

AC-1 Course Inventory Methodology

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Purpose of Document

Summary of methodology and outcomes of AC-1 sustainability course inventory to submit to STARS.

Summary | Findings

2018-2019 Academic Year Courses (Summer 2018, Fall 2018, and Spring 2019):

- Total number of courses provided by Registrar/Office of Institutional Research: **27,961**
- Total number of courses minus those [excluded per AASHE guidelines](#): **19,504**
- Total number of courses containing one or more sustainability keywords: **9,478**
- Total number of sustainability-focused courses (undergraduate + graduate): **192**
- Total number of sustainability-inclusive courses (undergraduate + graduate): **1,004**

Summary | Methodology

Scope of data:

A complete list of course offerings for Summer Semester 2018, Fall Semester 2018, and Spring Semester 2019 (Academic Year 2019) listed in the USC Course Catalog was obtained from the USC Registrar's Office and Office of Institutional Research. The complete list of course offerings included the course number, title, and description. The Office of Institutional Research excluded any courses that met [AASHE's exclusion criteria](#). Any course that was excluded was not to be counted in the total number of course offerings, and therefore not included in the course inventory. For courses with multiple offerings or sections, each offering or section was counted as an individual course.

Review of data:

1. **Determination of methodology:** The Presidential Working Group Sustainability in Education (PWG SE) committee reviewed a data processing methodology proposed by the Office of Sustainability. The proposed methodology included the following:
 - a. Overview of information required for the AC-1 credit
 - b. STARS definitions of “sustainability-focused” and “sustainability-inclusive”
 - c. List of types of courses eligible for exclusion per AASHE's guidelines
 - d. Options for how to handle courses with multiple offerings or sections
 - e. Examples of data-processing methodologies from peer universities
 - f. Proposed data-processing methodology to be carried out by the Office of Sustainability
2. **Create list of keywords:** The Office of Sustainability compiled a list of keywords based on [AASHE's keyword list](#) and keywords used by other universities. This was reviewed and confirmed by the PWG SE Committee.
3. **Conduct keyword search:** Student interns in the Office of Sustainability helped to clean the spreadsheet of course listings and carried out the keyword search within the spreadsheet. The courses that included a keyword were marked to be considered for the final inventory. A course had to contain at least one keyword.
4. **Classifying courses containing a keyword:** Student interns and Office of Sustainability staff classified all courses containing a keyword as sustainability-focused, sustainability-inclusive, or neither. The PWG SE Committee agreed to use [AASHE's definitions of sustainability-focused and sustainability-inclusive](#) as the foundational understanding of how to classify a course. The following are the criteria for the course classifications:
 - a. **Sustainability-focused courses must include the following:**
 - i. Contained a sustainability keyword in course title or description, and
 - ii. The course title and/or description had an explicit focus on sustainability or addressed a sustainability challenge, as aligned with AASHE's definition of sustainability
 - iii. Directly addressed a sustainability challenge as outlined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals
 - b. **Sustainability-inclusive courses must include the following:**
 - i. Contained a sustainability keyword in course title or description, and
 - ii. A unit or element of the course contained an element of sustainability or addressed a sustainability challenge, as aligned with AASHE definition of sustainability, and
 - iii. Addressed a sustainability challenge as outlined by the UN Sustainable Development Goals
5. **Review:** The PWG SE committee reviewed and confirmed the sustainability course inventory.
6. **Revision and confirmation:** Any suggestions and edits on course classification will be incorporated into the inventory by the Office of Sustainability staff and student interns.

7. **Third party-review:** The inventory will be reviewed by GreenerU.

Compiled Assumptions

- Any course which mentions a sustainability topic within its course description was marked as a *sustainability-inclusive* course
 - A relevant issue must touch upon one of the three pillars of sustainability to qualify, e.g. Global finances, public health, development, equity and accessibility topics, etc.
- If multiple themes in the curriculum revolved around sustainability, then it was considered *sustainability-focused*
 - Courses must include considerations of all three sustainability pillars
 - Courses required for Environmental Studies Majors and Minors
 - A sole focus on the application of a sustainability concept, theory, framework, or tool, including: sustainable design, engineering, policy, natural resources & systems, etc
- **Built Environment:** Courses that mentioned the built environment, landscape design, and land management practices that considered application in urban settings, ethics and the human experience were considered *inclusive*. These courses included ARCH courses that supported resiliency through landscape design.
 - RCL_DEPT
 - ARCH
- **Social Change, Social Justice and Racial Justice:** Courses that teach units on aspects of social change, social justice, equity, and changemaking as it relates to creating a more engaged citizenship or safer and sustainable environment were considered *inclusive*.
- RCL_DEPT
 - ASCJ
 - AMST
- **Economics and Politics:** Courses that address the understanding of economic and political systems, the ethical nature of these systems, and their impacts on society were considered *inclusive*. Courses teaching about challenges and betterment of international and global trade relations and policy were also classified as *inclusive*.
 - RCL_DEPT
 - ECON
 - FBE

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- **Human Rights:** Courses with a focus on teaching foundational concepts related to human rights were not considered *inclusive* unless they addressed a specific sustainability challenge.
 - RCL_DEPT
 - POIR
- **Global Health, Disease, and Nutrition:** Courses about global health issues and understanding were classified as *Inclusive* due to their alignment with UN SDG Goal 3. Courses teaching a greater understanding of disease and its impacts on the environment and society were considered *inclusive*. Courses that taught units on general public health were evaluated as *inclusive* or not based on the course description. Courses that were focused on or taught units on nutrition and hunger were evaluated for classification as *sustainability-inclusive* based on the course description.
 - RCL_DEPT
 - ACMD
 - MEDS
 - PM
 - GERO
- **Varying Topics:** courses with topics and professors that vary each semester may substantively address sustainability/sustainability challenges for some or all semesters, but there was insufficient information in the course title and description to make this determination, so these courses were not considered to be sustainability-focused or sustainability-inclusive.
 - Examples:
 - CORE-103: The Process of Change in Science: Thematic Option Honors Pro
 - GESM-130: Seminar in Social Analysis
 - GESM-140: Seminar in the Life Sciences
 - SOWK-704: Strategic Innovations for the Grand Challenges
 - WRIT-150: Writing and Critical Reasoning--Thematic Approaches

Appendix

List of Keywords Approved by the PWG SE Committee: USC's final inventory submitted for STARS includes a tab with this full list of keywords.

Departments Offering Academic Courses: A list of departments was provided by the Registrar and Office of Institutional Research via the AY18-19 USC Course Catalog. The list of Departments is all encompassing of any "RCL_DEPT"

Level of Course: Based on the USC Course Catalog description, courses were designated as undergraduate and graduate levels by their number in the "RCL_COURSE_LEVEL" column:

USC's three-digit system for indicating the year level of a course¹:

- 000: preparatory courses (non-credit)
- 100 and 200: lower-division courses primarily for freshmen and sophomores
- 300 and 400: upper-division courses primarily for juniors and seniors (graduate credit available for 400-level courses)
- 500, 600, and 700: graduate

Location of Courses: Courses included in this inventory include courses taught in person and online.

Excluded Courses: A complete spreadsheet of all course offerings in AY19 was obtained from the Office of Institutional Research with the support of the Registrar's Office. [Based on AASHE's AC 1 exclusion criteria](#), the following courses were excluded by the Office of Institutional Research and are not included in the **total count of course offerings**:

1. **USC Course Catalog "000" courses: preparatory courses (non-credit)**
2. **Individually-directed courses (e.g., thesis, independent study, practicum)**
 - a. GRSC-800
 - b. GRSC-801
 - c. Directed Research courses with the following RCL_COURSE_SUFFIX_NUMBER
 - i. 490
 - ii. 594
 - iii. 596
 - iv. 790,791,794
 - v. 800
3. **Courses of four or fewer students**

¹ https://arr.usc.edu/glossary/c.html#course_descriptors

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4. **Special topics courses (e.g., courses that address emerging issues or specialized content and that are not offered on an ongoing basis)**
 - a. Rcl Title
 - i. Special Topic
5. **Medical courses dedicated to clinical practice and courses that are strictly practice-oriented**
 - a. **RCL_DEPT**
 - i. DPBL
 - ii. PCPA
 - iii. DENT
 - iv. PHRD
 - v. PT
 - vi. PCPA (Catalog Owner= MED)
 - b. **Rcl Course**
 - i. SOWK 694
6. **Arts courses dedicated to performance, technique, or composition.**
 - a. **RCL_DEPT**
 - i. DANC
 - ii. MUS
 - iii. THTR
7. **Physical education courses that are activity-based.**
 - a. **RCL_DEPT**
 - i. PHED
8. **Courses in the following disciplines as a part of the following study abroad programs. Other courses offered abroad that are owned by other departments have been included in the inventory.**
 - a. **Rcl Title**
 - i. Off Campus Studies
 - ii. WBB Semester At Large
 - iii. Overseas Block Enrollment
9. **Courses listed as RNR as the Catalog Owner. These are placeholder courses.**
10. **Courses without a description provided by the Registrar.**