

Definition of Sustainability challenge from AASHE STARS

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. Today most uses of and references to sustainability emphasize the concept's simultaneous economic, environmental, and social dimensions. For example, businesses talk about the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profits (or, alternately, human capital, natural capital, and financial capital).

Definition of Sustainability Academic Courses from AASHE STARS:

A course may be sustainability-focused or sustainability-inclusive; no course should be identified as both.

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

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.

Definition of Sustainability Learning Outcomes from AASHE STARS:

Consistent with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), student learning outcomes are defined as:

Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning as well as the specific intellectual and practical skills gained and demonstrated by the successful completion of a unit, course, or programme. Learning outcomes, together with assessment criteria, specify the minimum requirements for the award of credit, while grading is based on attainment above or below the minimum requirements for the award of credit. Learning outcomes are distinct from the aims of learning in that they are concerned with the achievements of the learner rather than with the overall intentions of the teacher.

Thus, **sustainability learning outcomes** are statements that outline the specific sustainability knowledge and skills that a student is expected to have gained and demonstrated by the successful completion of a unit, course, or program. Mission, vision, and values statements do not qualify.

Sustainability-focused learning outcomes are student learning outcomes that explicitly address the concept of sustainability. A learning outcome does not necessarily have to include the term “sustainability” to count as sustainability-focused as long as there is an explicit focus on the

interdependence of ecological systems and social/economic systems. Specific examples include (but are not limited to):

- Students will be able to define sustainability and identify major sustainability challenges.
- Students will have an understanding of the carrying capacity of ecosystems as related to providing for human needs.
- Students will be able to apply concepts of sustainable development to address sustainability challenges in a global context.
- Students will identify, act on, and evaluate their professional and personal actions with the knowledge and appreciation of interconnections among economic, environmental, and social perspectives.

Sustainability-supportive learning outcomes are student learning outcomes that include specific intellectual and practical skills (and/or attitudes and values) that are critical for addressing sustainability challenges, but do not explicitly address the concept of sustainability (e.g., systems and holistic thinking, change agent skills, interdisciplinary capacities, social and ethical responsibility). Specific examples include (but are not limited to):

- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the nature of systems.
- Students will have an understanding of their social responsibility as future professionals and citizens.
- Students will be able to accommodate individual differences in their decisions and actions and be able to negotiate across these differences.
- Students will be able to analyze power, structures of inequality, and social systems that govern individual and communal life.
- Students will be able to recognize the global implications of their actions.

Definition of Sustainability **Research from AASHE STARS**

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.