QS Stars for Business Schools: Methodology

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About QS Stars for Business Schools

We launched QS Stars in 2009 to provide a comprehensive assessment of institutions beyond traditional rankings.

Today, with more than 700 institutions evaluated globally, and partnerships with local governments, QS Stars is the leading international ratings provider.

Our detailed assessment across ten categories, culminating in an overall institutional rating, empowers institutions to showcase their strengths, while identifying areas for improvement.

But at QS, we never stop evolving.

Recognising the unique challenges and opportunities faced by business schools, we've developed a specialised methodology tailored to the sector. This system focuses on reweighted key areas including Entrepreneurship, Specialist programmes, and Employability – all critical to the success of business graduates.

By removing less relevant categories and adjusting thresholds to accommodate the diverse size and nature of business schools, we provide a more accurate and meaningful assessment, allowing you to spotlight your strengths with precision and clarity.

01   **Audit and guidance**: To ensure a seamless audit, your business school will be assigned a dedicated QS analyst. They'll guide you throughout the process, from data gathering to reviewing your submissions and validating information from third parties.

02   **Scores and badges**: Ratings are earned according to the table on page six, and points are calculated from the data gathered. You'll be awarded badges to showcase your institution's achievements.

03   **Marketing**: Equipped with your QS Stars for Business Schools results, your institution is ready to propel its marketing plan. Publish and share your ratings to boost your global reputation and use our Marketing Guidebook and extra support to maximise your impact.

04   **Strategy**: QS Stars offers a comprehensive assessment of institutional performance, identifying strengths and areas for development across a variety of areas. Utilise this in-depth analysis to inform your institution's strategic planning and to elevate its overall quality.

QS Stars for Business Schools badges

Show your strengths and achievements to the world and attract more high-quality students and partners with QS Stars for Business Schools badges.

Overall badge

The Overall badge reflects your total QS Stars for Business Schools rating, from 1 Star to 5+ Stars. It's a mark of your school's overall quality.

Unlocking the QS Stars for Business Schools scoring system

Throughout this methodology document you'll find reference to a scaling down process used to award points for various indicators.

This process is a calculation based on thresholds. The maximum threshold will be awarded maximum points, and the minimum threshold will be awarded zero points. Any score in between will be calculated using an internal formula.

Category badges

Take a closer look at your institution's strengths. QS Stars for Business Schools presents distinct badges for each category analysed. These category badges range from 1 Star to 5 Stars, highlighting your school's key strengths in specific areas. You'll come across mandatory categories such as Teaching, Academic development, Programme strength, Entrepreneurship, Global engagement, Employability, Good governance, Diversity, equity and inclusion and two alternative categories Facilities OR Online learning, and Social OR Environmental impact.

Categories

The diagram below outlines the different categories evaluated in the QS Stars for Business School rating system. Each category has a maximum number of points that can be earned.
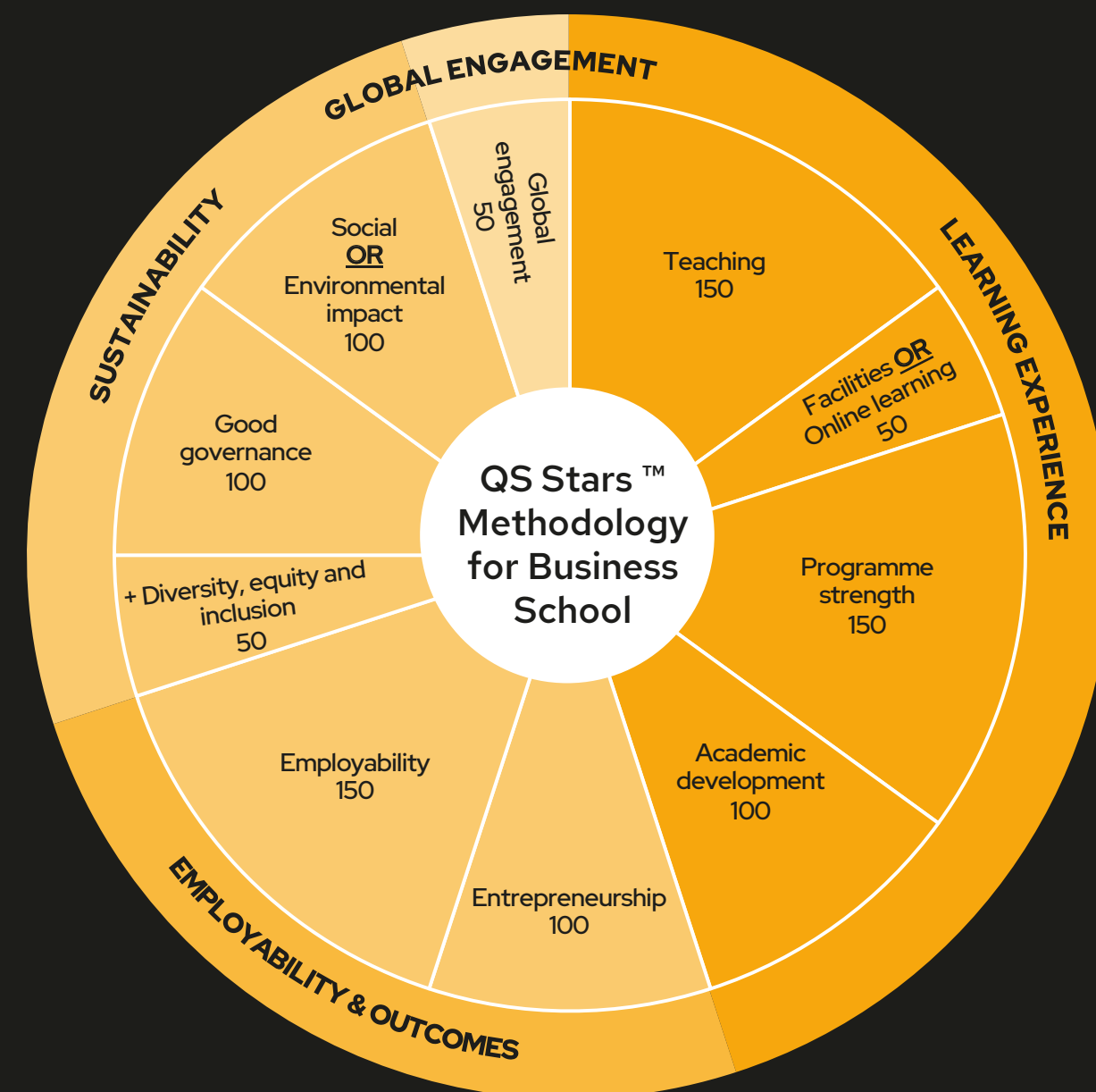
Badges are awarded for individual categories

QS Stars for Business Schools process

Minimum points required for corresponding QS Stars for Business Schools categories:

Categories with a maximum of 50 points: Facilities, Online learning, Diversity, equity and inclusion, Global engagement	
Rating	Minimum points
1 Star	5
2 Stars	15
3 Stars	20
4 Stars	30
5 Stars	35

Categories with a maximum of 100 points: Academic development, Entrepreneurship, Social impact, Environmental impact, Good governance	
Rating	Minimum points
1 Star	10
2 Stars	25
3 Stars	40
4 Stars	55
5 Stars	70

Categories with a maximum of 150 points: Teaching, Employability, Programme strength	
Rating	Minimum points
1 Star	15
2 Stars	35
3 Stars	60
4 Stars	85
5 Stars	105

Overall thresholds and prerequisites

The table below sets out the minimum points and key prerequisites that need to be met to achieve each overall rating. Your business school must meet the point threshold and all prerequisites listed in order to qualify for the overall QS Stars for Business Schools rating.

Overall	Points	Prerequisites
OUTSTANDING (5+ Stars)	900+	• 5 Star ratings in all categories and meet all prerequisites needed for 5 Stars
EXCELLENT (5 Stars)	700+	• 5% international faculty (or 75% of the regional average) • 5% international students (or 75% of the regional average) • 35 points in the Facilities or Online learning categories • 85 points in the Employability category • 105 points in the Teaching category
VERY GOOD (4 Stars)	550+	• 1% international students (or 25% of the regional average) OR 30 points in Global engagement • 85 points in the Teaching category
GOOD (3 Stars)	400+	• At least a 3 Star rating in two of the categories
MODERATE (2 Stars)	250+	• At least a 2 Star rating in two of the categories
SATISFACTORY (1 Star)	100+	• Must have the authority to grant officially recognised degree-level programmes in its own name and have at least one graduating cohort

Learning experience

When evaluating your business school's learning experience, we examine core areas such as Teaching, Academic Development, Facilities or Online learning, and Programme strength.

Teaching — 150

Faculty–student ratio 10% faculty–student ratio (one faculty member per ten students) scaled down to 2% (one faculty member per 50 students)	**40**
Overall student satisfaction **OR** **Satisfaction with teaching** 75% student satisfaction scaled down to 50% — 75% student satisfaction scaled down to 50%	**40**
Completion **OR** **Further study** 90% of students scaled down to 60% graduate within the expected time for their course — 30% scaled down to 10% of undergraduate students pursuing further study within 12 months of graduation	**30**
Retention 90% of students carrying over from first to second year, scaled down to 70%	**15**
Learning management system 3 points each for the following learning management system (LMS) attributes: 1. Available from anywhere at any time (including mobile) 2. Communication and/or collaboration tools embedded 3. At least 90% programmes using LMS 4. Staff trained to work with the LMS 5. Reporting and analytics to track progress	**15**
Academic consultation hours Consultation hours equal to teaching hours scaled down to consultation hours representing one third of teaching hours	**10**

A note about surveys

QS Stars surveys and public national surveys can be accepted, as well as your institution's own survey with the proper evidence. Results are based on a minimum 20% response rate OR 1,000 respondents, with points being scaled down for lower response rates. Please speak with a QS representative to take part in the QS Stars student satisfaction or alumni surveys.

Facilities OR Online learning 50

Campus facilities
3 points for each on-campus facility, with 3 bonus points for 3 or more *(maximum 15 points)*:

1. Cafeteria / restaurant
2. Bookstore
3. Social room
4. Support centre for minority groups
5. Religious facilities

15

Library expenditure
$250 USD scaled down to $10 invested per student towards total library operating expenditure in a 12-month period

15

Technology in the classroom
4 points for each with 3 bonus points for 4 or more *(maximum 20 points)*

1. Computer equipped teaching spaces
2. Printing services
3. Teaching spaces with modern audiovisual equipment
4. Labs with specialised equipment
5. Coworking and meeting spaces with Internet access
6. Connectivity for hybrid learning (must have: WiFi, camera, microphone, electronic devices, IT support)

20

Category specific prerequisites:
- At least one fully online programme with a graduating cohort
- Online programme must be a full recognised degree
- Institution uses a Learning Management System
- Access to online library databases

Student-faculty engagement
2 points each with 2 bonus points for 3 or more *(maximum 10 points)*:

1. Scheduled one-to-one conversations OR face to face component such as an opportunity to meet faculty in person, including at regional centres
2. Live tutoring
3. Live streaming course video
4. Pre-recorded course video
5. Faculty assessment

10

Student interaction
2 points each *(maximum 10 points)*:

1. Online forum OR discussion board
2. Online alumni network
3. Live chat support OR 24/7 help centre
4. Existence of policies/methods for monitoring student engagement
5. Events for online students other than career fairs
6. At least one online career fair per academic year
7. Evidence of online collaboration between students (e.g: study groups, group projects, break-out sessions)

10

Student services and technology
1 point each *(maximum 5 points)*:

1. Customised access for users with special needs
2. Online access to career centre / dedicated online career advisor
3. Scholarships covering 50% of student fees
4. Advisory services for students from different backgrounds
5. Enrolment process support: online resources and/or help centre
6. Learning resources for individual study

5

Online learning 50

Criteria	Points
Application per enrolment Five completed applications per enrolment (5:1) scaled down to two completed applications per enrolment (2:1) **OR** **Faculty-student ratio** 10% faculty-student ratio (one faculty member per 10 students) scaled down to 1% (one faculty member per 100 students)	5
Training in the use of online learning/creating and delivering courses online 70% scaled down to 30% of staff having received specific training on design and implementation of online courses	5
International online experience (COIL: Collaborative online international learning) At least one COIL programme in the last three years	5
Completion within the expected time 80% scaled down to 40% of online students graduating in expected time	5
Online mission statement The university acknowledges online learning through a mention in its mission statement or a dedicated mission statement/strategic plan for the online learning component	5

Programme strength — 150

All indicators in this category relate specifically to the institution's chosen specialist programme

Graduate employment rate
95% scaled down to 70% of graduates employed or started a business within 24 months of graduation
30

Completion	**OR**	**Retention**	
95% of students scheduled to graduate succeed in doing so on time, scaled down to 65%		95% of students continuing from first to second year, scaled down to 75%	**15**

Student satisfaction
90% student satisfaction with the specialist programme, scaled down to 65%
30

Faculty-student ratio
20% faculty-student ratio (1 faculty member per 5 students) scaled down to 5% (1 faculty member per 20 students)
15

Applications per place
10:1 ratio scaled down to 2:1 of number of completed applications against available places
15

Internationally recognised accreditations	**AND/ OR**	**Nationally recognised accreditations**	
15 points for each international and 6 points for each national accreditation relative to the selected degree programme *(maximum 30 points)*			**30**

International students	**OR**	**International exchange programmes**	
20% scaled down to 0% international students		5% inbound/outbound students against total number of students on an international exchange programme lasting three months or longer *(maximum 15 points)* OR 5% outbound students against total programme number of students on an organised international trip lasting at least two weeks and less than three months *(maximum 10 points)*	**15**

Academic development — 100

Faculty development programmes
70% scaled down to 30% of total faculty members participating in faculty development programmes
20

Faculty experience and qualifications
80% scaled down to 60% of faculty with PhD / MBA / Professor of Practice (or equivalent terminal degree)
20

Learning development centre
4 points for each of the following resources and services available through the learning development centre :
1. At least one advisor
2. Academic writing support and assistance
3. Tutoring or mentoring programmes
4. Skills development resources (study skills, soft skills)
5. Webinars, tutorials, workshops organised by the learning development centre
20

Pedagogical innovation
Being awarded an international innovation in teaching award in the past five years
10

Teaching spending out of turnover
50% scaled down to 25% of total spending represents expenses with academic staff (including teaching staff costs)
10

Academic reputation
200 nominations received in the latest QS Global Academic Survey analysis
20

Employability and outcomes

Employers want graduates who are work-ready.

That means being able to jump right in and contribute to a multicultural team, with the skills and confidence to manage diverse projects and people effectively.

We've refined our business school Employability and outcomes category to place an even sharper focus the areas that matter most to business graduates and employers.

With new indicators such as Work experience and Faculty experience and qualifications added, we've made sure that practical skills and real-world experience are front and centre.

Employability   150

		Points
Employer reputation — 50 employer nominations received from the most recent QS Global Employer Survey analysis	**OR** **Campus employer presence** *(maximum 25 points)* 200 distinct companies, OR a number equivalent to 1% of the total FTE student body, attending employability events on campus in 12 months	40
Graduate employment rate — 90% scaled down to 50% of graduates employed or started a business within 24 months of graduation		40
Employability outcomes — 85% scaled down to 50% of employed graduates working in jobs requiring higher education OR in the field of study, according to university or official surveys within 24 months of graduation	**OR** **Alumni impact** — At least 50 alumni in the Alumni Impact list of the QS World University Rankings, scaled down to 0	40
Career service support — 4 points each with 3 bonus points for 3 or more *(maximum 20 points):* 1. 10 career advisors scaled down to two OR one career advisor per 1000 students 2. Career interview trainings or CV/cover letter writing support 3. At least one on-campus career fair in the last academic year organised by the academic institution 4. Career advising sessions available for students 5. Online career portal with access to job vacancies or career advisor appointment system		20
Work experience — 30% of total students enrolled with at least three years' work experience scaled down to 5%	**OR** **Internships** — 30% scaled down to 5% of total students enrolled in programmes where internship is part of the curriculum and organised/supported by the university	10

Entrepreneurship 100

Student or alumni-created startups 30 scaled down to 10 startups created in the last five years OR a number of startups equivalent to 10% of student body, scaled down to 6%	**30**
Incubator Presence of a business incubator and 10 points for each of the following: 1. At least 20 places for students scaled down to five 2. At least 40% female entrepreneurs, scaled down to 20% 3. 50% of companies still operating after five years (including those purchased by another bigger company), scaled down to 30% 4. 70% of companies receiving seed funding scaled down to 10% (includes funds both from university and from private entities/companies, but students' personal funding investment is not accepted)	**40**
Faculty members in operational companies 25% scaled down to 0% of FTE faculty members on boards of operational companies	**20**
Entrepreneurship clubs for students At least three student clubs with a focus on entrepreneurship and business, scaled down to 0	**10**

Sustainability

Sustainability is a business imperative. As the world grapples with pressing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) challenges, business schools have a critical role to play in developing the next generation of leaders equipped to create a sustainable future.

The QS Stars for Business Schools Sustainability indicators measure how well your institution is stepping up to tackle these challenges. This dimension includes Good governance, and Diversity, equity and inclusion and either Social impact or Environmental impact as mandatory categories.

Good governance | 100

Transparent financial reporting and solvency | 10
Annual financial report published on the website *(5 points)* AND financial compliance certified by an independent audit/control body based on the annual financial statement presented *(5 points)*

Ethics committee (not research related) | 15
4 points for each of the following *(maximum 15 points)*:
1. Ethics committee has a regular meeting schedule
2. There is an annual report of the ethics committee published on the university website
3. Information about submitting claims and complaints is public and accessible via a website link
4. Ethics committee has met once a month for the past 12 months

Representation in the university governing structures | 15
5 points for each of the below:
1. Students are represented in the university governing body
2. Proportion of female leadership staff exceeds 35%
3. The institution publishes a gender pay gap report

Policies and provisions for sustainability and integrity* | 15
2 points for each of the policies below that is publicly available, with 3 bonus points for six or more items, up to maximum 15 points:
1. Research independence / academic freedom policy
2. Anti-bribery or corruption policy
3. Sustainable procurement/ purchasing policy
4. Sustainable investment policy
5. Sustainability policy on donations and funding
6. Modern slavery policy
7. Student safety policy
8. Diversity & Inclusion policy

*Policies should be publicly available

Staff satisfaction | 15
75% staff satisfaction scaled down to 50%

Quality assurance | 10
At least one institutional accreditation by a national or regional quality assurance agency

Publication of governance meeting minutes | 10
At least one publication of governance meeting minutes in the last 12 months

Strategy and risk management | 10
5 points each for:
1. Strategic plan
2. Risk management plan or equivalent

Social impact OR Environmental impact 100

Social impact		
Funds for community investment and charity work 1% of turnover OR $2 million USD contribution to community projects or charities; this includes funds donated by the institution, as well as money donated and raised by students and faculty	**OR** **Volunteer hours for community investment and charity work** 50 scaled down to 0 volunteer hours (i.e. 1 scaled down to 0 hours per week over 12 months) for each faculty and student (total FTE) in a 12-month period	**20**
Human capital development Students from the university's local region (e.g. province, state) 50% scaled down to 30% of students hailing from the university's local region	**OR** **Graduates employed in the local region (e.g. province, state)** 50% scaled down to 30% of graduates employed in the university's local region	**20**
Scholarships and bursaries Scholarship funds 2% of turnover spent by institution on funds for scholarships, grants, and bursaries	**OR** **Students on 50% scholarship** 1% of students on scholarships covering at least 50% of fees	**20**
Low-income outreach Low-income students 15% scaled down to 5% of students identified as low-income	**OR** **Low-income funds** 1% of turnover or $2 million USD investment to recruit or support low-income students	**20**
Alternative entry pathways Policy provision for admitting non-traditional students		**20**

Operations

Environmental sustainability policies for investment, procurement and funding/donations
4 points each (maximum 10 points) for:
1. Sustainable investment policy
2. Sustainable procurement policy
3. Sustainable donations/funding policy

10

Environmental sustainability/ climate change employees
At least one FTE staff member dedicated to sustainability or climate change

10

Climate action plan
10 points each for climate action plans cover the following areas (maximum 30 points):
1. Operations
2. Education
3. Research
The institution should have a climate action plan or have created sustainability reporting. This report/plan should include 'SMART' objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant and Time-bound.

30

OR Carbon neutral certification (60 points)

Energy and resource consumption
1. Renewable Energy
   10 points for 50% of energy coming from renewable sources scaled down to 0%
2. Carbon Footprint
   10 points for 1,000 kilograms of CO2 emissions per person (students + faculty) per year with points scaled down to 0 for 4,000 kilograms

20

Environmental impact — 100

Education

Environmental sustainability networks
15 points for each international and 10 points for each national network that the business school is a member of *(up to a maximum of 15 points)* — **15**

Public education and outreach
10 public education or outreach activities scaled down to 0 — **10**

Environmental sustainability student organisations
At least one dedicated student organisation focusing on environmental sustainability issues — **5**

Diversity, equity and inclusion — 50

Scholarships and bursaries for underrepresented groups
5% of students scaled down to 1% receiving scholarships meant to increase participation in higher education for underrepresented groups, as defined by local legal provisions — **5**

Disability support
3 points for each of the following services or documentation:
1. Support services for mental health conditions
2. Built-in accessibility computer systems for visually impaired
3. Sign language interpreter or note-takers for hearing impaired
4. Map identifying wheelchair ramps, disabled toilets and parking access
5. Dedicated academic support for students with learning disabilities

— **15**

Student diversity
2 points for presence of each type of students, with a 2 points bonus if 4 out of 5 are represented *(maximum 10 points)* :
1. 10% of students are from legally recognised ethnic minority groups (applies to domestic students only)
2. 5% mature students
3. 30% first generation learners
4. 8% religious minorities
5. 5% other underrepresented groups combined (e.g: LGBTQIA+, neurodiversity) - the percentage applies to the total of these groups, but the student groups here should be different from those listed in items 1–4

— **10**

Student gender ratio
40:60 ratio scaled down to 30:70 for either gender — **5**

Faculty gender ratio
50% female academic staff, scaled down to 30% — **5**

Student organisations for underrepresented groups
1 point for each student organisation *(maximum 5 points)* — **5**

Strategy on equality, diversity and inclusion
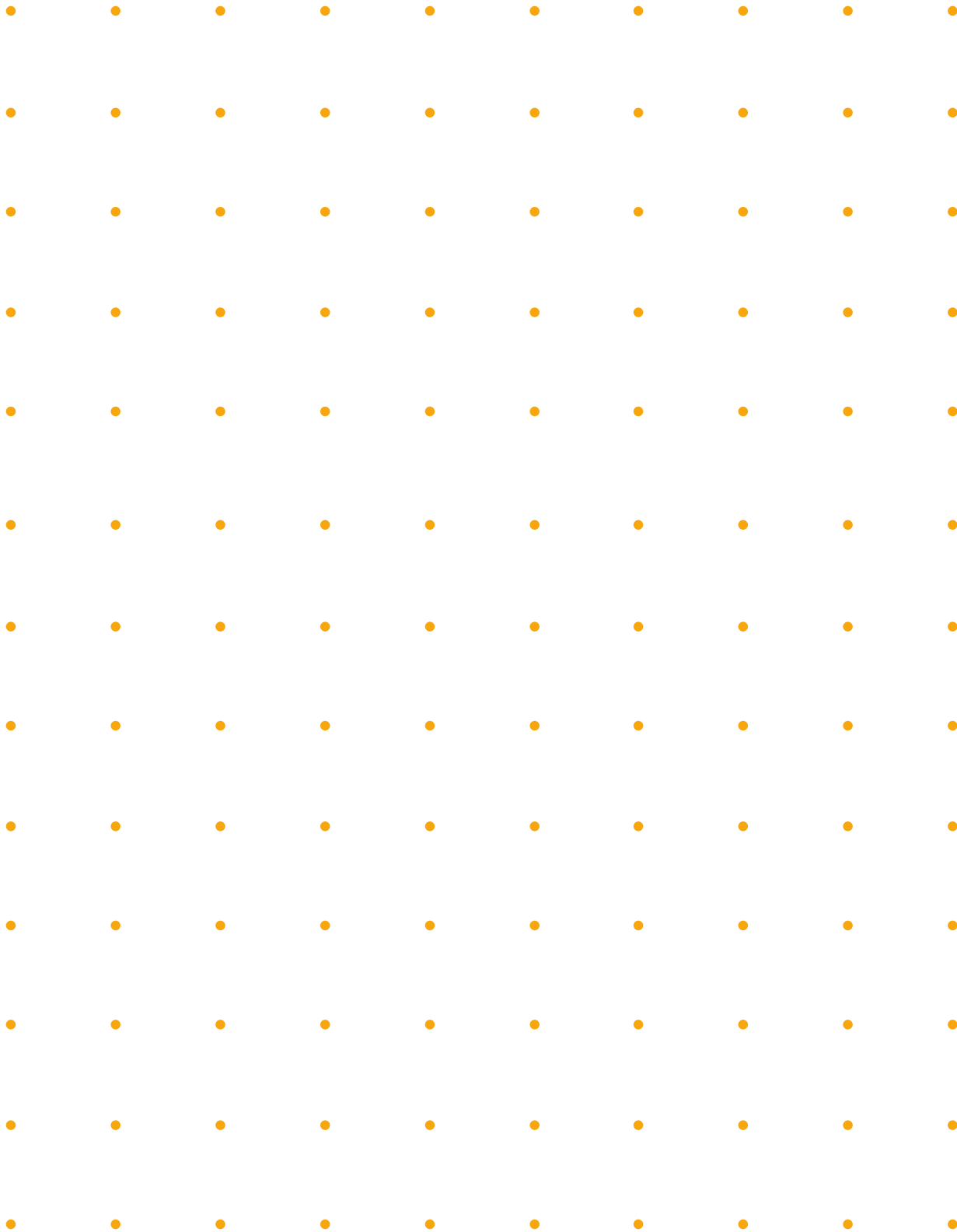Existence of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy with both defined goals and a time-defined action plan — **5**

Global engagement

Our goal here is to understand how your school is seen locally, regionally and globally. We'll look at factors including how many international students and staff you have, the diversity of nationalities represented in your student body, and the support and opportunities provided for international students.

Global engagement | 50

International faculty 25% scaled down to 0% international faculty members	**10**
International students 20% scaled down to 0% international students	**10**
International support centre Presence of an international support centre with at least one FTE staff and evidence it provides or organises the following *(2 points each)*: 1. Events for international students (freshman day, buddy programme) 2. Immigration/visa support 3. Language support classes/ Language competency courses 4. Maintains a dedicated webpage 5. Scholarships dedicated to international students only (yes/no)	**10**
International diversity 20 nationalities scaled down to five in student body	**10**
Networks 5 points for each international network and 3 points for each regional network *(maximum 10 points)*	**10**

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