Food Recovery	2
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Sustainable Procurement System	7
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Materials Management	4
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Waste Generation and Recovery	5
Operations	Procurement & Waste	Purchased Goods	4
Operations	Transportation	Commute Modal Split	6

<sup>5</sup> Based on the level of water stress for each institution: 7 points available if high and 6 points available if medium or low.

Operations	Transportation	Air Travel	2
Operations	Transportation	Campus Fleet	2
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Commitments and Planning	6
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Institutional Governance	4
Planning & Administration	Coordination & Planning	Sustainability Coordination	1
Planning & Administration	Investment	Investment Holdings	6 or 3 <sup>6</sup>
Planning & Administration	Investment	Sustainable Investment Program	4
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Racial and Ethnic Diversity	3
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Student Success	3
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Affordability and Access	3
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Institutional Climate	3
Planning & Administration	Social Equity	Gender Parity	2
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Pay Equity and Living Wage	5
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Employee Rights	3
Planning & Administration	Wellbeing & Work	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	3

---

<sup>6</sup> Based on the size of each institution's investment pool: 6 points available if \$1 billion (USD) or more and 3 points available if less than \$1 billion.