Social Responsibility and non-Financial Reporting

Professor: Fàtima Vidal Ayuso and Ramon Bastida Vialcanet
Office hours: by appointment
Course Type: Compulsory
Credits: 3 ECTS
Term: First

1. COURSE PRESENTATION

Course Description

The " Social Responsibility and non-Financial Reporting" course is a fundamental component of modern business education. As our world confronts the pressing challenges of climate change, social inequality, and the increasing demand for ethical business conduct, the role of companies extends beyond mere profit generation. This course delves into the evolving expectations for businesses to address these global issues and to operate responsibly both socially and environmentally.

The first part of the course will be dedicated to understanding best practices in environmental and social responsibilities. Students will begin by exploring an introduction to the concepts of sustainability and social responsibilities, examining their importance in the contemporary business landscape. The course will also guide students through the transition from traditional business models to sustainable business models, emphasizing the importance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors, ethical considerations, social impact, and risk management.

Additionally, the course include compliance with international standards such as ISO 26000, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) reports, and B Corp certification. Students will learn how these frameworks help companies measure, report, and improve their sustainability and social responsibility efforts. The course will also address effective methods for reporting and communicating these actions to stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability.

The second part of the course will provide an in-depth exploration of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). This part will focus on the composition,

application, and practical implications of these standards. The ESRS includes a comprehensive set of guidelines designed to standardise sustainability reporting across Europe. Students will study the specific elements that constitute the ESRS, including key performance indicators, reporting principles, and sector-specific standards. This understanding will be crucial in grasping how these standards aim to ensure consistency, comparability, and reliability in corporate sustainability reporting.

By the end of the course, students will be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the critical importance of sustainability and social responsibility in today's business world. They will also be prepared to implement sustainable business strategies that can lead to long-term competitive advantages and positive societal impact.

The course in the study plan

This **compulsory** course belongs to the subject of **Social Dimension of Sustainability** of the study plan. It takes place in the **first quarter**.

Leaning Objectives

The main objectives of the course are:

- To provide a solid understanding of the concept and scope sustainability and social responsibilities
- To investigate how businesses can develop and implement sustainable business models.
- To expose students to best practices in sustainability and social responsibilities and how companies adhere to international standards.
- To gain understanding of the importance of sustainability reporting in business, and the most-used frameworks and standards to disclose ESG information.
- To dive in-depth in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)

Related SDG

The subject is focused on sustainability and social responsibilities for what it is linked with the 17 SDGs. During sessions different SDGs will be addressed, depending on the topic to be treated and the business examples to be worked on in class.

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2. COURSE LEARNING PLAN

Methodology

The course comprises eight 3-hour sessions, which combine theory lecturing with general debates and applied discussions on business cases and exercises. Depending on the type of business cases or activities, they will be required individually or in groups, determined by the magnitude of them.

The course also involves a substantial amount of autonomous work outside the classroom combining reading and activities that will help participants to gain a deeper understanding of the material covered in class.

Hours devoted by the student (according to ECTS): **75 hours.**

Evaluation criteria

Three elements concur in the final mark:

- **Final exam (30%)**: the final exam is used to assess the individual level of knowledge and understanding of each student. It will include questions covering topics from all the sessions. This item counts for 30% of the final mark. To pass the exam the minimum grade is 5.

- **Final project and presentation (30%)**: Students will apply their knowledge to a practical study case. They are expected to use the topics they learnt during the sessions. Students will prepare a final project and present it in front of the class.

- **Activities and business cases (30%):** During the sessions, activities and business cases will be carried out. These will be handed in and evaluated individually.

- **Class attendance and active participation (10%)**: Attendance in every session is expected and recorded by means of an attendance sheet. It is your responsibility to comply with this measure. Class attendance is compulsory and will be considered in your final grades; punctuality is a must. Note that unexcused absences reduce your score on the "attendance and participation" element of your final grade. In fact, two or more unexcused absences will result in an automatic score of zero and, likely, a failure mark for the course.

Other evaluation criteria to take into consideration:

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Retake

Students who fail the course during regular evaluation will be allowed one re-take of the examination/evaluation. Students that pass any *Retake exam* should get a 5 by default as a final grade for the course. If the course is again failed after the retake, students will have to register again for the course the following year.

No-show

In case of a justified no-show to an exam, the student must inform the corresponding faculty member and the director(s) of the program so that they study the possibility of rescheduling the exam (one possibility being during the "Retake" period). In the meantime, the student will get an "incomplete", which will be replaced by the actual grade after the final exam is taken. The "incomplete" will not be reflected on the student's Academic Transcript.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is to use another's work and to present it as one's own without acknowledging the sources in the correct way. All essays, reports or projects handed in by a student must be original work completed by the student. By enrolling at any UPF-BSM Master of Science and signing the "Honor Code", students acknowledge that they understand the schools' policy on plagiarism and certify that all course assignments will be their own work, except where indicate by correct referencing. Failing to do so may result in automatic expulsion of the program.

Calendar and Contents

Session	Topic	Deliverables
1st	Introduction. Main concepts of sustainability and social responsibilities	TBC
2nd	Traditional vs sustainable business models. The implementation of sustainable models.	
3rd	Non-compulsory reporting methods. Methods that companies can use to	Assignment. Identification of the different reports and how to interpret them. Get used to see different non-compulsory reporting methods.

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	communicate and transfer their actions.	
4th	Evolution of the corporate sustainability disclosure. From voluntary to compulsory reporting. An international approach.	TBC
5th	The fundamentals of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). Surpassing the limits of the company.	
6th	Disclosure requirements regarding environmental, social and governance topics. General overview.	
7th	Disclosure requirements regarding environmental, social and governance topics. Topic-oriented information.	
8th	Beyond the ESRS: Assurance, interoperability, connectivity, and other hot topics in the sustainability reporting field.	
9th	Final exam	

* The activities are a proposal. They may be modified during the course.

3. PROFESSOR

Fàtima Vidal Ayuso is a professor of the Finance and Control department at UPF Barcelona School of Management. Prior to joining UPF-BSM, she worked in auditing and was a financial consultant for private companies.

Prof. Fàtima has a bachelor's degree in business administration and management from the Universitat de Lleida and a master's degree in financial and accounting management from UPF-BSM. She is currently a PhD candidate in Economy and Business at Universitat Internacional of Catalunya. Her lines of research are focused on sustainability, circular economy, and specifically on consumer understanding in the circular economy loop.

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Ramon Bastida-Vialcanet is an Associate Professor at the Finance and Control department at UPF Barcelona School of Management. He is the director of the Full Time MBA and the Chair in Affordable and Sustainable Housing at the School.

Prof. Ramon holds a PhD in Business and Administration from Universitat Rovira i Virgili (with an International PhD Mention). He has been visiting professor at HEC Liège Management School, Toulouse Business School, and Université de Perpignan, among others. His main research interests are linked to governance and control, corporate sustainability information, and social entrepreneurship. His academic research has been published in international business journals. He has also developed applied research and knowledge transfer activities such as studies and reports, books and book chapters, and articles published in practitioner journals and media.

More info:

Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/in/ramon-bastida/

Website: https://ramonbastida.com/

4. READING MATERIALS/ BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCES

No textbook is required for this course. All the required material will be provided. Any reading, notes, handouts, dataset, or additional course material will be available through the course website.

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