

AC 9: Research and Scholarship

12 points available

A. Credit Rationale

This credit recognizes institutions where faculty and staff 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 research faculty and staff and departments that are engaged in sustainability research are measures of the spread of sustainability research.

B. Criteria

Institution has conducted an inventory during the previous three years to identify its sustainability research activities and initiatives and makes the inventory publicly available. The research inventory should be based on the definition of "[sustainability research](#)" outlined in G. Standards and Terms and include, at minimum, the names and department affiliations of all faculty and staff members engaged in sustainability research. Research for which partial or incomplete information is provided may not be counted toward earning points for this credit.

Part 1

Institution produces sustainability research as measured by the percentage of faculty and staff engaged in research that are engaged in sustainability research.

Part 2

Institution produces sustainability research as measured by the percentage of [academic departments](#) that conduct research that include at least one faculty or staff member who conducts sustainability 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.

C. Applicability

This credit applies to all institutions where research is considered in faculty and/or staff 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 either omit or include the Research subcategory. Pursuing one or more Research credits and omitting other credits in the subcategory as "not applicable" is not allowed.

D. Scoring

Each part is scored independently.

Part 1

Institutions earn the maximum of 6 points available for Part 1 of this credit when 15 percent or more of faculty and staff that are engaged in 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 faculty and staff that are engaged in 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		Faculty and staff engaged in sustainability research		Total faculty and staff engaged in research		Points earned
40	×	_____	÷	_____	=	Up to 6

Part 2

Institutions earn 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 ($\frac{1}{3}$ 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		Departments that conduct sustainability research		Total number of departments that conduct research		Points earned
8	×	_____	÷	_____	=	Up to 6

E. Reporting Fields

Required

- ☐ Total number of the institution's faculty and/or staff that are engaged in research (headcount)
- ☐ Number of the institution's faculty and/or staff that are engaged in sustainability research (headcount)
- ☐ Total number of academic departments (or the equivalent) that include at least one faculty or staff member that conducts research
- ☐ Number of academic departments (or the equivalent) that include at least one faculty or staff member that conducts sustainability research
- ☐ A copy of the institution's inventory of its sustainability research that includes names and department affiliations of faculty and staff engaged in sustainability research (text or upload)
- ☐ A brief description of the methodology the institution followed to complete the research inventory (including the types of faculty and staff included as researchers)

Optional

- ☐ The website URL where information about the programs or initiatives is available
- ☐ Additional documentation to support the submission (upload)

- Data source(s) and notes about the submission
- Contact information for a responsible party (a staff member, faculty member, or administrator who can respond to questions regarding the data once it is submitted and available to the public)

F. Measurement

Timeframe

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

Institutions may choose to report research activities from one, two, or three academic years, as long as both the total number of research faculty and staff and the number of faculty and staff 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 faculty 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 the institution’s faculty and/or staff that are engaged in research” must include, at minimum, all faculty members for whom research is considered in promotion and/or tenure decisions. Institutions may report on faculty only, or choose to include staff researchers and/or graduate student employees that conduct research, as long as they are reported in both the count of faculty and staff that are engaged in research and the count of faculty and staff that are engaged in sustainability research. Likewise, institutions may report on faculty and staff regardless of status (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct, graduate student), as long as they are counted consistently.

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 in this Technical Manual. 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.

G. 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.

Sustainability challenges

Consistent with [Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (United Nations, 2015), major sustainability challenges include (but are not limited to) climate change, global poverty and inequality, natural resource depletion, and environmental degradation. To identify courses, research, programs and initiatives that contribute towards understanding or solving sustainability challenges, it is helpful to ask:

- Does it contribute towards realizing one or more of the principles outlined in the [Earth Charter](#)? And/or
- Does it contribute towards achieving one or more of the targets embedded in the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)?

Sustainability research

Sustainability research is research that leads toward solutions that simultaneously support social wellbeing, economic prosperity, and ecological health. It includes research and scholarship that:

- Explicitly addresses sustainability and/or furthers our understanding of the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental issues;
- Contributes directly toward solving one or more major sustainability challenge; and/or
- Engages community members with the aim of combining knowledge and action to achieve positive social, economic and environmental outcomes (e.g., participatory and community-based research and engaged scholarship).