

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership
3	Accreditation details	N/A
4	Name of final award	Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business
5	Programme title	Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business
6	JACS code(s)	N190
7	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
8	Qualifications framework level	FHEQ Level 7
9	Date specification produced/ last revised	July 2013
10	Date specification last reviewed	July 2013

The University of Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership (CPSL), an institute within the School of Technology, has run executive development programmes in sustainability for 25 years, with open programmes in the UK, Europe, North America, South America, South Africa and Australia, and customised programmes for many leading organisations. CPSL's accredited Masters-level Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business is now in its 15th year. CPSL has a global alumni base of over 3,000 senior leaders from business, government and civil society.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Business is a nine-month, part-time masters-level programme. This programme has been offered for 15 years and is a challenging and inspiring programme which addresses many of the key challenges being experienced by organisations seeking to embed sustainability principles and practices into mainstream business operations. Project-based learning to support strategy development and implementation is a key feature of the programme. It is targeted at current and future business leaders, particularly those in mainstream business roles.

Aims of the Programme

PCSB's aim is to help organisations address the following challenges, and to identify the strategic opportunities for sustainable practice:

- Defining the boundaries of corporate responsibility in relation to today's global challenges
- Devising and implementing effective approaches to socially responsible business, which at the same time encourage innovation and competitiveness

- Responding to the diverse social, environmental and economic expectations of stakeholders and society at large
- Identifying the critical skills and experience that will enable an organisation to achieve its sustainability objectives.

Learning Outcomes of the Programme

<i>Understanding and awareness:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display a broad understanding of current and emerging sustainability issues, their relevance to business, and be familiar with the evolution of the sustainability debate and with the conceptual frameworks that underpin it.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the systemic failings that drive unsustainabilities in our current economic system, and recognise the paradigm shifts necessary to achieve a sustainable economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and understand a range of perspectives and worldviews which shape stakeholder (including shareholder) opinion and actions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify relevant aspects of the social, economic, political and legislative environment, and recognise their links to sustainable development and their relevance to their own organisation's strategies and operations.
<i>Evaluation and analysis:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and interpret academic and practitioner theory and apply to business
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with complexity and contradictions in the knowledge base
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply their own criteria and judgement to sustainability issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand a range of theories of organisational change and analyse own organisation's approach to change
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and critically review evidence and propositions
<i>Critical review, challenge, engagement and collaboration:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in professional debate about sustainability issues with colleagues from other job functions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively across organisations, functions, sectors and regions
<i>Innovation, creativity and strategy:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond innovatively and creatively to emerging social and economic trends that pose risks or opportunities for their organisation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame and develop business strategies that address (one or more) sustainability challenges
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise and enhance mainstream business strategy and processes to achieve sustainability goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt mainstream strategy to build in resilience

Teaching methods

- Academic and practitioner inputs on key issues: contributors drawn from the University of Cambridge and from other teaching and research institutions, as well as leading edge practitioners from within the programme's extensive network

- Individual assignments and collaborative project work: both theoretical and practical in nature, these are undertaken by participants, using their own professional settings as the main point of reference
- Support and facilitation provided by a team of programme tutors
- Informal and formal collaboration with fellow participants via email, teleconferences, face-to-face meetings,
- A dedicated online virtual learning environment to support sharing of learning and resources.

Assessment

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Length (words)</i>	<i>Contribution to final grade</i>
1 – Analysis Paper	3000	30%
2 - Group Project	7000	30% for submitted assignment 10% for personal contribution to group project
3 - Strategy Paper	3000	30%

Participants are required to achieve a pass grade on all written work. However, if only one piece of work is graded a fail, participants will be given detailed guidance by their tutor and allowed to re-submit.

Programme Structure

1. A two to three week preparatory phase, involving pre-reading and identification of a sustainability challenge within participants' organisational context.
2. One 2.5 day workshop and two 3 day workshops, all held in Cambridge and each preceded by pre-workshop reading and preparatory activities.
3. A work-based, collaborative project (assessed).
4. Two individual tasks based on the identified sustainability challenge: an Analysis Paper and a Strategic Action Plan (both assessed).

Workshop One: System Pressures and Trends: The Role of Business

Themes covered:

- Global system pressures and trends;
- Sustainable development principles, frameworks and trends;
- Understanding the nature of sustainability challenges;
- Identifying the business implications and building the business case;
- Strategic leadership responses.

Workshop 2: Catalysing Change beyond the Organisation

Themes covered:

- Systems analysis and changing the system
- Innovation and creative disruption
- Moving towards a sustainable, low carbon economy
 - Sustainable finance and investment
 - Policy and regulation as drivers for change
 - Sustainable production and consumption
- Rethinking the role of business in society
 - The role of collaboration and partnerships
 - International governance and human rights
 - Sustainable sourcing and supply chains
 - Social enterprise

Workshop 3: Taking Action: Implementing and Driving Change in the Organisation

Themes covered:

- Embedding sustainability from strategy to operations
 - Corporate strategy and sustainability
 - Stakeholder analysis and mapping
 - Culture, values and governance
 - Employee engagement
 - Resourcing change
- Communicating and influencing
 - Motivational values
 - Influencing the Board
 - Communicating effectively for change
 - Influencing consumer behaviour
- Being an effective change agent
 - Leading organisational change
 - Championing change
 - Personal values and ethics

Cross Cutting themes explored within the Programme include:

- Organisational change
- Systems thinking
- Futures thinking
- Cooperation and partnerships
- Leadership

Programme Requirements

Candidates are screened and accepted on the basis that they have:

- Possession of an undergraduate degree from a recognised university, or evidence of equivalent work experience/achievement and ability to read for a Master's-level programme;

- An acceptable ability in written and spoken English language (evidence will be required of participants' proficiency if English is not their first language);
- A minimum of 3 years' work experience after graduation;
- An endorsement from their employing institution supporting their application and required time commitment for the programme, or – if independent – from an acceptable institution familiar with their work;
- Interest in and commitment to sustainability;
- Academic and/or professional excellence;
- Commitment to using your learning from the programme to lead or influence change;
- Access to appropriate computer technology and internet software;
- Ability to pay the course fees or identify a sponsoring institution.

Further Information

Who Should Attend?

The Programme is designed for senior and mid-career managers who want to explore business practices and opportunities in the area of sustainability and are looking to increase their own personal development in the field. Typical job titles include functional heads such as Director of Marketing, Director of Corporate Communications and Director of Public Affairs; and specialist managers such as Sustainable Development Manager, Environmental Director, Stakeholder Relations Director and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Executive, amongst others.

Whether or not they have specific responsibility for environmental or sustainability issues, it is hoped that participants' organisations' commitment to embedding and mainstreaming sustainable development will ensure that they are prepared to support participation in the Programme.

Applicants from outside the UK are welcomed. The web-based Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) assists geographically remote participants to participate fully in group projects.

Graduate Employability

There is a perceived growth in 'green collar jobs' in the UK and internationally. This programme enhances the ability of candidates to secure, and to perform well in those jobs. Companies are also increasingly requiring candidates for mainstream jobs to have a sophisticated understanding of sustainability issues and responses, and the PCSB programme therefore increases candidates' general employability.

It is understood that PCSB is now acknowledged to be the leading accredited sustainability leadership programme in the UK, and possibly internationally.

Managing Teaching Quality and Standards

Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership is careful in the selection in those involved in delivery of the programme, and provides significant support, guidance and briefing to ensure that delivery is to CPSL's high delivery standards. This includes tutor handbooks, speaker briefings, and norming exercises to ensure tutors are all marking to the same standard.

Each workshop is fully evaluated on the content, process and the extent to which it meets participants' objectives. The programme team and tutors review this feedback and take it into account when planning future workshops.

Assessment Practice

In common with other Faculties and Departments, CPSL takes particular care to ensure that common standards are applied across all elements of examinations and across all candidates. This means:

- i) assessment is undertaken consistently to ensure that standards are set and maintained at an appropriate level and that the learning outcomes are properly considered;
- ii) principles, procedures and processes of all assessments are explicit, valid and reliable;
- iii) there are robust mechanisms for marking and for the moderation of marks and that assessment is conducted with rigour, fairness and a due regard for security.

CPSL uses the following assessment practices recommended by the University guidelines: <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/quality/assessment/practices.html>

- i) *detailed marking criteria (see Annex 1 Table 1)*
these are drawn up for specific courses (and, where appropriate, specific modules and assignments) as a benchmark against which the assessors mark work; the criteria are circulated (e.g. in course handbooks and on the Learning Zone) to allow participants to plan their study and reflect on the outcome of their assessment
- ii) *double marking*
this ensures robustness of assessment particularly in more qualitative fields where subjectivity may be involved. CPSL has clear guidelines for assessors over what further action is required where marking discrepancies arise. If the discrepancy is 9% or less, an average of the two marks is awarded. If the discrepancy is more than 9%, the two assessors confer and see if the discrepancy can be reduced to within the acceptable range. If this isn't possible, third marking is instituted and the average of all three marks is awarded.
- iii) *example papers*
in order to guide participants on matters of focus and emphasis, examples of (anonymised) past papers are posted on the Virtual Learning Environment;
- iv) *grading scheme (see Annex 1 Table 2)*
CPSL adopts a University-wide grading scheme which aims to assess performance while allowing for appropriate discrimination between candidates;
- v) *mechanisms for the exchange of opinion*
CPSL ensures that assessors (tutors) undertake a 'norming exercise' at the beginning of each course. This entails the grading of identical sets of three

sample papers (of varying quality) prior to the course – and then meeting up to compare assessment approaches and the application of criteria and the grading scheme. A second ‘exchange of opinion’ forum is the Examiners’ meeting which takes place 8-10 weeks after the course – this is an opportunity for 3 examiners to comment on the grading and feedback provided by the assessors (tutors), prior to confirming final grades. Where discrepancy in the marks exists, assessors may confer to seek to reach agreement (see point ii above).

Student Support

Participants are provided with significant support, including:

- participant handbook and guidelines
- an online virtual learning environment
- a dedicated Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership team to handle enquiries and deal with any issues that may arise
- a tutor who has primary responsibility for supporting their academic work on the programme. Tutors are available at and beyond workshops (via phone and email, and where necessary for face to face meetings).

Other Benefits of attending

- On completion of PCSB, participants are invited to join the Cambridge Sustainability Network which brings together leaders over 3,000 senior decision-makers, thought-leaders, policy-influencers and executives from across the world who share an interest in and a commitment to creating a sustainable future.
- Opportunities to network with peers and to benchmark against other organisations active in the field of sustainability

Indicators of Quality

The programme has two key indicators of quality:

- Participant feedback
- Examiner feedback

Participant Feedback

Comprehensive feedback on all parts of the programme is collected at regular stages throughout the course (at least after every residential workshop). This asks for both quantitative and qualitative feedback on contributors, tutors, course materials and practical administration. Participant evaluation of the programme is carefully reviewed and used to inform future programme content, design, delivery and support.

Examiner Feedback

The following comments are extracted from recent examination process:

“The Examiners agreed that the overall standard of submissions was good and in line with expectations for post-graduate level work. The External Examiner noted that the course continues to be very good at encouraging candidates to integrate both the academic and

practical dimensions of the sustainability challenges facing the organisations from which they are drawn. The External Examiner further noted that the analysis paper/strategic action plan format continues to work well, and that candidates mostly show a clear sense of progression between the analysis work and the strategic planning. The following was the External Examiner's overall comment:

"Overall, as was the case last year, there was some really interesting and analytical work developed by the candidates and their ability to demonstrate the learning that they had acquired on the course and relate it to the real-world challenges faced by their organisations was genuinely impressive."

(Minutes from Examiners' Meeting 2013)

"In terms of the overall standard of the work – as last year, I thought that it was very much what one would expect at post-graduate level and the course continues to be very good at encouraging candidates to integrate both the academic and practical dimensions of the sustainability challenges facing the organisations from which they are drawn. The analysis paper/strategy action plan format continues to work well, and candidates mostly show a clear sense of progression between the analysis work and the strategic planning."

(External Examiner's Report 2013)

"Overall the standard of the work was generally what one would expect at post-graduate level and compared to the last time that I was involved as an examiner I believe a much better balance has been struck within the work between the academic and practical dimensions of knowledge and their integration by the candidate.

Overall though some really interesting work has been developed by the candidates and their development within the course is clear to see through the quality of the work."

(External Examiner's Report 2012)

"Overall I am satisfied that robust and fair procedures have been put in place to review students work. The completed mark sheets show that the course examiners take their task seriously and provide detailed justifications for their marks; this detailed feedback also benefits students."

(University Moderator's Report 2012)