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# **Planetary Health Report Card**

## ***Faculty of Medicine, McGill University***

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# Statement of Purpose

*Planetary health is human health.*

The Planetary Health Alliance defines planetary health as “a field focused on characterizing the human health impacts of human-caused disruptions of Earth's natural systems.” This definition is intentionally broad, intended to encompass the multitude of ways that the environment can affect health, including water scarcity, changing food systems, urbanization, biodiversity shifts, natural disasters, climate change, changing land use and land cover, global pollution, and changing biogeochemical flows. The health of humanity is dependent on our environment and our environment is changing rapidly and in disastrous ways. Although the World Health Organization has called climate change “the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century,” many medical school’s institutional priorities do not reflect the urgency of this danger to human health.

As future health professionals, we must be prepared to address the impacts of human-caused environmental changes on our patients’ health. This preparation is in the hands of the institutions providing our medical training. It is imperative that we hold our institutions accountable for educating medical students about the health impacts of climate change and other anthropogenic environmental changes, generating research to better understand health impacts and solutions, supporting related student initiatives, embracing sustainable practices as much as possible, and engaging with surrounding communities that are most affected by environmental threats. Because climate change and environmental threats disproportionately affect vulnerable populations (for example, Indigenous communities, communities of color, older adults sensitive to health threats, and individuals in low-resource settings), these issues are inherently ones of equity and justice.

With the purpose of increasing planetary health awareness and accountability among medical schools, we have created a standardized and reproducible Planetary Health Report Card that medical students can use to grade and compare their home institutions. This medical-student-driven initiative aims to compare medical schools on the basis of discrete metrics in four main category areas: 1) planetary health curriculum, 2) interdisciplinary research in health and environment, 3) university support for student planetary health initiatives, and 4) community outreach centered on environmental health impacts. This project is inspired by the [Racial Justice Report Card](#), an initiative from White Coats 4 Black Lives that has led to substantial impactful change at medical schools around the US.

## Planetary Health Curriculum

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates the integration of relevant planetary health topics into the medical school curriculum.

Metric	Points	Descriptor
1.1 Did your medical school offer elective courses to engage students in planetary health in the last year?	1	<b>Yes, the medical school has offered such elective courses in the last year.</b>
	0	No, the medical school has not offered such elective courses in the last year.
1.2 Does your medical school curriculum address the impact of climate change on the changing patterns of infectious diseases?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.3 Does your medical school curriculum address the environmental co-benefits of a plant-based diet in its nutrition lectures?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.4 Does your medical school curriculum address the potential mental health effects of environmental degradation and climate change?	2	<b>The metric is met by the core curriculum.</b>
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	The metric is not met.
1.5 Does your medical school curriculum address the effects of industry-related environmental exposures (e.g. air pollution, pesticides) on pregnancy?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>

1.6 Does your medical school curriculum address endocrine disrupting chemicals and their effects?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.7 Does your medical school curriculum address the relationships between individual patient food security, ecosystem health, and climate change?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.8 Does your medical school curriculum address the effect of air pollution on respiratory and cardiovascular health?	2	<b>The metric is met by the core curriculum.</b>
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	The metric is not met.
1.9 Does your medical school curriculum address the relationship between heat-related illnesses and climate change?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.10 Does your medical school curriculum address the outsized impact of anthropogenic environmental toxins and climate change on vulnerable populations such as those with low SES, women, minorities, Indigenous communities, children, and the elderly?	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.11 Does your medical school curriculum identify ways to advocate for and implement sustainable best practices	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.

in health care? (for example, avoiding unnecessary OR waste)	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.12 Does your medical school curriculum address important environmental threats that are relevant to the university's surrounding community? (for example, fires in California)	2	The metric is met by the core curriculum.
	1	The metric is met by elective coursework.
	0	<b>The metric is not met.</b>
1.13 Does your institution have graduate or non-medical undergraduate level courses on planetary health open to medical student enrollment free of charge?	2	<b>There are graduate or undergraduate level courses open to free medical student enrollment.</b>
	1	There are graduate or undergraduate level courses but they are not open to free medical student enrollment.
	0	There are no graduate level courses related to planetary health
1.14 In training for patient encounters, does your medical school's curriculum introduce strategies to have conversations with patients about the health effects of climate change?	1	Yes, there are strategies introduced for having conversations with patients about climate change.
	0	<b>No, there are no strategies introduced for having conversations with patients about climate change.</b>
1.15 In training for patient encounters, does your institution's curriculum introduce strategies for taking an environmental history or exposure history?	1	<b>Yes, the curriculum includes strategies for taking an environmental history.</b>
	0	No, the curriculum does not include strategies for taking an environmental history.
1.16 Does your medical school have an ongoing program that offers incentives for	1	Yes, the medical school has an incentive program.

faculty/departments to develop new planetary health courses and/or incorporate planetary health into existing courses?	0	No, the medical school does not have an incentive program.
Section Total (out of 28)	8	

## Score explanations:

### 1.1 Elective Courses

The public health and preventive medicine elective offered at McGill ([link](#)) offers the possibility to do environmental health work related to climate change, urbanization, or heat impacts for example. There were no other elective courses offered by McGill that engaged students about planetary health in the last year ([link](#) to list of elective courses).

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### 1.2 Infectious Disease

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the impact of climate change on the changing patterns of infectious diseases.

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### 1.3 Diet and Sustainability

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the environmental co-benefits of a plant-based diet.

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### 1.4 Mental Health

In 2019, one slide in the core curriculum lecture “Indigenous Health - Mental Health of Indigenous Peoples” (Block J - Human Behaviour) highlighted the mental impacts of climate change on Indigenous youth: “Another aspect of context: Research is starting to link changes in environment and climate with mental health and wellness, particularly in youth”.

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### 1.5 Environmental Exposures in Pregnancy

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the effects of industry-related environmental exposures (e.g. air pollution, pesticides) on pregnancy.

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### 1.6 Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals

In the 2019-2020 curriculum, assessing the gastro-intestinal, endocrine and global health content, there

were no explicit mentions of endocrine disrupting chemicals and their effects. In (Block I - Reproduction and sexuality), one lecture on “Reproductive Hazards in the Workplace” listed examples of chemical risks but did not mention the impacts on the endocrine system.

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### **1.7 Food Security**

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the relationships between individual patient food security, ecosystem health, and climate change. In 2019, a few students chose to focus their projects as part of Block A (Molecules to Global Health) on this topic.

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### **1.8 Air Pollution**

In 2019, the Block A (Molecules to Global Health) lecture on climate change and health primarily addressed the effects of climate change on cardiovascular and respiratory health. Environmental pollution impacts on respiratory health was also mentioned in Block B (Respiration).

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### **1.9 Heat-Related Illnesses**

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the relationship between heat-related illness and climate change.

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### **1.10 Environmental Determinants of Health**

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the outsized impact of anthropogenic environmental toxins and climate change on vulnerable populations.

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### **1.11 How to Advocate for Sustainable Practices**

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address the ways to advocate for and implement sustainable best practices in health care.

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### **1.12 Area-Specific Environmental Threats**

There are no classes in the core medical curriculum or elective coursework that address important environmental threats that are relevant to the university’s surrounding community. In the case of Quebec, heat waves have an impact on the health of the surrounding community but are not addressed in the curriculum.

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### **1.13 Graduate or Undergraduate-Level Planetary Health Courses**

The Interprofessional Global Health Course (student-led and non-credited course) ([link](#)) had one lecture on Ecosystems Approach to Health & Climate and one lecture on Environmental Health in the Winter 2020 edition of the course. The course is accessible to medical students free of charge. It is given in a

10-week series of lectures on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, making it accessible to pre-clinical and clinical students.

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#### **1.14 Patient Encounters**

The curriculum has not offered any training to medical students related to talking to patients about the health impacts of climate change.

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#### **1.15 Environmental History**

First-year medical students received a lecture by a pulmonologist in Block B (Respiration), called “Occupational Lung Disease”, which included descriptions of occupational exposures (e.g. Asbestos) and a strategy to elicit a patient’s exposure history.

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#### **1.16 Faculty Incentives**

There are no programs offering incentives for faculty/departments to develop new planetary health courses.

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## Interdisciplinary Research in Health and Environment

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates the quality and quantity of interdisciplinary research in health and environment at the medical school.

Metric	Points	Description
<a href="#">2.1</a> Does your institution have a planetary health website, or a website centralizing various campus resources related to health and the environment?	1	<b>There is a website that centralizes various campus resources related to health and the environment.</b>
	0	There is no website.
<a href="#">2.2</a> Has your institution hosted a conference on planetary health in the past 3 years?	1	<b>Yes, the institution has hosted a conference on planetary health in the past three years.</b>
	0	No, the institution has not hosted an interdisciplinary health conference in the past three years.
<a href="#">2.3</a> Are there researchers engaged in planetary health research at your institution?	3	Yes, there is a department, institute, or center devoted to planetary health.
	2	<b>Yes, there are individual faculty members who are doing research on topics immersed in planetary health.</b>
	1	Yes, there are individual faculty members who are doing research that is related to planetary health.
	0	No, there is no research on planetary health at this time.
<a href="#">2.4</a> Is there a dedicated department or institute for multidisciplinary environmental and planetary health research?	1	There is a dedicated department or institute.
	0	<b>There is no dedicated department or institute.</b>
<a href="#">2.5</a> Is there active recruitment of researchers who focus on planetary health issues?	1	<b>There is active recruitment.</b>
	0	No recruitment efforts are made.

2.6 Is there quantitatively and qualitatively meaningful research that has been authored or co-authored by researchers from your institution on planetary health issues?	2	Yes, researchers from my institution have produced a substantial body of impactful research related to planetary health.
	1	<b>There has been some research related to planetary health generated by researchers from my institution, but it is lacking in quantity and/or quality.</b>
	0	There are no studies authored or co-authored by university researchers on these issues.
2.7 Has your institution joined the Planetary Health Alliance and/or the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education?	1	Yes, the institution has joined the Planetary Health Alliance and/or the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education.
	0	<b>No, the institution has not joined the Planetary Health Alliance or the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education.</b>
Section Total (out of 10)	6	

## Score Explanations

### 2.1 Planetary Health Website

McGill University has a website dedicated to sustainability, which outlines the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2020 and provides resources for environmental and sustainability projects ([link](#)). The McGill Global Health Programs also has a page outlining research and public health initiatives in Global Environmental Health ([link](#)). However, there is no centralized website for planetary or environmental health specifically.

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### 2.2 Planetary Health Conference

There have been several interdisciplinary global environmental health (planetary health) conferences held at McGill since 2015: “Global Environmental Health: From Cell to Society” ([link](#)) in 2015, “Sustainable Cities and Environmental Health Conference” ([link](#)) in 2017, “Cells to Society Symposium on ‘Environment and Health’ – Sustainable Materials” ([link](#)) in 2018.

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### 2.3 Planetary Health Individual Researchers

McGill’s Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Occupational Health has a research group dedicated to environmental health and epidemiology. This group is formed by faculty members who have been conducting research in the areas of global health and environmental health ([Link](#) to the Environmental Epidemiology Research Group).

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## **2.4 Institute for Multidisciplinary Research on Health and the Environment**

McGill University does not have a dedicated institute for multidisciplinary research on health and the environment.

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## **2.5 Recruitment of Planetary Health Researchers**

The Faculty of Medicine has recruited global environmental health researchers based on information received from personal communication with the Global Health Program, but no information has been found online about this.

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## **2.6 Meaningful research**

There are many McGill affiliated physicians, residents and students who have joined the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE), where they have created a [toolkits series](#). This toolkit consists of eight modules which have been prepared as stand-alone documents that can be read by themselves, but they have also been prepared to complement one another. It has been designed as a tool for health professionals and students in the health care and public health sectors who want to engage more directly on the issue of climate change as educators with their patients, peers and communities, and/or as advocates for the policies, programs and practices needed to mitigate climate change and/or prepare for climate change in their workplaces and communities. In addition, there are some researchers at McGill engaged in [global health](#) and [epidemiological research](#) that focus on the link between the environment and health. The Environmental Epidemiology Research Group, consisting of four main faculty members, has published a few hundred peer-reviewed papers and obtained millions of dollars in funding. They work in several countries on topics such as pesticides, air pollution, and endocrine disruptors and their effects on the health of mothers, children, adults and the elderly. However, there are not enough faculty to set up research and teaching programs that meet the current needs in planetary health.

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## **2.7 Planetary Health Alliance**

The Faculty of Medicine is not part of the Planetary Health Alliance or the Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education.

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## Community Outreach and Advocacy in Environment and Health

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates the quality of medical school engagement in community programming and outreach and advocacy efforts associated with the environment and health.

Metric	Points	Description
3.1 How often does your institution offer community-facing courses or events regarding planetary health and the environment?	2	The institution offers such community-facing courses or events at least once every year.
	1	<b>The institution offers such community-facing courses or events less than once per year.</b>
	0	The institution does not offer such community-facing courses.
3.2 Does your institution interface with community organizations to promote planetary and environmental health?	1	Yes, the institution formally interfaces with one or more community organizations to promote planetary and environmental health.
	0	<b>No, there is no such community partnership.</b>
3.3 Does your institution have regular coverage of issues related to planetary health in its primary campus magazine?	2	Yes, there is an article related to planetary health in the majority of issues.
	1	<b>In the past year, there has been at least one article related to planetary health.</b>
	0	There has been no mention of planetary health in the last year in the campus magazine
3.4 Does the institution offer continuing medical education courses that address planetary health?	2	Yes, one or more in-person CME courses are offered.
	1	Yes, one or more online CME courses are offered.
	0	<b>There are no courses.</b>
3.5 Does your institution provide opportunities for medical student engagement in developing community resilience to anthropogenic environmental impacts?	1	Yes, the institution has provided opportunities.
	0	<b>No, the institution has not provided opportunities.</b>

3.6 Does institutional marketing (posters, billboards, etc) address climate change or the relationship between health and the environment?	1	Yes, institutional marketing addresses the intersections between climate and health.
	0	<b>No, institutional marketing does not address these intersections.</b>
3.7 Does your medical center have accessible educational materials for patients about environmental health exposures?	1	Yes, the medical center has accessible educational materials.
	0	<b>No, the medical center does not have accessible educational materials.</b>
3.8 Does your institution's endowment portfolio investments include fossil-fuel companies?	3	No, the institution is entirely divested from fossil fuels.
	2	The institution has partially divested from fossil-fuel companies.
	1	<b>The institution has not divested from fossil-fuel companies, but faculty and/or students are conducting organized advocacy for divestment.</b>
	0	Yes, the institution has investments with fossil-fuel companies and there have been no efforts to change that.
Section Total (out of 13)	3	

## Score Explanations

### 3.1 Community-facing courses

There are no free community-facing courses regarding climate change and health available at McGill's Faculty of Medicine. The McGill Global Health Committee of IFMSA-Quebec organised a "Global Health Conference on Climate Change" ([website](#)) in May 2015 but there have been no other events in recent years.

Please see section 2.2 for community-facing conferences in interdisciplinary global environmental health (planetary health) held in 2015, 2017, and 2018 at McGill.

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### 3.2 Community organizations

Based on online research, there seem to be no existing partnerships between the Faculty of Medicine and community organizations to promote planetary and environmental health. Such partnerships would have included organizations in Montreal that work towards food security or help neighbourhoods/vulnerable populations adapt to heat waves for example. The Community Health Alliance Project (CHAP) course

taken by second year medical students provides a list of organizations that students can volunteer with. The 2019-2020 list includes 32 partner organizations, none of which target an environmental issue or consequence of climate change.

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### **3.3 Coverage in campus magazine**

While Planetary Health topics are not regularly featured in the McGill Reporter, there has been an article in the past year that has addressed climate change or sustainability in some capacity. The article, “Meeting the global health challenge of worms that cause disease” ([link](#)) posted on January 15, 2020, includes a paragraph that mentions the need to look at the impacts of climate change on the spread of parasites. There have also been a few articles under the “Sustainability” section of the McGill Reporter in the past year that mention food security ([link](#)).

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### **3.4 Continuing education courses**

Based on the McGill University Health Centre Continuing Education Office website ([link](#)), there have been no courses offered related to planetary health or climate change in fall 2019 or spring 2020.

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### **3.5 Community outreach**

The McGill’s Faculty of Medicine does not provide opportunities for student engagement in developing community resilience to environmental impacts (for example through opportunities to advocate for health policy improvements in response to heat waves or educating vulnerable populations about how to protect themselves during heatwaves).

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### **3.6 Marketing**

There is no institutional marketing (posters, billboards, etc) that currently addresses climate change or the relationship between health and the environment.

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### **3.7 Patient educational materials**

The McGill University Health Centre does not have accessible educational materials for patients about environmental health exposures.

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### **3.8 Investments**

McGill’s endowment portfolio includes investments in fossil-fuel companies. The Board of Governor’s decided against divestment on December 5, 2019, despite support for divestment from several student groups and the McGill Senate.

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# University Support for Student-Led Planetary Health Initiatives

**Section Overview:** This section evaluates the extent and quality of institutional support for student-led planetary health initiatives, such as funding, programming, etc.

Metric	Points	Description
4.1 Does your medical school offer a year-long fellowship for medical students to enact an initiative related to planetary health?	1	The medical school offers an explicit year-long fellowship for medical students to enact an initiative related to planetary health.
	<b>0</b>	<b>There is no explicit practicum or year-long planetary health fellowship open to medical students.</b>
4.2 Does your medical school have a website where medical students can learn about applying for funding for planetary health initiatives?	1	<b>Yes, there is a website where medical students can learn about applying for funding for initiatives related to planetary health.</b>
	0	No, there is no such website.
4.3 Does your institution have a website where medical students can find the contact information of mentors for planetary health initiatives?	2	<b>The institution has a webpage that lists faculty involved in planetary health.</b>
	1	The institution has a general website or directory that lists faculty and staff members' research and/or academic interests, but is not planetary health specific.
	0	There is no simple means of locating potential mentors for planetary health initiatives.
4.4 Does your medical school have funded, registered student groups dedicated towards fostering a culture of planetary health engagement and scholarship on campus, supported by faculty advisors?	2	Yes, there is a funded student organization with faculty support at my medical school dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare.
	1	Yes, there is a student organization at my medical school dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare but it lacks faculty support and/or funding.
	<b>0</b>	<b>No, there is not a funded student organization at my institution dedicated to planetary health or sustainability in healthcare.</b>

4.5 In the past year, has the institution had one or more co-curricular planetary health programs or initiatives in the following categories? (1 point each)	1	<b>Projects where students are able to gain experience in organic agriculture and sustainable food systems, such as gardens, farms, community supported agriculture (CSA), fishery programs, or urban agriculture projects.</b>
	1	Conferences, speaker series, symposia or similar events related to planetary health that have students as the intended audience.
	1	Cultural arts events, installations or performances related to planetary health that have students as the intended audience.1
	1	<b>Wilderness or outdoors programs (e.g., that organize hiking, backpacking, kayaking, or other outings for students) that follow Leave No Trace principles.</b>
Section Total (out of 10)	5	

## Score Explanations

### 4.1 Fellowship opportunity

There is no explicit practicum or year-long planetary health fellowship open to medical students.

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### 4.2 Funding application website

The McGill [Sustainability Projects Fund](#) provides students from all faculties with funding for sustainability initiatives on campus. Four different streams exist depending on the extent of the project. Since 2010, \$8 million have been awarded to 200 projects.

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### 4.3 Mentor contact information

The [website](#) of McGill's Office of Sustainability provides a list of members of the Advisory Council on Sustainability. The Council comprises senior staff, faculty members, students, community members, and an Indigenous representative, and its goal is to offer advice on sustainability initiatives on campus. However, there is no centralized hub, directory, or webpage where contact information for faculty active in planetary health can easily be located.

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### 4.4 Registered student group

There are no funded, registered and active student groups dedicated towards fostering a culture of planetary health engagement and scholarship on campus.

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### 4.5 Miscellaneous programs and initiatives

- **Garden:**
  - 1) McGill Campus Crops: A collective working on urban agriculture initiatives to grow food on campus and provide students with space and opportunities to learn. They also promote discussion around issues of food politics and food security.
  - 2) McGill Permaculture Club: A club that aims to increase awareness of permaculture and to grow student's appreciation of its benefits. Club activities include workshops, farm visits, discussion groups, movie screenings, and hands-on farm work.
- **Conferences, speaker series, symposia, or similar events:** McGill hosts an annual "Sustainability Research Symposium", a one-day symposium comprising speakers, panel discussions, student posters, and networking opportunities. There are also other regular talks, such as a talk named "Renewable Resources for a Sustainable Society" in September 2019.
- **McGill Outdoors club:** This [student club](#) provides opportunities for hiking, camping, canoeing, skiing, snowboarding, cycling and climbing.

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# Grading

## Section Overview

This section focuses on the grading of the report card. The institution received a grade for each of the individual sections as well as an overall institutional grade. Section point totals were tallied, divided by the total points available for the section, and converted to a percentage. The overall institutional grade is an average of the section grades. Letter grades for each section and the institution overall were then assigned according to the table below.

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	80% - 100%
B	60% - 80%
C	40% - 60%
D	20% - 40%
F	0% - 20%

## Planetary Health Grades for the McGill Faculty of Medicine

The following table presents the individual section grades and overall institutional grade for the McGill Faculty of Medicine on this medical-school-specific planetary health report card.

Section	Raw Score	Grade
<b>Planetary Health Curriculum</b>	8 / 28 = 29 %	D
<b>Interdisciplinary Research in Health and Environment</b>	6 / 10 = 60 %	B-
<b>Community Outreach and Advocacy in Environment and Health</b>	3 / 13 = 23 %	D
<b>University Support for Student-led Planetary Health Initiatives</b>	5 / 10 = 50 %	C
<b>Institutional Grade</b>	<b>Average of four scores above= 41 %</b>	<b>C-</b>