Report Preface

This section of STARS brings together information about the institution and its reporting process that is not scored, but is included for transparency purposes and to provide context for understanding and interpreting the published report.

Table of Credits

PRE 1: Executive Letter	Required to submit a scored report
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PRE 1: Executive Letter

Rationale

This credit allows an institution to upload a letter from the institution's president, chancellor, or other high ranking executive. Typically written on official letterhead, the executive letter serves as an introduction or cover letter for the institution's STARS report. As such, the letter may include a description of the institution's commitment to sustainability, background about the institution, key achievements or highlights from the report, and/or goals for future submissions. The letter also serves as an indicator of administrative support for sustainability and the STARS process.

Applicability

Applicable to institutions that are submitting a scored report for a rating.

Points available

None

Criteria

Measurement

A new executive letter is expected when there has been a change in leadership or the institution is submitting for a higher rating. Otherwise, the same letter may be used for more than one submission.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Executive cover letter (required). Upload in PDF format.

PRE 2: Points of Distinction

Rationale

This credit provides an opportunity for an institution to highlight up to three programs, initiatives, or accomplishments that best reflect its leadership for sustainability. Completing this section will help inform how AASHE publicizes the institution's STARS rating.

Applicability

Optional

Points available

None

Criteria

Measurement

Report on current programs and initiatives and accomplishments from within the previous three years.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Name of the institution's featured sustainability program, initiative, or accomplishment (required)

- Narrative and/or website URL providing an overview of the institution's featured program initiative, or accomplishment (required)

- A photograph or document associated with the featured program, initiative, or accomplishment (optional). Upload.

- Name of a second featured sustainability program, initiative, or accomplishment (optional)

- Narrative and/or website URL providing an overview of the second featured program initiative, or accomplishment (optional)

- A photograph or document associated with the second featured program, initiative, or accomplishment (optional). Upload.

- Name of a third featured sustainability program, initiative, or accomplishment (optional)

- Narrative and/or website URL providing an overview of the third featured program initiative, or accomplishment (optional)

- A photograph or document associated with the third featured program, initiative, or accomplishment (optional). Upload.

PRE 3: Institutional Characteristics

Rationale

This credit collects information about an institution's boundary (defining the campus for purposes of reporting), its operational characteristics (the context in which it operates) and its demographics. This information provides valuable context for understanding and interpreting STARS data.

Some of the values reported in this credit are also required to pursue other STARS credits. Such reporting fields may be populated from the data provided in the Institutional Characteristics section of the online Reporting Tool.

Applicability

Applicable to all institutions and required to submit a report.

Points available

None

Criteria

Measurement

Report the most recent data available from within the previous three years.

Each institution is expected to report on its entire main campus, at a minimum, however AASHE recognizes that this may not always be feasible. An institution may exclude a feature from its boundary as long as the exclusion is reported in an appropriate documentation field and applied consistently. An institution that opts to exclude a hospital from its institutional boundary, for example, may not claim points for the hospital's sustainability programs and initiatives.

The general expectation is that the institutional boundary will be the same for an entire STARS report. Therefore, care should be taken in selecting the institutional boundary so that consistent reporting is possible across all credits. Exceptions are allowed, however, for example when unforeseen data limitations would otherwise not allow a credit to be completed. Further guidance is available in the [STARS Help Center](#).

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool, with floor area provided in square meters and percentage figures provided within a range from 0 to 100.

- **Institution type** (required)
  - Associate/Short-cycle
  - Baccalaureate
  - Doctoral/Research

- ○ Master's
- ○ Other

- Institutional control (required)
  - ○ Public
  - ○ Private for-profit
  - ○ Private nonprofit

- Narrative outlining the **institutional boundary** used to complete this report (required). Provide information about any prominent features included/excluded and any data limitations that may influence the institution's sustainability performance, as documented in this report. If multiple campuses are included in the boundary, describe included/excluded features for each campus individually.

- Which of the following features are included within the institutional boundary? (required)
  - ○ Agricultural experiment station larger than 2 hectares
  - ○ Agricultural school
  - ○ Farm larger than 2 hectares
  - ○ Hospital
  - ○ Medical school
  - ○ Museum
  - ○ Satellite campus(es)
  - ○ Veterinary school

- **Locale** (required). An institution with multiple settings should report the locale type that best represents its overall context, e.g., in regard to transportation infrastructure.
  - ○ Large city
  - ○ Urban fringe of large city
  - ○ Mid-size city
  - ○ Urban fringe of mid-size city
  - ○ Large town
  - ○ Small town
  - ○ Rural

- **Climate zone** (required). An institution with multiple settings should report the zone that best represents its overall context, e.g., in respect to heating and cooling needs.
  - ○ 1 - Very Hot
  - ○ 2 - Hot
  - ○ 3 - Warm
  - ○ 4 - Mixed
  - ○ 5 - Cool
  - ○ 6 - Cold
  - ○ 7 - Very Cold
  - ○ 8 - Subarctic

- **Gross floor area of building space** (required). Square meters. Unoccupied buildings and parking structures excluded. To convert square feet to square meters, multiply by 0.09290304.

- Full-time equivalent of **employees** (required). Include all employees, e.g., academic and non-academic staff.

- **Full-time equivalent** student enrollment (required). Include all students, e.g., undergraduate and graduate.

- Percentage of students that live in campus housing (required). Report the estimated percentage of students who live in institution-owned, operated, and/or affiliated housing located within the institutional boundary.

- Percentage of students enrolled exclusively in **distance education** (required)

Glossary

Climate zone – A climate designation used by the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) or the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). For further guidance, see [ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA Standard 90.1-2007](#) (international) or [IECC/ASHRAE Climate Zones](#) (US).

Distance education – Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously.

A distance education course is one in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education. Requirements for coming to campus for orientation, testing, or academic support services do not exclude a course from being classified as distance education. A distance education program is one for which all the required coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses. Distance education students are students who are enrolled in distance education programs, or else exclusively in distance education courses.

Employees – Personnel compensated directly by the institution (unless otherwise specified in credit language). Also known as "staff members" or "direct employees", employees include academic, non-academic, and executive staff, and regular/permanent and short-term/casual employees.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) – A unit used to measure employed persons or students in a way that makes them comparable although they may work or study a different number of hours per week. An institution should report its best estimates for FTE figures, annualized as feasible and calculated according to relevant national, regional, or international standards. IPEDS, for example, calculates the number of FTE staff by summing the total number of full-time staff and adding one-third of the total number of part-time staff. [Adapted from the definition used by Eurostat.]

Gross floor area of building space – The total amount of building space that is included within the institutional boundary. Any standard definition of building space may be used (e.g., ASHRAE, ANSI/BOMA, IECC) as long as it is used consistently. Unless otherwise specified, unoccupied buildings and parking structures are excluded. Buildings within the overall STARS boundary that the institution leases entirely (i.e., the institution is the only tenant) should be included. Buildings that are not owned by the institution and in which the institution is one of multiple tenants may be excluded. If the institution chooses to include such buildings, it must include all multi-tenant buildings that are included in the institution's overall STARS boundary and in which the institution is a tenant; an institution cannot choose to include some leased spaces and omit others. If an institution chooses to

include leased spaces, the institution should count only the square footage of building space it occupies and not the entire building.

Institutional boundary – The extent of the buildings, schools, features, and locations that are accounted for in an institution's STARS report.

Institution type – Each institution is classified into one of five basic types based on the general level of educational programs offered and number and type of degrees awarded. An institution should report the institution type that is most appropriate given its context and with consideration for the criteria outlined below. For example, a US Carnegie-classified Special Focus institution or Tribal College should select the institution type that best reflects the level of programs offered and the number and type of degrees awarded.

Associate/Short-cycle (ISCED 5). Includes tertiary institutions where all degrees, certificates, and/or diplomas are between secondary education and baccalaureate degree level (e.g., associate degrees), or where baccalaureate degrees account for less than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees. This may include community colleges, further education colleges, (higher) technical colleges, technician or advanced/higher vocational training, and similar institutions.

Baccalaureate (ISCED 6). Includes tertiary institutions where baccalaureate degrees represent at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and where fewer than 50 Master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees are awarded annually. May include some institutions above the Master's degree threshold.

Master's (ISCED 7). Generally includes tertiary institutions that award at least 50 Master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees annually.

Doctoral/Research (ISCED 8). Includes tertiary institutions that award at least 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees or at least 30 professional practice doctoral degrees in at least two programs annually (e.g., doctoral-level degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practice, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, and so on).

Other (ISCED 2-4 and other entities). Includes secondary schools and other non-tertiary institutions. This may include college preparatory schools, primary professional and technical education designed for direct entry into the labor force, and adult education institutions primarily focused on social, recreational, or self-development goals.

Locale – The setting of an institution's main campus. An institution with multiple settings should report the most representative of the locale types.

Large City: A central city of a consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) or metropolitan statistical area (MSA), with the city having a population greater than or equal to 250,000.

Mid-size City: A central city of a CMSA or MSA, with the city having a population less than 250,000.

Urban Fringe of a Large City: Any territory within a CMSA or MSA of a Large City and defined as urban by a national census bureau or the equivalent.

Urban Fringe of a Mid-size City: Any territory within a CMSA or MSA of a Mid-size City and defined as urban by a national census bureau or the equivalent.

Large Town: An incorporated place or census-designated place with a population greater than or equal to 25,000 and located outside a CMSA or MSA.

Small Town: An incorporated place or census-designated place with a population less than 25,000 and greater than or equal to 2,500 and located outside a CMSA or MSA.

Rural: Any territory designated as rural by a national census bureau or the equivalent.

PRE 4: Reporting Methodologies

Rationale

This credit collects information about the methodologies used to complete the report. Information about data collection, quality controls, and assurance processes provides valuable context for understanding and interpreting the report and can help other participants learn from the institution's experience and organize their own processes accordingly.

Applicability

Applicable to all institutions and required to submit a report.

Points available

None

Criteria

Measurement

Report on methodologies used in the preparation of the institution's current STARS report.

Documentation

Report the following information in the online Reporting Tool.

- Narrative outlining the data collection process used in the preparation of this report (required). For example, how data providers were identified and how credit criteria were communicated to them.

- List of personnel who led the reporting process (optional). For example, the names and positions of the individuals who should be listed as "authors" of the report were it to be formally cited as a publication.

- List of additional personnel who contributed to the reporting process (optional). For example, the names and positions of the individuals who provided, gathered, and/or entered the data into the Reporting Tool.

- Were students involved in the data collection process? (required). For example, as part of an academic course or project or as paid interns.

  If Yes, the following field is also required:

  - Narrative outlining how students were involved in the data collection process

- Description of the internal data quality controls used in the preparation of this report (required). Include, for example, information about how the data were checked for errors and adherence to credit criteria and any relevant training for the personnel involved.

- Were any independent audits or **external assurance** processes used in the preparation of this report? (required). For example, independent verification of emissions figures, peer review processes, and/or the engagement of a third party assurance provider.

  If Yes, the following field is also required:

  - Narrative outlining the independent audits or external assurance processes used in the preparation of this report

Glossary

External assurance – Independent affirmation provided by personnel not affiliated with the institution, for example, a peer reviewer or contracted assurance provider.