

# Report/Information/Follow up on Quality Assurance at the BUP

Why place a focus on QA?	1
The role of QA and the Values of HE	2
Overall mission/Wider contribution	2
The role of universities.	2
Related Concepts	4
Internationalisation	4
SDGs	4
ESD	5
Specific on QA and ESD	6

## Why place a focus on QA?

- The creation of sustainability offices or 'greening 'the campus is not enough to mean a radical transformation in higher education.
- This requires a reorientation around issues of QA- curricula, management, research, pedagogy.
- If sustainable development remains just an add on for education institutions and is mainly dependent on individual pioneers, its objectives will not be reached and it will struggle.
- To achieve the goal of integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into the core activities of universities lies in linking sustainability issues to an institution's quality culture and the institutional quality management systems that build upon it.
- Much like with sustainability, the problem is not that actors object to the key issue as such – for who would argue against quality and improvement – but the risk is that the implementation of the QA and improvement is limited and not widespread.
- The problem seems to be, how to transform this abstract acceptance of a value into the actors 'daily practices and interactions. In other words: make it a part of the institutional culture.
- ESDs and QAs strong connection to individual and collective values and the necessity to become an integrated part of daily actions and interactions in order to achieve the intended effects, can also be regarded as a strong connection between the two issues.

- If the focus is primarily on meeting the objectives of the next inspection or quality audit, there is no room for the dynamic and long-term horizon of ESD, which seeks to enable practitioners and learners to explore a more transformative educational experience.

### The role of QA and the Values of HE

- QA has a role in improving the best of what higher education has done in the past to build for a better future. The values include core ideas such as academic freedom. One additional core idea is a commitment to sustainability.
- QA has a role to play in supporting these values at a time of change and innovation at universities.
- Sustainability is one angle on this, of course there are many more- equality, race, Covid, diversity.
- QA can support and reinforce these values across our region.
- QA should also be a voice to students and society about these values and how they are important to quality higher education. Both students and (the large part) of society are wanting increased action on sustainability, QA can lead this.
- QA validates the importance of higher education. Means it can play a leading role.
- Universities that are able to sustain and commit to these values can benefit from the impetus provided by QA. There is often strong public support that emerges from a quality review. This helps to build wide investment at the university.
- QA has a responsibility for articulating the core values to students, government, employers and the public. This is the social responsibility.
- Notwithstanding the critical importance of quality assurance to protect academic standards, excellence in higher education can also be measured by the extent to which education is connected to societal challenges such as climate change.

### Overall mission/Wider contribution

- Today in the 21st century, the whole world has realised that, education has a role to lead sustainable development.
- A close set of regional partnerships focused on sustainability can be highly useful. International collaboration is good but often difficult to prove success. Furthermore, international collaborations are often limited to a few people and not widespread. The BUP's focus has always been about increasing meaningful collaboration in the BSR. The BUP can strive for real and meaningful collaboration instead with wide engagement, involvement of rectors, staff, students.

### The role of universities.

- Universities have new, reevaluated roles. These include providing strengthened citizenship and civic mindedness, away from classic economic ideas that universities are for income and

employment opportunities. Universities should engage with the community and contribute towards society's development. The dynamism of youth can also be harnessed.

- Higher education can engage with local communities more and make courses and programmes more aligned with the goals of national development.
- It is now time to create a strong unified voice on the global level to advocate for the commitment to a sustainable future for all. A broader approach to higher education's mission in aligning QA with sustainability can create even more relevance for the higher education community as a whole.
- Gearing study programmes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires transdisciplinary approaches, action-research and stronger linkages between research, policy design and labour market demands.
- Universities are uniquely positioned to contribute to the development of a global society which is more sustainable.
- Universities can focus more on social responsibility and on the sustainable development goals (SDGs). According to Wirz (2020), in recent years, top schools in the United States have "divested" in the fossil fuel industry, partly driven by students and alumni associations.
- In short, HEIs have to transform themselves in order to ensure that their members – administrators, faculty members, students, supporting personnel - become sustainability change-makers and lead to a transformation of how we treat, preserve, and protect nature, how we produce and consume, how we distribute values and how we secure an inclusive, fair and equal society (Mongkhonvanit et al, 2021).
- The SDGs have brought a new paradigm of education and learning. Quality of education and evaluation in the QA system, internal and external, need to recognize and reward initiatives in higher education both for, as, and about sustainable development. Promoting mutual collaboration and networking for sustainability.
- While striving towards sustainable development as the current vision of the world we want, higher education needs to remain trusted and a strategic partner.
- We must not forget that the local dimension is very relevant to sustainable development strategies and plays a significant role in knowledge construction processes.

Mongkhonvavin, P, Rukspollmuang, C and Sawheny, Y. (2021), IAU: The Power to Foster Higher Education for Sustainable Development, In: van't Land et al (eds), *The Promise of Higher Education*, Cham: Springer.

Wirz, M. (2020), *Universities cut oil investments as student activism builds*, Wall Street Journal. Available Online- <https://www.wsj.com/articles/universities-cut-oil-investments-as-student-activism-builds-11594719181>

## Related Concepts

### Internationalisation

- Internationalisation is a key concept, but can go further. This is key in the current context of a climate emergency as well as other factors. Economic rationales cannot drive internationalisation alone. It has to find a balance- around local, national and regional objectives. It can work to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- There has not been a sufficient sense of urgency on most campuses to warrant a sustained campaign for internationalization (Green, 2021).
- Internationalisation has new goals to meet, including sustainable development.
- Universities are challenged to be more sustainable and more equitable as well as serving the diverse needs of a wider range of local, national and international stakeholders (Noorda and Lock, 2021).

Green, M. (2021), Getting Unstuck with Internationalization at Home: Seizing the Post-pandemic Moment, In: van't Land et al (eds), *The Promise of Higher Education*, Cham: Springer.

Noorda, S and Lock, D. J. (2021), Promoting Values Together: Global Currency with Local Impact for Universities, In: van't Land et al (eds), *The Promise of Higher Education*, Cham: Springer.

### SDGs

The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are a range of assessors that are used by the organisation to compile these rankings. A number of related goals and their assessors are shown below. Whilst all goals are of key importance for universities and for becoming more sustainable, a number of related examples are given below. The SDGs are now key indicators and are something that the BUP could orientate around, whilst exploring QA.

#### **SDG 4- Quality Education**

- proportion of university papers that are viewed and downloaded
- proportion of university publications that are cited in the top 10%
- the scale of university papers on quality education
- proportion of graduates with teaching qualifications
- lifelong learning measures (providing access to materials, hosting events that are open to the public, educational outreach beyond campus, access policies that are open to all)
- proportion of first generation students

#### **SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth**

- proportion of publications that are focused on economic growth

-commitment to good practices (living wage, union recognition, policies around ending discrimination)

-expenditure by employee

-proportion of students taking work placements

-proportion of employees on fixed contracts

### **SDG 9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

-proportion of publications that are focused on industry

-patents citing research

-companies originating from the institution

-generation of new income

### **SDG 17- Partnership for the goals**

-proportion of output authored with low and middle income countries

-proportion of output related to the SDGs

-relationships with NGOs

-cross sectoral dialogue

-international collaboration of data

-collaboration for strong SDG best practice

-publication for SDG reports

-commitment to ESD education, commitment to specific courses on sustainability, commitment to sustainability outreach in the community.

Times Higher Education, Impact Rankings Methodology 2022, Available Online- [https://the-impact-report.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Impact+2022/THE.ImpactRankings.METHODOLOGY.2022\\_v1.3.pdf](https://the-impact-report.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Impact+2022/THE.ImpactRankings.METHODOLOGY.2022_v1.3.pdf)

### **ESD**

- Universities are key institutions for responding to sustainable development agendas. They can promote social innovations and lead co-creations for solutions to challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation and rising inequalities. (International Association of Universities 2019).
- The pressing needs of society can be incorporated into daily tasks at universities- such as teaching and research. Climate change is one subject that needs to be present in the agenda of those working with knowledge, in order to enhance a capacity to suggest solutions.
- These ideas have led ESD to relevance and an actively incorporated concept. The need to become more sustainable is now influenced by youth and student leadership.

- Between 2005-2014, the UN sponsored the Education for Sustainable Development Decade (UN-DESD). Emphasis was placed on ensuring that learners are expected to gain knowledge and acquire values regarding sustainable development and become co-creators for a more sustainable future in terms of the environment, economy and society for both present and future generations.

International Association of Universities, (2019), *International Handbook of Universities 2019*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

### Specific on QA and ESD

- Few tools exist regarding the integration between ESD and QA. It is in the hands of universities to work with this at the moment.
- Quality is always looking to be improved at universities, however, tools for its measurement have not kept pace, due to the resistance to this (Anderson, 2006). One element of quality is teaching students the skills required for change in society e.g. sustainability.
- ESD and teaching sustainability is a significant environmental aspect that universities can contribute to. This can focus on education, research, staff and faculties. Improvements in ESD teaching can simultaneously reduce other negative impacts, for example electricity consumption.
- Attempts to better integrate quality and ESD/environmentalism have begun outside of the education sphere. It remains new at universities (Ryan and Tilbury, 2013).
- QA can be used to enhance ESD, an enhancement which has been long advocated by the UN (2012).
- Instead, in many European quality standards, ESD is not recognised.
- This is disappointing as they can lead to a strong synergy between teaching, research and the community which can link well with other stakeholders. Both concepts are looking towards continuous development that provides benefits.
- QA providing a more holistic approach to the integration of ESD.
- Both enhancing ESD and quality assurance are based on systematic thinking and continuous improvement; both processes require that all stakeholders are aware and involved.
- How can QA contribute to as well as lead towards a more efficient fulfilling of ESD goals? The introduction of ESD and its success often implies a change which has enablers and barriers. These can be overcome with the help of QA.
- The BUP survey has revealed that whilst sustainability is found at BUP universities, the distinct and widespread integration of ESD on campus is not as strong.

- Leal Filho (2011) identifies poor commitment from management has been identified as a barrier to enhancing ESD in higher education, despite the clear benefits; the evolution and development of education and research, the specialization of graduates, and the diffusion of knowledge to society (Evangelinos et al, 2009).

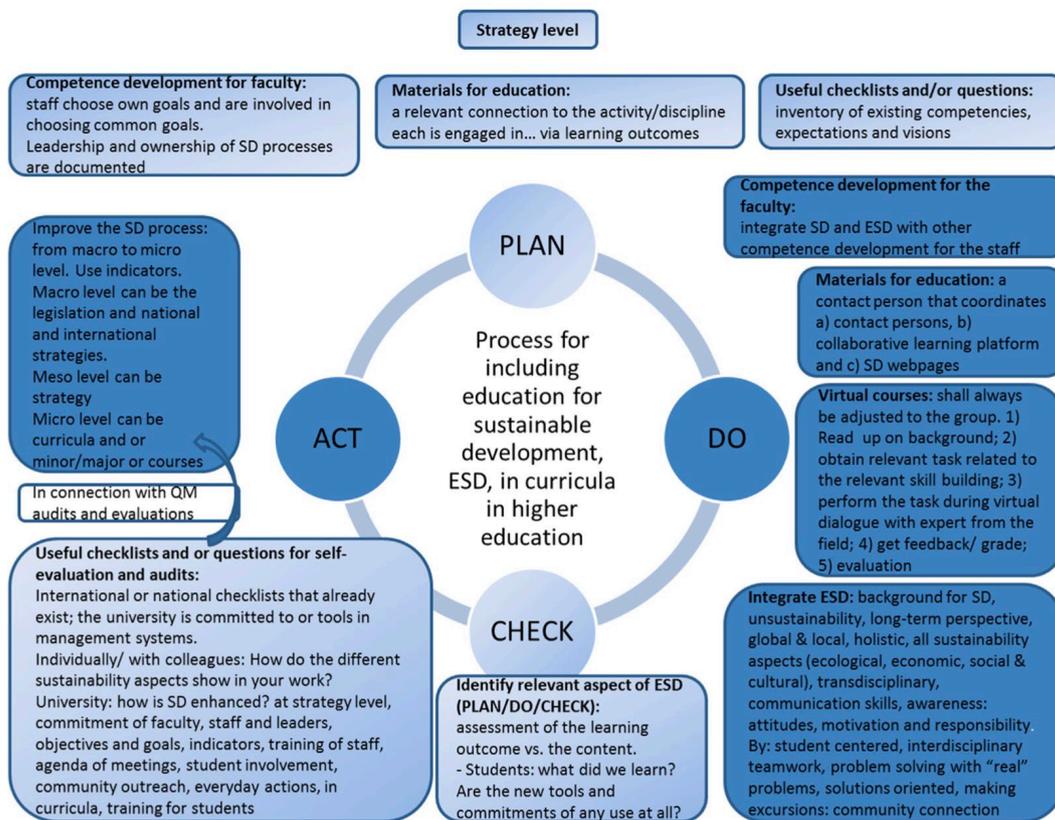


Fig. 2. The developed process framework for enhancing ESD with management systems in HE.

This is concerned with the process of integrating ESD and QA systems. The BUP is concerned with this. This diagram looks at process. (Holm et al, 2015).

- Some BUP challenges resulting from the survey relating to QA and ESD- limited teacher qualifications, existing disciplinary boundaries or subject separations, and an overcrowded curriculum, staff resistance, narrow definitions, focuses on administration, often missing in legislation (exc. Sweden). These are the challenges of integrating ESD in the region. NOTE- there are many drivers of this> Decade of ESD, international and national strategies, students, goals, collaboration.
- Despite the fact that the Nordic Council of Ministers and national strategies aim at leadership on ESD, ESD has yet to be integrated into quality assurance.
- Some work has been done regarding this integration (Holm et al, 2015) > the process requires a specialist, pushing the work forward, noticing possibilities, positive thinking,

knowing the connection between ESD and QA, being patient, setbacks, engaging more people, resistance, difficulty in getting senior management onboard.

- Whilst it may appear that ESD is linked within one discipline, it has a broad effect. It links in politically by looking at power structures, economically by looking at resources, socially by looking at how these resources are distributed (Holm et al, 2015).
- How can QA be used for the benefit of ESD>
- Quality cultures can make us reflect. What is important and from whose point of view? Is there a gap between the rhetorics and reality? Are the institutional identity and values mirrored in the strategic documents? How well does the institutional culture deal with change? Do the institutional strategies provide for the possibility (and necessity) of change in the institution and the institutional environment? How and how well can it cope with conflicts that may arise? Are the current tools and practices finding resonance with the stakeholders and actors they are intended to benefit? If not, why not? Which are the main inconsistencies and contradictions in and between the institution's sustainability rhetorics and actions? ESD can be reappraised. (Vettori and Rammel, 2014).
- Use QA to create a sense of ownership> encourage the various actors to try out their own ideas and approaches – and to participate in the consequences as well, independent of their success. Within a stakeholder-oriented approach, the university management represents just one of various perspectives, although with an arguably higher probability of being asserted (Vettori et al, 2007). On the other hand it is not sufficient to grant responsibility and autonomy: participants should feel compelled to actually take it. Communication and mutual trust can form the basis for this interplay of delegation and acceptance, but they depend on a successful implementation of trust-building actions.
- Develop a dialogue that fosters discussion> Discussion and negotiation formats play a pivotal role here, allowing a variety of actors to construct the communicative reality of sustainability together instead of receiving information and acting accordingly to the normative layer encoded in this information.



**A simplified version of the process for enhancing ESD with management systems that has been developed in the ESDAN project, applied at Novia University of Applied Sciences**

Novia University of Applied Sciences applies an integrated management system for quality, environment and safety, certified according to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.

**Improvement of the SD processes:** At the meso (strategic) level: the strategies are developed every three years, when also the text about SD and ESD in them is revised. At the micro (curricula) level: the realizations of the courses are followed up every second year. The curriculum is revised if necessary, and the relevant aspects of SD for the profession, which can be found in the curricula. Latest research results from the field is prioritized

**External audits:** the university has external audits every 9 months, according to ISO 9001 and 14001; every 6<sup>th</sup> year by the The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. The positive and developing reflection of the external auditors, of how ESD is implemented, motivates the personnel.

Vision: Novia University of Applied Sciences stands for quality in education, regional presence and sustainable ecological, economic and social development.

The main objective is to support our students' progress into quality- and environmentally conscious professionals who take sustainable development into consideration in their future careers.

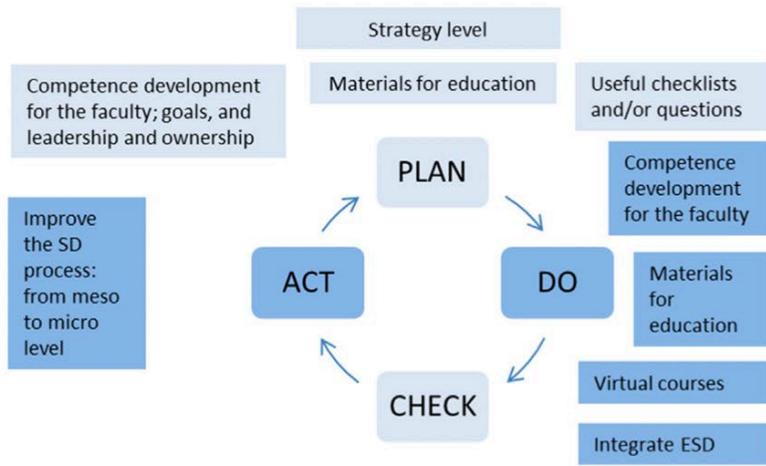
**Competence development for the faculty:** annual competence development for the faculty and staff twice a year; once a year for the entire staff and once a year for particularly the faculty.

**SD objectives:** we have overall objectives on the university level as well as on the faculty level and within the administration. The objectives have been identified in processes involving both staff and students. Our overall objective by 2015 is to implement sustainable development, SD, in the curricula of all degree programs.

**Leadership and ownership of SD processes:** are documented in the manual for the management system. Environmental coordinator: overall responsibility. Quality coordinators: unit /campus specific responsibility.

**Materials for education:** ESD is realized in the degree programs according to the curricula. Instructions to lecturers.

**Checklists:** every head of every degree programs answers to which are the relevant aspects of SD for the profession in the curricula.



**Competence development for the faculty:** annual competence development in SD for the faculty and staff, twice a year. The introduction about SD and ESD, is integrated in the overall introduction for new staff, about the management system.

**Materials for education:** the environmental coordinator coordinates information about contact persons, and materials and methods. ESD information and SD tip of the week on the intranet. Library: information literacy

**Integrate ESD: according to the pedagogical strategy.** The university is based on problem-oriented project work and teaching, sometimes referred as the Aalborg model (Brundiers et al., 2010). Thus the academic culture requires students to have a multidisciplinary and multi-methodological approach which very much keeps up a correspondence with ESD (Hansmann et al., 2009). Hence the following methods are very common: problem-based learning, critical thinking, reflective accounts, group discussion, fieldwork, lectures, case studies, etc. Also the student affairs office and the janitorial guide students.

Brundiers, K., Wiek, A. and Redman, C. 2010. Real-world learning opportunities in sustainability: from classroom into the real world, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*  
Hansmann, R., Crott, H. W., Mieg, H. A. and Scholz, R. W. 2009. Improving group processes in transdisciplinary case studies for sustainability learning, *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Ed.*

A process for enhancing ESD and QA at a BUP participating university (Novia). This is a Nordic example. Can we build this in the BUP? (Holm et al, 2015).

Anderson, G. Assuring Quality/Resisting Quality Assurance: Academics' responses to 'quality' in some Australian universities, *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp 161-173.

Evangelinos, K. I, Jones, N and Panoriou, E. M. (2009), Challenges and opportunities for sustainability in regional universities: a case study in Mytilene, Greece, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 17, No. 12, pp. 1154-1161.

Holm, T, Sammalisto, K, Grindsted, T. S and Vuorisalo, T. (2015), Process framework for identifying sustainability aspects in university curricula and integrating education for sustainable development, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 106, pp- 164-174.

Leal Filho, W. (2011), About the Role of Universities and Their Contribution to Sustainable Development, *Higher Education Policy*, Vol. 24, pp. 427-438.

Ryan, A and Tilbury, D. (2013), Flexible Pedagogies: new pedagogical ideas, The Higher Education Academy Report.

United Nations General Assembly, (2012), 'Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27th July 2012 –66/288. The Future We Want'.

Vettori, O, Lueger, M and Knassmüller, M. (2007), 'Dealing with Ambivalences. Strategic Options for Nurturing a Quality Culture in Teaching and Learning', In: *European University Association: Embedding Quality Culture in Higher Education. Linking Quality Assurance and ESD 65 A Selection of Papers from the 1st European Forum for Quality Assurance* (Brussels: European University Association).

Vettori, O and Rammel, C. (2014), Linking Quality Assurance and ESD: Towards a Participative Quality Culture of Sustainable Development in Higher Education, In: Fadeeva, Z, Galkute, L, Mader, C and Scott, G, (eds), *Sustainable Development and Quality Assurance in Higher Education*, Macmillan.