



Times Higher Education
**Sustainability
Impact Ratings**

SDG

14

Life Below Water





SDG 14

Life Below Water

Why we measure

The two SDGs that look at the broader ecosystem divide it into Life Below Water, and Life on Land. The oceans, and the rivers and watersheds that link to them, are the largest part of our ecosystem. 40% of the world's population lives within 100km of the coast, and we all rely – directly or indirectly – on the sea.

We are capturing how universities are protecting and enhancing aquatic ecosystems like lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, rivers, estuaries and the open ocean.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/oceans/>

Links to other SDGs

SDG 14 relates to other SDGs since over three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity for their livelihoods – affecting hunger (SDG2) and poverty (SDG1). Maintaining healthy oceans supports climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts (SDG13). Life on the land (SDG15) is closely linked to life under water, and our choices around production and consumption (SDG12), clean energy (SDG7), and water and sanitation (SDG6) will all impact on this area.

Metrics and indicators

14.1 Research on life below water

14.1.1 Life Below Water: CiteScore

This indicator measures the proportion of a university's publications appear in the top 10% of journals according to the Citescore metric. It is intended to reflect on excellence of academic output.

The indicator is normalised and is worth 10% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 2.60% of the overall score).

14.1.2 Life Below Water: FWCI

This indicator explores the quality of a university's output in the area of conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources research using the number of citations received as a metric.

This number is normalised by publication type (paper, review, conference proceeding, book, or book chapter), by year of publication, and by subject. Subjects are defined using Elsevier's ASJC classification.

This indicator is normalised and is worth 10% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 2.6% of the overall score).

14.1.3 Life Below Water: publications

The number of publications looks at the scale of research output from a university around research addressing conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. It is not scaled by the size of the institution – rather it looks at the overall impact.



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This indicator is normalised and is worth 7% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 1.82% of the overall score).

14.2 Supporting aquatic ecosystems through education

Universities need to demonstrate how they are providing direct support through education in maintaining ecosystems in rivers, lakes and seas.

There are a total of 9 points that could be gained from meeting the criteria in this metric, worth 15.30% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 3.98% of the overall score).

This metric and indicators relate to the UN Targets 14.3 and 14.A.

#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.2.1	Fresh-water ecosystems (community outreach) Year: 2024 Offer educational programmes on fresh-water ecosystems (water irrigation practices, water management/conservation) for local or national communities Up to three points based on: • Existence of programmes – maximum one point for free, 0.25 points for paid only • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	5.10% in SDG (1.33% Overall)
14.2.2	Sustainable fisheries (community outreach) Year: 2024 Offer educational programmes or outreach for local or national communities on sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism Up to three points based on: • Existence of programmes – maximum one point for free, 0.25 points for paid only • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	5.10% in SDG (1.33% Overall)
14.2.3	Overfishing (community outreach) Year: 2024 Offer educational outreach activities for local or national communities to raise awareness about overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices Up to three points based on: • Existence of activities – maximum one	5.10% in SDG (1.33% Overall)



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	point for free, 0.25 points for paid only • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	
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Data submission guidance

Definition: Aquatic ecosystem

This is an ecosystem in a body of water. An ecosystem is a geographic area where plants, animals, and other organisms, as well as weather and landscape, work together to sustain life. Examples of aquatic ecosystems include lakes, ponds, streams, wetlands, rivers, estuaries and the open ocean.

Guidance: 14.2.1 and 14.2.2

...’for local or national communities’ means that these target practitioners. In this context university degree programmes (BA or MA programmes) can only be accepted as evidence if this point is explicitly targeted.

14.3 Supporting aquatic ecosystems through action

Universities need to demonstrate how they are providing direct support through actions in maintaining ecosystems in rivers, lakes and seas.

There are a total of 13 points that could be gained from meeting the criteria in this metric, worth 19.40% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 5.04% of the overall score)

This metric and indicators relate to the UN Targets 14.3 and 14.4.

#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.3.1	Conservation and sustainable utilisation of the oceans (events) Year: 2024 Support or organise events aimed to promote conservation and sustainable utilisation of the oceans, seas, lakes, rivers and marine resources Up to three points based on: • Existence of events – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	4.85% in SDG (1.26% Overall)



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#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.3.2	Food from aquatic ecosystems (policies) Year: in place by 2024 Have a policy to ensure that food on campus that comes from aquatic ecosystems is sustainably harvested Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	4.85% in SDG (1.26% Overall)
14.3.3	Maintain ecosystems and their biodiversity (direct work) Year: 2024 Work directly (research and/or engagement with industries) to maintain and extend existing ecosystems and their biodiversity, of both plants and animals, especially ecosystems under threat Up to three points based on: • Existence of direct work – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	4.85% in SDG (1.26% Overall)
14.3.4	Technologies towards aquatic ecosystem damage prevention (direct work) Year: 2024 Work directly (research and/or engagement with industries) on technologies or practices that enable marine industry to minimise or prevent damage to aquatic ecosystems Up to three points based on: • Existence of direct work – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	4.85% in SDG (1.26% Overall)



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Definition: Aquatic ecosystem

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14.4 Water sensitive waste disposal

Universities need to demonstrate a carefully managed practice and responsibility with the aim to prevent potential harm to humans, animals, or the environment.

There are a total of 10 points that could be gained from meeting the criteria in this metric, worth 19.30% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 5.02% of the overall score)

This metric and indicators relate to the UN Targets 14.1.

#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.4.1	Water discharge guidelines and standards Year: in place by 2024 Have water quality standards and guidelines for water discharges (to uphold water quality in order to protect ecosystems, wildlife, and human health and welfare) Up to three points based on: • Existence of standards and guidelines – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	6.45% in SDG (1.68% Overall)
14.4.2	Action plan to reducing plastic waste Year: in place by 2024 Have an action plan in place to reduce plastic waste on campus Up to three points based on: • Existence of plan – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	6.45% in SDG (1.68% Overall)



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#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.4.3	Reducing marine pollution (policy) Year: in place by 2024 Have a policy on preventing and reducing marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities Up to four points based on: • Existence of policy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point • Is policy created or reviewed in period 2020-2024 – one point	6.40% in SDG (1.66% Overall)

14.5 Maintaining a local ecosystem

Universities need to demonstrate necessary actions related to the maintenance of aquatic ecosystems associated with the university.

There are a total of 15 points that could be gained from meeting the criteria in this metric, worth 19% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 4.94% of the overall score).

This metric and indicators relate to the UN Targets 14.2 and 14.A.

#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.5.1	Minimizing alteration of aquatic ecosystems (plan) Year: in place by 2024 Have a plan to minimise physical, chemical and biological alterations of related aquatic ecosystems Up to three points based on: • Existence of plan – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	3.80% in SDG (0.99% Overall)
14.5.2	Monitoring the health of aquatic ecosystems Year: 2024 Monitor the health of aquatic ecosystems Up to three points based on: • Existence of monitoring – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	3.80% in SDG (0.99% Overall)



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#	Indicator	Maximum score
14.5.3	Programmes towards good aquatic stewardship practices Year: 2024 Develop and support programmes and incentives that encourage and maintain good aquatic stewardship practices Up to three points based on: • Existence of programmes – maximum one point for ongoing, 0.25 points for ad-hoc only • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	3.80% in SDG (0.99% Overall)
14.5.4	Collaboration for shared aquatic ecosystems Year: 2024 Collaborate with the local community in efforts to maintain shared aquatic ecosystems Up to three points based on: • Existence of collaboration – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	3.80% in SDG (0.99% Overall)
14.5.5	Watershed management strategy Year: in place by 2024 Have implemented a watershed management strategy based on location specific diversity of aquatic species Up to three points based on: • Existence of strategy – one point • Evidence provided – up to one point • Is the evidence provided public – one point	3.80% in SDG (0.99% Overall)

Data submission guidance

Guidance: Location

14.5 is explicitly about local ecosystems. It is about the maintenance of aquatic ecosystems associated with the university, around/nearby the university.



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Guidance: Aquatic stewardship (14.5.3)

Aquatic stewardship is the use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site and watershed-based actions.

Guidance: Watershed management (14.5.5)

The purpose of a watershed management strategy is to provide directions in protecting, improving, conserving and restoring the watershed in partnership with the community in order to balance our needs and the needs of the natural environment. In this context a watershed means a connected set of waterways (including streams and rivers) that form a distinct ecological grouping.

A general (not university specific) example

<https://www.abca.ca/downloads/Watershed-Management-Strategy-2015-Web.pdf>
