

Course overview

SUSTAINABILITY AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

CISU-MBA – Cologne International Summer University

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Preliminary course description

Sustainability and Competitive Advantage

Professor Paolo Taticchi, OMRI
UCL School of Management

Course overview

Sustainability is one of the key issues of today society as confirmed by increasing attention of governments, media, academics and industry.

A quoted definition of sustainability and sustainable development is that of the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations: "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Such a definition leads directly to the three pillars of sustainability, that are the economical, social and environmental dimensions. The concept of sustainability is therefore close to the concept of "quality of life".

In the context of sustainable development, businesses that are often referred as part of the problem, can be part of the solution. As a consequence of that, policy makers, industry leaders, society and academics with different backgrounds are today dealing with sustainability trying to understand how this affects traditional way of doing business, and, as well, how traditional businesses are affected by sustainability. How to develop organisations with a sense of purpose, and how to build a sustainable competitive advantage are key challenges in today's agendas of global executives.

This module will address the topic of sustainability from a strategic perspective, with a particular emphasis on decision-making and trade-offs. Topics covered include: the drivers of the sustainability debate; the business case for sustainability; sustainability and competitive advantage; sustainable strategies and sustainable value creation. As this module is designed for non-European students, the instructor will discuss sustainability issues / best-practices from a global perspective, but use several European cases and examples.

The class will be involved in an engaging debate that will cover different perspectives of the topics discussed, including the economic, the environmental and social one. Lectures, case studies, role-play exercises and guest speakers from industry are some of the experiential teaching methods used in this module.

Participants at the end will have a comprehensive understanding of sustainability issues, the role of corporations and the implications for decision-making. The ultimate goal of this MBA class is to empower future decision-makers with sustainability thinking skills and to expose students to the latest thinking in Europe.