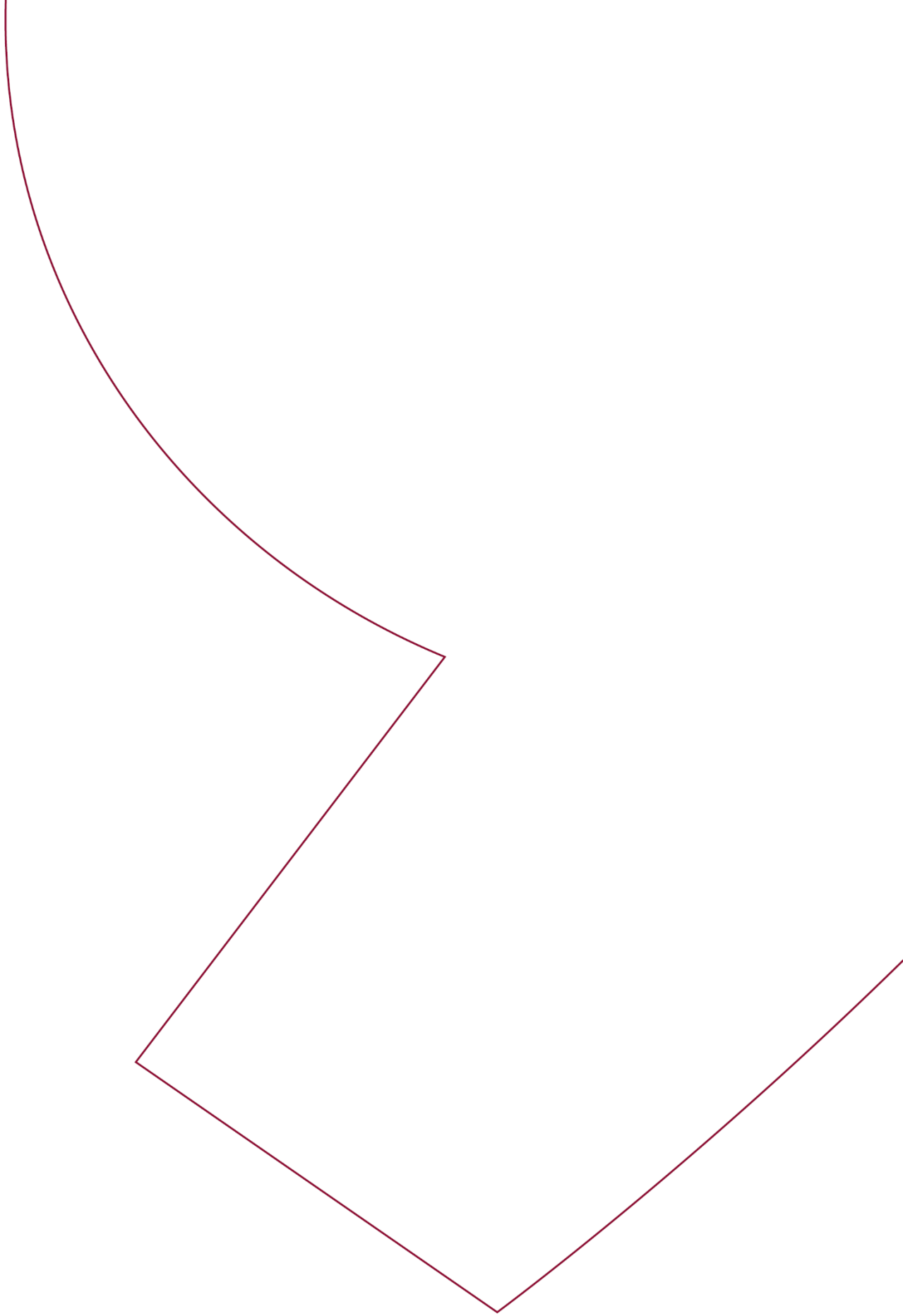


**Assessment framework
Sustainable development
in higher education**

**SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION
(SHE)**



Assessment framework Sustainable development in higher education

SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (SHE)

Hobéon Certificering & Accreditatie

Date of issue December 2020

Editor Marvin Leerdam

Edition v2.0

SHE-Framework 2024

CONTENT

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK	4
3.	PROCEDURE OF THE ASSESSMENT	14
4.	DECISION RULES	19
5.	CERTIFICATION DECISION AND CERTIFICATE	20
6.	TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ENTRY INTO FORCE	21
7.	SPECIAL FEATURE SUSTAINABLE HIGHER EDUCATION NVAO	22

1. INTRODUCTION

The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are seventeen global goals for sustainable development and are intended to make the world a better place in 2030. The SDGs have been agreed upon by the countries that are members of the United Nations (UN), including the Netherlands. They are a global compass for challenges such as poverty, education and the climate crisis.

The SDG agenda is currently the leading framework in the world to address sustainable development challenges at all levels. Other frameworks are of course conceivable, but should then be able to be positioned in the context of the SDGs. The advantage of the SDG framework is not only that many organisations have embraced it, but also that a lot of research is being conducted worldwide and, based on this agenda, both social and didactic growth scenarios can be defined.



To determine the degree of integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in higher education programmes, Hobéon uses the 'SHE' assessment framework 2021 (hereinafter SHE framework). SHE is an abbreviation of the name Sustainability in Higher Education and will replace the former AISHE framework 2016 (hereinafter AISHE framework) as of January 1, 2021.

In 2024, a revision of the SHE framework took place in which the method of assessment was modified so that it can also be combined with higher education programme accreditation.

Why SHE as an assessment framework?

The general view of social values can change. For sustainable development, the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals has led to such a change. The SDGs represent a balance between social, ecological and economic interests. This requires an up-to-date assessment tool that has incorporated the view from the SDGs.

For whom?

The SHE assessment framework has been developed for study programmes that want to give substance to sustainability by means of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), appropriate to the domain and / or field for which they are training.

What developments do the SDGs result from?

For the interpretation of the framework, Hobéon bases itself on the principles of the UN that have drawn up the SDGs in collaboration with governments, citizens, companies and civil society organisations. Since its inception in 1945, the UN has formulated development goals that represent universal values. These development goals transformed into the 8 Millennium Development Goals around 2000 and to the 17 SDGs after 2015. These SDGs serve, among other things, until 2030 to:

- 1) end poverty and inequality;
- 2) fight climate change, so that there is a circular economy and social justice, within the ecological limits of the planet¹.

The SDGs assume a holistic approach to be able to understand and tackle problems. They are transformational, universal, integrated, inseparable and based on rights. They are aimed at ensuring that actors (companies, citizens, governments and knowledge institutions) in all countries take responsibility for solving global problems, so that no one has to be left behind. The SDGs aim to provide security for:

- 1) social inclusion (PEOPLE),

¹ <https://www.sdg Nederland.nl/>

- 2) environmental protection (PLANET)
- 3) lasting and inclusive economic growth (PROSPERITY),
- 4) in peace (Peace),
- 5) through cooperation between civil society organisations such as companies, education and NGOs (PARTNERSHIP).

Many companies, schools (all colleges and universities) and other organisations have already signed the SDG Charter². The SDGs and the SDG Charter want to encourage:

- the understanding that the planet should be seen as a whole; everything is connected with everything,
- investing in lifelong learning / development to bring about change,
- finding partners to create a better world together,
- asking the right questions to get the right answers,
- taking responsibility for not leaving anyone behind³.

Principles for SDGs in education

Within the framework of People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership, programmes can choose their own position and define their contribution. It is assumed that the position and choices of the programme are substantiated. The choices that a study programme makes within the framework of People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership and Peace and SDGs, the extent to which external partners are involved and the intensity of this participation / influence of external partners are subjects that form part of this substantiation. A number of general principles apply when training future professionals for sustainability. These are independent of the choice for one or more (combinations of) SDGs⁴.

- Transfer and development of knowledge about sustainability in relation to the domain based on the principles and goals of one or more SDGs,
- Active search for the connections (nexus) between the SDGs,
- Development of a pragmatic, solution-oriented - not ideological - attitude towards the SDG,
- Development of an attitude of responsibility, integrity, respect and personal and community leadership,
- Organisational development: transition and change management, focused on stakeholder dialogues and co-creation models,
- Development of behaviour and skills. Examples of these are interdisciplinary collaboration, conducting ethical debates, systems thinking, developing future scenarios or conducting a stakeholder analysis. SHE is in line with the objectives set by UNESCO in the Education for Sustainable Development Goals⁵.
- Development of social intelligence on top of other forms of intelligence: IQ (general), EQ (Emotional intelligence), PQ (Practical intelligence).⁶
- Multiple value creation: develop a focus on multiple value creation with respect to People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships.

² <https://www.sdgcharter.nl/>

³ idem

⁴ The publication 'Getting started with SDGs in Universities – SDSN Australia/pacific (2017) describes three levels of SDG ambitions:

- **Recognition:** Identifying and acknowledging what a university is already doing to contribute to the SDGs can provide a powerful narrative about impact and a strong impetus for further action.
- **Opportunistic alignment:** Different areas across the university recognise the usefulness and importance of the SDG framework and find opportunities to use it to frame or drive discrete activities and programs (such as the examples in Section 2), without an overall strategy.
- **Organising principle:** The ongoing and far reaching impact will come if the SDGs become part of 'business-as- usual' for the university, by recognising and integrating the SDG framework into all relevant university governance structures and frameworks

⁵ The document Education for Sustainable Development Goals, refer to: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>

⁶ An example of integral training on SDG-relevant skills in education is provided by R. van Tulder (2018) Skill Sheet.

Education stimulates thinking in terms of transition, transformational change and also pursues ambitions that are aimed at 'doing good' (instead of 'avoid doing harm').

This document covers the following topics:

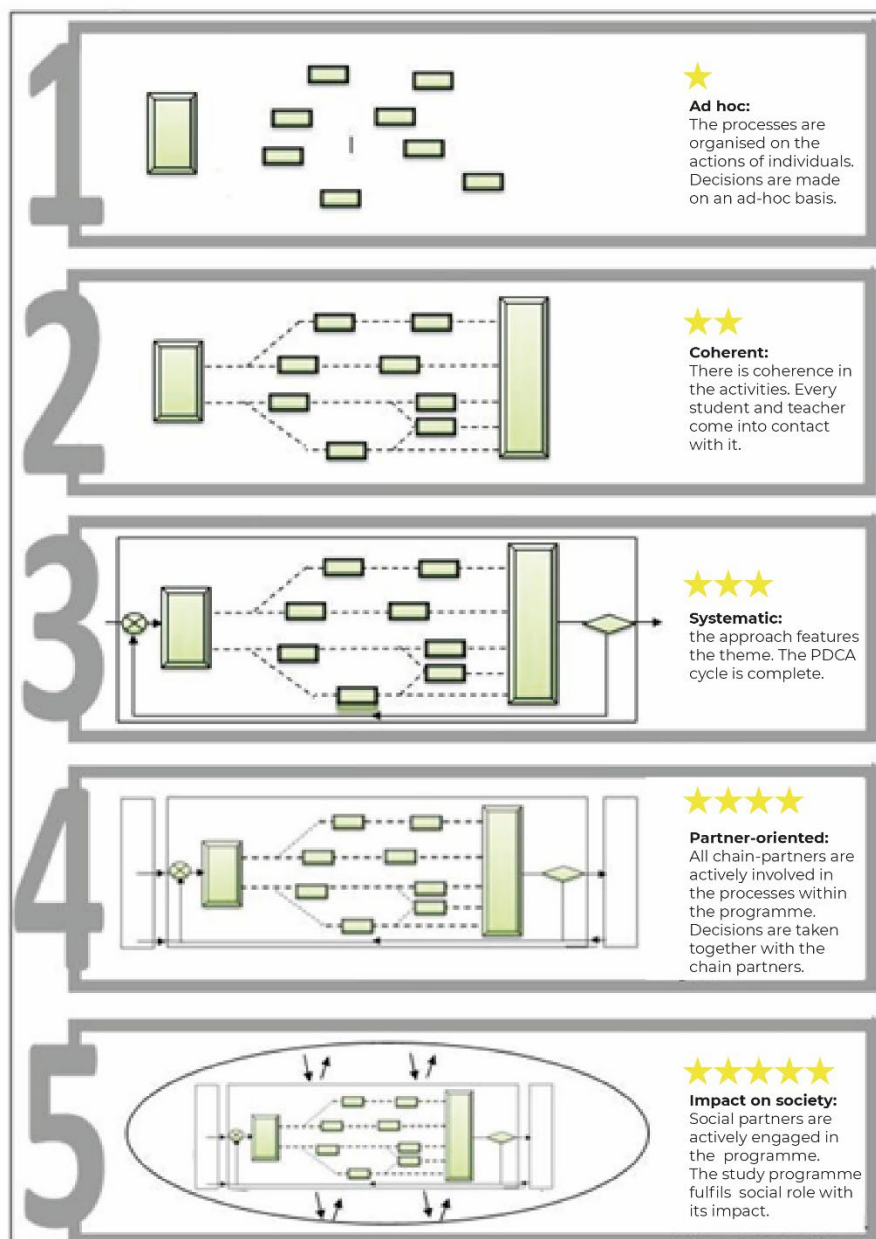
- The assessment framework,
- Process of the assessment,
- Decision rules to be applied,
- The certification decision,
- The certificate: issue, management and validity period,
- Procedure for recertification,
- Special Feature Sustainable Higher Education.

2. THE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

SHE distinguishes five development levels in the degree of integration of the concept of "sustainability" and the SDGs in study programmes. These levels are taken from the original EFQM model (1988) and the INK model as it looked up to 2008. Although the INK Foundation has now abandoned this model in favour of 'perspectives', it fits well within the SHE framework to map out the rapid developments taking place in this field in educational programmes, to label the development level and to pursue further development.

Prior to the specifications of the individual criteria according to the different levels, a general characterisation of these levels was given. General formulation and specific elaboration must be seen in conjunction with each other. They can complement each other, together they acquire a meaning that challenges the study programmes to look for the spirit of the criteria rather than the letter. It is up to training courses and SHE auditors to use them in this sense.

The levels range from 'ad hoc' through 'coherent', 'systematic', and 'partner-oriented' to 'impact on society'. Here is a description of the five levels.



General characterisation of the levels

Level 1 Ad hoc	Activities around the SDGs take place ad hoc: these are based on actions of individuals, and these are one-off activities.
Level 2: Coherent	Activities around the SDGs form a planned, coherent whole. The activities are regarded as common practice: every student and every teacher pay attention to the SDGs in the training (plan + do of the PDCA cycle).
Level 3: Systematic	The theme of 'sustainability' is systematically anchored in the training. The PDCA cycle is demonstrably round: the programme evaluates, initiates follow-up activities, and achieves concrete results (check + act of the PDCA cycle).
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial professional field partners and knowledge institutions work together and are actively involved in the integration and evaluation of 'sustainability' into the training, in other words, throughout the PDCA cycle.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme profiles itself on the SDGs ⁷ and the associated social issues, its ambitions in this area reach across borders, and crucial partners recognise that the programme fulfils an exemplary role in both areas. Together with crucial partners, the training has an impact on the sustainability problems facing society.

⁷ By across the border we mean within Europe and across the boundaries of educational disciplines.

Four main subjects are distinguished in the study programmes to be assessed, these subjects are then divided into sub-topics.

1. Goals

- 1.1. Vision
- 1.2. Strategy
- 1.3. Learning objectives

2. Staff and organisation

- 2.1. Faculty
- 2.2. Partnerships
- 2.3. Culture of peace, security, justice
- 2.4. Communication and knowledge-sharing

3. Education and research

- 3.1. Didactics
- 3.2. Knowledge substance of the curriculum
- 3.3. Research and/or professional practice
 - 3.3a Learning and research in the professional field (Universities of Applied Science/hbo)
 - 3.3b Learning to research (Scientific Universities/wo)

4. Impact

- 4.1. Graduates/alumni
- 4.2. Innovations and impact

1. Goals

1.1 Vision

How does the programme relate to the SDGs in its vision of sustainability?

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual actors within the programme have different and implicit views on sustainability, which may or may not be related to the SDG.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme features an explicitly stated vision on sustainability and education using (1) the vision on the SDGs, (2) the SDG Charter, (3) the 5Ps. The vision is supported by large parts of the programme.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme has elaborated the explicit vision with a substantiated choice for one, more or all of the 17 SDGs. The vision is systematically and demonstrably kept up to date. The entire programme propagates the vision and trains students to become SDG competent professionals.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the systematic development of a vision on sustainability and in its regular updating.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme profiles itself with its vision based on the SDGs, and the ground-breaking ambitions that express this. Crucial partners recognise the programme as an example in both areas. The developed and propagated vision leads has a demonstrable impact on society.

1.2 Strategy

How does the programme incorporate its vision of sustainability according to the SDGs in its strategy?

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual actors within the programme formulate their own strategy and goals for their activities based on one or more SDGs.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme has translated the explicit vision of sustainability into joint concrete goals for all actors. These concrete goals cover the various policy areas.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme annually evaluates the achievement of the SDGs pursued and ensures that students are competent in the SDG. The programme formulates a new strategy where necessary. The programme applies the explicit vision of sustainability in this regard.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the strategy development based on the targeted SDGs and their annual updating.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme profiles itself with its strategy, which is derived from the vision of the SDGs. Critical partners recognize the training strategy as an exemplary and resourceful translation of the SDGs. The training strategy is adopted and applied by other organisations and companies.

1.3 Learning objectives

How do the learning goals of the training programme reflect the SDGs and objectives of UNESCO?

Level 1 Ad hoc	None or some of the learning objectives of the programme coincidentally contain elements that can be linked to the SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO.
Level 2: Coherent	The SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO have been explicitly and deliberately incorporated into parts of the learning objectives or the elaboration thereof.
Level 3: Systematic	The SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO are an integral part of the learning objectives. The programme regularly evaluates and updates these in conjunction with the vision on sustainability.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the integration of the SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO into the learning objectives and the regular updating of the learning outcomes based on this.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme fulfils a leading role nationally (or even internationally) in the further development of the learning objectives based on the SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO, and the ground-breaking ambitions that express this. Crucial partners from the professional field and knowledge institutions acknowledge the programme as an example in this respect. Other study programmes adopt these learning objectives.

2. Faculty and organisation

2.1. Staff

Level 1 Ad hoc	A number of faculty members have substantive knowledge in the field of SDGs. The faculty offers scope for the execution of individual training initiatives in the field of sustainability.
Level 2: Coherent	All faculty members work on their expertise development with regard to the SDGs that are an extension of the domain of the training programme. The development of expertise in the field of sustainability is part of the personnel development plan.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme regularly evaluates the level of expertise of its employees about the SDGs and, where necessary, formulates new professionalisation actions. Evaluation and reflection take place in conjunction with the goals of the personnel development plan.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial professional field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the expertise development of faculty members with regard to the SDGs: they work together with the training on the expertise development of the faculty members.
Level 5: Impact on society	Lecturers of the programme are even acknowledged across the border as pioneers and leaders when it comes to their expertise on the SDGs in relation to the professional domain. Together with the key-partners, the faculty members of the programme have an impact on society.

2.2 Partnerships

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual employees have ad hoc contact with the professional field and / or knowledge institutions about their own objectives derived from the SDGs.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme plans and organises its contacts with companies and knowledge institutions with attention to the objectives derived from the SDGs.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme regularly evaluates its database of partners and forms of partnerships in relation to the SDGs. The programme consciously develops its network on the basis of the desired exchange of knowledge and expertise about sustainability / SDGs and training them accordingly.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	The programme has managed to engage crucial professional field partners and knowledge institutions. Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are actively collaborating with the study programme on the realisation of the SDGs.
Level 5: Impact on society	With its partners the programme forms a leading coalition in the field of the SDGs; this pioneering role is acknowledged even across the border. In the field of SDGs, the leading coalition has demonstrable impact on society.

2.3 Culture of peace, inclusiveness, security and justice

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individuals take actions - often one-off - to create a culture of peacefulness, inclusion, security and justice in education.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme has a coherent policy aimed at developing common values and appropriate behaviour around peacefulness, inclusivity, security and justice among students and teachers. These values are supported by them.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme evaluates its own culture: to what extent are the common values of peacefulness, inclusivity, security and justice reflected in our culture? Based on the evaluation results, the programme takes follow-up actions to strengthen common values and promote appropriate behaviour.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	The programme also develops common values around peacefulness, inclusivity, security and justice with key professional field partners and knowledge institutions. The common values and appropriate behaviour are propagated together with them.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme fulfils a recognised social role and sets an inspiring example for others. The developed and propagated common values of peace, inclusiveness, security and justice are adopted by other parties in society.

2.4 Communication and knowledge-sharing

How does the programme share knowledge, and how does it communicate about topics, questions and activities related to the SDGs (internally and externally)?

Level 1 Ad hoc	Communication and knowledge sharing about one or more SDGs takes place incidentally, ad hoc through actions of individuals.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme has an explicit communication and knowledge-sharing policy about its own activities related to the SDGs. Communication and knowledge sharing about these activities related to the SDGs is executed in a systematic manner.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme evaluates the progress of the goals in the communication and knowledge-sharing policy specifically aimed at the activities related to the SDGs. Based on the evaluation outcomes, the programme will take follow-up actions to promote communication and knowledge sharing about SDGs.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial professional field parties and knowledge institutions are active partners in the communication and knowledge sharing of the study programme about the SDGs.
Level 5: Impact on society	The training programme is acknowledged across the border as the leading communication and knowledge sharing platform in the field of SDGs with demonstrable impact.

3. Education and research

3.1 Didactics

Level 1 Ad hoc	In education, didactic work forms are occasionally used, depending on individual lecturers, that promote knowledge and attitude of responsibility for one or more SDGs among students.
Level 2: Coherent	During the course, every student comes into contact with working methods that are purposefully used to develop knowledge and an attitude of responsibility for one or more SDGs.
Level 3: Systematic	The study programme evaluates whether it develops an attitude of responsibility around the SDGs with its didactic concept. Based on the evaluation, the programme takes follow-up actions to adapt its didactic concept.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Pivotal work field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the systematic didactics' development and implementation. They are actively involved in the evaluation of the didactic concept.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme is acknowledged across the border for its innovative didactic concept and working methods in the field of SDGs. Other organisations and companies are adopting the didactic concept in the field of SDGs.

3.2 Knowledge content educational programme

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual lecturers or students - often incidentally - establish a link with the SDGs in education. The knowledge content of the training happens to contain elements that can be linked to the SDGs and objectives of UNESCO.
Level 2: Coherent	Basic knowledge of the SDGs relevant to the educational domain has a visible place in the curriculum. The SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO have been explicitly and consciously made part of the knowledge content of the curriculum.
Level 3: Systematic	The SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO are an integral part of the education programme. The programme regularly evaluates and updates the curriculum in conjunction with the vision on sustainability.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are active partners in the integration of the SDGs and the objectives of UNESCO in the education programme. They are actively involved in the evaluation of the curriculum.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme is acknowledged across the border for its innovative education programme in the field of SDGs. Other organisations and companies are adopting parts of the innovative education programme in the field of SDGs.

3.3a Learn and research in the professional field (UoAS)

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual teachers or students occasionally take the perspective of the SDGs in research and / or practical assignments in the professional field.
Level 2: Coherent	During the study programme, each student carries out a research or practical assignment in the field from the perspective of the SDGs at least once.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme regularly evaluates with external supervisors whether students use the perspective on SDGs when carrying out research or practical assignments in the professional field. It follows up on the results of the evaluation.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are involved in the choices about the practical / research projects to be carried out that are aimed at innovations around the SDGs in professional practice. Which assignments are carried out, and how are assignments set up (development side)?
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme is acknowledged across the border for its innovative research and / or practical assignments in the field of SDGs. The approach and development side of the innovative research and / or practical assignments in the field of SDGs are adopted by other organisations and companies and has an impact on increasing sustainability in society.

3.3b Learn how to research (Scientific University)

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual lecturers or students occasionally take the perspective of the SDGs in research assignments.
Level 2: Coherent	Each student carries out a research assignment at least once during the programme from the perspective of the SDGs.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme regularly evaluates with external supervisors whether students use the perspective on sustainability / SDGs when carrying out research assignments. The programme follows up on the results of the evaluations.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions are involved in the choices about the research projects to be carried out that are aimed at innovations around the SDGs in the research domain. Which assignments are carried out, and how are assignments set up (development side)?
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme is acknowledged across the border for its innovative research assignments in the field of SDGs. The approach and development side of the innovative research and / or practical assignments in the field of SDGs are adopted by other organisations and companies and has an impact on increasing sustainability in society.

4. Impact

4.1 Graduates/alumni

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual graduates are able to make an incidental contribution to the SDGs in the professional field or research domain.
Level 2: Coherent	All graduates are able to make a substantiated contribution to the SDGs in the professional field or research domain.
Level 3: Systematic	Regular evaluation shows that all graduates are able to clarify the meaning of the SDGs and initiate changes in their professional practice or research domain. The training follows up on the results of these evaluations.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions recognise that all graduates are competent to act as ambassadors with regard to the SDGs in the work field or research domain. The programme makes this demonstrable through regular evaluation with professional field partners and knowledge institutions.
Level 5: Impact on society	The graduates / alumni fulfil an exemplary role, across the border, in making professional practice more sustainable on the basis of the SDGs. Work field partners and knowledge institutions endorse their track record and graduates are experienced as thought leaders in the field of sustainability and have an impact on society.

4.2 Innovations and impact

Level 1 Ad hoc	Individual research and / or graduation projects occasionally lead to solutions for issues related to the SDGs.
Level 2: Coherent	All students, lecturers and researchers are able to come up with innovative solutions in education, research or professional practice for issues related to the SDGs.
Level 3: Systematic	The programme regularly evaluates the impact of the innovations that students, lecturers and researchers develop around the SDGs. The training follows up on the results of these evaluations.
Level 4: Partner-oriented	Crucial work field partners and knowledge institutions recognise that all students, lecturers and researchers are innovators in the field of the SDGs in education, research or professional practice.
Level 5: Impact on society	The programme has an impact on research, education or professional practice with its innovations in the field of the SDGs; this is acknowledged across the border. Pivotal work field partners and knowledge institutions endorse the track record and the impact of the programme in this area.

3. PROCEDURE OF THE ASSESSMENT

3.1. Mode of assessment

Obtaining the SHE certification can be done in two ways. Certification can be through a regular assessment on the SHE framework or through a combined audit, in combination with a higher education accreditation audit. These two ways are elaborated below.

	SHE assessment in combination with accreditation	Regular SHE assessment
Norm	SHE-framework	SHE-framework
Judgements	Only test whether level 3: Systematic is met. Assessment per standard element: Satisfactory or inadequate Decision rules remain the same.	In advance, the programme indicates the level of development that is aspired to. Assessment on all assessment elements at five levels: Level 1 Ad hoc Activities Level 2: Cohesive Level 3: Systematic Level 4: Partner-oriented Level 5: Impact on society
Validity	6 year	6 year Possibility for midterm after 3 years
Plan	Simultaneously with the accreditation audit Extra meeting of 1.5 hours with lead auditor from Hobéon and secretary (total of two auditors) with representation from management, lecturers and possibly lectorate. The secretary tests a number of elements during the accreditation audit. The auditors are given guidelines with points that they should pay extra attention to. In the programme itself, this has the following consequences: Extra 15 minutes when talking to students Extra 15 minutes when talking to the professional field/alumni	Two auditors, half a day. Verification interviews with representatives of management, students, lecturers/researchers and professional field/alumni. From level 4 onwards, a chain- discussion is also held with the aforementioned parties.
What does the customer get	Reporting with findings on whether a standard element meets or does not meet level 3: systematic. In case of a positive certification decision: DHO certificate at level 3. Inclusion in the DHO register of Hobéon	Report with findings per standard element and level indication and advice for the future. In case of a positive certification decision: DHO certificate at the desired level. Inclusion in the DHO register of Hobéon
Cost	1 day of interviews and preparation (2 auditors) 1.5 days extra for reporting Total investment: 2.5 days	4 days

3.2. Substantive principles

A number of substantive principles have been formulated for SHE audits.

Content and process quality

The assessment is about the extent to which sustainable development is integrated into the content and design of the programme and the extent to which the conditions for achieving this are in place. It is therefore a combination of an assessment of content and an assessment of the processes through which content is created and safeguarded. The assessment of both content and process quality, as two sides of the same coin, is a characteristic of Hobéon as a certification body.

Measurement and demonstrability

The size of the audits is appropriate to the size of audits that assess the integral quality of education. The SHE audits assume the presence of an overall quality level in the educational processes and build on it. In the documentation submitted by the programme for assessment and in the audit process itself, the focus is on sustainable development within the existing situation. The programme provides a self-reflection with supporting documents, and through audit interviews with various stakeholders, the panel verifies the status of the programme in terms of sustainability. Hobéon uses demonstrability, persuasiveness and plausibility as key principles in the SHE assessment; a sensible combination of information sources is important for this.

Focused on improvement

The intended added value of involving Hobéon as an external assessor is to increase the civil effect of integrating sustainable development into the training, but certainly also to strengthen the own quality cycle. This means that there can be not only a settlement assessment, but that it also provides an incentive for improvement. This can be achieved by the style of working and collaborating, which can be characterised as development-oriented auditing, as well as by the assessment framework - which has development as a design element - and the decision rules used.

3.3. Regular SHE-audit

3.3.1 Intake

If a study programme wants to obtain a Sustainable Higher Education Quality Mark, it contacts Hobéon for an intake interview. In this intake interview, Hobéon and the applicant agree on which study programme(s) the audit relates to and what level of certification the study programme aspires to. In an audit where several courses are assessed at the same time, a working method is agreed that enables an assessment for all courses in an appropriate manner. Agreements are also made about the audit programme, preparation, division of tasks, planning, etc. and Hobéon then draws up a quotation for the performance of one or more SHE audits, in line with the agreements made in the intake interview.

3.3.2. The audit team

The audit team is composed of two people, at least one of whom is a certified Lead auditor. Hobéon submits the composition of the audit team to the study programme(s). The auditors are independent of the study programme(s) and competent in the areas of quality assurance, auditing, educational quality and sustainable development.

3.3.3. The audit process

The assessment takes place in two phases, the first of document study, the second of an on-site visitation. The starting document is a short self-reflection of the programme in terms of the assessment framework. In this self-reflection, reference is made to the attached documentation. The documentation consists as much as possible of authentic sources, i.e. documents that the programme already draws up to record and communicate its sustainability policy. The programme of the audit is determined by the audit team after consultation with the study programme.

The assessment takes place in two phases (in this order):

Phase 1: Documenten study

The starting document is a short self-reflection of the programme in terms of the assessment framework. In this self-reflection, reference is made to the attached documentation. The documentation consists as much as possible of authentic sources, i.e. documents that the programme already draws up to record and communicate its sustainability policy.

Phase 2: Verification audit

The audit team bases its question on the self-reflection and the assessment framework and draws up its audit strategy based on the documentation. During the audit, the auditors in any case have discussions with management, teaching staff, lecturers, students and the professional field. Attention is paid to a spread of: specializations, disciplines, phases in the curriculum, knowledge and experience with regard to sustainable development, etc. If more than one programme is assessed, the discussion panels consist of sufficient representatives from all programmes.

At the end of the audit, the audit team provides preliminary feedback. If necessary, it provides instructions for the rectification of minor shortcomings (see decision rules). The audit team then draws up the report.

3.3.34. Report

The audit team draws up a short report with the main findings from the audit. The report contains the most important considerations that lead to the judgments on the individual sub-topics and subjects. This results in an integral final judgment on the level of development that the programme has reached in the field of sustainability. Before adopting the report, the audit team submits it to the study programme to correct factual inaccuracies. After processing the response from the programme, the audit team adopts the report.

The report also contains a section with recommendations. The programme can use this section as a development agenda. When recertified, the recommendations are included in the assessment process.

3.4. SHE audit combined with an accreditation audit for higher education

3.4.1. Intake

When an institute for its programme chooses to have the SHE audit carried out in combination with an accreditation audit, the programme will indicate this during the management meeting in preparation for the audit for the NVAO accreditation.

The programme is assessed at developmental level 3, which is required to apply for the Special Characteristic of Sustainable Higher Education at the NVAO. Agreements are made about the audit program, preparation, division of tasks, planning and Hobéon then draws up a quotation for the accreditation in combination with the SHE audit.

3.4.2. The auditteam

The audit team for the combined audit is split into two parts.

The panel that carries out the programme assessment for the accreditation by the NVAO; That panel will hold two extended interviews with (1) students and (2) alumni/professional field. This panel does not have a judging function, but only has a verification function.

In addition, the Hobéon lead auditor and the secretary conduct a 1.5-hour interview with a representative of management, the lecturers and possibly a research group. The lead auditor and secretary decide whether or not to achieve development level 3.

Of these two auditors from Hobéon, at least one of them is a trained IRCA lead auditor.

Hobéon submits the composition of the audit panel to the study programme(s). The auditors are independent of the programme(s) and competent in the areas of quality assurance, auditing and quality of education and the lead auditor is at least competent in the field of sustainable development. The secretary is the linking pin between the two extended conversations with students and alumni/professional field and the conversation with representatives of management, lecturers and possibly a research group.

3.4.3. Auditproces

The assessment takes place in three phases (in this order):

Phase 1: Documenten study

The starting document is a short self-reflection of the programme in terms of the assessment framework. In this self-reflection, reference is made to the attached documentation. The documentation consists as much as possible of authentic sources, i.e. documents that the programme already draws up to record and communicate its sustainability policy.

Phase 2: Extended interviews during accreditation audit

The training assessment panel shall carry out the normal training audit. The conversations with students and professional field/alumni will each be extended by 15 minutes. During these conversations, the secretary has the task of checking whether all the necessary information has been discussed. The auditors are given clear instructions in advance on what information they must verify. The audit panel does not have an assessment task, but only has to carry out a verification. The secretary takes the information collected to the verification interview with representatives of management, lecturers and possibly the research group.

Phase 3: Verification interview with representatives of management, lecturers and possibly research group

A lead auditor from Hobéon and the secretary of the programme audit will conduct an extra 1.5-hour interview with representatives from management, lecturers and possibly the research group.

The audit team bases its question on the self-reflection and the assessment framework and draws up its audit strategy based on the documentation. Attention is paid to a spread of: specializations, disciplines, phases in the curriculum, knowledge and experience with regard to sustainable development. Only one programme can be part of the object of assessment of the SHE framework at a time.

At the end of the audit, the audit team provides preliminary feedback. If necessary, it provides instructions for the rectification of minor shortcomings (see decision rules). The audit team then draws up the report.

3.4.4. Report

The audit team draws up a short report, with the most important findings from the audit. The report contains the most important considerations that lead to the judgments on the individual subtopics and topics. This results in an integral final assessment of whether the programme in question has achieved development level 3 (Systematic) in the field of sustainability. The audit team only reports whether a programme meets or does not meet level 3 per standard element.

Before the report is adopted, the audit team submits it to the study programme to correct factual inaccuracies. After processing the response from the study programme, the audit team adopts the report.

If possible, the audit team will provide a number of recommendations. In view of the scope of the audit, it will not be self-evident that the audit team will be able to formulate recommendations.

After a positive certification decision, the programme receives the certificate of the DHO quality mark at development level 3.

4. DECISION RULES

The following decision rules apply to a judgment on the level of the quality mark:

- The four main topics must on average be 'compliant' to the intended development levels;
- For the two main topics Goals and Impact, each sub-topic must be at least 'compliant' in order to be rated as 'compliant' in its entirety;
- For the two main subjects Faculty and Organisation and Education and Research, one sub-subject may be below the standard; not being (2.1) Staff, (3.2) Knowledge content of the curriculum and (3.3a) Learning and researching in the professional field (HBO) and / or (3.3b) Learning to research (WO).

If, despite this non-conformance, the audit team finds it 'compliant' at subject level, it must give an explicit consideration.

4.1. Improvement process

If the audit team rates one or two main subjects as 'non-compliant', there is a possibility for a recovery period. The programme must then demonstrably have started an improvement process within six months in order to still be able to obtain a positive assessment for those subjects. If this is not successful, the decision to certify will follow at a lower than the intended level. In the event of a new trajectory, all main subjects will be reassessed, if this takes place within a year, this may be done with substantiated results of the previous research.

4.2. Minor shortcomings

If the audit shows that a study programme, or one of the study programmes, does not fully meet the requirements of the quality mark at a certain level, but deviates only slightly from it, the audit team can, at the request of the study programme, grant a small repair. The training programme will have an extra six weeks to carry out this repair. When assessing the results, the audit team determines whether the sub-topic in question now meets the requirements.

If, in the opinion of the audit team, a minor repair is sufficient to arrive at a 'satisfactory' assessment at subject level, this can still be included as part of the audit and processed in the report, whereby this must be visible and substantiated in the report.

5. CERTIFICATION DECISION AND CERTIFICATE

The report is sent by the audit team to the director of Hobéon with a certification advice on the level of the Quality Mark. The certification decision maker assesses the application on the basis of this advice, performs a marginal assessment and takes a certification decision. The certification decision and the Sustainable Higher Education certificate are sent to the relevant study programme(s). Hobéon ensures that the awarded Quality Mark is entered in the Quality Mark Register. Hobéon keeps a register of the programmes that have been awarded the Sustainable Higher Education Quality Mark and at what level. This register is publicly accessible through the Hobéon website.

The certificate is valid for six years. After six years, the study programme can choose to go for recertification. The programme can choose from: (1) a recertification at the same development level, and (2) a new certification at a higher level:

(1) In case of recertification at the same level, the audit programme is compact in design. The substantive focus is on updating (what has changed in the environment; what did that mean for us?) and changes (where did we arrive at new insights and what did they mean for the sustainability programme; what has changed in the educational programme anyway that specifically impacted sustainability in the programme?); The audit programme consists of two interviews, with (combinations of) management, teachers, students and the professional field who are appropriate to the changes.

(1) If the training programme has the ambition for certification at a higher development level, then the set-up of the audit programme is the same as for the initial certification (see paragraph 3.3 'The audit').

6. TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ENTRY INTO FORCE

6.1 Transitional arrangement for validity of certificate

Certificates for Sustainable Higher Education issued before January 1, 2025 remain valid until the expiry date indicated on the certificate. These certificates remain valid for three years. Certificates issued after January 1, 2025, these certificates are valid for six years.

7. SPECIAL FEATURE SUSTAINABLE HIGHER EDUCATION NVAO

The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) recognises sustainable development as a meaningful 'special feature' in the context of accreditation. The Quality Mark Sustainable Higher Education at the level three is seen by NVAO as sufficient proof of this Special Feature.

Awarding of the Special Characteristic Sustainable Higher Education to a study program proceeds as follows:

Obtaining the quality mark

The programme obtains the Quality Mark Sustainable Higher Education at a minimum development level 3.

Application at NVAO

The programme applies for the Special Feature by letter and attaches a copy of the certificate and report to the application letter.

Award

If the degree programme meets the requirements of at least level three, NVAO will award the Special Feature Sustainable Development to the degree program.

Accreditation

The Special Feature for Sustainable Higher Education does not have to be applied for at the same time as the accreditation. If a programme wishes to retain the Special feature during in a subsequent accreditation round, this should be part of the assessment. It has been agreed with the NVAO and the evaluation agencies that an audit panel will check the validity and level of the certificate and, if it meets the requirements, give a positive recommendation on the Special Feature. When applying for accreditation, a copy of the certificate and the SHE report can be sent in addition to the accreditation report.



Hobéon 
a **kiwa** company

Sir Winston Churchilllaan 273
2288 EA Rijswijk
Postbus 70, 2280 AB Rijswijk
+31 (0)88 998 3140
www.hobeon.nl
info@hobeon.com