

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, because they form the foundation on which the other elements of the course stand.

Sustainable development is a much broader concept than protection of the Earth. It implies a concern for future generations and for the long-term health and integrity of the dimensions of our living environment. It embraces concern for the quality of life (not just revenue growth), for equity between people in the present (including making sure products and services are accessible to all), for inter-generation equity (people in the future deserve an environment which is at least as good as the one we currently enjoy, if not better) and for the social and ethical dimensions of human welfare. It also implies that further development should only take place as long as it is within the carrying capacity of natural systems, because this environment is where (international) business takes place.

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. Nation branding for individual countries and groups of countries (i.e., the EU).
4. Sustainability marketing.
5. Organizational strategy related to sustainability.
6. Sustainable and regenerative businesses models.
7. A political economical perspective on capitalism, socialism and feudalism.

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.

The subjects of this course are the following:

Term 1:

1. Cultural Encounters • Over a period of six weeks, students will participate in cross-cultural experiences. The goal of these organized experiences is to discover how culture works in practice and how different cross-cultural theories can help in getting a better understanding. The assignments in this program are diverse. The first is a group assignment, in which students describe cultural differences and to name risks for cooperation in their project group. The second assignment consists both of a group and of an individual element, in which students show their cooperative skills and their knowledge of cross-cultural models. The third assignment consists of a reflection paper on the qualities and strengths of their project group in general and their own role in that team in particular. Of course, students are supposed to use relevant sources and readings in all their work, such as Hofstede, Trompenaars, Schein and Meyer. The goal of this is to help students become better cross-cultural professionals. This assignment is 5EC.
2. Sustainability Marketing • In this assignment a group of two 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 an 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 5EC.
3. 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:

4. 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 a number of 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 an 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.

5. Sustainable and Regenerative Business Models • This part of the program builds on the Sustainability Marketing course 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 models might look. Students will apply their newly acquired knowledge in a business plan for an existing business to re-do it in a more sustainable and regenerative way. 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.
- 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), Jeroen van der Zeeuw, Hans Linker, Hein Oldeman, Jelle Terpstra, Jan Lok, Jan Willem van Nus, Tineke de Groot, Erik Geluk, Auke Drost, Jody de Blois

Level: Hbo-minor

Language: English

EC: 30