

# Assessment report

# **QUALITY MARK Sustainability In Higher Education**

# **Rotterdam Business School**

B International Business M International supply chain management M Consultancy and Entrepreneurship

# Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

De kracht van kennis.

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Hobéon

Dated: 26 January 2021

#### **Authors**

D.P.M. (Danielle) de Koning, MSc Drs M.N. (Marvin) Leerdam, MPM

# AISHE:

Auditing Instrument for Sustainability in Higher Education

# **INHOUDSOPGAVE**

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# **REPORT**

This report reflects the results and findings concerning the audit at: Rotterdam Business School (RBS) of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS)

Audit date	20 november 2020
Audit members	D.P.M. (Danielle) de Koning, MSc Drs M.N. (Marvin) Leerdam, MPM
Contact institute	Dean RBS: Mariska Wit Dr. Mirella Soyer
Institute	Rotterdam Business School
Programme	B International Business M International supply chain management M Consultancy and Entrepreneurship
Croho numbers	30029 49292 70020
Discipline	Economy
Level (bachelor – master)	Bachelor:
Mode of study	Fulltime and parttime

# **CERTIFICATE**

This report substantiates the assessment of the programme convincingly.

Valuation	3 stars
Validity of the certificate	3 years
This report is affirmed by	Drs. W.G. van Raaijen
Position	CEO Hobéon
Date	1 February 2021

Chairman auditteam	M.N. Leerdam
Position	Advisor
Date	26 January 2021

# 1. INTRODUCTION AISHE

# 1.1. Purpose of this report

This is the final report of the audit that took place 20 November 2020 of the programmes:

- B International Business (IB)
- M International supply chain management (MSC)
- M Consultancy and Entrepreneurship (MCE)

at Rotterdam Business School (RBS)<sup>1</sup> of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS). The audit was carried out on the basis of the AISHE framework in order to acquire the certificate for education for sustainable development (in Dutch: 'Keurmerk Duurzaam Hoger Onderwijs').

This report shows the results: Do the programmes, based on the information that was provided, meet the requirements of 3-stars according to the (AI)SHE framework? The findings of the audit panel are presented in chapter 3.

### 1.2. The certificate

Dutch and foreign programmes of higher education can apply for the certificate for education for sustainable development. The certificate is assigned to programmes that have shown to meet the requirements of the framework, as recorded in the (AI)SHE regulations.

#### 1.3. The AISHE Method

For a description of the criteria and developmental phases we refer to (AI)SHE 2016, a free download of which is available at www.hobeon.nl.

# 1.4. Working and assessment procedure

The audit consisted of two phases:

First, the institute submitted a self-evaluation and other relevant documents on their sustainability policy and performance. The institute has made one self-evaluation for the three programs. The audit panel examined these documents and formulated significant points of attention and formed a general idea about the level of integration of sustainability in the teaching programmes.

Secondly, during an online visit the audit panel met with management, a representative number of staff, students and the professional field and reviewed these points of attention and other significant issues that were raised by the audit panel or stakeholders.

### 1.5. Auditteam

The audit is carried out under the supervision of Mr. M.N. (Marvin) Leerdam, senior consultant at Hobéon.

### 1.6. Issuing the certificate

Hobéon will forward the certificate and audit report to the programmes concerned and ensures that this quality label is added to the register which is public and available on the website of Hobéon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Rotterdam Business School (RBS) is part of the economic domain of the RUAS. This domain is in a transition whereby the institutes of Financial Management (IFM), Business Administration (IBK), Commercial Economy (COM) and the Rotterdam Business School will be integrated into the Hogeschool Rotterdam Business School (HRBS).

# 2. JUDGEMENT ON EACH CRITERION

#### **GOALS**

#### Criterion 1.1. Vision

Level 1: Ad hoc	Various implicit visions on sustainable development are adopted and applied within the programme
Level 2: Coherent	The programme sustains an explicit vision on sustainable development and education, supported by large parts of the faculty.
Level 3: Systematic	The vision on sustainable development has been made explicit in the profile of the programme.
Level 4: Chain oriented	The professional field and knowledge institutions are active partners in the development of the vision on sustainability and participate in the regular review process
Level 5: Exemplary	The programme is an acknowledged pioneer and leader in the transfer of the concept of sustainable development into the domain.

The RUAS has, in response to the several (global and regional) trends presented in its Self Evaluation, selected the following themes as central elements in its vision:

- Resilience<sup>2</sup>;
- 2. Circular economy;
- 3. Climate change.

Although these themes have relevance for all institutes, their importance might vary across programmes, and institutes are free to add or even replace themes where appropriate. The themes chosen by the RUAS are integrated into RBS' vision on sustainable development.

The three sustainability themes of the RUAS – boosting resilience, circular economy, and climate change – are well aligned with the ambition of the Rotterdam Business School to "... change the face of business". In its position paper (September 2020) RBS clarifies its vision on sustainable development by stating that it wants to educate young professionals who are globally engaged, who are responsible and who are innovative in the field of international business. RBS aims to deliver 'change agents', professionals who are agile enough to adapt to significant demands, changing business environments and external pressures and who indeed will change the face of business. RBS considers sustainability to be an integral component of all current and future roles the student fulfils. Students are invited to investigate the morality of decisions in the roles of consumer, leader, and aspiring entrepreneur. In the new IB curriculum, RBS has fully integrated the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN SDGs) and the UN framework for value creation (the 5 Ps).

The audit team observes that the learning outcomes (see 1.3) are a translation of this vision and deal with aspects relating to people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships (5 Ps). The vision is echoed in several documents, and the programme organizer's and staff have clearly tried to update their vision using the input from both internal and external stakeholders (research partners, the network in the work field, lecturers and students).

Level: 3

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 $<sup>^2</sup>$  Resilience is a multidisciplinary concept that is linked with coping skills; it is the capacity of individuals, communities, institution, businesses and systems to survive, adapt and grow, no matter what kind of chronic stress and acute shocks they experience (SE, p.15).

# Criterion 1.2. Strategy

Level 1: Ad hoc	Various actors formulate different strategies and goals for their own activities
Level 2: Coherent	The explicit vision on sustainability is translated into concrete objectives for the various
	policy areas.
Level 3: Systematic	The faculty evaluates and reflects regularly on the realisation of sustainability goals. The
	evaluation is coherent with the programme's vision on sustainable development.
Level 4: Chain oriented	The professional field and knowledge institutions are active partners in the development of
	the policy on sustainability and participate in the regular review process of the policy
Level 5: Exemplary	The programme is an acknowledged pioneer and leader in the transfer of the concept of
	sustainable development into concrete policies.

RBS does not have an extensive and coherent policy on sustainable development. However, sustainable issues are addressed in different policy documents such as the 'Jaarplan 2020 RBS'. This Annual Plan contains sustainable development-related objectives on various policy areas.

The audit panel has seen a policy document in which the sustainability activities implemented over the past years are evaluated and goals are formulated for the next period. This policy document<sup>3</sup> was developed by the sustainability coordinator at RBS. The sustainability coordinator is responsible for developing and implementing programmes and policies regarding sustainability at the RBS as well as the development of the sustainability curriculum. The audit panel finds the policy document confidence-inspiring. There is room for improvement though when it comes to (explicitly) formulate concrete sustainability goals. The goals at present are more general objectives such as generating (internal and external) awareness for and commitment to a sustainable outlook within the RBS study programmes, and collaborate with the HRBS (with which the RBS will merge in the near future).

In general, the audit team has reason to believe that RBS is indeed operating on the basis of a specified set of sustainability goals, implicitly using a Plan-Do-Check-Act strategy. Sustainability is one of the focal points within the new curriculum. The intended programme outcomes are systematically evaluated with students, lecturers and the Programme Advisory Board, so implicitly sustainability goals are part of those evaluations. As a point of improvement, the panel recommends that RBS:

- formulates concrete sustainability goals, preferably in a document, thus making the objectives explicit and easier to trace;
- devises a way to monitor and evaluate the progress of the goals set (Check and Act), and to keep a record thereof as well.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> An interdisciplinary policy to sustainability within the HRBS 2018-2020' (July 2018)

# **Criterion 1.3. Intended learning outcomes**

Level 1: Ad hoc	The intended learning outcomes show a few aspects that can be connected to sustainable development.
Level 2: Coherent	Sustainable development is an aspect of the intended learning outcomes of the programme or an elaboration of these outcomes.
Level 3: Systematic	Sustainable development is fully integrated in the intended learning outcomes and systematically reviewed.
Level 4: Chain oriented	The professional field and knowledge institutions are active partners with regard to the integration of sustainability in the learning outcomes and participate in their regular review process.
Level 5: Exemplary	The faculty plays a leading role in the development of the intended learning outcomes on sustainable development within the domain.

Through the examination of the various module descriptions of both programmes, the audit panel has established that the interconnections between the programme learning outcomes and sustainable development issues are numerous. The way the IB programme has organized this is outlined below.

The KSAVE (Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Values & Ethics) model was chosen to structure the IB learning outcomes. The model consists of four domains: 1) ways of thinking, 2) ways of working, 3) living in the world, and 4) tools for working and management. Sustainability is placed in the domain of "Living in the world" and is labelled as the 21st skill set named "Ethical and social responsibility" (ESR) with a set of four specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). These PLOs serve as outcomes that students need to master at the end of their bachelor programme and require students to:

- formulate his/her own position concerning ethical and social responsibility in a professional environment.
- 2. contribute to social, ecological and economic discussions on contemporary trends.
- 3. assess the effect of changes in society's needs on the sustainability of the organisation's business model.
- 4. assess the impact of organisational decisions on the environment and society. In the new IB programme the PLO for ESR is #11: "Formulate one's position concerning ethical and social responsibility in a professional environment". The additional PLOs (2 t/m 4) are understood as being part of the chief PLO for ESR.

As stated in 1.1., RBS wishes to deliver professionals who will change the face of business. The skills needed to address this challenge overlap with the 21st-century skills, which among others include skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. Both the IB and the Master programmes feature 21st-century skills in their programmes. These are integrated into the PLOs and there are also dedicated skills modules (for example on critical thinking and personal leadership development). In the latter, students receive training in emotional intelligence, inter-cultural competence and teamwork. These skills are considered indispensable for creating an inclusive, sustainable society and business.

The audit panel perceived that there are several learning outcomes in specific modules that are connected to sustainability. In the minor 'Fieldlab Circular Economy and Business Innovation', for instance, students learn to explain how the circular economy differs from the linear economy in terms of drivers, frameworks, structures, processes, financing, legislation and obstacles. They learn to evaluate the implications of a CE business model from a financial, environmental and social perspective. The field assignments in this minor are developed in collaboration with the professional field, and are aligned with the research programme of the research centre business innovation.

As for this criterion, the panel affirms that RBS has achieved level 3 for the IB, MSC and MCE programmes. Sustainable development has been integrated to the full in the intended learning outcomes and this is systematically reviewed by the Curriculum Committee (CuCo) in cooperation with the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), and the lecturers.

# STAFF AND ORGANISATION

#### Criterion 2.1. Staff

Level 1: Ad hoc	Some members of the faculty bear knowledge of the concept of sustainable development in the domain of the programme. There is room for individual learning activities.
Level 2: Coherent	The development of expertise in the field of sustainability is part of the training programme of the faculty.
Level 3: Systematic	The expertise on sustainable development is broadly available in the programme and systematically updated.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Knowledge and the expertise of knowledge institutions and the professional field are part of the education programme. Expertise of the faculty is developed in collaboration and exchange with relevant partners.
Level 5: Exemplary	Members of the faculty and of related institutions are leading in the field on sustainable development.

RBS provided the audit panel with a list of staff members who have considerable expertise in sustainability. In the audit the panel encountered a vibrant and critical group of lecturers with in-depth experience in sustainability. Among them are several lecturers who hold a relevant PhD or Masters' degree. Nearly all of them have also true work field experience in sustainability and bring with them a valuable network. In addition to these lecturers, there are many others who are developing expertise in this area. Based on the course descriptions and the dialogue between the panel and the lecturers, the panel experienced that lecturers have ample expertise in the sustainable development area. Among other things, their expertise is particularly evident in how they have managed to consistently interweave the sustainable development theme into the course content (see Chapter 3.2).

Further, the panel was informed about various ways in which the staff members' expertise on sustainable development is updated. The lecturers with whom the panel spoke indicated that sufficient facilities and resources are available for professional development. First of all, the HR Academy offers formal training. Here lecturers can follow the course Business Ethics organized by lector Jelle van Baardewijk of the Research Centre Business Innovation. Besides this, lecturers are encouraged to participate in relevant conferences such as the ISPIM Conference, the New Business Model Conference, Nationale Duurzaamheids Congres, Congress for Energy transition, and others.

The lecturers with whom the panel spoke explained that they tap into each other's knowledge and into the expertise of the companies they collaborate with. They demonstrated a vast understanding of the need to grow as a group. Lecturers brief each other after relevant events, e.g., on the suitability of content for the curriculum. The sustainability coordinator of the programme disseminates knowledge in the form of articles, research papers and case studies on sustainability to lecturers responsible for teaching sustainability-related subjects. The programme also applies the teach-the-trainer method. One of the lecturers at the RBS, who also holds the position of senior sustainability advisor to the (central) steering committee that advises the Board of Directors, trained ten of her colleagues in GRI to help them integrate the subject into their courses.

Lastly, RBS lecturers are in a position to update their knowledge on sustainability topics through their link with the Research Centre Business Innovation and the RDM Centre of Expertise, for instance by using input from the professorship circular economy of the Research Centre Business Innovation in their classes. In addition, several lecturers participate in research projects at the research centres.

In summary, the panel could easily discern that RBS lecturers have ample expertise with sustainability topics. There are several ways in which the faculty's expertise on this theme is updated. Lecturers keep up their knowledge actively, formally through participating in conferences, training programmes, masterclasses and research projects, and informally by exploiting the extensive collective staff experience. The integration of sustainability in all modules ensures that an ever-larger group of lecturers (and students) is exposed to sustainability-related topics, which in turn contributes to a growing culture of sustainability.

# Criterion 2.2. Network

Level 1: Ad hoc	Individual staff members have contacts with professionals and knowledge institutions on the subject of sustainable development.
Level 2: Coherent	The staff is in contact with enterprises and knowledge institutions on the subject of sustainable development.
Level 3: Systematic	The staff develop their networks based on the planned exchange of knowledge and expertise on sustainable development and education for sustainability. This network is reviewed on a regular basis.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Research and education on sustainability are performed in collaboration with the professional field and knowledge institutions. Content of the programme and the research agenda is cooperatively developed and evaluated.
Level 5: Exemplary	The network of the programme in the field of sustainable development contains a broad spectrum of social agents. In its environment the programme has adopted a prominent and pioneering role.

In line with the RUAS policy, RBS places strong emphasis on its regional and urban context. For IB this means working together with network organisations such as Yes!Delft, CIC (Cambridge Innovation Centre), Aon, B&S, B-Corp, the SDG Charter, the Global Reporting Initiative, The Ellen MacArthur Foundation<sup>4</sup>, Lectoren Platform Circular Economy, and MVO Nederland. In addition to this, strategic partnerships exist with Blue City, the Municipality of Rotterdam, and companies such as A&M Recycling, TKI Dynalog, Materialsense, and Bouwend Nederland. These accounts are involved in a variety of elements of the curriculum: e.g. guest lectures, projects, company visits and/or year 3 and year 4 graduation placements. RBS also has various relevant collaborations with other Dutch and foreign universities. These partnerships are at the base or are the result of joint research projects.

The audit panel observed that each of the master programmes has its own specific collaboration. The Master in International Supply Chain Management for instance collaborates with a variety of partner organisations (e.g. Dinalog, Bouwend Nederland, Nedcargo, TLN, Evofenedex, OSI, and Kennis DC Logistiek).

For the implementation of sustainability (e.g. in the learning outcomes or in the programme), the RBS involves several stakeholders (e.g. from the professional field, lecturers and the students, and its representative board RISA $^5$ ). The professional field is formally represented by the Company Advisory Board. Members reflect upon various themes related to sustainability. The PAC was also involved in the development of the position paper (see 1.1.).

During the site visit the audit panel spoke with several stakeholders involved in (research) projects on sustainability. They were all positive about their collaboration with RBS. The alumni however indicated that RBS can still improve when it comes to staying in touch with their graduates. Some alumni are still involved with RBS (as a guest lecturer or, e.g., as a member of the PAC), but in general RBS could possibly profit more from their experience and knowledge. The audit panel nevertheless rewards this criterion with 4 stars. The panel concludes that RBS has been able to set up a firm network, both at the institutional and the (inter)national level. Stakeholders are actively involved in exchanging knowledge and providing input into the curricula. Research and education on sustainability are performed in collaboration with the professional field and knowledge institutions.

Level: 4

<sup>5</sup> Rotterdam International Student Association

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> the leading research institution to facilitate the transition towards a circular economy

# Criterion 2.3. Culture

Level 1: Ad hoc	A few measures to develop common values related to sustainable development are in place.
Level 2: Coherent	The programme has a coherent policy aiming at the development of common goals related to sustainable development and at the behaviour of students and teachers in this respect.
Level 3: Systematic	A culture in which values are connected with sustainable development is a key-feature of the programme. This culture is actively maintained.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Common values with regard to sustainable development and the behaviour of students and teachers are consistent with these values.
Level 5: Exemplary	The programme plays a highly appreciated societal role as an inspiring example to others.

In a culturally diverse city such as Rotterdam, particular attention is paid to values of equality, mutual respect and tolerance. Formally, these values are communicated in the Code of Conduct and Integrity, the Study Handbook, and physically via Banners on various locations. The Code features 13 points which translate the values into practical guidelines for day-to-day behaviour. More informally, these values are demonstrated throughout the interaction between members of the management team, lecturers and students.

Resilience as a key element in the RBS vision on sustainable development is fostered through a culture that grants autonomy to teams, and a non-hierarchical management style where the primary goal of the leader is to serve the organisation and its people (put teams in the lead, emphasising professional leadership). The issue of vitality is also important within this context. The RBS has taken to heart the issues of maintaining a healthier work-life balance and reducing work pressure on employees. These topics are part of the interview cycle and planning activities. Boosting resilience of students is taking place through, inter alia, mentoring sessions (including a peer mentoring programme) and coaching and professional development courses.

During the site-visit, managers, lecturers and students point out that sustainability is part of their mindset (see also criterium 4.1). The mode of thinking within the programmes is clearly sustainability oriented. Staff and students are aware of the choices they make, and of the degree to which options are (un)sustainable. All parties gave examples of how they balance the different interests. Lecturers – some more than others – try to raise awareness and reflection in students. Sometimes it is the other way around when students are giving suggestions on how to live a sustainable life.

The audit panel is convinced of the presence of a 'sustainability culture' within the IB, MSC and MCE programmes. Management, lecturers and staff share common values with regard to sustainable development, and also act in a way that is consistent with these values. Respect for people is an essential part of the curriculum. By following all the programmes students are educated to treat each other respectfully and think about the impact of their actions and decisions on the lives of other people and the environment. Last but not least, resilience is incorporated both into human resource policies and the student programme in order to guide the staff members as well as the students towards a sustainable future.

# **Criterion 2.4. Physical Environment**

Level 1: Ad hoc	On a few subjects, measures are in place regarding the physical environment of the unit.
Level 2: Coherent	Concrete policies are focussed on reduction of the ecological footprint of the unit and on contributing to the recovery of the environment.
Level 3: Systematic	The unit works systematically on the reduction of its ecological footprint and on
Level 4: Chain oriented	contributing to the recovery of the environment.  The unit develops together with its partners policies and measures aiming at the reduction
	of its ecological footprint and that of its partners and contributes to the recovery of the environment.
Level 5: Exemplary	The unit sustains innovative solutions for reduction of its ecological footprint and that of its partners and contributes to the recovery of the environment. It is an example to
	others.

RBS pays attention to the environment as it respects the policy drawn up by the Board of Directors of RUAS with which it fully complies. Decisions with regard to buildings and their features, the equipment, and furniture, are decided by the central department of Facility Management and IT (FIT). RUAS also formulated guidelines for travelling. For instance, RUAS promotes the use of video conferencing instead of travelling and the use of public transport when and wherever possible.

The new building at the Kralingse Zoom is energy neutral, flexible and circular. The old building will be demolished while harvesting materials that can be reused. Until the new premises is finished, the RBS remains in the Posthumalaan. Management stated that the degree to which RBS can itself reduce its ecological footprint is limited, because procurement is organized centrally. Also, RBS has little say in the environmental performance of the location Posthumalaan as it is a rental property shared with the SVB. Waste management and canteen services, however, do incorporate environmental aspects, but as RBS itself recognises there is still room for improvement.

During the site-visit the audit panel examined some of the programme's own efforts to reduce its footprint. The panel set eyes on the following activities:

- RBS tries to work paperless, using digital devices for teaching and communication whenever possible. This also includes digital exams instead of paper ones.
- A project with a larger impact taken up by RISA involved the installation of the Ecosia search engine on all computers of the RBS. The profit made from the ads on the search engine is used to plant trees.
- Other activities organised by RISA included participation in clean-up activities such as the Plastic Rally, and the National Clean Up day (cleaning the Scheveningen beach and dunes).
- Other ideas of students include the change to a more sustainable coffee supplier and reduction of paper cups. Initiatives like these are supported by the lecturers who offer students coaching with the actual implementation.

To conclude, some steps to greening the school have taken root. The new building most definitely meets the environmental standards. RBS indirectly works on the reduction of its ecological footprint through the institutional policies of RUAS, but lecturers and students also presented some examples of RBS' own efforts to reduce its footprint as well.

RBS is recommended to communicate more explicitly about these initiatives. Furthermore, to gain a better understanding of the progress made on the programme-level alone, the audit team would suggest that RBS more explicitly formulates its own goals to reduce its footprint and to materialise its policy even better by outlining *how* exactly RBS intends to achieve the set goals. The panel is convinced that this would at some point lead to success.

# Criterion 2.5. Communication

Level 1: Ad hoc	Communication on sustainable development is incidental and relates to unconnected activities.
Level 2: Coherent	Internal and external communication is executed parallel to the activities concerning sustainable development.
Level 3: Systematic	The unit has an explicit communication policy on sustainable development and executes this policy.
Level 4: Chain oriented	The communication on sustainable development is coordinated with partner organizations and is executed along with them.
Level 5: Exemplary	On the subject of sustainable development, the unit is the foremost communication platform for various organizations in the relevant domain.

RBS communicates through various channels about the theme of sustainability and its activities concerning sustainable development. In 2.1 the audit panel already mentioned the dissemination of knowledge in the form of articles, research papers and (best) cases on sustainability. The self-evaluation report states that communications about RBS' sustainability performance has increased substantially during the past years, with lecturers communicating their research on formal platforms, sharing project information, and publishing sustainable activities. It has become evident to the audit panel that RBS has a wide variety of activities in place and, to some extent, also communicates about them. However, their internal alignment can and must be improved.

The audit panel did not perceive a structural communication mechanism or instrument to inform students, alumni and 'the network' about sustainable development. While the panel to some degree shows understanding for the fact that communication on sustainability indirectly takes place through internships, bachelor's theses, research projects, the professorships and the PAC, this is not sufficiently convincing to obtain level 3 on this criterion. The audit team sincerely wishes to challenge RBS to explore ways to *systematically* present, publish on, and tell people inside and outside the university about (new) knowledge and experiences regarding sustainability gained by RBS faculty and students. RBS should demonstrate and share more why the programmes are frontrunners in the field of sustainability ("be good and tell it").

The perception of the panel did not come as a surprise. RBS agrees with it and is already developing a more systematic approach to communicate information about its achievements and activities in the field of sustainability. This action is highly welcomed by the audit panel.

#### **EDUCATION**

#### Criterion 3.1. Didactics

Level 1: Ad hoc	In the education programme suitable didactic methods are used for developing an attitude of responsibility for sustainable development, however the application thereof depends mainly on individual teachers.
Level 2: Coherent	Within the education programme every student is exposed to methods that are suitable to develop an attitude of responsibility for sustainable development.
Level 3: Systematic	The didactic concept is geared to develop an attitude of responsibility for sustainable development. There is a clear link between vision and policy on sustainable development and the didactic concept.
Level 4: Chain oriented	The program designs and implements its didactic concept in interaction with the social partners.
Level 5: Exemplary	The course is renowned for its innovative teaching methods aimed at sustainable development.

Since 2012, RBS has adopted an integrated approach to sustainability in the programmes. The audit panel was truly impressed to learn that RBS considers didactics an inseparable part of its sustainability tuition concept. The vision on sustainability is reflected in the topics lecturers teach (content of the modules, see 3.2), in the way they teach them (didactics) and in the way they assess them.

The didactical approach is based on three principles: constructivism, contextuality, and student-centeredness. All three programmes use a variety of didactical tools that suit the principle of sustainable development and promote 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration (teamwork), inter-cultural competence and creativity. These tools include written cases, field cases, (research and field) projects, assignments, discussions/debates, master classes and reading materials.

Each student brings his or her learning into the learning process. With regards to sustainability, this is an important assumption. The student's background colors ideas on sustainability. In the Netherlands, the government emphasises the greener aspects of sustainability, whereas, in other countries, social aspects might be deemed much more important. The knowledge is, therefore, the result of personal experiences and interpretations, which makes it imperative to find out how students construct the sustainability knowledge offered in the modules. Knowledge develops and changes, mainly by the sharing of multiple perspectives with other students. Which is why in our teaching approach, students are exposed to a broad range of cases with lots of opportunity for discussion. (SE, p. 33)

In the curriculum, interactivity is as much as possible incorporated in curriculum development. Ideally, didactical approaches such as 'flipping the classroom' are being used. A tool to facilitate this approach is the digital learning platform that runs on Moodle. With this digital approach, the curriculum can quickly adapt to incorporate the fast-moving trends within the sustainability sector and allows for discussions about the most current news topics or research findings.

#### Example

In the exchange programme (minor) the Fieldlab Circular Economy and Business Innovation the digital learning platform is used to disseminate knowledge, assess knowledge, communicate, stimulate discussion, and involve external stakeholders to get involved in parts of the programme. Students also works on as assignment for a (real) client organization (projects) and receive workshops (theoretical part) on themes as business research, circular in action, tools for the circular economy and sustainable finance.

Contextual learning as a principle means that effective learning needs to take place in a realistic environment. One of the representatives of the work field during the audit stated that students make a shift from the "educational bubble" into the "practical bubble". They first gather knowledge about sustainable development, then they begin to apply the concepts they learned in small projects/assignment and finally they practice in a contextual environment where they experience ambiguity, face challenges and have to work out solutions. It shows students how the theory works in practice and brings a sense of reality to the sometimes very ambitious plans students have.

A very useful didactical tool in the MSC and MCE programmes are the "sustainability pressure cooker" weeks. Pressure Cooker is a learning event during which teams of graduate students are given a real-life sustainability problem to solve within just a few days. Lecturers provide them with expert-lectures on relevant topics, and then require them to present a solution to the problem. Students attended lectures on Scenario Planning, Sustainable Innovation, Current Rotterdam Port Issues, and presentation skills, topics designed to help them with their team task. MSC and MCE offers other experiential learning activities to develop the needed skills and mindset of students. Those include game simulation where students practice decision making, performance and leadership (MSC), Concept battles (MCE) and Co-creation sessions.

In 2.3 the panel stated that boosting resilience of students is taking place through, inter alia, mentoring sessions (including a peer mentoring programme), through coaching and through professional development courses. This is consistent with the principle of student-centredness as a critical feature in the pedagogic-didactical approach. Students are stimulated to assume responsibility for their learning process, and support is based on individual needs and learning styles. Master students receive individual coaching when they partner up with a coach in a thought-provoking and creative process to maximize personal and professional potential. The aim is that students become autonomous and independent learners which prepares them for lifelong learning and independent problem-solving.

The panel concludes that the didactic concept of the programmes is truly geared to develop an attitude of responsibility for sustainable development. The use of real-life cases clearly stimulates the development of such an attitude in students. There is not only a clear link and alignment between vision and policy on sustainable development and the didactic concept, the didactic concept itself is also designed and implemented in interaction with stakeholders. This in particular is why the audit panel awards this criterion 4 stars.

# Criterion 3.2. Content of the courses

Level 1: Ad hoc	Education on sustainable development is developed on the basis of initiatives by individual teachers or students.
Level 2: Coherent	The core knowledge on sustainable development in the education domain has a traceable position in the curriculum.
Level 3: Systematic	Sustainable development is derived from the intended learning outcomes of the programme and visibly interwoven throughout the curriculum.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Knowledge transfer on sustainable development is designed and conducted in close cooperation with the industry and knowledge institutions.
Level 5: Exemplary	Institutions and organizations in society appreciate the training programme as an example for programmes in and outside the domain.

RBS has presented to the audit panel an overview of the content of the sustainability Bachelor curriculum (years 1-4) and the sustainability content of the masters' programmes. The topic sustainable development frequently recurs in the three programmes, and it has been visibly woven into the curriculum.

In the new IB curriculum, RBS fully integrated the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN SDGs) and the UN framework for value creation (the 5 Ps), as stated in 1.1. The subjects are integrated into newly developed modules. As a result, sustainability as a subject is recognized in three different ways, namely as:

- 1. an explicit subject in years 1, 2 and 4 (in the minor Fieldlab Circular Economy, Module Business Environment, Sustainable Business Models).
- 2. a case study integrated in a module, without assessing sustainability related learning outcomes in years 1, 2 and 3,
- 3. an explicit sustainability assignment, including the thesis assignment in years 3 and 4.

In the masters' curricula emphasis is placed on raising student's awareness on the importance of sustainable development and integrity. The master courses share a number of general modules. One of these modules involves managing corporate sustainability in which students need to develop a sustainable solution for a particular case and present these in an argumentative essay. In the Master of Logistic Management students examine for the module of warehouse management the consequences of the location, storing of goods and distribution from the view of e-commerce, information systems, sustainability and quality management. In the other Master courses, sustainability is integrated as a topic but not separately assessed.

The themes *Climate change and the transition to a circular economy* are also integrated into the various modules in both the IB programme and the masters' programmes. For instance, in the new IB curriculum, first year students will investigate externalities and the costs of these for society. In the current curriculum, the circular economy is integrated as a topic in year one, two and three. Additionally, it is a central theme in Minors offered in the Fieldlab Minor Circular Economy and Business Innovation, and International Finance and Accounting. Furthermore, these themes are part of the project Sharing Logistics which involves students of all years in the activities it organizes. In the Master programmes, these are part of the International Sustainability Pressure Cooker Event (see 3.1).

The *relationship between sustainability, finance, and accountancy* has matured since the last audit. From an elective on alternative financing that includes a substantial component on sustainable finance, the curriculum now includes elements such as CO<sub>2</sub> pricing, integrated reporting, and sustainable funding, for example, by banks. Sustainable finance is also a module in the Minor International Finance and Accounting. Sustainability now has a much more prominent place in finance and accounting.

The new IB curriculum is developed by a design team consisting of 30 lecturers from the RBS, under the guidance of a curriculum committee comprised of nine members. In the design team, the sustainability coordinator and a senior sustainability lecturer advise the module developers on how to integrate sustainability best into the different modules. The design process is iterative, with checks and balances at various points throughout. The audit panel finds this reassuring.

The panel arrives at the conclusion that the three programmes have successfully and visibly integrated the theme of sustainability into their curricula. Sustainability is integrated into nearly all educational activities, whether specifically on the topic of sustainability or as a case, learning activity or by using a framework in one of the other modules. The quality assurance process in place ensures that the content of the modules, and the assessment instruments used, reflect trends, and systematically work towards the goals for the end qualification in sustainable development.

# Criterion 3.3. Learning in the professional setting

Level 1: Ad hoc	The perspective of sustainable development in research and practical projects depends on the individual teacher or student.
Level 2: Coherent	Each student participates at least once in a practical assignment.
Level 3: Systematic	When conducting assignments in/for the industry students use the perspective of sustainable development.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Faculty and students together with the professional field and knowledge institutions execute projects that focus on innovations for sustainable development in the profession.
Level 5: Exemplary	The unit has a leading role in multidisciplinary innovation projects in the professional field along with civil society organizations, educational and research institutions.

All students participate in practical assignments in the professional field more than once, and students evidently use the perspective of sustainable development while carrying out the assignments. The panel draws the first conclusion on the basis of the didactical concept and the curriculum outline: both of these show that RBS predominantly works with real life cases (contextual learning). Also, where possible, students work on projects in the work field. In the audit both students and lecturers referred to example projects in which sustainability issues played an important role. For example, one of the goals of the Minor International Finance & Accounting (year 4) in 2019-2020 was to make students aware of the financial possibilities and obstacles for companies in a world shifting to a circular economy. Students worked on a project for a company called Gispen. The objective of the project was to gain an insight into the knowledge of circular business models and the resulting consequences for Gispen from a (sustainable) finance and financial reporting perspective.

Furthermore, IB students all do internships, which creates additional opportunities for them to use the perspective of sustainable development in the work field. Sustainability is integrated as an assignment in the placement report. Students need to describe and analyse the sustainable performance of the placement organisation where they work.

Other ways in which students get in touch with the work field is through participation in projects of professorships and guest lectures. In year two of the current curriculum students conduct a research assignment in the module 'Organisation Analysis and Entry Strategy', a module developed in collaboration with the research centre business innovation. Students learn how to collect data using a survey, analyse the data and report and discuss the findings. Every year a new sustainable assignment is selected (e.g. the effectiveness of the waste management activities of the municipality of Rotterdam; sustainable consumption of clothes and food in the consumption phases of purchasing, use and disposal of clothes or food items). This integration delivers two major benefits: students learn about sustainability on items that fit well in their daily lives, and at the same time come to grips with the technicalities of doing survey research while contributing to the body of knowledge.

The focus of the programme on real life cases (contextual learning), the involvement of stakeholders (from the work field and/or research centres) and the types of projects students do, strengthens the panel's conclusion that level 3 has been reached for this standard.

### **OUTCOMES**

# Criterion 4.1. Graduates

Level 1: Ad hoc	Some of the graduates are able to contribute to sustainable development in the profession or discipline.
Level 2: Coherent	All graduates are able to make an informed contribution to sustainable development in the profession or discipline.
Level 3: Systematic	All graduates are able to clarify the importance of sustainable development in their professional practice or research domain and initiate changes.
Level 4: Chain oriented	Graduates are competent to act in the profession or discipline as ambassadors and innovators in the field of sustainable development.
Level 5: Exemplary	Graduates play an initiating and leading role in the sustainability of the domain, both in knowledge and in professional practice.

The panel is convinced that every single graduate of one of the three programmes is able to make an informed contribution to sustainable development in the field. Sustainability is not a mandatory theme in the thesis right now, but RBS provided the audit panel with a list of sustainability-related theses of last and this year, both from the IB and the Master programmes. Below a few examples.

Programme	Thesis themes
B International Business	<ul> <li>Recyclability of products in the floral industry. (Celeste de Blieck, 2020)</li> <li>Sustainable mobility (improvement). (Jason Bos, 2019)</li> <li>Sharing logistics – shared warehousing application in fashion warehouses. (Sladjan Stojadinovic, 2020).</li> <li>Implementation (including awareness and acceptance) of green technologies in social housing. (Maquidu Frevry, 2018) (Avnishee Urvashi Tanakadoo, 2019)</li> </ul>
M International supply chain management	<ul> <li>Reducing the waste of fresh fruits and vegetables in the grocery retail supply chain. (Stella Müller, 2020)</li> <li>Transition towards product-service system as a sustainable and profitable alternative for traditional product-selling models. (Ermia Shafiee, 2020)</li> </ul>
M Consultancy and Entrepreneurship	<ul> <li>Sustainable fashion. (D.N. Quynh, 2020)</li> <li>Solutions for future mobility demand – sharing of mobility modes. (Steven Verstoep, 2019)</li> </ul>

RBS' quality assurance system with checks and balances at module, year and end level, ensures that students meet the official end level requirements for Ethical and Social Responsibility. In the IB programme, students write a thesis addendum (reflection report) in which they also have to formulate their position concerning ethical and social responsibility in a professional environment. Also, one of the MCE students with whom the audit panel spoke said that the lecturers were helping them to approach their thesis from a sustainability point of view. However, with respect to what is discussed above, the panel did not see any evidence of the lecturers always explicitly taking into account the theme of sustainability when assessing students' final projects (thesis). This could be considered a downside of the strong integration of sustainability in the study programmes. The theme is so deeply interwoven into the curricula that it sometimes becomes too implicit. The audit panel shows understanding for this, but nonetheless proposes that RBS seeks ways to explicitly evaluate students' awareness for sustainability issues when assessing their theses.

Part of this criterion is the extent to which graduates are able to initiate change. According to RBS to meet the end-level requirements for Ethical and Social Responsibility is not necessary for the creation of "ambassadors". The audit panel agrees with that. The panel is optimistic about students' ability to act as change agents. The graduates with whom the audit team spoke were very positive about the usefulness of the programmes. One of them said that it was not

possible to follow the programme without coming in contact with sustainability or any related (sub) theme. Also, having followed the programmes changed the students' perspective, they said. Sustainability became part of their mindset and has changed the way they look at doing business. One of the lecturers described it as "an inventiveness and willingness to really change the face of businesses". While the sample of graduates was of course still small, it was interesting to see that the alumni with whom the panel spoke clearly dealt with sustainability topics on a daily basis and that they were able to clarify the importance of sustainable development in their professional practice. Alumni testified that they are well-equipped to apply the sustainability related knowledge and skills as acquired in the programmes in their work as a (former) CSR Manager and a Business and Development Manager. Another interesting aspect according to the audit panel is the fact that RBS embraced resilience as a theme in its organisation, research and education. Being resilient to changes, being agile, is an important skill for future decision makers and change agents.

From the innovations of some of the students (see Chapter 4.2 Innovations), the panel gathers that a number of students succeed in initiating changes related to sustainability. However, the panel could not infer (e.g. from the Self Evaluation) to what degree this is true for all graduates, nor does the panel know whether graduates act as ambassadors and innovators in the field of sustainable development. Often, according to RBS, a focus on sustainability in the thesis phase is a good predictor of the extent to which students want to further their career in this field. Interviews with alumni or a survey study would enable RBS to learn more about this, and about students' needs to become true ambassadors during and after graduation.

In general, the audit team has reason to believe that the IB, MSC and MCE graduates indeed contribute to sustainable development in their profession or discipline, through the thesis they write and the (real life case) projects they carry out in the field. The panel considers this the key evidence that level 3 has been obtained for this criterion.

#### Criterion 4.2. Innovations

Level 1: Ad hoc	Research and / or graduation projects lead incidentally to innovative solutions for issues related to sustainable development.
Level 2: Coherent	In its research and / or graduation projects the course encourages students to arrive at innovative solutions for sustainable development related issues.
Level 3: Systematic	Research and education are systematically focused on developing sustainable innovations in professional practice and research.
Level 4: Chain oriented	In research and education there is a cooperation with external partners to achieve sustainable innovations in the discipline and professional practice
Level 5: Exemplary	The innovative sustainable solutions achieved in research and the teaching of the course and by its partners, are widely known in the profession, the discipline and society.

Research and education are systematically focused on developing sustainable innovations in professional practice and research. The audit panel observed that the staff members strongly encourage students to think of inventive solutions for sustainable development related issues. The Sustainability Pressure Cooker in the MCE programme is a perfect example of that. Students come up with smart solutions in course projects, internships and in their theses. The Self Evaluation provides examples of student initiatives that can be classified as innovations too.

The RBS collaborates closely with the Research Centre Business Innovation and the RDM Centre of Expertise on sustainability issues highlighted by the work field. The Research Centre Business Innovation is affiliated with the economic domain, whereas the RDM Centre of Expertise has its stronghold in the technical domain. Those professorships provide chances for cooperation with new external partners, or more intense cooperation with existing partners, and, as such, the professorship act as an accelerator for sustainability innovations from which the discipline and the professional field could profit (see also the framework below). The results are disseminated in the form of publications and other products such as the MOOC Circular Economy that is being developed, case studies, and research instruments.

The research conducted generates knowledge, insights and products that contribute to solving the issues in professional practice and to the development of the professional practice. The committee heard and saw some good examples in that respect.

The Fieldlab Minor Circular Economy and Business Innovation (CEBI) joins forces with the Research Centre Business Innovation in solving complex problems companies face with regards to the transition to a sustainable circular economy. In the past two years students worked with companies such as A&M recycling, the Dutch Design Foundation, the Soccer Club Excelsior, Groeibalans, the WUR, Royal IHC, Coppers Cress, and Halfweg Industrial Park. The projects varied from end of life options for infrastructure objects and train wagons, researching sustainable options, developing energy solutions involving peer2peer systems, changing to sustainable packaging materials, developing business cases for residual waste streams for fashion, conducting life cycle assessments for innovative mining methods, or assessing the ecological impacts of events.

Under project name Sharing Logistics, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences – together with Breda University of Applied Sciences and HZ University of Applied Sciences and practical partners\* – conducts a large study on the sharing economy as a promising development in the logistics sector. The project is used to investigate the extent to which logistical concepts based on the sharing economy can contribute to a significant reduction in CO2 and nitrogen (N2) emissions and to increasing efficiency within the sector. Participating companies receive advice from students on how to increase their returns, reduce costs and reduce emissions.

\* Bouwend Nederland, DOCKR, Evofenedex, GoederenHubs, GroenCollect, Kappa Koerier, KennisDC Logistiek, Nedcargo, OSI Global Supply Chain, RoutiGo and TLN.

The panel is impressed by some of the innovations of both students and staff listed in the Self Evaluation. It believes that the current sustainability innovations of students and staff could be shared (even) more widely than is currently done (also see Chapter 2.5 Communication), but it is clear that sustainability innovations emerge regularly, as students and staff work on real life cases that require real life solutions and the mode of thinking throughout the programme is sustainability oriented (see Chapter 2.3 Culture). In addition to that, the research conducted at the Research Centre Business Innovation and the RDM Centre of Expertise generates knowledge, insights and products that contribute to solving the problems that professional practice is facing regarding sustainability issues. Considering there exists a firm cooperation with external partners to achieve sustainable innovations, the panel draws the conclusion that all three programmes have reached level 4.

# **GENERAL ASSESSMENT**

The panel concludes that the IB, MSC and MCE-programmes in general meet the set criteria for a three star AISHE assessment.

# Overview of judgements

Subject	Criterion					
Goals	Vision	3				
	Strategy	3				
	Intended learning outcomes	3				
	Overall score on this subject: 3					
Staff and organisation	Staff	4				
	Network	4				
	Culture	3				
	Physical Environment	3				
	Communication	2				
	Overall score on this subject: 3					
Education	Didactics	4				
	Content of the courses	3				
	Learning in the professional setting (university of applied sciences, 'hbo')	3				
	Overall score on this subject: 3					
Outcomes	Graduates	3				
	Innovations	4				
	Overall score on this subject: 3					

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit team wishes to conclude this report with some recommendations:

- **Goals & Strategy:** Formulate concrete sustainability goals and devise a way to monitor, record and evaluate the progress of the goals set (Check and Act).
- **Network:** Improve alumni engagement. By building a stronger relationship with alumni, RBS can create a community willing to support the institute. Alumni can act as ambassadors for RBS. Think about ways to provide added value to alumni (e.g. sharing interesting content; organising events; providing a platform where alumni can connect, share memories, stories and experiences, get career support).
- Physical environment: RBS indirectly works on the reduction of its ecological footprint, but the audit team would suggest that RBS more explicitly formulates its own goals to reduce its footprint and to materialise its policy even better by outlining how exactly RBS intends to achieve the set goals. Communicate more explicitly to staff and especially students about initiatives to reduce the ecological footprint.
- **Communication:** Develop an explicit communication policy on sustainable development and execute this policy. Make sure the communication initiatives are tied to the sustainability goals as defined in the strategy of RBS. Be proud of innovations from students and staff ("be good and tell it")!
- Learning in the professional setting: develop learning in the professional field in regular programs by carrying out projects aimed at innovations together with companies and knowledge institutions. Make use of the experiences gained from the minors Sharing Logistics and Circular Economy
- **Graduates:** Search for ways to explicitly evaluate students' awareness for sustainability issues when assessing their theses. By strengthening the bond with alumni RBS can better demonstrate the extent to which graduates act as ambassadors in the field o sustainability.

# **APPENDIX: PROGRAMME**

AISHE date: 20 November 2020

Opleidingen				
Bachelor International business (BIB)	Re accreditation (level 3)			
Master International Supply Chain Management (MISCM)	Initial accreditation (level 3)			
Master Consultancy and Entrepreneurship (MCE)	Initial accreditation (level 3)			

Start	End	Content	Physical/ online	Role
8.45	9.30	Reception auditors from Hobeon Interview with management	Interview Room	Dean Course Director IB Course Director MA
				15 min break
9.45	10.30	Work field / Alumni Bachelor International Business Master International Supply Chain Management Master Consultancy and entrepreneurship	Via the outlook link Click here to join the meeting	Member of the company advisor Board   Ciparo Alumni BIB   former CSR manager IHC   Researcher Circular Economy Excess Materials Exchange Alumni BIB   Business Development Manager A&M Recycling Samen meer waarde   Industrial park Halfweg Molenwatering Enviu   Venture creators for global change Lyondell Bassell Groen Collect   involved in sharing logistics project Alumni MSc CE Professor Circular Economy   Research Centre Business Innovation
				15 min break
10.45	11.30	Lecturers Bachelor International Business	Interview Room	Senior Lecturer sustainability, marketing   GRI coordinator and lead trainer  preparing promotion research Energy Transition  Research lecturer research methods, sustainability  Postdoc sustainable consumption   Coordinator Fieldlab Circular Economy & Business Innovation (CEBI)  Research lecturer finance   Researcher sustainable finance   Coordinator minor International (sustainable) Finance  Senior lecturer organisation & strategy, sustainability   Coach Fieldlab CEBI

				Senior lecturer marketing, sustainability & professional development   Coach Fieldlab CEBI
				Principal lecturer economics   researcher internationalization   Coach Fieldlab CEBI
				Principal lecturer logistics & SCM / programme manager Sharing Logistics
				Research lecturer   member of the curriculum committee BIB
	•			
15 minute	es break			
11:45	12:30	Lecturers	Interview	Research Lecturer   Coordinator of the MCE program
		Master International Supply Chain Management	Room	Senior Lecturer   Coordinator of the MSC program
		Master Consultancy and entrepreneurship		Research Lecturer   Chair Curriculum Committee
				Senior Lecturer   member Program Advisory Committee (PAC)
1				Principle lecturer  Coordinator International Project  member PAC
				Principle lecturer MSC   Entrepreneur
12:30	13.15			
		Lunch panel members		
13.15	14.00	Students	Interview	Student year 1
		Bachelor International Business	Room	Student year 1
				Student year 2
				Student year 2
				Student year 3
				Student year 4
				Student year 4
				Student year 4
	1			15 min break
14.15	15:00	Students	Interview	
		Master International Supply Chain Management	Room	Student MSC
		Master consultancy and entrepreneurship		Student MSC
				Student MCE
				Student MCE
				Student MCE
45.45	45.55			15 min break
15.15	15:55	Reflection and deliberation panel members		
		I =		5 min break
16.00	16.30	Feedback	Interview	
			Room	



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