

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

Spring semester 2025

Course: CSR – concepts, strategies and communication of sustainability **5. semester**

Number of ECTS Credits: 10 ECTS

Aims:

The first course of this semester focuses on introducing students to the different conceptualizations and understandings of CSR and sustainability, both in terms of their historical and conceptual development. We will discuss the role of CSR and sustainability in society - a society that increasingly demands and expects organizations to engage in sustainability and behave responsibly. This further entails exploring what the social responsibility of organizations may encompass (their role, characteristics, and challenges), the importance of sustainability and social responsibility in relation to developing and strengthening organizational values and ethics and, not least, the opportunities and challenges organizations face in communicating CSR.

This first course of the semester also includes an introduction to sustainable business models, the principles of the circular economy, and the different methods of reporting in both annual and sustainability reports.

Pedagogical and Didactic Approaches:

The primary purpose of this course is to introduce students to the broad field of CSR and sustainability while providing them with the knowledge and understanding required to work with these topics in a professional, critical, and practical manner during later courses in the semester.

The teaching focus is on enabling students to understand, identify, and recognize theories and concepts related to CSR, sustainability, and sustainable business models as they are applied in practice.

Throughout the course, classes will include a mix of lectures, class exercises, group work, student presentations, and written assignments. Students are expected to prepare for classes (e.g., by reading literature, working on cases, discussing theories and cases in study groups, and preparing presentations of different formats) and to participate actively in class. The teaching and course content require a high degree of independent work from students, encouraging them to reflect on the theories and approaches discussed and on their own learning processes.

Learning Outcomes:

Knowledge and Understanding

Students will gain knowledge and understanding of:

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability definitions
- Approaches to CSR and sustainability organization and strategy
- CSR and sustainability communication
- Challenges and opportunities related to CSR and sustainability communication
- CSR and sustainability in branding
- Sustainable business models
- Circular economy
- ESG and ESG Reporting
- Climate accounting standards

Skills

Students will develop skills in:

- Recognizing, identifying, and analyzing organizations' use of CSR and sustainability approaches in their strategic communication
- Understanding and discussing organizational choices regarding sustainability and CSR, with the ability to suggest alternative choices
- Identifying and discussing potential communicative challenges and opportunities for organizations engaging in and communicating about CSR and sustainability
- Reading and understanding corporate material related to CSR/sustainability reporting

Competences

Students will acquire competences in:

- Suggesting and arguing for alternative CSR strategies, communication methods, and reporting approaches based on independent analysis and research

Selected Literature (all material is made available on ItsLearning)

Andersen et al. (2017). Communicative Dilemmas of CSR: Towards and Integrative framework of CSR communication. In Diehl et al.: *Handbook of Integrated CSR Communication*, pp. 51-69.

Blowfield & Murray (2019). *Corporate Social Responsibility*. Chapter 1: Introducing CSR, pp. 4-28.

Brunner & Langner (2017). Communicating Corporate Social responsibility for Brands.

Carroll (1991). The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders. *Business Horizons*, 34(4):39-48.

Chandler (2020). *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility. Sustainable Value Creation*, 5th edition, chapter 10: 240-257 (Strategic CSR).

Elkington (2018). 25 Years Ago, I Coined the Phrase “Triple Bottom Line.” Here’s Why It’s Time to Rethink It. *Harvard Business Review*, June issue. Available online at: <https://hbr.org/2018/06/25-years-ago-i-coined-the-phrase-triple-bottom-line-heres-why-im-giving-up-on-it>

Gulbrandsen, Just & Uldam (2020). S(t)imulating Resistance. Corporate responses to the Trump presidency. *Organization*, 1-23.

In Diehl et al., *Handbook of Integrated CSR-Communication*, pp. 149-169.

information, response and involvement strategies. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 15(4): 323-338.

Morsing & Schultz (2006). Corporate social responsibility communication: Stakeholder

Olkkonen & Morsing (2022). A Processual Model of CEO Activism: Activities, Frames, and Phases. *Business & Society*, 1.49.

Porter & Kramer (2011). Creating Shared Value – How to reinvent capitalism – and un-leash a wave of innovation and growth. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1-2):62-77.

Rasche, Morsing, Moon & Kourula (Eds) (2024). *Corporate Sustainability. Managing Responsible Business in a Globalised World*, 2nd edition. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1: Corporate Sustainability – What is its and Why it Matters, pp. 1-26.

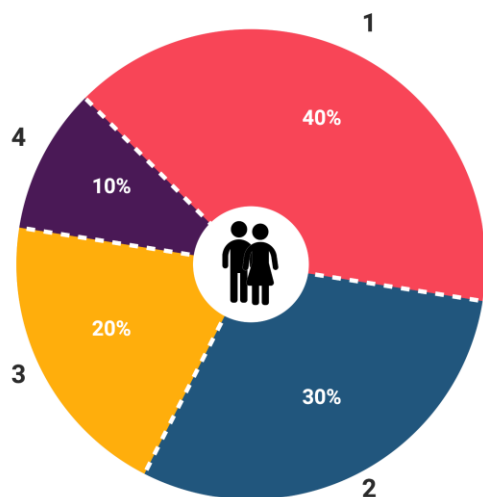
Schmeltz (2012). *Defining CSR*. In *Conflicting Values in Discourses of Social Responsibility. Essays on Consumer-Oriented CSR Communication*. PhD Dissertation. Excerpt.

The Study Activity Model

CSR – concepts , strategies and comm

30 ECTS points

6 weeks



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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.

Lectures, class instruction
Group discussions
Student presentations
Guest lectures
Company visits

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.

Reading literature
Case work
Groups assignments / workshops

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.

Exam preparation
'What have we learnt today'

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.

Student-initiated activities
Forum sessions where students determine and guide lesson content and reading
Supervision

Godkendt, DTM, 24.01.2025