Sustainability Reporting and Universities

REPORTING FRAMEWORKS AND THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ERIN UPFOLD

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Executive Summary

Over the last few decades, sustainability reporting has become an increasingly common practise amongst companies - who now report on their environmental, social and governance (ESG) impacts. However, this trend has not been seen in higher education institutions such as universities – albeit many universities have set sustainability related policies, targets, and goals. Universities may be lagging behind companies in terms of reporting due to less external pressure to do so, and a lack of reporting frameworks that are suited to the differing context of universities. The Australian National University is one of the many universities that does not publicly report on its sustainability impacts, however, as it broadens its sustainability, the Australian National University would like to identify a suitable sustainability reporting framework to assist it in making sustainability disclosures. As such, this report will provide insight into what (if any) sustainability frameworks may be suited to the Australian National Universitiy. This report provides the Australian National University with factors it may consider before selecting a framework, such as a materiality assessment, carbon accounting software and university rankings methodology. Additionally, the report identifies the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) as the most used frameworks amongst universities and provides an analysis of the two. Following the analysis, it was recommended that the STARS framework would be most suited to the Australian National University, given its widespread use internationally and its specific design for universities.

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Background

Sustainability reporting refers to a "form of non-financial reporting that enables companies to convey their progress toward goals on a variety of sustainability parameters" (Good Ecological Potential, 2023) –including but not limited to, the disclosure of information regarding environmental, social and governance (ESG) impacts and targets by organisations.

Sustainability reporting has become increasingly important for organisations as the expectations of stakeholders evolve. Broadly, stakeholders (such as governments, shareholders, suppliers, employees, customers, and the media) expect organisations to report beyond the legal minimum- i.e., annual reports and financial reports, to produce their own ESG reports. This comes as stand-alone, holistic ESG reports will enhance the transparency and accountability of an organisation and its impacts (whether positive or negative) and assist stakeholders in making decisions about the level of interaction they are prepared to have with an organisation.

Over the last few decades sustainability reporting has increased - with not only more organisations reporting on ESG but the level of detail in their reporting improving/increasing. In 2002 only 18% of the N100 (i.e., worldwide sample of top 100 countries by revenue from 58 countries etc) reported on sustainability whereas 79% of the N100 report on sustainability as of 2022 (KPMG, 2023). In Australia, a survey conducted in 2020 found that 97% of Australia's top companies (as measured by revenue) provide sustainability reports, "outperforming global peers" (KPMG, 2022).

Hundreds of sustainability frameworks (created by various bodies and institutions) exist to aid organisations in disclosing/reporting on sustainability related information. Some frameworks are solely focused on environmental disclosures, some tailor sustainability to financial disclosures and many encompass all ESG aspects. Notwithstanding the guidance they provide, the abundance of frameworks often sees organisations struggle to decide and then understand which frameworks are the most appropriate for them to use.

Whilst for many companies (particularly those in the mining and financial sectors), there has been a significant uptake in sustainability reporting over recent decades, universities (and other higher education institution) have not shared the same trends. For example, of the 43 universities in Australia only 37% of these universities provide a stand-alone sustainability report, with the quality of these reports varying significantly (see Appendix A). Notwithstanding a lack of stand-alone reporting, most universities in Australia do observe dedicated sustainability goals, targets, plans and policies which are often incorporated into annual reports.

The Australian National University (ANU) is one of the many Australian universities that does not produce a stand-alone sustainability report. Establishing the ANU Below Zero team in 2020, the university has only recently seen the development of environmental sustainability targets (e.g., reaching below zero by 2030), and the collection of sustainability data - particularly that related to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

Given its recent inception, the Below Zero initiative has so far adopted a narrower approach to ESG – focusing largely on environmental impacts etc. However, the university has positioned itself to broaden this approach over time (becoming more holistic), recently forming an official Sustainability Division (2023), of which the Below Zero is now subset to.

As the ANU begins to broaden the scope of its ESG initiatives, the adoption of a suitable sustainability reporting framework will allow the ANU to produce suitable sustainability reports and making broader ESG disclosures. Though the university is some time away from producing such reports, the identification of a suitable reporting framework may be beneficial in helping inform the ANU of appropriate targets and goals as it evolves its approach, as well as identifying gaps in ESG related current data collection etc.

Employing a sustainability framework to assist in reporting is important for universities such as the ANU, given the growing expectations of a broad group stakeholders which is now reflected by university rankings over the last few years – with rankings such as the QS World Ranking and the Times Higher Education Rankings now assessing university sustainability responses either separately or as part of an organisation's overall performance. It is noted that these rankings hold much significance for universities as they are important in attracting both domestic and international students, attracting and retaining staff who deliver high quality education, and finally, in obtaining funding from governments and potential investors.

Given the above information, this report will provide an outline of the various factors ANU needs to consider prior to selecting a reporting framework, an in-depth comparison of relevant frameworks and a recommendation regarding which framework (if any), would be most suitable or beneficial to the ANU given its current standing.

Preliminary Research

Universities and Reporting

Despite the few studies and literature available regarding higher education institutions (HEI) and sustainability reporting, it is important to first investigate why universities are less inclined to report on sustainability than companies.

Sustainability reporting is traditionally a voluntary practise - albeit some legislation exists regarding specific aspects related to ESG (such as modern slavery or money laundering). Traditionally, voluntary reporting allows organisations have almost complete discretion over whether or not ESG related information is disclosed (publicly) – and the extent to which this is done.

Given this, many organisations tend to be reactive in their reporting - such as responding to stakeholder pressures or ensuring that they are neither too far advanced or behind the reporting of others in their sectors. As such, it can be discerned that some organisations, industries, and sectors are likely to be subject to greater scrutiny or pressure to report than others (i.e., universities). For instance, highly regulated financial institutions such as banks are more likely to report on social and governance activities, whilst mining companies are likely to see more pressure to report on environmental impacts/activities.

It should be noted that legislation around sustainability reporting is expected to become more prominent over the coming years (something the ANU should carefully consider). For example, in January 2023 the European Union (EU) announced that as of 2024, new laws will require all large and listed companies to "disclose information on what they see as the risks and opportunities arising from social

and environmental issues, and on the impact of their activities on people and the environment" (European Commission, 2023).

Traditionally, reporting frameworks are developed to accommodate corporations or target specific sectors. Higher education institutions are scarcely targeted, as such most frameworks are not "suitable to use in the context of universities" (Gamage & Siculli, 2017).

This comes as universities are fundamentally different, requiring the consideration of additional components to sustainability – i.e., where most organisations only consider financial/economic, social, governance and environmental impacts, universities should also consider education (Haupt et al., 2017). Figure 1 visual depicts the facets of sustainability universities need to consider.

Materiality

With this additional component to sustainability universities have significantly different material impacts when compared to other organisations/institutions – i.e., where materiality "is the principle of defining the…topics that matter most to your business and your stakeholders" (KPMG, 2017). Figure 1 provides a few examples of material topics under each aspect of sustainability for universities.





Whilst many sustainability frameworks aid organisations in identifying the topics under ESG that are most relevant to organisations, and how they may be disclosed, the unique position of the ANU as a university makes conducting a materiality assessment individually particularly important.

Materiality assessments traditionally involve the following steps – as identified in an NYU report (NYU Stern School of Business , 2019):

- 1. Identifying key issues and categorising these issues to relevant stakeholder groups
- 2. Collecting data from internal and external stakeholders.
- 3. Mapping and prioritising these issues. See Appendix B
- 4. Aligning these issues with management and business vision.

Data Collection

Materiality assessments are beneficial in identifying and prioritising the collection of data related to sustainability by the university. The ANU has not yet begun a comprehensive collection of sustainability data. At present, a large portion of data collection is centred around emissions. The ANU currently collects receipts and stores data in manual spreadsheets. Manual data entry can be time consuming and subject to human error. As such, the ANU may consider utilising carbon accounting software that can assist in automating data, aid in setting goals and targets, displaying data visually on a customisable dashboard and assist in producing auditable reports etc (See Appendix C for more information regarding data collection and software).

Rankings

The Times Higher Education (THE) Ranking, and the QS World Ranking assess and rank over 1400 universities (each) based on varying criteria. The Australian National University is ranked 62nd on THE Ranking and 30th on the QS World Ranking as of 2023 against overall performance. The differing methodology used by the two rankings results in the ANU placing differently in each instance.

As of 2023, both the QS Rankings and THE Rankings ranked and assessed universities on their sustainability performance separately from overall performance. The ANU ranked 72nd on the QS rankings but did not opt to be ranked by the THE impact (sustainability) rankings.

The ANU should consider the methodology of both the QS World Rankings and the Times Higher Education Rankings when considering sustainability frameworks, which should allow the ANU to meet all criteria for the rankings.

<u>QS World Rankings</u>

First looking at the QS World Rankings. In 2023, sustainability rankings were performed separately from overall rankings. To be eligible for this particular ranking universities had to (1) show commitment to mitigate the climate crisis – i.e., evidence of policy or strategy etc, and (2) show evidence of "research culture" aligned with the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – see Appendix D for full list of SDGs.

The ranking was split between social and environmental impacts (with each having a weighting of 50%) (Quacquarelli Symonds Rankings, 2023). Each impact is assessed on a number of "performance lenses", as shown in the table below. A number of these performance lenses are based on various indexes or the SDGs - assessing institutions research on several SDGs. Each impact and its subsequent performances lenses are listed in the below table (figure 2)

Social Impact	Environmental Impact
Equality	Sustainable Institutions
Knowledge Exchange	Sustainable Education
Employability and Opportunities	Sustainable Research
Impact of Education	
Quality of Life	

Figure 2- QS World Ranking Impacts and Performance lenses

Turning to a few of the lenses under environmental impacts. The *sustainable institutions* metric considers whether institutions report on their emissions, energy, and water usage. This particular metric is likely to assist in encouraging universities to disclose or report on information related to environmental sustainability. Under the same lens, another metric assesses whether institutions are a member of the following alliances:

- 1. U7 Alliance
- 2. International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN)
- 3. Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI)
- 4. International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU)

At present, the ANU is only a member of the U7 Alliance and IARU. Alliances hold value for universities as they highlight commitment to sustainability targets and often allow universities to collaborate with one another. Notwithstanding this, alliances "remain a statement of intent" and universities that do not actively look to mitigate their sustainability impacts run the risk of "greenwashing" (Gamage & Siculli, 2017).

The ANU is actively looking to meet another metric titled "race to zero commitment". This particular metric requires universities to have published a plan or statement regarding their intention to commit to zero (emissions), with scores varying depending on the target date for achieving this. The ANU has released statements regarding goals to achieve both net zero and below zero by 2030 (for emissions).

As of 2024, the QS World Ranking will begin including the sustainability performance of universities in its overall rankings – rather than doing so separately. This alters the overall weighting of its criteria as shown in figure 3, however, the methodology for this component will remain unchanged and environmental impacts (with each having a weighting of 50%) (Quacquarelli Symonds Rankings , 2023).

Academic Reputation	30%
Employer Reputation	15%
Faculty Student Ratio	10%
Citations per Faculty	20%
International Faculty Ratio	5%
International Student Ratio	5%
International Research Network	5%
Employment Outcomes	5%
Sustainability	5%

Figure 3- QS World Ranking Criteria 2024

Time Higher Education Ranking

Whilst the QS World Ranking does incorporate SDGs elements into its criteria, the THE Impact Rankings are designed solely around the SDGs.

Evistainability To be eligible for the ranking, universities must (as a minimum) provide data on SDG 17, i.e., *Partnership for the Goals*, and three additional SDGs (of the remaining 16). This means that institutions can be scored and ranked based on different sets of SDGs.

A Universities overall score is calculated on its SDG 17 score, which holds a weighting of 22% and its top three additional SDGs, each holding a weighting of 26%. Metrics vary across each goal, however, each will require that (a) submitted data come from a particular time frame, and (b) have research metric requirements. Take for example SDG 10, i.e., *reduced inequalities*, organisations are assessed on the number of publications related to the goal, the proportion of papers in the top 10% of journals as defined by Citescore, the proportion of international students from low- or middle-income countries, and the percentage of students and staff with disabilities etc (Times Higher Education Ranking, 2022).

Framework Analysis

As noted previously, there are over 600 frameworks that an organisation may use to assist them in reporting on sustainability (see Appendix E). However, research indicates that there are two frameworks most suitable to higher education institutions, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS).

The STARS framework, launched in 2010, was specifically developed for higher education institutions (universities and colleges), with over 1000 institutions registered to use the reporting tool and roughly 600 institutions officially publishing reports under the framework as of 2023 (AASHE, 2023). The

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STARS Framework allows Universities to report under 5 topics (credits) with the option of being ranked – the five topics are as follows; Institutional Characteristics, Academics, Engagement, Operations, Planning and Administration, Innovation and Leadership. Each topic requires universities to disclose information related to the environment, social, economic, governance and educational of the university.

In contrast, the GRI, developed in 1997, is the world's most well-known sustainability reporting tool, and is widely used by a range of organisations across several sectors. Whilst not specifically designed for use by universities, the GRI may be tailored to accommodate a university's educational needs. In 2013 thirty-three universities were recorded as using the GRI internationally (Gamage & Siculli, 2017).

Competitors

With over 1000 universities using STARS to report on their sustainability impacts, this particular framework appears to have a strong presence globally, particularly in America. In comparison, of the Australian universities that publicly disclose which framework they utilise (See Appendix F), the GRI would appear to have a stronger presence across domestic universities.

Here it is important to consider how the ANU looks to position itself. If internationally, STARS is the dominant framework, and the ANU is positioned as an international research university, the ANU could take the opportunity to gain an advantage over other domestic universities – differentiating its approach and becoming a leading university for sustainability reporting in Australia. Whether or not the university chooses to use STARS or the GRI, it is important to consider that the framework is not wholly responsible for the university's success. Universities must take proactive and tangible steps to improve its position as a sustainable university.

The Australian universities that do use STARS have only begun doing so recently. The University of Tasmania and the University of Queensland for instance released their first report under STARS in 2020, while the University of Sydney submitted its first report under STARS in 2021 (AASHE, 2023).

Interestingly, several other Australian universities have registered to use the STARS reporting tool but have not officially submitted data under the framework. These universities are as follows:

- The University of Adelaide
- Macquarie University
- The University of Melbourne
- UNSW Sydney
- University of Western Australia
- University of Southern Queensland
- Queensland University of Technology

Perhaps many of these universities may begin to officially report under the framework in the coming years – a trend the ANU should remain aware of. As of 2023, the UNSW Sydney, the University of Sydney and the University of Adelaide are the leading universities for sustainability in Australia according to the QS World Rankings. Western Sydney University ranks the best amongst Australian universities for sustainability on the THE rankings.

From an international perspective, several world-renowned universities use the STARS Framework. Stanford University and Cornell University began utilising the framework in 2012, Yale University began reporting under the framework in 2011 and UC Berkeley, a university ranked best in the world

for sustainability by the QS World Rankings in 2023, began using the framework in 2018 (AASHE, 2023).

In contrast, the GRI is officially reported under by the following Australian universities; Monash University, RMIT University and Melbourne University. This brings about an interesting consideration, why is the University of Melbourne registered under STARS if it officially reports using the GRI? Whilst the University of Melbourne has not publicly commented on its registration of STARS, other GRI reporting trends may be observed.

Between 2010-2013 La Trobe University reported using the GRI. However, the university stopped reporting under the framework in 2014 and has not provided an official sustainability report since (La Trobe University, 2023). The university is currently developing a new sustainability plan, which might provide insight into their next steps regarding reporting under sustainability frameworks.

Interestingly the UNSW Sydney used to publish sustainability reports that stated their alignment with the GRI up until 2018, whilst still producing reports, the university no longer notes an official framework. If ANU looks to implement the GRI, it may be recommended that they meet with these universities first to discuss their experiences using the GRI – perhaps the GRI did not suit the universities needs or the university needed to improve its own internal structures.

Given this information it may be deduced that STARS has much more momentum behind it than the GRI, whose support amongst universities appears to be dwindling. Much of STARS support has appeared to occur in recent years, with a large portion of universities publishing their first report under the framework in 2018

STARS Analysis

STARS is a "transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance" (AASHE, 2023). The framework was founded by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and was designed by tertiary education institutions to provide a standard framework for universities.

Universities that submit reports for rating and receive a platinum, gold, silver or bronze rating based on their ability to meet the reporting criteria/credits across five overall categories. Recognition of these ratings are valid for three years, although institutions may continue to submit reports and update ratings annually.

Reporting

As noted earlier, STARS requires universities to report activities across five areas: academics, operations, engagement, planning and administration, and innovation and leadership. Each of these categories is broken down into a number of subcategories, all of which are highlighted in the below table (Figure 4).

Academics	Operations	Engagement	Planning and Administration	Innovation and Leadership
-Curriculum	-Air & Climate	-Campus	-Coordination & Planning	-Exemplary Practise
-Research	-Buildings	Engagement	-Diversity & Affordability	-Innovation
	-Energy	-Public Engagement	-Investment & Finance	
	-Food & Dining		-Wellbeing & Work	

Figure 4- STARS Reporting Categories and Subcategories

-Grounds		
-Purchasing		
-Transport		
-Waste		
-Water		

Each subcategory has a number of credits by which universities can earn points. Take for example the Air & Climate subcategory of Operations. Universities can receive up to 3 credits under the topic of *Emissions inventory disclosure* and up to 8 points under the topic *Green House Gas* (AASHE, 2022).

For Emissions Inventory, each university must have completed an inventory of its scope 1 and 2 emissions and may also include scope 3 emissions from a number of sources *Emissions* (STARS, 2023). STARS provides universities with several forms, templates and tracking sheets for each subcategory and its metrics, including GHG emissions calculation tools and energy calculators.

Institutions may also use STARS "to measure and report on its contributions to the SDGs" (STARS, 2023). Both STARS and the SDGs share "similar intent and scope", with a number of STARS metrics aligning with specific SDGs. STARS provides universities with academic course inventory sheets that match to SDGs – this may be particularly useful when considering the THE Rankings (see Appendix G).

Eligibility and Cost

Any university or other educational institution may utilise STARS. There are two levels of access to STARS. (1) Basic Access, which allows universities to access the reporting tool and produce an unscored published report at no cost or (2) Full Access, which sees universities submit a report for scoring which is then published and rated.

Full Access does require that universities pay a subscription fee, however, this appears to be relatively inexpensive (i.e., less than \$3,000 AUD in first years of subscription), with discounts applied to those universities that are members of AASHE or members of Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) (see Appendix H). With these two differing memberships in mind, the STARS reporting process is visualised in figure 5.

Figure 5- STARS Reporting Process.

STARS Reporting Process



Steps in green only available with a STARS subscription.

Other Aspects of STARS

Institutions that are members of AASHE or STARS may also have access to several features. This includes a benchmarking tool that allows universities to look at the performance of other institutions reporting on STARS across specific and general indicators. AASHE members have access to a forum by which members can converse, collaborate, attend virtual events and share documents/ideas etc (see **Appendix I**).

Studies on STARS

A 2011 study on STARS asked a number of Universities whether "STARS would be more credible

if it required data to be verified", at the time 43.2% respondents agreed, highlighting the issue of data validity and accuracy (Kaplan, 2011). To mitigate these issues, STARS provides universities with a review template, recommends they conduct an internal review or external audit before submission, and review of reports provided to STARS after submission. Whilst verified data would likely be beneficial to both the framework and its participants, it should be noted that this issue is not exclusive to STARS, with frameworks such as the GRI also failing to require data verification.

SWOT

The above analysis of STARS may be applied to a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats SWOT) table, as shown below.

Streng	gths	Weakness
-	Tailored to the needs of universities.	- Data not formally verified.
-	Strong international presence	- Direct Financial Cost for Full Access to
-	Clear, accessible and easy to use.	STARS
-	Transparent – all data published	
Onno	rtunities	Threats
Obbo	tumitics	
-	Global Benchmarking	- Not widely recognised beyond the HEI
- -	Global Benchmarking Recognition of STARS Rating	 Not widely recognised beyond the HEI sector – i.e., not the same recognition as
- - -	Global Benchmarking Recognition of STARS Rating Opportunity to share resources with	 Not widely recognised beyond the HEI sector – i.e., not the same recognition as GRI
- - -	Global Benchmarking Recognition of STARS Rating Opportunity to share resources with other universities	 Not widely recognised beyond the HEI sector – i.e., not the same recognition as GRI Not as compatible with Carbon

GRI Analysis

The GRI is the most widely used voluntary self-reporting sustainability framework in the world. Used by more than 10,000 companies from a range of industries and sectors, the GRI offers a "modular system" to report, comprising of three series of standards – i.e., the *Universal Standards*, the *Sector Standards*, and the *Topic Standards* (Gamage & Siculli, 2017). It should be noted that there is no direct cost to using the GRI.

Comparability, Standardisation and Flexibility

Whilst designed to be used in conjunction with one another, organisations may report in accordance with any standard individually or report using parts of selected standards content. The flexibility or discretion offered by the GRI may at first glance be considered beneficial to organisations. However, this aspect has long been considered a problem that diminishes the value delivered by the framework to organisations/institutions (Bonatxea, et al., 2021).

By allowing organisations to "pick and choose" what content they wish to disclose, there is little standardisation and comparability offered by the GRI. For stakeholders, it can become difficult to discern how companies compare with one another, when there is no standardisation in how companies report using the GRI. This limits opportunities to benchmark organisations against each other, diminishing accountability and subsequently increasing the opportunity to "greenwash" – as organisations can choose to disclose information only relating to its positive impacts, rather than disclosing information related to its risks.

Breakdown of Standards

Now analysing the three GRI standards (i.e., Universal Standards, Sector Standards, Topic Standards)

The <u>Universal Standards</u> apply to "all organisations". This standard may be divided into three sections: GRI 1, GRI 2 and GRI 3. GRI 1 (known as Foundation 2021), outlines the purpose, structure and requirements of reporting using the GRI and "explains key concepts for sustainability reporting". GRI 2, known as General Disclosures 2021, provides organisations with information regarding what information may be disclosed about the organisation itself.

GRI 3, known as Material Topics 2021, provides organisations with a guide to assist in determining its material topics/impacts and how to report on its management of these impacts. Whether or not the ANU chooses to report on the GRI, referencing the GRI 3 or reading the document available on the standard may be useful in conducting its own materiality assessment.

The <u>Sector Standards</u> "provide information for organisations about their likely material topics". These standards are relatively new, with the GRI aiming to provide sector standards across 40 sectors, including education services. Whilst this might appear to be an exciting opportunity for universities, these have not yet been developed, with the GRI focusing on priority sectors such as oil and gas or agriculture first. With education services appearing at the bottom of the list (in terms of prioritisation) these standards are unlikely to be published in the next five years – with the some of the current priority sector not expecting publications until 2026 or 2027.

The <u>Topic Standards</u> "contain disclosures for the organization to report information about its impacts in relation to particular topics". The topics are divided into three series; The 200 series focuses on economic impacts; the 300 series focuses on environmental impacts and the 400 series focuses on social impacts – i.e., these topics include disclosures related to community impact, waste, and emissions etc. Evidently, there is no direct inclusion of that additional sustainability component for universities – i.e., education, within these topic standards. This means that universities will have to work to modify these standards to its needs separately.

GRI and Universities

From the available reports published by universities that do or have reported using the GRI, it would appear that most universities report using the Topic Standards, or by using the guidelines provided in GRI 3 – Material Topics, under the Universal Standards. UNSW Sydney's 2018 Sustainability report included the following statement:

Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) G3 Reporting Guidelines, disclosure elements and indicators have informed the development of this report.

Evidently, only "elements" of the GRI are used. The fragmentation of reporting in using the GRI can become confusing and time consuming for universities, brining into question the suitability of the GRI to universities.

A study conducted on the suitability of the GRI for universities (which used a sample of European universities) found that only 22.4% and 25.5% of the economic and social series (under the Topic Standards) were found to be suitable by HEIs to account for their activity "and while the environmental standards are more diverse, even their usage is less than 38%" (Bonatxea, et al., 2021).

Other Aspects of the GRI

One of the benefits of the GRI, that the ANU may like to consider, is the widespread popularity and recognition of the framework. With such a large pool of organisations using the framework, there would be a number of ancillary benefits in that (a) many stakeholders are likely to recognise the framework and may have positive associations with it, which may benefit the subsequent perception of the ANU and (b) some carbon accounting software tools recognise the framework, and may assist in exporting data to the standards (c) if the ANU were to individually seek verification and audit its data or reports that are in line with the framework, most organisations, such as the Big 4, would have preference to and experience with the framework.

<u>GRI</u>

The above discussion may be summarised into the below Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats SWOT) table.

Strengths	Weakness
- Dominant Framework across sector	rs– - Not formally verified.
widely used and well known.	- Not specifically designed for universities
- Stronger domestic presence	- will require tailoring to university needs
- Offers online courses to aid	
organisations in using the standards	S
Opportunities	Threats
- Will release sector standards for	- Not as widely used by universities –
educational institutions within the r	next appears to be losing momentum
decade	

Recommendation

With the above analysis in mind, recommendations may be made to the Australian National University, regarding its future sustainability reporting.

Firstly, it is recommended that the Australian National University undertake a number of steps before officially selecting a framework such as (a) first focusing on the development of its sustainability division and broadening its approach (b) carefully considering its own needs as a university (in the context of Australia), by conducting a materiality assessment individually, (c) considering how it may intend on collecting data and (d) carefully observing sustainability reporting trends in other universities.

Secondly, with an understanding of the existing frameworks (that have been used by other universities) it is recommended that the ANU consider the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) framework as the most suitable framework for the university to report on and measure its sustainability related disclosures. As a framework designed by tertiary education institutions for universities, the framework is tailored to specific institutional needs, is comprehensive and relatively easy to understand, inexpensive and provides the university with an opportunity to benchmark itself against competitors globally.

Finally, in the instance that the ANU would like to consider the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) as an avenue for future sustainability reporting, it is recommended that members of the Below Zero team

meet with universities such as La Trobe or UNSW Sydney to gain insight into their experiences using the framework first, to assist in making the most informed decision.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Research was conducted to determine how many universities in Australia released stand-alone sustainability reports within the last five years (2018-2023). Report published before this period were not accepted, but the year of last publication was provided. Accepted reports vary in length and quality – with some reports tailored to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals or focusing largely on one ESG aspect (mainly environmental or social). Sustainability plans, statements of intents, missions, goals, information included in annual reports or on websites were not included. Deakin Universities video sustainability report was accepted.

University Name	Sustainability Report	Last Published
Australian Catholic University	Yes	2021
Avondale University	No	
Australian National University	No	
Bond University	No	
Central Queensland University	Yes	2022
Carnegie Mellon University	No	
Charles Darwin University	No	
Charles Stuart University	Yes	2020
Curtin University	No	
Deakin	Yes - in video format	2022
Edith Cowan University	Yes	2020
Federation University	No	
Flinders University	No	
Griffith	Yes	
James Cook University	No	
La Trobe University	No	2013
Macquarie University	No	
Monash University	Yes	2018
Murdoch University	No	
The University of Queensland	No	2012
RMIT University	Yes	2021
Southern Cross University		
Swinburn University	No	
Torrens University	Yes	2021
Adelaide	No	
University of Canberra	No	
University of Divinity	No	
University of Melbourne	Yes	2021
University of New England	No	
University of New South Wales	Yes	2021
University of Newcastle	Yes	2022
University of Notre Dame Australia	No	
Queensland University of Technology	No	
University of South Australia	No	

University of Southern Queensland	No	
University of the Sunshine Coast	No	
University of Sydney	yes	2021
University of Tasmania	No	
University of Technology Sydney	Yes	2021
The University of Western Australia	No	
University of Wollongong	Yes	2021
Victoria University	Yes	2021
Western Sydney University	Yes	2021

Appendix B

Two Materiality Maps are shown below, the first shows topics relevant to the ANU mapped to the UNs Sustainable Development Goals and the second to stakeholders. For more context/methodology regarding the two please see the following link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18jZFsrJzqr4tZUXbGMNhQ8qvkbMVZTBfhFsLzS WQfqo/edit?usp=sharing

	1 POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 NOUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW MATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE JUSTICE AND STRONG	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GDALS
	<i>Ň</i> ∗ŧŧŧ	····	-w/•		ę	Ø		1		I €►				$\overline{\mathbf{x}}$	<u></u>		*
Buildings							*		*		*	*					
GHG Emissions			*				*						*				
Air Quality							*				*	*	*				
Energy Mangement							*				*	*	*				
Water			*			*					*	*	*	*			
Waste Management							*					*	*	*	*		
Biodiversity												*	*	*	*		
Human rights and Community Relations	*			*	*			*		*						*	*
Student Wellness and Safety			*													*	*
Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion				*	*			*		*						*	
Data Security and Privacy																*	
Access and Affordability	*			*	*					*							
Admissions										*							
Quality of Education & Gainful Employment	*			*	*			*		*							
Marketing and Recruiting Practises					*					*		*					
Labour Practises	*		*		*			*		*							
Recruitment and Retention	*		*		*			*		*						*	
Product Design & Lifecycle Management												*					
Materials Sourcing & Efficiency	*						*		*	*		*	*				*
Supply Chain Management	*									*		*					*
Board Composition					*					*						*	
Competitive Behavior									*			*				*	
Management of the Legal & Regulatory Environment																*	
International Activities			*		*						*	*				*	



Importance to the ANU

Appendix C

For the purpose of the internship, a table was created outlining a number of carbon accounting software platforms that the ANU could consider using. See the following link to view this table: Carbon Accounting Software Platforms.xlsx

For information regarding data verification and software platforms see the following link: <u>u7295393_Weekly Report 2.docx</u>

And for information regarding the challenges of data collection and sustainability reporting see the following link: Weekly Task 6.docx

Appendix D

In 2015 the United Nation developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals to serve as a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future". They are as follows:

- SDG 1 No Poverty
- SDG 2 Zero Hunger
- SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being
- SDG 4 Quality Education
- SDG 5 Gender Equality
- SDG 6- Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities

- SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13 Climate Action
- SDG 14 Life Below Water
- SDG 15 Life on Land
- SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

Appendix E

Over the course of the internship, a number of sustainability reporting frameworks, consolidated frameworks, alliances and goals were explored. See the following link to view an outline of these frameworks in a table format:

Guide to Sustainability Frameworks.xlsx

Appendix F

It should be noted that whilst many universities do produce sustainability reports globally, not all universities that publicly report will disclose which (if any) reporting framework they utilise.

Appendix G

the University of Tasmania has mapped 4 of the STARS categories to the SDGs, as seen in the table below. The university notes that this "is used as a basis for the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking methodology and complements other University reporting efforts (e.g. TEFMA15, NGERS16) and ranking system participation (e.g. UI GreenMetric)".



University of Tasmania Strategic Framework for Sustainability

Appendix H

Each year a university is subscribed to STARS (following the first) a renewal fee must be paid – as shown in the table below in USD. It should be noted that the system also provides additional discounts to universities in low-income economies.

	AASHE Member	Non-member
Subscription	\$975 USD	\$1525 USD
Renewal	\$585 USD	\$915 USD

Appendix I

As an example, members of AASHE have access to a number of resources from case studies to videos & Webinars – as shown below, across a wide range of topic (such as campus engagement and research) – also shown below.

