University of St.Gallen

HSG Impacts and Sustainability Strategy
Exploratory Interviews – Internal stakeholders

Documentation for interview partners (internal)
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1. About the overall process / the social and economic sustainability working group

HSG is currently in the process of developing a **comprehensive sustainability strategy**. HSG wants to demonstrate to internal and external stakeholders that there is a **systematic approach** in how it identifies material topics in the **economic, environmental and social dimensions**, and how it defines targets and measures related to those material topics. The process is inspired by GRI (see box) and similar frameworks for systematic sustainability management and reporting. For the goals and targets developed as part of this process, the SDGs (see box) are a key reference.

> The **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** is a well-established framework for sustainability management and reporting. Four in five of the largest global companies report according to the GRI Standards (Source). These standards also represent a useful framework for universities.
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> According to the GRI Standards,
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> > *"**impact** refers to the effect an organization has or could have on the economy, environment, and people […] as a result of the organization's activities or business relationships. The impacts can be actual or potential, negative or positive, short-term or long-term, intended or unintended, and reversible or irreversible. These impacts indicate the organization's contribution, negative or positive, to sustainable development." (p.8)*
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> > *An organization's **material topics** are "those topics that represent its most significant impacts on the economy, environment, and people"(p.8)*
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> **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** are 17 goals and 169 targets adopted in 2015 by all UN member states as the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and represent a blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and planet. Businesses were key stakeholders both the development and implementation of the SDGs (see SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals). Many companies refer to the SDGs in their sustainability reporting and the framework is equally important for non-business actors, such as universities. Of particular importance here are the **UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)** with the vision "to realize the Sustainable Development Goals through responsible management education".

With a decision by the President's board in October 2022, a working group was established to develop the social and economic dimensions of an integrated sustainability strategy. The environmental dimension has already been developed by Prof. Judith Walls as Delegate Responsibility and Sustainability and her Team R&S. The working group is headed by Prof. Dirk Lehmkuhl and accompanied by a steering group with Dr. Peter Lindstrom, Prof. Judith Walls, Prof. Isabelle Wildhaber, Prof. Karolin Frankenberger, Prof. Thomas Beschorner as members. The working group is conducting a **materiality process**, where internal and external stakeholders of HSG are engaged to identify and rate the material topics of HSG. The goal here is to have a representative but also pragmatic sample of all key stakeholders. The ranked material topics serve as basis for the formulation of the (comprehensive) sustainability strategy and a **roadmap** (goals, targets, measures, indicators) for

its implementation. An explicit goal of this process is to make visible and align with the various existing activities in the HSG ecosystem related to sustainability / social innovation / positive impact – and not to re-invent the wheel.

2. About the interviews with internal stakeholders

There are two steps to develop the material topics of HSG: 1. Identifying topics where activities of HSG has relevant impacts, and 2. Defining the material topics (i.e. most important topics and impacts) through topic ratings by internal and external stakeholders. The sources in identifying topics are interviews with (internal and external) key stakeholders, benchmarks against peer and best practice institutions, and the literature. *This is why we want to talk to you as a key internal stakeholder.*

Interviews will be semi-structured and revolve around the following **questions and themes** (with a particular focus on the social and economic dimensions):

- Where do you see the most relevant impacts (directly or indirect; positive or negative) of HSG as an organization today?

- In your day-to-day activities, where do you experience and/or contribute to relevant impacts (directly or indirect; positive or negative) today?

- Where do you expect see the most relevant impacts (directly or indirect; positive or negative) of HSG as an organization in the next 5-10 years?

- Where do you expect to experience and/or contribute to relevant impacts (directly or indirect; positive or negative) in your day-to-day activities in the next 5-10 years?

- Are there activities and/or people in the HSG ecosystem or among HSG's key stakeholders that you feel are particularly important to be aware of or talk to for the sustainability strategy?

- What are your personal thoughts about the role and responsibility of HSG as a business school and consequently, about the sustainability strategy and its appropriate ambition?

Possible examples of the impacts of a business school / HSG:

	Topic	Description	GRI
	(regional) economic impacts (direct and indirect)	HSG has various economic impacts, particularly in the region around St.Gallen, e.g. through students and faculty living in the area or university purchasing (see graph of regional effects).	GRI 201, 203
	Procurement practices	HSG has various economic, environmental, and social impacts through its procurement.	GRI 204
	GHG emissions from travelling	Besides Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from operating the campus (GRI 305-1, GRI 305-2) has indirect GHG emissions from commuting and travelling e.g. to conferences and business meetings.	GRI 305-3
	Student health and safety	With competition and performance pressure, student health and safety might be a relevant topic.	GRI 416
	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	Creating an environment that stands for and lives by diversity, equity and inclusion, especially regarding special needs, gender equality and women empowerment	GRI 405, 406

■ Environmental   ■ Social   ■ Economic & Governance

3. Preparation and additional resources

There is *no need to prepare* beyond reading this short documentation as background. We are interested in your context and your views. Optionally, the following resources might be interesting and relevant (we're happy to provide PDFs where applicable, if desired):

- Websites of GRI (Short introduction to GRI), SDGs, UN PRME
- HSG's PRME reports (all, latest)
- Sustainability Report in accordance with GRI by Universität Zürich (2019/2020; 2018 [materiality analysis on p. 10])
- Responsible Research in Business and Management Network (RRBM)
- WWF Nachhaltigkeit an Schweizer Hochschulen Rating-Studie (website, latest report)
- Positive Impact Rating for Business Schools (website, oikos blog on last HSG rating)
- Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2022 (link)
- Recent academic discussions around the responsibility of business schools and management research: (Nyberg & Wright, 2022a), (Wohlgezogen et al., 2022), (Nyberg & Wright, 2022b), (Harley & Fleming, 2021), (Hoffman, 2021)
- "Can business schools prove — and improve — their social impact?" (FT, October 2022)
- "Management research: why are so few of its ideas taken up?" (FT, February 2023)

References

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