

# MANUAL

## CASE SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE TOOL

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## 1. Introduction

The following manual provides an overview of the background of the CASE Sustainability Performance Tool and highlights the intended objectives and possible applications of the tool. In the second part, the methodology of the analytic process and the individual elements of the tool are explained in detail. Finally, the process of the tool development as well as the used sources are described.

### 1.1 Background and objectives

The Sustainability Performance Tool is a qualitative tool for recording and developing sustainability in companies and non-profit organizations. It provides a holistic overview of the interplay between business areas within organizations and reveals opportunities to systematically identify and further develop sustainability potentials and challenges. It builds on a comprehensive understanding of sustainability that considers ecological, social and economic aspects in a balanced way.

The tool was designed for teaching primarily but it can be used by enterprises and other organizations for self-assessment as well. It can be applied to every kind of organization: profit oriented enterprises, non-profit organizations, social businesses, associations, etc. For reasons of simplifying we summarize all forms of organizations under the term “enterprise”.

The main objective of the tool is to support collaborative learning within the frame of transdisciplinary projects between universities and business partners. It aims at interlinking academic and business realities and setting in action a process of mutual understanding of mind-sets, terms and working routines. Accordingly, the tool and the analysis process create added value simultaneously for university teaching and entrepreneurial practice.

#### For universities

- Students learn to understand enterprises as systemic networks of interlinked internal functions and departments. They get a feeling how enterprises are structured and how the different business areas should be accorded.
- Through a structured analysis students get a wider perspective of sustainable entrepreneurial acting and learn to identify opportunities and challenges of sustainable development within enterprises.
- Students benefit from real world experiences, get to know good practice examples and get impulses for their own sustainability-oriented business ideas.
- Teachers are supported in setting up a structured analyses process and in professionalizing collaboration between universities and external partners.
- Ideas and needs for further research questions and research projects are revealed.

#### For enterprises

- Partners get feedback and an external view, particularly on their sustainability performance.
- Partners are motivated to reflect upon their organization and to re-think sustainability. They are motivated to figure out sustainability opportunities and challenges and to take appropriate measures towards a more sustainable future.



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- Through a structured analysis process, the tool supports the dialogue between universities and enterprises and gives ideas for further collaborative projects.
- Benchmarks for sustainability-oriented enterprises are created and provided.

## 1.2 Basic principles

The Sustainability Performance Tool follows principles which are fundamental for the understanding of sustainable economy and sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship.

- **Holistic view:** A concept of strong sustainability is put forward which is about the balance between the ecological, social, and economic dimension of sustainability. Accordingly, sustainability-oriented organizations should consider aspects of all dimensions in all working areas.
- **Systemic understanding of organizations:** Organizations, economic enterprises as well as NGOs, associations, and other non-profit organizations, are analyzed under a systemic focus. This means that the departments and working areas of an organization are not to be understood as separate units but as interconnected.
- **Transdisciplinary understanding:** The tool considers the fact that sustainable socioeconomic development can be achieved most effectively by deliberately designing the interfaces between business and science. Therefore, a continuous dialogue and reflection between enterprises, students, and teachers is crucial.
- **Interdisciplinary understanding:** The tool targets not only people with a business background but aims at providing access to sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship for students of different scientific disciplines.
- **Transformation orientation:** The tool aims not only at a status quo survey of the sustainability performance but also at working on suggestions for further development and transformation. Therefore, the reflection of the results in dialogue with the external partners plays a vital role.

## 1.3 Application and usage

As mentioned in the introduction, the main objective of the Sustainability Performance Tool is to support teaching. As such it is crucial that the tool is integrated in a course or lecture. Under the guidance of teachers, students are enabled to combine microeconomic basic knowledge with aspects of sustainability sciences and to apply them in practice, either in case studies, or in the context of cooperation projects with enterprises or in their own business-plan. Possible contexts could be courses on business and management sciences, on entrepreneurship, on sustainable development or interdisciplinary modules for all scientific disciplines.

Moreover, the tool can also be applied in an entrepreneurial context. It supports entrepreneurs and employees in reflecting on how sustainable aspects are organized and to develop them further. Possible contexts could be vocational trainings, seminars and advanced trainings or consulting projects.

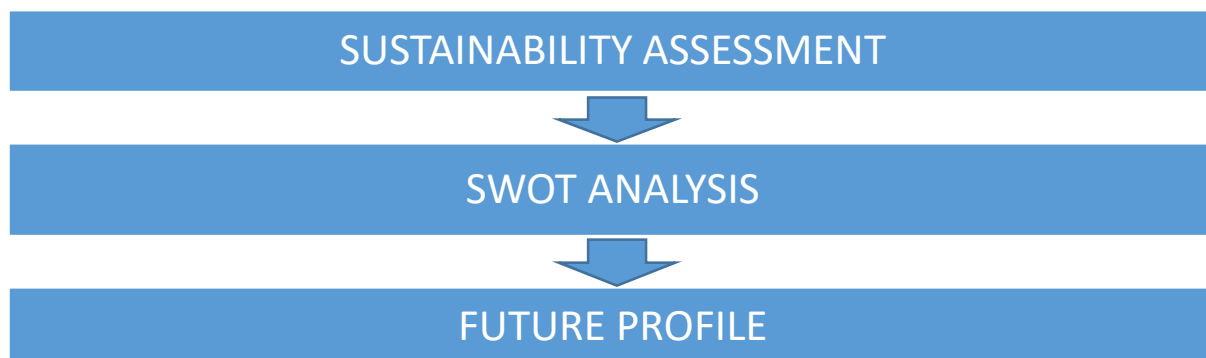


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## 2. Structure of the analysis tool

The tool consists of three main parts which may be used optionally, according to the depth of analysis.



## 3. Sustainability Assessment and Sustainability Profile – Assess sustainability performance and make it visible

The central aim of the assessment is to better understand interrelations within enterprises and to initiate the dialogue on sustainable alternatives, opportunities and challenges. Above all, in the context of teaching, it is not so much about an exact reproduction of the enterprise but about the competence to understand holistically and to ask the "right" questions.

The structure of the assessment which is based on a valuation matrix, consists of the following elements:

CATEGORY: BUSINESS AREA							
	Assessment						Justification
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Indicator 1							
Indicator 2							
Indicator 3							
Indicator 4							
Indicator 5							
Indicator 6							
Indicator 7							
Total of the category							



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### 3.1 Categories and Business areas

The business areas, described more in detail in section 4, serve as categories in the matrix.

- Mission & Vision
- Products & Services
- Procurement and Production
- Location & Logistics
- Stakeholder & Marketing
- Governance & Organization
- Employee Development
- Controlling & Reporting

Not all categories are relevant for all enterprises. The category "production & supply", for instance, is central for manufacturing companies but not relevant for service providers. The category "employee development" is not relevant for one-person enterprises. Those categories, which are not relevant, are considered in the final evaluation, in order not to distort the sustainability performance.

### 3.2 Sustainability indicators and impulse questions

Each business area is represented by a set of indicators which are explained in section 4. The indicators are formulated as statements and aim to give a comprehensive picture of sustainability, covering all dimensions of sustainability (e.g. Indicator 1.2: The company's mission takes equal account of environmental, social and economic sustainability issues).

The impulse questions intend to broaden the understanding and give impulses to a deeper reflection on certain aspects of the single indicator. They serve as guiding questions or examples, rather than being strict criteria which must be answered. Therefore, they might be used or not, reduced or extended in the concrete assessment process. In the online tool, they do not appear on the main page but can be activated by a certain button or pop-over function.

### 3.3 Assessment of indicators and justification

In a first step, it is to figure out, whether the individual indicator is relevant to the nature of the company's activity. For instance, for a one-person enterprise the indicator 1.4. "participatory development of mission and vision", is not relevant. In this case, the indicator is not assigned a value in the assessment.

In a second step, the quantitative assessment is conducted by measuring the single indicator on a scale from 0 to 5. The scores correspond to defined sections on a percentage scale, from 0% to 100%, and can be interpreted as follows:



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Score	Percentage-scale	Assessment	Interpretation
0	0 %	Does not apply	The criterion is not implemented in the company.
1	1 % - 20 %	Rarely apply	First approaches of implementation
2	21 % - 40 %	Partly apply	Some aspects are implemented, others not
3	41 % - 60 %	Apply in many aspects	The criterion is partly implemented
4	61 % - 80 %	Apply in most aspects	The criterion is mostly implemented
5	81 % - 100 %	Apply completely	The criterion is completely implemented and can be taken as best practice.

Finally, for each indicator an additional field is available, where the assessment is justified verbally. This step is of particular importance for evaluators, in order to reflect their decisions and avoid superficiality. Furthermore, it is crucial for dialogue-processes with cooperation partners to have grounded arguments, which may lead to fruitful further discussions about opportunities and challenges in sustainable development.

### 3.4 Sustainability Profile

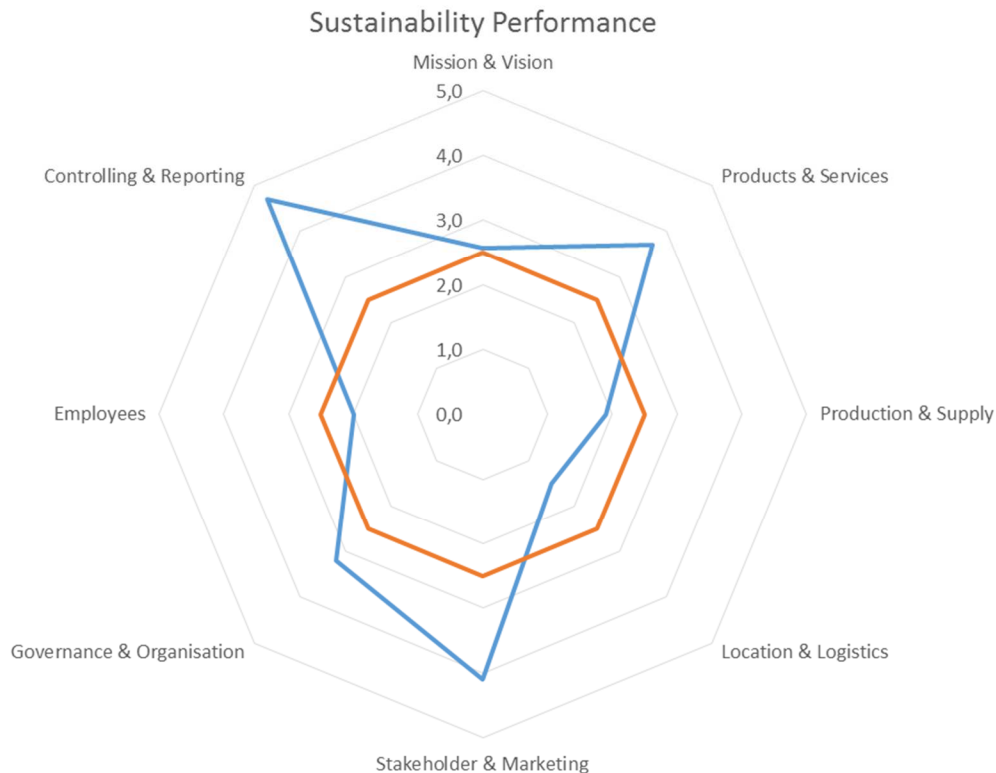
The scores awarded per indicator are summed up in a total for each category. The assessment of each business area is visualized in a bar chart that provides a quick overview of the sustainability performance.



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The visual representation of the sustainability profile of the whole enterprise is done in a radar chart. In blue, the performance of the analyzed enterprise is shown and may be compared to a benchmark or average (in orange).



#### 4. Categories and Indicators – Understand enterprises in a holistic way

Each organization, independent whether profit-oriented or not, must fulfill certain basic functions to meet its purpose and to be able to survive in the long term. In the Sustainability Performance Tool, these basic functions are translated into eight categories, covering the different business areas or departments within an enterprise.

Certainly, there are many links and interdependencies between the single business areas, some overlap and flow one into the other. To encounter this complexity in an appropriate way, it is decisive to regard enterprises as systemic networks.

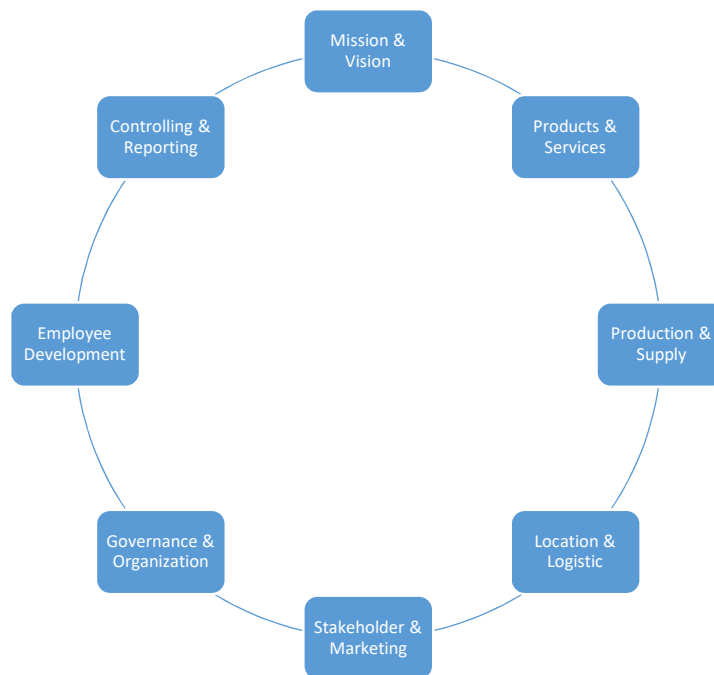
For purposes of simplicity in teaching, each business area or category is analyzed separately.

The order of the categories is optional but it makes sense to start with “mission & vision” and to end with “controlling & reporting”.



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## 4.1 Mission and Vision

The mission describes the basic orientation and purpose of the enterprise. What is the core task and what does the enterprise stand for in society? The vision describes the intended picture of the future. How should the enterprise's future but also the relevant environment (society, region, world) develop through the company's activities? The question how far aspects of sustainability are anchored at this superior and strategic level is relevant, as it is essential for the implementation in everyday routines.

- Indicators 1.1. and 1.2. describe how far the enterprise has defined its mission and future vision, and how sustainability is reflected in it.
- Indicators 1.3., 1.4. and 1.5. deal with the process of mission development and how internal and external stakeholders are involved.
- Indicators 1.6. and 1.7. are about the implementation of the mission and how far it is translated into concrete strategies and objectives.

## 4.2 Products and Services

This category is about the values, the enterprise creates. Are products and services in line with accepted sustainability standards? How far does the enterprise contribute to common welfare? Does the enterprise work in the “green economy” (e.g. production of renewable energies) or does it implement aspects of sustainability (e.g. production of chocolate, using organic, fair-trade raw materials)? A crucial issue is the enterprise's orientation towards innovation, as the ability to respond to changing conditions and to develop and implement new opportunities, is central for long-term existence.

- Indicators 2.1. and 2.2. are concerned with the question what kind of value and meaning the company's offer creates and how far it contributes to the common welfare.



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- Indicators 2.3. and 2.4. refer to the entire range of products and services and its orientation towards ecological and social sustainability.
- In indicator 2.5. the question arises, for which products the company commits itself to binding standards through audits and certifications.
- Indicators 2.6. and 2.7. take up the importance of innovation, research and development in general and focus particularly on the promotion of social and ecological innovations.

### 4.3 Production and Supply

This category is concerned with the production process and supply chain and therefore primarily relevant for producing companies and less for service providers. It is about giving an evaluation of the whole value chain, including the indirect effects and costs of production as well.

- Indicators 3.1. and 3.2. deal with supply management and how far ecological and social criteria are considered in purchasing raw materials.
- Indicator 3.3. refers to the relationships with suppliers. Which criteria are relevant for the selection of suppliers and to what extent are long term supplier-relations established?
- Indicators 3.4. and 3.5. deal with the production process and ask, how ecological and social sustainability standards are implemented in production processes.
- Indicator 3.6. deals with the recovery of waste and emissions and the possibility of re-use.
- Indicator 3.7. questions, whether the enterprise's activities contribute to a circular economy. That means to reduce, reuse and recycle all resources accordingly. In an extended understanding, the approach is applicable not only to materials and products but also to human resources (working hours, know-how).

### 4.4 Location and Logistics

This category focuses on the environmental and social challenges and opportunities that arise through decisions about geographical site, design and construction of company buildings and the operation of the business. Sustainability-orientation aims at reducing the social and ecological footprint and has the potential to reduce long term costs and support the common welfare at the same time.

- In indicators 4.1. and 4.2. the question is how far the location is in line with environmental standards or at least neutral to its environment. Particular attention is given to the scarce resources of land and space.
- Indicators 4.3. and 4.4. are concerned with the building and the design of the workplaces. Naturally, for new building higher sustainability standards can be achieved but at the same time target conflicts with the scarce resource land must be considered.
- In the following indicators, 4.5. and 4.6., efficiency of transport and logistic systems is being questioned and the possibilities for a more sustainable mobility investigated.
- Indicator 4.7. is particularly relevant for enterprises operating in different locations, also internationally. The question is raised to what extent high sustainability standards are respected even if the legal situation does not require it.

### 4.5 Stakeholder and Marketing

Under this item the concepts, communication and interaction processes aligned to the market are summarized. In contrast to the traditional understanding of marketing, sustainability orientation



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means to involve extended target groups as stakeholders (customers, suppliers, local authorities, interest groups, civil society) in distinct phases of creating products and services. Marketing is fundamentally re-thought, where customers are perceived as holistic beings with head, heart and soul. The “new” customer is well-informed, critical and orients his decisions on rational and emotional arguments and increasingly on the meaning of products and services.

- Indicators 5.1. and 5.2. are about who is perceived as stakeholder and how they are involved in the offer of the enterprise.
- Indicators 5.3. and 5.4. highlight the enterprise's cooperation orientation.
- Indicators 5.5. and 5.6. pose the question which image of customers prevails and how the relationship to customers is designed.
- In the following indicators, 5.7. and 5.8., the question of fair pricing and transparent, ethically-oriented communication is asked.

## 4.6 Governance and Organization

This point describes the internal structure and processes which transfer the corporate objectives into operative action. The goal of a sustainability oriented enterprise is to develop into a learning, adaptive organization, being able to react to complex and rapidly changing requirements with fast, innovative solutions. This requires a changed understanding of leadership that does not follow the patterns of traditional autocratic top - down decisions, but integrates more participatory and flexible models that are summarized under the concept of corporate governance.

- Indicators 6.1 and 6.2 highlight the understanding of leadership within the enterprise and how organizational development and models of participation are realized.
- Indicators 6.3. and 6.4. deal with organizational structures and processes and how far they interact organically. Transparency and clarity about tasks and roles are essential prerequisites so that employees can take responsibility for their working-area.
- Indicators 6.5., 6.6. and 6.7. are concerned with corporate culture. The question of how the enterprise deals with mistakes and failures is essential for future viability. Are they classed as exceptional phenomena that must be avoided? Or are they perceived as opportunities that reveal new potentials?

## 4.7 Employee Development

Employees and their active, self-conducted engagement are essential for the success of an enterprise. Under the premise of sustainability, employees are regarded not only as human resources but as people with values, attitudes and abilities that can continuously evolve. In this item, the aim is to assess how the personal development of each employee is fostered and which frame conditions apply.

- Indicator 7.1. captures the fundamental attitude towards employees and how development processes are anchored in business processes.
- Indicators 7.2. and 7.3 reflect the understanding of competencies and the importance of vocational training. Above all, the question arises how non-formal competencies are promoted.
- Indicators 7.4. to 7.6. are about working conditions (salary, working-time, diversity), which play a significant role regarding to what extent the job is considered as valuable and meaningful.



## 4.8 Controlling and Reporting

This section describes how entrepreneurial activity can be made more effective by clear and transparent monitoring, success evaluation and reflection looping. Controlling therefore refers not only to classical financial controlling but to all business areas (e.g. marketing: how successful is marketing? Employee development: How are external learning contents integrated into daily practice?). Particularly interesting is the impact of the enterprise, e.g. the effects of the enterprise on the natural and social environment and how this is communicated to the outside world.

- Indicators 8.1 to 8.3. record the importance of controlling in general and sustainability-controlling in particular.
- Indicator 8.4 deals with the impact of the enterprise on its natural environment. Many enterprises have a vague idea about this, but rarely make systematic surveys.
- Indicators 8.5 and 8.6 are concerned with reporting and communication of outcomes. Sustainability reports are legally binding for enterprises from a certain size class. It is therefore interesting what is published beyond the legal standards.
- Indicator 8.7. is concerned with financial-management and sustainability-oriented alternatives.

## 5. SWOT Analysis - Identify strengths and weaknesses

SWOT analyses provide a quick overview of the status quo but also the future potential of topics. Following the well-known four quadrant model, questions about the sustainable development of the analyzed enterprise are raised:

In what aspect does the enterprise already act sustainability-oriented? What are the strengths?

Where are perceived weaknesses and why these aspects are considered as weaknesses?

Which aspects are regarded as opportunities for a sustainable development of the enterprise? How can these opportunities be leveraged?

What are threats and risks for a sustainable development of the enterprise? How to cope with risks?



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The SWOT analysis can be used on different stages, depending on the purpose of the analysis, and also more or less comprehensively, for the entire enterprise or for individual business areas.

1. As a starting point, before or instead of the detailed assessment to get a general idea of the sustainability performance of the enterprise as a whole.
2. As a starting point to receive an overview of sustainability opportunities and challenges of individual business areas.
3. Subsequently to the detailed analysis to assess the potential for future fields of action, where the enterprise would like to be more engaged.

## 6. Future Profile - Planning Sustainability

Since most companies experience pressure to develop in a sustainable direction and the need to constantly adapt, not only the status quo but also the desired future of sustainability performance is of interest. The main question is which sustainability performance an enterprise wants to achieve in the medium or long-time horizon (5-10 years).

### Quantitative assessment

In order to ensure comparability with the status quo, the assessment follows the same logic as the status quo assessment, using the same categories and indicators. It is again carried out on a scale from 0 to 5, which corresponds to the desired realization targets in percentages.

Scores	Percentage – scale	Assessment	Interpretation
0	0 %	Does not apply	The criterion is not relevant or not achievable for the enterprise.
1	1 % - 20 %	Rarely apply	First steps are planned, but with a long time-horizon.
2	21 % - 40 %	Partly apply	The criterion is anchored in the strategy, but has not high priority.
3	41 % - 60 %	Applies in many aspects	The criterion is anchored in the company's strategy. Development targets are planned with a medium time horizon.
4	61 % - 80 %	Applies in most aspects	The criterion has a more than average priority for the company and should be realized with a shorter time horizon.
5	81 % - 100 %	Applies completely	The full implementation of the criterion has top priority in the company plans. It will be well-equipped with time and money resources.



### Qualitative justification of the objectives

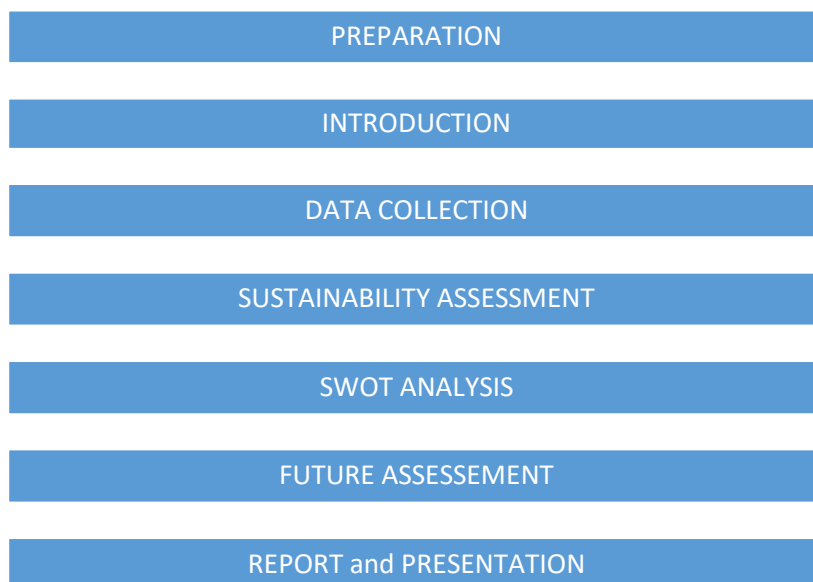
The desired degree of attainment is underpinned by verbal justifications. For each criterion, the importance for the company's strategy has to be estimated and the temporal horizon of implementation as well.

### Future-profile

The company's future sustainability performance is also visualized through bar charts per business area. The summary of the desired set points for the entire company is again visualized in a radar chart. From the comparison of actual values and target values, interesting conclusions can be derived for the sustainability performance of individual business areas as well as for the entire enterprise.

## 7. Analysis process - Applying the Sustainability Performance Tool

Applying the Sustainability Performance Tool in the context of a cooperation project means to set up a defined process, where teachers, students and external partners collaborate in defined roles and tasks. The process consists of the following steps:



### 7.1 Preparation

As outlined in the chapter above, university-business cooperation projects need careful preparation, where needs and expectations of all involved stakeholders are considered. Applying the Sustainability Performance Tool in the context of a university course raises some additional questions which should be answered in advance.

#### About the course

What are the main objectives of the course? What is the purpose and function of the tool in the course?

Which additional benefit has the tool for the course?



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In which format the tool is used, in a case study or in a real-world cooperation project? How is the cooperation project planned, just one external partner (e.g. with different departments) or several external partners?

Which time resources are planned for introduction and implementation of the tool?

#### **About teachers**

Who carries out the course? Which business or management skills does the teacher have? Does the teacher have knowledge in sustainability sciences, particularly sustainable entrepreneurship?

Which practical experience does the teacher have in carrying out cooperation projects? How is the access to the business world? Is the teacher already involved in business and multi stakeholder networks?

#### **About students**

Which backgrounds do the participating students have? Do they have basic knowledge in business and management or in sustainability sciences? Which practical experiences do students have in cooperation projects with external partners?

What are the expectations and motivations of students?

How are working groups organized (e.g. size, constellation)?

#### **About business partners**

What are the criteria for selecting the cooperation partners?

Is it the first cooperation project with the partner or does it build on an established partnership?

Who will be involved in the project? What is the role of the involved persons in the enterprise?

What is the motivation for participating in the project? Which expectations and needs does the partner have?

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*Plan enough time for the introduction of the tool, particularly if students have no business background. Each single indicator can give rise to questions about conventional business concepts and sustainable alternatives. Best case: plan one semester for the theoretical introduction and one semester for the practical project.*

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## **7.2 Introduction of the tool**

As the testing phase revealed, a sound introduction of the Sustainability Performance Tool is a key success factor. It is crucial to enable students not only to manage it from a technical point of view but to dive deeper into the multi-faceted issues of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship. Consequently, the introduction should cover the following contents:

#### **Business and management knowledge**

How is an enterprise organized? What are the key functions or business areas of enterprises and how are they linked? What are specific challenges of sustainable entrepreneurship?



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## **Sustainability knowledge**

What do the three dimensions of sustainability mean and how are they linked? Which approaches are behind terms like systemic, holistic, transdisciplinary, etc.?

## **Usage of the tool**

How to use the online tool? How to collect data? How to set up a fruitful cooperation and constructive interview situations with external partners?

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*To get familiar with the tool it is recommended to test it in a case study first, before applying it in the context of a business partnership.*

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## **7.3 Data Collection**

As a starting point, students collect relevant data and information about the cooperation partner. The structure of data collection follows the logic and headlines of the assessment tool (categories and indicators) and is carried out in a two-step process:

### **Desktop research**

Students collect relevant information on the analyzed organization via websites, reports, advertising brochures and other channels. This should provide a rough overview of the status quo of the sustainability performance. The absence of essential information in external communication is also a statement and can already point out an important future field of action.

### **Field research**

Information that cannot be gained from secondary sources should be collected directly through interviews or workshops with representatives of the enterprise. A careful preparation in advance, facilitated by teachers is essential. In addition to general principles of good cooperation, the following questions should be clarified:

- How is the interview carried out? By way of an on-site visit, a skype meeting or any other form?
- Who are the interview partners and which position do they have? (e.g. CEO, head of department, ...)
- Who will be involved from the university side? The whole student group, just single representatives, also teachers?
- How much time is planned?
- What are the expectations of the partners?

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*Keep in mind that the requirement is not to ensure a complete data collection but to better understand how enterprises work. As such the effort for data collection should be limited, for students as well as for enterprises. Sometimes, data are not available, e.g. management ratios, others are too sensitive to circulate them externally.*

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## 7.4 Sustainability Assessment

The core element of the tool is the sustainability assessment, which provides an in-depth analysis of the sustainability performance for each business area or department. In accordance with the preferences of the external partners, the assessment can be conducted in diverse ways:

1. Grounded on a careful preparation the assessment is carried out in a participative workshop with students and representatives of the enterprise.
2. Students with support of teachers conduct the assessment based on the data collection. Afterwards, the results are discussed and verified with the business partners.
3. Business partners carry out a self-assessment and discuss the results with students and teachers afterwards.

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*Draw explicit attention on the qualitative interpretation and justification of the numeric values and make sure that they are well recorded because they sometimes reveal insights of perceived challenges and opportunities.*

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## 7.5 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis aims at going deeper in certain aspects and at revealing future developments in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As such it is recommendable to carry out the SWOT in a cooperative setting, e.g. a workshop, with clear defined tasks and roles.

- Students prepare the workshop, especially the guiding questions, and ensure that all results are recorded. During the analysis, they can either take the role of observers or, in advanced courses, as facilitators.
- Teachers are responsible for a fluent and smooth process, either in the role of facilitators or observers.
- Entrepreneurial partners are the key actors in a SWOT workshop. Therefore, it is crucial that those persons participate, who oversee future development of sustainability issues.

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*From the entrepreneurial partner, ideally representatives of management and of all departments or business areas are present.*

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## 7.6 Future profile

To deepen the results of the sustainability assessment, which focuses on the status quo and the sustainability performance already achieved by the enterprise, an extended version of the tool could provide an outlook on future plans and visions. The structure is based on the core matrix of the assessment, which allows a direct comparison between status quo and envisioned status. In general, this assessment will be carried out by representatives of the enterprise, as it requires deep insights in plans and decisions about future development of sustainability issues.



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*It depends on the intensity and quality of the cooperation before, which role students and teachers play in this process. Either they are involved directly or at least they should be informed about the plans of the enterprise.*

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## 7.7 Report and presentation

The final report summarizes the results of the assessment and the SWOT analysis. The students prepare the SWOT analysis, which should be approved by the teacher and discussed with the project partners. Depending on the requirements, the final report can also be presented directly towards the management and / or staff of the partner enterprise.

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*Final report and final presentation are not just impositions but can be the entry ticket for further cooperation projects. Therefore, plan enough time for preparing the report and the presentation and draw specific attention on design and graphic elaboration of the materials. It is the final impression partners keep from this university business cooperation.*

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