



School of Liberal Arts

and the

UN Sustainable

Development Goals

Public Report

Executive Summary

During the 2023–2024 academic year, the School of Liberal Arts (SLA) at Maqsut Narikbayev University demonstrated a strong institutional commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) through a wide range of educational, research, cultural, and community engagement initiatives. Across the year, faculty, students, and external partners jointly implemented programs and events that advanced sustainability-oriented education, social responsibility, and innovation in alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda. The School's activities reflected the integration of global values—equity, inclusion, environmental consciousness, and ethical development—into academic and extracurricular life.

A total of over 150 events were organized during the reporting period, spanning seminars, workshops, guest lectures, professional trainings, and student-led initiatives. These activities were mapped to all 17 SDGs, with particularly strong engagement in areas such as Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17). The events showcased SLA's leadership in promoting lifelong learning, supporting professional and ethical growth, and fostering sustainable partnerships at the local, national, and international levels.

Introduction

The School of Liberal Arts (SLA) is one of the core academic units of Maqsut Narikbayev University, uniting departments in English Language, Translation Studies, Applied Linguistics, Tourism and Hospitality, Psychology, and General Education. During the 2023–2024 academic year, the School's mission was deeply aligned with the global Sustainable Development Agenda, emphasizing innovation in education, inclusivity, and social responsibility. Through diverse academic, cultural, and research activities, the School sought to connect the values of humanistic education with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, positioning the university as a platform for positive social change.

Throughout the year, SLA organized an extensive set of programs aimed at equipping students and faculty with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to contribute to sustainable development. Initiatives ranged from language and intercultural education, to psychological well-being and ethics, sustainable tourism, and community engagement. Collaboration with international partners — including HubSpot, Swiss Education Group, The Ritz-Carlton, The St. Regis, Hilton, and Kazakh Tourism — strengthened the School's ability to connect global expertise with local educational priorities.

By embedding sustainability principles into curriculum design, extracurricular activities, and research practices, SLA fostered a community that values academic excellence alongside ethical responsibility. The following sections detail how the School's events and initiatives contributed to each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals between September 2023 and August 2024.



SDG 1: No Poverty (4 events)

Throughout the 2023–2024 academic year, the School of Liberal Arts contributed to SDG 1 – No Poverty by promoting access to quality education, professional skills development, and social solidarity. Events such as the *MNU Business Incubator guest lecture series* (September–October 2023) provided students with knowledge of entrepreneurship and innovation as sustainable pathways to financial independence. Charity initiatives, including the *MNU Charity Fair* on 14 October 2023 and the *Fundraising Fair* on 10 November 2023, demonstrated the School's commitment to supporting vulnerable communities by mobilizing students toward collective action. Dual education programs signed with major hospitality partners like *Sheraton Astana Hotel* (4 September 2023) and *The Ritz-Carlton Astana* (26 December 2023) also created employment opportunities for students, thereby contributing to long-term poverty reduction through skill-based learning and equitable career access.



SDG 2: Zero Hunger (2 events)

While SLA's primary focus is education, several initiatives indirectly advanced SDG 2 – Zero Hunger by fostering social responsibility and promoting food security awareness. The *Charity Fair* in October 2023 included the sale of homemade goods and local products, with all proceeds directed to support children in need. Guest lectures within the *Tourism and Hospitality* program, such as "*Sustainability Management in Restaurants and Hotels*" (5 October 2023), emphasized sustainable food sourcing, waste reduction, and ethical consumption practices in hospitality management. These activities contributed to cultivating an understanding of food sustainability and responsible consumer behavior among future industry professionals.



SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being (28 events)

SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being was one of the strongest areas of engagement for the School. The *Psychology Department* conducted continuous initiatives promoting mental and emotional resilience, including *Mental Health Club* meetings (throughout Fall 2023) and the *Cinematherapy* session on 11 March 2024, which used film as a reflective tool for self-awareness and coping. Guest lectures such as “*Etiology and Neurobiology of Addictive Behavior*” (2 April 2024) and “*Panic Attacks: A Guide for Educators*” (5 October 2023) helped raise awareness about mental health in academic and professional settings. Collectively, these initiatives advanced the well-being of students and staff by integrating psychological health and preventive education into the broader learning environment.



SDG 4: Quality Education (118 events)

The School’s largest contribution was to SDG 4 – Quality Education, reflected in numerous academic workshops, guest lectures, and student-centered learning activities that enhanced access to inclusive and equitable education. The *Speaking Clubs* (September 2023–April 2024), *Writing Center workshops*, and *English Language Olympiad* on 26 March 2024 helped students develop communication and academic writing competencies. Seminars such as “*How to Write a Literature Review*” (3 April 2024) and “*Product-Based Research in Translation Studies*” (2 November 2023) built research literacy and critical inquiry. The *General English and IELTS courses* (launched 23 January 2024) expanded educational access to non-native speakers, while the *Provost & Dean’s List recognitions* celebrated academic excellence. Through these initiatives, SLA reaffirmed its leadership in promoting lifelong learning, academic integrity, and innovation in pedagogy.



SDG 5: Gender Equality (2 events)

SLA's activities supporting SDG 5 – Gender Equality focused on research, awareness, and empowerment. Notably, the publication of *“Experiences of Female Early-Career Professionals in Male-Dominated STEM Companies in Kazakhstan”* by Associate Professor Dinara Mukhamedzhanova (19 April 2024) contributed to national and international discussions on women's professional inclusion. Academic discussions on *Language and Gender* (5 November 2023) in sociolinguistics classes encouraged students to reflect on gender representation in communication. By integrating gender-sensitive research, inclusive classroom practices, and representation in academic leadership, SLA advanced gender equity and empowered women in academia.



SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation (2 events)

Although SLA's primary focus is not environmental engineering, the School indirectly contributed to SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation through awareness-building and sustainable tourism education. Courses and field trips under the *Tourism and Hospitality* program, such as the *Altai Heritage Excursion* (22–27 September 2023) and *Otyrar–Kone Taraz* visit (17 November 2023), included environmental briefings on resource conservation and responsible visitor behavior near natural water sources. These activities raised awareness of the need to protect water ecosystems and encouraged students to view environmental stewardship as part of professional ethics in tourism.



SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy (1 event)

SLA contributed to SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy through academic dialogue and digital literacy promotion that encouraged sustainable thinking. During the *MNU Business Incubator* lecture cycle, several guest speakers — such as *Zhaina Sultanova* and *Nikolai Dobrovolsky* — discussed innovation and technological sustainability in business. Additionally, the integration of *HubSpot partnership training* (25 January 2024) promoted digital tools that minimize paper use and resource waste. These initiatives fostered awareness of energy efficiency and technological sustainability as key elements of responsible organizational management.



SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (52 events)

The School made extensive contributions to SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth by fostering employability, entrepreneurship, and professional development. The *Job Fair* (9 April 2024) and *Career Week* (9–13 October 2023) connected students with potential employers and industry representatives. Dual education agreements with *The Ritz-Carlton* and *The St. Regis* (January and December 2023) provided structured internships in the hospitality sector. Guest lectures such as “*Finances in Hospitality*” (12 April 2024) and “*HR Management in Tourism and Hospitality*” (1 December 2023) offered insights into ethical employment practices and leadership. Together, these initiatives cultivated the skills, values, and opportunities necessary for sustainable economic participation.



SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (7 events)

Activities supporting SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure centered on technological innovation and collaboration between academia and industry. The *HubSpot partnership* (January 2024) strengthened digital marketing and customer relationship management education. The *MNU Business Incubator Demo Day* (27–28 October 2023) showcased student start-up projects with practical economic potential. Additionally, the “*Innovation Ecosystem Overview*” guest lecture (14 September 2023) and the use of *Bosch simultaneous translation equipment* (5 October 2024) underscored SLA’s commitment to modernizing academic infrastructure. These actions demonstrated how higher education can serve as a platform for technological progress and innovation.



SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (18 events)

The School advanced SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities through language programs, internationalization, and equal access to academic resources. Initiatives such as *Kazakh Language Speaking Clubs* (12 September 2023, 9 February 2024) and *Summer School for International Students* (27 February 2024) promoted cultural inclusion and linguistic equity. The *Open Talk with the Dean* (30 January 2024) provided a platform for students to share experiences and concerns, reinforcing institutional inclusivity. These events reflected the School's ongoing commitment to ensuring equal opportunities and representation in education regardless of background or ability.



SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (13 events)

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities was represented through SLA's emphasis on cultural heritage and sustainable tourism. The *Altai Historical Tour* (10 October 2023) and *Otyrar-Kone Taraz Excursion* (17 November 2023) promoted awareness of national heritage preservation and community-based tourism. The *"TRAVEL Hack"* project (27 March 2024), developed with *Kazakh Tourism*, encouraged innovation in sustainable travel and regional development. The *Qalam theatrical performance* (8 December 2023) celebrated Kazakh literature and ethical principles, fostering civic engagement through art. Collectively, these initiatives supported social cohesion, heritage preservation, and community participation.



SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production (2 events)

SLA contributed to SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production by promoting sustainability within hospitality education and everyday university life. The *guest lecture "Sustainability Management in Restaurants and Hotels"* (5 October 2023) taught environmentally responsible business practices, while *Charity Fairs* encouraged resource sharing and mindful consumption. Students learned to view economic activity through the lens of social and environmental responsibility, applying sustainability principles to future professional contexts.



SDG 13: Climate Action (2 events)

Activities under SDG 13 – Climate Action highlighted the intersection of education, tourism, and environmental awareness. The “*Sustainability Management*” lecture (5 October 2023) and *TRAVEL Hack project* (27 March 2024) included discussions on climate-smart strategies in tourism and hospitality. Field trips to *Altai* and *Окжетпес* introduced students to local biodiversity and the importance of ecosystem conservation. These initiatives encouraged climate-conscious thinking and reinforced the responsibility of future professionals to mitigate environmental impact.



SDG 14: Life Below Water

Although SLA’s scope is primarily terrestrial, awareness of SDG 14 – Life Below Water was indirectly addressed through sustainability education in tourism. Guest lectures emphasized the role of environmental ethics in protecting aquatic ecosystems, especially in destinations where tourism intersects with natural water bodies. By embedding sustainability across its programs, SLA fostered ecological awareness consistent with ocean and water protection values.



SDG 15: Life on Land (5 events)

The School’s field excursions and cultural projects strongly supported SDG 15 – Life on Land. Educational trips to *Altai* (10 October 2023) and *Kone Taraz* (17 November 2023) taught students the principles of biodiversity conservation and responsible interaction with natural landscapes. These experiences, integrated into the *General Education* curriculum, cultivated respect for ecosystems and underscored the role of education in protecting life on land.



SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (4 events)

SLA upheld the values of SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions through ethics education and civic engagement. The *Research Ethics Seminar* (20 October 2023) and *Legal English & TOLES Certification Program* (10 January 2024) promoted integrity, transparency, and respect for legal frameworks. The *photo essay contest “Өзгеше перспектива”* (11 October 2023) and *Open Talk with Administration* (16 November 2023) encouraged dialogue, inclusion, and participatory governance. Together, these activities nurtured ethical awareness and democratic values within the academic community.



SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals (18 events)

Finally, SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals represented the School’s integrative approach to collaboration and global engagement. Strategic alliances with *HubSpot*, *Swiss Education Group*, and global hospitality brands (*Ritz-Carlton*, *St. Regis*, *Hilton*, *Sheraton*) enabled academic mobility and professional exchange. Events such as the *Poetry Evening with the Austrian Ambassador* (27 February 2024) and guest lectures by *Dr. Rogelio Flores* (1 November 2023) and *Dr. Guillaume Tiberien* (12 September 2023) exemplified international dialogue. Collaborative research projects with partners from *Nazarbayev University* and *the University of Calgary* further reflected SLA’s leadership in building cross-sector and global partnerships that advance the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Conclusion

During the 2023–2024 academic year, the School of Liberal Arts at Maqsut Narikbayev University integrated the UN Sustainable Development Goals into every dimension of its academic and extracurricular work. By linking education, innovation, community engagement, and global collaboration, the School created a model for sustainability-oriented higher education. Through its contributions to all 17 SDGs — most prominently SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)—SLA strengthened its role as an agent of positive change, equipping students and faculty to lead in building a just, inclusive, and sustainable future

