McGill Committed to pursuing sustainability excellence

STARS Report Summary 2024



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A note from the President and Vice-Chancellor

On behalf of McGill University, it is my pleasure to present our fourth report for AASHE's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS[®]).

In 2017, McGill set an ambitious new long-term target for the University: attaining a Platinum STARS® sustainability rating by 2030. After earning an improved Gold rating in 2020, McGill released its Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025, which incorporated best practices from the STARS® framework in its actions and objectives. Thanks to these commitments, as well as several critical projects supported through the University's flagship Sustainability Projects Fund, and the dedicated work by members of the McGill community, we are proud to achieve a Platinum rating six years in advance of our goal.

Our submission demonstrates our unwavering commitment to pursuing sustainability excellence at McGill. Since our last report, we have expanded our commitment to sustainability-focused teaching and learning, incorporated LEED considerations into all of our new construction and renovation projects, and enhanced the University's waste infrastructure to improve our diversion rate. We have also launched innovative projects such as a new online sustainability training module for all students and staff and a Sustainable Lab Certification program.

The strength of McGill's sustainability initiatives lies in the collaboration between committed students, staff, faculty, and community members in Montreal. Our report reflects the efforts of these many individuals and groups across the University, as well as the leadership of our Office of Sustainability. I am proud that we can unite as a community to tackle the many sustainability challenges that we face today and lead by example.

A note from the Executive Director, Sustainability

The sustainability journey at McGill began over two decades ago. Since then, our community has rallied around the shared vision of a more sustainable institution-not just in operations but also in our many academic and engagement endeavours. Achieving a STARS Platinum rating reflects the incredible work that hundreds of dedicated students, staff, and faculty have put in to realize this goal.

We are proud to have participated in this transparent reporting process, showcasing the achievements and accomplishments of our organization and community. In this report, you will find an overview of our submission and McGill's performance, with the full report publicly available on the STARS website.

Looking ahead, as we develop our vision for the next five years in a new Climate & Sustainability Strategy, we will continue to be guided by the passion and input of the McGill community. Our world is facing an urgent climate and biodiversity crisis, and I am certain that we at McGill can be part of the driving force for change-through our actions, ideas, and solutions.



Deep Sain President and Vice-Chancellor, McGill University



François Miller Executive Director Sustainability

Overview

Executive Summary

In 2024, McGill achieved a Platinum sustainability rating under the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS[®]), developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). A Platinum rating (a score of over 85) is the highest achievement within STARS. As of March 2024, only five universities in Canada, including McGill, have reached the Platinum level.

The STARS framework assesses sustainability across all of the University's activities, as reflected in five reporting categories: Academics, Engagement, Operations, Planning & Administration, and Innovation & Leadership. Submitting a report involves collecting a vast amount of data from stakeholders across the University and is undertaken every three years.

In 2012, McGill submitted its first STARS report, which resulted in a Silver rating. Since this initial assessment, McGill has made significant improvements to its sustainability performance and data collection process. This progress was reflected in the University's attainment of a Gold rating in 2016, which was renewed in 2020.

Notably, in 2017, the University committed to a long-term target to achieve a Platinum sustainability rating by 2030. Building on this, the Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025 was aligned with the STARS framework to facilitate work towards this goal. Thanks to the McGill community's collective efforts, this ambitious target was accomplished six years in advance. In 2024, McGill reported notable achievements in construction waste diversion, green building standards, responsible investment practices, and sustainability-focused learning, among others.

As the STARS framework is periodically reviewed and new versions are released, the threshold for Platinum will become increasingly more difficult to achieve. Therefore, our commitment to a Platinum sustainability rating will require ongoing effort to continue embedding sustainability in all areas and at every level in the University.





Current STARS Ratings- All Institutions* 159 130 32

*All institutions with a valid STARS report as of March 2024. Institutions awarded a Reporter designation elected not to publish scoring information or pursue a rating.

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System

(STARS[®]) is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to gauge relative progress toward sustainability. STARS was developed by AASHE with broad participation from the higher education community.

- Provide a framework for understanding sustainability in all sectors of higher education.
- Enable meaningful comparisons over time and across institutions using a common set of measurements
- developed with broad participation from the campus sustainability community.
- · Create incentives for continual improvement toward
- · Facilitate information-sharing about higher education sustainability practices and performance.
- Build a stronger, more diverse campus sustainability

STARS is intended to engage and recognize the full spectrum of colleges and universities-from community colleges to research universities, and from institutions just starting their sustainability programs to longtime campus sustainability leaders. STARS encompasses long-term sustainability goals for already high achieving institutions as well as entry points of recognition for institutions that are taking first steps toward sustainability.

STARS is a program of <u>AASHE</u>, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. AASHE is a member-driven organization with a mission to empower higher education to lead the sustainability transformation.

Report Summary

Key achievements

- In the 2024 report, McGill gained the most ground in the Academics Category, achieving full points for 10 out of 11 credits. This achievement is due in part to the University expanding its commitment to sustainability-focused teaching and learning, as reflected in the Strategic Academic Plan and the Sustainability Policy. Additionally, we performed a full-circle sustainability literacy assessment and improved clarity regarding open access research resources. This work has been supported by the launch of an online sustainability module and the Sustainability Education Fellows program.
- We also saw improvement in the credits pertaining to sustainable building practices in the Operations Category. Sustainability considerations, including best practices from the LEED and WELL certifications, have been embedded into McGill's Design Standards. Additionally, the University has started tracking all construction and demolition waste, the majority of which is diverted from landfill. Progress in this area complements the University's commitment to have all new eligible construction and major renovation projects be, at minimum, LEED Gold certified, which was communicated in the Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025.

Looking forward

- McGill's performance still has room for improvement. The Operations Category represents the biggest opportunity for growth, as we have achieved 63% of the total points available. Several projects underway will help with these efforts, including the project to replace a natural gas boiler in the downtown powerhouse, funding and support to electrify McGill's fleet, as well as the aforementioned commitment to sustainable building practices.
- Moreover, AASHE will release STARS version 3.0 in 2024, which will have additional requirements and considerations to improve our sustainability performance. Given that the reporting framework is based on best practices for higher education institutions, we will perform a gap analysis to identify improvement opportunities and to inform the design of the next iteration of McGill's Climate & Sustainability Strategy (2025-2030).





Academics Category

The Academics Category assesses the integration of sustainability into the teaching, learning, and research activities at the university. There are two subcategories in the Academics Category: Curriculum and Research.

Highlights by subcategory

McGill highlighted the following commitments, programs, and projects that were ongoing or initiated between 2021-2024:

Curriculum

- 22% of courses include sustainability content. Additionally, 77% of departments offer courses that incorporate sustainability content.
- Incentives for developing sustainability courses include the Sustainability Education Fellows program, which brings together instructors and students to advance sustainability in their curriculum and pedagogy.
- McGill expanded its commitment to sustainability-focused teaching and learning in the Strategic Academic Plan and the Sustainability Policy.
- McGill offers hundreds of major, minor, and concentration programs that require an understanding of sustainability challenges, such as the B.A. & Sc. Interfaculty Program in Sustainability, B.Com. Managing for Sustainability, and M.Eng. Sustainability in Engineering and Design.
- McGill offers several sustainability-focused immersive programs, such as the Faculty of Science field study programs in Barbados, Panama, and East Africa. The University implemented a brief sustainability literacy assessment in 2020 and 2022 to measure students' understanding of general sustainability concepts.
- A wide breadth of campus as a living lab (CLL) projects were initiated through ENVR 401 Environmental Research course and Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) projects.

Research

- 23% of faculty engaged in sustainability research and over 80% of departments conducted research on sustainability challenges.
- Hundreds of thousands of funding dollars are available to faculty and students through the McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative (MSSI) and Bieler School of Environment grants programs.
- Eligible academic staff may use McGill's Professional Development Fund to reimburse expenses incurred for professional development, including article processing charges. This creates more opportunities for research to be open access.

Related Sustainable Development Goals



McGill A

Research Curriculum

STARS Academics Credits		Score	% of total available points	Variance 2020- 2024
AC-1	Academic Courses	13.16		-0.09
AC-2	Learning Outcomes	8.00		+6.33
AC-3	Undergraduate Program	3.00		-
AC-4	Graduate Program	3.00		-
AC-5	Immersive Experience	2.00		-
AC-6	Sustainability Literacy Assessment	4.00		+3.00
AC-7	Incentives for Developing Courses	2.00		-
AC-8	Campus as a Living Laboratory	4.00		-
AC-9	Research and Scholarship	12.00		+0.27
AC-10	Support for Sustainability Research	4.00		-
AC-11	Open Access to Research	2.00		+0.67



*Average scores from 460 institutions that have received a rating using STARS v.2.2.

... during their time at McGill, students should gain essential knowledge of sustainability that will enable them to address interdependent economic, environmental and social challenges our world is facing.

- McGill Strategic Academic Plan

Engagement Category

The Engagement Category assesses the ways that we engage with the topic of sustainability beyond the academic setting- from extracurricular learning opportunities to community partnerships. The Engagement Category has two subcategories: Campus Engagement and Public Engagement.

Highlights by subcategory

McGill highlighted the following commitments, programs, and projects that were ongoing or initiated between 2021-2024:

Campus Engagement

- An online sustainability module was launched that provides all students, staff and faculty the opportunity to learn how sustainability can play a role in their time at McGill while collectively contributing to a more sustainable university.
- A wide number of options exist for students to participate in orientation activities and programming that prominently include sustainability, as well as sustainability-focused student groups, such as the Student Sustainability Network (SSN), SSMU Environment Committee, Sustainability in Engineering at McGill (SEAM), and Desautels Sustainability Network (DSN).
- 26% of staff report that they incorporate sustainability into their performance dialogues and over 20% of staff report having completed a sustainability-focused professional development activity (e.g., workshop, webinars, conferences).
- McGill creates and promotes sustainability outreach materials and publications, such as social media channels, signage, walking tour, and Residence Handbook.

Public Engagement

- 40% of students report that they engage in community service activities, according to the 2022 Sustainability Survey.
- Several community partnership programs engage with Indigenous groups as partners to address sustainability issues. These partnerships include the Ingram School of Nursing Ashukin Program, the Bachelor of Education First Nations and Inuit Education (FNIE) program, and the Bayano-McGill Reforestation Project in Panama.
- The University is extremely active in the higher education sustainability community, presenting regularly at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education annual conference and other events. The University belongs to international, national and regional sustainability networks.
- McGill became a member of the Fair Labor Association in 2023. Moreover, the McGill bookstore, Le James, only does business with clothing manufacturers who are, at a minimum, Fair Labor Association certified.

Related Sustainable Development Goals



	blic Engagement		■ Aver ■ McG
	0% 25% 50%	75%	100%
*Avera	ge scores from 460 institutions that have re	eceived a ra	ating using STA
STARS	Engagement Credits	Score	% of total available points
EN-1	Student Educators Program	2.74	
EN-2	Student Orientation	2.00	
EN-3	Student Life	2.00	
EN-4	Outreach Materials and Publications	2.00	
EN-5	Outreach Campaign	4.00	
EN-6	Assessing Sustainability Culture	1.00	
EN-7	Employee Educators Program	1.74	
EN-8	Employee Orientation	1.00	
EN-9	Staff Professional Development and Training	1.25	
EN-10	Community Partnerships	3.00	
EN-11	Inter-Campus Collaboration	3.00	
EN-12	Continuing Education	5.00	
EN-13	Community Service	3.65	
EN-14	Participation in Public Policy	2.00	
EN-15	Trademark Licensing	2.00	



Operations Category

The Operations Category assesses the implementation of sustainable practices and approaches across key areas of the university's operations. There are nine subcategories in the Operations Category: Air & Climate, Buildings, Energy, Food & Dining, Grounds, Purchasing, Transportation, Waste, and Water.

Highlights by subcategory

McGill highlighted the following commitments, programs, and projects that were ongoing or initiated between 2021-2024:

Air & Climate

 McGill produces a thorough GHG emissions inventory annually, which includes Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, as well as air pollutant emissions. Additionally, McGill has reduced its GHG Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50%, per campus user, over the past 20 years.

Buildings

 100% of LEED-eligible building space is built or renovated to LEED specifications; over 30% of LEED-eligible space is certified LEED Gold. Additionally, McGill's buildings are managed under a custom operations and maintenance program that is based on LEED Operations + Maintenance attributes, of which several are embedded into the McGill Design Standards.

Food & Dining

 Over 10% of total annual food and beverage expenditures are on products that are sustainably produced (i.e., fair trade, organic, Marine Stewardship Council-certified). Additionally, 22% of total annual food and beverage expenditures are on plant-based products.

Grounds

• In 2023, the University published a Biodiversity Plan that aims to monitor, protect, and enhance biodiversity via research, teaching, and operations, while raising awareness and engaging community members both on and beyond the campuses.

Purchasing

 88% of institutional electronics purchases are EPEAT- or single-attribute certified, while 85% of institutional electronics purchases are EPEAT-Gold certified.

Transportation

• About 80% of students and staff commute by sustainable modes of transportation.

Waste

• McGill reported a 42% day-to-day waste diversion rate in 2022 and a 95% construction waste diversion rate for 2021.

Water

• The University reduced its potable water consumption per square metre by 27% since 2014.

Related Sustainable Development Goals



Purchasing Grounds Transportation Air & Climate Water Waste Buildings **Dining Services** Energy

STARS	Operations Credits	Score	% of total available points	Varianc 2020- 2024
OP-1	Emissions Inventory and Disclosure	2.46		-
OP-2	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	5.47		-0.17
OP-3	Building Design and Construction	1.65		+1.54
OP-4	Building Operations and Maintenance	2.00		+2.00
OP-5	Building Energy Efficiency	4.25	4	+0.85
OP-6	Clean and Renewable Energy	0.00		-
OP-7	Food and Beverage Purchasing	1.31		+0.21
OP-8	Sustainable Dining	2.00		+0.12
OP-9	Landscape Management	1.63		-0.37
OP-10	Biodiversity	2.00		-
OP-11	Sustainable Procurement	3.00		-
OP-12	Electronics Purchasing	0.87		-0.09
OP-13	Cleaning and Janitorial Purchasing	0.94		+0.27
OP-14	Office Paper Purchasing	1.00		-
OP-15	Campus Fleet	0.12		+0.06
OP-16	Commute Modal Split	4.37		-0.20
OP-17	Support for Sustainable Transportation	1.00		-
OP-18	Waste Minimization and Diversion	3.54		-0.22
OP-19	Construction and Demolition Waste Diversion	0.95		+0.95
OP-20	Hazardous Waste Management	1.00		-
OP-21	Water Use	2.97		+0.10
OP-22	Rainwater Management	2.00		_

McGill Operations Performance Benchmark



*Average scores from 460 institutions that have received a rating using STARS v.2.2.

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Planning & Administration Category

The Planning & Administration Category assesses the university's strategic planning, investments, inclusivity, accessibility, as well as workplace health and wellbeing. This category has four subcategories: Coordination & Planning, Diversity & Affordability, Wellbeing & Work, and Investment & Finance.

Highlights by subcategory

McGill highlighted the following commitments, programs, and projects that were ongoing or initiated between 2021-2024:

Coordination and Planning

 McGill has strong governance structures in place to pursue its sustainability commitments, such as the Board Committee on Sustainability and Social Responsibility and the Advisory Council on Sustainability. Additionally, McGill has a Sustainability Policy and regularly publishes a Climate and Sustainability Strategy.

Diversity and Affordability

- McGill's Equity team aims to ensure that equity is a key consideration in all decisions affecting academic life at McGill, such as student life, teaching and learning, and the appointment, tenure, and promotion of professors.
- McGill's Office for Mediation and Reporting offers non-judgmental confidential consultations to students, faculty, and staff on matters of harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence.
- The University recruits and offers support to students and staff from underrepresented groups, such as the Black Staff Employee Resource Group and the Local Wellness Advisors for Black, 2S&LGBTQ+, and BIPOC students.

Investment and Finance

- In 2019, McGill pledged to invest 5% of the McGill Investment Pool (MIP) in funds that actively generate positive environmental impact.
- The MIP has committed \$55 million USD to a Global Renewable Energy Fund and a Global Private Equity Impact Fund. Additionally, MIP decarbonization efforts have resulted in a 55% reduction in the carbon footprint of the listed equity portfolio between 2019 and 2023.
- In 2021, McGill hired a service provider dedicated to engaging with companies in its portfolio about climate change issues and has since participated in over 196 engagements.
- McGill announced that it would completely divest from remaining 1% of funds that are directly invested in the Carbon Underground 200 firms.

Wellbeing and Work

• McGill offers robust wellness programming, including mental health services, for employees and students. These include the Student Wellness Hub, the Health and Well-being Program, the Employee and Family Assistance Program, and the Staff Fitness program.

Related Sustainable Development Goals



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Performa	

Coordination & Planning Diversity & Affordability Wellbeing & Work Investment & Finance

STARS Credit

STARS Credit		Score	% of total available points	Variance 2020- 2024
PA-1	Sustainability Coordination	1.00		-
PA-2	Sustainability Planning	4.00		-
PA-3	Inclusive and Participatory Governance	3.00		+0.25
PA-4	Reporting Assurance	1.00		-
PA-5	Diversity and Equity Coordination	2.00		-
PA-6	Assessing Diversity and Equity	1.00		-
PA-7	Support for Underrepresented Groups	3.00		-
PA-8	Affordability and Access	3.60		-0.02
PA-9	Committee on Investor Responsibility	2.00		-
PA-10	Sustainable Investment	3.46		+0.77
PA-11	Investment Disclosure	0.62		-
PA-12	Employee Compensation	0.86		-1.58
PA-13	Assessing Employee Satisfaction	0.96		+0.51
PA-14	Wellness Programs	0.75		-
PA-15	Workplace Health and Safety	1.66		+0.06



*Average scores from 460 institutions that have received a rating using STARS v.2.2.

Innovation & Leadership Category

The Innovation & Leadership Category recognizes innovative solutions to sustainability challenges and leadership in sustainability that are not otherwise captured in the STARS framework. This category has over forty types of innovation credits available, as well as credits that allow for unique innovation and leadership practices. A maximum of four points can be earned in this category.

Category highlights

McGill chose the following credits to highlight programs and projects that were ongoing or initiated between 2021-2024:

- Carbon Mitigation Project Development: The Bayano-McGill Reforestation Project has seen 44,500 trees planted, 1,939 metric tonnes of CO₂e offset, 44 local families participating, and 8 McGill students conducting research.
- Fair Trade Campus: McGill's Downtown campus has been a Fair Trade Campus for over a decade, Macdonald Campus for nearly 5 years.
- Green Event Certification: The McGill Sustainable Events certification program is an initiative that provides consultations, trainings, and resources to encourage and support more responsible events at McGill.
- Green Laboratory Program: McGill recently launched its Sustainable Lab Certification, which is divided into eight categories that target a range of actions lab users can take to make their operations more sustainable.
- Laboratory Animal Welfare: McGill's Policy on the Study and Care of Animals prohibits laboratory animals from being subjected to severe and unrelieved pain and distress.
- Sustainability Projects Fund: The Sustainability Projects Fund mandate is to build a culture of sustainability on McGill campuses through the development and seed-funding of interdisciplinary projects. The Sustainability Projects Fund reached \$1 million in 2020 and is the largest SPF of its kind in Canada.
- Wellbeing Certification: McGill received a silver certification from Excellence Canada in 2021 for the University's commitment to co-creating a safe, engaging and productive workplace for its employees.
- Bonus Innovation: The University launched two online sustainability modules: "Creating a Brighter Future: Sustainability at McGill," which gives students the opportunity to learn how to incorporate sustainability into their time at McGill, and "Envisioning a More Sustainable McGill," which provides staff and faculty the opportunity to learn how sustainability can play a role in their careers.

Related Sustainable Development Goals



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McGill	In

Innovation 0

STARS	Credit	Score	% of total available þoints	Variance 2020- 2024
IN-5	Carbon Mitigation Project Development	0.50		-
IN-12	Fair Trade Campus	0.50		-
IN-18	Green Event Certification	0.50		-
IN-19	Green Laboratory Program	0.50		-
IN-23	Laboratory Animal Welfare	0.50		-
IN-40	Sustainability Projects Fund	0.50		-
IN-44	Wellbeing Certification	0.50		
IN-47	Online Sustainability Module for Students	0.50		-



novation Performance Benchmark

1				
				Average scores*
)%	25%	50%	75%	100% McGill score

*Average scores from 460 institutions that have received a rating using STARS v.2.2.

[McGill aims to] share knowledge to stimulate innovation, raise awareness and ensure effective participation of the McGill community in the *implementation of sustainable* practices.

- Sustainability Policy (2023)

Acknowledgements

Special thanks

We would like to acknowledge the many students, staff, and faculty who have both directly and indirectly contributed to the 2024 STARS submission. The McGill community's incredible work is the foundation of this report and the progress that has been made at the institution.

While it is impossible to list everyone involved in the vast range of sustainability actions undertaken at McGill, we would like to recognize the significant contributions of our students, who have both catalyzed and driven progress at the University.

Additionally, many staff members have contributed key data for the 2024 STARS submission. In recognition of their work, we have listed these contributors on the right.

STARS reporting at McGill

Every three years, the McGill Office of Sustainability collects data and prepares the STARS report submission on behalf of the University. Additionally, the Office prepares gap analyses and recommendations for governance bodies and key stakeholders at McGill. The 2024 STARS reporting process was coordinated by Karen Oberer, Sustainability Officer (Monitoring & Reporting) and Krista Houser, Associate Director, Sustainability (Strategy & Governance).

Reporting) and Krista Houser, Associate Director, Sustainability (Strategy & Governance).

Key data contributors

Academic Personnel Office Anne-Marie Durocher Analysis, Planning and Budget Natalie Phillips-Elgar Irina Susan-Resiga Nayiri Tokmanciyan **Buildings and Grounds** Gaby Pinto **Campus Planning and Development** Adam Dudeck Susanne Glenn-Rigny lan Tattersfield **Campus Public Safety** Christopher Carson Angela Debellis **Career Planning Service** Darlene Hnatchuk Tara Wilkins **Dana Hospitality** Mariana Garcia Mario Paladin **Design Services** Jeremy Glenn José Romo Vazquez Philippe St-Jean **Enrolment Services** Veronica Amberg Gemma Else **Environmental Health and Safety** Christian Bouchard

Equity (Provost & VP Academic)

Tynan Jarrett **Food and Dining** Göktuğ Bender Shawn Casey Zach Suhl Gault Nature Reserve David Maneli Le James Bookstore Jason Kack Libraries Jessica Lange **Macdonald Campus** Laura Caralampides **Thomas Forrester** Shane Lenhan **McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative** Larissa Jarvis **Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education** Shannon Wood **Office of Investments** Karim Bengelloun Zahr **Office of Religious and Spiritual Life** Carlene Gardner

Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Karen Kennedy

Organizational Development Ross McDonald

Procurement Services Stéphanie Leclerc Suzanne Boyd **Filip Werneck** Prodeepti Ramdoss **Research and Innovation** Candace Miller **Scholarships and Student Aid** Cara Piperni **Science Outreach Jacky Farrell** Student Involvement Stéphane Cardinal Victor Sanchez-Lopez **Teaching and Learning Services** Jennie Ferris **Total Compensation Daniel Gélinas** Valerie Parsons **Trottier Institute for Sustainability** in Engineering and Design Parisa Hassani Monika Skonieczny **Utilities and Energy Management** Jerome Conraud Josh Huizinga Fred Samson

McGill Office of Sustainability Staff