

AC 5: Sustainability Literacy Assessment

Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions that measure the extent to which their students gain an understanding of the concept of sustainability and its application. Sustainability literacy assessments help institutions evaluate the success of their sustainability education initiatives and develop insight into how these initiatives could be improved.

Applicability

Applicable to all institutions.

Points available

A maximum of 4 points are available for this credit.

Criteria

5.1 Sustainability literacy assessment design and administration

An institution earns 2 points when it has conducted one or more assessments of the **sustainability literacy** of its students during the previous three years and meets both of the criteria listed below. Partial points are available and earned as outlined in Table I.

Table I. Points earned for indicator 5.1

| Criterion | Points available | Points earned |
|--|------------------|---------------|
| A. Institution conducted one or more assessments of the sustainability literacy of its students during the previous three years. | 0.67 | |
| B. Academic staff engaged in sustainability education at the institution were involved in developing and/or adopting the methodology used to assess sustainability literacy. | 0.67* | |
| C. The literacy assessments are designed and administered in such a way that the results can be used to evaluate the success of the institution's sustainability education initiatives (e.g., as longitudinal, formative and summative, and/or pre- and post-assessments). | 0.67* | |
| Total points earned → | | |

* Criterion A must be met to earn any additional points for this indicator.

Measurement

Report on assessments conducted during the previous three years.

To qualify, an assessment must address student understanding of sustainability and/or the knowledge and skills required to address **sustainability challenges**. Assessments that exclusively address sustainability culture (i.e., behaviors/practices, beliefs/values, and/or awareness of campus sustainability initiatives) or student engagement in sustainability-related programs and activities are excluded. A single instrument that addresses sustainability literacy, culture, and/or engagement qualifies if a substantive portion (e.g., one-third) of the assessment focuses on literacy.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Has the institution conducted one or more assessments of the sustainability literacy of its students during the previous three years? (required)

If Yes, the following four fields are also required:

- Narrative and/or website URL providing an overview of the instruments/tools used to assess sustainability literacy
- Description of the institution's recent sustainability literacy assessment findings and any notable trends
- Were academic staff engaged in sustainability education at the institution involved in developing and/or adopting the methodologies used to assess sustainability literacy?

If Yes, the following field is also required:

- Description of the process through which academic staff were involved in developing and/or adopting the methodologies used to assess sustainability literacy
- Are the literacy assessments designed and administered in such a way that the results can be used to evaluate the success of the institution's sustainability education initiatives? For example, as longitudinal, formative and summative, and/or pre- and post-assessments.

If Yes, the following field is also required:

- Description of how the design and administration of the sustainability literacy assessments supports the evaluation of the success of the institution's sustainability education initiatives

5.2 Percentage of students assessed for sustainability literacy

An institution earns 2 points when at least 75 percent of students are assessed for sustainability literacy during their tenure at the institution, either directly or by **representative sample**. Partial points are available and earned as outlined in Table II.

Table II. Points earned for indicator 5.2

| Percentage of students assessed for sustainability literacy, either directly or by representative sample | Points earned |
|--|---------------|
| 75 to 100 | 2 |
| 50 to 74 | 1 |
| 25 to 49 | 0.5 |
| 1 to 24 | 0.25 |

Measurement

Report the most recent data available. An institution that has not conducted a sustainability literacy assessment during the previous three years may not claim points for this indicator.

A student is considered to be assessed when assessed directly (e.g., as part of a course or program or a mandatory assessment) or by representative sample (e.g., of the student's entering and/or graduating cohort). An institution that has opted to assess an unrepresentative segment of the population may only claim points for those individuals that participated.

An institution may limit its analysis to undergraduate students if they represent its **predominant student body** or else report on the entire student body.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Percentage of students assessed for sustainability literacy, either directly or by representative sample (required). Select one.
 - 75 to 100
 - 50 to 74
 - 25 to 49
 - 1 to 24
 - No assessment conducted

If greater than zero, the following field is also required:

- Description of the process used to measure or estimate the percentage of students assessed for sustainability literacy

Glossary

Academic staff – Personnel whose primary assignment is instruction, research, or public service. Also known as “faculty members”, academic staff include personnel who hold an academic rank with titles such as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, or the equivalent. 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, or research assistants; student teachers; or teacher aides. [Adapted from the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).]

Predominant student body – The primary academic division (e.g., undergraduate versus graduate) that enrolls the greatest share of the total student population. For example, the predominant student body of an institution with 5,000 undergraduate students, 2,000 graduate students, and 500 post-graduate students would be undergraduate students.

Representative sample – A subset of a statistical population that accurately reflects the members of the entire population. A representative sample should be an unbiased indication of what the entire population is like. For example, in a student population of 1,000 students in which 25 percent of the students are enrolled in a business school, 50 percent are enrolled in humanities programs, and 25 percent are enrolled in science programs, a representative sample might include 200 students: 50 business students, 100 humanities students, and 50 science students. Likewise, a representative sample of purchases should accurately reflect the institution’s total purchases, accounting for seasonal and other variations in product availability and purchasing.

Sustainability challenge – An issue or situation that threatens or undermines ecological integrity, racial equity and social justice, or the ability of future generations to meet their needs (e.g., biodiversity loss, poverty and inequality, and climate change), OR a goal or objective that contributes to the resolution of such an issue or situation (e.g., ecosystem health, universal human rights, and renewable energy generation). To identify sustainability challenges, it may be helpful to reference the [targets embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), the principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](#), and/or the [Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries](#).

Sustainability literacy – Knowledge about our shared sustainability challenges, as well as ways to create solutions to these challenges. Sustainability literacy assessments are thus designed to assess both students’ understanding of the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental issues and their capacity to effectively address them. These assessments may take a variety of forms including multiple choice tests and surveys, self-assessments, and competency/skills-based assessments. [Adapted from the definitions used by Sulitest.org.]