

## Reflecting on The University Impact Rankings on Achieving SDGs in Higher Education

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### Introduction

HEIs have expressed growing interest in sustainability matters ever since the approval of Agenda 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encourage HEIs to contribute to achieving these goals by evaluating the institutions' performance (De la Poza et al., 2021). Universities can act as catalysts for sustainable development by leveraging their educational, research, and community engagement capabilities (*Sustainability-Counts.Pdf*, n.d.). BINUS University recognizes the importance of actively contributing to the SDGs. In 2022, BINUS University joined the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings (THE UIR), which assesses universities' impact on society and the economy concerning the SDGs. By participating in this evaluation, BINUS University sought to gather valuable data to enhance its SDG-related performance. The THE UIR 2022 rating was a starting point for BINUS University to review and improve its contribution to the SDGs. BINUS' leaders then formed a team to prepare the THE UIR assessment. The team included data analysts and strategic planners. This team is part of the Data Analytics & Business Process (DABP) team under the Presidential Office at BINUS University. Under the DABP, one manager and three officers work with the strategic development manager to formulate the steps for preparation of THE UIR in 2022. The team was mandated to coordinate the preparation of BINUS SDGs contribution among departments and supporting units at BINUS University.

The team reviewed the score data, identified areas for improvement, and developed follow-up actions. Some steps relevant to specific departments or supporting units would be coordinated through several meetings. The results were then shared with the relevant departments, and their responses were monitored. The steps for preparing the university's SDG achievement were quite similar to other cases of universities, which started organically through the education and training of its students and faculty members. The University of Florida, for example, started with sustainability education for its undergraduate, then went through THE UIR and achieved 30th rank in 2021. Some major flagship business program universities started with sustainability subjects in business programs to their undergraduate students prior to their THE UIR benchmarking (Seva-Larrosa et al., 2023). BINUS University is strong in IT and business subjects. Its business school was AACSB accredited. There are some subjects related to sustainability in business. With the background of some prominent faculty members teaching and researching SDG matters, the university strengthened its value by entering benchmarking. In addition, the University of California, Berkeley, also implements similar steps. The university has established an SDG Task Force to coordinate its efforts to achieve the SDGs. The task force includes representatives from the university, including faculty, students, and staff. A case study was conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, which focused on using data analytics to measure and monitor progress on SDG indicators. This research provides insight into the benefits of using data analytics and practical implementation strategies(*Uc\_berkeley\_sustainability\_plan\_2020\_1.Pdf*, n.d.).

At first, BINUS University participated in THE University Impact Rankings (THE UIR) in 2022 (based on 2021 collected data), ranked 1001-1200. The ranking was a significant achievement, as it showed that BINUS was already positively impacting the world. However, some things could have been improved, especially in managing the system and data flow. In 2022, for the ranking of 2023, BINUS is working to address these shortcomings. The university is developing a more streamlined system for collecting and reporting data, and it is also working to improve its communication with stakeholders. BINUS is confident that these changes will help it improve its ranking in the THE UIR in 2023. For instance, Corporate Marketing Communication (CMC) utilized social media and the university website to communicate the SDGs to external stakeholders, while initiatives supporting small industries in Indonesia highlighted the university's commitment to the SDGs. The team also improved the SDG website, published articles about SDG experts, and conducted a roadshow to encourage faculty members to assign SDG research tags to their work.

Additionally, the Human Capital unit and the corporate learning unit at BINUS (BCL&D) promptly responded by publishing information related to recycling that contributes to SDGs 3, 4, 8, 10, and 17. BINUS University supports multiple SDGs through various initiatives. For example, in SDG 3, the Student Advisory and Support Center (SASC) provides academic and non-academic assistance through three sub-units: Counseling, Mentoring, and Disability Services. SDG 4 is achieved by offering free lifelong learning platforms such as GreatNusa and Taman Belajar. Community Service activities, including SME training and free tutoring for underprivileged children, contribute to SDG 8, while Disability Services and the ADAB app (Ayo Dengar Ayo Bicara) cater to SDG 10. Additionally, the university's Freshmen Partners mentoring program and Friends Care Community prioritize the needs of students with special needs, and the Building Facilities accommodate users with physical limitations. In SDG 17, BINUS collaborates with other universities, including Montgomery College, for open pedagogy involving several BINUS SDG experts. Through THE UIR, the team at BINUS University discovered how to enhance the university's contribution to sustainability. One way to achieve this is by regularly meeting with teams and units.

BINUS University is a leading example of how universities can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The university's commitment to the SDGs is evident in its wide range of initiatives designed to impact society and the environment positively. BINUS University is also using data analytics to measure and monitor its progress on the SDGs, helping the university identify areas where it can improve its impact. The steps that BINUS University is taking to contribute to the SDGs are commendable. Other universities can learn from BINUS University's example and take steps to increase their impact on the world. By working together, universities can make a significant difference in achieving the SDGs and creating a more sustainable future. This writing reflects on BINUS University's follow-up actions based on the evaluation data of THE UIR. This article explores the role of universities in achieving the SDGs, specifically focusing on BINUS University's participation in the 2022 Times Higher Education: University Impact Rankings (THE UIR).

## **Method**

We used qualitative and quantitative data analysis to reflect BINUS University's involvement in the THE UIR. The team tracked the university's progress toward the SDGs and improved its SDG activities. This five-step method is for aligning SDG focus with work programs. Figure 1 shows the five steps in a flow chart.



Figure 1. The five-steps of team’s reflection on THE UIR

In order to achieve the SDGs, the university needs to align its work with the goals. Universities must identify how their work contributes to the SDGs and ensure their work is aligned with the goals. The first step is to create a consignment event to align SDG focus with work programs. The Data Analytics & Business Process (DABP) team held this event on 27 April 2022 at Anggrek Campus, bringing together the Research and Technology Transfer Office (RTTO) and Dean of Schools to discuss how the program can align its work with the SDGs. The second step is to hold a series of meetings to discuss aligning SDG focus with work programs. These meetings should be held with different departments and units within the organization to ensure everyone is on the same page. Concurrently, the team builds an SDG website and social media to communicate SDG-related activities. BINUS Digital made the SDG Website, and then Corporate Marketing Communication (CMC) continued to create BINUS's SDG social media like Instagram. This website and social media share information about the activities, actions, and research on the SDGs. The fourth step is to create a yearly sustainability report to track progress on SDG-related activities. This report tracks the university's progress on the SDGs and identifies areas where improvement is needed. The fifth step is to complete the UIR assessment to gather evidence of SDG-related activities. The UIR assessment is a tool that can be used to assess a university's alignment with the SDGs. By following these five steps, universities can improve their alignment with the SDGs and positively contribute to the world.

## Results and Discussion

Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE UIR) evaluate the university's commitment to the 17 SDGs of the United Nations based on four broad areas: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching. BINUS University in 2022 has achieved THE UIR with an overall score of 44.3 and increased rapidly by +11.8 with an overall score of 56.1 in 2023. This overall score also recently brought BINUS forward from a 1,001+ ranking to 801-1000. Hence, the top three SDGs that bring BINUS in 2022 score and rank are SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality). BINUS Expand on developing and implementing innovative teaching and learning methods that are student-centered and promote critical thinking, as well as offering a wide range of courses and programs that meet the needs of a diverse student population. Frequently improve inclusive and sustainable economic growth, comprehensive employment opportunities, and decent work. Aside from that, BINUS also prevents intra- and inter-country disparities by providing the best services to all students. In recent years (2023), the top three remained the same on SDG 4 and 8;

therefore, SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) joined as the top three to promote peace and security on campus and in the surrounding community, uphold the rule of law, and protect human rights. The top three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that contributed to BINUS' score and rank in 2022 and 2023 were SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Table 1. Summary of BINUS Achievement in THE UIR 2022 and 2023

Items	2022	2023
Overall scores	44.3	56.1
Rank	1,001+	801-1,000
Top 3 SDGs	SDG 4, 8 and 10	SDG 4, 8 and 16

In the 2022 assessment, BINUS University participated in THE UIR with four criteria determined by the university's leadership, in addition to the mandatory criterion set by THE UIR, SDG 17. The four SDGs assessed in 2022 were SDGs 3, 4, 8, and 10. Table 2 shows the scores for these four SDGs. The scores for the following year's assessment showed an improvement in all of them. The same was observed for SDG 17, a mandatory criterion, showing an increase in the score from 2022 to 2023. The results reflected the university team's and all stakeholders' success in enhancing contributions to achieving the SDGs. Notably, BINUS University also expanded its participation in THE UIR benchmarking by adding data on achievements for six other SDGs (SDGs: 1, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16), demonstrating BINUS' bold step in positioning itself for global and public evaluation. Thus, BINUS University has been benchmarked to 11 SDGs up to this year.

Table 2. SDGs' Score of BINUS University in THE UIR 2022 and 2023

SDGs	2022	2023
SDG 1: No Poverty	NA	59.5
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	NA	NA
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being	33.4	42.4
SDG 4: Quality Education	41.4	71.8
SDG 5: Gender Equality	NA	NA
SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	NA	NA
SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	NA	NA
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	33.5	63.5
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	NA	44
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality	40.6	56.1
SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	NA	53.6
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	NA	35.8
SDG 13: Climate Action	NA	NA
SDG 14: Life Below Water	NA	NA
SDG 15: Life on Land	NA	47.1
SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	NA	63.9
SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goals	62.2	71

\*NA: data were not available, BINUS University needs major improvement in the provided SDGs

THE UIR, in its assessment methodology, the board benchmarked universities based on three categories: (1) Written Commitment, (2) Posted Activities, and (3) Published Research. In the first category, the university must provide commitment evidence in the policy format, which must be publicly accessible. The second category requires activity evidence posted on the BINUS website and publicly accessible to achieve higher scores. The highest category would be a total score for the university to provide Scopus-indexed publications within five years. As shown in Table 2, we conclude that the increasing score of SDG 3, 4, 8, 10, and 17 is due to the highest score achievement of each category. We compared both assessment years among the five SDGs to provide a clear reflection. Table 3 shows significant increments of shared sports facilities and sexual and reproductive health care services for students. Both

criteria originated from the students' affairs supporting units providing publicly accessible policies.

Table 3. The sub-scores comparison from THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for SDG 3

SDG	Sub Criteria	Sub Criteria (description)	2022	2023	Increments
SDG 3	3.1.1	Good health and well-being: paper views	51.2	68.6	17.4
SDG 3	3.1.2	Clinical citations	0	0	0
SDG 3	3.1.3	Good health and well-being: publications	25.6	41.9	16.3
SDG 3	3.2.1	Proportion of graduates in health professions	8.4	9.2	0.8
SDG 3	3.3.1	Current collaborations with health institutions	89	100	11
SDG 3	3.3.2	Health outreach programmes	100	100	0
SDG 3	3.3.3	Shared sports facilities	0	33.3	33.3
SDG 3	3.3.4	Sexual and reproductive health care services for students	0	33.3	33.3
SDG 3	3.3.5	Mental health support	33.3	33.3	0
SDG 3	3.3.6	Smoke-free policy	100	100	0

In addition to the total score achievement, we also reflected that SDG 4 items number 4.2.1 (Table 4) showed a significant increment for the THE UIR 2023 due to our report on the relevancy to the item. We included the proportion of graduates that will relate to the teaching qualification. We concluded that adding values of teaching qualifications to all graduates is in line with our university's value to empower the nation. Other items in SDG 4 also achieved their full scores due to our website building and recognition of each activity relevant to the items. As the final result, SDG 4 raised its score from 41.4 to 71.8 in 2023.

Table 4. The sub-scores comparison from THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for SDG 4

SDG	Sub Criteria	Sub Criteria (description)	2022	2023	Increments
SDG 4	4.1.1	Quality education: paper views	51.1	66.3	15.2
SDG 4	4.1.2	Quality education: CiteScore	0	10	10
SDG 4	4.1.3	Quality education: publications	99.4	99.9	0.5
SDG 4	4.2.1	Proportion of graduates with relevant qualification for teaching	1.8	90.8	89
SDG 4	4.3.1	Public resources (lifelong learning)	100	100	0
SDG 4	4.3.2	Public events (lifelong learning)	75	100	25
SDG 4	4.3.3	Vocational training events (lifelong learning)	41.7	83.3	41.6

SDG 4	4.3.4	Education outreach activities beyond campus	25	100	75
SDG 4	4.3.5	Lifelong learning access policy	25	50	25
SDG 4	4.4.1	Proportion of first generation students	49.6	51.5	1.9

Table 5. The sub-scores comparison from THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for SDG 8

SDG	Sub Criteria	Sub Criteria (description)	2022	2023	Increments
SDG 8	8.1.1	Decent work and economic growth: CiteScore	11.2	12.5	1.3
SDG 8	8.1.2	Decent work and economic growth publications	88.2	93.5	5.3
SDG 8	8.2.1	Employment practice living wage	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 8	8.2.2	Employment practice unions	33.3	33.3	0
SDG 8	8.2.3	Employment policy on discrimination	0	100	100
SDG 8	8.2.4	Employment policy modern slavery	0	87.5	87.5
SDG 8	8.2.5	Employment practice equivalent rights outsourcing	0	50	50
SDG 8	8.2.6	Employment policy pay scale equity	0	50	50
SDG 8	8.2.7	Tracking pay scale for gender equity	0	33.3	33.3
SDG 8	8.2.8	Employment practice appeal process	0	33.3	33.3
SDG 8	8.3.1	Expenditure per employee	37	18.7	-18.3
SDG 8	8.4.1.	Proportion of students with work placements	60.7	69.6	8.9
SDG 8	8.5.1	Proportion of employees on secure contracts	8.5	71	62.5

Table 5 shows the increments between THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for the SDG 8 items. A significant increase in item 8.5.1 also valuable for the team. There was a misunderstood at the first assessment in 2022 benchmarking about the items. Thus, we made an incorrect submitted data. In line with other SDG assessments in the previous tables and Table 6 for SDG 10, the team successfully addressed the publicly available evidence for each item. These proved the coordination throughout other departments and supporting units at BINUS University.

Table 6. The sub-scores comparison from THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for SDG 10

SDG	Sub Criteria	Sub Criteria (description)	2022	2023	Increments
SDG 10	10.1.1	Reduced inequalities: CiteScore	38	40.9	2.9
SDG 10	10.1.2	Reduced inequalities: FWCI	33.1	44.2	11.1
SDG 10	10.1.3	Reduced inequalities: publications	74.4	87.9	13.5
SDG 10	10.2.1	Proportion of first generation students	49.5	52.1	2.6
SDG 10	10.3.1	Proportion of international students from developing countries	46.6	41.1	-5.5
SDG 10	10.4.1	Proportion of students with disabilities	63.5	67.3	3.8

SDG 10	10.5.1	Proportion of employees with disabilities	2.2	0	-2.2
SDG 10	10.6.1	Non-discriminatory admissions policy	0	62.5	62.5
SDG 10	10.6.2	Access to university track underrepresented groups applications	50	100	50
SDG 10	10.6.3	Access to university underrepresented groups recruit	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 10	10.6.4	Anti-discrimination policies	25	75	50
SDG 10	10.6.5	University diversity officer	33.3	33.3	0
SDG 10	10.6.6	Support for underrepresented groups	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 10	10.6.7	Accessible facilities	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 10	10.6.8	Disability support services	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 10	10.6.9	Disability access scheme	33.3	100	66.7
SDG 10	10.6.10	Disability accomodation policy	33.3	100	66.7

To compare BINUS SDG 17's achievement between 2022 and 2023, we analyze each benchmarking item in Table 17. We reflected that aside from the trend of increments due to the publicly accessible evidence, there were two significant declining scores. The first and utmost decline was in item 17.2.1, relating to Relationships with regional NGOs and government for SDG policy. In 2022 benchmarking, this item received its full score due to the event of networking at an international level as part of SDG policy. We reflected that this event would be better to be an annual event in the future. We believe that this recommendation to the university's leaders would be a good starting point for BINUS to be able to play a significant role in SDG at the national and international levels.

Table 7. The sub-scores comparison from THE UIR 2022 and 2023 for SDG 17

SDG	Sub Criteria	Sub Criteria (description)	2022	2023	Increments
SDG 17	17.1.1	Proportion of output co-authored with low or lower-middle income countries	41	29.6	-11.4
SDG 17	17.1.2	Partnership for the goals: publications	62.8	77.1	14.3
SDG 17	17.2.1	Relationships with regional NGOs and government for SDG policy	100	33.3	-66.7
SDG 17	17.2.2	Cross sectoral dialogue about SDGs	100	83.3	-16.7
SDG 17	17.2.3	International collaboration data gathering for SDG	0	83.3	83.3
SDG 17	17.2.4	Collaboration for SDG best practice	100	83.3	-16.7
SDG 17	17.2.5	Collaboration with NGOs for SDGs	89	83.3	-5.7
SDG 17	17.3.1-17.3.17	Publication of SDG report: SDG1-17	66.7	83.3	16.6
SDG 17	17.4.1	Education for SDGs: commitment to meaningful education	33.3	33.3	0
SDG 17	17.4.2	Education for SDGs: specific courses on sustainability	100	100	0
SDG 17	17.4.3	Education for SDGs in the wider community	33.3	83.3	50

We did not compare SDGs 1, 9, 11, 12, and 16 because BINUS University has just submitted these SDGs for the 2023 benchmarking. However, through BINUS' commitment to submitting the new items for the other 5 SDGs in the 2023 benchmarking, BINUS has collected the accumulation of scores. Not only the scores that matter, but BINUS has contributed several achievements to 11 out of 17 SDGs. As part of its efforts to boost higher education's success in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), BINUS University aims to implement performance improvement strategies based on the evaluation data from THE UIR. (Bautista-Puig et al., 2022; Hansen et al., 2021) Universities have a unique role in achieving the SDGs by providing education and training in sustainable development, conducting research on sustainable development, engaging with communities to promote sustainable development, and adopting sustainable practices on their campuses. Exploring different ways of strategizing sustainability toward delivering the SDGs would enhance the achievement of SDG 17 and, in return, enhance significant increments in other SDGs. (El-Jardali et al., 2018)

The reflection of the entire assessment process provides a comprehensive evaluation of the team, providing insights for leaders, including carrying out developments in policies and actions in the following year. (de Wit, 2019) Therefore, it also offers understanding for internal faculty members, such as promoting individuals with a good track record in teaching, research, and community development in one or more SDG scopes. (De la Poza et al., 2021; Esposito & Stark, 2019; Goodall & Moore, 2019) Since the assessment process is to be designed reflective, it provides opportunities for the team to think critically about their work and identify areas for improvement. The insights from the reflection can then be used to change the university's policies and actions. For example, if the team finds that they need to meet their goals for teaching, the faculty members may need to change their teaching methods or provide more support to their students. The reflection process can also identify faculty members who significantly contribute to the team's work. These faculty members may be eligible for promotion or other forms of recognition. In addition to providing insights for leaders and faculty members, the reflection process can also help to improve the team's overall performance. By identifying areas for improvement and making changes accordingly, the team can become more effective in achieving its goals.

BINUS University has set a vision for 2035 to be Fostering & Empowering Society. Through this vision, BINUS actively contributes to developing and supporting communities. By joining THE Impact Rankings, BINUS realizes that fostering and empowering society is not limited to supporting communities only. Through the methodology in THE IR, BINUS learns daily to be a better university. The required evidence in THE IR, for example, posting public articles about activities and publishing policies related to SDGs, pursues BINUS to be responsible for our vision. This year, a slight improvement in our THE IR ranking may represent our commitment to SDG through programs and activities.

Future improvements in sustainability actions must include a focus on environmental issues. (Demaidi & Al-Sahili, 2021; Zhou et al., 2020) The Indonesian government has focused on climate change these years and directed Indonesian universities, including BINUS University, to participate in reducing carbon emissions. To support the government, BINUS University has tracked the quantity of transportation and used electricity for daily operations in the campus area. BINUS has installed some utilities so that the electricity will be reduced, such as using the sensor for the lamp so that the lamp will be turned off if there is no one near the area, using LED lamps, and designing the campus building so the sunlight can go through inside of it and only uses the lamp in the nighttime. BINUS University has done all these things to reduce carbon emissions, and every year BINUS has set a target to reduce the emission continuously until 2065 to become a net zero emission university.



## Conclusion

University's participation to the sustainability benchmarking has empowered the management to reflect on the university's wide role toward stewardship to the SDGs. University's participation to the benchmarking has encouraged continuous improvements in each items of SDGs. Further analysis and actions in each SDGs would certainly improve Binus University's contribution to the achievement of SDGs in the national and international level. We believe that through further research on THE UIR impact toward universities and communities, the benchmarking would find its maximum benefit.

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