

Sustainable HRM, strategies, practices, and challenges

International Semester Programme

September 2024 — February 2025

HRM specialisation: parallel track of the Social Work Bachelor programme



2024
2025

think. act. become.

Understanding Sustainable HRM in a VUCA World

- 30 ECTS
- Taught in English
- Autumn Semester
- Mid-September — End of January (specific dates can be found on the website)

Challenged? Curious?

We invite you to take part in this programme!

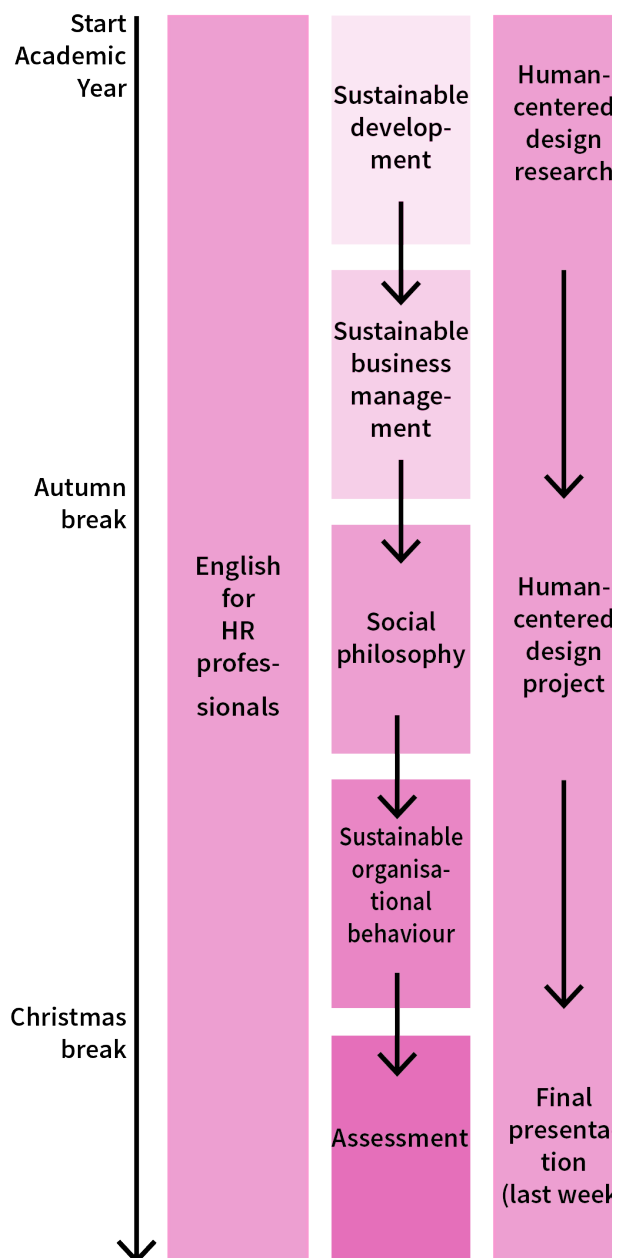
In management and particularly in HR there are many courses to provide insight into management as well as HR issues.

However, there is limited understanding of systems thinking at the level of the organisation. Therefore HR policies are often not sustainable proof and may unintentionally have unwanted effects on organisational outcomes and internal or external stakeholders.

Understanding of the organisation-stakeholder relationship using new and contemporary theories in the sustainable HRM is useful in reframing more dominant strategic HRM-based mental schemas.

Sustainable HRM is important in achieving economic, financial, ecologic, and social outcomes of corporate sustainability. If we want future leaders in business and HRM to care more about sustainability when making decisions, we should introduce sustainable HRM in the curriculum and ask students to reflect critically on current situations and on possible solutions for our future.

Timeline





Courses

Mixed groups with local students

Sustainable development

4 ECTS

Faced with persistent socio-ecological problems diverse actors all over the world are engaged in initiatives aimed at fostering sustainability transitions: fundamental changes at the level of complex socio-technical systems like the energy, mobility, housing or agro-food system. These transitions are long-term processes that change deeply anchored strategies, structures, and practices.

Transitions which result in a profound transformation of a system. Existing decision-making procedures often prove unable to adequately tackle persistent and complex, so-called “wicked” sustainability problems. Hence, appeals have been made to experiment, to tackle these problems as “learning by doing.”

Ghent is a living lab for social innovation initiatives for local social-ecological wicked issues. In this course we will have a closer look to local experiments initiated from a multi-disciplinary perspective in order to bridge the gap between theoretical models and real practices.

Sustainable business management

4 ECTS

Our world is changing fast. Future leaders face the challenges of a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world. Disruptive events such as the Covid-19 pandemic have a huge impact on society and economy. Also, climate changes show that business-as-usual has to change in

order to guarantee meaningful lives for future generations. The objective of this course is to offer students an overview on theories and frameworks related to sustainability, and which solutions are already implemented in the current business environment. Traditionally, sustainability is linked with environmental theories and challenges, but authentic sustainable business management also aims at creating economic and social value.

Therefore, we focus most on recent theories to underpin sustainable business management: the Doughnut Economy, Profit versus Value and Ecosystems. After setting the framework, we will discuss practical examples and real-life cases, looking for practical solutions that could help face these challenges. Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Entrepreneurship and Circular Economy among others will be analysed.

Social philosophy

3 ECTS

The problems we are facing today have their roots in history. Philosophy has a tradition of reflecting on current situations informed by great thinkers in different periods. In this course there will be a focus on philosophy of late modernity with focus on subjectivity, differently understood as the ego, the individual or the effect of social power structures. Texts of great thinkers on “subjectivity” will be discussed, from René Descartes (modernity) to Slavoj Žižek (our late-modernity).

Sustainable organisational behaviour

5 ECTS

In recent decades, we have been facing many crises: financial, leadership, health care, climate... The dominant narrative of the way we organise our life and institution at all levels is under pressure. Transition management is needed now more than ever. Moreover, it is important to realise that the most thrilling breakthroughs will not come from technologies inspired by robotics or artificial intelligence, but from our capacity to reinvent organisations towards more sustainability.

These agile organisations are the scope of this course. How can we develop agile leadership and HRM for turbulent times? In this course we explore strategies and practices of these reinvented organisations. We take a deeper dive into fundamental principles of these agile organisations: self- management, holistic or systemic perspective and working with the concept of an emergent future (instead of a planned future).

In this transition phase, we are especially interested in the role of HR-professionals to make sustainable organisations happen.

Human-centered design research

3 ECTS

What kind of research do we need in order to tackle wicked problems? In what way can human-centered design research support social innovation?

In what way is this methodology valued as research and what kind of expertise is expected from a researcher? What can we learn from designers and how can we apply this knowledge towards wicked problems in organisations?

As this semester is all about tackling wicked problems, design research is indispensable not only for improving your practice, but also for advancing learning as the basis of improved practice. It offers a notion of research that is thoroughly integrated into everyday life. Reflectiveness or reflexivity is advocated and integrated in this approach. We explore the connections and potential incongruences between our theorising and how we act.

Design research aims to be a disciplined, systematic process: take stock of what is going on; identify a concern; think of a possible way forward; try it out; monitor the action by gathering data to show what is happening; and evaluate the progress by establishing procedures for making judgments about what is happening.

Human-centered design project

8 ECTS

Sustainable HRM is the common thread in this semester. The courses provide a better understanding from different perspectives. The purpose of the design project is to undertake a human-centered design project yourself. Starting with a real-life question, you will improve your learning process by doing it yourself, together with your fellow students.

The project will be carried out in co-creation with an (international) local organisation and coached by a lecturer, who will also guide you during the semester on your professional development.

By doing a project, students reflect actively on their own professional identity. Being a reflective practitioner is the answer for the rising challenges for future professionals in a globalised and ever-shifting world.

English for HR-professionals

3 ECTS

This course can be seen as a boot camp introducing non-native speakers to “what’s in it for Me, for the Business (or Organisation I want to work for) and My World.” It is an invitation to improve your communication skills to take more advantage of the other courses during this semester.

The topics are related to the general topic of the semester. It features dozens of exciting, authentic and up-to-date examples to raise awareness on “Alive in the Anthropocene” and have interesting discussions on it.

It draws on video materials from international media and texts from different sources and perspectives. In addition, you will be honing your grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills.

The International Semester is aimed at students...

- *interested in sustainability in organisations (HRM, social work, business, and open to other relevant disciplines)*
- *from Higher Education Partner Institutes which we have a BILAK or MOU with*
- *with an advanced level (obtained 60 ECTS in a bachelor programme)*
- *sufficiently proficient in English, level B2*

If you want to come to Ghent for a whole year, we recommend you combine it with the programme ‘Together for Social Education.’



Interested?

Next steps and procedure

Step 1

Nomination by your institution

Nomination before 1 May by the international officer of your institution via the forms (spread by email)

Step 2

application online by the student

Register online through '[mobility online](#)'.

Period of online application:

15 March 2024 — 8 May 2024



Location

HRM specialisation: parallel track of the
Social Work Bachelor programme
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