

AC 9: Research and Scholarship

12 points available

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions where employees are conducting research and other forms of scholarship on sustainability topics. Conducting an inventory of an institution's sustainability research can serve as a valuable first step in identifying strengths and areas for development. Likewise, since sustainability requires collaboration that transcends traditional disciplines, conducting an inventory can help connect individuals, laboratories, research centers, and other campus community members with a shared interest in sustainability. The percentage of employees and departments that conduct sustainability research are measures of the spread of sustainability research.

Applicability

This credit applies to all institutions where research is considered in employee promotion or tenure decisions. Institutions that do not consider research in promotion or tenure decisions as a matter of policy or standard practice may choose to mark all of the Research credits as Not Applicable. Pursuing one or more Research credits and marking other credits in the subcategory as Not Applicable is not allowed.

Criteria

Part 1. Sustainability research

Institution produces sustainability research as measured by the percentage of *employees* who conduct research that are engaged in *sustainability research*.

Part 2. Sustainability research by department

Institution produces sustainability research as measured by the percentage of *academic departments* that conduct research that include at least one employee who conducts sustainability research.

Required documentation

Institution must provide an inventory conducted during the previous three years to identify its sustainability research activities and initiatives. The research inventory must be based on the definition of sustainability research outlined in Standards and Terms and include for each individual conducting sustainability research:

- Name
- Departmental affiliation
- Research interests/topics or a brief description justifying the individual's inclusion

Research for which partial or incomplete information is provided may not be counted toward earning points for this credit.

Scoring

Each part is scored independently.

Part 1

An institution earns the maximum of 6 points available for Part 1 of this credit when 15 percent or more of its employees that conduct research are engaged in sustainability research. Incremental points are awarded based on the percentage of researchers that are engaged in sustainability research. For example, if 7.5 percent of employees that conduct research are engaged in sustainability research, an institution would earn 3 points (half of the points available for Part 1).

Points for Part 1 of this credit are calculated automatically in the STARS Reporting Tool as follows:

Factor		Number of employees engaged in sustainability research		Total number of employees that conduct research		Points earned
40	×	_____	÷	_____	=	Up to 6

Part 2

An institution earns the maximum of 6 points available for Part 2 of this credit when 75 percent or more of departments that conduct research are engaged in sustainability research. Incremental points are available based on the percentage of departments that conduct sustainability research. For example, if 25 percent of departments that conduct research are engaged in sustainability research, an institution would earn 2 points (one-third of the points available for Part 2).

Points for Part 2 of this credit are calculated automatically in the STARS Reporting Tool as follows:

Factor		Number of departments that conduct sustainability research		Total number of departments that conduct research		Points earned
8	×	_____	÷	_____	=	Up to 6

Reporting Fields

Required

- ☐ Total number of employees that conduct research (headcount)
- ☐ Number of employees engaged in sustainability research (headcount)
- ☐ Total number of academic departments that include at least one employee who conducts research
- ☐ Number of academic departments that include at least one employee who conducts sustainability research
- ☐ A copy of the inventory of the institution's sustainability research (text or upload)
- ☐ A brief description of the methodology the institution followed to complete the research inventory (i.e., how the total number of employees that conduct research was determined and how sustainability research was identified, including the definitions used and the process for reviewing and/or validating the research inventory)

Optional

- Website URL where information about the institution's sustainability research is available
- Additional documentation to support the submission (upload)
- Data source(s) and notes about the submission
- Contact information for a responsible party (an employee who can respond to questions regarding the data once it is submitted and available to the public)

Measurement

Timeframe

Report the most recent data available from within the three years prior to the anticipated date of submission.

An institution may choose to report research activities from one, two, or three academic years, as long as both the total number of employees that conduct research and the number of employees engaged in sustainability research are measured during the same time.

Sampling and Data Standards

Each institution is free to choose a methodology to identify sustainability research that is most appropriate given its unique circumstances. For example, an institution may distribute a survey to all academic staff members and ask them to self-identify as being engaged in sustainability research or ask the chairperson of each department to identify the sustainability research activities within his or her department.

The total number of employees that conduct research must include, at minimum, all *academic staff* for whom research is considered in promotion and/or tenure decisions. Institutions may report on academic staff regardless of status (e.g., full-time, part-time, or adjunct) and may also include *non-academic staff* who conduct research, as long as they are counted consistently in both the numerator (the number of employees engaged in sustainability research) and the denominator (the total number of employees that conduct research).

Any level of sustainability research is sufficient to be included for this credit. In other words, a researcher who conducts both sustainability research and other research may be included.

An institution that has developed a more refined approach to conducting the research inventory that is appropriate given its particular context may use that approach as long as it is consistent with the definitions and guidance provided. For example, a large research institution may limit the inventory to funded research.

Institutions that do not have academic departments should report fields of study, programs, subject areas or the equivalent.

Standards and Terms

Academic departments

An academic department is an administrative division of a college, university, or school faculty that is devoted to a particular academic discipline (e.g., Economics, Environmental Science, Sociology) or a closely related set of disciplines (e.g., Asian Studies or Physics & Astronomy). Departments may exist under other nomenclature and with coarser or finer divisions, depending upon each institution's context.

Fields of study, programs, subject areas or the equivalent may be considered to be “departments” in the absence of traditional administrative divisions.

Academic staff (i.e. faculty members)

Consistent with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), academic staff (also known as “faculty members” or “academic employees”) are defined as: “...personnel whose primary assignment is instruction, research, or public service. This includes staff personnel who hold an academic rank with titles such as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, or the equivalent of any of these academic ranks. The category includes personnel with other titles, (e.g. dean, director, associate dean, assistant dean, chair or head of department), if their principal activity is instruction or research.” It does not include graduate, instruction and research assistants; student teachers; or teacher aides.

Employees

Employees are defined as personnel paid by the institution and include full-time and part-time workers (as defined by the institution), and both academic and non-academic staff.

Non-academic staff

Non-academic staff are defined as administrative, clerical, operational, support, and technical employees whose primary assignment is something other than instruction or research, i.e., personnel who are not classified as academic staff.

Sustainability challenges

AASHE defines sustainability in a pluralistic and inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations. Major sustainability challenges include (but are not limited to) climate change, global poverty and inequality, natural resource depletion, and environmental degradation. To identify additional sustainability challenges, it may be helpful to reference the principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](#) and/or the targets embedded in the UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

Sustainability research

Sustainability research is research and scholarship that explicitly addresses the concept of sustainability, furthers our understanding of the interdependence of ecological and social/economic systems, or has a primary and explicit focus on a major sustainability challenge.