

Leadership in Sustainability

Nature-Based Learning for MBA's

Open University Accredited Sustainability Component at Regents Business School, London

Component Overview

Using nature based experiential learning, students explore the sustainable paradigm from economic, social, environmental and cultural perspectives. Knowledge management is considered through a multidisciplinary and application oriented approach, intertwined with philosophical investigations contextual to ecology.

The interconnectivity and interdependence of all factors in systemic and sustainability thinking are examined with particular focus on their relevance in professional and personal life, in business, and in society. The mechanisms of natural systems are used as both models for understanding sustainability and as learning criteria in their own right, and are given powerful relevance through small group work, personal reflection and discussion in situ. Practical applications embed knowledge management, insights, and associated strategies into activities. These develop adaptability, planning, authentic leadership skills, more effective individuals, and a vision and means for long-term value creation in a sustainable manner and the management of change. Students will sketch out an innovative organisational application (private or public sector) to lever sustainable cultural change.

On successful completion students will be able to critically evaluate the sustainable paradigm and understand its strategic significance for business and society. They will add critical understanding to assess and manage the information required to build knowledge management, leadership, and sustainability tools for application in business and life.

Component Aims

The component aims to:

- Create experiences that challenge students to realign their personal and professional paradigm with the newly acquired knowledge
- Provide insights and experiential knowledge to critically understand the sustainable paradigm and its ontological, economical and ecological dimension
- Explore the interconnectivity of economic, social and environmental benefits and how to manage their long-term value creation
- Empower students as innovative agents for positive culture change within the corporate context
- Re-define needs and align personal and professional values

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this component, students should be able to:

- LO1 Demonstrate an understanding of the relatedness and interdependence of economy, society, culture and environment
- LO2 Understand sustainability as a source of competitive advantage
- LO3 Understand the significance of deep questioning, systemic thinking and relational ontology in creating knowledge for sustainable enterprise
- LO4 Outline an innovative organisational application (private or social sector) that is based on personal skills and motivation to lever positive social change
- LO5 Show a critical understanding of the sustainable paradigm and develop their own argumentation of its strategic significance for society and economy

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning draw on nature based experiential coaching and activities, small group work, discussions, personal reflection and course readings.

Global Focus

The content of the module develops a deep understanding and appreciation of the interconnected complexity of global challenges, providing insights how solutions to global issues translate to student's personal level.

Skills Development

Critical reflection
Systemic thinking
Written and oral communication
Problem solving and analysis



Practical application
Leadership and teamwork

Assessment

Essay

Firstly students are asked to critically discuss the strategic importance of the sustainability concept with regard to the interdependence of economy, society and nature. In part two of the paper, students will identify a social or environmental challenge close to their own heart and outline an innovative business solution (private or public sector) that is in-tune with personal skills, interests and motivation. Integrating theoretical concepts, personal motivation and professional application, the task aims to deepen student's theoretical understanding and align personal values with the motivation to proactively solve social or environmental challenges through sustainable enterprise.

Process Handbook

It combines personal reflections, analytical observations, conceptual considerations as well as visual explorations with regard to insights gained through direct experience and topics discussed during the program. Thus it is a tool aiding contemplation and critical reflection. As such it is a record of students' individual learning, acting as a personalised module handbook.

Syllabus (Indicative Content)

- Gaining experience-based insights and understanding of sustainability
- Understanding significance and practice of questioning ontological assumptions as a basis of moving towards sustainable business processes and strategies
- Re-defining needs and aligning personal and professional values
- Increasing awareness about the social and environmental dimensions in economic decision making and leadership
- Appreciating the importance of cultural and environmental diversity for economic resilience and long-term prosperity
- Developing systemic thinking and open communication skills
- Developing a positive and compassionate attitude towards social and environmental challenges and how to proactively transform them through intelligent business applications

5 Day Outline (indicative content sequence)

Day One

- Framing of course, managing expectations and anxieties
- Introduction exploring ecological self concept
- Exploring meaning of key concepts
- History of western scientific/mechanistic paradigm
- Sustainable paradigm and case studies

Day Two

- Reflecting on needs, expressing needs, exploring needs matrix
- Exploring the psychology, assumptions, and contradictions of consumption and materialism in a resource constrained world
- Defining role, meaning, and goals at a personal and business level
- Exploring values and how they align with culture and professional practice
- The evolution of values into the future and its consequences

Day Three

- Looking deeply into phenomena: Discovering interconnectedness and interdependence of self, society and economy
- Understanding human ecology and the scope for leveraging sustainable change through business
- Reviewing process expressing experiences as practice to gather knowledge and express motivations, difficulties etc.
- Deep listening and true communication as tools for understanding and knowledge management

Day Four

- The role of reasoning and intuition in decision making
- Understanding and transforming emotions
- Adaptation and managing change at all levels
- Connecting to the natural world and our place in time and space (overnight solo experience)

Day Five

- Review of solo
- Placing learning experiences firmly into corporate context
- Discussing assessment

