

Quick Guide: Preparing for 5 Star Certification

5 Star schools demonstrate leadership in the school and education community via mentoring, sharing stories, attending conferences, hosting teacher network meetings and engaging with other environment groups.

This quick guide explains what a 5 Star school looks like and the process of achieving 5 Star Certification using the 7 actions in the 5 Star checklist.

5 Star readiness

Achieving 5 Star Certification is the pinnacle of ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) and is awarded to schools that have fully embedded sustainability in everything they do, with ongoing, proven results.

To achieve 5 Star Certification, your school must complete each of the five modules (core, biodiversity, energy, waste and water) and meet all Module benchmarks. Your school can receive stars and submit for certification as you make progress through each of the modules. Star certification is valid for four years.

What can a 5 Star school look like?

The journey to becoming a 5 Star school looks different for every school depending on the learning environment and wider community. Features of a 5 Star school can include:

- sustainability embedded in the school culture across the campus
- strong links between the school and local community
- sustainability incorporated into the school's curriculum
- use of school grounds as outdoor classrooms
- recognised by other schools for outstanding environmental sustainability work
- teachers and students work as mentors to others
- being at the forefront of sustainable technology and other environmental initiatives.

Move from 4 Star to 5 Star

When your school has achieved 4 Star Certification in the RSS program you can nominate your interest in becoming a 5 Star school by speaking to your RSS facilitator, who will liaise with Sustainability Victoria.

5 Star Certification is not automatic. Your school must first meet with Sustainability Victoria (in person or online) to showcase what you believe makes you a 5 Star school and to receive feedback on what you need to do to complete this certification.

Prepare for your 5 Star meeting

Representatives from Sustainability Victoria and your school will meet (on site at the school or online). This meeting may include:

- hearing from students and teachers who are involved in the RSS program
- taking Sustainability Victoria representatives on a tour around your school to showcase sustainability initiatives
- speaking with Sustainability Victoria about your school's key initiatives and sustainability related highlights
- reviewing your school's current plans and actions
- your school representatives having the opportunity to ask any questions of the Sustainability Victoria representatives.

During the meeting, Sustainability Victoria may ask you questions in relation to the three elements of the program - Campus, Curriculum and Community - including:

- a description of sustainability highlights in your school
- where the focus of sustainability efforts have been in the lead up to becoming a 5 Star school
- community connections such as a specific project or activity involving parents/carers and families or the wider community
- ways your school demonstrates leadership.

After the meeting, Sustainability Victoria will provide detailed feedback to your school on what to do to achieve 5 Star Certification. They will take into consideration the information gathered at the meeting and an in-depth look at your school's supporting materials on RSS Online.

Sustainability Victoria will assess the school against the 5 Star checklist that confirms your school:

- has entered bills for a minimum of 12 months to set baseline and that all bills are up to date including the biodiversity Habitat Quality Assessment Score (HQAS)
- has completed/maintained the following annual actions for all certified modules:
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (Action A1.1)
 - Water, Waste, Energy or Biodiversity action plans uploaded (A2.1)
- has all modules currently certified
- has your annual school data up to date for every year active in ResourceSmart Schools
- is at or below the benchmark for Energy, Water, and Waste and has increased the Biodiversity Habitat Quality Assessment Score since the baseline period
- has demonstrated leadership in RSS and uploaded documents that demonstrate:
 - a school story for each module
 - student, staff, and/or community leadership
 - evidence of actively mentoring other schools
 - engagement with the broader community
 - regularly reporting results to the school
- has completed the visit with Sustainability Victoria before commencing work to become 5 Star Certified
- has made a final comment in the 5 Star checklist.

Reach out for assistance

RSS Facilitators can help you:

- plan or promote your program
- locate additional resources that will assist you to participate in the Program
- conduct audits with students

- organise activities for your student action team
- find networks of like-minded staff and students to support your work
- progress your RSS module completion and certification.

To connect with your local facilitator email schools@sustainability.vic.gov.au

For support with RSS Online email help@resourcesmartschools.vic.gov.au

ResourceSmart Schools is a free program offered by Sustainability Victoria that supports Victorian schools to embed sustainability across the school facilities, community and curriculum, while saving resources and money for the school.

To register to become a ResourceSmart School, visit:

<https://my.resourcesmartschools.vic.gov.au/>

or email schools@sustainability.vic.gov.au