FOCUS UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Madrid, Spain

BUSINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Program Developer: Luis Fernando (Lou) Villalba, PhD., EdD.

Course Code:	MBA-BS 608 (Provisional)
Credits:	3 North American Graduate Credits / Proposed 6 ECTS
Academic Level:	Graduate (Master's / MBA)
Duration:	14 Weeks
Student Workload:	Approximately 150 Hours (42 Guided + 108 Independent)
Delivery Mode:	Madrid-Based, Online, or Blended
Program/Stage:	Master of Business Administration — Concentration: Business and Sustainability / Concentration Course 8
Professor:	____________________
Office Hours:	[To be determined]
Contact:	[To be determined]

1. Course Description

This advanced MBA concentration course examines how businesses integrate sustainability, responsibility, resilience, and regenerative ambition into enterprise purpose, competitive strategy, governance, and value creation. Students critically compare shareholder, stakeholder, shared-value, systems, paradox, strong-sustainability, and regenerative perspectives rather than treating sustainability as a peripheral compliance or communications activity.

Students analyze impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, stakeholders, and rights-holders across business functions and value chains. They connect sustainability to finance, accounting, marketing, operations, supply networks, human resources, innovation, digital capability, entrepreneurship, partnerships, and organizational transformation while examining tensions, trade-offs, rebound, burden shifting, greenwashing, and unequal distributions of benefits and harms.

The course culminates in an Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy that converts evidence and strategic priorities into an implementation-ready portfolio, governance model, roadmap, resource plan, measures, and learning system. It uses sustainability information for strategy but does not duplicate the ecological-economic methods of Course 7 or the detailed reporting, environmental-management-system, control, and assurance work of Course 9.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of the six-course MBA common trunk or approved equivalent.

2. Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

LO1. **Critically evaluate** business sustainability, corporate responsibility, stakeholder, systems, paradox, strong-sustainability, shared-value, and regenerative perspectives and determine their implications for enterprise purpose and managerial judgment. [Bloom's Level 5: Evaluate]

LO2. **Analyze** an organization's material impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, stakeholders, rights-holders, capabilities, incentives, and value-chain relationships using credible financial, environmental, social, governance, and contextual evidence. [Bloom's Level 4: Analyze]

LO3. **Integrate** sustainability into strategy, governance, finance, marketing, operations, supply networks, people management, digital and AI choices, innovation, partnerships, and organizational transformation. [Bloom's Level 5: Evaluate]

LO4. **Evaluate and design** sustainable, circular, inclusive, and regenerative business-model and innovation options for strategic fit, customer and stakeholder value, ecological integrity, social justice, financial viability, scalability, rebound, and implementation feasibility. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]

LO5. **Develop and defend** an implementation-ready integrated business sustainability strategy with priorities, targets, portfolio choices, governance, resources, roadmap, measures, accountability, adaptive learning, and transparent professional communication. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]

3. Required Materials

3.1 Main Texts and Open Educational Resource (OER)

- Main Text 1 (OER): Gittell, R., Magnusson, M., & Merenda, M. (2012). The sustainable business case book. Saylor Foundation. CC BY-NC-SA. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/the-sustainable-business-case-book
- Main Text 2 (OER): Byars, S. M., & Stanberry, K. (2018). Business ethics. OpenStax. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. https://openstax.org/details/books/business-ethics

3.2 Supplementary Texts (Non-Open Educational Resources)

- Hahn, T., Preuss, L., Pinkse, J., & Figge, F. (2014). Cognitive frames in corporate sustainability: Managerial sensemaking with paradoxical and business case frames. Academy of Management Review, 39(4), 463-487.
- Dyllick, T., & Muff, K. (2016). Clarifying the meaning of sustainable business: Introducing a typology from business-as-usual to true business sustainability. Organization & Environment, 29(2), 156-174.
- Selected current peer-reviewed work on sustainable strategy, business models, circularity, responsible innovation, transition, stakeholder governance, and implementation.
- Current organizational, sector, value-chain, community, regulatory, and market evidence selected for each applied case.

3.3 Open Educational Resources (OER)

- The Sustainable Business Case Book (CC BY-NC-SA): https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/the-sustainable-business-case-book
- OpenStax Business Ethics (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0): https://openstax.org/details/books/business-ethics
- A Primer on Sustainable Business (CC BY-NC-SA): https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/a-primer-on-sustainable-business
- Sustainability, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship open textbook: https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/sustainability-innovation-and-entrepreneurship

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: https://sdgs.un.org/goals
- UN Global Compact principles and resources: https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles
- OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct: https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/
- Selected current open-access government, intergovernmental, academic, community, and organizational sustainability resources.

3.4 Technology Requirements

- Reliable internet connection and Learning Management System access
- Spreadsheet, collaborative-document, presentation, stakeholder-mapping, business-model, portfolio, roadmap, and data-visualization tools
- Instructor-approved artificial-intelligence, scenario, lifecycle, circular-design, materiality, innovation, and decision-support tools; multiple commercial subscriptions are not required
- PDF annotation and video-conferencing capability for source review, strategy studios, case discussions, executive briefings, and the final oral defence

4. Assessment Structure

The course combines Sustainability Strategy Studios, an Enterprise Sustainability and Material-Issue Diagnostic, an independently completed midterm examination, a Sustainable Business Model and Portfolio Decision Memo, and the Week 14 Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy. The final project replaces a conventional final examination.

Assessment Component	Type	Weight	Due Date
Sustainability Strategy Studios	Ongoing	10%	Continuous
Enterprise Sustainability & Material-Issue Diagnostic	**Formative**	15%	Week 4
Midterm Examination	**Summative**	20%	Week 7
Sustainable Business Model & Portfolio Decision Memo	**Summative**	15%	Week 10
Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy	**Summative**	40%	Week 14
TOTAL		**100%**	

5. Grading Scale

This course uses the American University grading scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100%	Excellent; exceptional achievement
A-	90-92%	Excellent work with minor areas for improvement
B+	87-89%	Very good; above average performance
B	83-86%	Good; solid understanding demonstrated
B-	80-82%	Good work with some areas for improvement
C+	77-79%	Satisfactory; meets basic requirements
C	73-76%	Adequate; acceptable understanding
C-	70-72%	Passing but below average

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
D	60-69%	Minimum passing; significant improvement needed
F	Below 60%	Failing; does not meet course requirements

6. Course Schedule

Week 1: Business Sustainability, Responsibility, and Enterprise Purpose

Topics: sustainability and sustainable development; responsibility; resilience; regeneration; enterprise purpose; shareholder and stakeholder theories; systems and strong-sustainability perspectives; business case and beyond-business-case rationales

Readings: Gittell et al., Chapters 1-2; OpenStax Business Ethics, selected sustainability and stakeholder sections

Synchronous: purpose, responsibility, system-boundary, and competing-frame strategy laboratory

Asynchronous: select an approved enterprise or value chain and define the strategic sustainability challenge

Week 2: Stakeholders, Rights-Holders, Power, and Legitimacy

Topics: stakeholder salience; rights-holders; affected communities; employees and supply-chain workers; Indigenous and local knowledge; participation; power; procedural, distributive, recognitional, and restorative justice

Readings: OpenStax Business Ethics, stakeholder material; UN Global Compact principles; selected rights-based guidance

Synchronous: stakeholder, rights-holder, power, legitimacy, and engagement mapping laboratory

Asynchronous: prepare a stakeholder and rights-holder engagement and safeguard map

Week 3: Impacts, Dependencies, Risks, Opportunities, and Strategic Context

Topics: inside-out and outside-in perspectives; climate, nature, resources, workforce, communities, customers, and governance; horizons; value-chain boundaries; strategic relevance; uncertainty and evidence quality

Readings: Dyllick and Muff; current organizational and sector evidence

Synchronous: impact-dependency-risk-opportunity pathway and evidence-quality laboratory

Asynchronous: build a preliminary sustainability issue universe and evidence register

Week 4: Material Issues, Enterprise Diagnosis, and Strategic Priorities

Topics: issue identification; prioritization; materiality as a strategic decision; severity and likelihood; financial relevance; stakeholder significance; root causes; capability and incentive analysis

Readings: Selected strategy and materiality guidance; organization-specific evidence

Synchronous: material-issue prioritization, challenge, and diagnostic review

Asynchronous: complete the Enterprise Sustainability and Material-Issue Diagnostic

Assessment Due: Enterprise Sustainability & Material-Issue Diagnostic (15%)

Week 5: Sustainability Strategy, Governance, and Board Oversight

Topics: strategic positioning; ambition; board and executive responsibilities; policies; incentives; accountability; risk appetite; decision rights; portfolio governance; ethics and organizational legitimacy

Readings: Hahn et al.; OECD Guidelines; selected governance research

Synchronous: strategy-governance alignment and board-decision case

Asynchronous: evaluate governance gaps, incentives, responsibilities, and escalation routes

Week 6: Integrating Finance, Accounting, Marketing, Operations, and People

Topics: capital allocation; management accounting; pricing and value propositions; procurement; operations; supply chains; human resources; job quality; skills; just transition; cross-functional trade-offs

Readings: A Primer on Sustainable Business, functional chapters; selected current evidence

Synchronous: cross-functional integration and trade-off simulation

Asynchronous: prepare for the midterm through an integrated enterprise case

Week 7: Midterm Examination and Strategic Integration

Topics: integration of sustainability paradigms, purpose, stakeholders, rights-holders, impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, material issues, governance, and business functions

Readings: Review Weeks 1-6 resources

Synchronous: individual midterm examination; generative AI is not permitted unless expressly authorized

Asynchronous: post-examination correction and professional-learning plan

Assessment Due: Midterm Examination (20%)

Week 8: Sustainable and Regenerative Business Models

Topics: value proposition, creation, delivery, and capture; circular strategies; sufficiency; product-service systems; stewardship; sharing; social enterprise; regeneration; revenue and cost logic; scaling

Readings: Gittell et al., innovation material; Sustainability, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, selected chapters

Synchronous: business-model pattern, value-network, and rebound laboratory

Asynchronous: generate and screen sustainable business-model alternatives

Week 9: Responsible Innovation, Digital Capability, and AI

Topics: mission-oriented and responsible innovation; design justice; technology assessment; AI energy, water, labour, accessibility, and governance implications; digital enablement; unintended consequences

Readings: Selected current responsible-innovation and responsible-AI evidence

Synchronous: innovation-portfolio, technology-impact, and safeguard laboratory

Asynchronous: develop an option portfolio and record assumptions, dependencies, and harms

Week 10: Portfolio Choice, Finance, Scenarios, and Strategic Trade-offs

Topics: option appraisal; capital needs; cash flow and value; scenario and sensitivity analysis; abatement and impact; feasibility; sequencing; real options; trade-offs; burden shifting; residual effects

Readings: Selected sustainable finance, strategy, and decision-method resources

Synchronous: portfolio decision, scenario, finance, and executive challenge exercise

Asynchronous: submit Sustainable Business Model and Portfolio Decision Memo

Assessment Due: Sustainable Business Model & Portfolio Decision Memo (15%)

Week 11: Partnerships, Policy, Markets, and Collective Action

Topics: business ecosystems; sector initiatives; standards; procurement; public policy; finance partners; customers; suppliers; competitors; collective action; antitrust awareness; place-based transition

Readings: OECD Guidelines; UN Global Compact resources; selected partnership cases

Synchronous: ecosystem, partnership, policy-interaction, and collective-action design studio

Asynchronous: define partnership roles, dependencies, safeguards, and shared-accountability mechanisms

Week 12: Implementation, Culture, Capability, and Just Transition

Topics: operating model; change architecture; culture; leadership; skills; workforce and community transition; resources; sequencing; resistance; incentives; learning; adaptation; implementation risk

Readings: Selected organizational-change, just-transition, and implementation research

Synchronous: implementation roadmap, capability, ownership, and just-transition review

Asynchronous: complete strategy architecture, roadmap, resources, and measures

Project Milestone Due: Approved strategy architecture, portfolio, stakeholder plan, implementation roadmap, and success criteria

Week 13: Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy Studio

Topics: strategic synthesis; target state; portfolio coherence; governance; finance; partnerships; metrics; accountability; learning; evidence; limitations; oral-defence preparation

Readings: Review current authoritative evidence relevant to the selected enterprise, value chain, sector, communities, and jurisdictions

Synchronous: strategy studio, peer challenge, instructor consultation, and executive-briefing rehearsal

Asynchronous: complete the strategy, exhibits, presentation, AI Usage Statement, and critical reflection

Week 14: Strategy Presentations, Oral Defence, and Integration

Topics: integration of sustainability, strategy, governance, finance, markets, operations, innovation, people, partnerships, implementation, measures, accountability, and adaptive learning

Readings: No new readings; review project evidence and course outcomes

Synchronous: Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy presentations, individual oral defence, peer learning, and course synthesis

Asynchronous: submit final strategy, evidence portfolio, presentation, AI Usage Statement, and individual reflection

Assessment Due: Final Project: Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy (40%)

7. Detailed Assignment Descriptions

7.1 Sustainability Strategy Studios - 10%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4, CLO5

Description

Graduate sustainability capability develops through disciplined preparation, systems and stakeholder analysis, cross-functional decision work, option design, scenario testing, peer challenge, professional communication, and reflection.

Requirements

- Attend at least 12 of 14 synchronous sessions and participate actively
- Complete purpose, stakeholder, issue, governance, functional-integration, business-model, innovation, portfolio, partnership, and implementation studios
- Use traceable evidence, explicit boundaries, assumptions, uncertainty, trade-offs, and limitations
- Provide respectful, specific, evidence-based challenge during cases, simulations, peer review, and executive briefings
- Follow confidentiality, accessibility, academic-integrity, rights-holder-respect, and AI-disclosure requirements

Participation Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Preparation & Engagement (20%)	Consistently prepared; contributions materially advance collective sustainability decisions	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Applied Strategy Studios (35%)	Rigorous, integrated work connects evidence, business functions, stakeholders, and sustainability outcomes	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Professional Contribution (20%)	Evidence-based questions and challenge materially improve shared decisions	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Responsible Evidence & Conduct (25%)	Exemplary provenance, rights-holder respect, ethics, accessibility, confidentiality, and AI transparency	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.2 Enterprise Sustainability & Material-Issue Diagnostic (Formative Assessment 1) - 15%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3
Due Date: Week 4

Description

Students diagnose an approved organization or value chain to identify the sustainability issues that are strategically consequential, ethically significant, and capable of shaping long-term enterprise and stakeholder value.

Requirements

1. Define enterprise purpose, decision scope, boundaries, horizons, strategy, value creation, and limitations
2. Map impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, stakeholders, rights-holders, and value-chain relationships
3. Prioritize material issues using transparent criteria and test alternative interpretations
4. Analyze root causes, capabilities, incentives, governance, data quality, uncertainty, and evidence gaps
5. Recommend strategic priorities, immediate safeguards, an improved evidence plan, and a complete AI Usage Statement

Total Length: 1,800-2,200 words plus issue map, stakeholder analysis, prioritization matrix, governance profile, and source record

Format: APA 7 professional brief with auditable exhibits; submit PDF and editable source files through the LMS

Enterprise Sustainability & Material-Issue Diagnostic Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Purpose, Scope & Context (15%)	Precise enterprise purpose, decision, boundary, horizon, strategy, and limitations	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Impact-Dependency & Stakeholder Analysis (25%)	Traceable pathways, stakeholders, rights-holders, value-chain relationships, power, and distribution are integrated	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Material-Issue Prioritization (25%)	Transparent criteria and evidence support critical priorities and alternative interpretations	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Governance, Capability & Root Causes (25%)	Incentives, systems, data, capabilities, uncertainty, and evidence priorities are compelling	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Communication, Evidence & AI Transparency (10%)	Decision-ready, calibrated, reproducible, accessible, and fully documented	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.3 Midterm Examination (Summative Assessment 1) - 20%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4

Due Date: Week 7

Description

The individual examination assesses independent mastery and integration of business-sustainability paradigms, stakeholder and rights-holder responsibilities, material issues, governance, strategic analysis, and cross-functional implications.

Requirements

1. Compare sustainability, responsibility, stakeholder, systems, paradox, and regenerative perspectives
2. Analyze impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, material issues, and affected groups
3. Evaluate strategic, governance, financial, operational, marketing, workforce, and value-chain implications
4. Interpret evidence quality, causal limits, uncertainty, trade-offs, power, and distribution
5. Recommend and defend a proportionate enterprise response with governance and implementation logic

Format: 120-minute examination with applied short answers, evidence interpretation, analytical work, and an integrated decision case

Conditions: Individual work; approved reference sheet and calculator permitted; generative AI not permitted

Midterm Examination Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Concepts, Purpose & Frames (20%)	Perspectives and assumptions are accurately compared and applied	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Stakeholder & Material-Issue Analysis (25%)	Impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, rights, power, and priorities are rigorously analyzed	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Cross-Functional Strategic Integration (25%)	Governance, finance, markets, operations, people, value chains, and innovation are integrated	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Evidence, Ethics & Sustainable Judgment (15%)	Uncertainty, trade-offs, affected groups, safeguards, and limits are critically handled	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Recommendation & Communication (15%)	Coherent, proportionate response is concise and convincingly defended	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.4 Sustainable Business Model & Portfolio Decision Memo (Summative Assessment 2) - 15%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO2, CLO3, CLO4

Due Date: Week 10

Description

Students prepare and defend a decision memorandum comparing sustainable or regenerative business-model and innovation portfolio options for an approved enterprise challenge.

Assignment Focus

The memorandum must distinguish verified evidence, assumptions, estimates, scenarios, values, and managerial judgment while testing strategic fit, financial viability, sustainability outcomes, feasibility, and unintended consequences.

Requirements

1. Decision context, baseline, system and value-chain boundaries, stakeholders, rights-holders, and success criteria
2. At least three business-model or innovation options with value-creation, revenue, cost, capability, and partnership logic
3. Financial, environmental, social, governance, customer, operational, workforce, and distributional comparison
4. Scenario, sensitivity, rebound, burden-shifting, feasibility, scalability, and residual-effect analysis
5. Recommendation with sequencing, finance, ownership, safeguards, indicators, review, and adaptation
6. Complete source, data, assumption, scenario, limitation, safe-disclosure, and AI Usage Statement records

Total Length: 1,800-2,200-word decision memorandum plus business-model, portfolio, finance, scenario, and impact exhibits

Format: Professional decision memorandum, auditable exhibits, and 5-7 minute individual review; submit through the LMS

Sustainable Business Model & Portfolio Decision Memo Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Decision Context & Baseline (10%)	Purpose, boundary, stakeholders, baseline, constraints, and criteria are precise	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Business-Model & Portfolio Options (20%)	Distinct alternatives have credible value, revenue, cost, capability, and partnership logic	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Financial & Sustainability Analysis (20%)	Enterprise value and environmental, social, governance, and distributional outcomes are rigorously compared	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Scenarios, Trade-offs & Uncertainty (20%)	Sensitivity, rebound, burden shifting, feasibility, scalability, and residual effects are transparent	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Recommendation, Governance & Roadmap (20%)	Sequencing, finance, ownership, safeguards, measures, review, and adaptation are actionable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Evidence & AI Transparency (10%)	Sources, models, assumptions, limitations, and AI use are verified and auditable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

8. Final Project: Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy (Summative Assessment 3) - 40%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: All course learning outcomes (CLO1-CLO5)

8.1 Project Overview

The final project is the signature assessment of Business and Sustainability. Students develop and defend an enterprise-wide, implementation-ready strategy that integrates sustainability with the principal functions and decision responsibilities of an MBA.

8.2 Project Scope

Each student selects an approved enterprise, business unit, product-service system, value chain, sector initiative, or place-based partnership for which lawful, non-confidential, and sufficiently reliable evidence is available.

8.3 Deliverables

Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy (3,500-4,500 words, excluding appendices)

1. Executive Decision Brief: strategic challenge, evidence, priorities, portfolio, value, risks, decisions requested, and limitations
2. Enterprise and System Diagnosis: purpose, strategy, context, boundaries, impacts, dependencies, risks, opportunities, stakeholders, rights-holders, and root causes
3. Material Issues and Strategic Priorities: transparent criteria, evidence, uncertainty, trade-offs, and target outcomes
4. Cross-Functional Integration: finance, accounting, marketing, operations, supply networks, people, digital and AI, innovation, and partnerships
5. Business-Model and Portfolio Design: options, financial logic, sustainability outcomes, scenarios, rebound, burden shifting, safeguards, and residual effects
6. Governance and Just-Transition Design: board and executive roles, policies, incentives, engagement, workforce and community safeguards, decision rights, and escalation
7. Implementation and Learning: roadmap, owners, resources, capabilities, measures, thresholds, review, accountability, and adaptation
8. Evidence and AI Record: dated sources, data provenance, reproducible analysis, assumptions, scenarios, limitations, independent judgment, reflection, and disclosure

Executive Presentation and Individual Oral Defence (12-15 minutes plus 5-10 minutes for questions)

- Present during the Week 14 synchronous session
- 10-12 slides or equivalent executive-ready visual narrative supported by diagnostic, portfolio, finance, roadmap, governance, and measurement evidence
- Respond to questions about purpose, evidence, stakeholders, financial viability, ecological and social outcomes, trade-offs, implementation, accountability, and limitations
- Professional, accessible, and interculturally responsive communication with transparent attribution and independent graduate mastery

8.4 Project Timeline & Milestones

Week	Milestone	Deliverable	Weight
Week 9	Scope and Evidence Gate	Approved problem, boundary, evidence plan, stakeholder analysis, and material-issue priorities	Formative feedback

Week	Milestone	Deliverable	Weight
Week 12	Integrated Design Gate	Portfolio, cross-functional design, governance, just-transition safeguards, roadmap, and measures	Peer/instructor review
Week 13	Complete Draft and Challenge	Complete strategy, evidence portfolio, presentation, reflection, and AI record	Instructor feedback
Week 14	Final Presentation and Defence	Final strategy, evidence portfolio, executive presentation, and individual defence	40% of final grade

8.5 Final Project Grading Rubric

Integrated Business Sustainability Strategy Written/Applied Portfolio (70% of Final Project Grade)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Scope, Evidence & Enterprise Diagnosis (15%)	Decision-ready scope and triangulated evidence connect purpose, systems, strategy, impacts, dependencies, stakeholders, and root causes	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Material Issues & Strategic Priorities (15%)	Priorities and outcomes are justified through transparent evidence, uncertainty, power, and trade-off analysis	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Cross-Functional MBA Integration (15%)	Finance, accounting, marketing, operations, value chains, people, technology, innovation, and partnerships are coherently integrated	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Business Model, Portfolio & Viability (15%)	Options integrate value, finance, sustainability outcomes, scenarios, feasibility, rebound, and safeguards	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Governance, Rights & Just Transition (15%)	Roles, incentives, participation, rights, workforce and community safeguards, and accountability are robust	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Roadmap, Measures & Adaptive Learning (15%)	Actions, owners, resources, capabilities, metrics, thresholds, review, and adaptation are actionable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Evidence, Limitations, AI & Professional Quality (10%)	Executive-ready, current, reproducible, calibrated, accessible, safe, and transparently disclosed	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

Executive Presentation and Individual Oral Defence (30% of Final Project Grade)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Strategic Narrative (30%)	Compelling narrative connects purpose, diagnosis, priorities, portfolio, implementation, and decisions	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Analytical & Decision Visuals (25%)	Accurate, accessible visuals make evidence, options, finance, impacts, roadmap, and trade-offs understandable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Executive & Intercultural Presence (20%)	Confident, concise, accessible, and responsive to diverse perspectives	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Oral Defence (25%)	Responses demonstrate independent mastery of evidence, strategy, business functions, sustainability outcomes, implementation, and limits	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

9. Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment Alignment

CLO / Assessment	Labs	Diagnostic	Midterm	Exercise	Final Project
CLO1	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
CLO2	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO3	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO4	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓

Key: ✓ = Addressed | ✓✓ = Primary Direct Evidence

10. Course Policies

10.1 Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance and active participation in synchronous sessions are essential for success in this course. Students are expected to attend all scheduled synchronous sessions with cameras enabled. If you must miss a session, please notify the instructor in advance. More than two unexcused absences may result in a reduced participation grade.

10.2 Late Submission Policy

- Assignments submitted within 24 hours of deadline: 10% penalty

- Assignments submitted 24-48 hours late: 20% penalty
- Assignments submitted more than 48 hours late: not accepted without prior approval
- Extensions may be granted for documented emergencies with advance notice

10.3 Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be your own original work. Plagiarism, including the use of AI-generated content without proper disclosure, is a serious academic offense. All sources must be properly cited. Violations of academic integrity will result in a zero for the assignment and may lead to further disciplinary action.

10.4 AI Usage Policy

Artificial intelligence may support selected discovery, stakeholder mapping, issue analysis, business-model design, scenario testing, portfolio comparison, roadmap development, measurement, and communication, but students remain accountable for every source, assumption, calculation, impact claim, ethical judgment, and recommendation.

1. Assessment Conditions: The Week 7 midterm examination is completed without generative AI unless the instructor expressly authorizes a specific tool or accommodation.
2. Transparency and Provenance: Every AI-assisted submission must include an AI Usage Statement identifying tools, purposes, material prompts, outputs used, information supplied, verification steps, limitations, and substantive human revisions.
3. Verification, Current Authority, and Professional Limits: AI output is not evidence. Students must use dated authoritative sources, verify calculations and claims, distinguish facts from estimates and scenarios, document limitations, and avoid presenting course work as legal, audit, certification, engineering, or other regulated professional advice.
4. Privacy, Security, Confidentiality, Rights, and Responsible Disclosure: Sensitive personal, community, employee, customer, supplier, ecological, contractual, proprietary, or security information must not be entered into public AI systems. Students must use lawful access, data minimization, approved storage, safe simulation, rights-holder respect, and responsible disclosure.

10.5 Communication Expectations

The instructor will respond to emails within 48 hours during the work week. For urgent matters, please indicate 'URGENT' in the subject line. Course announcements will be posted on the LMS. Students are expected to check the LMS and their university email daily.

10.6 Accessibility & Accommodations

Focus University Institute is committed to providing equal access to all students. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office and the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations will be made to ensure full participation in all course activities.

10.7 Netiquette Guidelines

Online learning requires respectful, professional communication. When participating in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, please use professional language, be respectful of diverse perspectives, avoid all-caps (which reads as shouting), and provide constructive feedback. Remember that cultural differences may affect communication styles.

11. Additional Resources

11.1 Library & Research Support

- Focus University Institute Library: business sustainability, strategy, governance, finance, marketing, operations, value chains, innovation, entrepreneurship, organizational change, ethics, and sustainable development databases
- Research Librarian consultations are available for authoritative academic, regulatory, standards, statistical, organizational, community, and methodological evidence.

11.2 Writing & Academic Support

- Writing and Learning Support: graduate systems thinking, strategic analysis, business-model design, financial reasoning, evidence evaluation, decision writing, visualization, presentation, and study consultations
- APA Citation Guide: Purdue OWL (https://owl.purdue.edu/)

11.3 Technical Support

- IT Help Desk: LMS, account, spreadsheet, stakeholder-mapping, portfolio, roadmap, secure-storage, visualization, presentation, accessibility, and approved-tool support
- Source verification, data-provenance, safe-disclosure, accessibility, reproducibility, and AI Usage Statement tutorials are available in the course Getting Started module.

11.4 Professional Development

- UN Global Compact, OECD, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, UNEP, ILO, and other authoritative responsible-business and transition resources
- Peer-reviewed research, organizational and value-chain evidence, public datasets, and community and rights-holder knowledge used with permission and context
- Open Textbook Library and OpenStax OER supporting sustainable business, ethics, innovation, strategy, and functional integration

11.5 Suggested Bibliography (APA 7)

Bocken, N. M. P., Short, S. W., Rana, P., & Evans, S. (2014). A literature and practice review to develop sustainable business model archetypes. Journal of Cleaner Production, 65, 42-56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.11.039

Byars, S. M., & Stanberry, K. (2018). Business ethics. OpenStax. https://openstax.org/details/books/business-ethics

Dyllick, T., & Muff, K. (2016). Clarifying the meaning of sustainable business. Organization & Environment, 29(2), 156-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575176

Gittell, R., Magnusson, M., & Merenda, M. (2012). The sustainable business case book. Saylor Foundation. https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/the-sustainable-business-case-book
Hahn, T., Preuss, L., Pinkse, J., & Figge, F. (2014). Cognitive frames in corporate sustainability. Academy of Management Review, 39(4), 463-487. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2012.0341
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises on responsible business conduct. https://mneguidelines.oecd.org/
Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating shared value. Harvard Business Review, 89(1/2), 62-77.
United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda
United Nations Global Compact. (n.d.). The ten principles of the UN Global Compact. https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles
Whiteman, G., Walker, B., & Perego, P. (2013). Planetary boundaries: Ecological foundations for corporate sustainability. Journal of Management Studies, 50(2), 307-336. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01073.x

12. Syllabus Disclaimer

This syllabus represents a plan for the course and may be modified based on pedagogical needs or material changes in sustainability evidence, markets, technologies, laws, policies, standards, stakeholder conditions, and data availability. Students will be notified of significant changes through the LMS and email.

Focus University Institute

Madrid, Spain