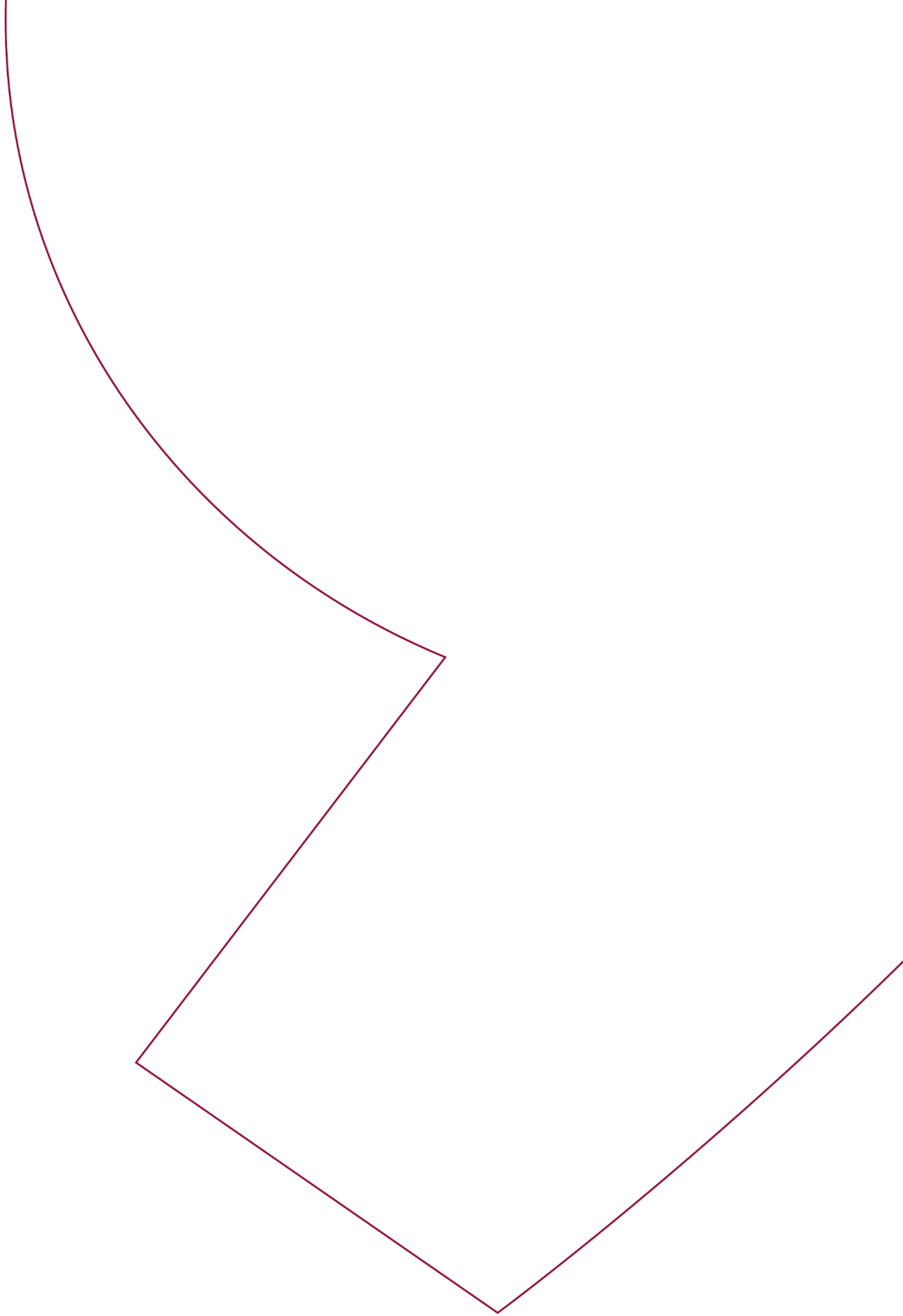


Assessment report

Assessment after three years

Master Applied Sustainability Management
fulltime

**SRH Haarlem University of Applied
Sciences**



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Assessment report

Assessment after three years

HBO MSc Applied Sustainability Management

Fulltime

SRH HAARLEM UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

(programme formerly part of Global School
for Entrepreneurship Foundation)

ISAT: 70231

Hobéon Certificering & Accreditatie

Date

11 March 2026

Audit panel

Drs. N. Rijnders (chair)

Dr. L. Roza

Dr. G. Silvius

M. Babii MSc (student member)

Secretary

Drs. P. Gertenaar

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Institution	SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences
Status	Recognized private institution
Outcome of Institutional Quality Assessment	n.a.
Name of programme in the Central Register of Higher Education (RIO)	Master of Science in Applied Sustainability Management
ISAT-code RIO	70231
Domain / Sector RIO	Economics
Orientation and level	Master of Science (HBO)
Degree	Master of Science (HBO)
Number of credits	60
Location	Haarlem
Variant	Fulltime
Language	English
Date site visit	11 March 2026

2. INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of a '*Assessment after three years*' assessment of the Master of Science in Applied Sustainability Management.

The audit for the application for the Initial Accreditation of the Master of Science in Applied Sustainability Management took place on 30 March 2023. On 17 October 2023, SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences (at the time known as Global School for Entrepreneurship) received a positive accreditation decision for the programme from the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (here after: NVAO).

Because SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences does not have an Institutional Quality Assurance Assessment, a midterm assessment must take place after three years on the method of testing and assessment (standard 3) and the level achieved (standard 4). This interim assessment took place on 11 March 2026.

A part of the audit panel consisting of independent experts (see appendix III for an explanation) was the same as the panel of the Initial Accreditation. The audit panel used the assessment framework '*Assessment after three years*' of the NVAO for the assessment.

This report discusses the findings, considerations and conclusions of the audit panel regarding the NVAO quality standards 3 'assessment' and 4 'achieved learning outcomes'.

Educational Institution

The SRH Haarlem University of Applied Science is part of SRH Group, a German-based foundation active in education and health care. SRH is one of the oldest and largest private universities in Germany. These institutions offer programmes in informatics, data science, media and design, economy, law, social, health and cultural sciences. Together, the institute covers over 150 degree-programmes with over 20.000 students.

Since 1 September 2024, following a formal transition supported by OCW, NVAO and the Dutch Inspectorate of Education, the institution has operated under an independent legal entity—Haarlem Institute for Higher Education BV. In the national RIO register it is known as 'SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences, this name is used in this report, or SRH for short. The programme now operates fully within its own RPHO¹ entity, with independent governance, examination board, and quality assurance structures.

The organization and didactic approaches of SRH are based on the Competence-Orientated Research and Education principles (CORE), developed by the German institute. In 2019, the German accreditation organization ZEvA formally validated and accredited the CORE principle.

SRH Haarlem offers three bachelor's degrees and one master's programme for a very international group of students. All programmes are taught in English and focus on (global) entrepreneurship and management, digitalization, ethics, and sustainability.

The programmes have an interactive set up and the didactical approach is competence orientated. Education is delivered by a team of Dutch and international professors and lecturers, in conjunction with experts from the work field.

The start of the parttime variant has been postponed, until more parttime programmes can be offered. Depending on the accreditation of a new parttime programme, SRH will offer the parttime variant in September 2026.

¹ Rechtspersoon Hoger Onderwijs (RPHO): in English Recognized Private Institution

Characteristics of the course

The Master Applied Sustainability Management is a professionally oriented programme that prepares students to initiate and guide sustainability-related transformation processes in organisational and societal contexts. The programme focuses on the strategic integration and practical implementation of sustainability challenges rather than on theoretical model development. It combines advanced conceptual knowledge with applied research, case-based learning, and organisational intervention projects. Graduates are trained to develop feasible and context-appropriate sustainability solutions that align ecological, organisational, and economic considerations.

Since the start in February 2024, the programme has experienced rapid growth, increasing from 20 to approximately 150 students at the time of the site visit. This expansion required adjustments in the organisation, including the extension of lecturer capacity and support staff. Entry requirements have been revised, and the English language requirements for incoming students have been raised.

The programme has also seen changes in faculty and management staff, including the appointment of a new Programme Director. A review of the quality assurance framework and periodic course evaluations have resulted in strengthening of internal processes. The programme is currently operating within these updated structures and procedures.

3. FINDINGS ON THE LEVEL OF THE STANDARDS

3.1. Student assessment

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

Explanation: 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 testing and assessing

The assessment system is based on the SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences General Assessment Policy 2026-2027. This policy describes the vision on assessment, principles, its organization, and quality assurance mechanisms. The vision on assessment is based on the Competence Oriented Research and Education model (CORE). Student assignments serve both to measure the achievement of learning goals and to support the continued development of their competencies.

The Master Applied Sustainability Management programme consists of 5 EC modules and a 15 EC final Applied Research Project. The programme has structured all intended learning outcomes around four competence domains: Specialist, Methodological, Social and Personal competencies. Assessment is designed to measure the integrated development of these competencies at EQF/NLQF level 7 and is in line with the Dutch Professional Master standard. The modules show a clear progression in level, complexity, and assessment methods, concluding with a final integrated assessment of the Applied Research Project.

Assessment formats include term papers, written exams, case studies, role plays, presentations, reflective journals, and oral assessments. Assignments are often group-based, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork. Care is taken to distinguish individual performance within group work. The panel was informed about the recent review of the balance between individual assessment and collaborative work. This has resulted in replacement of certain group-based assessments by individual assessment and further refinement of assessment of individual performance within group assignments. The panel appreciates the programme's efforts to enhance the visibility of individual contributions in collaborative work.

Validity, reliability, independency

The programme uses various tools to ensure transparency, reliability, and validity. The panel was pleased with the extensive reflection and evaluations on these aspects in the submitted documents.

All assessments are prepared by experienced lecturers. Lecturers from the work field, who bring in practical knowledge, are guided by examiners and supporting materials. The panel notes that the programme ensures adequate attention to assessment expertise. New lecturers receive an onboarding programme, which emphasizes the CORE- vision, and the execution of formative and summative assessments.

As part of quality control, assessments and monitoring were improved by installing an 'Assessment Office.' The Assessment Office supports examiners and helps in standardizing the execution of assessment design, rubric development, and the monitoring of results.

Clear procedures safeguard the validity and reliability of assessment. Learning outcomes and assessment methods are aligned using appropriate taxonomies. Rubrics are used for all summative assessments to clarify performance expectations and ensure transparent and

consistent grading. An AI policy is in place. Assessments are reviewed by the Assessment Office and the Programme Director before being administered.

The module handbook or syllabus provides students with information on the module objectives, type of assessment, and corresponding criteria. It is distributed and discussed at the start of each module. Students confirmed to the panel that they understand the assessment criteria and AI guidelines, which are also available through the online portal. Students also appreciate the formative assessment they receive, such as the feedback provided during classes on their progress, understanding of the material, and development of relevant skills.

The panel has studied the assessment system and discussed it during the site visit. It concludes that the system adequately ensures the validity, reliability, and transparency of assessment.

Examination board

The institute has installed a joint Examination Board. The Examination Board includes an external chair and members from all programmes with expertise in programme content, higher education assessment and the CORE didactic model. The Examination Board appoints examiners and plays a vital role in quality assurance and in safeguarding the achievement of final learning outcomes. The Examination Board reviews a selection of assessments and student work as part of its regular audits. In addition, it advises programme directors and participates in policy development, such as policies regarding the use of artificial intelligence in assessment.

The Assessment Office supports SRH Haarlem's quality assurance in assessment. It systematically collects evidence on exam quality, grading, student feedback, and examiner reflection, and integrates these findings into institutional PDCA cycles.

At the start of the programme, the Examination Board collaborated closely with lecturers, programme directors, and the Institutional Board to establish assessment guidelines and procedures. During the site visit, the panel learned that the Examination Board since then adopted a more independent role in safeguarding assessment quality. The panel supports this shift and considers the Board to be appropriately positioned and aware of its responsibilities. Based on the documentation and the discussions held during the audit, the panel concludes that the Examination Board fulfils its role effectively in safeguarding the quality of assessment.

Graduation process and final assessment

The Applied Research Project (ARP) constitutes the final and integrative assessment of the MSc Applied Sustainability Management and represents 15 EC. It is positioned at the end of the programme and builds directly on the previous modules, for instance in terms of acquiring research skills and exploring topics of interest. The ARP is designed to verify that graduates independently meet the intended master's level by integrating theory, research methodology and applied sustainability transformation in a real-life context.

Students can start their ARP twice during the year and are expected to complete this in 12 weeks. The ARP consists of a written research project on a sustainable transformation management topic and a reflective and analytical presentation. The Written Final Project counts for 70% of the final grade, and the oral assessment accounts for 30%. The final report and the reflective interview are assessed by the first examiner/supervisor and a second examiner who was not involved in the supervision. The examiners grade independently and after discussion, the grades are finalized. In case of a 1.5 point or more difference in grades between the two examiners, a third examiner is involved.

Students are given a timeline and must submit several interim and final products such as a proposal, initial report draft, full draft, and presentation. Guidance is given through workshops and regular meetings with a supervisor. The students that the panel spoke with, appreciated

the supervision during the Applied Research Project, but they felt that the twelve-week period to complete it was challenging.

The programme evaluates each cohort of graduation and identifies the relevance of topics, and quality of the written work as some of the strong points of the ARP's. At the same time, adjustments were made to prevent reports from becoming overly extensive and to reduce delays in students completing their projects. Attention was also given to the relative high marks for the ARP's. According to management, students are highly motivated to achieve high grades and often make use of resit opportunities to improve their results. The panel appreciates the frequent evaluation cycle and the prompt implementation of improvements to the graduation process.

The panel reviewed student work, rubrics and assessment forms and notes that the forms used for the examined final projects were not always sufficiently substantiated, despite existing quality guidelines. The panel recommends that the programme ensures that more feedback is incorporated into the assessment forms so that evaluations become more transparent, informative, and supportive of student learning.

According to the panel, the detailed rubric for the ARP appears to be formulated in a way that leads to high marks. The Examination Board also remarked on the relative high grades in its Annual Report and made recommendations. The programme management acted on the grading outcomes by adjusting the ARP rubric and by allocating more thesis coordination time to the Programme Director. The panel agrees with these adjustments but also considers that the Applied Research Project rubric requires further revision, particularly the assessment of the Methodological competencies. For this section, the panel recommends a simplification and a clearer articulation of the academic requirements. The panel recommends redesigning this part of the rubric by reducing unnecessary detail and concentrating on the key elements that must be assessed, such as the formulation of the research question and the methodological rigour of the project. In addition, the panel recommends reformulating the performance level descriptions (e.g. from *excellent* to *insufficient*) so that they are grounded in academic criteria such as "Identify a research question and project design" or "Define working concepts and conceptual frameworks." Finally, the panel thinks that the rubric-elements assessing the three other learning outcomes should also be simplified.

The panel is confident that the measures already taken, combined with ongoing refinement of the rubric and its use, will lead to a robust and well-calibrated assessment practice going forward.

Weighing and judgment

The Master Applied Sustainability Management programme has a valid, transparent, and reliable system of assessment. Sufficient quality assurance mechanisms are in place to ensure that students individually achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. Assessment criteria and procedures are transparent and information about this is easily available to students. The graduation assessment procedure is up to standard. The panel recommends that the programme takes action to ensure that sufficient feedback is included in the assessment forms. Each ARP is graded independently by two examiners using a rubric to align the grading criteria. The panel recommends simplifying the rubric by focusing on the essential assessment criteria, particularly the clarity of the research question and the methodological soundness of the project and revising the performance level descriptions so they reflect clear academic expectations.

The Examination Board is in control and has a proactive role in the quality assurance of assessment in the programme. The panel appreciates the reflective attitude of lecturers and staff towards assessment and points of improvement.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 3.

3.2. Achieved learning outcomes

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

Explanation: 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

The audit panel own assessment of the intended learning outcomes.

In preparation for the site visit, the panel studied a selection of Applied Research Projects of 15 students of the first cohorts who graduated in 2025 and 2026. The grades of the sample varied between 6,8 and 9,7 (out of 10)². The panel received the ARP papers, recordings of the reflective interviews and the assessment forms from both examiners.

The panel concludes that the ARPs generally meet the required master's level and adequately reflect the learning outcomes (Specialist competencies; Methodological competencies; Personal competencies and Social competencies) of the Master Applied Sustainability Management programme.

In one case, the panel found that the final project did not fully meet the required standard due to insufficient methodological elaboration. The panel does not attribute these shortcomings to the student, as they appear to stem from the nature of the rubric; see the previous section for the recommendation regarding revision of the ARP-rubric. The panel further notes that in this case, aside from the methodological component, the student's ARP does meet master's-level expectations.

The 15 ARPs that the panel studied, address topics relevant to sustainability challenges and are professionally and practically oriented. Students demonstrate the ability to design and conduct a structured research project. The panel noticed that some of the papers were too long, with 60-120 pages. This issue was also identified by the programme in its initial evaluations and has since been addressed.

The panel notes that in some cases the data collection was limited, and that the methodological strength could be enhanced by formulating the research questions more critically. According to the panel, more focused research questions could also help reduce the size of the research papers.

As remarked in standard 3, the grades are generally high, which has led to the recommendation of revising the rubrics. The panel also recommends increasing external involvement in the calibration of the ARP assessments. External validation of the ARP can further strengthen reliability and confirm that the intended master's level is achieved, while also contributing to the benchmarking, by aligning with expectations and the needs of the professional field.

In summary, the panel finds that the sampled projects showed strong qualities such as practical and relevant recommendations and solid conceptual grounding, while noting that further improvements can be achieved in the focus of research questions, the scope of the papers, the methodological design and external validation.

² The range of final grades in the sample spans from the lowest awarded grade to the highest awarded grade. The remaining grades reflect the distribution of final assessments as awarded by the examiners.

Alumni

After graduation, alumni typically return to their previous professional field or obtain positions across a wide range of sectors, both in the Netherlands and abroad, in small and large companies as well as non-profit organisations. In conversations with the panel, students and alumni expressed that the broad scope of the programme and the interaction with diverse nationalities and cultures were valuable aspects of their learning experience. They also reported that group assessments were initially challenging but contributed significantly to their learning and enhanced their professional abilities such as communication and presentation. When pressed for points of improvement, the alumni mentioned that the programme could include more practical data-related and sustainability reporting skills, as well as an internship. They indicated that they generally feel well equipped to contribute to sustainability transformations within organisations.

The panel concludes that the programme prepares graduates adequately for the working field.

Weighing and judgement

The panel concludes that the Applied Research Project show that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. The panel finds that the overall quality of the sampled ARP's meets the expected master's level but also observes variation in methodological depth and focus. The panel recommends increasing external involvement in the calibration of ARP assessments. External validation can further strengthen reliability, confirm that the intended master's level is achieved, and support benchmarking with the professional field.

With the recommendations on the rubric and external validation in mind, the panel is confident that the consistency and academic quality of future ARP's will further improve.

Graduates are positive about the programme, the students and alumni that the panel spoke to feel that the programme prepares graduates adequately for the (international) job market.

The panel concludes that the programme meets standard 4.

4. OVERALL FINAL JUDGEMENT

The audit panel concludes the programme meets standards 3 and 4. Therefore the final assessment is positive, in accordance with the NVAO decision rules (2024).

After approval by the panel members, this assessment report was approved by the chairman on 11 March 2026.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that more examiner feedback to the student on their ARP, based on the assessment criteria, is incorporated into the ARP assessment forms.
- Revise the Methodological competencies element of the Applied Research Project rubric by simplifying its structure, focusing on the main elements and reformulating the performance level descriptions based on academic criteria. Simplify the rubrics of the other three learning outcomes in a similar way.
- Increase external involvement in the calibration and validation of ARP assessments.

Attachment I Programme, method and decision rules

Assessment programme

Time	Round
8:30 – 9:00	Arrival & Welcome of audit panel
09:00 - 09:30	Session 1 Institutional board Managing Director, Manager Operations, Head of Marketing, Academic Director
09:30 - 10:30	Session 2 Teaching staff Programme Director and 3 lecturers
10:30– 10:45	BREAK
10:45 – 11:30	Session 3 Student round 3 students from different cohorts, 1 alumnus
11:30 – 12:15	Session 4 Exam Board 5 members of the Exam Board, Chair and former Chair, Secretary and Assessment Office representative
12:15 - 12:45	Panel deliberates
12:45 – 13:00	Feedback from panel

Method

The focus of this assessment after three years is on the method of examination and on the achieved final level or standards 3 'Student assessment' and 4 'Achieved learning outcomes'.

The assessment of the programme was based on the so called '*Assessment framework for the higher education accreditation system*' of 2024 (NVAO, The Hague, 2024). This framework states per standard (1) what an audit panel must focus on and (2) the criteria based on which the audit panel determines its assessment per standard.

Based on the set of documentation made available to the audit panel, the panel was able to form an impression of the primary and secondary processes of the programme. The educational institution has specifically explained those aspects in its Self-evaluation report that are applicable to an assessment after three years.

The visitation was aimed at verifying the findings from the document analysis and obtaining additional information about the programme. This was done by means of discussions with representatives of the programme, characterized as 'discussions between colleagues'.

The audit panel verified the same subject several times with different levels and by examining additional documentation.

After studying the audit programme, the panel selected the discussion partners, thereby taking into account the above mentioned 'Assessment framework' and based on its document analysis and the resulting specific points of attention.

The audit panel's assessment, reflected in a draft report, was submitted to the educational institution for a test for any factual inaccuracies.

Decision rules

According to the NVAO *Decision Rules for Accreditation*, a standard scores: 'meets', 'partially meets' or 'does not meet'. Hobéon applied these decision rules as listed in the '*Assessment framework for the accreditation system for higher education in the Netherlands*'. In case of different variants of a course (for example: full-time, part-time and/or dual), the assessment must show that the quality is guaranteed for each variant based on the standards of the relevant assessment framework in order to arrive at a positive final assessment of the course. The final assessment of the course is: 'positive', 'positive under conditions' or 'negative'.

If a course is offered under one RIO registration at multiple locations, the course can only be eligible for accreditation if the assessment shows that each location meets the quality standards stated in the relevant framework.

Attachment II List of documents

- HBO MSc Applied Sustainability Management- Midterm Assessment report.
- Appendix A: EER Applied Sustainability Management – 2025–2026.pdf
- Appendix B_ Education Profile and Objectives ASM v2.pdf
- Appendix C: General Assessment Policy 2026–2027.pdf
- Appendix D – Old Assessment Policy.pdf
- Appendix E: Quality Assurance 2026–2027
- Appendix F: Mapping of Learning Outcomes
- Appendix G_ Lecturer Workshops Proposal 2025–2026.pdf
- Appendix H: Slidedeck Exam Board Training
- Appendix Ia: Annual Report of the Joint Examination Board for SRH – Haarlem University of Applied Sciences 2023-2024
- Appendix Ib: Annual Report of the Joint Examination Board for SRH – Haarlem University of Applied Sciences 2024-2025
- Appendix J: CORE in Modular Courses
- Appendix K_ Onboarding Lecturers.pdf
- Appendix L: Modules – Assessment Overview.xlsx
- Appendix M: SRH Haarlem AI Policy
- Appendix N_ ARP syllabus–Feb 2024 cohort.pdf
- Appendix O_ ARP syllabus–Sep 2024 cohort.pdf
- Appendix P: ARP Timeline Guide_sep 2025.pdf
- Appendix Q: Coordinator Final Applied Research Projects
- Appendix R: Exam Board – Applied Research Project report
- Appendix S_ ARP syllabus–Feb 2025 cohort_supervisor.docx.pdf
- Appendix T_ ARP syllabus–Feb 2025 cohort_second assessor.docx.pdf
- Appendix U: ARP kick off_Supervisors_feb 2025.pptx
- Appendix V_ ARP_Timeline guide_Feb 2025.pdf
- Appendix W_ Exam Board Members Overview.pdf
- Appendix X_ Staff Overview
- Appendix Y_ Module Handbook Applied Sustainability Management 2026.pdf
- Test assignments and assessment criteria and standards and a representative selection of tests taken (presentations, journals, written assessments).

The audit panel has reviewed 15 final projects. The names of students, their student numbers and the titles of the final projects are known to the secretary of the audit panel and can be requested anytime.

Attachment III Audit panel

Name	Short job descriptions of panel members
Drs. D.J.N.M. (Nies) Rijnders, chair	Independent Educational Consultant. Until January 2023: Senior Educational Consultant for Practice-Based Research & Manager, Sustainable Business Expertise Center, Avans University of Applied Sciences.
Dr. L. (Lonneke) Roza	Head of Community Investment at NN Group, (supervisory) board member, and freelance lecturer at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.
Dr. G. (Gilbert) Silvius	Academic instructor, researcher, and author in areas including project management and sustainable development at LOI University of Applied Sciences, HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences, and the University of Johannesburg.
M. (Mariia) Babii MSc, student member	Recently graduated from the Professional Master's programme in Global Sustainable Business at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.
Drs. P. Gertenaar	Secretary

On 11 March 2026, the NVAO approved the composition of the audit panel for the assessment of the Master of Science in Applied Sustainability Management programme of SRH Haarlem University of Applied Sciences, under the number PA-2701.

The independence and confidentiality declarations signed by all panel members are owned by Hobéon. In this declaration, the panel members declare they have had no ties with the institution concerned for at least five years prior to the audit - other than those in the context of their work as a member of the audit panel of the evaluation agency, Hobéon, that could positively or negatively influence an independent assessment.



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