



ABE Level 4 Certificate in
Strategic Sustainability

xxx/xxx/x

Qualification Specification v1

Version Control

Version and date	Change details	Section
V1-2025-10-03	Draft for accreditation	

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About ABE

Our Mission

We aim to build trust, resilience and reassurance in global business interactions leading to greater equity within and between nations. Our mission is to empower people to transform their lives and communities through gaining high-quality business, leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

Our Vision

We believe in an open, inclusive, global market economy where everyone benefits from responsible globalisation and trade. We believe that this will create a safer and more prosperous future for all.

ABE Qualifications

Our qualifications are created and designed to respond to the changing demands of business, in the UK and internationally, the pan sector and specialist subject areas. They enable you, through the learning, to develop expertise in particular disciplines with an underpinning focus on business management, leadership and enterprise. They integrate the latest in professional standards and provide opportunities for learners to develop professional knowledge and transferable skills for their current and future careers, they are:

Professional	Our qualifications are designed to give you the knowledge and transferable skills you need to excel in your career journey.
Affordable	ABE is a not-for-profit organisation; as such we endeavour to keep costs to a minimum. Our fast-track routes to degrees are often much less expensive than traditional routes.
Recognised	In addition to respected regulatory authorities, our qualifications are recognised by colleges, universities, employers and governments globally.
Supported	As an ABE learner and centre, you can access resources designed to support your studies and enhance your learning experience.
International	For more than 50 years, learners around the world have been benefitting from ABE qualifications.
Proven	Our learners speak for themselves – see their testimonials on our website. They work in a diverse range of industries and organisations.
Flexible	You can study full time or part time at a pace that suits you. Our qualifications provide expertise in pan sector and specific subject areas which are underpinned by Business Management, Leadership and Enterprise.

Recognition

These ABE qualifications are accredited as part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator for England. Internationally ABE has agreements or recognition by regulatory authorities in other countries where we operate, full details can be located on our website.

Progression

ABE qualifications have been designed with progression in mind and, after completing one of our qualifications, learners can progress onto a higher level of study or employment.

ABE offers a full framework of qualifications that have been designed for learners to be able to progress from Level 2 to Level 6.

These qualifications do not have any pre-requisites, and learners are free to start on the Level that best suits where they are in their learning journey and the scope of the academic requirement in each qualification. ABE recommends following the learning of one qualification at a time, but this is not a requirement.

Who is it for?

These qualifications are for learners that are 16 and over. It could be offered to those in employment, higher education or for those wanting to enhance their Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Entry guidance and criteria

There are no formal entry requirements to study ABE Level 4 Sustainability qualifications; however, there must be a reasonable expectation of success on the programme by assessing a learner's previous qualifications and/or related work experience.

It is a centre's responsibility to use professional and academic judgement when assisting learners in making the decision at which level they should enter ABE programmes.

In order to study successfully for an ABE qualification, you should have an appropriate level of English language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). For the ABE Level 4 qualifications, ABE recommends the following standards are met:

- IELTS - 6
- Cambridge ESOL - Cambridge English First- Cambridge English Advanced (points score 196 or above)
- Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic) - 56
- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) - B2

Centres can use other English language tests as a measure of a learner's English language skills; but the centre must be satisfied that the score is equivalent to those recommended above.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL), accreditation of prior learning (APL), and exemptions

If a learner holds other qualifications from either another professional body or university which is similar in content and level the learner is registering for, they may qualify for RPL, APL or an exemption from some ABE units.

If learners would like to find out if they qualify for any exemptions before registering for an ABE qualification, please send a letter or an email to admissions@abeuk.com to request a copy of the ABE Exemptions Policy and application form.

A registered learner can find further information on the [ABE Portal](#).

Qualification Structure

ABE Qualification Reference	Unit Title	Level	Credits	GLH
4CSS	Certificate in Strategic Sustainability	4	20	100

See individual qualification sections for any unit Rules of Combination (RoC). Learners must complete all the required units to achieve each qualification, and learners must achieve a minimum of a Pass for each unit.

ABE Unit Reference	Unit Title	Level	Credits	GLH	Assessment Method
4UESP	ESG Strategic Planning and Policy Writing	4	10	50	Assignment
4USO	Sustainable Operations	4	10	50	Assignment

The objectives of the ABE Level 4 Sustainability suite are to:-

- equip learners with knowledge and understanding of sustainability, in relation to workplace practices, and how this can be applied to support a sustainable working environment.
- provide opportunities for learners to enter or progress in employment or progress to higher education qualifications.
- provide opportunities for learners to develop the skills and techniques for successful career development.
- provide opportunities for learners to achieve a nationally recognised professional qualification.
- offer learners the chance of career progression in their chosen field.

Resources for the qualification

For each unit ABE will provide the following learning materials:

- Tutor Guides for centres. (This gives tutor-focused recommendations on how best to teach this syllabus.)
- Study Guides for learners.
- A list of Frequently Asked Questions.

Assessment

ABE's assessments are specifically designed to fit the purpose and objectives of the qualification. These qualifications are assessed by assignments, externally set by ABE. You can find out how each unit is assessed by checking the Unit Specification in this document, or the qualification tables above.

Assignment

ABE sets assignments in the form of an Assignment Brief. Sometimes a scenario and/or templates are provided as well. An organisation context is required. Learners can find the required word count for each assignment on the front of the Assignment Brief. For more information on assignments, please go to the questions and answers section of the ABE website.

Learners can submit assignments for these qualifications to ABE each month. For further details please visit the assessment section of the ABE website; <https://www.abeuk.com/assessments>.

All assignments submitted are marked by ABE. Results are usually released by ABE within eight weeks of submission.

For more information on results release, please consult ABE Website. Centres can find out more information about submitting assignments in the Centre Delivery Guide.

Marking and moderation

ABE has a broad and varied external academic team with a breadth of experience across the qualification areas and levels. Our external assessment team marks and is very familiar with ABE learners and the format of ABE exams and assignments. ABE has a very robust marking and moderation process: assessments are marked and standardised by our external team, after which they go through two phases of moderation. The results are presented to the assessment board for ratification, prior to publishing.

Additional examination requirements

There are no additional examination requirements for this qualification.

Reasonable adjustments and special considerations

ABE has taken steps in the development of this qualification to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to achievement. For learners with particular requirements reasonable adjustments may be made in order that they can have fair assessment and demonstrate attainment. There are also arrangements for special consideration for any learner suffering illness, injury or indisposition. Full details of the reasonable adjustments and special considerations policies are available from the ABE Portal.

Appeals and Enquiries About Results (EARs)

ABE has an appeals procedure that has been written in accordance with the regulatory arrangements in the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition. Full details of this procedure, including how to make an application, are available on the [ABE Portal](#).

You can find further information relating to ABE assessment on the Exam Regulations section of the [ABE website](#).

Grading

To achieve an ABE qualification, you must demonstrate sufficient depth of study and acquisition of knowledge and skills expected for the qualification. You will need to demonstrate your achievement through the assessments set by ABE. On completion of your ABE qualification, you will be awarded an overall qualification grade based on your performance across all your unit assessments.

The following qualification grades are available:		Units will be assessed using the following grading scale:	
Grade		Grade	Boundary
Distinction		Distinction	70 - 100
Merit		Merit	55 - 69
Pass		Pass	40 - 54
Fail		Fail	0 - 39

Calculation of the qualification grade

The overall qualification grade will be calculated based on learner performance at unit level. Each unit carries a maximum of 100 points. The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the learner's performance in all units. All units in multi-unit qualifications must be attempted and contribute to your final grade. A minimum of Pass is required for all units to complete the qualification.

ABE Level 4 Certificate in Strategic Sustainability (2 units)

Grade	Boundary points threshold
Distinction	140 – 200
Merit	110 – 139
Pass	80 – 109
Fail	0 – 79

Grade descriptors

The table below details the grade descriptors that will be used to make judgements on grade boundaries. These descriptors will also help you to understand what we expect to see in order to achieve each grade.

Level 4

0-39 Fail	40-54 Pass	55-69 Merit	70-100 Distinction
Knowledge and understanding of the subject matter including underpinning theoretical concepts			
Lack of, limited or incomplete knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and underpinning concepts and theories, including their relevance; lack of ability to apply concepts to a relevant context.	Adequate knowledge and understanding of most key areas of the subject matter and basic use of their underpinning concepts and theories; sometimes able to apply to a relevant context.	Sound knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and in the appropriate use of concepts and theories; understands how to apply them to a relevant context.	Extensive knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and in the appropriate use of related concepts and theories, including in-depth understanding and application to a relevant context.
Awareness of relevant ethical, social, legal, regulatory and other local issues of relevance			
Lack of awareness of relevant ethical, social, legal, regulatory and local issues.	Adequate awareness of relevant ethical, social, legal, regulatory and local issues.	Clear recognition of relevant ethical, social, legal, regulatory and local issues.	In-depth recognition of relevant ethical, social, legal, regulatory and local issues.
Professionalism, business acumen, innovation and professional practice			
Lack of or limited awareness of business acumen, innovation and consideration of relevant professional practice.	Adequate awareness of business acumen, innovation and consideration of relevant professional practice.	Sound awareness of business acumen, innovation and consideration of relevant professional practice.	Clear evidence of awareness of business acumen, innovation and consideration of relevant professional practice.
Investigating and solving problems using different methods including data gathering and use of literature			
Lack of or limited use of information gathering, investigation and problem solving methods; limited use of data and of relevant literature.	Adequate use of information gathering, investigation and problem solving methods; some use of data and of relevant literature.	Sound use of a range of information gathering, investigation and problem-solving methods; good use of data and relevant literature.	Clear, consistent and appropriate use of a wide range of information gathering, investigation and problem-solving methods; use of data and relevant literature throughout.

0-39 Fail	40-54 Pass	55-69 Merit	70-100 Distinction
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Critical evaluation, analysis and independent thinking

Lack of or limited evidence of evaluation, analysis and independent thinking; conclusions are unsupported or lacking; content is highly descriptive.	Adequate level of evaluation, analysis and independent thinking, although some content is descriptive; conclusions are generally made but often lack support.	Sound evidence of evaluation, analysis and independent thinking, points made are generally explored and supported; conclusions made where appropriate and are supported.	Clear and consistent evidence of evaluation, analysis and independent thinking, points made are appropriately detailed and supported; conclusions are consistently made, clear, relevant and justified.
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Professional communication

Poor or inappropriate standard of communication and editing, lacking in relevant examples; limited consideration of the audience; inappropriate choice of media and format; poorly referenced.	Adequate standard of communication and editing, generally using in relevant examples where appropriate; some consideration of the audience; some appreciation of the choice of media and format; referencing is generally adequate but inconsistent.	Good standard of communication and editing, using in relevant examples where appropriate; consistent consideration of the audience; sound appreciation of the choice of media and format; work is accurately referenced throughout.	Outstanding communication and editing, using highly relevant and topical examples where appropriate; clear and consistent consideration of the audience; thorough appreciation of the choice of media and format; high quality referencing throughout.
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Results and certification

The results are usually released within eight weeks of the assessment submission.

Certificates are usually dispatched around six weeks after results have been published unless your result is subject to an EAR or an Appeal. Transit times vary according to which country you are in.

ABE Level 4 Certificate in Strategic Sustainability

Ofqual reference

xxx/xxxx/x

ABE reference

4CSS

Credit value

20

Operational start date

06th October 2025

Guided Learning Hours (GLH)

50

Total Qualification Time (TQT)

100

Qualification summary

The Certificate in Strategic Sustainability is designed to equip learners with knowledge and understanding of various sustainability strategies and components and identify the influence of megarisks on their successful delivery. Learners will analyse the impact of commercial and political contexts on their creation and potential success of a sustainability strategy.

Learners will develop and demonstrate a working knowledge of the key strategic frameworks to support effective strategy writing within megatrend, operational and competitor perspectives and reflect on their relevance to different company contexts. They will also understand how to write an effective carbon management strategy, evaluating the different components needed for developing policy and action plans to implement the policy.

The qualification also focuses on the design, manufacture and transportation of products, and the impact that these can have on emissions and the environment. Learners will develop a clear understanding of how sustainable operations are constructed and delivered, and how using Lifecycle Analysis (LCA) supports sustainable operations.

This qualification supports both personal growth and career progression by developing learners' knowledge and understanding of core topics in workplace sustainability, important to both Organisations and the Economy.

Units of achievement

ABE Unit Reference	Unit Title	Level	Credits	GLH	Assessment Method
4UESP	ESG Strategic Planning and Policy Writing	4	10	50	Assignment
4USO	Sustainable Operations	4	10	50	Assignment

Learners must complete two of the required units to achieve this qualification and achieve a minimum of a Pass for each unit.

ABE Unit Number: 4UESP

Unit Title	ESG Strategic Planning and Policy Writing
Ofqual Unit Ref	x/xxx/xxxx
Unit Purpose & Aim(s)	Creating a clear strategy is crucial when delivering on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals and targets. Having an ESG strategy is an increasingly important part of creating competitive advantage. In this unit you will learn the several sustainability strategies and components and identify the influence of megarisks on their successful delivery. You will analyse the impact of commercial and political contexts on their creation and potential success. You will develop and demonstrate a working knowledge of the key strategic frameworks to support effective strategy writing within megatrend, operational and competitor perspectives and reflect on their relevance to different company contexts. Finally, you will understand the elements of writing a clear carbon management strategy across a company's value chain, evaluating its usefulness across all stakeholders.
Level	4
Credit Value	10
GLH	50
Grades	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
1. Understand the need for a clear ESG strategy and frameworks to create effective ESG strategies	1.1 Analyse the importance to organisations of having a clear ESG strategy	Why a clear ESG strategy is important
	1.2 Discuss the frameworks that can be used to create effective ESG strategies	- SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis, Balanced Scorecard, Value Chain analysis - Competitor / market analysis: Porter's Five Forces

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
2. Understand the megarisks and challenges of sustainability initiatives	2.1 Explain how megarisks can be used to inform business ESG risks	The influence of megarisks (energy & climate, demographics, intangibles, globalisation, infrastructure & security, innovation & technology, risks: political, terrorism, ecological, health, litigation) and their translation into business ESG risks
	2.2 Explore the challenges of managing megarisks and the trends in how they can influence ESG strategy	Challenges and trends

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
3. Understand how to write carbon management strategies, policies and action plans	3.1 Explain the approach to an effective carbon management strategy	- IEMA GHG Management Hierarchy - Offsetting versus 'Insetting' - Carbon scoping - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol
	3.2 Evaluate the different components needed for an effective carbon management (CM) policy, and inform action planning	- How to design an effective CM policy (checklist, ERI Four Pillars) across travel, waste, digital, estates & facilities and procurement components - How to create action plans to implement the policy

Assessment	
1.	Assignment
2.	Assignment
3.	Assignment

Additional Information	
Relationship to National Occupational Standards	CFABD3 Plan the direction of your business CFALG5 Assess the environmental impact of your business INSBA005 Inform and support organisational decision-making INSBE030 Keep up to date with relevant legislation for your business
Links (s) to IoL's Dimensions / modules of My Leadership	N/A
Ofqual subject/sector classification	15.3 - Business management

ABE Unit Number: 4USO

Unit Title	Sustainable Operations
Ofqual Unit Ref	x/xxx/xxxx
Unit Purpose & Aim(s)	The design, manufacture and transportation of products has a significant impact on emissions and the environment. It is therefore a central component in delivering authentic sustainable actions and is fundamental to their delivery across all other functions. This unit will provide you with a clear understanding of how sustainable operations are constructed and delivered. You will explain the importance of this approach, assessing the current challenges. Finally, you will explain the benefits of taking a Lifecycle Analysis approach (LCA), and how it supports sustainable operations.
Level	4
Credit Value	10
GLH	50
Grades	Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
1. Understand the importance of creating sustainable operations	1.1 Explain what is meant by sustainable operations and its importance	- What is meant by sustainable operations - The importance of this approach (removing designed in obsolescence, single use, compliance, operational efficiencies and cost reduction, supply chain and societal expectations)
	1.2 Assess the challenges of creating sustainable operations	Challenges (gathering information, misalignment between companies and their suppliers, large number of standards, time, innovation)

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
2. Understand the key concepts of sustainable operations	2.1 Explain the key concepts of sustainable operations	Key concepts include: - Eco-design 'Green' Chemistry - Supply Chain optimisation and AI - Transportation (incl. maritime and air travel) - Waste management (incl. byproduct synergies)
	2.2 Analyse the impact of environmentally harmful materials and the move to less harmful alternatives on sustainable operations	- The role of plastics - The impact of mining for essential minerals (cadmium, cobalt, nickel, lithium) - The impact of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on biodiversity

Learning Outcomes The learner will:	Assessment Criteria The learner can:	Indicative Content
3. Understand how using Lifecycle Analysis (LCA) supports sustainable operations	3.1 Explain the purpose of a Lifecycle Analysis (LCA) and its stages	- Definition and purpose of a Lifecycle Approach (LCA) - Different Life Cycle Models (Cradle-to-grave, Cradle-to-gate, Cradle-to-cradle, Gate to Gate) - The different stages in a Product Life Cycle (Cradle to Grave) (Raw Material Extraction, Manufacturing & Processing, Transportation, Usage & Retail, Waste Disposal) - The 4 phases of an LCA (Definition of Goal and Scope, Inventory Analysis, Impact Assessment, Interpretation)
	3.2 Assess the impacts at each stage of an LCA and how to identify opportunities for improvement	LCA template elements (e.g. RIBA)

Assessment

1.	Assignment
2.	Assignment
3.	Assignment

Additional Information

Relationship to National Occupational Standards	COGSBP04 Lead the Development of Sustainable Business Practice COGSBP05 Lead Innovation in Support of Sustainable Business Practice COGSBP06 Specify and Co-Ordinate Life Cycle Assessments in Support of Sustainable Business Practice COGSBP10 Manage Innovation in Support of Sustainable Business Practice COGSBP12 Complete Life Cycle Assessments in Support of Sustainable Business Practice COGSBP16 Develop an Awareness of Sustainable Business Practice LANWFS15 Contribute to sustainable practice in workplace and facilities services
Links (s) to IoL's Dimensions / modules of My Leadership	N/A
Ofqual subject/sector classification	15.3 - Business management

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