

Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Value Chains

Indicative curriculum themes

System pressures and trends. This topic introduces the broad debate around sustainability, looking at global sustainability challenges and developing a system-wide understanding that recognises the interdependency of natural, social, political, cultural, economic and technological dimensions. The purpose and objectives of business in addressing these challenges is considered, exploring possible leadership aims and responses.

Terms and definitions. This topic ensures that students understand the definitions and various interpretations of the key concepts and terminology of relevance to sustainability in value chains, including 'sustainability', 'value chain', 'value', 'resilience' and 'integration'. These concepts provide the foundation for the theories and practical cases presented throughout the programme.

Business case for sustainable values. To fully appreciate the business case, the risks and opportunities associated with value chains are explored via case studies, in particular. The financial and other implications of resource disruption and depletion is explored and – where possible – quantified. The potential for achieving wider socio-economic benefits via value chain integration is showcased.

Evolution of value chain pressures and responses. Sustainability in value chains is a field that has been shaped by: seminal theories (e.g. by Porter, M.E., 1985); iconic case studies (e.g. accusations of child labour in Nike's supply chain); milestone voluntary initiatives (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council certification); and influential regulatory and international standards (e.g. ILO conventions).

Value chain development – tools and techniques. This topic introduces the various existing tools and techniques, which aim to improve sustainability in value chains, such as: measurement and reporting, chain of custody and certification schemes, management systems, and supplier indexes. Case studies are used to reveal how organisations have used these to build resilience and to unlock opportunities in their value chains.

From lifecycle analysis to systems thinking. A variety of approaches to 'greening' value chains have developed over the last decades. We reflect on these approaches and consider the growing recognition for the need for a holistic view and interconnectivity / integration. Students are asked to reflect on their own sectors / organisations / products in order to develop their ability to adopt systems thinking and respond to the challenges faced.

Sustainable value creation. This topic introduces the second workshop where the specific responses required by their organisations / sectors to develop and create sustainable value chains are considered. The notion of 'shared value' is explored amongst others.

Organisational change for value chain change. The programme promotes the need for business functions from across an organisation to work together to develop appropriate responses to value chain challenges and opportunities. In order to stimulate collaboration within and beyond an organisation, cultural and structural change is often required. Under this topic we look at the systems and processes that need to change and how this can be achieved.

Resilient business models. To stimulate resilient and sustainable value chains, organisations may need to alter or dramatically change their business models. Via case study analysis and hearing from both academics and practitioners, this topic covers various types of established and emergent business models.

Internal engagement and influence. Successful sustainability initiatives require internal engagement. Approaches to influencing the awareness, capacity and skills of colleagues and superiors are unpacked.

Building trusting business relationships – external engagement, communication & partnerships. This topic looks at how to influence and build relationships based on shared values and understanding with external stakeholders in an organisation's value chain. The importance of partnerships and collaboration is spotlighted.

Sustainable consumption & influencing the consumer. Traditional thinking in this area tends to fail to consider the role of the consumer in the value chain. This final topic concentrates on how organisations can promote sustainable consumption and influence their consumer base. Students are encouraged to reflect on the collective power of the consumer and how organisations have responded in the face of, and to influence, consumer demand. A full lifecycle ('farm to fork', 'mine to mobile', etc.) perspective is promoted.