

Sustainable International Business

Take a deep dive into doing international business sustainably

In this course students will study in a multidisciplinary environment in which they will learn to frame (international) business problems within the 17 sustainable development goals of the UN. The sustainable development goals are interconnected; often the key to success to one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another. The work of Jeffrey Sachs provides the theoretical framework. Students therefore start the course with a deep dive in the sustainable development goals.

Sustainable development is broader than protecting the planet alone. It asks how international business can create long-term value while improving quality of life, not just driving revenue growth. It also emphasizes fairness and inclusion in the present (i.e., making products and services accessible to all) and responsibility toward future generations, who deserve an environment at least as healthy as the one we enjoy today. In this view, development is only legitimate when it stays within the carrying capacity of natural systems, the very context in which international business operates.

Students are taken on a learning journey in which they discover that environmental, social and governmental challenges are interrelated, and an integrated approach is required that undertakes action at various levels simultaneously. Subjects are:

1. History and politics of the sustainable development goals.
2. Cross-cultural theories, many cross-cultural experiences, their implications in business.
3. Sustainable businesses models.
4. Sustainability marketing and communication.
5. Organizational strategy related to sustainability.
6. Nation branding for individual countries and groups of countries (i.e., the EU).

This course will provide students with a unique learning experience in which they will both become aware of the complexity of building a better and more sustainable business world while at the same time providing them with knowledge regarding this very important challenge for the professionals of the 21st century.

Classes and assignments

The learning environment consists of lectures, self-study, seminars, workshops, debates, group assignments and excursions. There will be many practical tests and assignments in which Dutch and foreign students are expected to show both that they have

gained sufficient theoretical knowledge and that they are able to apply the newly acquired knowledge. Most importantly, students learn to express themselves in English, because that's the working language of this minor.

Term 1

Cultural Encounters

Over a six-week period, students will take part in structured cross-cultural experiences designed to explore how culture operates in practice and how cross-cultural theories can help interpret what they observe. Throughout the program, students will work both collaboratively and individually to analyze cultural differences, identify potential risks and opportunities for cooperation, and demonstrate professional teamwork and intercultural competence. They will apply relevant academic sources and models (such as Hofstede, Trompenaars, Schein, and Meyer) to support their analyses and reflections. The overall aim is to help students develop into more effective cross-cultural professionals. This module carries 5 EC.

Sustainable Business Models

This part of the program aims to help students to find out what the future of sustainable business models looks like. Through a combination of business visits, research on new sustainable business developments and extensive discussions, students discover what a regenerative business model and the system of which is a part might look. Students will apply their newly acquired knowledge in a business plan for an existing business. This assignment is also 5EC.

Sustainable Development

This individual assignment consists of an essay in which the student needs to critically reflect on the theoretical work of Sachs (2015) related to the sustainable development goals. Student needs to show they master such topics as stewardship, shalom, resilient cities, poverty, development goals, planet, climate, and biodiversity. This assignment is 5EC.

Term 2

Nation Branding

In this group assignment students undertake a project in the field of nation branding. First, students do research on the application of the SDGs in several preselected countries. Secondly, they jump into the topic of nation branding and find out how the same preselected countries give shape to their nation brand. We also take a closer look at the nation brand of the European Union, a very particular one as research shows. Finally, students combine the learnings of the two previous assignments and draft advice for the

government of one of the preselected nations, so that this government can improve its nation brand from the perspective of the SDGs.

We make extensive use of Simon Anholt's work on nation branding in this course, and we take recent scientific research for up-to-date examples. The goal of this assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to gain business experience in on sustainable nation branding. This assignment is 7.5EC.

Sustainability Marketing and Communication

In this assignment groups of students need to identify a particular sustainability issue in a business or an industry, and they need to critically assess it from the perspective of sustainable international business concepts, theories and frameworks (coming from the works of amongst others Wit (2020) and Beltz & Peattie (2012)). They will have to write a research report, that also includes advice to the organization or industry, and they need to do a presentation. The goal of this assignment is to make students aware of the (un)sustainable impact that businesses have and how this can be improved. This assignment is 7.5EC.

Textbooks

- Anholt, S. (2016). *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Belz, F., & Peattie, K. (2012). *Sustainability Marketing: A Global Perspective* (2nd ed.). Wiley.
- Meyer, E. (2016). *The culture map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done Across Cultures*. Public Affairs.
- Sachs, J. D. (2015). *The Age of Sustainable Development*. New York City, United States of America: Columbia University Press.
- Wit, D. B. (2020). *Strategy: An International Perspective* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning EMEA.
- Articles related to weekly topics.

Requirements

All students are welcome to participate in this minor. However, we expect students to have basic knowledge about international business.

Characteristics of this minor

- Data: September – January
- Location: Christelijke Hogeschool Ede

- Lecturers: Harm Hilvers (Course Leader), Hylkje Algra, Cees van den Berg, Jody de Blois, Erik Geluk, Tineke de Groot, Hans Linker, Hein Oldeman, Marleen de Sterke, Jelle Terpstra, Harrie van Toor
- Level: Hbo-minor
- Language: English
- EC: 30