

REPORTING PROGRESS FOR SUCCESS

Introduction

The economic, social, and environmental impacts of climate change and adoption of sustainable practices continue to be a high priority, particularly in higher education. Sustainability and Climate Action Plans are key guiding documents for efficient implementation, but they do not provide ongoing information on progress towards commitments. Communicating with students, staff, faculty, and Senior Leadership on commitment progress provides the information necessary to understand whether implemented strategies and practices are working, or whether strategies, priorities, and resources need to be reevaluated. Furthermore, reporting helps inform and educate decision makers while demonstrating the institution is “walking the talk”.

This document offers suggestions for components to include in a sustainability and climate progress report. Institutions that currently complete a progress report generally do so annually. Progress reports should be relatively short and succinct, as their purpose is to summarize efforts and successes over the past year and relate them back to commitments and goals for reevaluation.

The components below are suggested starting points and present options for what to include in a progress report. Recommendations are not mandatory, but should help support and provide structure.

Reporting on Sustainability and Climate Action Progress

Based on a review of Ontario’s post-secondary progress reporting on sustainability (links below), the following items are recommended as a starting point for effective, informative annual sustainability and climate reporting:

1. Sustainability definition, vision, and principles (if applicable). This information should be included in the Sustainability Plan and serves as a convenient reminder of what the institution is striving to meet.
2. Outline the timeframe the report covers, either the previous calendar or fiscal year.
3. Awards received since last progress report.
4. Goals created in the Sustainability and/or Climate Action Plan(s) along with target and metrics for each goal.
5. Outline any targets or goals that have been achieved over the previous year.
6. Describe initiatives and/or program progress towards each goal. Include numbers, such as the change from baseline, wherever possible to help provide context and help the reader understand the scope of the challenge
7. Summarize the approximate level of completion for each goal, such as not started, in progress, or completed.
8. Keep in mind any other areas of voluntary or mandatory reporting and how they can tie in and support a sustainability report. For example, STARS reporting occurs every three years and will most likely have numerous areas of overlap with a sustainability report.

Please use the links below to explore examples of Ontario’s post-secondary sustainability reports.

[Carleton University](#)

[Fleming College](#)

[Humber College](#)

[Ryerson University](#)

[University of Toronto](#)

[University of Waterloo](#)

[York University](#)

Potential Challenges

- Staff capacity for report writing.
- Gathering monitoring data from multiple individuals.

Conclusion

Reporting sustainability and climate progress to stakeholders at regular intervals helps communicate the positive and negative impacts of the institution and how the latter can be effectively managed. Furthermore, annual reporting helps create momentum and demonstrates tangible progress. It gauges whether strategies are effective, and if not what needs to change improve performance. Finally, reporting can also serve as a very informative measure for senior management to help enhance their understanding and priorities. This type of reporting is intended to act as a catalyst for education, evaluation, and conversation by allowing all the components the institution has worked so hard to create and implement continue to be as effective as possible.