

Sustainability Grand Challenges Course

Faculty: RSM
MSc Global Business and Sustainability
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Description of the course

This course's primary learning goal is for students to understand and harness a sustainable grand challenge. Grand challenges are global problems requiring combined efforts and innovative approaches to understand better and tackle them. Examples include climate change, natural disasters, poverty and inequality. Individually, students write an essay about a grand challenge and review their peers. Jointly students develop and assess a novel and viable 'solution' by engaging partners. At the end of the course, students present to a multi-stakeholder jury.

What have we learned about impact-driven education in practice?

- **Students and teachers have a positive reception towards working with external stakeholders.** To students and teachers, this made the course stand out from regular classes. Students learned more about the complexity of the challenge by considering the views of different actors.
- **There needs to be room in the programme for self-reflection, peer feedback and teacher-student communication.** This 'internal' communication improves students' ability to take different perspectives. Furthermore, it improves the 'students' understanding of the tasks and their performance during the course.
- **The course led to an increased understanding of societal issues.** The most common perception among students about their societal impact after finishing the course was that they became more aware of the grand challenges.
- **Students consider the course duration too short for developing their professional identity.** Students regarded critical thinking, collaboration, and communication as the most relevant skills for their future careers. In general, students felt the course design of three weeks was too short to develop their professional identity. It was perceived there was too much work and little time to process new information.

What are the next steps to increase the impact capacity of students in similar learning environments?

- Continue working with the stakeholder format and modify the course timeframe to add more interaction between the stakeholders and the students.

- Balance internal and external communication and cooperation activities to overcome unbalanced attention towards stakeholder communication.
- Maximise the learning opportunities that come with 'students' awareness of their indirect impact by using learning journals and providing tools to stimulate learning
- Revise the course design to relieve time pressure and increase understanding of the assignments.

Want to know more about the research or the course?

Research and Evaluation

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Contributions Impact at the Core

The Transformative Learning Innovators at RSM and Impact at the Core contributed to the following aspects of the Sustainability Grand Challenges course:

- The course activities were already highly experiential. Because of this, they aimed to deepen the level of reflection. They suggested adding questions to reflective assignments, especially regarding self-image and awareness.
- They designed a portfolio assignment that enables students to track their skill development and improve self-awareness.
- They advised incorporating a reflective portfolio assignment and final essay.

The evaluation team of IATC provided the platform for monitoring and evaluation of the course. The evaluation centres on understanding how impact learning contributes to developing students'

Impact capacity, 21st-century skills, 'teachers' knowledge of teaching impact, and stakeholder-" involvement.