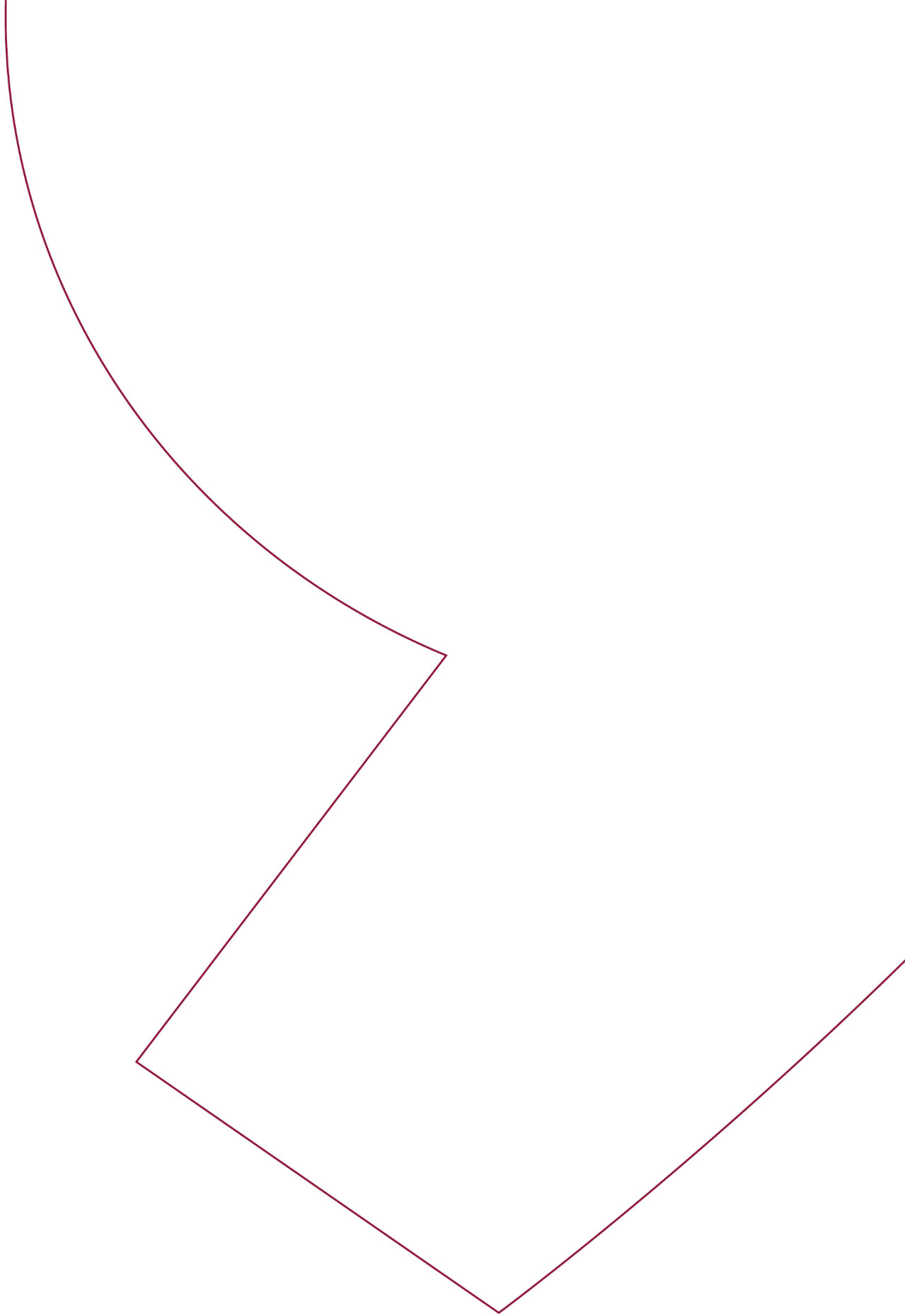


ASSESSMENT REPORT

Institution with institutional audit (ITK)

Bachelor programme
International Business
full time

Saxion University of Applied Sciences



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

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CROHO nr. 30029

Hobéon Certificering & Accreditatie

Dated

April 20th 2026

Audit committee

R. Pereboom

H. Jager

B. Bešalj

F. Soragna

Secretary

I. van der Hoorn

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1. GENERAL AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

Name Institution	Saxion University of Applied Sciences
Status	Funded
Outcomes of Institutional Quality Assessment	Positive NVAO decision d.d. 12-04-2018
Name program (as in RIO)	International Business
ISAT code	30029
Domain/sector	Economics
Orientation and level	Hbo
Level	Bachelor
Degree and title	Bachelor of Business Administration
Number of credits	240 EC
Specialisations	Short Degree Programme
Locations	Enschede, Deventer
Variant	Fulltime
Legal professional requirements	No
Language of instruction	English
Date audit	6 November 2025
Final date submission deadline report NVAO	1 May 2026

1. SUMMARY

The International Business programme at Saxion prepares students to become starting international business professionals, capable of developing sustainable and responsible business solutions in a complex international context. Graduates typically find employment in organisations such as multinational corporations, financial institutions, logistics companies, consultancy firms and nongovernmental organisations.

Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes

In its assessment, the panel takes into consideration that the programme presents a coherent and well substantiated set of programme learning outcomes that are directly derived from the National Qualifications Framework for International Business and informed by the Dublin Descriptors and NLQF level 6. The panel values the strong and transparent translation of the programme learning outcomes into module learning outcomes, in which levels of autonomy and complexity are clearly articulated and reinforced through the AuCom model.

The panel is particularly positive about the meaningful involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from the professional field and alumni. This has contributed to the relevance and future-oriented character of the intended learning outcomes and the new curriculum. The panel also recognises a clear and convincing link between the programme's vision, its research orientation and the institution's research line on customer centric consumer behaviour and business models.

Overall, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes provide a solid and coherent foundation for the curriculum and are appropriate for an International Business programme at bachelor level. The panel encourages the programme to continue and further strengthen the involvement of alumni and companies, building on the already strong connections with the professional field. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 1 is met.

Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment

The panel concludes that the programme demonstrates a well-thought-out and coherent translation of the programme learning outcomes into the curriculum, with due attention to knowledge development and a strong focus on practice-oriented learning through business challenges, integrated learning pathways and authentic, internationally oriented assignments that align well with professional practice. The programme benefits from strong commitment from companies, which actively contribute to the programme.

Research and internationalisation are clearly embedded in both curriculum design and educational practice. The panel appreciates that research is not only addressed conceptually but is actively applied in business challenges, internships and graduation projects. The panel is positive about the strong formative learning culture within the programme. Although the intensity and approach to study guidance may vary between lecturers, the panel values the overall focus on learning and development.

The teaching staff collectively possess the required subject-matter expertise, pedagogical skills and professional experience. The organisation of staff into squads, together with the programme's consultation and coordination structures, supports alignment, collaboration and shared responsibility for the curriculum and its ongoing development. The panel encourages the programme to continue fostering this collaborative approach in the future.

The panel notes that student support is well organised and embedded in the curriculum, particularly through the Personal and Professional Development pathway and the role of study coaches. Lecturers also demonstrate a high level of commitment to student wellbeing and are readily accessible to students. At the same time, the panel recognises the programme's own awareness that further strengthening of support for international students – especially with

regard to internships and integration into the Dutch learning and working environment – remains an important point of attention. The intended further integration of the Short Degree Programme into the regular programme structure is therefore viewed positively. In this context, the panel also notes that the accessibility and alignment of the Short Degree Programme for incoming international students are appropriately safeguarded through a thorough curriculum comparison.

Overall, the panel concludes that the programme provides a supportive, coherent and activating teaching and learning environment that enables students from both the four-year programme and the Short Degree Programme to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The identified points of attention do not detract from the overall positive judgement but instead offer clear directions for further enhancement. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 2 is met.

Standard 3. Student assessment

In reaching its judgement, the panel takes into account that the programme has established a coherent and well-considered assessment framework that aligns with Saxion's educational vision and effectively combines formative and summative assessment, using a broad and appropriate range of assessment methods. Students are systematically supported through (oral) feedback, and the assessment strategy ensures that individual achievement of the programme learning outcomes is assessed in a reliable manner.

The panel is positive about the strong alignment between programme learning outcomes, assessment methods, and the extensive use of authentic, practice-oriented assessments, including oral examinations and individual defence. These assessment practices also contribute to safeguarding academic integrity and limiting the improper use of artificial intelligence.

The panel was initially critical with regard to the traceability and written substantiation of assessment and grading decisions, an observation that was also shared by the Examination Board. However, the programme has demonstrated that significant steps have recently been taken to address this issue. The panel positively assesses the set of measures implemented, including updated procedures, clearer roles and responsibilities in graduation assessment, strengthened calibration and peer review processes, and additional checks on the completeness and justification of assessments. The review of additional, more recent graduation and assessment files confirms that these measures are starting to show the intended effect in practice, with initial but positive signs of impact.

While the panel emphasises the continued importance of consistent written substantiation of assessments and the further consolidation of recent improvements, it concludes that the programme, supported by the active and safeguarding role of the Examination Board, has demonstrated sufficient capacity to safeguard the validity, reliability and transparency of assessment and grading. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 3 is met.

Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes

Based on its analysis of the graduation dossiers and the experiences shared by professional field partners and alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the International Business programme demonstrate the intended learning outcomes at HBO bachelor level. The graduation projects show that students are able to function as starting international business professionals, combining applied research skills with the development of relevant and usable professional products. The professional field confirms that students add value to organisations, particularly in the later stages of the programme, and recognises their strong professional attitude and soft skills. While the panel identifies opportunities to further strengthen strategic depth, theoretical underpinning and the explicit international dimension in some dossiers, these observations do not detract from the overall level achieved. The panel therefore concludes that Standard 4 is met.

Overall conclusion

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Business at Saxion University of Applied Sciences meets all four quality standards for higher professional education, as set out in the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Programmes with Institutional Accreditation. Based on the NVAO's decision rules, the panel issues a positive overall assessment of the programme, both for the four-year programme offered in Enschede and Deventer and for the Short Degree Programme.

After approval by the panel members, this report was adopted by the chair and secretary on April 3th 2026.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of the limited programme assessment of the International Business bachelor's programme at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. The report presents, in succession, the panel's findings, considerations and conclusions regarding the programme in relation to the four quality standards: intended learning outcomes, teaching-learning environment, assessment, and achieved learning outcomes. For its assessment, the panel applied the Assessment Framework (2024) of the Dutch–Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO).

The programme forms part of the visitation group *HBO IBMS Groep 1 Noord*. Other institutions within this visitation group include Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen, HAN University of Applied Sciences, Webster University and NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences. The submission deadline for the visitation report is 1 May 2026.

Characteristics of the programme

The International Business programme at Saxion aims to educate students to become starting international business professionals, able to develop sustainable and responsible business solutions within a complex international environment. Graduates of the programme typically find employment in a wide range of organisations, including multinational enterprises, financial institutions, logistics companies, consultancy firms and non-governmental organisations.

The programme is offered at the Enschede and Deventer locations in a full-time format (240 EC). The intended learning outcomes, curriculum and assessment framework are identical at both locations. The teaching staff and the Examination Board are organised jointly across the two locations. Throughout this report, references to “the programme” therefore apply to both locations, unless one of the locations is explicitly mentioned.

In addition to the regular four-year programme, the programme offers a one-year (60 EC) Short Degree Programme in International Business (SDP IB) for students who have completed at least three years of comparable higher education abroad and wish to obtain a Saxion International Business degree. The SDP IB is built on longstanding partnerships with selected institutions in Indonesia and Vietnam and is underpinned by a thorough curriculum comparison, applying the four-eyes principle to safeguard alignment with the prior education of incoming international students. Where relevant, the panel reports separately on the Short Degree Programme (SDP).

Curriculum renewal

The programme is currently in the process of curriculum renewal. At present, years 1 and 2 of the new curriculum have been implemented, while years 3 and 4 will be renewed in the coming years. In this report, the panel therefore distinguishes between the new curriculum (years 1 and 2) and the curriculum that is being phased out (years 3 and 4). Where relevant, this distinction is explicitly addressed under the respective standards.

Characteristics of the institution

The programme is part of the Saxion School of Finance & International Business (SFIB). This school was established in 2022 following the merger of the School of Finance, Economics and Management (FEM) and the International Business School (IBS). SFIB offers the bachelor's programmes Finance & Control, Accountancy, Finance, Tax & Advice and International Business, as well as the associate degree programme Finance & Control and the research group Sustainable Business Models. A master's programme in Sustainability Transitions is currently under development.

SFIB operates according to the principles of continuous improvement. This is reflected, for example, in weekly kick-off meetings, quarterly meetings, the organisation of the management team, and the use of quality dashboards.

Extended audit process

The audit of the International Business programme took place on 6 November 2025. At the time of the audit, the effects of a number of improvement measures recently implemented by the programme, and considered essential by the panel for its assessment of Standard 3, were not yet demonstrable. The programme indicated that it expected these effects to become apparent around February 2026.

Given that the submission deadline for the visitation report was set for 1 May 2026, the panel decided to request an additional set of six graduation dossiers and their assessments which became available in February 2026. The panel took this additional documentation into account, as well as a brief follow-up discussion with the programme director, in reaching its final judgement.

Further information on this process is provided under Standard 3.

Developments since the previous visitation

Recommendation 2020	Follow up
To generate more input on a strategic level connection with the professional field could be intensified by strengthening the relation with the Professional Field Committee and with future IB alumni. The panel encourages the programme to continue intensifying the bond with the work field and make sure companies are involved in discussions about the curriculum in its broadest way.	The programme has expanded the membership of its Advisory Board to include alumni. Structured consultations with the Advisory Board take place on a regular basis, including at a strategic level, and have contributed to the development of the renewed curriculum. In addition, professional field partners are closely involved in the Business Challenges offered in years 1 and 2.
Continue to invest in professional development of the team, since this new didactical concept demands a different way of coaching. It takes time and training to ensure all teachers are qualified for the new didactics.	The programme has organised study days for teachers on specific topics, such as student coaching (with input from a student counsellor). In addition, all lecturers have participated in training courses focusing on didactics, assessment (including providing feedback), and the use of AI in assessment. There is also an institutional offer of Saxion courses to support individual professional development, such as Green Belt certification.
The panel encourages the programme to continue developing the Conscious Business Lab and make it more visible as a source of knowledge and inspiration.	Conscious Business has evolved into a core element of the programme, now embedded under the Multiple Value Creation (MVC) framework. It is aligned with the Programme and Module Learning Outcomes and supported by the lectorate on Business Models, which includes a dedicated research line from IB.

The companies receiving students need more concrete information, especially about the criteria for business cases, to execute their part of the programme adequately. The lector's focus should shift from business cases to research projects.	Clear guidelines are now in place for companies taking part in business challenges. Two lecturers are responsible for recruiting companies for the business challenges and also inform them about their role and what is expected of them. Lecturers who subsequently supervise the business challenges can then focus more on supervision, coaching and research questions.
Decreasing the number of written exams would be more suitable to the didactic concept and to the programme's vision on assessing.	In the new programme are fewer modules and consequently fewer assessments (with a minimum of 5 EC). The Business Challenges are assessed by means of a portfolio assessment, whilst the assessment methods for the other modules vary. In addition to written (digital) assessments, other methods include assessments, reports and oral exams.
Continue professionalising the examiners with BKE training and provide SKE training for some of them as well.	Over the past two years, the programme has made considerable progress in BKE certification, particularly due to the introduction of an English-taught BKE/BDB programme in close collaboration with the University of Twente. Currently, almost 80% of the lecturers hold a BDB/BKE certificate. One lecturer holds an SKE certificate, and another lecturer is currently in the process of obtaining this qualification.
Regarding holistic and integrative assessing, the panel advises the programme to collect information and best practices outside IBS instead of reinventing the wheel.	The decisions regarding the design of the (integrated) assessments are based on and inspired by Saxion's assessment policy. In developing the integrated assessments, IB drew on the knowledge and experience of other programmes within Saxion; IB also visited Zuyd University of Applied Sciences to gather inspiration and identify best practices.
Sometimes the comments on the grading forms weren't in-depth. Some examiners should elaborate more and some of them could do with some extra training in English.	Examiners receive clear instructions on how to provide feedback and justify their assessments. This has been covered in detail on several occasions during training sessions. A handbook containing instructions is available, which includes useful examples of feedback and justification. In recent years, several lecturers have obtained their Cambridge certificate. Saxion Academy has also provided English training courses (e.g. Teaching your content through English).
Stay in touch with future IB alumni and send out alumni surveys every year. This will generate valuable input for future curriculum adjustments.	The programme maintains active contact with alumni. They were involved in the development of the new IB curriculum through a survey. Guest lectures are also organised annually, or alumni contribute to

	business challenges through their companies. The IB programme maintains a LinkedIn page to keep alumni informed of developments within the school. Work is underway to establish a Saxion-wide alumni database and communication system, whilst ensuring compliance with privacy regulations (AVG).
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3. FINDINGS AND JUDGEMENTS

4.1. Intended learning outcomes

Standard 1: 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

Explanation NVAO: The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. The principles for how the programme is organised must match the institution's vision on education and its profile. - The intended learning outcomes must be evaluated periodically.

Findings

The International Business programme at Saxion aims to educate students to become starting international business professionals, able to develop sustainable and responsible business solutions within a complex international environment. Graduates are expected to connect organisations and stakeholders across cultures and disciplines and to contribute to sustainable value creation for multiple stakeholders. In doing so, the programme supports students in developing a professional identity characterised by reflective capability, entrepreneurial behaviour and personal responsibility.

The panel notes that the intended learning outcomes, which apply to both the four-year programme and the Short Degree Programme, are derived directly from the National Qualifications Framework for International Business (2023), which was developed by representatives of the participating universities of applied sciences. In formulating the intended learning outcomes at the bachelor level, the Dublin Descriptors and the level descriptors of NLQF level 6 have been taken into account. To distinguish between levels of competence, the AuCom model is applied, resulting in increasing levels of complexity and autonomy. In addition, representatives from a broad range of predominantly large organisations have been involved to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are well aligned with developments and expectations in the professional field.

The four programme learning outcomes (PLOs) are:

1. The IB professional defines international business opportunities and recommends possible strategies for the organisation to create sustainable multi-sided value for stakeholders.
2. The IB professional contributes to business (systems) transitions and transformations in order to optimise sustainable international business practices.
3. The IB professional cultivates and manages internal and external relationships with culturally diverse stakeholders in a responsible manner in order to achieve (mutual) business goals.
4. The IB professional manages themselves in complex surroundings and continuously develop their professionalism for the benefit of the organisation, the field of international business and themselves.

The panel notes that the National Qualifications Framework International Business (2023) includes a suggested Body of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (BOKSA), which also forms the foundation of the International Business programme at Saxion. The programme actively involves regional professional field partners in keeping both the intended learning outcomes

and curriculum as a whole up to date. Following a recommendation made during the previous visitation in 2020 (see table on page 7), the programme has since expanded the membership of its advisory board to include alumni. The panel further learned that representatives from the professional field have played a prominent role in the development of the renewed curriculum, thereby contributing to its continued relevance to professional practice (see Standard 2).

Profile

The panel notes that, in line with Saxion's strategic plan (2025-2030), which explicitly includes sustainability as a key theme, the Bachelor's programme in International Business clearly profiles itself through a strong focus on Multiple Value Creation. The programme actively encourages students to reflect on and address the creation of sustainable business solutions within each business challenge, thereby embedding sustainability as a guiding principle throughout the curriculum (see also Standard 2).

In addition, the panel observes that both interdisciplinary and international orientation play a prominent role in Saxion's strategic plan. While internationalisation is inherent to any International Business programme, Saxion has explicitly positioned international orientation and interdisciplinarity as strategic institutional priorities. This is reflected in the programme's strong emphasis on collaboration across cultures and disciplines. In this context, the panel notes that the programme has deliberately extended the AuCom-model by incorporating interdisciplinarity as a third dimension, alongside autonomy and complexity. This additional dimension is consistently reflected in the translation of the programme learning outcomes (PLOs) into module learning outcomes (MLOs), thereby reinforcing the programme's interdisciplinary character.

Vision on research

The panel notes that the programme regards research ability as a core competence for future international business professionals, with a clear emphasis on critical thinking and innovative problem-solving. Students are trained to become practice-oriented researchers who are able to assess data in an ethically responsible manner and translate this into applicable insights and professional products for the professional field. The development of students' research ability is particularly evident in the elaboration of the programme learning outcomes International Business Opportunities and Business Transformation into module learning outcomes. These MLOs include, among others, students' ability to formulate measurable research questions, to collect and analyse data in an ethical manner, and to synthesise research findings into actionable and well-substantiated recommendations, that are communicated effectively to relevant stakeholders.

In relation to its vision on research, the panel also considers it worth noting that there is a strong integration with the Saxion research group ('lectoraat') *Business Models* and the programme's own International Business research group *Customer-Centric Consumer Behaviour*.

Intended learning outcomes of the phasing-out curriculum

The panel also reviewed the intended learning outcomes of the phasing-out curriculum. These outcomes are directly derived from the National Framework International Business (2017). The panel notes that, in developing these intended learning outcomes, alignment with the professional field took place and that the Dublin Descriptors as well as the Higher Economic Education standard were used as reference points. The phasing-out curriculum comprises a total of 24 nationally defined programme learning outcomes, supplemented by three Saxion-specific PLOs addressing the institutional themes of *Technology & Innovation*, *Entrepreneurship*, and *International Trade*.

The panel further observes that this set of PLOs also explicitly and appropriately addresses business research skills, for example through learning outcomes such as "*Analyse a complex*

business problem in an international business setting with use of an adequate research design, resulting in an evidence-based, feasible solution”, as well as the development of cultural awareness, for instance “Assess the effect of cultural differences on organisational behaviour and strategic choices”.

In alignment with professional field partners and peer universities of applied sciences, the programme ensures that the Body of Knowledge and Skills of the phasing-out curriculum continues to evolve in line with current developments in the professional field.

Considerations and Judgement

In its assessment, the panel takes into consideration that the programme presents a coherent and well substantiated set of programme learning outcomes that are directly derived from the National Qualifications Framework for International Business and informed by the Dublin Descriptors and NLQF level 6. The panel values the strong and transparent translation of the programme learning outcomes into module learning outcomes, in which levels of autonomy and complexity are clearly articulated and reinforced through the AuCom-model.

The panel is particularly positive about the meaningful involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives from the professional field and alumni. This has contributed to the relevance and future oriented character of the intended learning outcomes and the new curriculum. The panel also recognises a clear and convincing link between the programme’s vision, its research orientation and the institution’s research focus on customer-centric consumer behaviour and business models.

Overall, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes provide a solid and coherent foundation for the curriculum and are appropriate for an International Business programme at bachelor level. The panel encourages the programme to continue and further strengthen the involvement of alumni and companies, building on the already strong connections with the professional field. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 1 is met.

4.2. Teaching-learning environment

Standard 2: The curriculum, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of the teaching staff enable the incoming students to achieve the intended learning outcomes

Explanation NVAO: The intended learning outcomes have been adequately translated into educational objectives of (components of) the curriculum. The diversity of the students admitted is taken into account in this respect. The teachers have sufficient expertise in terms of both subject matter and teaching methods to teach the curriculum, and provide appropriate guidance. The teaching-learning environment encourages students to play an active role in the design of their own learning process (student-centred approach).

If the programme is taught in a language other than Dutch, the programme must justify its choice. This also applies if the programme bears a foreign language name. The teaching staff must have a sufficient command of the language in which they are teaching. Services and facilities are not assessed, unless they have been set up specifically for the programme concerned.

Findings

From PLOs to curriculum

The panel reviewed the Course Document of the curriculum, with year 1 implemented in the 2024–2025 academic year and year 2 currently being rolled out. The panel observes that the programme has taken the four programme learning outcomes (PLOs) as the starting point for the development of this curriculum, with due consideration given to the BOKSA framework.

The PLOs have been elaborated into module learning outcomes (MLOs) in a transparent and traceable manner. In developing the MLOs, explicit account has been taken of the levels of the AuCom-model. The panel notes that, in broad terms, year 1 has a low level of autonomy and complexity, years 2 and 3 have an average level, and year 4 has a high level.

Curriculum (as of 2024-2025)

The panel read that the development of the new International Business curriculum started in April 2023 and was led by the project team *Cutting Edge Curriculum Crafters* (CECC), consisting of lecturers from different disciplines and an educational expert. The panel spoke with members of the CECC and learned that they followed a collaborative and iterative development process. In this process, educational visions and the curriculum framework were developed on the basis of research. They were subsequently validated with a broad range of stakeholders, including lecturers, students, the degree course committee, the examination board, representatives from the professional field, research groups and management. According to the panel, this approach has resulted in broad support for the new curriculum and provides a solid foundation for its further development.

Year 1 and 2

In reviewing the curriculum, the panel found that year 1 and year 2 have a consistent and recognisable structure. In line with the educational vision, each period of approximately ten weeks (15 EC) is centred around a business challenge. Within these challenges, students work on real-life assignments involving actual companies, fictitious cases, or games and simulations. The panel notes that these challenges align well with both the professional field and the students' learning journey. The panel considers this a valuable concept, as it results in realistic assignments and professional products, such as reports, presentations, videos or podcasts. It also provides a strong connection to, and insight into, professional practice. The panel discussed several business challenges with students, who expressed considerable enthusiasm about these learning activities.

For example, in the business challenge 'Marketeer' (Year 1, Period 2), students work in project groups on a real-life marketing assignment commissioned by external partners, including SES Creative, a toy manufacturing company. Each project group focused on marketing for a different country, including Germany, France and Belgium. For this assignment, students conduct research, develop and justify marketing deliverables, and present their findings. The aim of this challenge is to deepen students' marketing knowledge and research skills through a structured, practice-oriented approach, while encouraging collaboration, reflection and learning from international and cross-group perspectives.

The business challenges in year 1 each carry a workload of 5 EC. In year 2, a business challenge carries 10 EC and spans two periods. In addition, two further modules of 5 EC each are included in the programme every quarter. These modules provide students with a solid knowledge base and, wherever possible, are aligned with the specific role students assume within the business challenge.

For example, the above-mentioned business challenge 'Marketeer' is accompanied by the modules *Introduction to International Marketing & Sales* and *Financial Management*. The panel discussed the latter module with students. In this module, students are introduced to financial management theory and individually run a simplified virtual coffee business in which they apply basic financial concepts, such as purchasing, selling and preparing a balance sheet, within a realistic but accessible context. The aim of this game is to introduce students, in a playful and progressive manner, to how business and financial decision-making operate in practice, with the level of complexity gradually increasing as new theory is integrated.

The panel observes clear sequencing and strong coherence between the modules. This coherence is further reinforced by the four learning pathways that are integrated into every business challenge. These learning pathways concern (i) Business Communication, (ii) Business Research, (iii) Personal and Professional Development, and (iv) Multiple Value Creation (MVC). Within the MVC learning pathway, the panel observes that sustainability is an embedded and recurring theme. This enables students to explore how businesses define their purpose, develop sustainable strategies, and assess the impact of their actions across economic, social and ecological dimensions.

Learning activities related to the pathways are scheduled flexibly and planned in advance, based on the weeks in which they are considered most appropriate to address the respective skills. For example, learning activities related to business communication may take place during the first three weeks of a quarter, business research activities during weeks four to seven, while personal and professional development activities are offered throughout the entire quarter.

As a business challenge is offered only once per academic year, the panel draws attention to the consequences for students who do not successfully complete a business challenge. In such cases, students would have to retake the business challenge in the following academic year, possibly alongside their internship or Smart Solutions Semester (see below), which may lead to (additional) study delay. To limit potential study delay, the panel encourages the programme to reflect on possible measures or arrangements to mitigate these effects.

Year 3 and 4

The structure of year 3 and year 4 largely remain unchanged compared to the way they were designed in the phasing-out curriculum. This means that year 3 consists of a six-month internship (30 EC) and the Smart Solutions Semester (20 EC), accompanied by the new module '*Investors in Meaningful International Business*' (10 EC), in which the four learning pathways are integrated again. Year 4 comprises a minor (30 EC) and the graduation phase (30 EC).

The panel considers that Saxion effectively implemented interdisciplinary learning through the Smart Solutions Semester, in which students from different programmes collaborate on a shared project.

Overall, the panel values the programme's practice-oriented focus and its activating educational design. Students have the opportunity to make a number of individual choices within the programme. For example, in the second year of the programme they can explore a wider range of interests by selecting one of several elective modules, including *The Sustainable and Lean Startup*, *Doing Business with Asia*, *Entrepreneurship*, or *Leadership & Change Management*.

The business challenges motivate students to perform well and to present high-quality outcomes to the participating companies. The panel observed that these companies show a strong level of commitment, while they also benefit from collaboration, for example through innovative ideas and/or the recruitment of new employees.

Phasing-out curriculum

The panel also reviewed the Course Document of the phasing-out curriculum. The alignment between the 24 programme learning outcomes (PLOs) and the curriculum is clearly and thoroughly elaborated in a PLO chart. These charts demonstrate which PLOs relate to specific professional skills, domains or specialisations. They further translate the PLOs into performance indicators and the corresponding body of knowledge and skills (BOKS) for all three levels (i.e. basic, intermediate and specialist knowledge).

Years 1 and 2 of the phasing-out curriculum were structured differently from the new curriculum, consisting of one business case (5 EC) per semester of 20 weeks. In addition, four or five supporting modules were offered in each period, ranging from 2 to 4 EC per module. One of the reasons for developing the new curriculum was the programme's intention to move away from a large number of small, fragmented modules towards a more coherent and integrated structure.

Years 3 and 4 of the phasing-out curriculum are currently still being delivered. Year 3 consists of an internship (30 EC), the Smart Solutions Semester (25 EC), and a specialisation, from which students can choose options such as *Language, Technology & Innovation*, *Entrepreneurship*, and *International Trade*. Year 4 comprises a minor (30 EC) and the graduation phase (30 EC).

Entry requirements

The panel notes that the programme applies the legally prescribed admission requirements. This entails that students with an mbo level4 diploma, vwo graduates and havo graduates are admissible, with an additional requirement applying only to students who followed the havo *Culture and Society* profile. Students holding a foreign qualification that is deemed equivalent to a Dutch diploma are also eligible for admission, provided that they demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language at least at havo examination level.

Based on the discussions held, the panel observes that students experience the transition from their prior education to the higher professional education context as appropriate and manageable.

Internationalisation

Inherent to the name of the programme, the panel considers it fully understandable that the programme has opted for a fully English-taught curriculum and an English language programme title. This choice enables the programme to attract international students and staff and to create an international learning community. According to the panel, this international learning community contributes to the development of students' intercultural competencies, as students work together while blending different perspectives and cultures.

Furthermore, the panel observes that the programme's international character is reflected in the mandatory period abroad of at least six months, which can be fulfilled through an internship, a minor and/or the graduation phase. In addition, both international and regional perspectives are embedded throughout the curriculum, including in the business challenges. These are further strengthened by the activities of the *Business Models* research group, which contributes to internationalisation through international research projects, collaborations and staff exchanges. Moreover, the programme has an extensive network of international partner universities, including partnerships within E³UDRES², which it uses to develop and facilitate international projects. Students informed the panel, for example, about a year 2 collaborative online intensive learning (COIL) project in which they collaborated with peers from India and Kosovo.

Through these activities and curriculum components, the programme enables students to develop intercultural awareness and competencies, to gain experience working abroad, and to acquire relevant experience in an international business context.

Role of Artificial Intelligence

The panel discussed with students how artificial intelligence (AI) is addressed within the programme. Students indicated that AI is well integrated into the curriculum, reflecting its growing use in professional practice. According to students, they learn about both the advantages and limitations of AI, how to use AI tools responsibly, how to formulate effective prompts, and the importance of requesting sources and explanations when using AI. The panel further notes with satisfaction that the programme applies clear and strict guidelines regarding the use of AI, of which students are well aware; students indicated that improper use of AI may result in a resit or further scrutiny by the examination board.

Student support

Study coaching within the IB programme aims to support students to successfully complete their studies, develop their talents, and prepare them for their future career. It is an integral part of the IB-curriculum, embedded in the learning pathway personal and professional development (PPD). During the PPD-modules which also include 'thuisgroepen' (tribes) attention is paid to both professional and personal growth, as well as to study progress. Students take part in group consultations and individual consultations (three sessions per year) with their PPD teacher, who additionally acts as their study coach during their bachelor programme. The study coach is further involved in both the internship and the graduation programme.

Students who face temporary or long-term personal or private challenges that affect their ability to study can receive support from a student counsellor, student psychologist or from other experts from Saxion's Student Support Centre. Those with special needs are assisted by a dedicated special needs officer in collaboration with the examination board to ensure appropriate accommodations. Additionally, students with demanding responsibilities outside their studies, such as caregiving, a professional career in sports or the arts, or running a business, are part of the 'talent scheme' and can turn to the Support Centre for tailored guidance and support.

Students informed the panel that they experience their coach as highly committed and accessible and indicated that students with study related challenges or disabilities receive appropriate and considerate support.

Support international students

The panel notes the programme's own awareness that further strengthening of support for international students is desirable. In recent years, the programme has taken several measures to better support international students in their transition to the programme and the Twente region. These measures include the appointment of student coaches who assist international students with practical matters, such as insurance, and guide them in using learning

environments such as Brightspace. At the same time, the programme indicated that further improvements in support for international students are desirable. Based on the discussions held, the panel indeed encourages the programme to further enhance the support provided to international students, particularly in relation to finding suitable internships in the region, as international students appear to face additional challenges due to Dutch language requirements in the regional labour market.

Lecturers

Like the students, the panel is positive about the quality and commitment of the multidisciplinary teaching team that delivers the programme. The team is responsible for the regular programme at both the Enschede and Deventer campuses, as well as for the Short Degree Programme. Students informed the panel that the personal approach of the teaching staff stands out in particular. According to students, lecturers show a strong interest in their well-being and take student support seriously.

The panel reviewed an overview of the teaching staff and noted that the team collectively represents the required range of knowledge and expertise, including finance and accounting, HR management, entrepreneurship, and foreign languages such as Spanish and German. Several lecturers also bring recent and relevant professional practice experience into the programme. The panel further notes that the English language proficiency of the lecturers meets the required standard, as was also confirmed by the students.

The panel discussed professional development with teaching staff. Lecturers indicated that there is sufficient opportunities and institutional support for professionalisation. This includes participation in the Basic Teaching Qualification (BDB) and Basic Examination Qualification (BKE) programmes. In addition, training sessions and workshops are organised on didactic coaching, and study days include, among other topics, contributions by external speakers on MVC.

Furthermore, some lecturers have obtained a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt qualification, with one lecturer continuing towards a Black Belt. Teaching staff also indicated that they actively share relevant academic and professional articles with one another. In addition, several lecturers are actively involved as researchers in research groups (lectoraten), including the *Customer-centric Consumer Behaviour* research group, the *Data Driven Innovation* research group and the *Business Models* research group. Based on these discussions, the panel concludes that a strong learning culture is evident among the teaching staff.

Squads

The teaching staff is organised into three so-called squads: one based in Deventer and two in Enschede. Each squad consists of approximately 12 to 15 lecturers who are collectively responsible for the delivery of the full curriculum and for supervising two to three student cohorts per academic year. A squad remains responsible for these cohorts throughout the entire four-year duration of the programme. As a result, each squad comprises lecturers who together cover all required subject matter expertise.

Each squad meets on a bi-weekly basis. The panel enquired about collaboration and calibration between the squads and discussed this with teaching staff. Lecturers explained that squad leaders meet every two weeks together with the programme director. In addition, lecturers teaching the same subject area, such as finance, collaborate across squads to jointly discuss the content and alignment of modules and courses. The panel notes that this way of working contributes to a high level of enthusiasm, energy and a shared sense of responsibility within the teaching team as a whole.

Short Degree Programme

In addition to the regular four-year programme, the programme offers a one year Short Degree Programme in International Business (SDPIB) for students who have completed at least three years of comparable higher education abroad and wish to obtain a Saxion degree. The SDPIB is built on longstanding partnerships with selected institutions in Indonesia and Vietnam and is based on a careful curriculum comparison, applying the four-eye principle.

At present, the SDPIB consists of a first semester covering selected second-year subjects, followed by a graduation phase that is similar to that of the four-year programme. SDP students currently form a separate group of students from Indonesia and Vietnam and experience a sense of isolation.

From the coming academic year onwards, the programme intends to revise this structure by admitting students after two years of study in Indonesia or Vietnam to a two-year programme in the Netherlands. The panel views this intended adjustment positively. Students will follow the full second year of the regular programme, with the aim of achieving stronger integration into the wider Saxion student population. This adjustment also aims to better support students in adapting to the practice-oriented nature of Dutch universities of applied sciences and to improve their retention in the Dutch labour market.

The panel learned from current international SDP students that they experience the guidance within the programme as accessible and supportive. Students value the openness and availability of teaching staff, the clear guidelines provided for assignments, and the opportunity to make use of consultation sessions for both individual and group work. In addition, individual study career coaching and timely, personalised feedback support students in adapting to the more practice-oriented learning environment and help them feel well prepared for their assignments and graduation. However, students also noted that finding a suitable graduation internship can be challenging.

Considerations and Judgement

The panel concludes that the programme demonstrates a well-thought-out and coherent translation of the programme learning outcomes into the curriculum, with due attention to knowledge development and a strong focus on practice-oriented learning. This is achieved through business challenges, integrated learning pathways and authentic, internationally oriented assignments that align well with professional practice. The programme benefits from strong commitment from companies, which actively contribute to the programme.

Research and internationalisation are clearly embedded in both curriculum design and educational practice. The panel appreciates that research is not only addressed conceptually but is actively applied in business challenges, internships and graduation projects. The panel is positive about the strong formative learning culture within the programme. Although the intensity and approach to study guidance may vary between lecturers, the panel values the overall focus on learning and development.

The teaching staff collectively possess the required subject-matter expertise, pedagogical skills and professional experience. The organisation of staff into squads, together with the programme's consultation and coordination structures, supports alignment, collaboration and shared responsibility for the curriculum and its ongoing development. The panel encourages the programme to continue fostering this collaborative approach in the future.

The panel notes that student support is well organised and embedded in the curriculum, particularly through the Personal and Professional Development pathway and the role of study coaches. Lecturers also demonstrate a high level of commitment to student wellbeing and are readily accessible to students. At the same time, the panel recognises the programme's own awareness that further strengthening of support for international students - especially with

regard to internships and integration into the Dutch learning and working environment - remains an important point of attention. The intended further integration of the Short Degree Programme into the regular programme structure is therefore viewed positively. In this context, the panel also notes that the accessibility and alignment of the Short Degree Programme for incoming international students are appropriately safeguarded through a thorough curriculum comparison.

Overall, the panel concludes that the programme provides a supportive, coherent and activating teaching and learning environment that enables students from both the four-year programme and the Short Degree Programme to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The identified points of attention do not detract from the overall positive judgement but instead offer clear directions for further enhancement. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 2 is met.

4.3. Student assessment

Standard 3: The programme has an adequate system of student assessment in place.

Explanation NVAO: The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The requirements are transparent to the students. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes. The Board of Examiners carries out its legal duties and exercises its legal powers.

Findings

System of assessment and grading

The panel observes that the programme's approach to assessment is aligned with Saxion's vision on examination. The programme deliberately combines development-oriented formative assessments with decisive summative assessments, often in the form of authentic professional products that address integrated, cross domain competencies. The panel further notes that assessments always include an individual component, ensuring that each student's achievement of the programme learning outcomes is assessed reliably. Feedback is also used systematically to guide students' learning processes towards the final required level. The panel considers the assessment principles formulated by the programme to be clear, well substantiated and supportive for both students and teaching staff.

The panel spoke with students representing the Enschede and Deventer locations as well as the Short Degree Programme. They indicated that they generally experience the feedback provided by lecturers as being of good quality. Students emphasised that all students receive feedback, including those who are less outspoken, and noted that preliminary submissions are standard practice and are followed by feedback. In particular, students value the extensive oral feedback they receive. They indicated that written feedback provided via Brightspace is sometimes less detailed. However, they also noted that this varies between lecturers, with some providing step-by-step guidance while others offer more general feedback.

The panel reviewed the IB Exam Plan and notes that it is thoughtfully and coherently designed. According to the panel, the plan clearly demonstrates that the programme has carefully considered the alignment between programme learning outcomes, assessment methods and study load, resulting in a well substantiated and transparent assessment structure.

Assessment methods

To ensure alignment between assessment and the learning outcomes of the modules, the programme employs a wide range of assessment methods. In line with Saxion's educational vision, which emphasises the importance of a solid knowledge base, the International Business programme uses written and digital knowledge exams. In addition, skills-based assessments are used to demonstrate mastery of specific competences, such as communication skills. Other assessment forms include portfolios, professional products and reports, for example as outcomes of the business challenges. These also include presentations and oral examinations. Together these form an integral part of the programme's assessment repertoire.

Students informed the panel that presentations and oral examinations are frequently used as assessment methods. According to students, these forms of assessment reduce the risk of improper use of artificial intelligence, as during oral examinations students are required to explain and justify the choices made in their assignments or research. Students also indicated that, in the case of group assignments, individual oral defences are always conducted, which each student must pass in order to successfully complete the module. In other projects, the individual contribution of students is also explicitly assessed, for example through the use of a personal journal.

Graduation

The current cohort of students still graduates through the graduation programme of the phasing-out curriculum. This graduation programme consists of a final individual assignment and a portfolio, which students compile throughout their studies, and which demonstrates the extent to which the programme learning outcomes have been achieved. The final individual assignment is carried out in the eighth semester of the programme. Students may choose to conduct this assignment within a company, addressing an empirical research question that requires a holistic, research-based analysis. Alternatively, students with an entrepreneurial profile may complete the final individual assignment within the context of their own business.

In the new International Business curriculum, graduation takes the form of an internship-based final project. As the final component of the programme, students demonstrate their readiness for the professional field through an applied research and implementation project at an internationally oriented company or organisation. In this project, students are either responsible for a standalone assignment or make a substantial contribution to an ongoing project within the organisation. The graduation assignment requires students to demonstrate achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes (PLOs) through authentic, real world application. The panel considers this revised form of graduation to be well aligned with the overall structure and practice-oriented character of the new curriculum.

Approval of the Plan of Approach

The panel noted that, as part of the graduation phase, students are required to conduct an in-depth market and stakeholder analysis in order to identify viable international opportunities for the host organisation. Based on this analysis, students are expected to propose strategies that create multisided value, taking sustainability and long-term stakeholder impact into account.

However, in its review of the graduation dossiers (discussed in more detail under Standard 4), the panel observed that not all graduation assignments offer sufficient scope for such in-depth analysis and that, in some cases, no clear strategic issue is addressed within the project. The panel discussed this observation with, among others, the graduation coordinator, who currently approves all plans of approach. The panel understands that, from the coming academic year onwards, a committee will be established to assess plans of approach. The panel considers this a prudent decision and recommends that clear, shared agreements be formulated regarding what constitutes an in-depth analysis and how the strategic nature of graduation projects is defined and assessed.

Quality of assessment

To safeguard the validity, reliability and transparency of assessments, the responsible examiner prepares an exam file for each assessment. This exam file includes, among other elements, a test matrix, clear instructions for students and assessors, a grading table and, where applicable, a rubric. The panel is impressed by the thoroughness of the exam files reviewed and also notes that the programme applies the four-eyes principle by having each exam file reviewed by a member of the Exam Review Committee using a checklist and accompanied by feedback.

Traceability of grading

In preparation for the audit, the panel reviewed fifteen graduation files to gain insight into the assessment practices within the programme (see Standard 4 for the substantive evaluation). In reviewing these files, the panel noted that in several assessment forms, particularly rubrics, no feedback was provided on individual assessment criteria. As a result, the panel was not always able to trace the reasoning behind the assessment and grading decisions.

The panel addressed this observation during the site visit. It was explained that the programme uses a form of holistic single point rubrics, in which the middle row describes the expected performance level per criterion. Deviations from this level, above or below the expected

performance, are substantiated by assessors in written feedback. The programme has decided that performances assessed at the expected level do not require further justification. This explanation clarified the assessment approach, although the panel encouraged the programme to also provide a brief substantiation when student performance is assessed at the expected level.

Despite the explanation, the panel still encountered assessment forms in which students were assessed above or below the expected level without any accompanying justification. This observation is consistent with the findings of the Examination Board (see the paragraph below on the Examination Board).

Although students expressed satisfaction with the extensive oral feedback they receive, the panel concludes that written justification in assessment forms has often been limited or absent. In discussions with programme management, the panel learned that these concerns are recognised and that improvement measures have recently been initiated. These measures have been set out in an Action Plan (April 2025). The panel reviewed this Action Plan and noted a set of appropriate measures, including an updated graduation procedures manual, a first and second reader protocol, the establishment of a graduation committee, a buddy system for new examiners, checks on the completeness and substantiation of rubrics by the graduation coordinator, a formal calibration PDCA cycle, and structural intervision and peer review sessions on feedback quality. The panel endorses the value of these measures.

Given the recent implementation of these measures, their effects were not yet visible at the time of the site visit. According to the programme, the impact would become apparent in the next cohort of graduation projects, available from February 2026 onwards. Therefore, in consultation with the programme, the panel reviewed an additional selection of six graduation files from February 2026 three months after the site visit. To ensure that assessment practices in other parts of the curriculum were also adequate, the panel additionally reviewed two student files from three modules in the new curriculum (Business & Ethics, Intercultural Competences and a Business Challenge).

The panel found the assessments of the six graduation files and the two regular modules to be in order. The assessment of one of the two Business Challenge files initially raised questions, as a conditional criterion appeared not to have been met while the student nevertheless received a pass. Following an additional interview with the programme director, it became clear that this ambiguity resulted from the format in which the panel had received the assessment forms (PDF), whereas assessors record their information in Brightspace. During the conversion from Brightspace to PDF, some information and structure had been lost. After being granted access to Brightspace, the panel concludes that the assessment practice is adequate.

Overall, the panel concludes that the programme has recently made a clear improvement with regard to the traceability of grading decisions. This does not detract from the panel's continued emphasis on the importance of consistent written substantiation of assessments and grading decisions. In this regard, the panel emphasises the importance of the role of the Examination Board in continuing to monitor the effects of the measures that have been implemented and are still to be implemented and – where necessary – to continue to draw attention to the traceability of grading decisions.

Examination Board

The panel met with members of the Examination Board to discuss its role and reviewed, among other documents, its two most recent annual reports. The Examination Board is organised at the level of the School of Finance & International Business and is therefore responsible for several programmes, including International Business and the Short Degree Programme. Several lecturers from the International Business programme are members of the Examination Board.

Based on the annual reports and the discussion, the panel concludes that the Examination Board takes its statutory responsibilities seriously and fulfils them in a careful and professional manner. Each year, through the Exam Review Committee, the Examination Board conducts programme-level sampling exercises to monitor the quality of assessment and grading, including the completeness of exam files. All newly developed assessments are subject to a standard review process. In addition, the Examination Board safeguards the quality of examiners, is actively involved in the development of schoolwide assessment policy, and takes well-considered decisions on individual student matters, such as exemptions, (shortened) study routes and irregularities.

With regard to the International Business programme, the Examination Board has concluded that the achieved final level is sufficient. The panel notes that this judgement is based on systematic sampling.

The panel observes that the Examination Board has, consistent with the panel's own observations, expressed concerns in recent years regarding the traceability and documentation of assessments. The panel discussed this issue with the Examination Board. The Chair of the Examination Board indicated that this is a recurring theme in discussions with the programme management. While examiners indicate that extensive oral feedback is provided, which is valued, this does not sufficiently contribute to the traceability of assessments. The Examination Board has therefore requested the programme to develop a plan to address this issue. In April 2025, following several requests, the programme drew up the aforementioned Action Plan aimed at strengthening the documentation and traceability of assessments.

The panel further understands, based on discussions with both lecturers and the Examination Board, that calibration sessions and meetings have been organised in recent years to enhance the quality of assessment and reporting. The panel appreciates these initiatives, while at the same time drawing attention to the importance of consistent documentation of the outcomes of these sessions and of the agreed working methods resulting from them.

Overall, the panel concludes that the Examination Board fulfils a clear signalling and safeguarding role. Guided by a clear vision on final level and quality, the Board contributes to the further strengthening of assessment and grading within the International Business programme. The activities and professional stance of the Examination Board provide a solid basis for strengthening the quality of assessment. This positive effect depends on programme management following up on the Examination Board's advice in a timely and decisive manner. The panel notes that this is the case in recent practice.

Going forward, the panel encourages the programme to translate the outcomes of evaluations and consultations with stakeholders, including the Examination Board, more promptly and more consistently into concrete action plans, supported by clear planning, to ensure the timely implementation of improvement measures.

Considerations and Judgement

In reaching its judgement, the panel takes into account that the programme has established a coherent and well-considered assessment framework that aligns with Saxion's educational vision and effectively combines formative and summative assessment, using a broad and appropriate range of assessment methods. Students are systematically supported through (oral) feedback, and the assessment strategy ensures that individual achievement of the programme learning outcomes is assessed in a reliable manner.

The panel is positive about the strong alignment between programme learning outcomes, assessment methods, and the extensive use of authentic, practice-oriented assessments, including oral examinations and individual defences. These assessment practices also

contribute to safeguarding academic integrity and limiting the improper use of artificial intelligence.

The panel was initially critical with regard to the traceability and written substantiation of assessment and grading decisions, an observation that was also shared by the Examination Board. However, the programme has demonstrated that significant steps have recently been taken to address this issue. The panel positively assesses the set of measures implemented, including updated procedures, clearer roles and responsibilities in graduation assessment, strengthened calibration and peer review processes, and additional checks on the completeness and justification of assessments. The review of additional, more recent graduation and assessment files confirms that these measures are starting to show the intended effect, in practice, with initial but positive signs of impact.

While the panel emphasises the continued importance of consistent written substantiation of assessments and the further consolidation of recent improvements, it concludes that the programme, supported by the active and safeguarding role of the Examination Board, has demonstrated sufficient capacity to safeguard the validity, reliability and transparency of assessment and grading. On this basis, the panel judges that Standard 3 is met.

4.4 Achieved learning outcomes

Standard 4: The programme demonstrates that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

Explanation NVAO: The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in postgraduate programmes.

Findings

Functioning of graduates in the professional field

The professional field partners and alumni with whom the panel spoke are positive about the level and employability of graduates of the International Business programme. They indicate that graduates show a clear development over the course of the programme. One professional field representative expressed this as follows: *“In years one and two, we invest in the students; in years three and four, they demonstrably add value to organisations. At that point, the investment pays off.”*

Professional field representatives particularly value the development of soft skills, such as problem-solving ability, independent working, creativity, critical thinking, and the capacity to navigate organisational contexts. These competences are regarded as essential for a strong start in the international professional field. The professional field partners consider them more important than specific hard skills (for example, working with particular software), which, according to the field, can be acquired relatively quickly in the workplace. In addition, both professional field partners and alumni are positive about the practice-oriented nature of the programme, and about the graduation assignments in particular. Professional field partners note that students take feedback seriously and demonstrate greater awareness of themes such as AI, ethics, and sustainability than in the past.

The discussion with the professional field further indicates that the retention of (international) graduates for the region is an explicit point of attention for both the programme and regional employers. Professional field representatives emphasise the importance of retaining internationally educated talent in the Enschede/Deventer region, particularly given the presence of internationally operating companies in Gelderland and Overijssel. They indicate that these graduates are essential to the future resilience of the regional labour market. At the same time, they note that factors such as limited proficiency in Dutch and German, as well as housing availability, can hinder the retention of international students. The panel observes that the programme is aware of these challenges. The panel considers it worthwhile for the programme to adopt an even more proactive role in strengthening the likelihood that graduates will establish a sustained connection with the region, while recognising that external factors will inevitably continue to play a role.

Overall assessment of the final level by the audit panel

The panel selected 15 graduation dossiers in order to form its own view of the achieved learning outcomes. The sample included graduation projects from both locations (Enschede and Deventer) as well as from the Short Degree Programme.

Based on its analysis of the graduation dossiers, the panel concludes that they demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes at hbo bachelor level. In all cases, students show that they are able to function as starting professionals and to complete a graduation assignment that meets the minimum requirements in terms of level, complexity and professional relevance.

The panel observes several positive aspects across the graduation dossiers. Overall, the dossiers show that students are capable of dealing with international business problems in a structured and independent manner, which aligns with the expected hbo bachelor level.

In many cases, students deliver professional products that are relevant and usable for the commissioning organisation and that are clearly connected to practical business needs. In most dossiers, the relationship between the research findings and the professional product is clear. In the dossiers that received a higher final grade, students are particularly able to substantiate their choices convincingly, drawing on relevant theory and empirical data.

The panel finds that most students demonstrate an adequate command of applied research skills. This includes formulating problem-oriented research questions, selecting appropriate research methods, analysing data, and translating findings into conclusions and recommendations.

At the same time, the panel identifies a number of areas in which the realisation of learning outcomes could be made more explicit and robust in some dossiers. The panel notes that some assignments remain relatively operational in nature, which limits the opportunity for students to demonstrate strategic depth and analytical complexity. In addition, theoretical underpinning is sometimes limited, and the international and intercultural dimensions of assignments are not always explicitly addressed, despite the profile of the programme.

Overall, the panel is confident that the achieved learning outcomes meet the requirements of hbo bachelor level. Further strengthening could be achieved by sharpening the complexity and strategic level of graduation assignments, reinforcing the applied research component, and ensuring consistent emphasis on international and intercultural aspects of the graduation assignment/context. Such measures would support students in demonstrating their achieved learning outcomes even more convincingly and consistently.

Considerations and Judgement

Based on its analysis of the graduation dossiers and the experiences shared by professional field partners and alumni, the panel concludes that graduates of the International Business programme demonstrate the intended learning outcomes at hbo bachelor level. The graduation projects show that students are able to function as starting international business professionals, combining applied research skills with the development of relevant and usable professional products. The professional field confirms that graduates add value to organisations, particularly in the later stages of the programme, and recognises their strong professional attitude and soft skills. While the panel identifies opportunities to further strengthen strategic depth, theoretical underpinning and the explicit international dimension in some dossiers, these observations do not detract from the overall level achieved. The panel therefore concludes that Standard 4 is met.

5. OVERALL CONCLUSION

The panel concludes that the bachelor's programme in International Business at Saxion University of Applied Sciences meets all four quality standards for higher professional education, as set out in the NVAO's Assessment Framework for Programmes with Institutional Accreditation. Based on the NVAO's decision rules, the panel issues a positive overall assessment of the programme, both for the four-year programme offered in Enschede and Deventer and for the Short Degree Programme.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel recommends several follow-up actions to further improve the programme.

- Further strengthen support for international students, particularly with regard to finding internships and integration into the Dutch learning and working environment.
- Develop clear policy measures to prevent unnecessary study delay for students who are unable to complete or pass a Business Challenge.
- Continue to prioritise the traceability and transparency of assessment and grading. Although the panel observes that recent measures are beginning to have a positive effect, sustained attention remains necessary. The panel therefore recommends:
 - consistently and visibly implementing and monitoring the measures already introduced (such as the extension of the graduation committee for approval of the plan of approach, calibration activities, and the written substantiation of assessments);
 - ensuring that findings and recommendations of the Examination Board are followed up in a timely and prioritised manner.
- Translate outcomes of evaluations and consultations with stakeholders, including the Examination Board, more consistently into concrete action plans, supported by clear planning, to ensure timely implementation of improvement measures.
- Ensure that the assessment of the Plan of Approach leads to graduation projects that allow for genuine in-depth analysis and the addressing of clear *strategic* issue.
- Make the international and intercultural dimensions in the graduation projects more explicit, in order to consistently reflect the international profile of the programme across all components.

APPENDIX I Overview of judgements

Results overview Saxion University of Applied Sciences Bachelor programme in International Business Full time	
Standard	Judgement
Standard 1. Intended Learning Outcomes	Meets the standard
Standard 2. Teaching-learning environment	Meets the standard
Standard 3. Student assessment	Meets the standard
Standard 4. Achieved learning outcomes	Meets the standard
Overall conclusion	Positive

APPENDIX II Site visit, working methods and rules of decision

Programme site visit, 6 November 2025, Enschede

Time	Activity / Participants
08.30-8.45	Welcome panel
08.45-09.00	Internal panel meeting
09.00-09.45	Tasting - The IB Programme presents itself - Lecturer supply chain, squad leader, member examination committee - Internship coordinator, acquisition companies for business challenges, liaison Professional field committee
10.00-10.45	Students - 2nd year student (Deventer) - 2nd year student (Enschede), chair iManagement Study Association - 2nd year student (Enschede) member Degree Course Committee - 3rd year student (Enschede) - 3rd year student (Enschede), member Degree Course Committee - SDP student
11.00-12.00	Lecturers - Chair project team New IB curriculum "Cutting Edge Curriculum Crafters", Researcher - Squad leader, Lecturer Finance, Coach Business Challenges, Member "Cutting Edge Curriculum Crafters" - Coach Business Challenges, lecturer Marketing, Entrepreneurship. Sustainability /Technology /AI, Member "Cutting Edge Curriculum Crafters", Member Degree Course Committee, Researcher IB research line Customer Focused Circular Business Models - Lecturer Learning Pathway Personal & Professional Development, Coach, Study Coach, Coordinator Study Coaching - Lecturer Marketing, Coach Business Challenge, Minor Conscious Business, Chair working group SHE-accreditation
12.00-12.45	Lunch including tour of the department (facultative)
12.45-13.30	Professional field - IB alumnus, Marketing manager Brinkers Food - Commercial director Senzora Detergents - IB alumnus, Global I&D Program Manager Eaton - Consultant Valorem Consulting - Manager Business Development EMEA Eaton - Director World Trade Center Hengelo
13.45-14.30	Examination Board, Exam Review Committee and Graduation coordinator - Chair Examination Board (Lecturer Business Communication) - Vice chair Examination Board (former Chair Exam Review Committee) - Member Exam Review Committee (Lecturer Spanish, Intercultural Communication, Study Coach)

	- Graduation Coordinator (Curriculum committee, Lecturer Learning Pathway Business Research, Researcher IB research line Customer Focused Circular Business Models)
14.45-15.30	Management, professor, policy officers - Dean School of Finance and International Business - Programme Director International Business - Educational Specialist, Member “Cutting Edge Curriculum Crafters” - International Academic Affairs, Course Director Short Degree Programme International Business - Lector Sustainable Business Models
15.30-16.30	Consultation panel
16.30	Feedback session

Working methods

In compliance with the NVAO regulations the audit panel prior to the audit decided on the composition of the delegations (auditees) in consultation with the course management and on the basis of the points of focus that had arisen from the panel's analysis of the course documents.

Auditing process

The following procedure was adopted. The panel studied the documents regarding the programme (see Annex Documents reviewed) and a number of theses. The panel secretary organised input from the auditors and distributed the preliminary findings among the panel members prior to the audit. A preparatory meeting of the panel was held before the site visit.

During the site-visit the audit panel members spoke randomly to students and reviewed a number of additional theses.

In assessing the relevant full-time programme, the panel applied the *Assessment Framework for the Accreditation System of Higher Education in the Netherlands*, as established by the NVAO (in effect since 1 April 2024). This framework specifies the standards that an audit panel must address during a programme assessment, as well as the criteria on which the panel must base its judgement of the programme.

The site visit focused on verifying the findings of the document analysis and on gathering additional information about the content of the curriculum. This was achieved through discussions with representatives of the programme, students, and the professional field, which took the form of 'peer-to-peer dialogues'.

Verification by the audit panel took place by addressing the same topics on multiple occasions with different groups, by reviewing additional documentation, and (where housing and material facilities were concerned) through direct observation.

The panel formulated its preliminary assessments per theme and standard immediately after the site visit. These assessments were based on the findings of the site visit and built on the analysis of the programme documentation. An exception was made for the assessment of Standard 3. At the time of the site visit, the panel lacked sufficiently convincing evidence that the assessments carried out by the examiners were consistently transparent and traceable. As the programme had already taken measures to address this issue, the panel offered the programme the opportunity to submit additional, up-to-date evidence three months after the audit.

The panel subsequently studied this additional documentation, held a brief explanatory meeting with the programme director, and then arrived at its final judgement for Standard 3.

An 'open consultation session' was scheduled as part of the site-visit programme. The panel verified that the scheduled times of the consultation session had been made public to all parties involved in the school community in a correct and timely manner. No students or staff members attended the open consultation session.

A first version of the assessment report was drafted by the secretary and circulated among the members of the panel for review and comments. The final draft was subsequently forwarded to the institute to correct factual inaccuracies.

Rules of decision

According to the NVAO Accreditation Decision Rules, a standard can score "satisfactory", "partially satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory". Hobéon has applied the decision rules as listed in the "Assessment Framework for the Dutch Higher Education Accreditation System" (2024).

If there are different variants of a programme (e.g. full-time, part-time and dual), the assessment must show that the quality of each variant is guaranteed on the basis of the standards set out in the relevant assessment framework in order to arrive at a positive final assessment of the programme. The final assessment of the programme is either "positive", "positive with conditions" or "negative".

If a programme is offered under a single programme code (ISAT) at multiple locations, the programme can only be considered for accreditation if the assessment shows that each location meets the quality standards specified in the relevant assessment framework.

Programme assessment of institutions without ITK accreditation

The final assessment of a programme is positive in any case if all standards score "compliant".

The final assessment of a programme is positive with conditions in any case if Standard 1 is compliant and a maximum of three standards score "partially compliant", in which case the audit panel recommends imposing conditions.

The final assessment of a programme is negative in any case if:

- one or more standards score "does not meet"
- standard 1 scores "partially meets"
- one to three standards score "partially meets", whereby the audit panel does not recommend imposing conditions;
- three or more standards score "partially compliant".

APPENDIX III Documents reviewed

List of documents examined

- Dashboard IB
- National Qualifications Framework International Business (2023)
- Suggested Body of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes Framework International Business 2023
- True North SFIB
- Academiejaarplan SFIB 24-25
- IB Year plan
- Course Document IB New
- Blueprint 30 EC Graduation (new)
- Blueprint 10 EC Investors in meaningful IB (new)
- Course Document IB Out phasing
- Exam plan IB Out phasing
- Exam file Graduation Programme Out phasing
- Study and Assessment Programme Short Degree Programme
- Minutes of the Advisory Board
- Annual Report of the Examination Board
- Overview of the teaching staff
- Teaching and Examination Regulations (TER)
- Overview of all recent graduation projects
- Assessment assignments, including assessment criteria and grading standards (answer models), as well as a representative selection of completed assessments (such as presentations, internship reports, assessments, portfolios, etc.) and the corresponding assessments
- A representative selection of textbooks and other study materials

In accordance with NVAO regulations, the panel reviewed fifteen students' graduation dossiers prior to the audit. This selection included eight graduation dossiers from students at the Enschede location, five dossiers from Deventer, and two dossiers from the Short Degree Programme (SDP).

Additional documentation regarding Standard 3

To assess whether the improvement measures implemented for Standard 3 have led to the intended results, the panel received additional documentation:

- IB Graduation Programme Improvement Plan
- Action Plan Graduation programme IB 2022-2023
- Assessment Form final Assignment
- Evaluation Graduation programme IB 2022-2023
- Improvement Assessing Graduation since 2019
- Exam file Graduation Programme 2024-2025
- Format Exam File IB 2.0 (version April 2024)
- Minutes of the meeting on the IB graduation programme with an external member of the Examination Board
- Results 100% check Q3/Q4 IB 2024-2025
- PoA Calibration Session summary
- Overview of all graduation projects since site visit
- Results exams modules new curriculum:
 - Dossiers Business & Ethics
 - Dossiers Business Challenge
 - Dossiers Intercultural Competences

The panel also selected six additional graduation dossiers three months after the audit (February 2026). These dossiers were drawn from a group of ten students who graduated in the period between the site visit and February 2026. The additional sample consisted of five students from Enschede and one student from Deventer.

For privacy reasons, the names of these graduates and their student numbers are not included in this report. The names of the graduates and their student number are known to the secretary of the audit panel.

APPENDIX IV Composition of the auditpanel

On 17 September 2025 the NVAO endorsed the composition of the panel to assess the International Business programme of Saxion University of Applied Sciences (PA-2406).

Name site visit cluster	HBO IBMS Groep 1 Noord	
Name	Role	Succinct CVs
Robin Pereboom	Chair	Senior researcher at the Centre of Expertise for Wellbeing Economy & New Entrepreneurship at Avans University of Applied Sciences, and lecturer in the International Business bachelor's programme
Henk Jager	Member	Lecturer in the International Business bachelor's programme of Windesheim University of Applied Sciences
Biljana Pešalj	Member	Professor of Applied Research (Dutch: lector) in Circular Transition at Fontys University of Applied Sciences
Filippo Soragna	Student-member	Student International Business at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
Inge van der Hoorn	Secretary	Consultant at Hobéon

Prior to the audit all panel members undersigned declarations of independence and confidentiality which are in possession of the NVAO. This declaration certifies, among other things, that panel members do not currently maintain or have not maintained for the last five years any (family) connections or ties of a personal nature or as a researcher/teacher, professional or consultant with the institution in question, which could affect a fully independent judgement regarding the quality of the programme in either a positive or negative sense.



Hobéon
a **kiwa** company

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