

EN 12: Continuing Education

5 points available

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that provide continuing education courses and programs in sustainability to the community. Such courses train community members in sustainability topics and help build knowledge about the subject. They can also provide the training people need to obtain and perform green jobs. Certificate programs offer professional recognition for sustainability training and are important tools in helping students obtain, perform, and advance their position in green jobs.

Applicability

This credit applies to institutions that have a formal continuing education or community education program (e.g., that offers courses and awards certificates).

Criteria

Part 1. Continuing education courses in sustainability

Institution's offers *continuing education* courses that are *sustainability-focused* or *sustainability-inclusive* (see Standards and Terms).

Required documentation

Institution must provide an inventory conducted during the previous three years to identify its continuing education sustainability course offerings and describe for current and prospective students how each course addresses sustainability. For each course, the inventory must include:

- The title and department (or equivalent) of the course.
- A brief course description or rationale explaining why the course is included that references sustainability, the interdependence of ecological and social/economic systems, or a sustainability challenge.

Courses for which partial or incomplete information is provided may not be counted toward earning points for this credit. An institution that has developed a more refined approach to course classification may use that approach as long as it is consistent with the definitions and guidance provided.

Part 2. Sustainability-focused certificate program

Institution has at least one *sustainability-focused certificate program* through its continuing education or extension department (or the equivalent).

Degree-granting programs (e.g., programs that confer Baccalaureate, Masters, or Associate degrees) and certificates that are part of academic degree programs are not included in this credit; they are covered in the Curriculum subcategory.

Scoring

Each part of this credit is scored independently.

Part 1

An institution earns the maximum of 3 points for Part 1 of this credit when sustainability course offerings comprise 10 or more percent of all continuing education courses offered. Incremental points are awarded based on the percentage of continuing education course offerings that are sustainability-focused or sustainability-inclusive. For example, an institution where 5 percent of all continuing education courses offered were sustainability course offerings would earn 1.5 points (half of the points available for Part 1).

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

Factor		Number of continuing education courses that are sustainability course offerings		Total number of continuing education courses offered		Points earned
30	×	_____	÷	_____	=	Up to 3

Part 2

An institution earns 2 points in Part 2 of this credit for having at least one certificate program that meets the criteria outlined above. Partial points are not available for Part 2.

Reporting Fields

Required

Part 1

- ☐ Total number of continuing education courses offered
- ☐ Number of continuing education courses that are sustainability course offerings
- ☐ A copy of the institution's inventory of its continuing education sustainability course offerings and descriptions (text or upload)
- ☐ Do the figures reported above cover one, two, or three academic years?

Part 2

- ☐ Does the institution have at least one sustainability-focused certificate program through its continuing education or extension department?
If yes, provide:
 - ☐ A brief description of the certificate program(s)

Optional

- ☐ Website URL where information about the institution's continuing education courses and programs in sustainability is available
- ☐ 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

Part 1

Report on the most recent data available from within the three years prior to the anticipated date of submission. Institutions may count course offerings from one, two, or three academic years, as long as the counts of continuing education courses and sustainability continuing education courses are drawn from the same time period.

Part 2

Report on current program status and offerings at the time of submission.

Sampling and Data Standards

Part 1

Each institution is free to choose a methodology to identify continuing education sustainability course offerings that is most appropriate given its unique circumstances. Asking continuing education faculty and programs to self-identify courses that are sustainability-focused and sustainability-inclusive using the definitions outlined in Standards and Terms or looking at the stated learning outcomes and course objectives associated with each course may provide a richer view of sustainability course offerings than simply reviewing course descriptions, but it is not required.

To best reflect the number of opportunities community members have to learn about sustainability, it is recommended that institutions count each time a course is offered as a separate course (e.g., a course with two sections taught in the fall term and two sections taught during spring term would count as four courses). To streamline the data gathering process, however, institutions may elect to count a course with multiple offerings as a single course as long as sustainability course offerings are counted in the same way as total course offerings. For example, a course that is held twice (or if there are two sections) in the fall term and once in the spring term may be counted as 3 courses or 1 course, as long as the institution's course counting methodology is consistent. An institution that elects not to count each time a course is offered as a separate course should verify that 50 percent or more of the sections or offerings of a course are sustainability-focused or sustainability-inclusive.

Likewise, an institution may choose whether or not to count courses that are cross-listed as separate courses. For example, a course that is cross-listed in two departments may be counted as one or two courses, as long as the institution's methodology is consistent. Similarly, a course that is listed as both an academic course and a continuing education course may be counted in both the Academic Courses credit and this credit, as long as this is done consistently.

Part 2

Not applicable.

Standards and Terms

Continuing education

Continuing education (also known as further education) includes non-credit courses and programs that train community members and help build knowledge about particular subjects. Continuing education is inclusive of non-credit, community education, and extension courses and programs. Examples include non-degree career training, workforce training, credential maintenance courses, formal personal enrichment courses, self-directed learning and experiential learning (on and off campus). In some cases, non-credit students may earn continuing education units, certification, or other evidence of class completion to meet personal or professional requirements.

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 course offerings

Sustainability course offerings include A) sustainability-focused courses and B) sustainability-inclusive courses:

A. Sustainability-focused courses (a.k.a. “sustainability courses”)

To count as sustainability-focused, the course title or description must indicate a *primary and explicit* focus on sustainability. This includes:

- Foundational courses with a primary and explicit focus on sustainability (e.g., Introduction to Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Sustainability Science).
- Courses with a primary and explicit focus on the application of sustainability within a field (e.g., Architecture for Sustainability, Green Chemistry, Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Business). As sustainability is an interdisciplinary topic, such courses generally incorporate insights from multiple disciplines.
- Courses with a primary and explicit focus on a major sustainability challenge (e.g., Climate Change Science, Environmental Justice, Global Poverty and Development, Renewable Energy Policy). The focus of such courses might be on providing knowledge and understanding of the problems and/or the tools for solving them.

The course title or description does not have to use the term “sustainability” to count as sustainability-focused if the primary and explicit focus of the course is on the interdependence of ecological and social/economic systems or a major sustainability challenge. If the course title and description do not unequivocally indicate such a focus, but it is evident from the course description or syllabus that the course incorporates sustainability challenges, issues, and concepts in a prominent way, the course may qualify as sustainability inclusive (see below).

B. Sustainability-inclusive courses (a.k.a. “sustainability-related courses”)

Courses that are not explicitly focused on sustainability may contribute towards scoring if sustainability has clearly been incorporated into course content. To count as sustainability-inclusive, the course description or rationale provided in the course inventory must indicate that the course incorporates a unit

or module on sustainability or a sustainability challenge, includes one or more sustainability-focused activities, or integrates sustainability challenges, issues, and concepts throughout the course.

While a foundational course such as chemistry or sociology might provide knowledge that is useful to practitioners of sustainability, it would not be considered to be sustainability-inclusive unless the concept of sustainability, or sustainability challenges and issues are specifically integrated into the course. Likewise, although specific tools or practices such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems) or engineering can be applied towards sustainability, such courses would not count unless the description or rationale provided in the inventory clearly indicates that sustainability is integrated into the course.

Sustainability-focused program

Sustainability-focused programs are interdisciplinary academic programs that have a primary and explicit focus on the concept of sustainability or the interdependence of ecological systems and social/economic systems. The courses required for the successful completion of the program educate students about how different dimensions of sustainability relate to and support each other in theory and practice. The sustainability focus of such a program should be explicit in the program title or description.