

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Higher Education



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

Duncan Ross
Chief data officer
September 2024

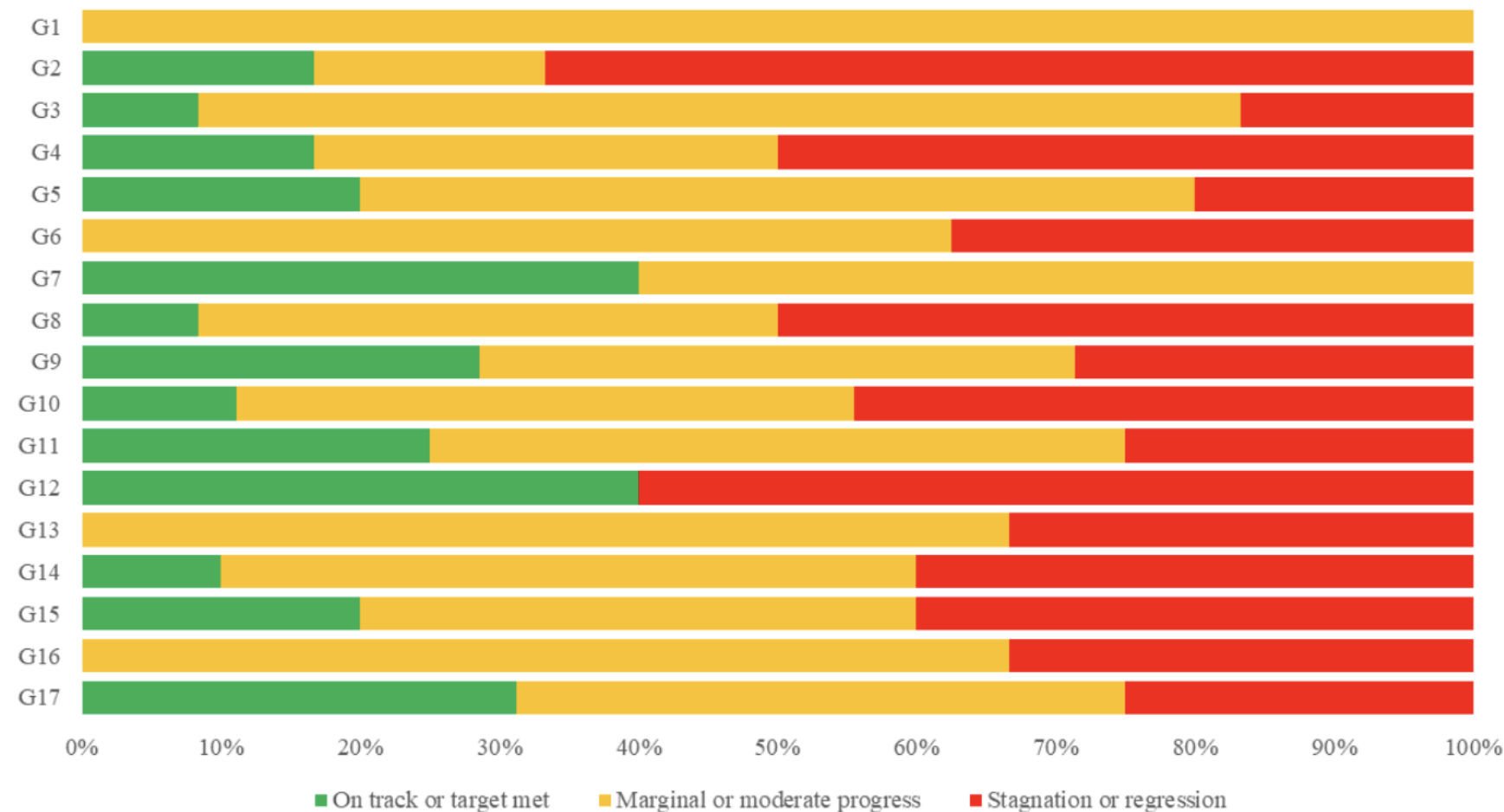
Sustainable Development Goals

- Goals agreed by the UN in 2015
- A common framework for evaluation and a commitment to deliver
- Broad and comprehensive
- 17 Goals
- 169 Targets
- Over 230 indicators



Crisis of sustainability

As we begin the second half of our journey to 2030, signs of a determined, sustained global comeback have yet to emerge. This year's report reveals that only seventeen per cent of SDGs targets are on track to be achieved, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed.



António Guterres – Secretary-General of the UN

From *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals Report of the Secretary-General* May 2024

Higher Education and the SDGs

- All goals are relevant to all universities
- Not just SDG 4: Quality Education



Higher education brings specific skills to the SDGs

Education

Higher education institutions are both direct, and indirect educators of future generations

Research

Universities lead the development of new solutions, both scientific and social

Perspective

The higher education sector thinks long-term: they are generational actors

Economic

Significance of universities to local economies

Need for measurement

In order to deliver on the SDGs, measurement is critical.

If we don't know where we are we can't plan for change.

When we take actions we can't evaluate their impact.

Measurements need to be

- Quality
- Accessible
- Timely

And include data from civil society

48. Indicators are being developed to assist this work. Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision-making. Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible. We agree to intensify our efforts to strengthen statistical capacities in developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. We are committed to developing broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product (GDP).

National level

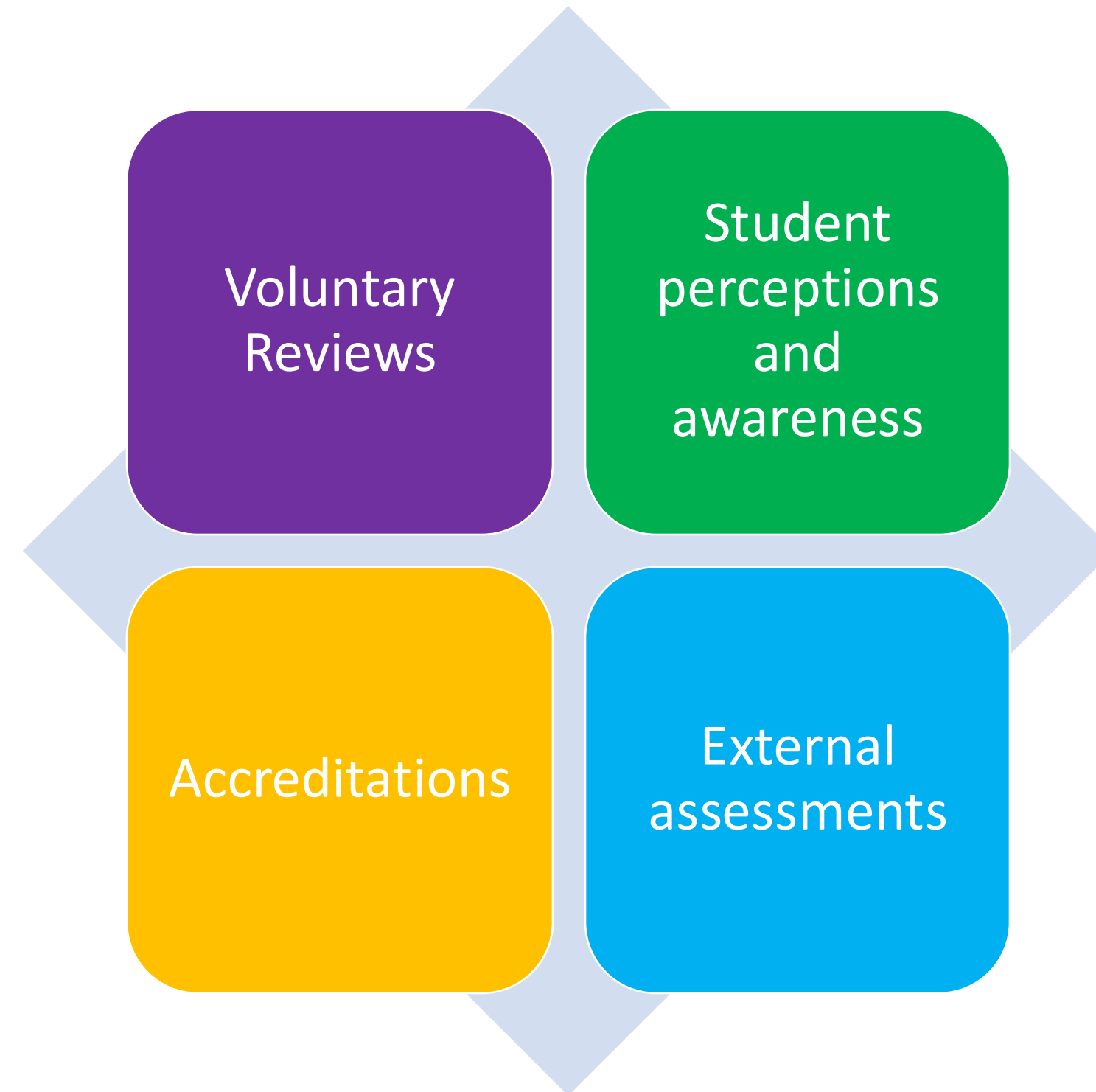
78. We encourage all member states to develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda. These can support the transition to the SDGs and build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate.

79. We also encourage member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.

Measurement systems

- The standard for the SDGs
- You can choose the metrics that are most relevant to you
- They are time consuming
- It's hard to compare your review with other institutions
- Example: Carnegie Mellon University

- Accreditation systems may have sustainability requirements
- These may be at an institutional or course level
- Provide visibility for your institution
- Often minimum standards and may be mixed with other aspects of performance
- Example: AACSB



- The views of students are important and often undervalued
- May be more radical than professionally led insights
- Can be linked to external evaluation
- Example: Sulitest TASK

- Require you to provide consistent data to specific standards
- Ability to compare results across institutions in some cases
- Useful for visibility of your work
- Examples: STARS, THE Impact Rankings

THE Impact Rankings

- Created in 2017
- First edition in 2019
- Takes into account all 17 SDGs
- Focused on driving continuous improvement
- Makes sustainability a strategic focus of university leaders



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

The largest and most comprehensive global university ranking
dedicated to the UN sustainable development goals



2,152

Universities

30,000+

person hours (mainly evidence validation)

283,000+

documents collected

269,000+

measurements

3.7m

publications on the SDGs

75

metrics*

125

Countries and regions

251

indicators*



How do we measure what universities do?





Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target	Description
4.1	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education , including university
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills , including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development , including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
4.b	By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries , in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers , including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

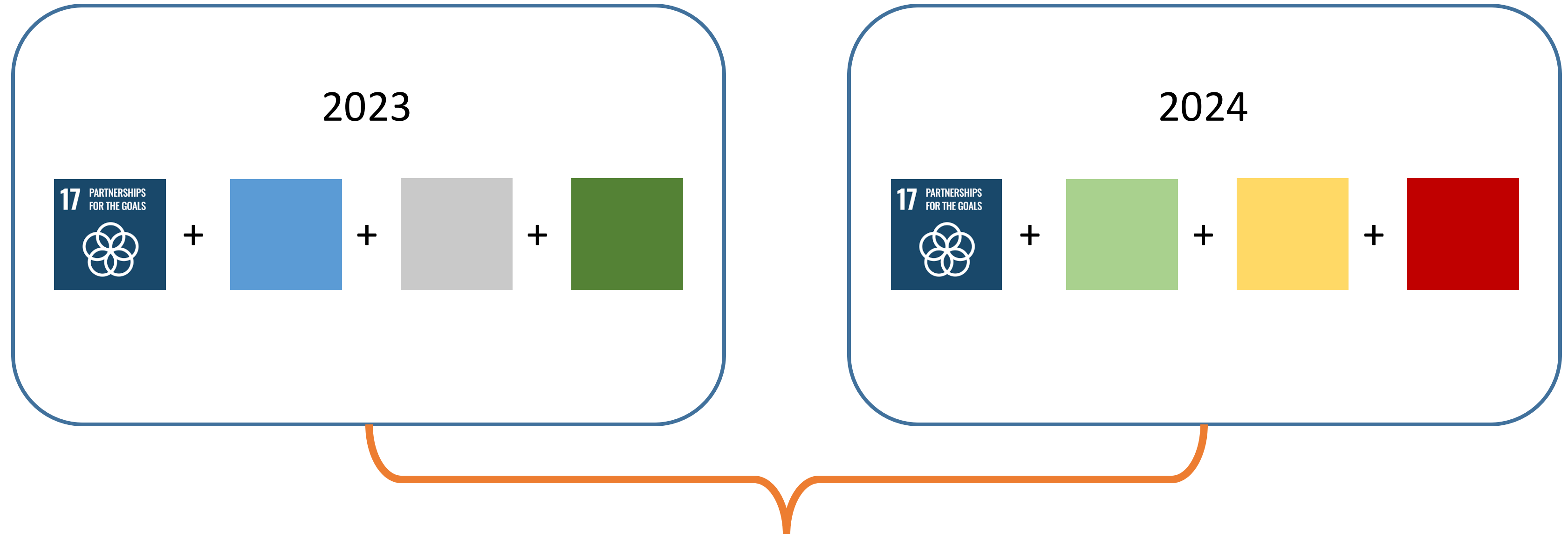
Target	Description
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills , including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development , including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Lifelong learning measures

Universities need to highlight lifelong learning opportunities they provide

- Provide free access to educational resources for those not studying at the university.
- Host educational events at university that are open to the general public.
- Undertake educational outreach activities
- (e.g. tailored lectures or demonstrations) beyond campus – in local schools, in the community.
- Have a policy that ensures that access to these activities is accessible to all, regardless of ethnicity, religion, disability, immigration status or gender.

Overall score: annual score from two years



Overall ranking

Provides a truly international understanding of excellence

Flexibly represents your strengths

Recognised across the world

Rank	Name	Best scores by rank	Overall
1	Western Sydney University 📍 Australia	5 79.7 15 96.6 12 93.3 17 98.5 SDG Descriptions	99.7
=2	University of Tasmania 📍 Australia	13 92.7 15 96.8 14 93.1 17 96.8 SDG Descriptions	98.5
5	RMIT University 📍 Australia	10 92.8 6 87.8 8 85.1 17 97.1 SDG Descriptions	97.7
7	UNSW Sydney 📍 Australia Explore	6 91.2 13 92.1 15 93.0 17 93.7 SDG Descriptions	97.2
11	Yonsei University (Seoul campus) 📍 South Korea	9 100.0 8 88.1 16 89.7 17 84.8-90.0 SDG Descriptions	96.0
=13	University of Auckland 📍 New Zealand	15 95.3 16 89.1 12 88.1 17 92.5 SDG Descriptions	95.2
=13	University of Technology Sydney 📍 Australia	12 91.3 6 89.1 8 80.7 17 99.6 SDG Descriptions	95.2
18	Universiti Sains Malaysia 📍 Malaysia	16 90.9 2 80.3 6 81.3 17 97.4 SDG Descriptions	95.0
=19	Mahidol University 📍 Thailand	3 94.5 5 71.5 9 77.0-90.2 17 98.3 SDG Descriptions	94.9

Why do universities participate?



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

Visibility

ITS in THE Impact Rankings 2024



AMRITA RANKED AMONG TOP 100 IN THE WORLD | 1ST IN INDIA

3 rd QUALITY EDUCATION	7 th GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING	22 nd GENDER EQUALITY	62 th CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	87 th AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	87 th INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	301-400 PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS
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amrita.edu/impact

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

University Impact Rankings 2024: The world's top universities for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals

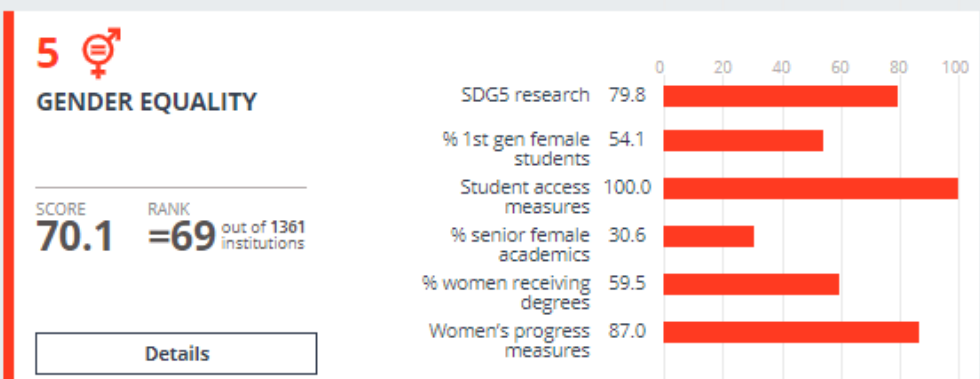
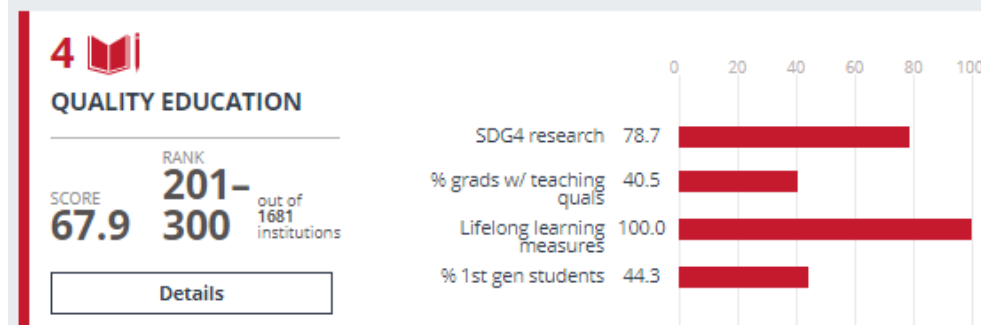
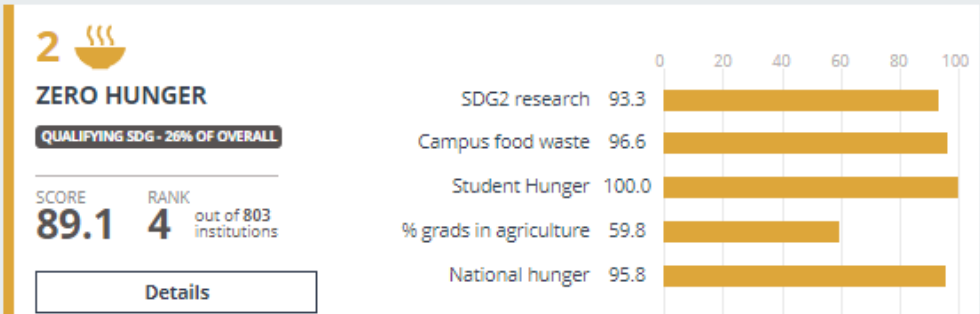
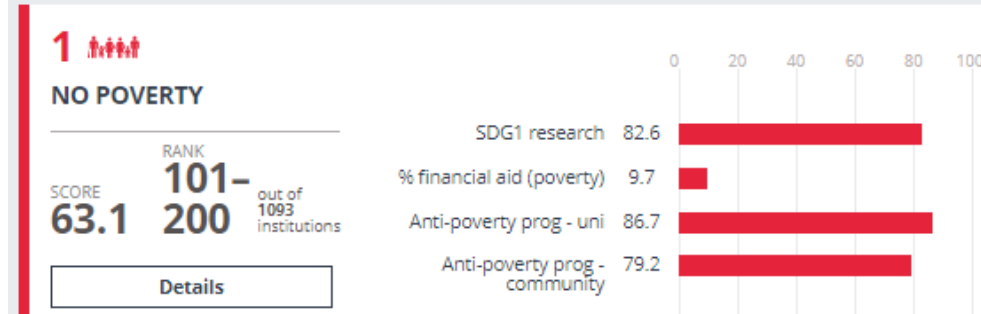
Jun 12, 2024



Benchmarking

Sustainable Development Goals Breakdowns

Info [List Icon] [Grid Icon]

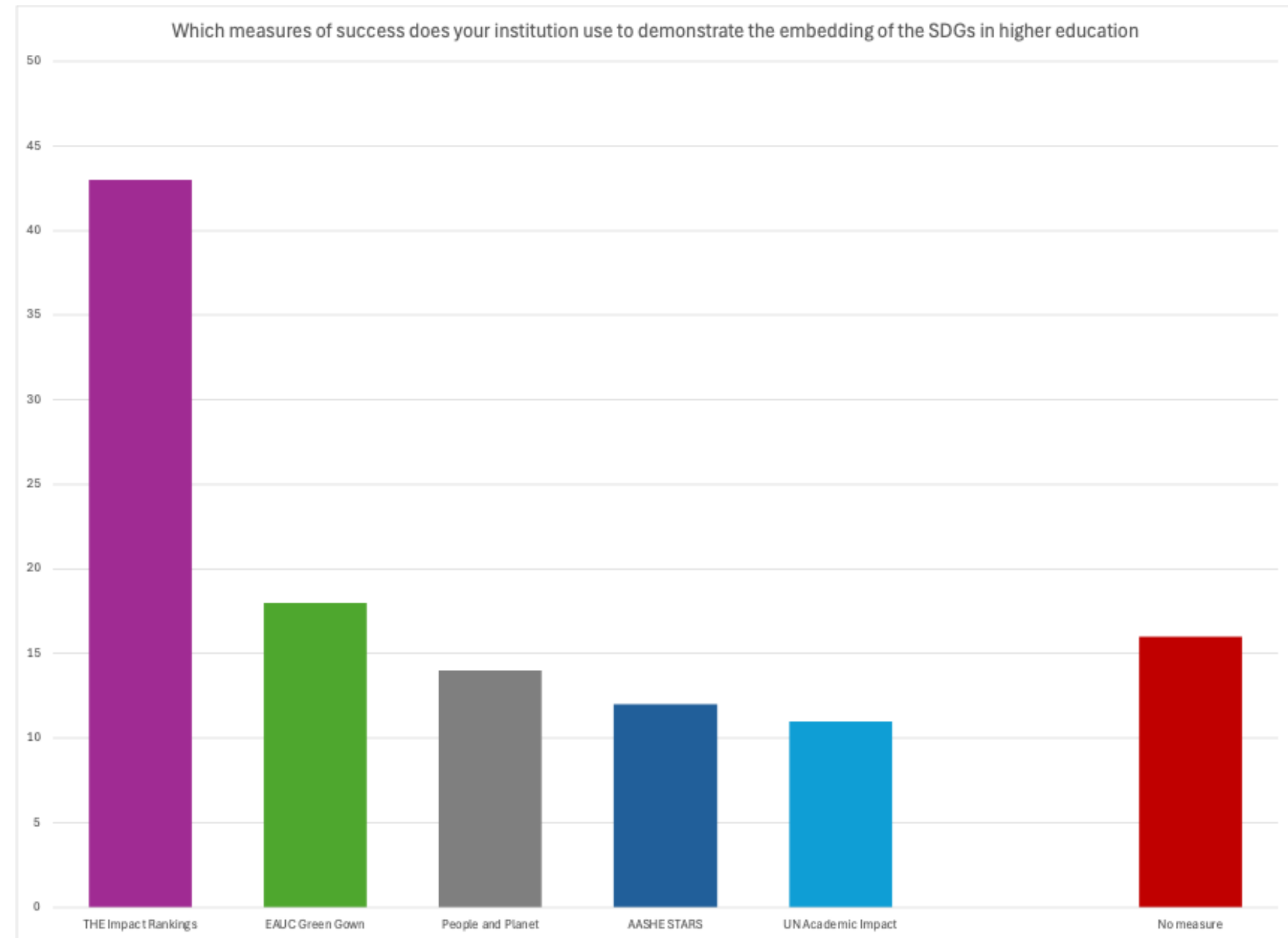


Comparison to other systems

THE's Impact Rankings is the most popular measure of success for demonstrating SDG progress

Based on a survey of European universities

Filho, W.L., Sierra, J., Price, E. *et al.* The role of universities in accelerating the sustainable development goals in Europe. *Sci Rep* **14**, 15464 (2024).
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-65820-9>



Case studies



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences



RCSI



**2024 Ranked 5th
SDG 3**

The benefits of taking part: creating a benchmark, attracting talent, making an impact

“The challenge is for us now to demonstrate our impact. That’s why the Impact Rankings are so important. It is a very useful benchmark and framework for us to measure ourselves against.”

“There is no doubt that our focus on innovation, our focus on making an impact, is allowing us to attract top international talent to Ireland and that benefits the institution.”

“It is important that [students] see our institution is serious about making an impact on society and the planet through the template of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.”

Cathal Kelley, CEO and registrar

Ashesi University, Ghana

Ashesi University is a non-profit, multidisciplinary institute with a mission to propel an African renaissance by educating next-generation ethical, entrepreneurial leaders and raising the bar for higher education in Africa.

The benefits of taking part: global accreditation, creating a path, telling your story

“Ranking is pretty much the equivalent of global accreditation in its own form. It allows you to be comparable to other universities who have no idea what the 1,600 universities on the African continent are capable of.”

“We have a saying in Ghana: ‘It is the person walking behind you who knows that the path you’re trying to make is either crooked or straight.’ Ranking gives you a number in the queue.”

“Rankings give you the opportunity to tell your story the way you want to tell your story, and see where you fall.”

Angela Owusu-Ansah, provost



2024 Ranked 101-200
SDG 1

Tecnológico de Monterrey



**2024 Ranked
=67th Overall**

Tecnológico de Monterrey is a private university system founded in 1943 in Monterrey, México.

The benefits of taking part: building a community, attracting students, creating structure

“The way I view the rankings is that it should be a growing and learning experience, so the feedback that we get for each area is highly relevant. It’s a community of learning and we are very excited to be part of that.”

“The rankings help us to convey a powerful message to attract socially committed students, but at the same time allows us to review our own internal processes and practices to see how we can be a more diverse and inclusive university.”

“We’re a highly dispersed university with a large student body...so just collating the information was a challenge. Participating in the rankings helped give us a structure and a database in terms of how to bring all this together.”

Juan Pablo Murra, rector of undergraduate and graduate programmes

How to Submit Data



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

Choosing SDGs

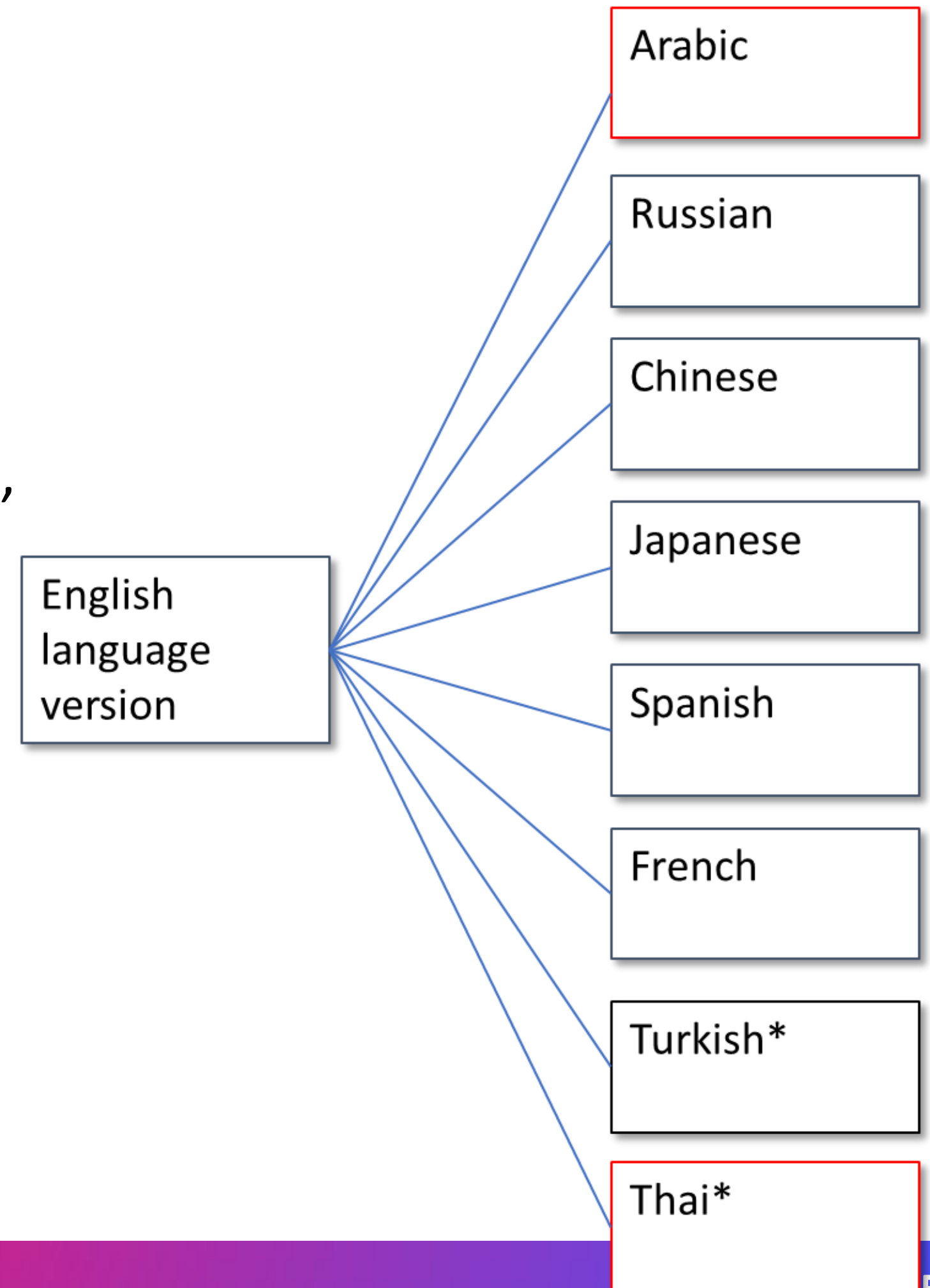
- You can submit to just one SDG and you will be ranked
- Overall ranking – minimum 3 SDGs + SDG 17
- How to choose which SDGs to participate to?
 - Based on your institution's mission
 - Regional
 - Relevant to the activities at the university

You can take an SDG quiz to see what ones are relevant to your institution, or which ones can be worked on in the future.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/datapoints/sdg-quiz>

Methodology

- Few changes from 2024
- Multiple languages
Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, French, Arabic, Thai
- English language is master document for decisions



*Reduced version

Dates

A university “year” may be a calendar year or may be seasonal. Some institutions’ academic years are different from their financial years. “Year” for the purposes of this ranking is defined as follows:

- The calendar year January to December 2023
- The academic year that ended in 2022-23
- The financial year that ended in 2023

You may use the most appropriate annual cycle that best fits your data, but ends in 2023.

Research Evidence

- Make sure that your university is correctly identified in Scopus

- Explore the SDG queries on Mendeley:

<https://elsevier.digitalcommonsdata.com/datasets/y2zyy9vwzy/1>

- Work with your researchers to make relevance to SDGs clear

Data Collection Portal



Data Collection Portal

Email
This field is required.

Password

[Log in](#) [Forgot password?](#) [Request a login](#)

The data collection runs from 16th September to 11th November, followed by a period of validation. To submit your data for this year's rankings, you will need to do the following:

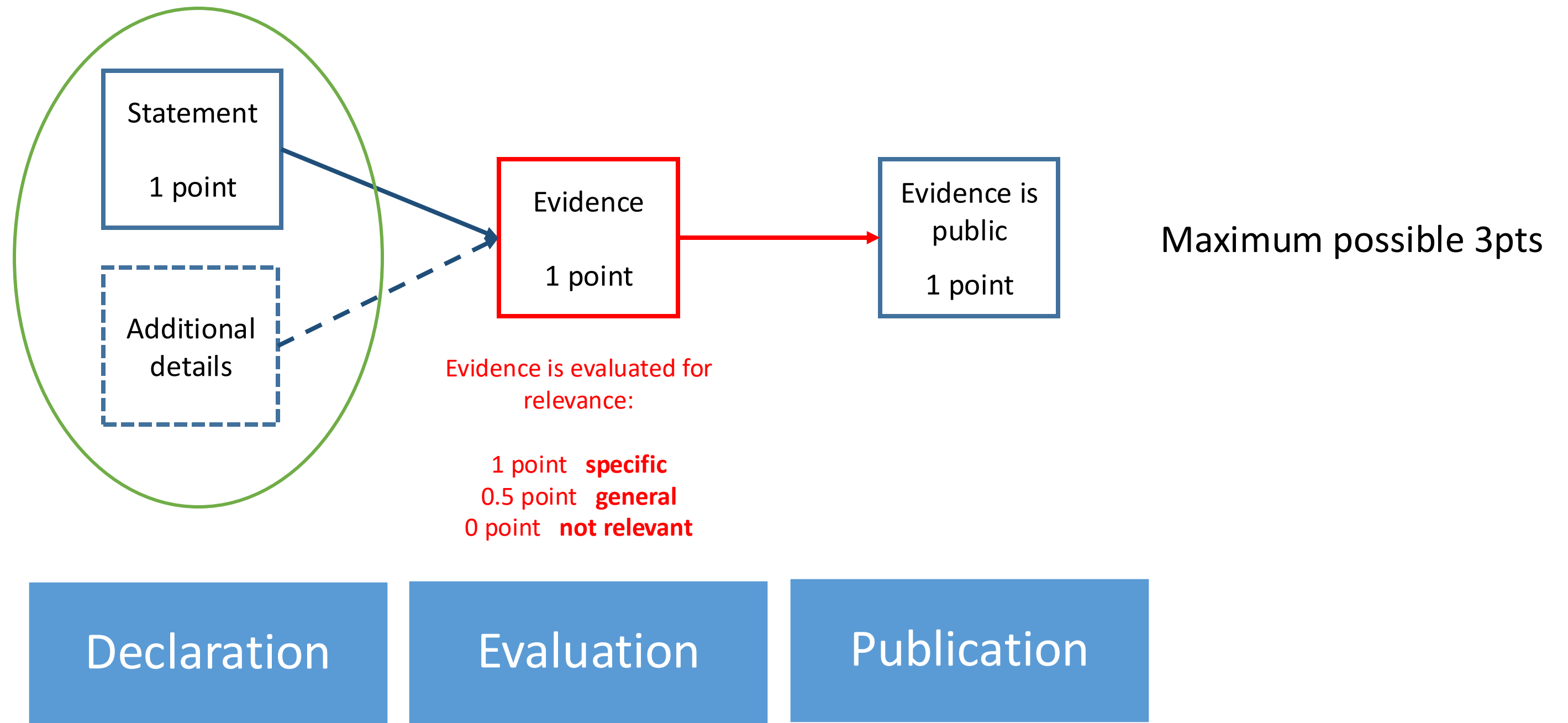
1. Nominate a Data Provider

This will be a contact from your institution who will be responsible for submitting institutional data.

2. Login to the data collection portal

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/wur/portal/>

Evaluating qualitative data



Submitting Evidence: Types

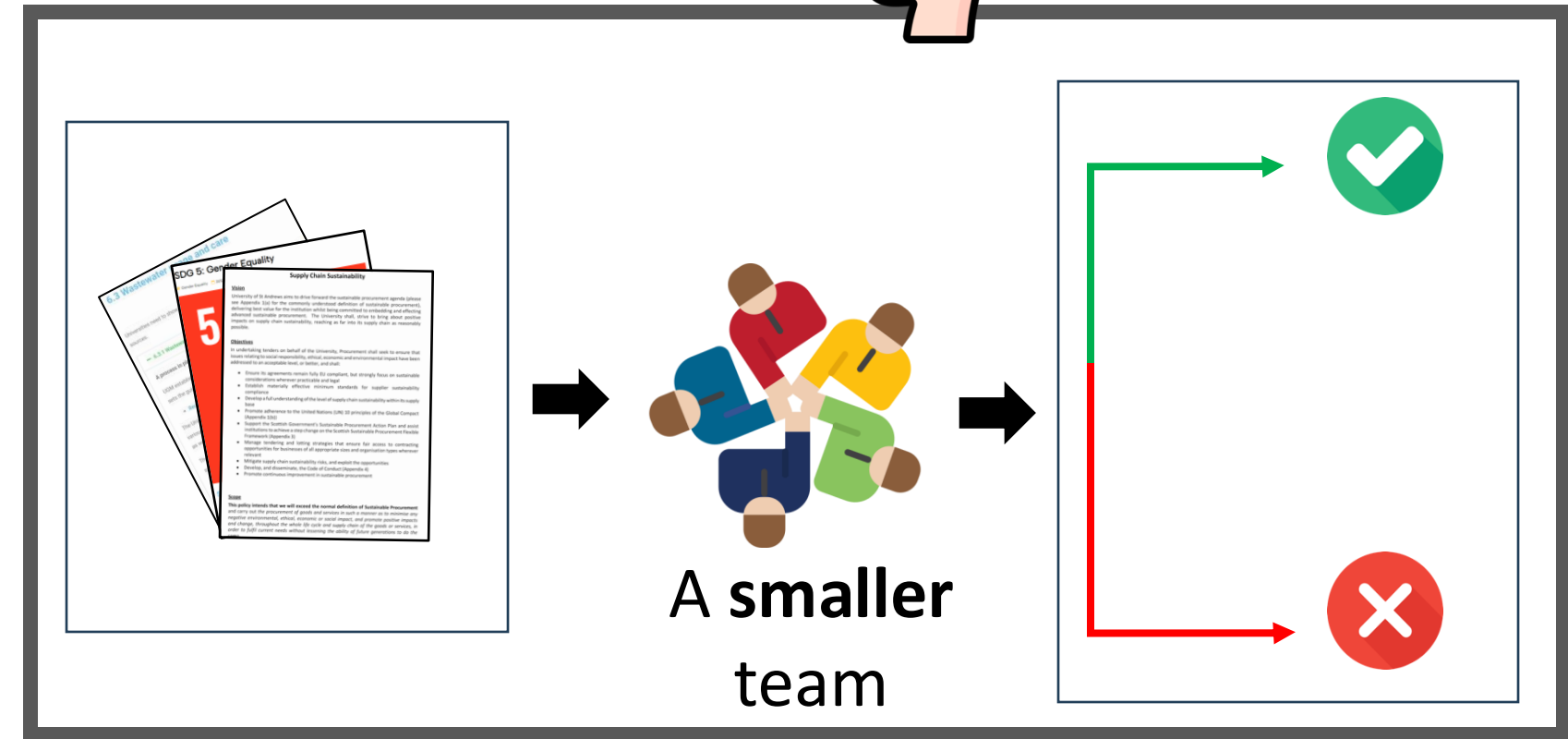
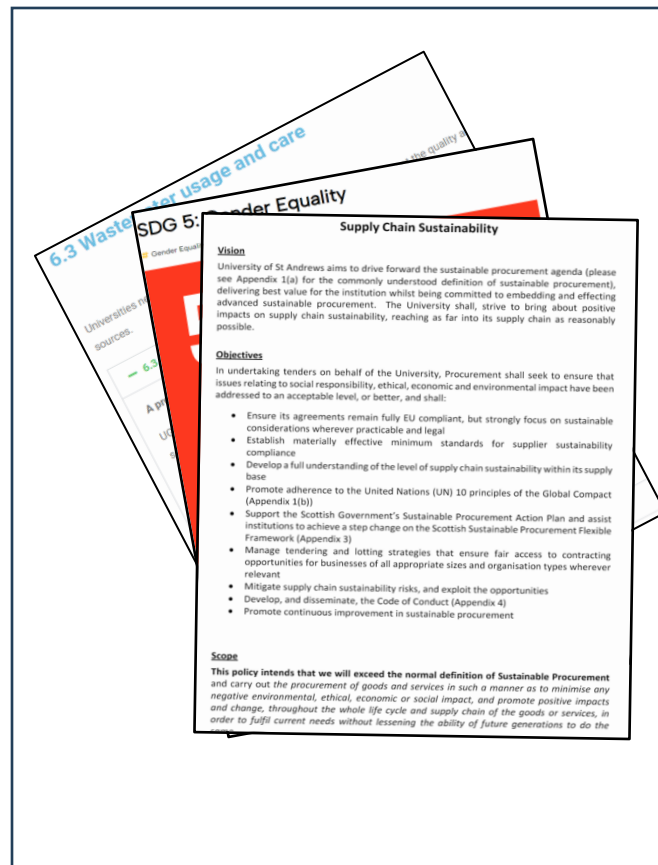
- We only accept **1** piece of evidence
- URLs are preferred type
- Uploadable types include .doc, .pdf, .xls, .gif, .jpeg, .png
- Video and Audio files are not accepted
- Evidence should be clear and direct

Submitting Evidence: Public or Private

- Public evidence gets additional credit
- Universities will be able to select private or public for each piece of evidence
- Accepted as public:
 - University websites that can be accessed by people outside your university network
 - Documents that can be found easily online
 - Google drive documents that are set as open
 - External websites
- Examples of confidential evidence:
 - Documents with sensitive information
 - Google drive documents set as private or only available for those with access to a link

Evidence validation process

The Future



Rejected



(Also humans)

Methodology changes



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

Methodology & validation changes

- We only accept 1 piece of evidence per indicator
- We have split the indicators where we ask for two things
- Added metric 7.5 : Low-carbon energy use
- Added indicator 17.4.4 : Sustainability literacy
- AI LLM Evidence validation
- More extensive continuous validation & QA checks

BEFORE

AFTER

SDG	ref_id	indicator	ref_id	exact titles TBC	comments
2	2.3.2	Students hunger interventions	2.3.2	Students hunger interventions	title is same but means something else, 1 new ID
			2.3.5	Staff hunger interventions	
3	3.3.5	Mental health support	3.3.5	Mental health support for students	new title, <i>students</i> stays at 3.3.5, 1 new ID
			3.3.7	Mental health support for staff	
5	5.6.3	Maternity and paternity policies	5.6.3	Maternity policies	new title, <i>maternity</i> stays at 5.6.3, 1 new ID
			5.6.9	Paternity policies	
6	6.5.2	Promoting conscious water usage	6.5.6	Promoting conscious water usage on campus	new title, old indicator removed , 2 new IDs
			6.5.7	Promoting conscious water usage in the community	
8	8.2.2	Employment practice unions	8.2.2	Employment practice unions	title is same but means something else, 1 new ID
			8.2.9	Employment practice labour rights	
10	10.6.4	Anti-discrimination policies	10.6.4	Anti-discrimination policies	title is same but means something else, 1 new ID
			10.6.11	Anti-harassment policies	
15	15.2.5	Sustainable management of land for agriculture and tourism	15.2.5	Sustainable management of land for agriculture	new title, <i>agriculture</i> stays at 15.2.5, 1 new ID
			15.2.6	Sustainable management of land for tourism	

New indicators

Metric 7.5 Low-carbon Energy use – same metric used in SDG 13

7.3. Metric changed the weight due to addition of new metric (7.5): Low-carbon energy use
The energy use density weight is 17% in SDG

7.5 Low-carbon energy use

7.5.1 Low-carbon energy use

Year: 2023

This indicator is normalised and is worth 10% of the score in this SDG (equivalent to 2.6% of the overall score).

Data Collected	Definition
Total energy used	Total energy used in Gigajoule (GJ) for the year 2023
Total energy used from low-carbon sources	Energy used from low-carbon sources in 2023 in Gigajoule (GJ)

New indicators

17.4.4 Sustainability Literacy

This metric is exploring the measurement of sustainable literacy. Although we are focusing on the Sulitest TASK system we recognise that other systems are available.

17.4.4	<p>Sustainability Literacy</p> <p>Year: 2023</p> <p>This question explores how you evaluate your students' ability to learn and retain key concepts of sustainability. For 2025 we will not score this question but will use it to inform our decisions for 2026.</p> <p>Measure the sustainability literacy of students.</p>	0.0 % in SDG
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How to make the most of your participation



Times Higher Education
Impact Rankings

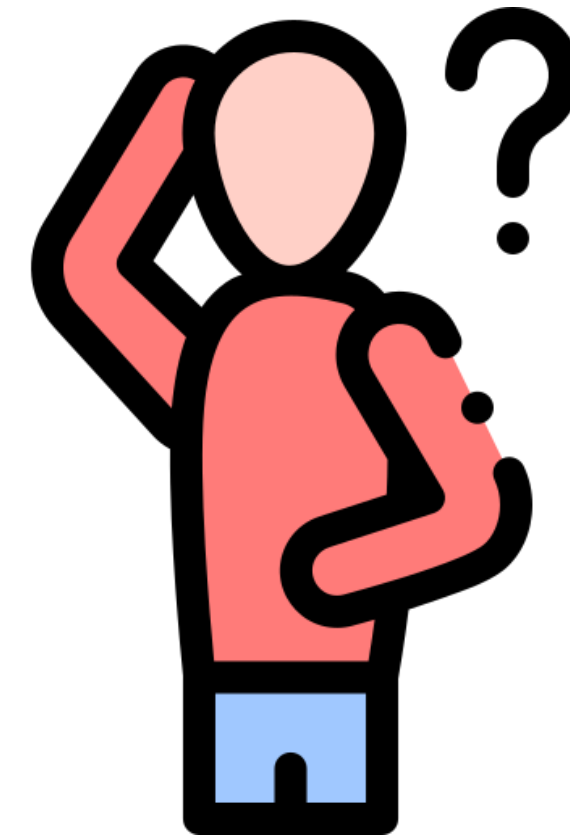
- Choose SDGs which are relevant to your institution
- When submitting evidence, it should be direct and clear and preferable public
- Coordinate with your teams to access the right data for your submission
- Reply back to us if we have any queries regarding the data
- New AI tools to support submission



What are Universities' challenges for Impact ranking?



Providing the right evidence is **a lot of work**



Complex guidelines, hard to know if you **fit the requirements**

The Evidence Reviewer Module

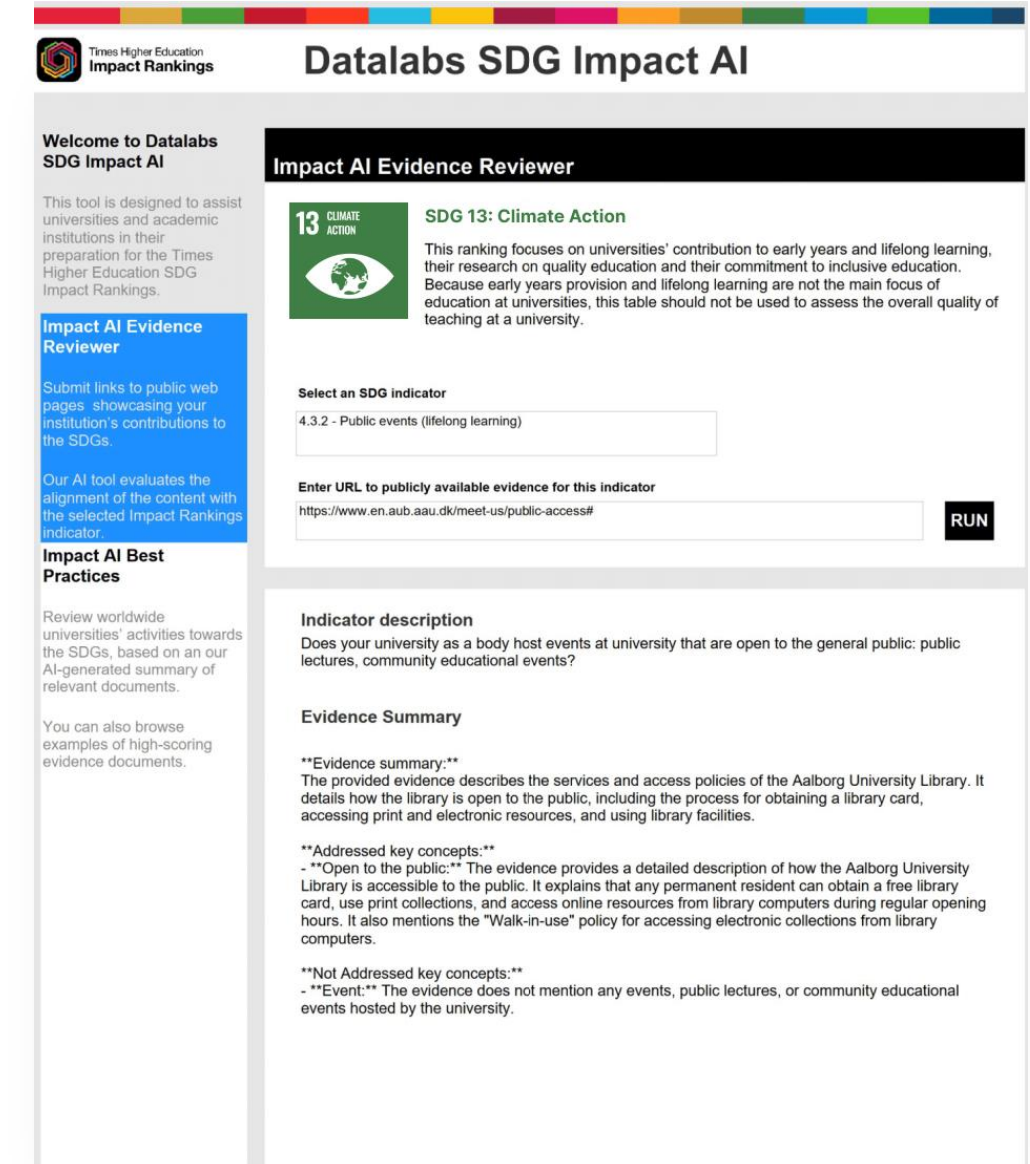
Precision in Evidence

Features:

The Evidence Reviewer uses AI-driven feedback to help you refine and elevate your SDG submissions, proving your contribution towards the SDG agenda, **in line with THE's Impact Rankings 2025 methodology.**

Benefits:

- **Improved Evidence Quality:** Refine your evidence submissions, supporting higher relevance and accuracy.
- **Actionable Insights:** Use detailed feedback to guide improvements, making your submission process more transparent and informative.
- **Efficiency:** Reduces your submission workload by rapidly accelerating research and comparison.



The screenshot shows the 'Impact AI Evidence Reviewer' interface. It features a sidebar with navigation options: 'Welcome to Datalabs SDG Impact AI', 'Impact AI Evidence Reviewer', and 'Impact AI Best Practices'. The main content area is titled 'Impact AI Evidence Reviewer' and displays 'SDG 13: Climate Action' with a description: 'This ranking focuses on universities' contribution to early years and lifelong learning, their research on quality education and their commitment to inclusive education. Because early years provision and lifelong learning are not the main focus of education at universities, this table should not be used to assess the overall quality of teaching at a university.'

Below the description, there is a section for 'Select an SDG indicator' with a dropdown menu showing '4.3.2 - Public events (lifelong learning)'. A text input field is labeled 'Enter URL to publicly available evidence for this indicator' with the example URL 'https://www.en.aub.aau.dk/meet-us/public-access#'. A 'RUN' button is located to the right of the URL field.

The 'Indicator description' section asks: 'Does your university as a body host events at university that are open to the general public: public lectures, community educational events?'. The 'Evidence Summary' section contains an AI-generated summary: '**Evidence summary:** The provided evidence describes the services and access policies of the Aalborg University Library. It details how the library is open to the public, including the process for obtaining a library card, accessing print and electronic resources, and using library facilities. **Addressed key concepts:** - **Open to the public:** The evidence provides a detailed description of how the Aalborg University Library is accessible to the public. It explains that any permanent resident can obtain a free library card, use print collections, and access online resources from library computers during regular opening hours. It also mentions the "Walk-in-use" policy for accessing electronic collections from library computers. **Not Addressed key concepts:** - **Event:** The evidence does not mention any events, public lectures, or community educational events hosted by the university.'



Welcome to DataLabs SDG Impact AI

This tool is designed to assist universities and academic institutions in their preparation for the Times Higher Education SDG Impact Rankings.

Evidence Reviewer

Submit links to public web pages showcasing your institution's contributions to the SDGs.

Our AI tool evaluates the alignment of the content with the selected Impact Rankings indicator.

Evidence Reviewer

Select SDG

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Select an SDG indicator

4.3.1 - Public resources (lifelong learning)

Enter URL to publicly available evidence for this indicator

https://www.en.aub.aau.dk/meet-us/public-access#

RUN

Best Practice Guide

Review worldwide universities' activities towards the SDGs, based on an our AI-generated summary of relevant documents.

You can also browse examples of high-scoring evidence documents.

Indicator description

Does your university as a body provide free access to individuals who are not formally affiliated with the university, such as non-students, non-faculty members, or non-staff to educational resources such as one of the following: computers, library, online courses, access to lectures etc?

Evidence Review

Results for:

Indicator: 4.3.1

Link: <https://www.en.aub.aau.dk/meet-us/public-access#>

The provided evidence describes the access policies of Aalborg University Library. It states that the library is a public library with free access, allowing any permanent resident to obtain a free library card and use print collections and library facilities during regular opening hours at no charge. However, electronic resources can only be accessed from the library's computers and not from personal devices or from home. The evidence emphasizes that private individuals without a current affiliation to Aalborg University cannot use electronic resources from home.

The evidence provided addresses the following concepts:

- free access to library

The evidence provided does not address the following concepts:

- open access to educational resources
- free access
- online courses
- free resources

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Best Practice Guide

Select SDG

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



4.3.1: Public resources (lifelong learning)

Relevant activities

Examples of relevant evidence

- [Aalborg University \(Denmark\)](#)
- [Hong Kong Baptist University \(Hong Kong\)](#)
- [University of Worcester \(United Kingdom\)](#)

4.3.2: Public events (lifelong learning)

Relevant activities

Examples of relevant evidence

- [Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham \(India\)](#)

Submit links to public web pages showcasing your institution's contributions to the SDGs.

Our AI tool evaluates the alignment of the content with the selected Impact Rankings indicator.

Best Practice Guide

Review worldwide universities' activities towards the SDGs, based on an our AI-generated summary of relevant documents.

You can also browse examples of high-scoring evidence documents.

4.3.1: Public resources (lifelong learning)

Relevant activities

Providing Free Access to Educational Resources for Non-Affiliated Individuals

This guidance document aims to provide a comprehensive framework for universities to offer free access to educational resources for individuals who are not formally affiliated with the institution, such as non-students, non-faculty members, or non-staff. The document draws on examples from various universities to propose actionable steps that can be implemented to enhance accessibility and inclusivity in educational offerings.

Free Access to Library

Free access to library resources is a crucial step in democratising education and knowledge. Libraries serve as a hub for learning, research, and community engagement.

- **Open Library Membership:** Implement a system where non-affiliated individuals can apply for a library membership, allowing them to borrow books and access digital resources. For instance, *Lancaster University* offers community membership to the public, enabling them to borrow materials and access certain e-resources.
- **Visitor Access Days:** Designate specific days or times when the library is open to the public without the need for membership. This can encourage community engagement and promote the library's resources.
- **Digital Access:** Provide remote access to digital library resources, such as e-books and journals, for non-affiliated individuals. This can be facilitated through a registration process that grants temporary access credentials.

Open Access to Educational Resources

Open access to educational resources ensures that knowledge is not confined within the walls of the university but is shared with the broader community.

- **Open Courseware:** Develop and offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that are accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Institutions like *Padjadjaran University* have successfully implemented MOOCs to provide free educational content globally.
- **Institutional Repositories:** Create an online repository of research papers, theses, and dissertations that are freely accessible to the public. This enhances the visibility and impact of the university's research outputs.
- **Public Lectures and Seminars:** Organise regular public lectures and seminars on various topics, inviting community members to participate. *The University of Patras*, for example, hosts events that are open to the general public, fostering a culture of learning and dialogue.

Free Access to Online Courses

Free Resources



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