

*Godkendt MIB, 15.08.24*

**Danish School of Media and Journalism**

**Sustainability communication - Theories and practical approaches to communicating a trustworthy image of the organization as a responsible actor in society**

**Course description**

**Fall semester 2024**

**Course:** Crisis and change communication in a CSR context

**5. semester**

**Number of ECTS Credits:** 10 ECTS

**Aims:**

The second course of the semester focuses on crisis and change communication. When an organization engages in sustainability communication, the public might criticize the organization for greenwashing, diversity washing or charity-washing, and the employees might not see the connection between what the organization say and do. In other words, crisis and change communication is useful to help an organization act as a responsible organization. The aim of the course is thus to introduce the students to selected concept and theories within crisis and change that can be used in a sustainability and CSR context. Furthermore, the aim is to create an understanding of employees as stakeholders. Employees are an important, if not the most important stakeholder for an organization, and when they are part of the sustainability journey, the organization becomes more trustworthy. The students will learn to understand organizational changes and explore how organizations can involve employees in the process as well as how they can handle potential crisis situations in order to strengthen, build and rebuild stakeholder confidence and trust in a changing, critical, and global world.

**Pedagogical and didactic approaches:**

The course is a mixture of lectures with presentations, case work, exercises and reflections, readings as preparation for classes as well as tasks, assignments, and projects that the students work with in study groups. The intention with the teaching is that the students get a good grasp of the theories within the field of crisis and change communication, so that they can use them to critically reflect on possible options and choices when working with concrete cases. Furthermore, the students should learn to analyse a situation and come up with concrete communication products that translate theories into practice. The students will also develop skills in teamwork, in providing and receiving feedback, as well as skills in critical reflection on products and processes. The intension is to develop the students' ability to acquire new knowledge and work independently.

The course finishes with an assignment solved in study groups addressing crisis- and change communication in a sustainability and CSR context where the students can demonstrate that they can use the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the course.

**Learning outcomes:**

The students will obtain the following during the course:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- Concepts and theories within change communication, issues management and crisis communication
- Different approaches and paradigms within strategic communication (ranging from functionalistic to constitutive and co-creative/collaborative) and how they influence crisis and change communication
- How relationships between organization and stakeholders are built and developed.
- Organizational identification and employees as stakeholders
- Organizational listening
- Different approaches to involving employees in CSR initiatives and change situations
- Sustainability and CSR as risk communication

Skills:

Students completing the course are expected to:

- Understand the complexity of handling and planning crisis and change communication
- Understand how an organization can act as a responsible organization in relation to crisis and change communication
- Develop analytical, reflective, strategic and critical skills in relation to change communication, issues management and crisis communication
- Identify and apply different strategies within crisis communication

- Develop and plan organizational change communication and to put up a communication plan for a specific crisis situation

**Competences:**

Students are expected to be able to

- Reflect critically on different approaches to and paradigms within crisis- and change communication
- Reflect critically on concepts, theories and methods used in change communication, issue management and crisis communication in relation to CSR in different organizational contexts and settings
- Produce communication products that execute ideas developed in an analysis of a situation

**Literature** (to be purchased before the course begins):

Frandsen & Johansen (2017): *Organizational crisis communication: A multivocal approach*. Sage.

Wolff Lundholt & Uldall (2019): *Leadership Communication in Theory and Praxis*. Samfundslitteratur.

**Literature** (available on ItsLearning):

Aggerholm, H. K. (2014). Communicating organizational change reactions: Downsizing survivors' discursive constructions of flexible identities. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 77(4), 473-498.

Chen, F., Coombs, W.T., & Holladay, S. (2022). Paracrisis and Crisis. In Jin & Austin (Eds.). *Social media and crisis communication* (pp. 118-129). Routledge.

Coombs, W.T. (2022). Chapter 7: Crisis Response, In *Ongoing Crisis Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 129-162.

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S. (2015), "CSR as crisis risk: expanding how we conceptualize the relationship", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 144-162.

Cornelissen (2020). Chapter 10: Issues Management. In *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. 6th Ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 193-213.

Costas & Kärreman (2013): Conscience as control – managing employees through CSR. *Organization*, 20(3): 394-415.

Dahlman, S. and Heide, M. (2021). Introduction. The value of internal communication. In *Strategic internal communication. A practitioners' guide to implementing cutting-edge methods for improved workplace culture*. New York: Routledge, p. 1-10.

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2011): The study of internal crisis communication: towards an integrative framework. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 16(4), 347-361.

Harrison (2015): Chap 6. Communicating change. In Ruck, M. K. (Ed.). (2015). *Exploring internal communication: towards informed employee voice*. Gower Publishing, Ltd, pp. 57-64

He & Brown (2013): Organizational identity and organizational identification: A review of the literature and suggestions for future research. *Group & Organization Management*, 38(1), 3-35.

Kim, S. & Austin, L. (2022). Corporate Social Responsibility and Crisis. In Jin, Y. & Austin, L. (Eds.). *Social media and crisis communication* (pp. 48-59). Routledge.

Klein, S. M. (1996): A management communication strategy for change, *Journal of organizational change management*, 32-44

Kotter, J. P. (1995): Leading Change - Why transformation efforts fail, *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 59-67.

Lewis, L. (2011): Chap 1 Defining Organizational Change In *Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication*, pp. 21-51.

Lewis, L. (2019): Chap 2 Processes of communication during change. In *Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication*, pp. 53-88.

Men & Bowen (2017): Chap 1. The Evolving Practices of Internal Communication. In Men, R. L. and Bowen, S. A. (2017) Excellence in Internal Communication, pp. 1-12.

Men & Bowen (2017): Chap 10. The future of internal communication, In Men and Bowen (2017) Excellence in Internal Communication Management, Business Expert Pres, pp. 165-183.

Sellnow & Seeger (2023). *Theorizing crisis communication*. UK: Wiley & Sons, Inc., p. 1-20.

Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman & Bordia (2004): The downsides of downsizing: Communication processes information needs in the aftermath of a workforce reduction strategy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(4): 485-516.

Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger (2021). Chapter 3: Lessons on Effective Crisis Communication. In *Effective Crisis Communication: Moving From Crisis to Opportunity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications., 31-53

Yaxley, H. and Ruck, K. (2015) Chap 1: Tracking the Rise and Rise of Internal Communication. In Ruck, M. K. (Ed.). (2015). *Exploring internal communication: towards informed employee voice*. Gower Publishing, Ltd, p. 3-14.

**Attendance:**

To pass, students are expected to be active and fulfil DMJX's requirements of attendance and participation both in class, in group work and projects and assignments.

**Prerequisites for taking the exam:**

Fulfilling the requirements mentioned here is a prerequisite for the students to take the exam. Failing to fulfil requirements counts as a used examination attempt.

Compulsory attendance: All scheduled classes are compulsory.

Compulsory participation:

Assignments: All obligatory assignments are compulsory and must be submitted in time and approved.

Group work: Participation in assigned group work is also compulsory.

Remediation

The possibility for remediation only applies in cases of lawful absence.

Substitute assignments: Scheduled classes can be substituted by one or more written assignments if the lecturer finds it necessary. This is always based on specific and individual assessment.

**Exam/Grading:**

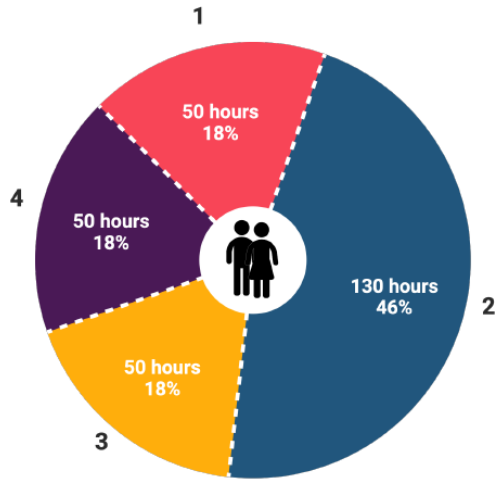
The course is grading according to the 7-point Scale (A-F), internal examination and consists of a written assignment and an oral examination, departing from the written assignment. The groups for the exam are the same as the study groups during the course, which are composed by the institution. The oral examination lasts 15 minutes pr. student, including the assessment, but with a maximum of 75 minutes pr. Group. The student will be graded individually and therefore it needs to be clear who is responsible for which section in the written assignment. The grade reflects a combined assessment of both the written and the oral presentation.

**Study Activity Model:**

## The Study Activity Model

### Crise- and change communication in a CSR context

280 hours in total  
10 ECTS points  
6 weeks



#### Category 1

The lecturer has primary responsibility for the study activities, and the students have co-responsibility through their preparation and participation. Participation by students and one or more lecturers.

Teacher presentations Exercises and discussion in class Feedback on assignments Oral exam

#### Category 2

The lecturer has primary responsibility for defining the learning activities, and the students have primary responsibility for taking an active part in the planned study activities. Participation by students only.

Read course literature Group work Research and analyze cases Write assignments Prepare presentations

#### Category 3

Students have primary responsibility for the study activities, and the lecturer has co-responsibility for ensuring appropriate settings for the activities. Participation by students only.

Write final project in groups of 3-6 people Peer feedback Find supplementary material

#### Category 4

Students have primary responsibility for the learning activities, and the lecturer has co-responsibility for ensuring appropriate settings for the activities. Participation by students and one or more lecturers.

Workshops