

International Strategic Communication and Sustainable Development (Term 1)

In this course, students will study international communication in a multidisciplinary setting, learning how to frame (international) business challenges through the lens of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Because the SDGs are interconnected, communication choices that support progress on one goal often affect others, making systems thinking and cultural awareness essential. Building on the work of Jeffrey Sachs as a theoretical foundation, students begin with a focused introduction to the SDGs and explore how sustainability debates are shaped, contested, and communicated across countries, sectors, and stakeholder groups.

Students follow a learning journey in which they discover that environmental, social, and governance (ESG) challenges are deeply interrelated, and that effective international communication requires an integrated approach across levels: interpersonal, organizational, societal, and global. Emphasis is placed on cross-cultural communication, stakeholder analysis, ethical considerations, and the strategic role of communication in guiding sustainable change.

Key themes include:

1. The history, politics, and global discourse surrounding the SDGs.
2. Cross-cultural communication theories and experiential learning, and their implications for international collaboration.
3. Communicating sustainable business models and value propositions to diverse audiences.

This course offers a distinctive learning experience: students will develop a realistic understanding of the complexity of sustainability challenges while gaining practical knowledge and skills in international communication, skills that are essential for professionals operating in the 21st-century global context.

Cultural Encounters (5 EC)

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.

International Strategic Communication (5 EC)

International Strategic Communication focuses on building and maintaining sustainable relationships with internal and external stakeholders; for governments, companies, and other organizations, such communication is essential to earn and sustain societal trust—especially in an international context. In this program, students explore how organizations communicate sustainability and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), learning to frame business challenges within at least three SDGs and to recognize how these goals are interconnected.

Assessment is integrated and performance-based: students select an international corporation (e.g., LEGO, IKEA, Scania, or another multinational) and analyze how at least three SDGs are expressed across a minimum of 30 different communication outputs, using relevant corporate/strategic communication theory; they examine how these communications support the organization's sustainability objectives and strategy, substantiate and position key findings within Van Ruler's framework, and translate the analysis into a visually compelling TED Talk-style presentation that clearly shows relationships between elements, is grounded in academic sources, and is coherently linked to a chosen sustainability focus.

Sustainable Development (5 EC)

In this 5 EC course, students work in a multidisciplinary setting to learn how to frame (international) societal and business challenges within the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognising their interdependence and the need for integrated solutions across domains. The course is grounded in Jeffrey Sachs' (2015) work on the SDGs, which students critically engage with and compare to perspectives from Wolterstorff and Goudzwaard, with key themes including stewardship (from a Christian worldview), justice and shalom, poverty and human development, resilient cities and urbanisation, biodiversity and responsible use of the earth, and the economic and political dimensions of

climate change. Assessment consists of an individual essay in which students critically reflect on Sachs' framework and demonstrate mastery of core concepts such as stewardship, shalom, resilient cities, poverty, development goals, planet, climate, and biodiversity.

Textbooks

- Cornelissen, Joep (2020). *Corporate Communication. A guide to theory and practice* (6th revised ed.). Sage.
- 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.
- Wide range of 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 – November
- Location: Christelijke Hogeschool Ede
- Lecturers: Harm Hilvers (Course Leader), Hylkje Algra, 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: 15