



# ***The IAU Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD)***

## **Strategy and Working Plan 2022-2024**

Document discussed with the Cluster and IAU during the  
**International Research and Networking Workshop on  
Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development:**

***The IAU Global HESD Cluster's collaboration to accelerate action to achieve the  
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***

Paris/online, 21.03.-23.03.2022

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### **International Association Of Universities**

International Universities Bureau

UNESCO House

1 rue Miollis - F-75732 Paris Cedex 15

Tel + 33 1 45 68 48 00 - Fax + 33 1 47 34 76 05

[contact@iau-hesd.net](mailto:contact@iau-hesd.net)

- [www.iau-aiu.net/](http://www.iau-aiu.net/)

- Twitter

[@IAU\\_AIU](https://twitter.com/IAU_AIU)

Linkedin: [www.linkedin.com/company/iau-aiu](http://www.linkedin.com/company/iau-aiu)

HESD: [www.iau-hesd.net](http://www.iau-hesd.net) Twitter [@IAU\\_HESD](https://twitter.com/IAU_HESD)



# Introduction

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In September 2015, the **United Nations General Assembly** unanimously adopted: [\*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development\*](#). This Agenda identifies **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to define the actions needed for a sustainable future for all. One of the key messages and mottos of the 2030 Agenda is “leave no one behind.” The Agenda is truly global, it concerns everyone, everywhere: **the goals set are globally applicable, inclusive, and combining all dimensions of sustainability** (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships). With the “Decade of Action for Sustainable Development” and less than 10 years to 2030, **actions for sustainable development** by the **higher education** sector need to be **reinforced and scaled up** to contribute to a sustainable transformation process effectively. The COVID-19 Pandemic added to the urgency of the SDGs, and highlighted the **need to act now**.

The [International Association of Universities](#) (IAU) has **fostered sustainable development** for more than 25 years. In 1993, the Association adopted the *IAU Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development*, urging the higher education leaders and the HE community to engage with sustainable development. In 2014, the IAU adopted the *Iquitos Statement on HESD*, urging to connect knowledge and research systems worldwide. This Statement was one of the many IAU contributions to the UNESCO Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (UN-DESD, 2004 – 2015) and used by UNESCO for the Aichi Nagoya End of Decade Conference and launch of the new ESD for 2030 Education programme. IAU was a key partner to the UNESCO Global Action Programme on education for sustainable development (GAP-ESD) and lead partner network for the steering committee of Partner Network 2 – Whole of Institution Approaches to ESD. Today **IAU is a lead partner in the UNESCO ESD for 2030 programme**.

The IAU has contributed to increasing the commitment of Universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) to sustainable development over the years. **IAU advocates for the role higher education plays for the achievement of the SDGs** and looks at how the 2030 Agenda contributes to the transformation of HEIs themselves. The COVID-19 pandemic stressed how important international cooperation in education and science is and how a crisis also comes with opportunities for engagement, reflected in the many activities started at HEIs to support communities and continue education and collaboration online to a large extent.

As an expert and well-established and recognized global network active in the field of HESD, IAU launched [\*The IAU Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development \(HESD\)\*](#) in 2018, a project that aims to help bridge gaps identified above. Since its launch, the Cluster constantly developed, and the network now **mobilizes over 70 universities**; its dynamics stimulated **numerous projects and partnerships** and continues to do so.

The IAU Global Cluster on HESD brings together a diverse group of HEIs from around the world and encourages them to develop innovative joint initiatives and partnerships. This project is more than just about north-south, south-south, or north-north connections; it encourages triangular cooperation and in



particular builds strong teaching, research, and developmental projects and initiatives between HEIs committed to working across differences and borders on an equal footing. The Cluster works on all dimensions of the SDGs, people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Interdisciplinarity, cooperation and cultural diversity is at the core of the Cluster activities.

**The Cluster consists of 16 lead universities, each engaging more specifically on one of the SDGs while connecting to the other SDGs.** IAU leads the work on SDG 17 by fostering global HE partnerships. From all world regions, the lead universities collaborate with several ‘satellite’ institutions, engage with a particular SDG, and initiate concrete projects across all goals. The subclusters are not limited to their assigned SDG, but are encouraged to work across goals, disciplines, and cultures. Furthermore, the Cluster promotes the role, and potential HEIs globally have to achieve the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. HEIs and Universities engage with the SDGs in multiple ways, through teaching, research, leadership, and campus operations. The Cluster facilitates collaboration and promotes a whole-institution approach ([WIA](#)) to sustainable development.

## VISION

The Global IAU HESD Cluster aims to be a global network of HEIs committed to **promoting education and research for sustainable development**. The IAU Global Cluster also aims **to connect HE Associations and networks worldwide** working on sustainable development or wishing to get involved. Its vision is to scale-up sustainable development within HEIs, while at the same time increasing awareness of SD actions already implemented at HEIs, to policy makers and the broader public.

## MISSION

The Global IAU HESD Cluster aims to be **inclusive** and **open** to all members who look for **peer-to-peer advice** on how the 2030 Agenda can be implemented at universities and how universities can engage with the Agenda and the SDGs. The Global IAU HESD Cluster promotes **collaboration, exchange, and joint research** among HEIs around the world in support of the 2030 Agenda. The Cluster works on all dimensions of sustainable development.



## OBJECTIVE OF THE CLUSTER

The IAU Cluster on HESD networks and promotes new and existing HE work undertaken to achieve the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. All **HEIs** are seen as **equals**, no matter their location, size, age, or mandate. **Connections** and **partnerships** must be ensured and built, particularly **between** very **diverse sets of institutions**. We know that this approach **triggers innovative approaches** to issues raised in the goals.

The Cluster assists universities in addressing the SDGs; the Cluster work also helps monitor and foster work on the **transformation universities** themselves undergo. The ultimate aim is to **facilitate teaching, research, and community engagement** projects that result in **better-educated critical citizens** who will be better prepared to address global and local issues and challenges. Student initiatives receive special attention.

The Cluster encourages a **holistic approach to the SDGs** and welcomes innovative methods. **Peer-to-peer learning** sparks new ideas and creativity among the Members of the Cluster. It encourages other universities to step up their game towards achieving a more sustainable present and future.

Within the overarching goal of “Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (UN SDG Summit 2019), the Cluster has **two concrete objectives**:

1. First, to serve as a **resource and networking hub** both for institutions already engaged in SD and moving more strongly to help address the SDGs locally and seeking innovative partnerships around the world and for those starting to engage with the SDGs at their institutions. They turn to the Cluster for collaboration and guidance on best practices to advance on the SDGs in local, national, and international contexts. This includes **facilitating work in institutions**, by proposing tools and providing support in various forms.
2. Second, the IAU Global Cluster serves as a **global voice for higher education and sustainable development**. IAU advocates for HESD at UNESCO, the UN, particularly at the High-Level-Political Forum, at IAU global Conferences, at Member workshops, and other initiatives developed at the local and the regional levels.

While recognizing the interrelatedness of global challenges, the Cluster focuses on the higher education sector and the following overarching key topics:

- UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs,
- Higher Education and Research
- Internationalisation
- Partnerships

The list of Cluster leads and Satellite Institutions can be found here: <https://www.iau-hesd.net/contenu/4648-iau-global-cluster-hesd.html>

## Working plan

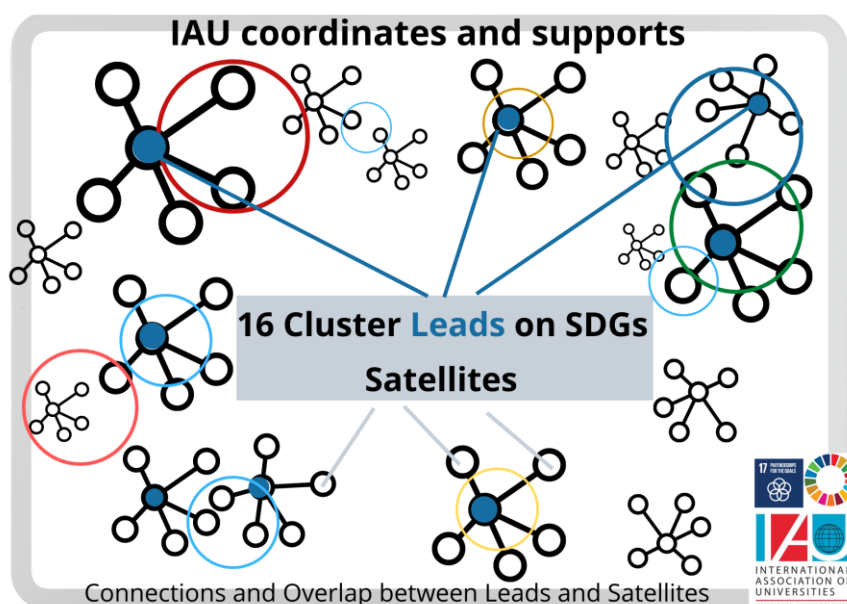
This working plan and strategy have been discussed at the **IAU HESD Cluster Workshop**, taking place online from 21-23 March 2022, **supported by the [UNESCO Participation Programme](#)**.

The Cluster works mainly at two levels:

- 16 HESD Cluster lead universities, each leading one of the SDGs.
- Each SDG lead institution works and advances projects relating to the SDG with their Satellite Institutions and partners

IAU coordinates the overall project and provides assistance where needed to the Lead Institutions, and it leads the work on SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals. **IAU acts as a multiplier**, working with and **supporting International Organisations**, such as UNESCO, and the Lead Institutions. Together, the Lead and Satellite Institutions form creative and innovative SDG teams, reporting back to IAU. Also, connections between leads and satellites further strengthen connections between SDGs and institutions in the network.

**Cross/trans-SDG-Partnerships** are strongly encouraged, and many HEIs are active in more than one Subcluster. The separation into SDG teams is not supposed to create new “silo” approaches to sustainable development work. Still, it should be seen as a method to ensure that all SDGs are being considered. Due to the diverse nature of the SDGs, each team will develop its projects and strategies. **Joint initiatives** have been, are being, and will further be planned. The Cluster work involves HE leadership, Academic staff (teaching research and admin), students, and local partners.



**Figure1:** Draft Scheme of the IAU HESD Global Cluster, elaborated by IAU (2022)

## Proposed projects

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### Project Monitoring and Reporting:

- Every year, the HESD Cluster Members are invited to report briefly on activities undertaken, this is compiled in a Cluster Report by IAU and published ([see 2019-2020 Report](#)). The report for 2021-2022 is currently being prepared;
- The IAU International Conferences (once a year) and General Conferences (once every four years) are used as networking nodes and means to communicate on and about the Cluster. The Cluster leads and teams are invited to attend and contribute to the IAU annual events.
- The IAU Cluster reports and plans will be submitted to the IAU General Conferences (every four years) in the lead up to the Agenda 2030 deadline.

### Global Monitoring and Evaluation:

- IAU Cluster Members are invited to choose amongst existing tools or create their own monitoring mechanisms;
- IAU Cluster Members are invited to test, monitor and evaluate tools;
- IAU Cluster Members are invited to jointly issue position papers and recommendations on such tools being developed or made available.

### Publications:

- IAU Cluster lead institutions are invited to contribute papers to *IAU Horizons* (twice a year);
- The HESD Cluster Members are invited to take on or contribute to an IAU publication;
- IAU Cluster lead institutions are invited to take on one publication per SDG thus growing the SDG Publication series with support of the IAU Secretariat.

### Representation and Advocacy:

- IAU and IAU Cluster team Members will foster the HESD cluster work at conferences, seminars and other events around the world to foster HESD. Cluster lead institutions will report briefly on events attended to better network initiatives;
- Together with the Cluster teams, IAU will present Cluster initiatives at the annual UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), each year in July, in New York or virtually;
- The IAU Cluster work is presented at UNESCO events, including the upcoming UNESCO WHEC 2022, in May; and other UN and Member events of relevance to HESD.
- Synergetic dynamics: Cluster Members will invite each other to attend and take part in projects, initiatives, events;
- Cluster Members are invited to speak at HESD events IAU is invited to take part in.



## Communication

IAU is communicating regularly with the IAU HESD Cluster Leads, by sharing bi-monthly update emails with news on IAU activities, opportunities to be engaged, and activities from other Cluster Members that are open for participation. These include also information or requests for feedback for the Cluster Leads on IAU initiatives. The Leads, in turn, report back to IAU and are invited to actively share their initiatives for publication on IAU channels. Also, the Leads are responsible for communicating with Satellites and sharing information distributed by IAU, if of relevance for the specific subcluster. Some platforms and possible IAU channels include:

- IAU Cluster Webinars with a focus on HESD are being offered regularly;
- The IAU website and the HESD portal reports on Cluster work highlighting the HEIs work;
- The IAU monthly Newsletter highlights achievements and share information;
- Twitter engagement (@IAU\_HESD) and possible campaign could be developed around the Cluster activities, slogans, highlighting individual and joint initiatives;
- A [linkedin group](#) for the Cluster is newly created to facilitate information-sharing;
- A google drive with IAU Cluster Resources is created (internal, please email [i.toman@iau-aiu.net](mailto:i.toman@iau-aiu.net) for access) .

## 2022 Deliverables - Strategic Paper: A Holistic Approach to including all SDGs into a Strategic Plan

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2022 will be the year of the [IAU 16<sup>th</sup> General Conference](#) to be hosted by **University College Dublin**. General Conferences are marked by elections and thus, each time by a change of leadership. These events are thus good milestones to keep in mind to report and reflect on achievements and plans. For the IAU GC 2022, a slot in the programme foreseen for the Cluster/HESD that can also be used to present the Cluster work and HESD Survey version of the report

- ⇒ The overall goals of these next two years of work for the Cluster will include the **strengthening of existing synergies between Cluster Members** and also developing strategic plans at the different institutions. Many activities are already taking place but mechanisms can be optimized to ensure communication between different parts of institutions working on SD





IAU GLOBAL HESD CLUSTER

IAU HESD GLOBAL CLUSTER

# TIMELINE 2018-2024



## 2018

- July: First Conference Call for an SDG network
- November: First Meeting of the Cluster at IAU International Conference, Malaysia

## 2019

- January: First Cluster Workshop at Unesco HQ in Paris & Adoption of Strategic Plan:
- July: High Level Political Forum (HLPF 2019) in New York: SDGs covered: 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17 . Delegation of IAU and Cluster representatives took part and organized side Events;
- November: IAU 2019 International Conference, BUAP, Puebla, Mexico.

## 2020

- January: Publication of the 2nd IAU Global HESD Survey report
- April: Start of the IAU Webinar series on the Future of HE, involvement of Cluster in the planning and selection of panelists for HESD webinars
- July: HLPF 2020 (virtual)

## 2021

- New Publications with cluster involvement on SDGs: 5, 14, 16
- Publication of first inclusive Cluster Repot (all 17 Leads)
- July: HLPF 2021 (virtual), side events with Cluster representatives and partners;
- Representation at Global Events and Trainings: UNESCO ESD Conference (Berlin/virtual, TAM workshops with Israel (March) and Azerbaijan (December) with Cluster representatives

## 2022

- March: 2nd IAU HESD Cluster Workshop
- April: Launch of the 3rd IAU Global HESD Survey, involvement of Cluster in Working group
- Publication of second Cluster Report
- May: UNESCO World Higher Education Conference
- June: UNEP Stockholm +50
- July: HLPF 2022
- September: UN Transforming Education Summit
- October: 16th IAU General Conference, Dublin. HESD/Cluster session

## 2023

- Maintaining presence at global events and advocacy for HigherEd for SDGs
- Strengthening ties between Cluster members and SDGs working areas
- Fostering holistic and interdisciplinary approaches
- Continuation of the SDG publications with the cluster members

## 2024

- 3rd IAU HESD Cluster Workshop
- Revision of Strategy and Working Plan
- Continuation with Publications, Global events



## Annex I - Ideas for future cluster projects

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Input from Leads and discussion during the meeting (21-23.03.22):

### **SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing : Universitat Oberta de Catalunya**

- Ongoing mapping of cluster activities to identify synergies and to stimulate collective action
- Joint learning and collaboration across sub-clusters on cross cutting issues.
- Lessons learned to date report for joint learning.

### **SDG4 - Quality Education : York University**

- “WIA Matrix”: project and research activities are very diverse but every cluster activity could include a concrete recommendation how the activities/outcomes relate to the whole-institution approach with regard to the 3 streams of the university mandate and to the dimension → in this way, we would develop a matrix checklist that could be used in and well beyond the cluster.
- Develop a concrete WIA reporting framework with standards/targets and room for contextualization
- Mapping of individual and institutional memberships in other global networks (UNESCO, RCE, SDG Accord, expert groups, etc.) → enhancing cross-SDG connections within the cluster and ability to create more concrete expert roasters for events etc.

### **SDG5 - Gender Equality : University of Bologna**

Working together as institutions promoting gender equality and empowerment all women and girls, we suggest to

- gather evidence, analyze, reflect and disseminate on IAU’s partner universities practices to sustain diversity, inclusion and equality in terms of university structures, recruitment and career progression, occupational well-being and family-work life integration, research/teaching/third mission activities, measures against discriminatory violence
- exploring funding opportunities to promote dissemination of good practices across Cluster (or IAU network) partners (e.g., staff exchange, training)
- exploring opportunities to co-organize multi-stakeholder events involving academics, managers and policy representatives



## **SDGs 7 and 9 - Affordable and Clean energy; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure : Assam Don Bosco University, Beirut Arab University, Qatar University (satellite)**

- Identify specific areas of research on 3D printing and effective use of renewable energy
- Collaborate with exchange of research including joint research publications
- Identify potential international funding sources and apply through joint research proposal
- Continue discussion among collaborating Universities at least once in 2 months through virtual platform
- Identify a potential timeline with specific targets to be jointly realized

## **SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities : University of Tsukuba**

- Joint agenda project of several SDGs. For example, inequality overlaps with diverse goals, including gender, poverty, education, and decent work. Therefore, joint events based on inequality are possible.
- Collaboration based on key points common to each goal, such as digitalization
- Creating opportunities for young researchers to interact across multiple SDG clusters

## **SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities: Siam University**

- Joint Sustainability camp with IAU HESD Cluster satellite universities under SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities along with small group exchange of students and culture with eye-opening activities on sustainability with different language and cultural aspects.
- Globally teaching subject virtually “Living Lab” which is under SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities teaching and learning project in collaboration with teachers from different countries and students from many countries and region in the same class to get a new perspective
- Monthly webinar on sharing good practices with different topics within SDGs and on SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities.

## **SDG 12 - responsible consumption and production: University of Regina and Luther College**

- Identify each year specific university practices and technologies that have been found to be successful in achieving one or more SDG goals/targets that are readily adopted and scalable.
- Engage those parts of our universities that actively work on issues of arts & culture and how these might contribute to the whole institution approach around specific SDGs or the SDGs in general.
- No university left behind: summarizing key SDG innovations that allow universities to sustain themselves organizationally over the short and long term.
- Develop a communications guide about the Cluster that each of us can use for our respective local communities (governments, NGOs, business, service clubs, etc.)



## **SDG14 - Life below water: University of Bergen**

- Hold a meeting in Cape Town at the occasion of the arrival of the tall ship Statsraad Lehmkühl's arrival there in January 2023. This is part of [The One Ocean Expedition](#) - a recognized part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The goal is to create attention and share knowledge about the crucial role of the ocean for sustainable development in a global perspective. From 13-20th of January the ship is docked in Cape Town, and this is an excellent opportunity to gather Clusters for a summit on Higher Education and Research for the SDGs.
- An international conference or session mixing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning communities and the IAU HESD communities in a joint effort to increase the quality of teaching and learning within the SDGs. Contact the [International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#) if there are opportunities to collaborate on a conference/meeting/session where the two societies come together around a topic of SDG pedagogics.
- Write a review for a scholarly journal about how SDGs are taught in a range of universities, and with advice on best practices and improvements.

## **SDG 15 - Life on Land: University of Costa Rica**

- Continue discussions for future collaborations with SDGs 2-13-14-16 Clusters, among others
- Offer opportunities for research and social outreach internships
- Explore interest in developing a COIL program together with other HESD Clusters
- Discuss possibilities of offering joint tailor-made programs for students (on site or virtual)
- Share information on research projects results, among others