

Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business

Module Themes

Workshop 1: Sustainability, business and catalysing change in the wider system

In the first workshop, we explore the changing external operating context for business, and what it means to build the business case for action – for both the organisation’s benefit and to catalyse change in the wider system.

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.

Deeper dives into sustainability challenges and opportunities. This module provides the opportunity to take a closer look at the risks and opportunities associated with climate change, poverty and inequality, and eco-systems and bio-diversity, exploring why they matter from a business, as well as planetary and societal perspective.

Sustainability concepts. This topic explores some of the seminal concepts and frameworks for sustainability and sustainable development, and examines their relative merits and strengths. A systems approach is emphasised, which explores the complexity and interconnectivity inherent within dynamic adaptive systems, and the importance of taking a holistic and integrated approach.

Rewiring the economy. We explore the current economic paradigm and some of the key levers for change in shifting to an economy which ‘works’ – supporting universal human development and flourishing within environmental limits. This includes sub-topics around:

- Finance and investment
- Design and technology
- Industrial ecology

Business and society. This topic unpacks the role of business in wider society, from issues around business and human rights to the relationship between business and (international) development.

Business leadership. In the face of global challenges and opportunities, this module unpacks the rationale for business taking a pro-active role in responding to a rapidly changing external context. The evolving relationship between business and sustainability over the last few decades is explored, culminating in a look at the frontiers for business and sustainability. We look at some of the tools and approaches for prioritising business action, and then look at what it means to build the business case for strategic leadership.

Workshop 2: Effective change agency: Embedding sustainability throughout an organisation

In the second workshop, we look at all aspects of a business – from its strategy and business model to engaging with those on the ‘shop floor’ – and explore what it means to be an effective agent for change.

Rethinking business. In this module, we ‘rethink’ a number of central tenets of the way in which business works:

- Rethinking the value proposition and therefore a company’s overall business model, using some of the latest work emerging from the Institute for Manufacturing
- Rethinking consumption and whether it is possible to ‘sell’ sustainable lifestyles, drawing on behavioural insights across the social sciences
- Rethinking value chains and what it means to encourage an integrated approach amongst different actors to bring about positive change

Strategic planning for action. In this module, we look at a number of different theories, tools and approaches for taking strategic action on sustainability, including hearing from those who have built the internal case for sustainability, different approaches to strategy and planning, stakeholder mapping and engagement, and theoretical and practical insights into organisational change. This module also includes a deeper dive into different strategies for embedding sustainability in everyday decision-making, e.g. through valuing externalities or reporting.

Communication and influencing. In this module, we explore a number of different insights into communication and influence, including behavioural insights into motivational values, practical insights into engaging employees across an organisation, working effectively with others (e.g. partners) through engaging with multiple perspectives, and the role of storytelling.

Leadership for Sustainability. Although a cross-cutting theme running through all the sessions, this workshop also includes a specific opportunity to reflect on values, ethics and leadership, a chance to develop your own practice framework for leadership, and the opportunity to hear candid stories from those who have been seeking to lead for sustainability within their own organisations.