HZ University of Applied Sciences

B International Business

Limited programme assessment

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April 2026

B International Business

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Summary

In January 2026, the Bachelor programme International Business (IB) at HZ University of Applied Sciences (HZ) was visited by an audit panel from NQA. This four-year full-time programme is taught in English at the HZ location in Vlissingen. The audit panel assesses the quality of the study programme as **positive**.

The profile of the programme is broad and internationally oriented. Students learn all aspects of international business and special attention is paid to the mastering of languages and becoming familiar with different cultures. The programme considers this to be of eminent importance for the international professional field. This is also reflected in the composition of both the student community and the staff team, which is quite international, resulting in an appropriate teaching-learning environment for International Business.

Standard 1: Intended Learning Outcomes
The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements of the standard and aligns well with the expected profile. The learning outcomes correspond to the 2023 National IB profile and are endorsed by representatives of the professional field. The programme clearly substantiates that the learning outcomes meet HBO-bachelor level. The panel values the establishment of the professional work field committee and sees that during the development of the challenge-based programme this relationship has become more important. The panel advises the programme to document the advice given by the professional work field committee, such as the need for mastering a second foreign language, to substantiate the ongoing revision of the programme.

Standard 2: Teaching-Learning Environment
The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for this standard, offering a well-designed and effectively executed teaching and learning environment. The panel finds the revision from a course based to a challenge-based programme to be valuable and attractive for students. Lecturers have embraced the programme revision and make an effort to acquire sufficient assignments or ‘challenges’ for the programme. A matrix structure connecting IB disciplines to these challenges is in place, securing the further development toward the end levels of the PLOs. The panel advises the programme to keep a close eye on the balance between acquiring knowledge and developing professional skills. Regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI), the panel notes that current initiatives mainly occur at HZ level and advises integrating the AI aspects within the International Business domain. Student guidance is aligned with the vision of HZ: it is personal, informal, and highly appreciated by students. They value the staff’s expertise and international business experience. The lecturer team is dedicated, passionate, and internationally diverse. Together with an internationally composed student community, this creates a genuinely international teaching and learning environment.

Standard 3: Student Assessment
The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for Standard 3. Overall, the panel is positive about the assessment documentation and the assessing process itself. Students indicate that they are adequately informed about the assessment procedures, forms and criteria, and note that the programme effectively prevents free-riding behaviour. Assessment procedures are adequate, with strong but informal calibration among examiners. Therefore, the panel advises the

programme to make assessment quality-assurance processes more transparent. Although the Examination Board operates as to be expected, the panel recommends increasing the number of assessments reviewed by the Assessment Committee. For the revision of the programme, the panel would advise maintaining a balanced mix of oral and other assessment forms.

Standard 4: Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for Standard 4. Based on having studied fifteen graduation internship products, along with feedback from graduates and professional field representatives, the panel concludes that all intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The graduation products studied meet the expected standards. However, the panel notes that the alignment between graduation components and the PLOs could be clearer, which is why they would advise improving the connection between assessment criteria and PLOs in the new programme. The professional field is positive about graduates' performance: IB alumni demonstrate initiative, perseverance, and strong interpersonal skills. Alumni also confirm that the programme prepares them well for contributing effectively to international business practices.

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Introduction

This assessment report constitutes the assessment of the Bachelor programme International Business (IB) at HZ University of Applied Sciences (HZ). The assessment itself was done by an audit panel compiled by Netherlands Quality Agency (NQA) and commissioned by HZ, in consultation with the programme representatives. The audit panel was approved by NVAO prior to the assessment process.

In this report the NQA panel describes its findings, considerations and conclusions. It also gives some recommendations for the programme. This report has been drawn up in accordance with the *Assessment Framework for the Higher Education Accreditation System of the Netherlands* of NVAO, the *Uitvoeringsregels accreditatiestelsel hoger onderwijs Nederland 2025* of NVAO and the *NQA Guideline 2025 for Limited Programme Assessment*.

The site visit took place on 22 January 2026. The audit panel consisted of:

Name	Role	Function
Drs. D.J.N.M. Rijnders	Panel Chair	Until January 2023, senior policy advisor practice-oriented research at Avans UAS
Saulius Buivys	Domain Expert	Leading Lecturer Master Consultancy and Entrepreneurship at Rotterdam Business School
Dr. mr. B.F.W. Wernaart	Domain Expert	Head of Research, Fontys School for Business and Communication
S.A.W. Valentijn	Student Member	Studying the MSc programme in Marketing Analytics at Tilburg University

Ir. A.B.C. Hoitink, NQA auditor, acted as secretary to the panel.

The IB bachelor programme is part of the audit cluster HBO IBMS groep 3 Zuid. The audit panels of this cluster have been aligned with each other, in the first place through the instruction of their members about the NVAO assessment framework. From the start, this alignment is guaranteed by the overlap between the composition of all the panels. In addition, considering that each assessment of a study programme is an individual assessment, as a result of the overlap between the composition of the panels, there has been progressive reflection on previous site visits within the audit cluster wherever relevant. Furthermore, the alignment between panels is guaranteed by the support of the same panel secretary as often as possible, and by employing well-trained panel chairpersons.

Method of working of the panel and process
The IB programme has delivered a self-evaluation report with appendices for this assessment. For the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes, the panel has studied fifteen graduate files of recent graduates. These fifteen graduate files have been selected from the list of alumni of the last two academic years. This selection has been made while taking a variety of grades into account.

The core of the assessment is the site visit by the panel, consisting of expert peers. To prepare the visit the panel held a preliminary meeting, where the panel members have been instructed about NQA's method of working and about the *NVAO-Assessment Framework*. In this meeting the panel members also discussed their tentative findings. During both the preliminary meeting and during the site visit, panel members shared their findings continuously with each other.

During the site visit, the panel spoke with various stakeholders of the study programme, such as students, lecturers (assessors) and representatives of the work field and it studied several documents, see Appendix 2. At the end of the site visit, the panel incorporated all the obtained information into an overall view and into a provisional well-argued assessment. In the final oral feedback session, the chairperson of the panel communicated the panel's conclusive assessment and its major findings to the programme's representatives.

Staff members and students of the study programme were given the opportunity to approach the panel (via mail) in confidence to bring those matters they consider important to the assessment to the attention of the panel. However, nobody made use of this opportunity.

After the site visit, a draft report was drawn up, which was presented to the panel first. On the basis of the panel's input, a second draft was made, which was then presented to the study programme for a check on factual inaccuracies. The panel members have taken note of the reaction by the representatives of the study programme and, wherever necessary, adapted the report. Subsequently, the report was made final. With all information provided (orally and in writing), the panel has been able to make a well-considered judgement.

The audit panel declares that the assessment of the study programme was carried out independently.

Utrecht, April 2026

Panel chair	Secretary to the panel
Drs. D.J.N.M. Rijnders	Ir. A.B.C. Hoitink

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Characteristic Features of the Study Programme

HZ is a medium-sized university of applied sciences that offers 33 study programmes at various levels, such as Associate degree, Bachelor or Master, and has been organised in three main domains: Business, Vitality & Hospitality, Health Education & Wellbeing and Technology, Water & Environment. During the site visit, around 4400 students in total were enrolled at HZ, just over 800 of them being international students. The IB programme is placed in the Business Vitality & Hospitality domain. Around 225 students are enrolled, of which just over half, around 140 students, have an international background.

At the moment of this visitation, the IB programme was in the process of implementing a revised programme. In the current programme three different tracks are offered. A revision was needed because of demographic developments and the national pressure on international programmes. The IB programme developed a new educational vision and profile for a future proof programme, while simultaneously implementing the new National IB profile The first year has been introduced and the second year is being developed. It is going to be offered in September 2026. Subsequently, the revised third and fourth year will be introduced a year later.

Basic Data of the Study Programme

Institute	
Name in RIO	HZ University of Applied Sciences
Address	P.O. Box 364, 4380 AJ Vlissingen
Website	www.hz.nl
BRIN-number	21MI
Status	Funded
ITK	Positive

Programme	
First name in RIO	B International Business
Location	Vlissingen
ISAT-code	30029
RIO-sector	Economy
Orientation and Level	Applied sciences, Bachelor
Language of Instruction	English
All programmes, majors and specialisations	4-year track
Joint Programme	Not applicable
Degree and Degree Addition	Bachelor of Business Administration
Study Load in EC	240 credits
Variant	Full time
Submission date	1 May 2026
Date of site visit by visitation panel	22 January 2026

Retrospective View of the Previous Accreditation

This paragraph gives a summary per standard of the recommendations given by the previous panel and subsequently the follow-up given by the programme.

Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes

- *Discuss strategic matters and decisions with work field representatives.*
- *Premature programme information should be removed from the CER and specify the end levels of additional languages next to Business English in the CER.*

A formal professional field committee was installed to discuss strategic matters and decision-making with the work field, such as the new national IB profile and the revision of the programme. The premature information is not relevant anymore and the end levels of additional languages is specified by the programme.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

- *Further development of the IB lecturers' team towards a (self-steering) team is advised.*
- *Connection with research groups can be intensified.*
- *The Board of Studies has to be able to meet without the programme coordinator present.*
- *Incorrect information about short track programmes is to be removed.*

The IB team has further developed because of lecturers retiring and new lecturers having been appointed. Despite several initiatives, the connection of the programme with research groups is still limited. There are ties with the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Knowledge Centre that is focusing on sustainable innovations and entrepreneurship. In addition, some lecturers are affiliated with the Supply Chain Innovation and Data Science research groups at HZ. Concerning the Board of Studies, the meetings are without the programme manager being present, unless this is requested. Finally, regarding the short track programmes, the programme has stopped offering these programmes.

Standard 3. Student assessment

At the previous accreditation the panel identified four shortcomings. The conditions specified were re-assessed in 2022 by the previous panel. At this re-assessment, the panel concluded that that the programme has met the conditions related to the shortcomings.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

- *Emphasise the professional product (and the recommendations for the company) more and intensify the relation with alumni and work field representatives.*

The professional product has become the most important part of students' graduation work. The panel notes that the programme's relation with the professional field has intensified. This is not only because of the professional field committee itself, but it is also caused by the revision of the programme with a challenge-based approach that intensifies contacts with the work field.

Assessments of NVAO Standards

Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for this standard. The orientation of the programme profile is according to the panel's expectations. The learning outcomes are in line with the 2023 National IB profile. In addition, these learning outcomes are endorsed by members of the professional field. The HBO-level of the learning outcomes is also clearly substantiated by the programme. The panel is positive about the installation of the professional work field committee. Similarly, the development of challenge-based education strengthens the connection with the professional field. For the further development of the challenge-based programme, active involvement of the professional field has even become more important. The panel advises the programme to record the expectations by the professional field well, since these expectations are vital for the programme profile, as is the importance of mastering a second foreign language.

Substantiation

Professional field and programme profile
The international business environment presents a mixture of opportunities and challenges. Global connections provide large markets and opportunities to diversify. These days, businesses can identify markets more specifically because of the availability of data from anywhere in the world. On the one hand, opportunities to develop business activities are increasing, while on the other hand, business development has become more challenging for ecological, societal and economic reasons. This makes developing international businesses easier but at the same time more complicated as well. The programme states that graduates are expected to be able to redefine and redesign international business practices and to consider the societal, ecological and economic consequences of these business practices.

Via focus group meetings, the programme revised the programme profile as part of the educational revision. Several focus group meetings were held with various stakeholders, such as work field representatives, students, alumni, staff an experts from the international business domain. This led to the general vision of the programme which is 'shaping international business professionals who combine a deep expertise in International Business with general skills to navigate global challenges.' The programme aims to educate professionals who are resilient, adaptive, innovative and who embrace complexity. It is important that intercultural awareness is cultivated as well as the drive for developing sustainable and responsible business strategies. This vision is in the line with the general vision of HZ and is translated into the following competence profile:

- Strategic & Sustainable Thinkers: Identifying and seizing global business opportunities while balancing profit, people, and planet.
- Innovators & Change-Makers: Developing adaptive business models, supply chains, and workforce solutions to tackle uncertainty.
- Global Connectors: Building strong international networks and partnerships to foster collaboration.
- Agile & Future-Focused: Applying data, technology, and foresight to create long-term business value.

Intended learning outcomes
In the existing programme (years 2 to 4), the intended learning outcomes are based on the 2017 National Framework for International Business Programmes. This Framework defines the IB intended learning outcomes via the following four domains:
1. Ways of Thinking,
2. Living in the World,
3. Ways of Working,
4. Tools for Working & Management.

In total, fourteen competency areas are defined related to these four domains. Subsequently, each competency area is elaborated in one or more learning outcomes. This national framework consists of a total of twenty-four Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs).

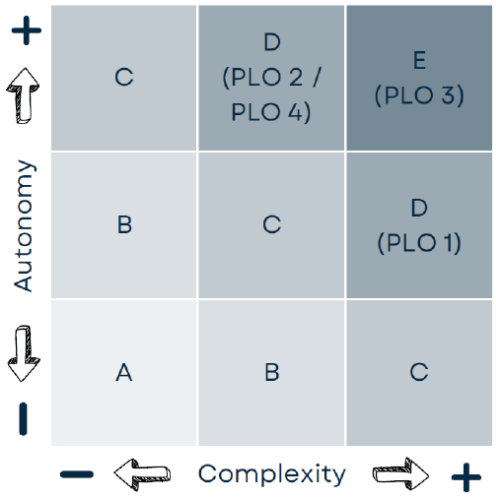
The revised programme (year 1) is based on the 2023 National Qualification Framework International Business. In comparison to the previous national profile, there is more attention for personal growth and reflection. In this framework no specific guidelines for the command of a foreign language have been given. Similarly, the PLOs have been defined more broadly and the number of PLOs has been reduced from twenty-four to the following four PLOs:

An IB professional facilitates sustainable international (global) business development by:
PLO1 Defining international business opportunities and recommending possible strategies for the organisation to create sustainable multi-sided value for stakeholders.
PLO2 Contributing to business (systems) transitions and transformations in order to optimize sustainable international business practices.
PLO3 Cultivating and managing internal and external relationship with culturally diverse stakeholders in a responsible manner to achieve (mutual) business goals.
To do this successfully, they need to:
PLO4 manage themselves in a complex surrounding and develop their professionalism for the benefit of the organisation, the field of international business and themselves.

The panel is positive about the discussion that the programme initiated with various stakeholders about the new PLOs and the implications for the programme. One of the outcomes of these discussions was that mastering a foreign language is of eminent importance for IB professionals. Subsequently, the programme has decided to pay special attention to mastering a second foreign language in the revised programme. The panel notes that documentation of this discussion is limited. The panel considers this to be a vital importance in order to substantiate the revision that is in process. Therefore, the panel advises the programme to document the expectations from the work field and the developments in education or the IB domain better to ensure that the programme will be revised in the appropriate direction.

Level

According to the panel, the level of the intended learning outcomes meets the agreed criteria for education at Bachelor level. The PLOs of both the previous and the latest National IB Profile are aligned to the Dublin descriptors and are classified at level 6 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF). In addition, the complexity of a task and the autonomy of execution is specified via the Autonomy and Complexity (AuCom) model. This model distinguishes 5 levels from A to E. the panel agrees with the end levels as mentioned in figure 1; level E for PLO3 and level D for PLOs 1, 2, and 4. The panel also agrees with the suggested intermediate level and lowest level per PLO as is presented in a breakdown document. It gives a clear overview of the core professional actions and activities on beginners, intermediate and end level and provides a solid basis for the development of the revised programme.



International orientation

The main focus of the programme is to educate students for the international labour market. Therefore, the panel fully supports the use of the English programme name, which is also in line with the National Qualification Framework for International Business. Graduates of this programme find roles and functions in the international business environment in roles such as account manager, export manager, project manager and consultant. Students find positions at global companies such as KLM, Deloitte, SAP, Coca Cola or IKEA. Therefore, the panel also fully agrees that this programme is offered in English.

Consultation with the Professional Field

The programme organises a professional field committee at the least twice a year. In these meetings representatives from globally operating companies and alumni are consulted about developments in the programme, and developments in the professional fields are also discussed with the programme in these meetings. The representatives from the work field have given additional input on topics valuable for the programme revision, such as the importance of Artificial Intelligence in international business and the implications for the programme. In addition to their presence in the professional field committee, professional partners also provide lectures with insights and new developments in the curriculum. The panel considers these partnerships of vital importance for the further development of the challenge-based programme. For this reason, the panel advises the programme to further invest in these partnerships, while simultaneously improving the documentation regarding the professional field committee meetings in order to keep track what follow-up points are implemented in the programme afterwards.

Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment

The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for this standard. The teaching and learning environment have been designed very well and function properly. The panel finds the revision from a course based to a challenge-based programme to be valuable and attractive for students. The panel notes that lecturers have embraced the programme revision and the panel acknowledges the effort the team is making to acquire suitable 'challenges' for the whole programme. The panel also notes that a matrix structure connecting the IB disciplines with the challenges is in place. This is important for the further development of the teaching-learning environment towards the end levels of the PLOs. The panel advises the programme to keep a close eye on the balance between acquiring knowledge and developing professional skills. Furthermore, the panel advises the management of the programme to provide the team with enough time and the means to continue this process of revision. Regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI), the panel notes that they are mainly dealt with on HZ level, which is why the panel advises the programme to encompass all aspects of AI in the International Business programme, tool. Student guidance is in line with the vision of HZ: it is personal and informal. This is a strong feature of the programme. Students appreciate the personal approach of the staff members and value the quality of their expertise and experience in international business. The team of lecturers is dedicated, passionate and combines various nationalities. The panel considers this to be valuable, and, together with the fairly international student community, leading to a truly international teaching-learning environment.

Substantiation

Structure of the programme
At the time of this visitation the current programme is offered to students in years 2 to 4 and consists of three tracks; Languages, Hybrid and Business, as is presented in figure 2. In the Language track students study two additional languages besides Business English. The Hybrid track involves one additional language and additional IB topics. In the Business track additional elective topics are offered. The subjects offered in all these tracks are relatively small in size. In general, the topic size varies between 2 to 4 EC. In Annex 3 an overview of the existing programme is given.

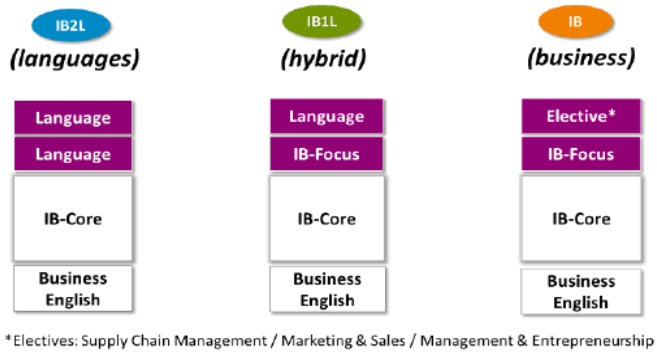


Figure 2: Overview of the tracks in the existing program (year 2 to 4) (SER HZ 2025)

The new programme has no tracks anymore and combines additional IB topics with one additional language. Students study modules of at least 5 EC. They work on business challenges and the IB topics required for the challenges are offered in an integrated way. Figure 3 gives an overview of the first year that is currently running. In the first year students work on seven business challenges (light blue colour). Next to these challenges students spend 15 EC on Business English and on an additional language: Dutch, German, Spanish or French (dark blue colour). The remaining 10 EC has been allocated to Professional Development and Personal Growth activities (orange colour). An overview of the new programme year 2 to 4 is presented in Annex 4.

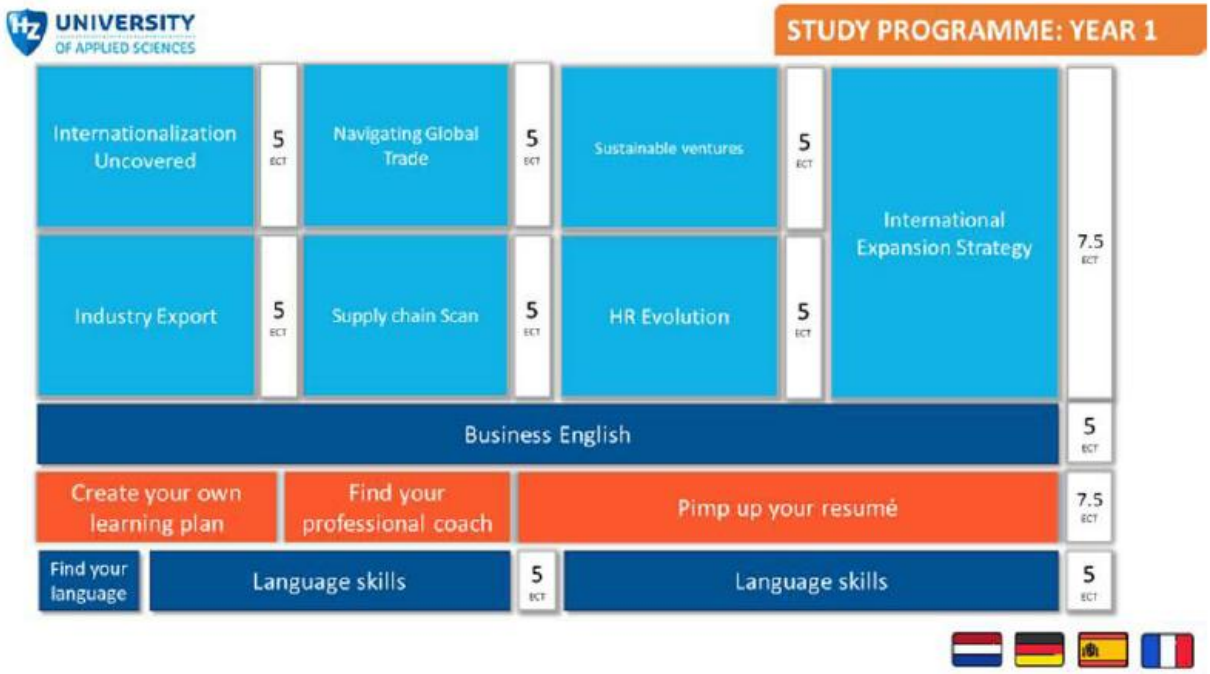


Figure 3: Overview of the first year of the new programme (SER IB HZ 2025)

The structure of the third semester is similar to the first-year programme. It consists of six business challenges (see annex 4). The fourth semester is assigned to the development of a Student Company. The third year consists of a minor and a placement abroad. At least one of these two semesters must be spent in a country where the chosen additional language is the standard language. The fourth year begins with an interdisciplinary project and the programme is completed through the graduation semester in which students conduct an in-company research.

Content of the programme
The panel notes that the content of both the existing and the new programme gradually has a clear and well-structured build-up. In line with the former as well as the latest national IB Frameworks, the programme distinguishes three levels for the PLOs. The lowest level is reached in year 1, the intermediate level in year 2 and 3, and the end level in year 4. In the new programme students are challenged by working on assignments coming from small or medium-sized enterprises that operate, or have plans to operate, across borders. Through these challenges students learn what internationalization entails (block 1). The challenges in block 2 are on determining the best international entry strategy for a company and in block 3 the challenges are about identifying Human Resource strengths and weaknesses of an existing, growing, international company. Together with the challenge in block 4, 'The Boss', all these challenges lead to professional products and the various disciplines needed to work on these challenges are offered in an integrated way. The first results of this programme are promising. The staff mentions that motivation of the students has improved, and students indicate that they appreciate delivering professional products or activities over studying for written examinations. Yet, according to the lecturers, this challenge-based concept requires more time for preparation and more cooperation between disciplines. Therefore, the panel advises investing in building a solid network of partner companies in order to have sufficient and suitable challenges for this programme in development.

In the second year of the existing programme, the three tracks share a major part of each semester or block. In the first block the courses are related to Organisational Behaviour, International Economics, Management Accounting and Customer Company Communication. Depending on the track, additional IB elective and/or additional languages are offered. In the second block the core theme is Research & Innovation. Students conduct research to identify market opportunities for a product or service. In this way, they demonstrate appropriate research and analysis skills, as well as pitching skills when they give a presentation in a setting similar to a Dragons Den. The best business ideas are selected for the Student Company semester in blocks 3 and 4. In this semester, students learn about starting, running and closing a company. About half of the credits are dedicated to working in this student company. The other half of the credits consist of courses needed to successfully run a business, such as Customer Relations Management, Finance, Supply Chain Management, Business & Shareholder meeting skills and presentation skills.

The central theme of the third year is to develop yourself as a student in a foreign environment. In this year students are expected to further develop their personal international network. During the internship or work placement, students spend one semester at an internationally operating organisation. During this internship, students combine working for the organisation with the execution of one or more assignments. They learn to perform effectively in a multicultural professional setting. The second part of the third year consists of the minor allowing students to broaden or deepen their knowledge and skills. HZ offers minor programmes together with around 50 bilateral partner institutions. Students often choose minors that relate to their special interests in either Marketing & Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations and Supply Chain Management or Organisation and People.

In the fourth year, students are expected to contribute to the international ambitions of enterprises. Often these enterprises are small or medium-sized enterprises. In the first semester, students of all the tracks study several IB core courses, such as Corporate Strategy & Governance (6 EC), Marketing, Sales and Analytics (8 EC), Supply Chain Management & Finance (4 EC), Geopolitics (2 EC), and HRM (2 EC). Additionally, depending on the chosen track, students study electives and focus modules, such as Business Improvement Tools & Techniques or Data Analysis, or they complete their chosen additional languages at the end level. In the last semester students complete their programme with a Graduation Internship. The contents of this semester is described in standard 4 of this report.

In general, the panel agrees that the theory offered is broad. Students learn about all aspects of international business. In addition, the panel agrees with the decision to introduce a challenge-based programme without tracks and also with the decision to include proficiency in one additional language besides business English. The panel advises the programme to monitor the balance closely between knowledge acquirement and professional skills development in this challenge based educational concept. The programme offers students enough options to emphasize certain aspects of International Business through the minor, the work placement and the graduation internship. Moreover, students can still focus on e.g. marketing and sales, controlling, HRM or on supply chain management. According to the panel this is well balanced and this corresponds with the generally used phrase: the IB professional is the jack of all trades of International Business.

Professional Skills and Competencies
The programme pays enough attention to the development of professional skills and competencies. The new programme has an umbrella course running throughout the whole semester (figure 2 orange colour). In the beginning, the development is aimed on building confidence that students can develop as IB professionals. Students are challenged in thinking independently and critically. At the end of the first year, they are expected to have worked out a personal and professional development journey for the main phase of the programme. This continues in the second year with the themes ‘broaden your horizon’ and ‘the development of entrepreneurial skills’. Students continuously connect their skills and competence development with what they have learned and experienced during the projects and challenges.

Research Skills
The panel clearly sees a gradual development of the research skills. Throughout both the current and the new programme there is attention for the development of research skills. In the first year, for example, students conduct a market research. And in the current second year they conduct an innovation research as part of the student company semester. The gradual development of these skills is visible in the material that was examined. The end level is developed in the work placement and during the graduation internship.

Admission regulations
The panel notes that the admissions procedure is adequate and that is in line with the national IB framework. The programme is open to students with a HAVO, VWO, or MBO level 4 diploma. Students with a HAVO Culture & Society (CM) profile are expected to complete remedial courses in either Economics or Mathematics. International applicants are expected to have a similar pre-education and they are required to give evidence of their English proficiency. Additionally, all

applicants are expected to complete a Study Choice Check in order to assess their motivation and alignment with the programme profile.

Guidance
A strong feature of the programme is the personal approach in student guidance and coaching. Students indicate that lecturers are easy to approach and that they know the students personally. The personal approach starts immediately in the introduction week. Each student is assigned to a study career coach and in the first block several study coach meetings are planned. In the first year, coaching focuses on becoming familiar with HZ, the routines and procedures of studying the programme, together with the use of the digital educational platform Learn that contains the information of all the courses. In the second year, the study coaching is more at the request of the students, for instance, if students need support to improve their study skills. If necessary, students are referred to a counsellor or student psychologist. HZ has developed a policy for students with extra needs for support. The general aim is to provide tailor-made support to students with social, physical and/or mental barriers. Three types of support are distinguished: adjustments in the organisation, adjustments in assessing and additional support, such as extra test time, alternative forms of testing, the use of supporting resources or specific study career coaching.

Lecturers
The staff team consists of thirteen lecturers (9,5 FTE). The team recently faced a few personnel challenges, such as the retirement of three senior lecturers, but this was solved by appointing new lecturers from abroad. In addition, lecturers experienced quite some pressure developing the new programme alongside teaching the existing programme. The panel notes that the majority of the lecturers has an international background; nine lecturers out of thirteen are coming from various parts of the world. The panel has seen that the team is working together closely in developing the new and offering the current programme. This internationally composed team is considered to be a strong feature of the programme, for it is providing a rich multicultural setting. Educational aspects are as to be expected; lecturers are trained in the basics of didactic competences (BDB) and the basics in examining (BKE). The findings of the panel are supported by the students. They told the panel that they experience the lecturers as supportive, communicative, knowledgeable and experienced. Students feel that they are heard and seen, when advice is needed. Lecturers are also valued for their motivation to provide additional advice and support when needed.

Standard 3 Student Assessment

The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for this standard. Overall, the panel is positive about the assessment documentation and the assessment procedures themselves. Students indicate that they are adequately informed about the assessment procedures, forms and criteria. They also mention that the programme adequately prevents free riding behaviour in group work. The daily process of assessment is adequate and the calibration between examiners is strong, but rather informal. The processes related to ensuring assessment quality could be presented more clearly. Although the examination board is operating as to be expected and procedures of assurance are executed as planned and agreed, the panel recommends increasing the number of assessments that is checked by the examination committee. Regarding the revised programme, it is advisable to keep a proper balance between oral assessments and other forms of assessment.

Substantiation

Assessment Policy
The IB assessment policy is in line with the HZ assessment vision and policy on this. According to this vision, assessing must contribute to a deeper insight into the learning process for both lecturers and students. Assessing must also be properly aligned with learning activities in order to give an insight into the level achieved and moreover to give more insight into the next steps for further development. In this way, assessing becomes a vital element of learning and supports students to self-steer their process of development. The HZ policy also provides a framework for examinations and tests. It distinguishes seven types of assessments: written knowledge tests, oral assessments, assignments, presentations, portfolios, criterion-referenced interviews and (workplace) assessments. It also describes assessment protocols and altogether offers a clear basis for designing an assessment programme and assessment itself.

Assessments
For every course an assessment table is provided. Students feel well informed beforehand. They are informed about the PLOs that are addressed in the assessment and about the assessment form. In the current programme, a major part of the assessments is individual. Testing consists mainly of written exams for smaller sized courses (2 – 4 EC). In the revised programme assessing is shifted towards assessing professional products that are more often delivered by a group of students. Assessment in the revised programme is more integrated with the challenge itself. Formative feedback is given during a block and the summative assessment at the end. Students are assessed via a portfolio with evidence that certain skills or knowledge are acquired or present, and that students are able to defend the professional product. Students find the new way of assessing to be motivating and stimulating. They also experience that in group work, their individual contributions are assessed adequately. The panel agrees that the first experiences are

positive but also notes that oral assessments are now becoming the predominant form of assessment. The panel advises the programme to maintain the balance in the various ways of assessing in order to maintain effective and efficient assessing for both students and lecturers.

Structure of graduation assessments
In general, the panel is satisfied with the graduation assessment procedure. The rubrics of the assessment form substantiate the marks given. Although the feedback is somewhat limited, all components together give a solid impression of the end level achieved. The graduation assessment is divided into several stages. In the initial phase of the internship and graduation project, the HZ supervisor, the company supervisor and the student agree on the type of research and the professional product to be delivered. During the internship, there is formative feedback given and at the end there is a summative assessment consisting of four components. Students hand in the professional product agreed upon and a justification of their research. These two components constitute half of the final mark. Subsequently, students present and defend the graduation project. The final part is an interview based on a portfolio to assess that a student has reached the end level of the PLOs. The four-eyes principle is applied to all these components. The company supervisor is not involved as an examiner but can give advice to the HZ examiner and HZ supervisor.

Quality assurance
The panel agrees with the way HZ has divided the roles of ensuring and assuring the assessment quality. The lecturers of the IB programme are responsible for ensuring the assessment quality while the Examination Board is responsible to assure the assessment quality. The programme ensures the quality via various means, such as coverage matrices, BKE certification requirements and the four-eyes principle. There is also enough attention for calibration between examiners, but in a more informal way, by alternating assessment panels and evaluation sessions. The panel advises the lecturers of the programme to better document the efforts to ensure quality.
The Examination Board is responsible for safeguarding the quality of assessing. There is one Examination Board for all HZ programmes and there are three Sub Exam Boards (DEX, Deelexamencommissies), one per domain.

Figure 4: Organisation of the HZ Exam Board, DEX and Assessment Committee (SER IB 2025)

The programme is represented by one person in the DEX for the domain Business, Health and Vitality (BVH). Based on the site visit and the Examination Board's annual report the panel concludes that safeguarding the assessment quality is adequately executed by the Examination Board. Achieving the intended final level is guaranteed by monitoring the application of strict protocols. This involves measures such as applying the four-eyes principle, the separation of roles between supervisor and assessor and a third assessor intervention, if the final grade falls between 5.5 and 5.9 or the two assessors cannot come to an agreement on the final grade.

Assuring the assessment quality is supported by the Assessment Committee. This HZ committee conducts periodic random checks. In a 2,5-year cycle, five assessments of the IB programme are checked. According to the panel this number should be higher, since the programme is in the process of introducing a more integrated way of assessing. Therefore, the panel recommends that more assessments are randomly checked by the Assessment Committee.

Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes

The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Conclusion

The programme **meets** the generic quality requirements for this standard. Based on the fifteen graduation internship products studied and on the experiences of graduates and representatives of the professional field, the panel concludes that the learning outcomes are achieved. All graduation products are up to the standard as expected by the panel. The panel notes that linking each graduation component to the PLOs can be improved. Therefore, the panel advises the new programme to improve the connection of the assessment criteria with the PLOs. The representatives from the professional field that talked with the panel are positive about the qualities of graduates. IB alumni demonstrate that they actually fulfil the business roles they were educated for: they take initiative, are outgoing and perseverant when needed. Alumni also indicate that the IB programme is well connected to what is expected in the professional field. They find themselves in a good position to be able to give solid contributions to international business practices.

Substantiation

Graduation Programme
In the last semester students conduct an in-company research. They work for at least 18 weeks at an internationally operating organisation and work on a research topic. This research used to be more or less traditional thesis research, but the focus of the research has shifted towards compiling a professional product. Through this final semester, students demonstrate the third level of competencies belonging to the domains Ways of Thinking, Ways of Working and Living in the World. The competencies of the remaining domain Tools for Working & Management are partly demonstrated at level three. Students can choose for the competency tools belonging to Marketing and Sales, Finance & Accounting, Operations & Supply Chain Management or Organisation & People. The other competency tools are demonstrated at level 2 as agreed in the national IB profile.

Products by Graduates
The panel examined fifteen graduation products and concludes that they all indicate that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The panel finds the research topics and professional products to be relevant for the IB domain and their level of complexity is in line with the panel's expectations. As explained before, the topics may vary from more marketing oriented to controlling, logistics or communication. One of the professional products that the panel saw is an internal audit report for an organisation to optimize decision-making around process improvement and AI adoption. Another one is an advisory report for an international publisher in the educational sector to increase customer satisfaction. There was also a product focused on controlling, which explained the development of a dashboard strategy and a proposal for a business reporting process. A final example is a study on the communication practices within a

company operating internationally. This research leads to recommendations for communication improvement and to the implementation of an MS-Teams toolkit for this company.

Graduates in the Professional Field

Graduates find various positions in medium-sized and larger businesses operating globally. Typical jobs include import/export management, supply chain management, international project management, international account management or roles in international business consulting or in international expansion. Representatives from the professional field find graduates to be self supportive. Alumni come across as internationally experienced persons, radiating a sense of maturity. Alumni are outgoing, are accountable for their work and perseverant, which altogether sets them apart. The professional field values the programme's paying attention to professional skills and languages skills. The representatives from the professional field confirm that these IB professionals are the 'Jack of all trades' in international business. These experiences are in line with the general international business orientation of the programme which is going to be implemented. Therefore, the panel is confident that the programme will keep on providing adequately trained and educated IB professionals for the professional field.

Final Assessment

Assessments of the Standards

The audit team comes to the following judgements regarding the standards:

	B International Business
Standard 1 Intended Learning Outcomes	Meets the generic quality requirements
Standard 2 Teaching-Learning Environment	Meets the generic quality requirements
Standard 3 Student Assessment	Meets the generic quality requirements
Standard 4 Achieved Learning Outcomes	Meets the generic quality requirements

The judgements have been weighted in accordance with the NVAO assessment rules. On the basis of this, the audit panel has assessed the quality of the existing Bachelor study programme International Business of HZ University of Applied Sciences as **positive**.

Recommendations

The audit panel has the following recommendation for the study programme:

Standard 3

- Increase the number of assessments checked by the Assessment Committee, in order to provide more substantiation for the quality assurance of the assessing.

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Appendices

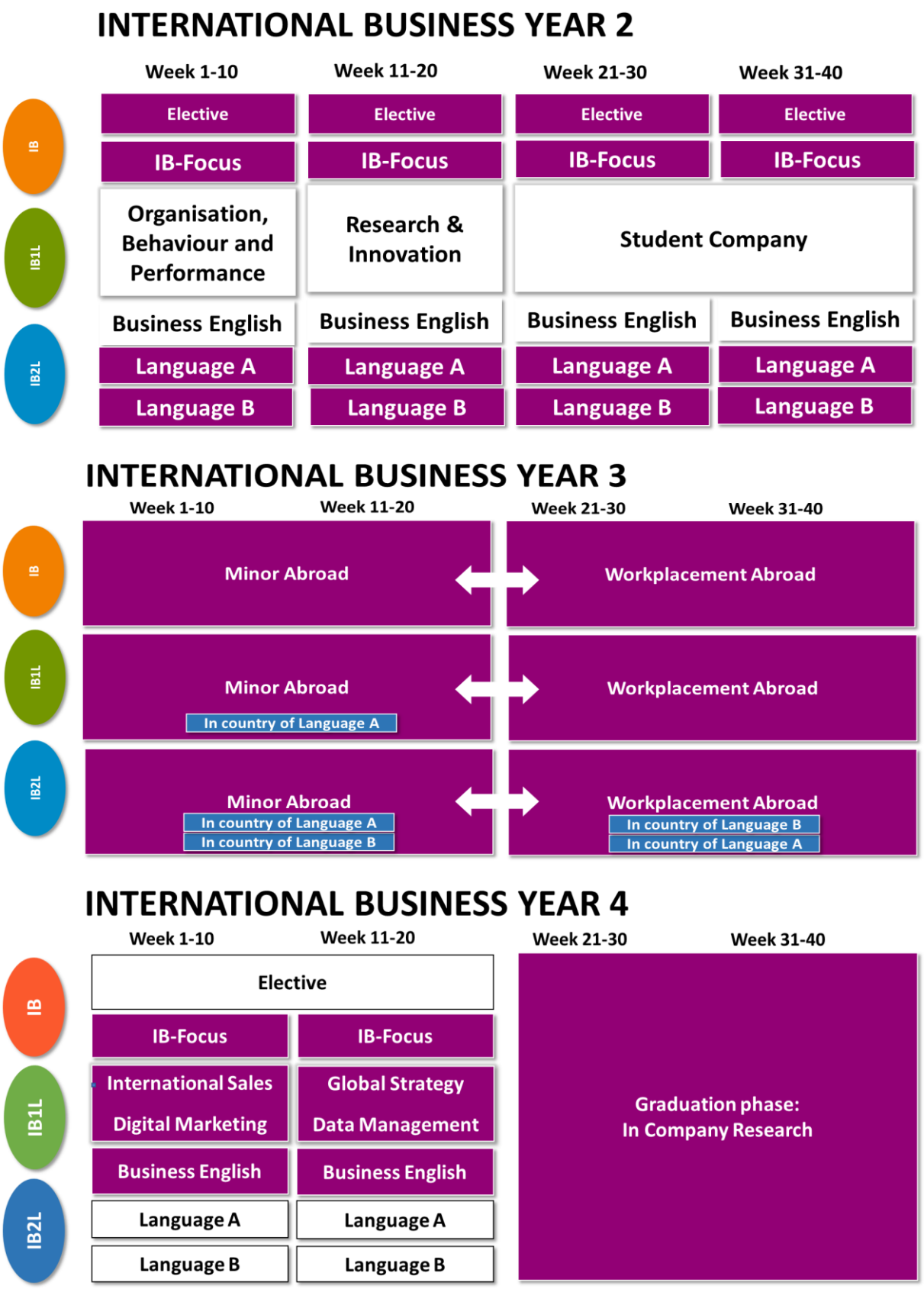
Appendix 1: Programme for the Site Visit

Time	Subject	Participants
08:30 - 08:45	**Welcome**	HZ – Edisonweg 4 Vlissingen
08:45 - 09:30	**Introduction / presentation**	Programme Manager 4th year Student Lecturer Personal Blueprint
09:30 - 10:45	**Study of materials**	Explanation HZ Learn and materials
10:45 - 11:30	**Interview with students**	1st year student (2x) 2nd year student (2x) 4th year student 4th year student and Member of the Board of Studies
11:30 – 11:45	**Internal panel deliberation**	
11:45 - 12:30	**Interview with professional field and alumni - ONLINE**	Professional field representative from Cargill Professional field representative from Ribbstyle Professional field representative from Foodtrend Professional field representative from Reply Three alumni
12:30 - 13:15	**Lunch & panel deliberation**	Panel
13:15 - 13:30	**Energizer**	
13:30 - 14:15	**Interview with lecturers**	Coordinator Professional Field Committee Coordinator Graduation Study Career Coach Coordinator of the Llanguages Centre
14:15 - 14:30	**Internal panel deliberation**	Panel
14:30 - 15:15	**Interview on assessment, assurance and end level**	Chair DEX Examination Board, Member Assessment Committee Lecturer, Portfolio Holder Quality Assurance Member DEX Examination Board Coordinator Graduation
15:15 - 15:30	**Internal panel deliberation**	Panel
15:30 - 16:00	**Interview with management/ pending issues**	Programme Manager Domain Director
16:00 – 17:00	**Internal panel deliberation**	Panel
17:00	**Feedback session**	

Appendix 2: Documents Examined

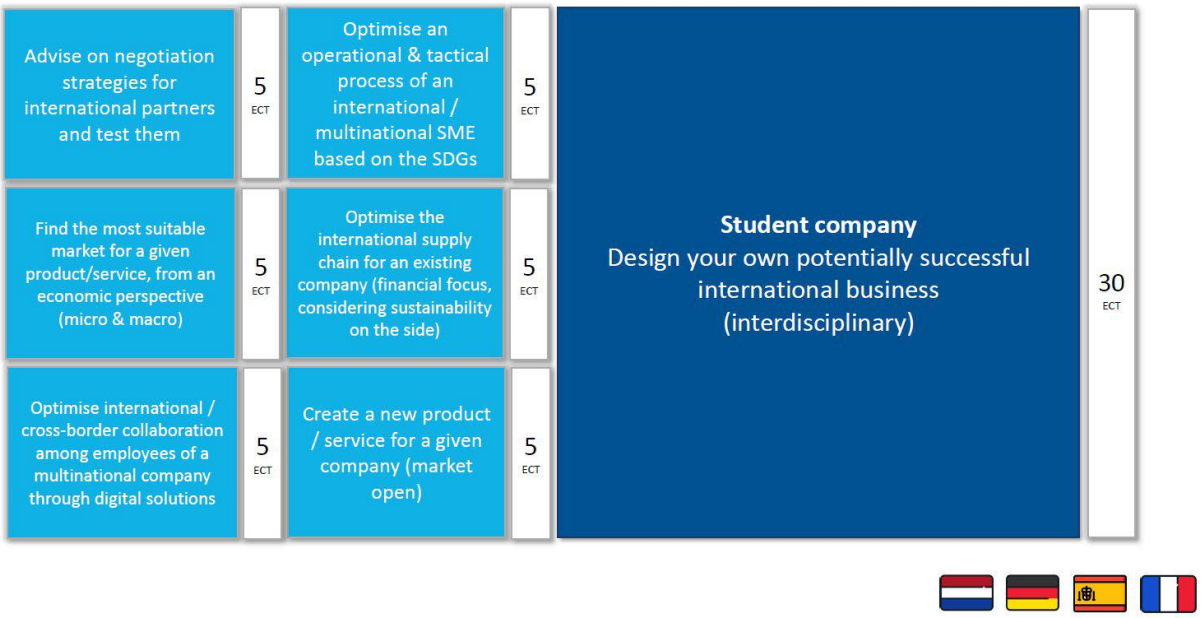
Annual report of the Examination Board,
Course and Examination Regulations,
Coverage matrix new curriculum,
Coverage matrix existing curriculum,
Expertise matrix,
Factsheet NSE 2025,
Factsheet HBO monitor 2024,
Framework for the International Business (IB), 2017,
HZ educational vision,
HZ assessment policy,
Implementation Regulations,
Minutes Board of Studies,
Minutes professional field meetings,
National Qualification framework International Business from 2023,
Programme Profile IB HZ 2025-2030,
SDGs in International Business,
Studying with a need for support, 2023,
Strategic Plan: Contributing to a better world, 2022.

Appendix 3: Current Programme (years 2 to 4)



Appendix 4: New Programme (year 2 to 4)

Year 2:



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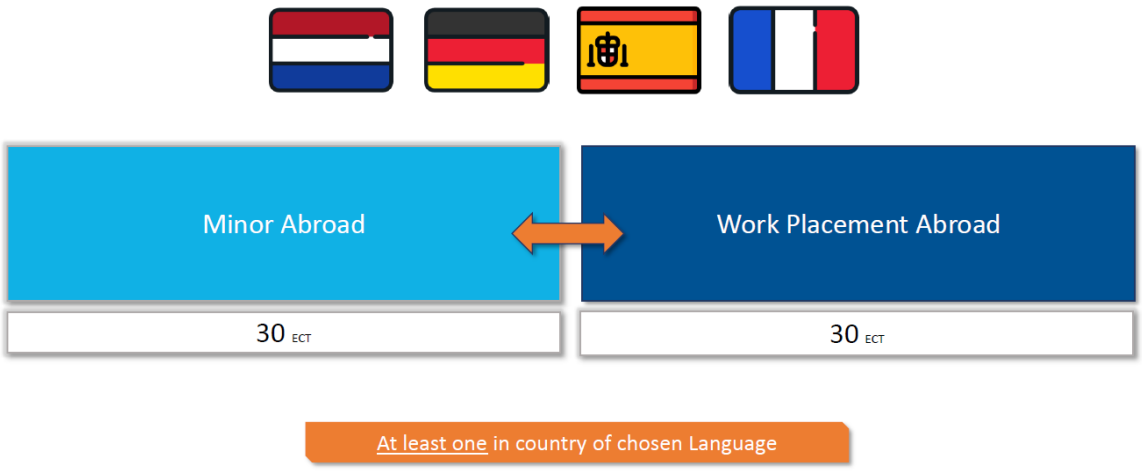
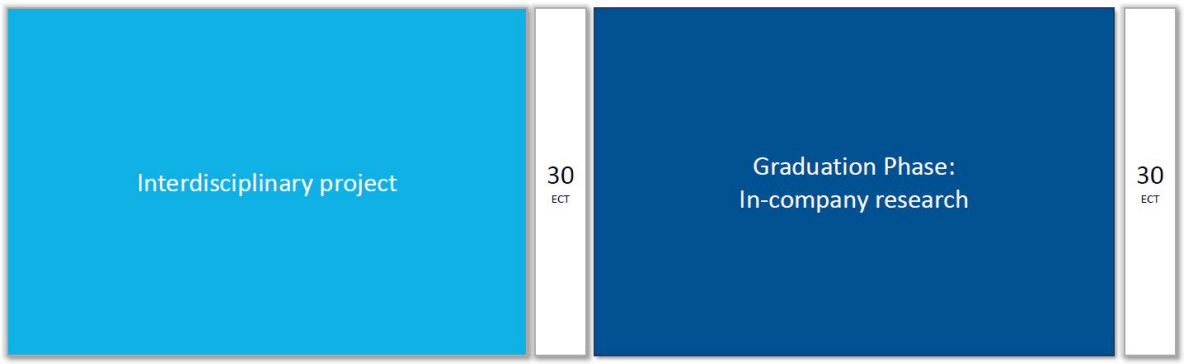


Year 4:



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