

One School – Two Tools

A comparison of the use of Green Plan and STARS at Euromed Management produced for AASHE Conference, Los Angeles 2012

Scope & Structure

STARS	GREEN PLAN
Self Assessment by action with obligatory indicators and space for comments	Self-Assessment by level with proposed actions/indicators – comment space
Timeframe varies with category and performance indicators	Yearly reporting (SA) Three year validity (Label)
3 sections categories Education & Research (100points) Operations (100 points) Planning, Administration & Engagement (100 points)	5 priority axes 63 variables 19 strategic variables within these themes with accompanying operational variables
Tier One Credits for higher impact sub-categories Tier Two credits for notable by lower-impact sub-categories	Average by Axe and Overall Rating Weight of axes: Equal 1/5 Governance Teaching Research Social Policy & Community Engagement Environmental Campus Management
Rating is public but only certain sections are general knowledge and public access	SA- Report sent to French Ministries and CGE/CPU, Fondaterra, and Campus Responsible (optional) but remain confidential/non public
Not campus specific/ no UGO	Can integrate UGOs and use a weighing system in the rating

General Comments:

Both measure sustainability performance and both cover the whole spectrum of sustainability's triple bottom line. STARS uses an established labelization process whereas GREEN PLAN has yet to finalize the label procedure. It currently uses a self assessment too that focuses on bringing HEI into conformity with national legislation and beyond.

The Green Plan also allows for an analysis by UGO – units of organizational management. In other words, the assessment user can separate the management of different campuses or schools if necessary. You can define the “weight” of each UGO, for example, at Euromed our main campus is 2/3 of our student population and activity. Thus the primary UGO would be Euromed Luminy, UGO 2 the Docks, UGO 3 Toulon, etc. This form of evaluation is particularly interesting for schools with multiple campuses in different countries that have independent management systems.

These UGO are not limited to geography. One can have multiple UGOs at the same site. It regards management style, resource and such.

Evaluation Style

STARS	GREEN PLAN
Answers verified by AASHE Staff	Answers are not verified (Self Assessment) Variables verified by Peer review (Label Levels 3 & 4)
Credits weighted by impact not difficulty	Variables are rated by level 1-5
Each category has the same worth but subcategories are weighed.	1. Awareness 2. Initiation 3. Conformity to French law 4. Mastery 5. Exemplarity
ER 19 Credits – 8 Sub Credits (two tier) OP 23 credits - 56 Sub Credits (two tier) PAE 25 Credits - 12 Sub Credits (two tier) Total 300 points	The levels are progressive and have no “end point” or completion
Rating System Total points (average of three categories plus innovation) Ratings Minimum points Bronze 25.00 Silver 45.00 Gold 65.00 Platinum 85.00	Rating system 1: Committed Institution 2: Institution of Interest (50% Variables> Level 3) 3: Institution of Reference (80% Variables> Level 3) 4: Institution of Excellence (100% Variables> Level 3)
Evaluation based on answers/results and current situation. Yes/No – How Many?	Evaluation based on results and objectives – actions and indicators are proposed by open to the discretion of the reporter
Prioritizes performance over strategy	Rates on both Operations and Strategy Separately then jointly
Each HEI is treated the same – although can say that some sub-cat do not apply	Takes into account institutional context in weighing credits Importance/Performance

General Comments:

Although both systems are measuring the same general things, the approaches are notably different. STARS uses a very action based that is quantitative, precise and not very flexible. If you do not meet all requirements, you receive no points. For example, in the OP: Buildings section, they ask the total Sq ft of buildings and how much of this space is covered by sustainability guidelines and policies and how much is certified under LEED. Even if your buildings are maintained sustainably, but there is not policy, you do not qualify. If you do not have building certification you lose points. In the French tool the actions and results are taken into account. Did you carry out a diagnostic? Is there an action plan? Do you measure? There are five levels of answers based on advancement. Building certification is not taken into account in the levels – but can be used as an action or indicator.

In STARS the user tries to increase their “points” to improve their rating, to do this you work on specific indicators/actions that are pre-defined by AASHE. In the Green Plan you seek to move towards conformity onto exemplarity with a more objective based approach. Actions and indicators are suggested by not obligatory. This leads to increased creativity and innovation, but does not force institutions to reply to certain “minimum” actions or criteria.

Weighing Criteria & Evaluation

STARS	GREEN PLAN
<p>3 categories with equal weight</p> <p>Curriculum & Research = Operations Operations = Planning & Admin</p> <p>Importance determines credit value</p> <p>Audit by AASHE personnel</p> <p>Provides national norms and weights accordingly – everyone with the same tool.</p>	<p>5 categories with equal weight</p> <p>Teaching = Campus Management Research = Social Policy & Community Engagement</p> <p>Each axes contains variables and the average of each axes is used to produce an institutional average In Self Assessment – there is no review</p> <p>Label – Peer review Audit & Stakeholder Interviews Level 2: 50 % operational variables ≥ 3 Level 3: 80 % operational variables ≥ 3 Level 4: 100 % operational variables ≥ 3</p> <p>Takes into account institutional context (ie campus location)</p>

General Comments:

Both are performance based.

By defining 3 or 5 categories and giving them equal weight each system defines what they believe is priority. In STARS the operations section is equal to teaching and research. Within the operations are buildings, climate, dining services, energy, grounds, purchasing, transportation, waste, water etc. This section is worth 1/3 of the total points – placing environmental management as a key/deciding factor in each school’s assessment. In the Green Plan Self Assessment the 5 axes are all worth the same – this give the environmental campus management 1/5 of the weight in the overall rating. In the labeling processes there will be other criteria that determine an institution’s level, such as number of variables at 3 or more.

It is interesting to note that with STARS, many credits require that the information be made public – by asking for the URL.

Overall STARS’ evaluation style and weighing system is more cut and dry. As a first time user, one knows what answers are being looked for and they know if their school is applicable or not. The GREEN PLAN’s self assessment is completely voluntary and there is no follow-up verification. It is more of a management tool and helps structure strategy. The label process is logical and adapted, but not the very easy to understand. It is a more complex approach with weighing and balancing the institution’s rating with their national and local context. There is also a “peer review” and stakeholder interview process.

Context & Compatibility

STARS	GREEN PLAN
<p>North American tool Uses US norms, laws, programs (LEED, Fair Labor association)</p> <p>Assumes that institutions have well defined data management systems (since 2005) and websites</p> <p>Schools are run as businesses with Merchandizing/Trademarks Assumes that schools have independent means</p> <p>Very politically correct vocabulary</p>	<p>French tool based on French law and national context (majority public or public financed schools) Uses the Grennelle law to fix institution/national objectives</p> <p>Does not use certification as rating criteria – uses actions</p> <p>Schools are mainly public or affiliated with public/government services. They are run as such with rules against merchandizing etc. Laws prohibit data on ethnic origin Laws prohibit “prejudicial” stipulations in purchasing (ie locality). Laws prohibit food donation</p>
<p>ER</p> <p>Schools have more student newspapers and co-curricular education Uses Green Communication for credit (signs) Credits sustainability programs Different indicators but basically the same info</p> <p>OP: Environmental aspects weigh heavily Uses LEED and other certifications that we do not have access to...or are culturally inaccessible.</p>	<p>ER</p> <p>Seeks to adapt traditional learning by ‘infusing’ CSR into every course Focuses on personal development Places continued education in education section Includes training staff in education section Has International OBJ – Co-create with stakeholders and international partners Has variables on “making public” academic sustainability research.</p>
<p>PAE</p> <p>Importance is placed on investment- in GP this is a more governance oriented question.</p> <p>Employee wellness is stated by not student</p> <p>Community service – not calculable at Euromed but omnipresent. Very Anglo-Saxon way of promoting service learning.</p> <p>Places Executive/continued education in community section Disability access/HANDICAP ISSUES? Measures diversity attitudes</p> <p>Credits are given for carrying out satisfaction evals Access issues are not the same in the US&FR.</p>	<p>Campus Management</p> <p>Environmental aspects do not weigh heavily as the context does not facilitate this section Greenhouse gas (policies, transportation, purchasing, energy, water), preventing pollution (waste management, air), biodiversity We calculate by volume not TONS.</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>More developed section on governance, awareness raising falls in this category as well as strat/structure of CSR. Encourages a transversal/systemic CSR approach Includes Stakeholder approach Evaluates resources people & budget given to sustainability Schools to not general have funds/profit – thus investment is not considered in GP.</p> <p>Social Policy & Community Engagement</p>

<p>Most schools cost less than 500 USD a year – except one like ours.</p> <p>Technical issues: Software not adapted to intl users (ie phone numbers or metric systems etc.)</p> <p>User friendly</p> <p>Cannot extract overall entry for review...</p> <p>Allows for information transfers to certain partners.</p> <p>Has a public and private information sections – interesting for visibility</p> <p>Accompanying tools are clear and understandable</p>	<p>Well developed social policy section with more HR, Wellness, security, hygiene and health sections.</p> <p>HR – develop the competencies of your staff Measures actual diversity French social systems obliges us to have more sustainable compensation, benefits, representation, etc... Retirement fund is public Includes aspects on efforts for social integration with INTL students, etc.</p> <p>Technical issues:</p> <p>New software that has bugs to work out Easy information extraction Allows for information transformation/ transfers Submission remains confidential.</p> <p>Lacks accompanying tools</p>
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General Comments:

GP is French specific as it is based on French laws and Norms. STARS is very North American in evaluation style, criteria and content. It is easier as an INTL participant to thus use the GREEN PLAN, since there are no imposed indicators or actions. Since STARS uses set indicators with USA certifying bodies, it is complicated. Each is better adapted to their national context and instructional settings.

The Education and Research sections are very similar in content. The main difference is found in the indicators. The GREEN PLAN seeks to transform traditional teaching, STARS seems to want to work on the “offer” more than the “demand” – in other words less transversal but more easily calculated. One main difference is that the Green Plan considers continued education in the “pedagogy” section on in the community engagement section.

In STARS one calculates the number of professors producing sustainability research; through the Green Plan we calculated the percentage of academic outputs. The result is the same. In the GREEN PLAN also asks for the “vulgarization” of research – efforts the school makes to increase public sustainability understanding. The research section in the Green Plan is a little more developed than STARS.

It is interesting to note that outreach and awareness rising are considered education in STARS and Governance/Strategy in the Green Plan. STARS also gives credit for schools with student groups/associations.

Conclusion:

The scope and information is basically the same. There are some differences, but there is a common foundation. While one might place the emphasis on operations and the other the social policy, each covers the three spheres of the triple bottom line.

The STARS assessment system is a clearly established label process with adapted tools and resources. They used a visibility North American approach to this issue, an approach that corresponds to their national contexts (USA/CANADA). With clear and concise reporting methods, anyone could fill out their assessment, given that they have the time and means to retrieve the required information.

The GREEN PLAN replies to a national need, legally and socially. The software and the tools are relevantly new and the label is currently being finalized. Although the Green Plan is label “behind”, their assessment system is operational and well adapted. It takes into consideration institutional context and objectives/ action plan that need to put in place.

Between the two tools one of the main differences is that the GREEN PLAN has both the free and open sourced assessment tool- required by law- and the paid label process. Whereas STARS is a paid label process and resources are not in open source.

Both seek to improve sustainability in HEI, through sharing best practices and tools. You can feel that the STARS label system is more competitive (with public information) than the GREEN PLAN currently is. However this is subject to change with the arrival of the label.

In conclusion one can easily say that both are different, yet good tools for measuring sustainability. Clear links can be seen in the content and objectives of both systems. There is no reason why these two systems could not create a compatibility system.

Tashina Giraud

Sustainable Development Manager

Euromed Management – KEDGE Business School

Email: tashina.giraud@euromed-management.com

Skype: tashina.giraud

Twitter: TashinaGiraud