VET Roadmap for Sustainability

Education for Sustainability (EfS) - Rubrics and Indicators for the VET Sector

Through information and awareness, but more importantly by building people's capacity to innovate and implement solutions,
education for sustainability is essential to re-orienting the way we live and work and to Australia becoming a sustainable society.

Living Sustainably, The Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability, 2009

Introduction

In the last year of the Decade of Education for Sustainability (2005-2014) we must seriously question our progress towards a sustainable Australia. There are numerous definitions of sustainability. Due to its broad, encompassing nature it takes on the values and language of the area it is focussed on (i.e. economic, social, cultural, and/or environmental).

The rubrics and indicators for sustainability were adapted for the VET sector as a tool to help individuals and groups to clarify their own and others' understanding of sustainability and to move together towards more sustainable patterns of living and working. In adapting the rubrics for the VET sector, the language of the rubrics and indicators has been made generic in order for individuals, groups and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to clarify further meanings for their own context. This is particularly important for the VET sector, which represents a broad range of stakeholders including students, employees, RTOs/campuses, businesses, enterprise and industries.

Using the Rubrics

The rubrics and indicators for sustainability are intended to be used flexibly by RTOs and Enterprise against which to conduct regular self-assessments and gap analysis, to identify their starting and continuing points for implementing sustainability. These support both the process of integrating Education for Sustainability (EfS) in teaching and assessment and of implementing sustainable work practices across the organisation. This ensures that sustainability is modelled in practice to students and to industry. The rubrics may be adapted and applied to any industry qualification in which education, training and assessment is conducted.

Acknowledgments

Principles for Education for Sustainability (EfS)

The model and rubrics encompass the following education for sustainability (EfS) principles:

- **Transformation and change**

  Education for sustainability is not simply about providing information but involves equipping people with the skills, capacity and motivation to plan and manage change towards sustainability within an organisation, industry or community.

- **Education for all and lifelong learning**

  Education for sustainability is driven by a broad understanding of education and learning that includes people of all ages and backgrounds and at all stages of life and takes place within all possible learning spaces, formal and informal, in schools, workplaces, homes and communities.

- **Systems thinking**

  Education for sustainability aims to equip people to understand connections between environmental, economic, social and political systems.

- **Envisioning a better future**

  Education for sustainability engages people in developing a shared vision for a sustainable future.

- **Critical thinking and reflection**

  Education for sustainability values the capacity of individuals and groups to reflect on personal experiences and world views and to challenge accepted ways of interpreting and engaging with the world.

- **Participation**

  Education for sustainability recognises participation as critical for engaging groups and individuals in sustainability.

- **Partnerships for change**

  Education for sustainability focuses on the use of genuine partnerships to build networks and relationships, and improve communication between different sectors of society.

(Source: *Living Sustainably, The Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability*, 2009).

The Model for the VET EfS Rubrics

The Model for VET EfS Rubrics is divided into **five interconnected elements**, with **Culture** being central, and each element has **three sub-elements**:

1. **Culture**　　　　　vision and values, interconnectedness and whole-organisation approach
2. **Understanding**　　learning and change, learning for sustainability, a sustainability inquiry
3. **Learning**　　　　　course content, learning environment and course delivery
4. **Community**　　　　community connections, building capacity and developing partnerships
5. **Management**　　　leadership, governance and planning and management

Note: In the context of VET, the community is principally business and industry. In the rubrics, this meaning evolves through the stages described below to include working with local and global communities. An example can be found at: http://www.illawarraflame.com.au/house.php

The Rubrics

The rubrics and indicators have been developed to support RTOs/campuses in their sustainability journey. The rubrics and indicators enable RTOs/campuses to discuss their perceptions of where they are currently and where they would like to go next to improve the sustainability of the whole site and course content and delivery. Whilst the layout of the rubrics and indicators appears hierarchical it is, in practice, a dynamic spiral due to the continuous changes we confront every day, month and year in the workplace. Ultimately, the value of the rubrics and indicators is in the interconnectedness of discussions, evolving relationships and actions taken by everyone to live more sustainably together on a daily basis.

The rubrics are divided into **four** stages:

1. **Starting**　　　　　The RTO/campus realises the need for change, questions current practices and identifies possible directions.

2. **Challenging**　　　The RTO/campus is actively involved in challenging practices and establishing processes for change.

3. **Committing**　　　　sustainability is being integrated into the life of the RTO/campus and its broader community.

4. **Transforming**　　　the RTO/campus, with its community is continuously learning and living sustainable lifestyles and work practices.

These stages overlap since there is no defined barrier. An RTO/campus may be working at a particular stage in one element and a different stage in another, as well as moving between stages. Before getting to the *Starting* stage, it might be necessary to make a business case for implementing sustainability. Some ideas are included in *Attachment 1* for making a business case to the management of your organisation or to a business whose staff you are training.

The Core Indicators

The core indicators have been developed to provide an example for each section of the rubric. They are intended as a generic guide only, so your RTO/campus may need to develop other indicators if the ones provided are not relevant to your context. The interpretation of 'we' will be made by the RTO/campus. In some instances, this will mean a group of interested people who wish to guide the process. In other instances, it may mean the management or administration team or their nominees.

The following table explains the structure of the core indicators:

Stage	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
Core Indicators	The core indicators are written in the **PAST** tense i.e. can be achieved by the RTO/Campus driven by an individual, group or program.	The core indicators are written in the **PAST** tense i.e. can be achieved by the RTO/Campus in discussion with its stakeholders.	The core indicators are written in the **PAST** tense i.e. can be achieved by the RTO/Campus in partnership with its stakeholders.	The core indicators are written in the **PRESENT** tense as, at this stage, the process is ongoing and emergent. The RTO/Campus is now part of sustainable communities of practice, working together to live and work sustainably. This is not the end – it is the beginning!

Using the rubrics and indicators

The rubrics and indicators can be used in a number of ways. They are a useful learning tool for considering the essential components of education for sustainability. They can also be used to gather a range of perceptions as to where the RTO/campus is currently placed with sustainability education and identifying areas for future focus. Valuable discussions take place during the process which helps to clarify and develop a common language for the discussion of sustainability education. An initial set of indicators has been developed for consideration. RTOs/campuses are encouraged to further develop and add to the indicators to make them more specific to their context and needs. Adding examples provides evidence of addressing that section of the rubric and further information for discussion. Challenging the information and evidence through critical questioning will further enhance the richness and depth of the discussions. Using the rubrics is intended to be a regular, e.g. annual evaluation, process in order to continue to identify growth and areas for future focus.

Useful References

- *Sterling, S (2001) Sustainable Education – Re-Visioning Learning and Change, Schumacher Society Briefing no. 6, Green Books*
- *Living Sustainably, The Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability*, 2009
- *Environmental Sustainability: An Industry Response*. Industry Skills Councils
- *Skills for Sustainability Standards Framework,* National Quality Council*, 2009*
- *Education for Sustainability: Professional Learning Hub,* NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- *Culture, Practices and Strategies of the Sustaining Organisation Link to EfS. Suzanne Benn, UTS Business School*
- *A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution to Sustainability in Australia: Business and Industry Education.* Australian Government Department for the Environment and Heritage and Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES), 2005
- *The 5-Stage Sustainability Journey.* Bob Willard. *http://sustainabilityadvantage.com/2010/07/27/the-5-stage-sustainability-journey/*
- *Turnaround Leadership for Sustainability in Higher Education, Executive Summary 2012, Geoff Scott*
- *Theory U*. Otto Scharmer. http://www.ottoscharmer.com/

VET Model and Rubrics

CULTURE

Our RTO/campus develops a culture of sustainability with the wider community.
- Vision and values
- Interconnectedness
- Whole RTO/campus approach

UNDERSTANDING

Our RTO/campus nurtures the understanding, skills and values required to move with our community towards sustainability.
- *Ongoing* Learning and change
- *Continuously* Learning for sustainability
- An *ongoing* inquiry *into* sustainability *thinking and practices*

LEARNING

Our RTO's/campus' courses, learning environments and course delivery help us to achieve a more sustainable lifestyle in and with our wider community.
- Course content
- Learning environment
- Course delivery
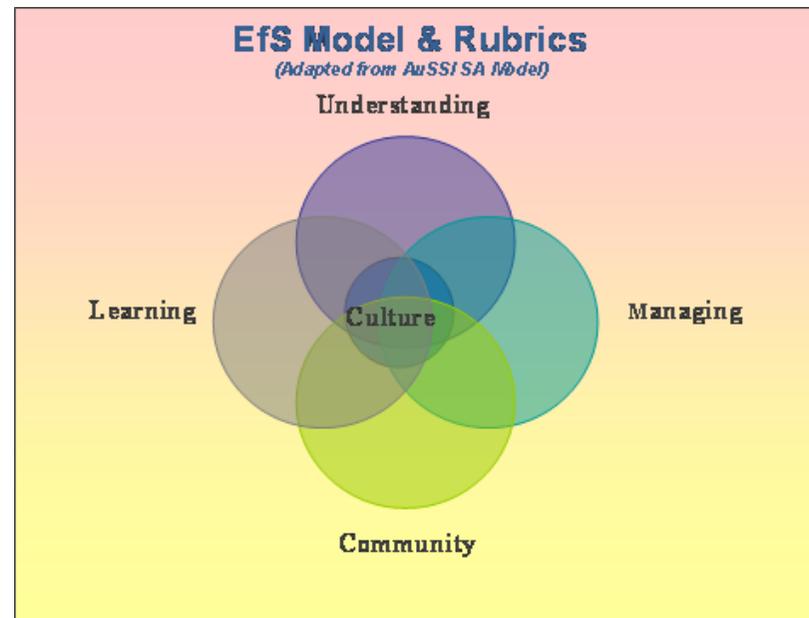
MANAGING

Our RTO's/campus' leadership, governance and management processes foster sustainability.
- Leadership
- Governance
- Planning and management

EfS Model & Rubrics
(Adapted from AuSSI SA Model)
Understanding
Learning
Culture
Managing
Community

COMMUNITY

Our RTO/campus achieves sustainability with its communities.
- Community connections
- Building capacity
- Developing partnerships

Culture: Our RTO/campus/organisation develops a culture of sustainability with the wider community.

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
1. Vision and Values	a. Our RTO's/campus' current vision and values are examined to see how sustainability can be included	b. Our RTO/campus undertakes an inclusive process to develop its sustainability vision and values	c. There is evidence of commitment to the vision and values through all areas of the RTO/campus	d. Core vision and values are practised, renewed and shared across communities to build more sustainable work practices and lifestyles
Core Indicator(s)	We have examined our RTO's/campus' current vision and values and identified how sustainability can be included.	We have developed our sustainability vision for the future and values through an inclusive process.	We have identified examples of commitment to our sustainability vision and values and discussed ways to share our achievements.	We are constantly practising and renewing our shared sustainability vision and values with our communities.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
2. Interconnect-edness	a. Our RTO/campus considers how to integrate social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability factors	b. Some of our practices reflect a balance between social, cultural, environmental and economic factors	c. Our RTO/campus places equal value on social, cultural, economic and environmental factors when making decisions	d. Through a culture of sustainability, social, cultural, environmental and economic factors are integrated
Core Indicator (s)	We have identified the different factors of sustainability and discussed how to integrate them into our work and working environment.	We have reviewed our decision making policy to include and consider all factors of sustainability when making decisions.	We have continuously aimed to include and sought to find a balance in sustainability factors when making decision.	We are continuously analysing sustainability challenges and choices from a social, economic and environmental perspective at the same time.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
3. Whole RTO, campus, organisational approach	a. Individuals consider and identify their role in making the RTO/campus more sustainable	b. Groups consider ways to coordinate and integrate their work with the RTO's/campus' sustainability vision	c. There is commitment by the whole RTO/campus to achieving the sustainability vision	d. Our RTO/campus is part of a network of sustainable communities
Core Indicator(s)	We have discussed and identified our role in making our RTO/campus more sustainable.	We have aligned our work with the RTO's/campus' sustainability vision.	We have identified the ways that individuals and groups in our RTO/campus are committed to achieving the sustainability vision.	We are, as individuals, group, RTO/campus and community members working continuously towards a sustainable future.
Examples include				

Understanding: Our organisation nurtures the understanding, skills and values required to move with our community towards sustainability.

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
1. Learning and change	a. Our RTO/campus is learning about sustainability	b. Our RTO/campus is learning to become more sustainable	c. Questioning and reform underpins change towards sustainability	d. Ongoing processes of learning and change challenge perceived knowledge and values
Core Indicator(s)	We have included discussions in all our meetings about what sustainability is and how it applies to us personally and professionally.	We have incorporated learning for sustainability into our staff training programs.	We have set up learning systems to encourage continuous learning and application of sustainability strategies such as systems thinking, managing complexity.	We are continuously challenging our views of sustainability and finding ways to improve our practices with our local and global communities.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
2. Learning for sustainability	a. Our RTO/campus recognises that sustainability is a priority	b. Our RTO/campus is practising sustainability in some aspects of training and management	c. There is commitment to ongoing learning and application of sustainability strategies	d. Our RTO/campus, with its extended communities, is an active model of sustainability learning
Core Indicator(s)	We have explored sustainability principles, the need to live in balance with nature and the global community and identified priority areas for sustainability action in our RTO/campus.	We have implemented ecologically friendly initiatives across the RTO/campus and as part of our course content and delivery e.g. water and energy savings, improving biodiversity.	We have set up systems and processes to monitor, challenge and continue to reduce our carbon footprint mindful of integrating social, cultural and economic dimensions.	We are continuously learning for sustainability with our communities and incorporating new learning into practices.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
3. A sustain-ability inquiry	a. Our RTO/campus begins an inquiry into sustainability	b. Current practices are challenged through an inquiry process	c. Inquiry processes are collaboratively developed and implemented across our RTO/campus	d. Interconnected inquiry processes underpin sustainability learning in our community
Core Indicator(s)	We have developed an inquiry question and started our inquiry into sustainability.	We have set up action research groups to challenge our current practices and monitor the results of implemented changes.	We have set up communities of practice sharing our expertise and experiences of learning for sustainability through such strategies as values clarification and critical thinking.	We are continuously questioning, researching and living more sustainable patterns of living with our local and global communities.
Examples include				

Learning: **Our courses, learning contexts & course delivery help us to achieve more sustainable lifestyles & work practices in & with our community.**

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
1. Course content	a. Our RTO/campus reviews learning and assessment strategies to identify opportunities for education for sustainability	b. Our RTO/campus includes sustainability and local community priorities in delivering qualifications	c. The whole RTO/campus is committed to integrating sustainability into course content to achieve education for sustainability outcomes	d. There is a continuous process of review and reform with the whole community to evolve sustainability in courses.
Core Indicator(s)	We have reviewed our course content and discussed the common sustainability elements across programs.	We have identified and included sustainability principles, strategies (e.g. systems and critical thinking, values clarification) and local priorities into our qualification requirements.	We have integrated sustainability literacy into all course content and assessment and are achieving sustainability education outcomes.	We are cyclically reviewing and reforming our course content and delivery with our local and global communities.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
2. Learning context	a. Our RTO/campus identifies the range of potential learning environments to support action-based learning inside and outside the organisation.	b. A range of environments support action-based learning for sustainability	c. Our RTO/campus commits to using diverse environments to take actions for sustainability	d. Sustainability and educational outcomes are achieved through action-based learning in diverse environments
Core Indicator(s)	We have identified the range of potential learning environments to support action-based learning inside and outside the RTO/campus.	We have identified a range of learning environments (including our organisation) in our course content and delivery where students can engage with real problems or tasks.	We have used a diverse range of learning environments to support learning and action for sustainability.	We are continuously seeking and using diverse learning environments and opportunities to achieve action-based sustainability and learning outcomes with local and global communities.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
3. Course delivery	a. Our RTO/campus reflects on current delivery strategies and identifies the value of student participation in change processes	b. Educators and learners design and engage actively with sustainability experiences	c. Sustainability values, behaviours and skills are modelled in all course delivery to achieve effective outcomes	d. A learning community collectively leads sustainable change
Core Indicator(s)	We have discussed our current delivery practices and identified ways to improve student inclusion and participation.	We have started to engage students in improving the sustainability practices of the RTO/campus and/or workplace in culturally appropriate ways.	We have implemented systems to evaluate the changes in sustainability values, behaviours and skills and implement identified initiatives.	We are continuously learning and sharing best practices in sustainable living with local and global communities.
Examples include				

Community: **Our RTO/campus/organisation achieves sustainability with its stakeholders**

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
1. Community connections	a. Our RTO/campus recognises the need to connect with our staff and students	b. Our RTO/campus actively builds connections with a broader range of stakeholders	c. Connections with stakeholders and communities are supported, renewed and extended to achieve sustainability outcomes	d. The RTO/campus and its partners are leading in and living sustainable work practices and lifestyles
Core Indicator(s)	We have identified the benefits of staff and students working collaboratively across the RTO/campus.	We have set up and are using multiple lines of two-way communication with more stakeholders.	We have promoted open communication and reciprocal relationships with all stakeholders through such activities as open days, network meetings, and social media.	We are committed to national and international covenants and agreements to encourage fair trade, increase resource efficiency and reduce the ecological impacts of products and services.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
2. Building capacity	a. There is a discussion with the staff and students about learning and working together to achieve sustainability	b. Opportunities are provided to develop skills, understandings and values for sustainability with stakeholders	c. Stakeholders and the community commit to increase their capacity to live more sustainably	d. Whole communities continuously increase their capacity to work and live sustainably
Core Indicator(s)	We have discussed the value of working together to effectively move towards sustainable behaviours with our staff and students.	We have provided a number of opportunities for stakeholders to develop skills, understandings and values for sustainability (e.g. workshops, newsletter articles, events, meetings).	We have facilitated formal and informal networks to encourage learners to take control of the flexibility and relevance of their learning and practices for sustainability.	We are continuously developing the confidence and skills to deal with complexity and uncertainty as we challenge, share, initiate and advocate for sustainability practices.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
3. Developing partnerships and networks	a. The role of the staff and students as contributors to sustainability is investigated	b. Our RTO/campus and stakeholders work in partnership to identify sustainability priorities & opportunities	c. Partnerships are formalised and integrated into the vision for sustainability	d. Partners nurture relationships and interconnections through living sustainably
Core Indicator(s)	We have surveyed staff and students to identify individual and group interests and support for the RTO's/campus' shift to become more sustainable.	We have met with a range of stake-holders and identified sustainability priorities and opportunities which have been incorporated into a sustainability action plan.	We have formalised partnerships to share the sustainability vision, increasing program effectiveness, minimising duplication and maximising the efficient use of resources.	We are continuously building and nurturing relationships in advancing our sustainable working and living practices.
Examples include				

Managing: **Our RTO's/campus' leadership, governance and management processes foster sustainability as a priority**

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
1. Leadership	a. Our RTO/campus recognises sustainability as a democratic process within which everyone can demonstrate personal leadership	b. Opportunities to lead projects and initiatives are provided to students, staff and the wider community	c. All participants recognise their role and participate in sustainability initiatives and practices	d. All participants are able to be lead initiatives and practices in achieving sustainability
Core Indicator(s)	We have discussed leadership approaches (such as adaptive, stewardship and transformative) and how they can empower or depower people in moving towards sustainability.	We have encouraged and supported students, staff and the wider community to action their areas of interest in sustainability.	We have developed a range of projects to encourage broad participation in innovative, sustainability practices.	We are demonstrating transformational leadership through building positive relationships, challenging the status quo and encouraging creative options.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
2. Governance	a. The need for sustainability is introduced and discussed within governance structures	b. There is formal agreement to integrate sustainability into the RTO's/campus' priorities and directions	c. Governance structures support and develop sustainability as a priority	d. A culture of sustainability underpins all governance decisions
Core Indicator(s)	We have introduced and discussed the need for sustainability across the RTO /campus and in course content and delivery in different levels of governance.	We have formally agreed to integrate sustainability into our priorities and directions for the planning cycle.	We have prioritised sustainability in our hiring, promotional systems and all meeting agendas.	We are a dynamic and ecologically responsible part of a growing movement to become a sustainable local and global community.
Examples include				

Stage →	Starting	Challenging	Committing	Transforming
3. Planning and management	a. Our RTO/campus brings together information to support the decision to make sustainability a priority	b. A collaboratively developed management plan guides the implementation of sustainability	c. Sustainability data informs an ongoing cycle of planning, review and management action	d. Planning and management processes continuously improve sustainability
Core Indicator(s)	We have assessed our RTO/campus to gather information about our current sustainability practices and discussed the benefits of making sustainability a priority.	We have developed a cyclic, sustainability action plan which guides us towards our vision through identified priorities.	We have examined and identified useful sustainability tools (such as ISO 14001, Life Cycle Assessment, Cradle to Cradle design) to measure and reduce our carbon footprint.	We are continuously updating processes for evaluating our shifts in sustainability thinking.
Examples include				

Attachment 1:

Starting Ideas for Making a Business Case for implementing sustainability in a business or RTO

In a climate of constant change, RTOs and Businesses have multiple competing priorities and are often under pressure. The first step in gaining support for implementing Sustainability in an organisation involves making a sound business case, whether to management, to staff or both.

Here are some suggestions for highlighting the benefits of implementing sustainability in your organisation:

- Adds to RTO/organisational capacity to meet industry needs and demand for relevant workforce development
- Enables operational efficiencies and savings
- Supports risk management and compliance in related areas
- Strengthens the RTO/organisational brand and market position
- Demonstrates initiative and leadership
- Complements product and service innovation
- Can provide openings to new markets leading to revenue growth
- Gains client appeal, community and stakeholder acceptance
- Paves the way for new partnerships and relationships
- Facilitates better management of resources, supply and waste
- Can contribute to staff retention, commitment and improved performance
- Protects natural capital and reduces carbon emissions
- Essential for remaining competitive and for building future success
- Key to the RTO/organisational growth strategy

According to a Report[1] that mapped the performance of companies during the GFC, organisations that were focussed on environmental sustainability, outperformed their peers. An examination of high performing companies on the stock market today reveals that green organisations are moving ahead.

The findings of a 2011 global executive study[2] show that successful companies that embrace sustainability do the following:

- Move early, even if information is incomplete;
- Balance broad long term vision with short term gains;
- Drive sustainability both top down and bottom up;
- Integrate sustainability across the organisation;
- Measure everything, since what gets measured gets done;
- Value intangible benefits seriously without engaging in tokenism or Greenwash;
- They are authentic and transparent, both internally and externally.

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[1] A.T. Kearney, 2009. *Green Winners: The Performance of Sustainability-Focused Companies in the Financial Crisis.*

[2] Findings from the S*ustainability and Innovation Global Executive Study and Research Project.* MIT Sloan Management Review and the Boston Consulting Group, December 2011.