

# BUSINESS SCHOOLS' PREPARATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC CHANGE

A Gap Analysis of Student Perceptions and Curriculum Content at  
Lapland UAS and FH Aachen

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This thesis explores the extent to which business schools prepare students for an economy changing due to sustainability considerations, focusing on Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS) in Finland and Aachen University of Applied Sciences (FH Aachen) in Germany. The primary object of the research is to examine both student and faculty perceptions of preparedness to address sustainability challenges in students' future careers. The research is guided by four sub-questions related to the integration of sustainability and ethical business practices in curricula, the alignment between student expectations and faculty goals, and the role of ethics in business management education.

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative data from a survey distributed to current students and faculty with qualitative analysis of two open-ended questions in the survey and course descriptions. Course descriptions were analyzed to assess the extent to which sustainability is integrated into each business program.

Data analysis was carried out using statistical methods for the survey responses and content analysis for course materials. Key concepts from the theoretical frameworks of Capitalist Realism (Fisher), Ghoshal's critique of business schools, and Doughnut Economics (Raworth) were applied to assess the gaps and integration of sustainability in the curricula.

The findings indicate varied integration of sustainability and ethical business practices across both institutions, and notable gaps between faculty goals and student expectations. Recommendations include increasing sustainability-focused content in curricula and providing practical solutions at curricula, faculty, and institutional levels to better prepare students for a sustainability-focused economy.

<b>Keywords</b>	Sustainability Development, Tertiary Education, Curricula, Business Ethics, Survey Research, Economic Theories
<b>Special remarks</b>	This thesis has been submitted at both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen as part of a double degree program.

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## FOREWORD

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## SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECTS	European Credit Transfer Accumulation System
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
EU	European Union
FH	Fachhochschule
GBE	Global Business and Economics (FH Aachen)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IB	International Business (Lapland UAS)
IBS	International Business Studies (FH Aachen)
PRME	Principles for Responsible Management Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
UAS	University of Applied Sciences

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Business schools play a fundamental role in shaping the future of business as they instruct, and influence student thought about the intricacies and complexities of the business world. These schools equip students with the skills and knowledge required to both participate in and form the future of business, balancing the need to meet current market demands while providing a framework that allows students to develop into leaders who influence the realities they enter. Climate change impacts all aspects of society, creating new challenges for business schools in adapting their curriculum. In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a central topic both in business education and in the corporate world, reflecting an increasing societal demand for businesses to act as responsible stewards of the environment (Bansal et al. 2021). Business education must develop beyond traditional models to integrate more comprehensive discussions of sustainability, both in practical applications and in the role that ethics play in how businesses currently run and what might be done to mitigate climate change (Jaganjac et al. 2024). The challenge, therefore, is preparing students for the current business environment while still encouraging them to think critically and creatively beyond the status quo. Given their global reach and influence, businesses are uniquely positioned to drive large-scale societal change, particularly regarding sustainability. This research examines these concepts through the lens of two institutions, Lapland UAS in Finland and FH Aachen in Germany, which offer distinct approaches to integrating sustainability in business education.

The primary research question guiding this thesis is: How well do business schools prepare students for a sustainability-focused economy? This research will also be informed by the following sub-research questions:

1. How do business students and faculty perceive their preparedness to address sustainability challenges in their future careers?
2. How well do student expectations and faculty goals align in preparing students for a sustainability-focused economy?

3. To what extent are sustainability and ethical business practices integrated into the course offerings at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, based on course titles and descriptions?
4. How do students and faculty perceive the role of ethics in business management, and how does it influence their understanding of sustainability?

The main focus of this research is centered on a survey examining how students and faculty perceive their preparedness for sustainability-related challenges, including the ethics of management. The survey will also address how well student expectations, faculty goals, and institutional missions align in preparing students for a sustainability-focused economy. In addition, a review of the courses offered in these specific programs, focusing on course titles and descriptions, will provide additional context for how sustainability and social responsibility are integrated into the curricula.

At Lapland UAS (Lapland UAS 2024a), the International Sustainable Business (IB) program is structured to teach students how environmental and societal factors influence business decisions. The program emphasizes entrepreneurship and sustainability, providing a foundation for both a global and local approach to business (Lapland UAS 2024b). The program aims to prepare students explicitly for the changing needs brought about by climate change and the adoption of sustainability practices, understanding the ways in which business is both shaped by and contends with sustainability (Kalogiannidis et al. 2024). FH Aachen's Global Business and Economics (GBE) program, by contrast, focuses on the complexities of doing business in a global context as their main goal (FH Aachen 2024a). The International Business Studies (IBS) program also offers students practical experience in areas like finance, marketing, and economics (FH Aachen 2024b). This is appropriate given the geographic locations of each institution: Lapland UAS, with its multiple campuses spread across several cities in the Finnish Arctic and sub-Arctic (including Rovaniemi, Kemi, and Tornio), is situated in a region where the effects of climate change are felt more drastically (Koivurova et al. 2021; Stępień et al. 2015). FH Aachen, by contrast, is located in North-Rhine Westphalia, near the Rhine-Ruhr area—one of the most industrialized and densely populated regions in the European Union, with a population density of

over 1,100 people per square kilometer (Eurostat 2023). While both programs recognize the importance of international cooperation and teach to this, sustainability is more deeply embedded into the content structure of Lapland UAS's program, as reflected in its name, International Sustainable Business (Lapland UAS 2024a), compared to FH Aachen's programs (FH Aachen 2024a, 2024b). Both programs, however, could benefit from the integration of alternative economic models and deeper sustainability frameworks, such as Doughnut Economics or regenerative growth (Raworth 2017). The need for more sustainability-focused core curricula is increasingly important to graduate students with the skills, knowledge, and competitive edge in the business market globally (Jaganjac et al. 2024; Lozano 2010). As businesses are held more accountable for their environmental and social impact, graduates must be prepared to balance these expectations with profitability.

This research is significant because it can inform business schools, students, faculty, and curriculum developers on where and how sustainability is implemented, where gaps may exist, and what friction points for greater integration may arise. By highlighting the absence of alternative economic frameworks and examining how sustainability and ethical concepts are perceived by students and faculty, the research can offer suggestions for better integrating sustainability into business education. The findings will offer insights for business schools looking to better prepare students for future challenges in a sustainability-driven economy (Bansal et al. 2021), helping shape the kinds of future we all want to share.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

### 2.1 Introduction to Business Education and Sustainability

Over recent decades, there has been a growing call from both students and market forces to integrate sustainability into business education more thoroughly (Wickham 2014; Beamond et al. 2024; Abdou & Ammar 2024; PRME 2022). As industry standards change, sustainability skills are increasingly in demand in the market; however, this shift is largely reactive rather than proactive, often lacking the structural incentives (such as higher pay) to support curriculum changes that fully integrate sustainability (Abdou & Ammar 2024; Beamond et al. 2024). Students, too, are showing increasing interest in seeing sustainability integrated within business programs as a means to drive social and environmental impact (Wickham 2014; Zhang & Szerencsi 2023). Yet, even when sustainability content is introduced, it is commonly treated as an elective or supplementary module rather than a foundational element of the curriculum (PRME 2022; Tormo et al. 2016; Triana & Peterson 2022). This partial integration reflects, and perhaps reinforces, industry and academic perspectives that see sustainability as optional rather than essential to meaningful change (PRME 2022; Tormo et al. 2016; Triana & Peterson 2022).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), particularly Goal 4 on Quality Education, emphasize that education should build "knowledge and skills of sustainability" to support broader sustainable development (Dziubaniuk & Nyholm 2021). The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative, supported by the United Nations and originating from the UN Global Compact, was established in 2007 to guide institutions in embedding sustainability and responsible management principles into their curricula (PRME 2022). PRME engages over 800 business and management schools worldwide and is driven by Seven Principles aimed at fostering a comprehensive integration of sustainability across business disciplines (PRME Guide 2022). However, PRME itself has noted that the selective implementation of its principles by many institutions limits effectiveness, underscoring the need for a cohesive and fully realized strategy (PRME Guide 2022). This partial and inconsistent application often undercuts sustainability efforts, leading to limited outcomes and a prevailing

sense of stagnation among both students and faculty (Abdou & Ammar 2024; Zhang & Szerencsi 2023).

Despite the escalating reality of climate change, sustainability is still frequently seen as an add-on rather than foundational in both educational and corporate contexts (Raworth 2017; Castañeda & Cuellar 2024), though some frameworks advocate for greater integration (Wickham 2014). This perception creates a feedback loop in which neither students nor educators feel compelled to prioritize sustainability as central to business education (Beamond et al. 2024). The level of integration also varies significantly across business programs, with European institutions often leading in the incorporation of sustainability practices but still showing inconsistency in depth and application (Tormo et al. 2016). This disparity reflects a broader tension between long-term goals that prioritize environmental and societal welfare and short-term business practices that focus on immediate gains (Beamond et al. 2024; Abdou & Ammar 2024). For sustainability to become a foundational part of business education, both academic institutions and market actors must commit to integrating these principles deeply and consistently, challenging the "business-as-usual" approach that currently dominates the field (Raworth 2017; Zhang & Szerencsi 2023).

## 2.2 Historical and Ethical Foundations in Business Practices

The role of business in society began to shift significantly with the introduction of concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), both of which emphasize that business decisions should account for people, planet, and profit, not just financial outcomes (Wright et al. 2011). Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory marked a critical departure from Milton Friedman's influential view that a company's sole obligation is to maximize shareholder returns, asserting instead that businesses are accountable to a broader range of stakeholders, including employees, communities, and the environment (Freeman 1984; Friedman 1970). This approach redefined businesses as a direct part of, rather than separate from, society and, as such, responsible for their societal impact. Freeman's framework laid the groundwork for more in-

clusive business practices, an idea later expanded by Raworth (2017) in Doughnut Economics, although this only marked the beginning of a larger discourse on responsible business (Raworth 2017).

Over the years, CSR evolved, yet its role in business education often remains limited, treated more as a business strategy than as a core framework for business decision making (Wright et al. 2011). CSR, despite its potential to drive positive change, has frequently been employed as a public relations tool rather than a transformative business model, making it reactive rather than proactively foundational (Zsolnai 2024; Fisher 2009). As a result, CSR's initial goal of aligning business practices with societal welfare has, in many instances, been diluted, reducing CSR to a superficial strategy rather than integrating it as a genuine element of corporate values (Wright et al. 2011; Zsolnai 2024).

Business ethics teaching has grown from these shifts but continues to encounter challenges within modern curricula. Similar to sustainability, ethics is often presented as an add on rather than embedded in the core of business education (Statler & Oliver 2016). Business ethics is commonly offered as a standalone subject, detached from other major areas of business education such as finance, marketing, and operations, which limits students' understanding of the ethical dimensions across different business functions (Tormo et al. 2016; Schweigert 2016; Gottardello & Pàmies 2019). This compartmentalization risks leaving students unprepared for the complexities of real-world ethical dilemmas, where business decisions are interconnected and have far reaching consequences (Auvinen et al. 2013).

Further, ethics education in business schools often lacks the depth needed to critically address the complexities inherent in corporate decision making. Schweigert (2016) observes that a "cost of doing business" mentality can emerge when unethical practices are dismissed as acceptable trade-offs. To address this, ethics education would benefit from practical, experiential learning opportunities, such as simulations or case-based assignments which already exist in other courses such as business or logistics simulation games, that promote critical thinking and the application of ethical principles in complex scenarios. Emblen-Perry (2018) advocates for a constructivist approach to teaching ethics, one that

emphasizes real world application and actively engages students with the challenges of ethical decision making in a business context.

The development from CSR to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics is a constructive step in business education. ESG frameworks provide accountability across a broader range of metrics, integrating social and environmental performance alongside financial measures (Wright et al. 2011; Zsolnai 2024). ESG offers a comprehensive approach to evaluating a company's overall impact, encouraging businesses to expand beyond a solely profit centered perspective. However, the integration of ethics within business education continues to face resistance, often perceived as supplementary rather than essential. Ghoshal (2005) critiques this "neutral" view of business education, arguing that many programs overlook the inherently ethical nature of business decisions. For ethics to be fully integrated into business education, institutions must move beyond simply adding CSR and ESG as topics, instead embedding ethical considerations within the core curriculum, preparing future business leaders to recognize the ethical implications of their actions as fundamental, not peripheral.

### 2.3 Impact of Capitalism on Business Curricula

The traditional profit maximization mindset in business often conflicts directly with the goals of sustainability. Frequently, sustainability and ethical considerations are included in business curricula only in response to market pressures rather than as transformative educational goals (Beusch 2014; Gigauri 2021; Gottardello & Pàmies 2019). This market driven approach frames business education as a mechanism to prepare students for the economic realities they will face after graduation, rather than as a platform for driving meaningful change. In this way, capitalism shapes sustainability rather than allowing sustainability to redefine the economy, placing business education under pressure to conform to market demands rather than fostering a critical or transformative perspective on those demands (Fotaki & Prasad 2015).

Fotaki and Prasad (2015) further argue that this market centric approach restricts students' ability to engage critically with sustainability and ethical frameworks, as business education becomes focused on reproducing, rather than rethinking, the

market dynamics in which it is situated. To move away from simply replicating market ideologies, business schools and future leaders must reevaluate their relationship with capital, promoting an understanding of business as an integral part of society that is capable of effecting positive change. Ghoshal (2005) extends this critique to ethics, suggesting that ethical considerations often become secondary to market imperatives. Both Ghoshal and Fotaki & Prasad emphasize that without a shift in the underlying values taught in business programs, the role of ethics and sustainability will remain constrained, serving primarily as tools to appease market expectations rather than to challenge them (Ghoshal 2005; Fotaki & Prasad 2015).

Foucault's theories of power and knowledge offer insight into how these dynamics shape business education. Foucault explains that what is accepted as "truth" in a society is deeply influenced by dominant power structures, where truth is not only shaped by but exists within the bounds of power ("in truth") (Foucault 1980). In this view, market forces act as a form of ideological power that shapes business curricula; as business education responds to these forces, it reinforces and legitimizes those market driven perspectives in a cyclical manner. This feedback loop of influence makes it increasingly challenging to envision or implement an educational model that critically examines or opposes the dominant capitalist ideology (Kociatkiewicz 2022). Business schools, tasked with preparing leaders for the business world, inevitably experience the pressure to align with these powerful market expectations, which complicates the task of integrating sustainability as a core element rather than a peripheral one.

Foucault's framework further demonstrates the relationship between public and private sectors, or between market forces and academia, suggesting that while these spheres may see themselves as either adversaries or allies at varying times, they both operate within and contribute to an uneven distribution of power within society. Ignoring these power dynamics does not negate their influence; instead, it reinforces the existing power structures. As Foucault would argue, the role of business schools in producing the next generation of business leaders perpetuates these dynamics, limiting the potential for transformational integration of sustainability when such a shift challenge entrenched power relations (Foucault 1980).

Despite these challenges, movements within academia are pushing toward a broader approach in business curricula, aiming to view sustainability and ethics not merely as strategies or marketing tools but as foundational elements. This movement, however, remains uneven and largely aspirational, with little systemic change achieved to date (Springett 2005; Yang et al. 2021). Thus, the relationship between academia and market demands in a capitalist society remains complex and unresolved, as both institutions grapple with the need for transformation while operating within these established power structures (Yates 2023; Slager et al. 2018).

#### 2.4 Alternative Economic Models and Theoretical Foundations

Over the decades, there have been innovations and contributions that explore ways to understand the economy outside of traditional profit-maximization models, aiming instead for a more inclusive than extractive economy, as described in Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017). Alternative economic models challenge the way economies function and what we consider to be success metrics. These success metrics traditionally include indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), profit margins, and market share, which align with the dominant logic that measurable outcomes are paramount (Raworth 2017; Ghoshal 2005). However, this perspective often overlooks unquantifiable yet essential societal and environmental benefits. Sustainability frameworks, such as Doughnut Economics described by Raworth (2017), explicitly prioritize these benefits, presenting a direct challenge to traditional metrics of success (Hoff & Stiglitz 2016; Stern et al. 2022). In economics, countable metrics are vitally important; they imply that if something cannot be measured, it does not exist, even though this may not be true for society as a whole. This emphasis highlights the need to change how we view and prioritize key metrics and value creation (Bobulescu 2022). Business growth is often viewed as limitless, while finite resources are acknowledged, yet there is no explicit connection between these two contradictory realities. Alternative economic models, which question the assumption that profit maximization equals greater value creation, align more directly with sustainability principles, aiming to benefit society as a whole in various ways (Haider et al. 2024). As Hoff and Stiglitz

(2016) assert, current economic metrics often reinforce existing inequalities, making it imperative to evaluate alternative frameworks that incorporate social justice alongside environmental and economic goals.

Business schools already discuss aspects of a circular economy, which aims to keep resources in constant flow, a concept that mirrors how we understand and view money as both a store of value and a means of trade—ideas that may at first glance seem contradictory but function effectively in practice (Sandoval-Llanos 2024). However, circular economy concepts alone are not enough to bridge the gap between traditional economic models and sustainable development. Principles like those in Doughnut Economics, as described by Raworth, emphasize that economic planning and business strategies must explicitly recognize and operate within real world economic and social boundaries (Bobulescu 2022; Raworth 2017). Doughnut Economics, along with other alternative models, is not just an interesting side theory but a practical model that can be directly integrated into business curricula. Such integration would help shape a generation of students and future leaders who explicitly understand the interconnectedness of business, society, and the environment (Raworth 2017).

Another model that could significantly reshape the business landscape and economies as a whole, and that could bring business curricula more in line with sustainability and ethical consideration, is regenerative growth. This model seeks to add more than it takes, requiring businesses to actively improve the environments in which they operate, leading to a new kind of growth that moves beyond traditional profit maximization (Kopnina 2015). Here, sustainability is not some ambiguous concept with tenuous links between ecology and business but rather a deeply integrated objective, fostering a healthier world where business and ecological goals are intertwined. Degrowth presents yet another model with the potential to challenge students to think beyond traditional economics, sustainability, and conventional definitions of success and value creation (Kallis 2023). Together, these models illustrate a range of ways business curricula can not only expand the understanding and competencies of future leaders but also encourage critical thinking about what economics should and could look like. Stiglitz (2009) adds that overcoming "market fundamentalism" is a critical step toward

developing an economic framework that prioritizes long-term societal and environmental well-being.

The effectiveness of alternative models depends on the local context, as factors such as society, local economic structures, and environmental priorities vary widely. While understanding the complexities of these considerations is beyond the scope of this study, it should be acknowledged that they are vital to implementing alternative economic models in a way that makes sense within specific settings (Zherdeva et al. 2024; Yıldırım et al. 2021). Research highlights that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to economic development and business strategy, as each model’s potential impact depends on the unique regional, cultural, and economic conditions where it is applied. This emphasizes the need for further research to fully understand what each model’s implementation might entail (Yıldırım et al. 2021). As Capello (2011) also notes, regional economic frameworks must balance global sustainability priorities with local development needs to ensure meaningful and contextually relevant outcomes.

Foucault’s theories on power and knowledge offer insight into these dynamics, suggesting that access to and understanding of alternative models are shaped by dominant power structures that determine which forms of knowledge are valued and accessible. Without exposure to these alternative models, students are less likely to question the primacy of profit maximization, perpetuating a focus on short-term gains and limiting the potential for real, systemic change (Foucault 1980). Market forces exert influence over the types of students that emerge from academic institutions; yet, if business education continues to prioritize profit maximization and treats sustainability as secondary, it will continue to reinforce short-term objectives and hinder transformative change. Davis (2017) emphasizes that alternative models must not only be taught but also critically evaluated to empower students to challenge entrenched norms and contribute to sustainable and equitable economic systems.

Integrating and fostering a critical understanding of the possibilities within alternative economic models and their potential for transformative power is increasingly not only an option but essential for educational institutions committed to preparing students for the complex challenges of an economy facing significant

environmental pressures. These models can prepare future leaders to innovate beyond profit-driven objectives. The pandemic has highlighted strengths and weaknesses within the current economic paradigm that must be addressed, and incorporating models like Doughnut Economics, regenerative growth, and degrowth principles can help prepare students to lead with foresight, resilience, and innovation, ensuring that future business practices prioritize long term societal and ecological wellbeing. As Stiglitz (2019) argues, building a more equitable and sustainable global economy requires aligning education, policy, and practice to address the fundamental flaws of current systems.

Business curricula are an ideal setting to introduce students to alternative economic models, challenging them to think critically about the roles of economies, businesses, and value creation. Academic institutions can serve as testing grounds where students engage with these theories, assess their practical applications, and ultimately emerge as leaders with the vision and freedom to innovate in truly transformative ways.

## 2.5 Curricular Approaches to Sustainability and Ethics

While there are increasing efforts to include sustainability principles in business curricula, this inclusion remains uneven across institutions and in the distribution across courses where it is offered (Emblen-Perry 2018; Zsolnai 2024). There has also been a renewed interest in reintegrating ethics into business courses; however, these efforts still fall short of what is necessary to address the demands of an economy changing due to sustainability considerations and stakeholder expectations (Painter-Morland et al. 2015; Brunstein et al. 2020). Although business schools are progressing in this area, further integration is needed to address these evolving challenges meaningfully (Parrique 2019; Triana & Peterson 2022). Research suggests that an interdisciplinary approach facilitates deeper engagement and understanding, which in turn fosters increased interest in these areas among students (Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018). However, sustainability and ethics courses are still often relegated to optional or standalone classes, limiting student exposure and preventing a comprehensive understanding of how these principles are interwoven with all facets of business (Zsolnai 2024; Brunstein et al. 2020).

As this research focuses on two universities of applied sciences, it is also relevant to address research indicating that practical, hands-on teaching approaches, rather than purely theoretical instruction, improve critical thinking, understanding, and engagement with sustainability and ethics topics (Emblen-Perry 2018; Triana & Peterson 2022). Similarly to other areas of study in business education which include business simulations, research suggests that case-based and project-based learning are especially effective for sustainability and ethics education, as they enable students to apply theory to real-world situations, improving engagement with the ideas and fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018; Brunstein et al. 2020). While some courses do discuss real-world examples of ethical or sustainable dilemmas, these often focus on cases gone catastrophically wrong, leading to a sense of inevitability and inability to break free from the cycle (Painter-Morland et al. 2015). Positive reinforcement, along with fostering a sense of empowerment and agency, is essential to create room for real change. For there to be change, students must believe they can make a difference. Here, practical methods like simulations and hands-on projects provide students with a way to engage deeply, allowing them to explore these concepts within complex, multi-stakeholder environments and better preparing them for the nuanced realities they are likely to face in their future careers (Brunstein et al. 2020; Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018).

A well-designed curriculum that integrates sustainability and ethics across disciplines plays a critical role in developing responsible leadership. Responsible leadership, as defined in recent research, involves a commitment to ethical decision-making and accountability to both societal and environmental stakeholders (Zsolnai 2024; Painter-Morland et al. 2015; Parrique 2019). By including sustainability and ethics within core business courses, educational institutions can cultivate leaders who are prepared to balance profit with the broader needs of society and the environment, ultimately fostering a new generation of leaders capable of addressing the complex challenges of a sustainability-focused economy in the 21st century (Parrique 2019; Triana & Peterson 2022).

Research supports that while it is essential to maintain program-specific focus, providing students with an interdisciplinary perspective on sustainability, connecting economics, business, environment, and society, significantly strengthens

their understanding of how business practices interact with and impact the world (Hunnes 2023; Triana & Peterson 2022). Business is not separate from environmental and social factors, and a curriculum that introduces sustainability and ethical concepts across programs enables stronger engagement and critical thinking among students (Emblen-Perry 2018; Brunstein et al. 2020). This holistic approach also increases students' likelihood of taking these issues seriously, engaging critically rather than becoming disillusioned or dismissive of the urgency of sustainability, or dismissing other areas of study as irrelevant or out of hand.

Sustainability is not secondary to core business functions, as businesses do not operate in isolation from real-world ecological and social considerations. Treating it as a peripheral topic does a disservice to students, future leaders, and the broader society we all share (Painter-Morland et al. 2015). Effective curriculum design is therefore essential for fostering responsible leadership, and research highlights several methods for achieving this. Deep integration of sustainability and ethics across courses, supported by case studies and project-based learning, enhances student engagement and fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by sustainable business practices (Brunstein et al. 2020; Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018).

## 2.6 Student and Faculty Perceptions of Sustainability in Education

Student and faculty perceptions of sustainability vary widely based on factors such as age, background, personal motivation, and general understanding of what sustainability means (Bergman et al. 2024; Gottardello 2019; Probst & Zizka 2024). There is a stronger focus from younger students on sustainability considerations compared to older students and especially faculty. Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge, which are explored further in the theoretical framework, help understand this generational divide and consider the power structures within academic institutions, as well as the role academia plays in society. In particular, Foucault's concept of power/knowledge illustrates how generational divides in academia reflect broader power structures, with established norms and practices often privileging seniority, thereby positioning the knowledge and authority of the younger generation as subordinate within institutional hierarchies (Foucault 1980). These structures, as discussed in earlier sections, influence which topics,

like sustainability, gain prominence in curricula and which remain peripheral, which in turn subtly shape and reinforce engagement from both students and faculty. This dynamic, which is not static, underscores the importance of shifting educational and institutional paradigms to better support sustainability integration across disciplines and course offerings within programs (Foucault 1980; Raworth 2017).

Understanding the interconnected nature of sustainability and ethics is highlighted by how faculty who discuss ethics in their courses are more likely to also discuss sustainability. It is also important to note that often, despite the UN providing a broader definition, sustainability is still often considered only in environmental terms by students and faculty alike, rather than giving due consideration to societal and economic factors (UN 1987; Zhang & Szerencsi 2023). This emphasizes the need for sustainability integration across education programs and in institutional goals, which includes discussion of ethics and alternative economic theories, which themselves highlight the interconnected nature of business.

Some faculty view sustainability as core, whereas others may view sustainability as tangential to their area of teaching, which highlights the need for clear institutional goals and holistic approaches to sustainability integration in education, where it can be seen as multifaceted and provide students with the best opportunity for exposure and critical analysis (Parrique 2019; Zsolnai 2024). This is reflected in how students and faculty alike recognize the need for more depth in sustainability education, which better reflects real-world cases and scenarios (Triana 2022; Brunstein et al. 2020).

Faculty may lack access to professional development opportunities focused on sustainability and may also lack the time to pursue this for personal development on their own time even if they had access and inclination, resulting in varied levels of understanding and ability to incorporate these topics into their teaching (Triana & Peterson 2022; Tormo et al. 2016). Additionally, curriculum structures often limit flexibility, preventing faculty from making room for emerging content on sustainability, especially in comparison to other trends which are more traditional and

better match current institutional goals. This disparity highlights the need for institutions to provide both resources and incentives for faculty to engage meaningfully with sustainability topics (Emblen-Perry 2018).

Institutions that have succeeded in embedding sustainability across curricula demonstrate the impact of well-supported, interdisciplinary approaches. For instance, some universities have implemented cross-departmental workshops and ongoing faculty training programs designed to foster an environment where sustainability is seen as integral to all business studies. This model has led to increased student engagement and a stronger, more consistent incorporation of sustainability themes across various business disciplines (Bergman et al. 2024; Zsolnai 2024).

It is acknowledged there are a variety of reasons why students and faculty would be interested in sustainability integration, and that not all students or faculty have the same level of understanding or awareness with sustainability theories and realities. Integration of sustainability into courses needs to address this disparity accordingly. Foucault's insights into how discourses are shaped and controlled by power relations within institutions emphasize the role of younger voices in challenging traditional norms. While these voices often face resistance from long standing academic hierarchies, their focus on sustainability reflects an effort to shift institutional priorities, aligning them with broader societal and environmental needs (Foucault 1980). The interplay of desires and power structures both pushes and pulls for creating better educational institutions that acknowledge and adapt not only to market forces but also to the reality of a changing environment (Probst & Zizka 2024; Yang et al. 2021). Students have varying levels of engagement and understanding, faculty have varying levels of engagement and understanding, and institutions are finding the balance between supplying and shaping the market in which business students will emerge into. Foucault helps us understand this power disparity, and with understanding, change can be made.

## 2.7 Challenges to Integrating Sustainability in Business Education

Challenges to integrating sustainability into business education, whether individually or comprehensively, are multifaceted and generally understood (Bansal

2022; Gawel 2022; Schweigert 2016). Capitalism, as Fisher describes, inherently opposes sustainability by its very nature (Fisher 2009). Other studies similarly indicate that the dominant capitalist paradigm, along with business teaching practices rooted in this ideology, limits meaningful sustainability integration, often relegating it to a secondary or peripheral concern (Fotaki & Prasad 2015; Kociatkiewicz 2022). This opposition is reinforced by the inertia of business curricula, where both individual and institutional resistance contribute to a slow pace of change and a limited understanding of sustainability's potential for business education.

There is a significant disconnect between the desire and the more immediate need for transformative change in educational institutions, particularly within business schools with faculty often lacking both the expertise and resources to drive necessary changes. Sustainability education is rapidly evolving, and faculty members may feel unprepared to incorporate sustainability effectively into their courses due to limited access to training and professional development opportunities in this developing field (Triana & Peterson 2022; Tormo et al. 2016). In addition to ideological barriers, practical constraints like limited funding and inflexible curriculum structures hinder sustainability integration, making it difficult for faculty to dedicate time and resources (Emblen-Perry 2018; Triana & Peterson 2022). Additionally, curriculum structures often limit flexibility, creating challenges for faculty trying to incorporate emerging sustainability content, particularly when more traditional topics are prioritized to meet existing institutional goals. This disparity in faculty preparation and institutional support emphasizes the need for resources and incentives to help faculty engage meaningfully with sustainability (Emblen-Perry 2018).

Despite the United Nations' broad definition of sustainability, which includes environmental, social, and economic dimensions, sustainability is often perceived mainly through an environmental lens by both students and faculty, with less attention paid to its social and economic aspects (UN 1987; Zhang & Szerencsi 2023). This limited perspective further emphasizes the need for institutional support to integrate sustainability in ways that address how sustainability touches all aspects of society and the world in which we live. Institutions that successfully

embed sustainability across curricula, especially through interdisciplinary approaches, demonstrate that well supported models can significantly impact engagement. For instance, some universities have implemented cross departmental workshops and ongoing faculty training, creating an environment where sustainability is integral to business studies and can be understood as such. These efforts have led to stronger engagement and more consistent incorporation of sustainability themes across disciplines (Bergman et al. 2024; Zsolnai 2024).

Faculty views on sustainability range from seeing it as core to their teaching objectives to considering it tangential to their subject area. The ideological resistance rooted in "capitalist realism," as Fisher describes, presents a unique barrier to sustainability integration, where the dominant capitalist narrative limits the potential for alternative frameworks in business education. In line with Foucault's ideas on power and knowledge, altering the status quo requires not only structural resources but also an ideological shift that encourages critical engagement with capitalism itself (Fisher 2009; Foucault 1980). This inconsistency underscores the need for clear institutional guidelines and a holistic framework for integrating sustainability across business education programs, allowing students broader exposure and opportunities for critical analysis (Parrique 2019; Zsolnai 2024). Both students and faculty frequently recognize the need for deeper, more realistic sustainability education that aligns more closely with real world business scenarios (Triana 2022; Brunstein et al. 2020).

The varying motivations behind student and faculty interest in sustainability integration reflect differences in their knowledge and awareness of sustainability theories and practices. Effective integration must account for these disparities. Moreover, the interplay of individual interests, institutional goals, and power structures both supports and complicates the goal of creating educational institutions that respond to environmental and market realities. Coordinated institutional support is vital to bridge the gap between intention and implementation. Mandated faculty training on sustainability concepts, alongside increased funding for course development, could provide essential resources and reduce the barriers currently hindering meaningful integration (Rasche & Gilbert 2015; Tormo et al. 2016). Time will tell if these incremental steps are sufficient to address the challenges, but

evidence suggests that a more comprehensive, coordinated effort is necessary (Sudhirjo et al. 2024; Tormo et al. 2016).

## 2.8 Summary and Implications for Curriculum Development

It is imperative to integrate sustainability both more deeply and broadly throughout business education to ensure students are well prepared for an economy and business environment increasingly shaped by sustainability considerations. It is crucial to understand the motivations and backgrounds of both students and faculty, as well as the roles institutions play in society, as these factors influence how sustainability is perceived and adapted to within business programs (Triana & Peterson 2022; Tormo et al. 2016). Sustainability must be at the core of business education across disciplines, providing continuous exposure and fostering an understanding of the interconnectedness of subjects. This approach moves beyond simple environmental considerations to a more holistic view that encompasses social and economic dimensions (Bergman et al. 2024; Zsolnai 2024).

Ensuring that ethics is discussed across courses is one way to approach sustainability concerns and improve understanding and engagement. This both addresses what it means to be a responsible business and bridges the knowledge gap between rapidly evolving sustainability sciences and practical business applications, while also developing more conscientious and prepared leaders capable of facing challenges they may not have studied directly in university (Emblen-Perry 2018; Brunstein et al. 2020). Research suggests that practical, real-world applications, such as project-based and case-based learning, foster deeper engagement with sustainability, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios (Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018). Alternative economic theories offer additional methods to better address environmental impacts and break away from the traditional profit-maximization focus of capitalism (Raworth 2017; Kopnina 2015).

While fully integrated sustainability across programs and fully trained, well-funded faculty and programs is an ideal, such a transformation is unlikely to occur abruptly or on a large scale. Institutional inertia and existing curriculum structures

also pose significant challenges, as adapting to evolving sustainability needs often requires shifts that extend beyond individual faculty initiatives (Gawel 2022; Schweigert 2016). Just as students are encouraged to innovate in sustainable development, institutions and faculty must also adapt to the changing landscape, aiming to build a better future. There is much to learn, and the field is rapidly developing; by taking a systematic approach that embraces the integrated nature of sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models, institutions can allow these changes to become embedded in regular teaching materials. Integrating sustainability more deeply within business curricula also positions students to become future leaders capable of driving sustainable transformations within the evolving economic landscape (Parrique 2019; Zsolnai 2024). This approach enables students to engage meaningfully, guided in their critical thinking by qualified professionals within an academic setting (Parrique 2019; Zherdeva et al. 2024).

### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction to Theoretical Framework

This research draws on three key theoretical perspectives to examine how business education addresses sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic systems, with a fourth perspective briefly included for additional guidance. Mark Fisher's Capitalist Realism (Fisher 2009) inspired this work, offering a critical view of how sustainability is framed within the broader paradigms of capitalism and dominant economic systems. While the full scope of Fisher's work is not explored here, his insights on how capitalism shapes societal norms and restricts sustainable alternatives provide an essential lens for this analysis (Fisher 2009).

Sumanthra Ghoshal's Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices (Ghoshal 2005) offers critical views on the role of management education in influencing business practices, particularly how outdated and ineffective management theories continue to dominate academic curricula, creating a disconnect between academia and industry in addressing ethical and sustainable business practices (Ghoshal 2005).

Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017) provides a contrasting model that challenges traditional growth-centric economic systems, prioritizing human wellbeing and environmental sustainability within the boundaries of our planet. Her framework offers a more holistic view of sustainability, contrasting sharply with the capitalist models critiqued by Fisher and Ghoshal (Raworth 2017).

Finally, Michel Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge (Foucault 1980) are briefly employed to understand how institutions shape discourse around sustainability and reinforce existing power structures. Foucault's work is used here in a limited capacity to highlight the intersectionality of power, knowledge, and institutional influence on the discourse of sustainability (Foucault 1980).

Together, these theories provide a framework for analyzing the integration of sustainability, in its broadest sense, into business education, identifying potential barriers to reform, and offering recommendations for the schools surveyed.

### 3.2 Capitalist Realism by Mark Fisher

Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* (2009) puts forth that capitalism has become so entrenched in society that it is seen as the only viable system, as he demonstrates with the subtitle of the work *Is There No Alternative?*, which in itself is a play on the phrase "There Is No Alternative" popularized by Margaret Thatcher (Fisher 2009). Fisher argues that this ideology has permeated the way business is taught, including the perception that everything, from healthcare to education, should be run like a business (2009). Fisher's work highlights how capitalism is directly "opposed to any notion of sustainability," viewing sustainability as a threat to the profit-driven model and the omnipresent force that is capital (Fisher 2009).

This research will focus on employing specific concepts from Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* to examine the challenges of integrating sustainability into business education. While Fisher's work engages with a wide range of postmodern critiques, this analysis will concentrate on how his ideas specifically apply to sustainability in curricula (Fisher 2009). By narrowing the focus to these concepts, this literature review provides a critical lens for understanding how capitalist realism hinders deeper integration of sustainability in business education.

One of Fisher's key concepts, drawn from Slavoj Žižek, is that we continue to participate in the capitalist system even while knowing its flaws, and allow ourselves to keep participating as long as we acknowledge these flaws. This is referred to as "cynical distance" by Žižek, and then employed by Fisher (Žižek 2008; Fisher 2009). This concept of cynical distance helps explain why business education might acknowledge sustainability concerns while failing to take meaningful action. Fisher also critiques the naturalization of capitalism, where profit maximization becomes the dominant goal, relegating ethical and sustainable considerations to a surface level interaction (Fisher 2009).

Fisher also highlights how climate change and environmental degradation are acknowledged by capitalist culture but are co-opted into marketing and superficial efforts, rather than leading to deep systematic changes. This supports research into how business schools discuss sustainability but can fail to integrate it into a substantive way into curricula, or how courses may contradict one another, with

one promoting profit maximization while another course critiques the harm caused by that very practice. This can lead to confusion and cognitive dissonance for students (Fisher 2009).

Referring again to the notion of capitalism being inherently opposed to sustainability, this concept underpins an exploration of why alternative models of economics, such as Doughnut Economics or regenerative growth, are often underrepresented in mainstream business curricula, particularly in core courses (Fisher 2009; Cullen 2021; Aragon-Correa et al. 2020). A review of business school curricula across multiple institutions reveals that alternative economic models like these are included less frequently in core business courses compared to traditional economic theories (Cullen 2021; Aragon-Correa et al. 2020). While sustainability-focused topics are increasingly present, they are often confined to electives rather than mandatory core modules (Annelin & Boström 2024). The pervasiveness of capitalism, Fisher argues, limits alternative thinking. His concept of capitalist realism describes how capitalism becomes the default system, making it difficult for alternatives to take hold in education and, consequently, among students (Fisher 2009; Snelson-Powell et al. 2020). Finally, Fisher's critique of auditing culture demonstrates how bureaucratic procedures, often designed for organizational promotion rather than meaningful change, reflect capitalist priorities even in educational settings (Fisher 2009). These ideas are directly relevant to the examination of how Lapland UAS and FH Aachen approach sustainability in their business programs.

### 3.3 Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices by Sumanthra Ghoshal

Sumantra Ghoshal (2005) critiques the dominance of outdated management theories, which treat business as a predictable science rather than a field shaped by ethics and social responsibility. He contends that these theories create a "distance from considerations of morality," where business decisions focus solely on profit maximization (Ghoshal 2005).

Ghoshal's concept of "self-fulfilling prophecies" suggests that teaching managers to expect bad behavior in business encourages and normalizes that behavior

(2005). This idea helps explain why sustainability is often treated as an add-on in business education rather than a core principle: expecting opportunistic behavior leads to practices that prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability (Ghoshal 2005).

Another key concept raised by Ghoshal is the erosion of cooperation that results from relying on narrow management theories. When business education emphasizes profitability and finding ways to capitalize on and control opportunities, it can replace voluntary cooperation with minimal compliance. This also connects to Fisher's critique of bureaucracy and audit culture, where rules and procedures suppress creativity and deeper ethical engagement. This is particularly relevant in contexts where students are encouraged to be innovative yet must navigate structured environments and prescriptive tasks that limit their potential (Ghoshal 2005).

Overall, Ghoshal's critique articulates the need for business education to move beyond profit-maximizing models, even when considering "sustainability opportunities." He advocates for a broader focus on comprehensive sustainability and business ethics as core elements of curricula. His assertion that teaching managers to expect opportunism lends further support to the argument that reform is necessary in how sustainability is integrated into business curricula (Ghoshal 2005).

#### 3.4 Doughnut Economics by Kate Raworth

Doughnut Economics, developed by Kate Raworth in 2012 and published as a book by the same name in 2017, promotes a model of economics that thrives without surpassing environmental limits (Raworth 2017). This idea aligns with the UN's definition of sustainability developed in 1987, which described sustainability as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (UN 1987). This economic model offers a clear framework for evaluating how business schools address, or fail to address, sustainability, as it prioritizes balancing social and environmental needs with economic growth. The relative absence of models like Doughnut Economics in favor of more traditional profit-driven approaches, highlights a potential gap in current business

education (Raworth 2017; Lozano et al. 2015). See Appendix 1 for the full illustration of "Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist," which depicts the key shifts in economic thinking central to Doughnut Economics (DEAL 2017).

Raworth's framework is particularly relevant in the context of business education, where sustainability is often discussed but rarely integrated deeply into core curricula. Her work encourages a shift away from economic models that prioritize endless growth, proposing instead that businesses aim to meet societal needs within the ecological limits of the planet (Raworth 2017). By using the metaphor of the doughnut, Raworth visualizes the balance needed between meeting human needs (inside the doughnut) and staying within planetary boundaries (the outer ring), making this framework highly applicable to discussions of how business education can foster sustainable thinking (Raworth 2017). While some scholars have praised this approach for its holistic view of economics (Fullerton 2015), others have critiqued it for potentially oversimplifying complex economic systems (Hodgson 2019).

This study will use Raworth's Doughnut Economics to critique how current business curricula often fail to promote a comprehensive understanding of sustainability. While some sustainability concepts are addressed, Raworth's work suggests that a deeper transformation of business education is necessary. By failing to incorporate models like Doughnut Economics, business schools risk perpetuating the same profit-driven mentality that contributes to global environmental and social crises (Raworth 2017).

### 3.5 Considering Power, Knowledge, and Truth through Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault's theories provide a valuable perspective on how power structures within institutions, including business schools, shape and reinforce dominant ideologies. In Foucault's work, what is accepted as 'truth' within an institution is not an objective reality but rather a product of power relations (Foucault 1980). This means that those in positions of authority, such as curriculum designers and faculty, determine what is considered valid knowledge. Truth, in this context, is constructed within the framework of power and knowledge, where what is

acknowledged as true is contingent upon those who control the discourse (Foucault 1980).

In the context of business schools, Foucault's concept of 'power/knowledge' explains how curricula tend to reflect dominant economic ideologies, particularly capitalism. By framing capitalism as the natural or best system, business schools condition students to accept profit maximization as the primary goal, even when they may enter their programs with an interest in sustainability or ethics. This gatekeeping restricts the possibility of introducing alternative models, such as Doughnut Economics, because these models challenge the dominant capitalist framework (Raworth 2017).

Foucault's ideas are applied in this research to explore how power dynamics in business schools contribute to the marginalization of sustainability-focused models in business education. By understanding how these power structures function, this research examines how certain models, such as regenerative economics or Doughnut Economics, remain on the periphery, despite their growing relevance in global sustainability debates.

While Foucault's work is not the central theoretical framework of this thesis, it provides a critical lens through which the institutional barriers to integrating sustainability in business curricula can be understood. Specifically, Foucault's concept of power and knowledge will inform the analysis of how sustainability is presented, or not presented, in business programs, addressing the limitations and gaps in how business schools engage with these issues.

The application of Foucault's theory will help in analyzing how business schools' existing power structures may unintentionally gatekeep interdisciplinary learning by framing capitalist ideals as the norm. This understanding will be used to assess the broader context in which business schools teach sustainability and how the intersectionality of business and environmental concerns is handled, based on survey responses and findings.

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research Design

This research employs a primarily quantitative approach, with empirical data collected through an online survey. The survey utilizes Likert scales to gather structured responses from students and faculty at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen regarding their perceptions of sustainability in business education. Additionally, two open-ended questions were included to capture brief insights, which were reviewed to identify any notable patterns or themes. However, the overall methodology remains focused on quantitative analysis. This approach is appropriate for understanding broad perceptions of students and faculty and aligns with established research practices (Saunders et al. 2007; Moilanen et al. 2022).

The survey questions were designed to directly address the study's research questions, focusing on three main areas: perceptions of sustainability preparedness, curriculum alignment with sustainability concepts, and awareness of ethical and alternative economic models. The design of these questions was informed by the integration of multiple theoretical frameworks, including Fisher (2009) for insights on sustainability within capitalist systems, Ghoshal (2005) for understanding ethics in business education, and Raworth (2017) for concepts related to alternative economic models. Additionally, the UN definition of sustainability (1987) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, n.d.) served as guiding principles for assessing the role of sustainability in education.

In addition to survey data collection, a review of course listings and descriptions from Lapland UAS and FH Aachen's business programs for the 2023/2024 academic year was conducted to provide supplementary context (Lapland UAS 2024b; FH Aachen 2024a; FH Aachen 2024b). This review focused on how sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models are presented within the curriculum. Course data were extracted from institutional websites and systematically recorded, detailing course titles, descriptions, type (mandatory/elective/specialization), and year of study. A yes/no query was used to identify keywords related to sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models. Thematic coding was applied to the course descriptions, with the goal of identifying trends, such

as progression over academic years or the prevalence of these themes in mandatory versus elective courses.

Academic tools and channels for supporting the survey and course analysis included databases such as Finna, EBSCO, and ResearchGate to identify relevant scholarly articles. Key search terms included: sustainability in business education, ethical business management, alternative economic models, Doughnut Economics, and regenerative growth. Additional terms were iteratively added based on insights gained during the research process. Generative AI tools, primarily ChatGPT 4.0 and Elicit, were used to support the research process by facilitating brainstorming, clarifying theoretical frameworks, and identifying relevant academic sources. All sources suggested by AI tools were independently verified by reviewing the original peer-reviewed materials. Additionally, AI tools were used during the revision process to check clarity and refine language, in line with Lapland UAS guidelines (Lapland UAS 2023c). Final analyses and writing remain the independent work of the researcher, adhering to academic integrity standards.

#### 4.2 Sampling and Participants

The survey targeted students and faculty from Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, focusing on their English-language undergraduate business programs. A total of 52 responses were recorded; however, one respondent was screened out based on the survey design, resulting in 51 valid responses from participants affiliated with Lapland UAS or FH Aachen. Participants included students and faculty members, selected using a convenience sampling approach. Institutional email accounts were used to distribute the survey to ensure accessibility and reach. Student surveys were distributed via institutional staff who forwarded emails to their respective cohorts, while faculty contacts were identified using institutional directories.

Response rates varied by institution and group:

- Lapland UAS students: 6 responses out of 43 contacted (14% response rate).
- Lapland UAS faculty: 6 responses out of 8 contacted (75% response rate).

- FH Aachen students: 31 responses out of approximately 2,500 contacted (1.2% response rate).
- FH Aachen faculty: 8 responses out of 41 contacted (19.5% response rate).

The relatively low response rate from FH Aachen students reflects challenges associated with online surveys, such as self-selection bias and survey fatigue. However, faculty participation was higher than expected and provided additional insights into curriculum design and integration of sustainability themes. Demographic data collected included participant roles, study semester (for students), years of teaching experience (for faculty), and gender, enabling comparisons across groups.

#### 4.3 Survey Design and Development

The survey methodology and themes were informed by a review of 21 similar studies, with the framework drawing upon *Methods for Development Work: New Competencies in Business Operations* (Moilanen et al. 2022); *Research Methods for Business Students* (Saunders et al. 2007); and *Effective Research Methods for Any Project* (Rosen 2018). These resources ensure that the survey aligns with established quantitative methods. The survey questions were self-developed, as no validated survey addressing these specific themes was identified during the research process. The full survey is provided in Appendix 2 for reference.

The survey includes several sections to gather a broad range of information:

- Demographic information: e.g., role, institutional affiliation, study semester/years of experience, and gender.
- Familiarity with sustainability concepts: e.g., CSR, ESG, regenerative growth.
- Perceptions of curriculum integration: Assessment of how sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models are integrated into business courses.

- Alignment of expectations: Analysis of the perceived alignment between student and faculty goals regarding sustainability in business education.
- Open-ended questions: Focused on challenges and suggestions for improving sustainability and ethical integration, with a 750-character limit.

The survey was created using Webropol 3.0, an online survey platform, ensuring ease of access and secure data collection. Survey participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and anonymity protocols, and responses were anonymized in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and institutional guidelines. The survey was estimated to take 10-20 minutes to complete, and consisted of 27 questions, with slight variations in demographics for students and faculty. Participation was encouraged through institutional email accounts.

#### 4.4 Data Collection

Data was collected via the Webropol platform, which was used to create and manage the survey. The survey remained open for a set period of ten days to ensure sufficient response rates. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, and participation was voluntary. All data was anonymized automatically by Webropol ensuring the data management was in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and institutional ethical guidelines such as ethical standards of Lapland UAS and TENK (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity). Data was deleted no later than one month after the thesis process was completed.

Additionally, course listings, program descriptions, and institutional information from both institutions were reviewed, particularly regarding the representation of sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic theories in the curriculum. This review will be supplementary and primarily descriptive. These materials were collected from institutional websites and represented business program offerings for the 2023/2024 academic year, the most recent full academic cycle with complete

course information. The programs were the BBA International Sustainable Business for Lapland UAS and the B.Sc. Global Business and Economics and B.Sc. International Business Studies (English course offerings) for FH Aachen.

For course listings and descriptions, the review focused on collecting data about course titles, course descriptions, and classifications (mandatory vs elective, core vs specialization). Keywords related to sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models were noted, and data was organized in Excel using a yes/no query to track the presence of these themes. Additional coding was conducted to understand themes in course descriptions. Courses were further categorized by institution and year of study to prepare for subsequent comparisons.

For program descriptions, objectives and institutional context were collected to identify mentions of sustainability-related themes or goals. Institutional mission statements and institutional profiles and key figures were also reviewed to gather insights into the broader educational priorities of each institution. These materials were collected for descriptive purposes to contextualize the survey findings.

This review was supplementary and focused on collecting descriptive information to provide context for the primary survey data.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis was conducted using Webropol's built-in tools for both quantitative and limited qualitative analysis. For quantitative data, Likert-scale responses were processed by calculating averages and cross-tabulations to identify trends and differences between groups, such as students versus faculty, level of schooling for students, and years of teaching experience for faculty. This approach allowed for an exploration of differences in perceptions based on various demographic factors, though the analysis was limited by the time constraints for data processing and the skill of the researcher. While additional demographic data, such as age and educational background, were collected, these variables were not included in the analysis to ensure the study remained focused on its primary objectives and to manage the scope of the analysis within the constraints of time and length.

Open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns. Responses were first exported as a Word document for readability and later transferred to Excel, where codes were applied and grouped into categories. This process involved reviewing responses line by line to ensure impartiality and consistency. The results were then used to supplement the quantitative findings.

Additionally, a content review of course titles and descriptions from Lapland UAS and FH Aachen offered supporting data on how sustainability and ethics are presented in the curriculum. This analysis focused on keywords such as “sustainability” and “ethics” in course descriptions to contextualize the survey findings. Excel sheets were color-coded to compare trends across institutions and course types. Given the limited access to course details beyond titles and short descriptions, this analysis was intended to be basic and descriptive.

#### 4.6 Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported survey data may introduce response bias, as participants’ responses could be influenced by personal perceptions or social desirability, potentially impacting the objectivity of the findings. Additionally, the study focuses on two institutions, Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, and their English-language undergraduate business programs. This focus may limit the generalizability of the findings, as it restricts the analysis to a narrow academic and linguistic context, shaped by the researcher’s limited proficiency in Finnish and German. Future research could benefit from expanding to additional institutions and including programs taught in other languages to capture a broader cultural and educational perspective.

Another limitation involves the timeframe and language used for secondary research. Only English-language publications were used to ensure consistency. While some central works, such as *Capitalist Realism* and *Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices*, are older, these were included due to their relevance in framing key issues in business management theory. In contrast, additional research on the integration of sustainability in business education was limited to publications from the last ten years, capturing the rapidly

evolving discourse accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis and reflecting current trends and responses to global events.

The examination of alternative economic models and ethics in management was set within a broader timeframe of 15 years to provide a more comprehensive view of these concepts. This extended timeframe allows for an understanding of why certain ideas, despite long-standing recognition, have not yet been fully integrated into business education. This period also encompasses significant economic events, such as the 2008 financial crisis, which influenced academic discourse on alternative models. Moreover, this timeframe includes pivotal works like *Doughnut Economics* (2017) by Kate Raworth, which continues to offer relevant insights for contemporary business education.

Finally, while this study explores selected themes within sustainability and alternative economics, it does not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of sustainability education or the history of alternative economic theories. Instead, it is limited to a few key concepts that have gained traction in recent years. To achieve a more nuanced understanding, future research could incorporate additional qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, enriching the findings and enhancing data triangulation.

## 5 ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM CONTENT AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

In the following section is the analysis of the curriculum content, limited to course titles and descriptions, as well as institutional commitments to sustainability as understood through mission statements and international business program descriptions at Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Lapland UAS) and Aachen University of Applied Sciences (FH Aachen). Examining the course offerings and institutional missions, this section adds depth and a point of comparison for understanding the later survey results. While not a full course content analysis, the following offers a view into the nature of sustainability integration in each institution's international business education programs. The analysis is structured to highlight gaps and alignments with best practices for sustainability in higher education.

### 5.1 Course Content Analysis

#### 5.1.1 Lapland UAS: Course Offerings and Sustainability Content

Lapland UAS's Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) program in International Sustainable Business has sustainability as a specific objective and orientation for the degree. The course offerings, both core and elective, reflect this intention. Courses such as Introduction to Sustainable Business, Sustainable Logistics, Sustainability Accounting, and Sustainable Investing and Finance demonstrate the importance of environmental and social considerations in business operations. These courses are described as core competencies for the degree, progressively building from semester to semester, ensuring students from varying backgrounds are prepared to understand and engage critically with topics broadly across disciplines. These courses collectively provide foundational knowledge and skills, such as sustainable resource management, ethics in finance, and environmentally conscious logistics, which are especially relevant given the recent weaknesses demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. They prepare students to tackle climate related challenges in business contexts.

Additionally, Lapland UAS's program offers advanced modules on Social Entrepreneurship and Social Impact Management, both of which promote a deeper understanding of the role of business in society through both innovation and management practices. This is another way Lapland UAS demonstrates alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) by going beyond the limited view of sustainability as strictly an environmental concern. These courses describe their content in a way that suggests exploration of how businesses can contribute to or harm social well-being and emphasize the need for ethical and responsible leadership.

While this analysis only considers course titles and descriptions and does not assess the full implementation of aims and objectives within course syllabi, it is important to note that explicitly stating a course involves sustainability suggests an effort to integrate sustainability in a meaningful way.

#### 5.1.2 FH Aachen: Course Offerings and Sustainability Content

FH Aachen's Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Global Business and Economics (entirely in English) and International Business Studies programs (offering English-language courses) approach sustainability primarily through elective courses called specialization modules. FH Aachen has a much larger student body and business faculty than Lapland UAS and is accordingly able to offer a wider range of elective and specialization courses. However, the aims of the programs offered at FH Aachen are more traditional in their approaches to business while offering a range of international opportunities.

FH Aachen's English-language courses that integrate sustainability and ethical considerations include Business Ethics and Intercultural Management, Sustainability Accounting, and International Marketing, which address ethical and environmental implications, focusing on how global business practices intersect with sustainability challenges. This approach is most clearly evident in courses like Sustainability Accounting, where students examine advanced topics related to environmental reporting and finance, gaining skills and tools in assessing and reporting on sustainable practices within multinational organizations.

This analysis only considers course titles and descriptions and does not assess the full implementation of aims and objectives within course syllabi. It is important to note that broader discussions of sustainability and ethics topics may still be covered in the courses even when not explicitly listed as a topic of the course. As noted in the literature review, courses that discuss business ethics are more likely to also include sustainability topics (Emblen-Perry 2018; Brunstein et al. 2020).

### 5.1.3 Comparative Insights: Gaps and Alignments in Sustainability Content

Comparing the curriculum offerings at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen reveals both similarities and disparities in sustainability and ethics content integration at first glance, providing a reference for interpreting survey results. Both institutions address sustainability but vary widely in scope and depth. Lapland UAS, while offering fewer courses overall, incorporates sustainability as an explicit and foundational component across core courses, with a stronger emphasis on entrepreneurship. Conversely, FH Aachen integrates sustainability through specialization courses and electives, creating a more segmented approach where the degree's greater focus is on international applications and digital competencies in a globalized context.

The analysis indicates that while Lapland UAS provides a cohesive sustainability framework through core courses, FH Aachen's structure is more modular, with sustainability appearing as an option in elective courses and specialization modules. These differing structures could suggest differing institutional philosophies and reflect the location and societies they operate within: Lapland UAS emphasizes local sustainable business practices, while FH Aachen prioritizes preparing students for more narrowly defined specialization skills in international markets.

## 5.2 Institutional Goals and Sustainability Commitments

### 5.2.1 Mission Statements and Strategic Goals

The missions and strategic goals of both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen reflect their institutional commitments, broader educational priorities, and program-specific goals and objectives.

For Lapland UAS, while a direct mission statement was not found, the program descriptions for International Sustainable Business (IB) emphasize the importance of sustainable development, particularly within local and Arctic contexts (Lapland UASb 2024). The program description highlights skills in sustainable business practices and addresses social and environmental issues, aligning with Finland's educational priorities for sustainability in higher education (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland 2023). This regional and community-focused approach demonstrates Lapland UAS's intent to prepare graduates with the skills necessary to contribute to sustainability in local economies, in areas ranging from entrepreneurship to international business.

FH Aachen, on the other hand, has a defined mission statement that emphasizes innovation, digitalization, and sustainability across disciplines (FH Aachen 2024c). The university describes sustainability as an integral part of its guiding principles for both research and teaching. This approach reflects Germany's strategic priorities in higher education, where digital integration and transformation, as well as environmental responsibility, are highlighted as essential competencies for students entering the global market (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany 2023).

### 5.2.2 Comparison with Literature-Based Best Practices

An assessment of both institutions' approaches against literature-based best practices in sustainable business education shows strengths and areas for further development. Key sources on sustainable business education advocate for comprehensive sustainability integration, multi-stakeholder engagement, and ethical decision-making frameworks (Brunstein et al. 2020; Tormo et al. 2016; Zsolnai 2024). Both institutions partially meet these criteria but with different emphases.

Lapland UAS's curriculum aligns closely with best practices through its integration of sustainability in core courses and its strong practical orientation. The emphasis on collaboration with local entities and community engagement mirrors the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) despite not being a member, which encourage institutions to cultivate ethical, sustainable business leaders rooted in local contexts (PRME 2022; Bergman et al. 2024).

In contrast, FH Aachen's curriculum, while aligned with PRME principles (2022) through its focus on ethics and digital competencies as well as a practical orientation, would benefit from expanding core sustainability offerings to match the evolving needs of global business contexts. The modular approach could be augmented by integrating sustainability more deeply into required courses, enhancing FH Aachen's alignment with best practices that call for sustainability to be a foundation of business education (Triana & Peterson 2022; Gawel 2022).

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## 6 ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA: STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY IN CURRICULUM

### 6.1 Introduction to Analysis

#### 6.1.1 Overview of Data Collection and Survey Scope

Data was gathered via an online survey using the application Webropol 3.0 through a Lapland UAS license. The survey was distributed to undergraduate business students and faculty members for the English language programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen via official school emails. The survey was structured to look at how sustainability, business ethics, and alternative economics are perceived within these programs and curriculum, focusing on importance, integration and practical application in business education.

The survey consisted of primarily close-ended questions and additional two open ended questions to offer deeper insight. Close-ended questions utilized a seven-point Likert scale, allowing for a slightly more nuanced quantitative analysis of general background and analysis of general attitudes and perceived effectiveness. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on perceived challenges and suggest potential improvements, providing qualitative data for a deeper interpretation of their perspectives.

The survey ran for 10 days, made available through a public link emailed to target groups, with a reminder sent two days before closing to increase the response rate. In total, 52 responses were submitted, but only 51 were included in the analysis, representing both students and faculty from both institutions, as one respondent was not affiliated with either school and could not proceed. Respondents came from a diverse, if limited, cross-section of students and faculty with varying levels of experience and backgrounds. The survey used to collect this data is provided in full in Appendix 2 for reference.

### 6.1.2 Analytical Framework

A primarily quantitative approach was utilized to analyze survey responses, with limited use of qualitative techniques to understand two open-ended responses. Analysis was conducted using the built-in tools in Webropol and Excel.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** The quantitative data were analyzed using Webropol's built-in analysis tools, focusing on descriptive statistics, including response frequencies, averages, and cross-tabulations, to examine trends and relationships across participant groups. A seven-point Likert scale was employed, allowing comparisons across demographic segments, such as student and faculty responses, and student level or years of teaching experience for faculty. This structured view highlighted the importance students and faculty place on sustainability integration, their confidence in applying sustainability concepts, and their perceptions of how well the curriculum integrates sustainability.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Two open-ended questions were included in the survey, and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes in responses. Responses were first coded based on recurring topics, such as requests for practical application, interdisciplinary integration, and institutional/structural barriers. Webropol's text analysis tool was used to assist with initial coding, focusing on recurring topics, while further analysis and thematic categorization were conducted manually in Excel to ensure consistency and depth in the interpretation of open-ended responses. This thematic approach allowed for a deeper understanding of sentiments and complex ideas, adding insights to the quantitative analysis.

The combination of methods enabled the analysis to present a more balanced perspective on sustainability education, where the personal insights from the open-ended questions offer depth to the numerical data collected through the majority of the survey. This framework aligns with established academic standards for business research, supporting a comprehensive understanding of both student and faculty perceptions of sustainability in the business curriculum at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen.

## 6.2 Quantitative Analysis of Student Perceptions

### 6.2.1 Importance and Relevance of Sustainability in Business Education

The survey data indicates a general agreement among students on the importance of integrating sustainability and ethics into business education. On a seven-point Likert scale, with 7 indicating “extremely important” and 1 indicating “not important,” the average ratings were 5.6 as shown in Figure 1 for both sustainability and ethics integration. The data also indicated an average score of 5.6 for students’ perception of how important sustainability will be in the next 5-10 years in student future careers.

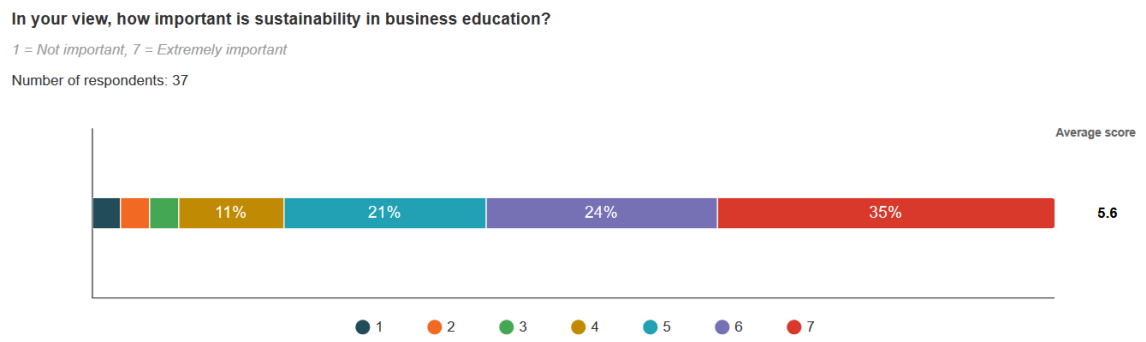


Figure 1. Student responses on the importance of sustainability in business education (1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important; N = 37)

The data, however, also indicated a lower average score for perceptions relating to personal responsibility in addressing sustainability in students’ future careers, with an average of 5.2. While this still demonstrates students feel sustainability is important, they are less likely to feel personally responsible for addressing these challenges in their future careers.

When analyzing data by year of study, as shown in Figures 2 and 3 below, another interesting trend appears. Students show an increase in their perception of the importance of sustainability and ethics in business education for the first three years of study, with the average decreasing for students in their 4th year and above. This slight increase in ratings for the first three years of study may suggest students’ recognition of sustainability’s importance grows over time, possibly due to increased exposure and understanding as they advance through their studies.

A decrease in the four years, likewise, could indicate there may be less contact with courses with students possibly taking fewer courses and engaging less with sustainability and ethics related topics. A more comprehensive data collection and analysis would be needed to understand this trend.

**In your view, how important is sustainability in business education?**

1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important

Number of respondents: 37

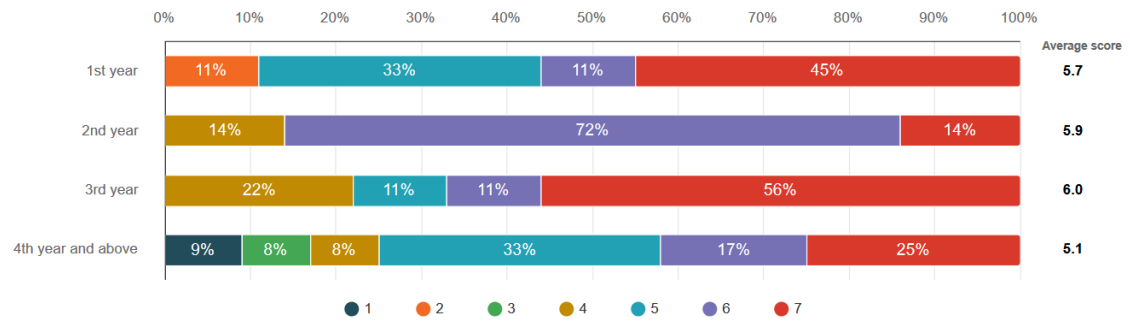


Figure 2. Importance of sustainability in business education by year of study (1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important; N = 37)

**In your view, how important is the role of business ethics in sustainability practices?**

1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important

Number of respondents: 37

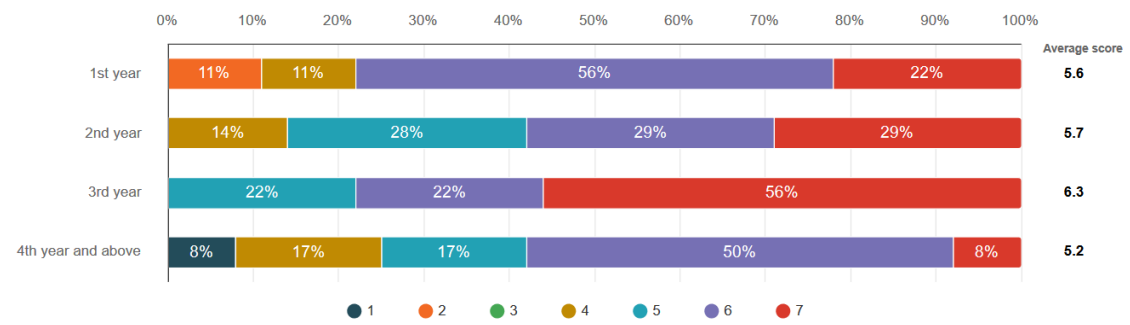


Figure 3. Importance of business ethics in sustainability practices by year of study (1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important; N = 37)

Comparative data between the two institutions indicate similar levels of importance attributed to sustainability and ethics. Students at Lapland UAS reported an average rating of 5.8 for the perceived importance of sustainability, while FH Aachen students reported an average of 5.5. Similarly, for perceptions of ethics in business education, Lapland UAS students reported an average of 5.7, and

FH Aachen students, 5.6. Overall, students across both institutions perceive sustainability and ethics as important topics within business education.

### 6.2.2 Confidence in Applying Sustainability Concepts

The survey also measured students' confidence in applying sustainability concepts in their future careers and whether they feel their program and courses adequately prepare them with the skills necessary for future sustainability challenges. Overall, confidence levels were moderate. The average for all student respondents reported a 4.6 for applying sustainability concepts in their future careers, however they also reported an average of 3.8 for how well their courses provide the skills necessary to address these challenges, and an average score of 3.9 for how well their program prepared them for sustainability challenges. These findings suggest that while students recognize the importance of these topics, there may be gaps in practical training or confidence-building exercises within the curriculum.

As shown in Figure 4 below, when comparing data across years of study, results show that confidence in applying sustainability-related skills to their future careers was highest among first-year students. While the average confidence score decreased slightly in subsequent years, the distribution of responses shifted positively, with more upper-year students selecting higher confidence levels. This may reflect a deepening engagement with sustainability concepts as students' progress and grapple with the complexities of the field.

**How confident are you in applying sustainability concepts in your future career (for students) or in your teaching practice (for faculty)?**

*This includes any sustainability-related ideas or practices relevant to your field. 1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident*

Number of respondents: 37

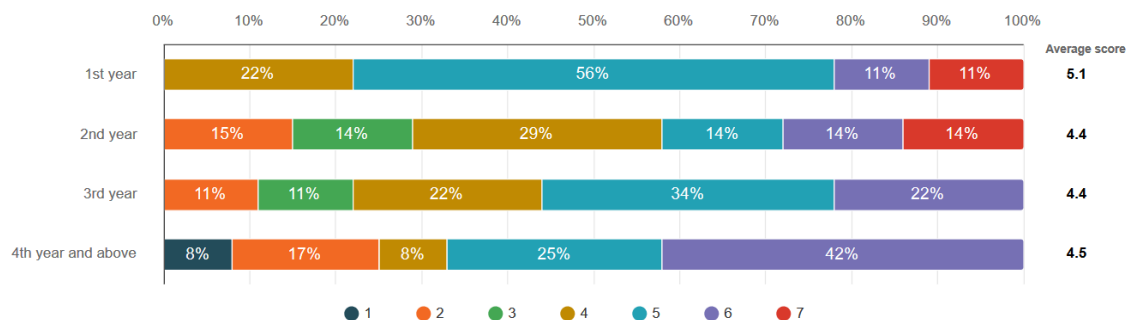


Figure 4. Confidence levels in applying sustainability concepts in future careers by year of study (1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident; N = 37)

Segmenting by institution, seen in Figure 5, students and Lapland UAS reported significantly higher confidence in applying sustainability concepts with an average of 6.2 where 33% reported “7 very confident” compared to their peers at FH Aachen which reported an average confidence of 4.3 and no respondents selecting the highest confidence rating. This may reflect the differences in curricular focuses of their respective programs or instructional methods.

How confident are you in applying sustainability concepts in your future career (for students) or in your teaching practice (for faculty)?

*This includes any sustainability-related ideas or practices relevant to your field. 1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident*

Number of respondents: 37

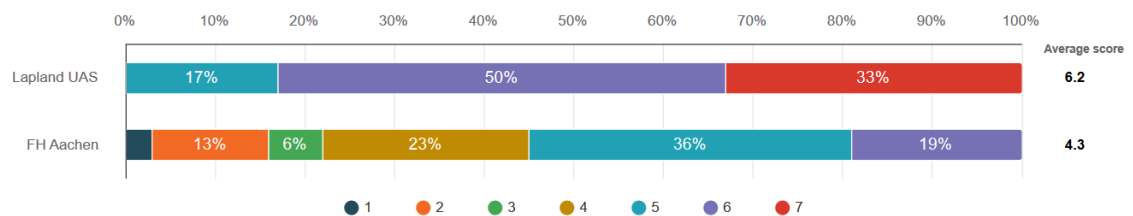


Figure 5. Confidence levels in applying sustainability concepts by institution (Lapland UAS vs. FH Aachen; 1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident; N = 37)

Students responded similarly in their perceptions of how well courses and programs prepared students for sustainability related challenges and conveying sustainability related skills. Lapland UAS students reported an average of 5.5 for how well they felt their courses prepared them for sustainability challenges, and an average of 5.8 for their program, compared to their peers which reported 3.4 for courses and 3.5 for their program.

### 6.2.3 Perceived Integration and Alignment in Course Content and Expectations

The survey data shows moderate engagement and satisfaction with real-world sustainability cases and sustainability integration among all students, with a total student engagement averaging 3.6. This suggests students experience a moderate level of exposure and opportunity to apply sustainability-related skills in their courses. The overall average score for satisfaction with sustainability integration in all programs included is 3.7, indicating moderate satisfaction. Finally, looking

across all students, as seen in Figure 6, perceived alignment with faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education is also moderate, with an average score of 3.9, showing that while students are not strongly in alignment, they are at least moderate in their shared goals.

To what extent do you believe there is alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education?

1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely

Number of respondents: 37

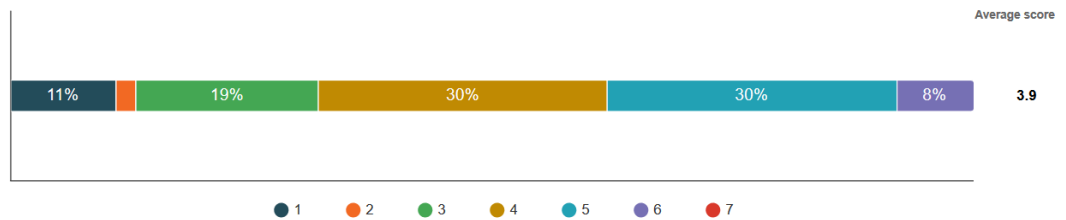


Figure 6. Perceived alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely; N = 37)

When analyzing the same data across academic years, a pattern is evident. First-year and second-year students reported slightly higher engagement with sustainability case studies and projects, with average scores of 3.4 and 4.6, respectively. This suggests practical engagement with sustainability topics is more frequent in the initial stages of the program but may also indicate that different types of instruction occur in different stages of education. However, this engagement score decreases to 3.3 in the third year and remains here for fourth year and above, indicating sustainability-focused projects may receive less emphasis as studies progress. Again, this may also indicate differing types of instruction in different years of study. As all programs are between 3.5 and 4 years of study, this is not unexpected.

Similarly, seen in Figure 7, satisfaction with sustainability integration is higher in the first and second years, with first-year students reporting an average score of 3.7 and second-year students an average of 4.9. This satisfaction decreases among third-year students to an average of 3.6 and further still in the fourth year with an average of 3.3. This trend suggests students perceive sustainability topics as becoming less frequently aligned with student expectations over time.

**To what extent does the level of sustainability integration in your program meet your expectations?**

*"Program" refers to the entire degree program, encompassing all courses, content, and learning experiences within the undergraduate English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely meets expectations*

Number of respondents: 37

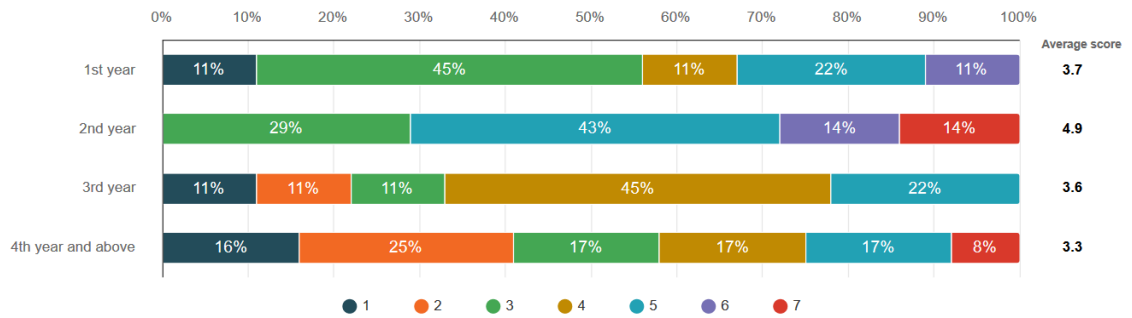


Figure 7. Student expectations for sustainability integration in their program by year of study (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely meets expectations; N = 37)

Figure 8 shows alignment between faculty goals and student expectations also follows this trend, with first- and second-year students reporting alignment scores of 4.0 and 4.3 on average, respectively. Third-year students report a decreased average of 3.9, and fourth year and above indicate 3.6 on average. This potentially demonstrates a disconnect between student and faculty alignment as students' progress in their studies.

**To what extent do you believe there is alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education?**

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely*

Number of respondents: 37

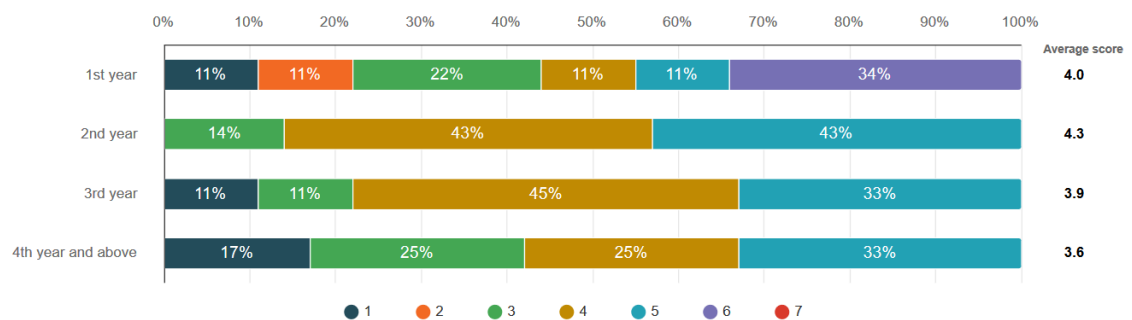


Figure 8. Perceived alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education by year of study (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely; N = 37)

Finally, looking at institutional differences, students report pronounced variations, highlighting differences in how each institution approaches sustainability integration. Students at Lapland UAS report significantly higher engagement with real-world case studies, higher satisfaction, and better alignment with faculty goals and student expectations compared to FH Aachen students. Shown in Figure 9, Lapland UAS students reported an average of 5.8 when considering engagement with real-world case studies and projects, compared to an average of 3.3 at FH Aachen. Similarly, in terms of alignment between faculty goals and student expectations, Lapland UAS students reported an average of 4.7, whereas FH Aachen students reported an average of 3.7. These significant gaps suggest that Lapland UAS may have a more robust and clearly integrated approach to sustainability within their curriculum, as described in their program description and observed in course offerings compared to FH Aachen, which may also contribute to a higher average alignment between faculty objectives and student expectations. While sustainability integration generally meets expectations in early years, there may be gaps in alignment as students' progress through their studies, particularly at FH Aachen, but the exact nature of that misalignment is beyond the scope of this study.

**To what extent does the level of sustainability integration in your program meet your expectations?**

*"Program" refers to the entire degree program, encompassing all courses, content, and learning experiences within the undergraduate English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely meets expectations*

Number of respondents: 37

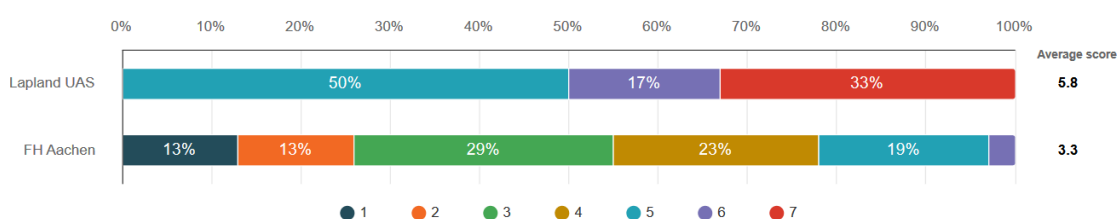


Figure 9. Student expectations for sustainability integration in their program by institution (Lapland UAS vs. FH Aachen; 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely meets expectations; N = 37)

### 6.3 Qualitative Analysis of Student Responses

#### 6.3.1 Key Themes in Student Open-Ended Responses

When analyzing key themes presented by students in their open-ended responses to understand how sustainability and ethics could be integrated more effectively into business education and what challenges students perceive when preparing students for sustainability focused business practices, a recurring theme was the desire for more opportunities to explore practical application and real-world examples. Many students expressed that while theoretical knowledge is valuable, they lack exposure to real world applications that could enhance their understanding and skills.

Another theme which emerged is the need for sustainability be integrated across different areas of study rather than only being confined to specific courses, and for the addition of more in depth dedicated courses. Students reported that sustainability topics often appear unconnected to other topics which are more commonly discussed in their courses. They suggest that encountering sustainability as a core discipline would create a more holistic understanding of the relevance in all areas of business and encourage critical thinking and engagement of the contradictions and tensions between sustainability principles and traditional business practices.

Students expressed a desire for more open discussion particularly around criticisms and long-term approaches to a rapidly changing discipline, allowing for greater depth of understanding beyond largely promotional views of sustainability. These themes highlight a shared perception among students that the curriculum needs more practical, integrated, and skill-oriented content to fully address their learning needs in sustainability.

#### 6.3.2 Student Recommendations for Curriculum Improvement

Students provided a variety of suggestions to better integrate sustainability into curriculum and better prepare them for sustainability related challenges in their future working lives. The most frequent recommendation was a desire for greater practical application of sustainability topics and included recommendations for

working with case studies or practical projects with local companies. This approach would provide students with examples of sustainability in action and allow them to experience the trade-offs businesses face and critically engage with the complexities of sustainability in practice.

Another strong recommendation was for sustainability to be integrated more broadly across courses, connecting sustainability and ethics considerations more directly with their regular subjects to create a more holistic view of sustainability in practice. This extended into some students for suggesting more offerings of sustainability dedicated courses and others for mandatory sustainability integration. The students who responded in the open-ended section of the survey believe that sustainability should be foundational to their studies, with continuous engagement to understand the complexities, and desire opportunities to engage in more meaningful and practical ways. They suggested that case studies featuring a range of industries could provide valuable insights into how businesses manage the complexities of sustainability alongside other business objectives.

These recommendations indicate a strong desire for a curriculum that not only teaches sustainability in theory but also prepares students with practical, interdisciplinary skills for real world applications. Implementing these suggestions could align the program more closely with students' aspirations and the demands of a rapidly evolving business landscape.

#### 6.4 Quantitative Analysis for Faculty Responses

##### 6.4.1 Faculty's View on Sustainability's Role in Business Education

Faculty respondents to the survey rated the importance of sustainability in business education with an average of 6.1 on a seven-point Likert scale with 7 indicating "extremely important" and 1 indicating "not important", shown in Figure 10. Half of the faculty rated the importance of sustainability at the highest option of 7, and no faculty rated below a 3 indicating sustainability is regarded as a critical component of the curriculum. This strong rating reflects an understanding amongst faculty who participated in the study of the indeed to equip students with

sustainability related knowledge and skills, aligning with broader educational goals for responsible business practices.

In your view, how important is sustainability in business education?

1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important

Number of respondents: 14

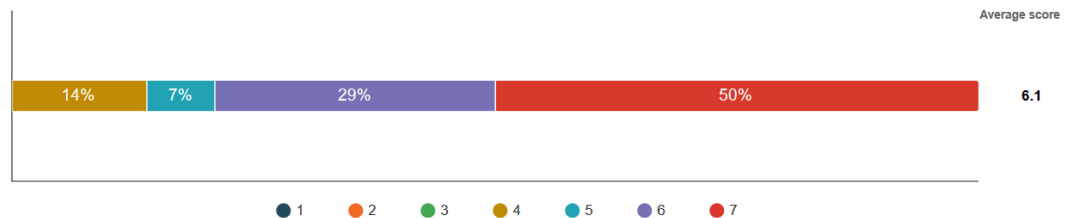


Figure 10. Faculty perspectives on the importance of sustainability in business education (1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important; N = 14)

Similarly, when asked about the significance of sustainability in the next 5-10 years, faculty responses averaged 5.9, with 79% of responses selecting 5 or higher. This suggests that faculty who participated in the survey not only see sustainability as important now but also anticipate its growing relevance in future business contexts and its importance in business curriculum. Together these results reflect a view from faculty of the importance of teaching students' sustainability skills and how they shape an evolving business landscape increasingly shaped by environmental and ethical considerations. The responsibility faculty feel towards in their teaching also remained high with an average of 5.6. Interestingly, by contrast, faculty reported ethical practices were only discussed in their classes with an average response of 4.6 where 7 indicates ethics is "fully integrated" and 1 indicates "not at all".

When viewing faculty responses by years of experience, faculty across years of experience indicate a shared value of sustainability with some variation in perceived importance. No faculty with fewer than four years of experience were represented and instead we can view faculty with those with more or less experience than eight years. Faculty with 4-7 years of experience reported the highest average importance for sustainability in business education with a rating of 6.3 and 67% of those selecting the highest score of 7. Faculty with eight or more years of experience rated the importance slightly lower with an average of 6.1 and only

46% rating it at the highest score of 7. When considering the importance of sustainability in the next 5-10 years, faculty with 4-7 years of experience rated an average importance of 6.0 while those with 8 or more years rated an average of 5.9, however this latter group also indicated a higher percentage of the highest score of 7 shown in Figure 11. These results suggest that while faculty across experience levels recognize the importance of sustainability in business education, those with fewer years of experience may feel a stronger sense of urgency or engagement with sustainability topics compared to their more experienced colleagues.

How significant do you think sustainability will be in the next 5-10 years for your future career (for students) or teaching (for faculty)?

1 = Not significant at all, 7 = Very significant

Number of respondents: 14

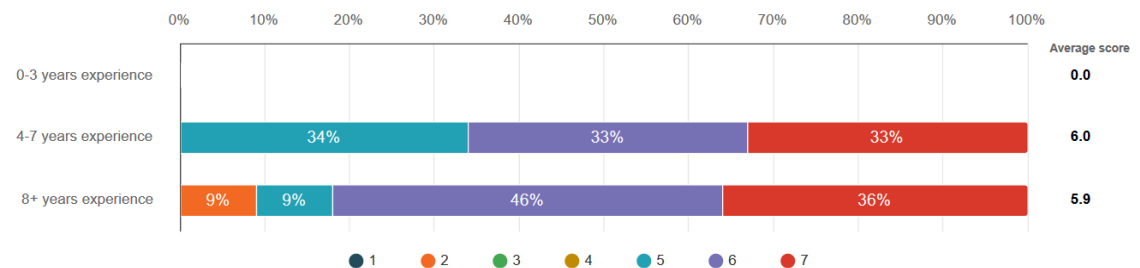


Figure 11. Faculty perspectives on the future significance of sustainability in teaching over the next 5–10 years by years of experience (1 = Not significant at all, 7 = Very significant; N = 14)

Finally, comparing responses between Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, greater institutional differences in the perceived importance of integrating sustainability in business education can be seen. Faculty at Lapland UAS rated the importance of sustainability in business education higher, with an average score of 6.7, compared to FH Aachen's faculty reporting an average of 5.8. At Lapland UAS 67% of faculty respondents gave the maximum rating of 7, suggesting a strong emphasis on sustainability felt amongst faculty, which aligns with the explicit intention of the program there. When considering the significance of sustainability over the next 5-10 years, faculty at both institutions shared more similar views, with Lapland UAS averaging 6.0 and FH Aachen averaging 5.9. However, slight variations appear in the integration of ethical practices in business education where Figure 12 shows Lapland UAS faculty rated this aspect at an average of 4.7 compared to FH Aachen 4.6. Additionally in this case Lapland UAS faculty reported

a higher percentage of respondents giving the lowest score of 1 to ethics being discussed in their courses, and no responses of the highest 7, where FH Aachen faculty did report some at the highest score. Lastly, faculty at Lapland UAS reported a slightly higher sense of responsibility for addressing sustainability in their roles with an average score of 5.8, while FH Aachen faculty averaged 5.5. The findings suggest that while both institutions recognize the importance of sustainability, Lapland UAS faculty demonstrate a somewhat stronger commitment to its integration in their course work, which is expected given the explicit goal of the program.

**To what extent are ethical practices discussed in your courses?**

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs. 1 = Not at all, 7 = Fully integrated*

Number of respondents: 14

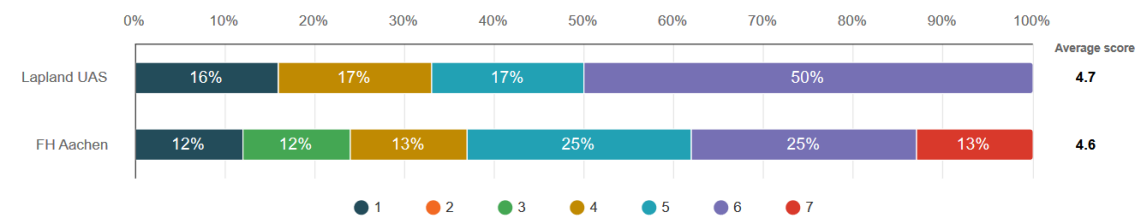


Figure 12. Faculty perspectives on the extent of ethical practices discussed in courses by institution (Lapland UAS vs. FH Aachen; 1 = Not at all, 7 = Fully integrated; N = 14)

#### 6.4.2 Faculty Confidence and Challenges in Teaching Sustainability Concepts

Faculty responses indicate a moderate level of confidence in applying sustainability concepts with their teaching practices, seen in Figure 13, with an average score of all faculty respondents of 5.7 out of 7. Nearly half, 43%, rated their confidence at 6, and another 21% selected the highest confidence level of 7. This distribution suggests that while a majority of faculty feel reasonably assured in their ability to integrate sustainability into their teaching, there remains room for improvement. When asked about how well faculty feel their program prepares them for addressing sustainability challenges in a business education context, faculty responses averaged lower at 4.3 indicating that of the respondents many feel moderately prepared but not fully supported by their programs structure. Additionally, faculty rated the effectiveness of their courses in providing necessary

skills for sustainability challenges at an average of 4.1, shown in Figure 14, again with responses predominantly selecting 4 or 5. These results suggest that faculty generally perceive themselves as competent in teaching sustainability, there may be institutional or curricular limitations that impact overall preparedness to perceived course effectiveness in addressing sustainability.

**How confident are you in applying sustainability concepts in your future career (for students) or in your teaching practice (for faculty)?**

*This includes any sustainability-related ideas or practices relevant to your field. 1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident*

Number of respondents: 14

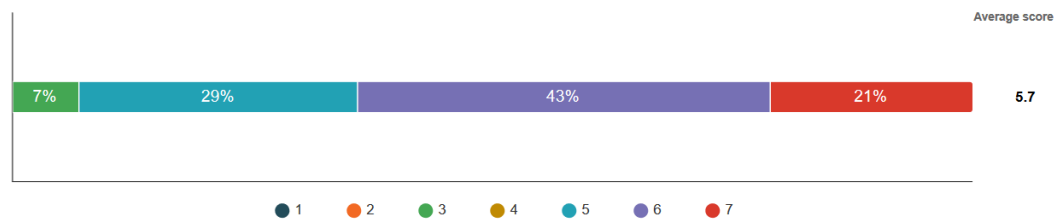


Figure 13. Faculty confidence in applying sustainability concepts in their teaching practice (1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident; N = 14)

**How effective are your courses at providing the skills necessary for addressing sustainability challenges?**

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs. 1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective*

Number of respondents: 13

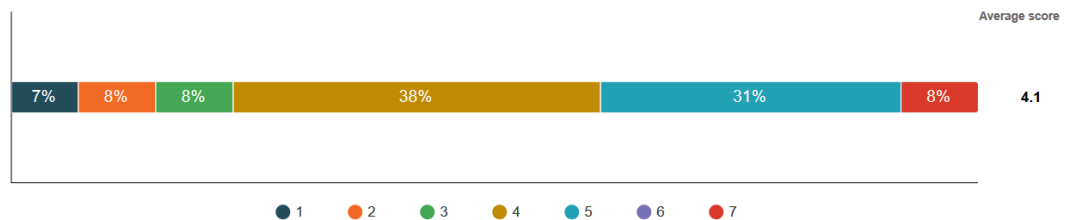


Figure 14. Faculty perspectives on the effectiveness of courses in providing skills for addressing sustainability challenges (1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective; N = 13)

Looking to examining faculty responses by years of experience, some variation is observed in confidence and perceived program support for teaching sustainability concepts. Figure 15 shows faculty with 4-7 years of experience reported the highest average confidence in applying sustainability concepts in their teaching practice with an average score of 6.0, and 33% selecting the highest confidence level of 7. Faculty with 8 or more years of experience rated their confidence

slightly lower with an average of 5.6 and only 18% choosing the highest confidence level and 9% rating three where the lowest rating for their younger colleagues was a 5. This suggests a slight decrease in confidence among more experienced faculty.

**How confident are you in applying sustainability concepts in your future career (for students) or in your teaching practice (for faculty)?**

*This includes any sustainability-related ideas or practices relevant to your field. 1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident*

Number of respondents: 14

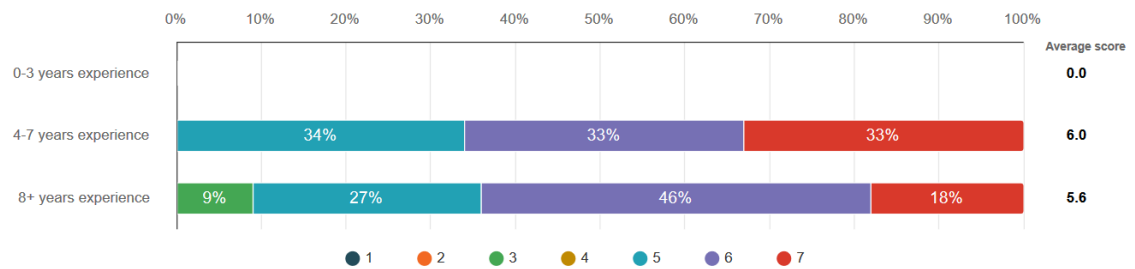


Figure 15. Faculty perspectives on the effectiveness of courses in providing skills for addressing sustainability challenges (1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective; N = 13)

In terms of perceived program support among faculty members, those with 4-7 years of experience again reported higher scores averaging 5.3 compared to those with eight or more years who averaged 4.0. This may indicate that faculty in the middle of their careers feel better supported by their programs compared to those with longer tenures or may indicate greater exposure to sustainability related concepts earlier and have fewer hurdles to overcome. More data would need to be collected and analyzed to fully understand why this trend appears or if it is statistically significant.

When it comes to the effectiveness of courses in providing the skills necessary for addressing sustainability challenges, shown in Figure 16, faculty with 4-7 years of experience rated an average of 5.5, with half selecting the highest effectiveness of 7, whereas those with eight or more years of experience reported a striking lower average of just 3.8. These responses suggest that mid-career faculty feel more capable and supported in their teaching roles related to sustainability compared to their more experienced colleagues.

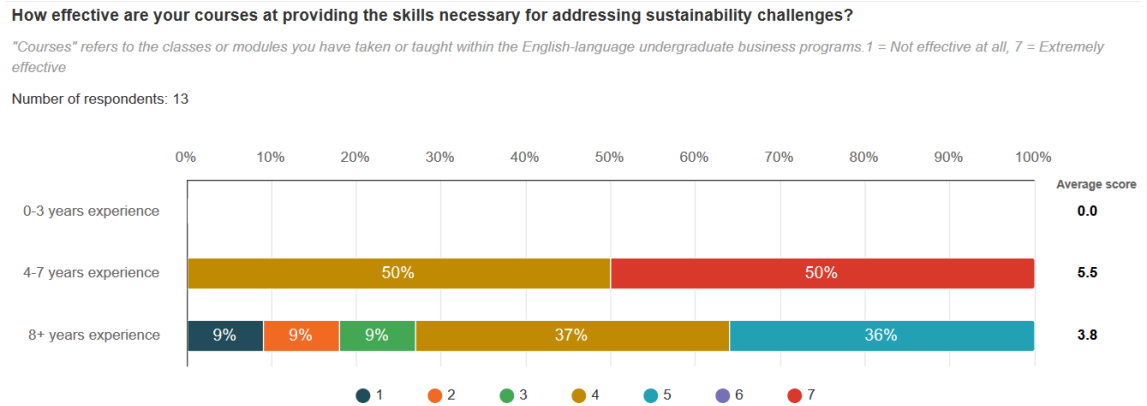


Figure 16. Faculty confidence in applying sustainability concepts in teaching practice by years of experience (1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident; N = 14)

Finally, institutional differences are evident in faculty confidence and perceptions of program support regarding sustainability concepts in business education. Faculty at Lapland UAS reported higher confidence in applying sustainability concepts in their teaching practice with an average score of 6.0 compared to an average of 5.5 at FH Aachen. Lapland UAS faculty selected a 6 or higher by 66% of respondents again highlighting a relatively stronger sense of readiness compared to FH Aachen where only 25% indicated this confidence level. Faculty perceptions of program preparedness for sustainability challenges varied, with Lapland UAS faculty rating their program at an average of 4.8 where FH Aachen faculty rated even lower with 3.9 on average. Similarly, show in Figure 17, in terms of course effectiveness in equipping students with sustainability skills, Lapland UAS faculty reported higher average scores of 4.3 while FH Aachen faculty reported lower average again with 3.9. These findings suggest that Lapland UAS faculty feel more confident and better supported in their teaching of sustainability and related concepts, potentially reflecting institutional priorities and explicit program objectives, and accompanying resources dedicated to sustainability education at each institution's business faculty.

### How effective are your courses at providing the skills necessary for addressing sustainability challenges?

"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs. 1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective

Number of respondents: 13

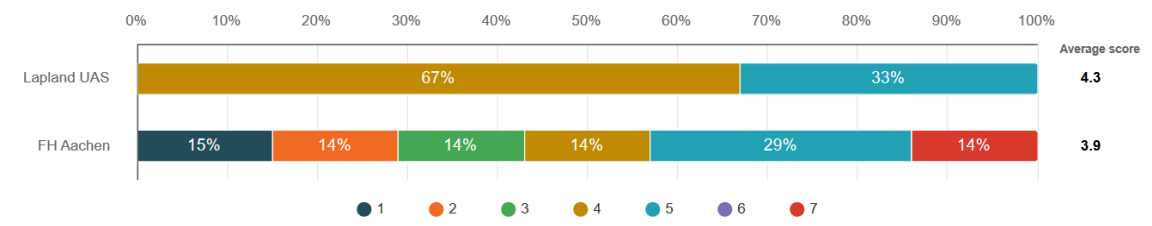


Figure 17. Faculty perspectives on course effectiveness in providing skills for addressing sustainability challenges by years of experience (1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective; N = 13)

#### 6.4.3 Faculty Perceptions of Sustainability Integration and Practical Application

The faculty responses reflect a moderate level of perceived alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education, with an average score of 4.5. While 21% of faculty respondents selected a score of 6, 7% selected 1 indicating no alignment at all. This could indicate that while some faculty members feel strong alignment, the majority are less certain, while some feel there is no alignment, and could suggest a disconnect in how sustainability education goals are communicated or emphasized between faculty and students. Similarly, when asked about the extent to which sustainability integration in their program meets their expectations, faculty reported an average score of 4.7 with 50% of respondents selecting a 5 making the response feel decidedly neutral.

Engagement with real-world sustainability case studies or projects is also somewhat limited with an average score of only 3.7 shown in Figure 18. To understand this more deeply the analysis would benefit for cross-tabulation with what course each of the respondents teach. Only 7% of faculty reported frequent engagement with these practical applications, indicating case studies and real-world projects may not be a significant component of many faculty current teaching practices.

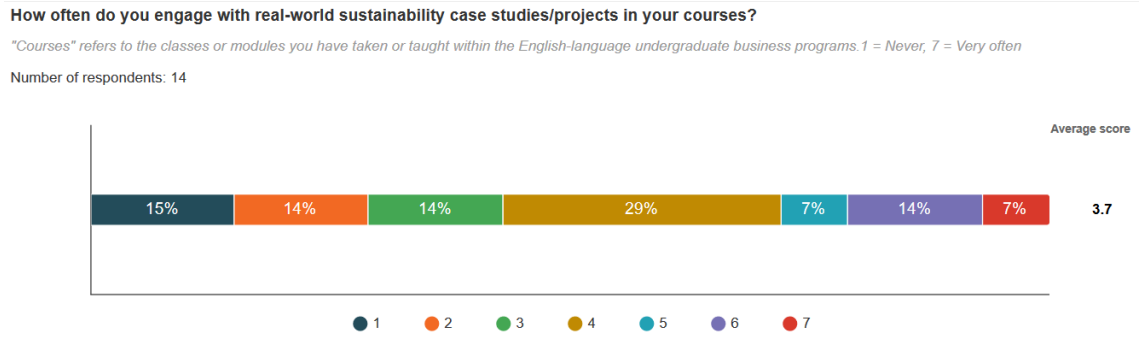


Figure 18. Faculty engagement with real-world sustainability case studies/projects in courses (1 = Never, 7 = Very often; N = 14)

These responses together indicate that while sustainability is acknowledged as an important element in business education curriculum there may be challenges in aligning institutional objectives with both faculty and student expectations as well as providing sufficient practical applications for sustainability in course content.

Looking now at faculty comparisons by years of experience shown in Figure 19 comparing alignment between faculty goals and student expectations on sustainability education, faculty with 4-7 years report an average score of 4.7 with a majority 67% making marking a neutral position. Faculty with over eight years of experience rated this alignment with slightly lower averaging 4.5 with responses more evenly across the scale, but also showing a tendency towards slight satisfaction alignment as well as some at the lowest end.

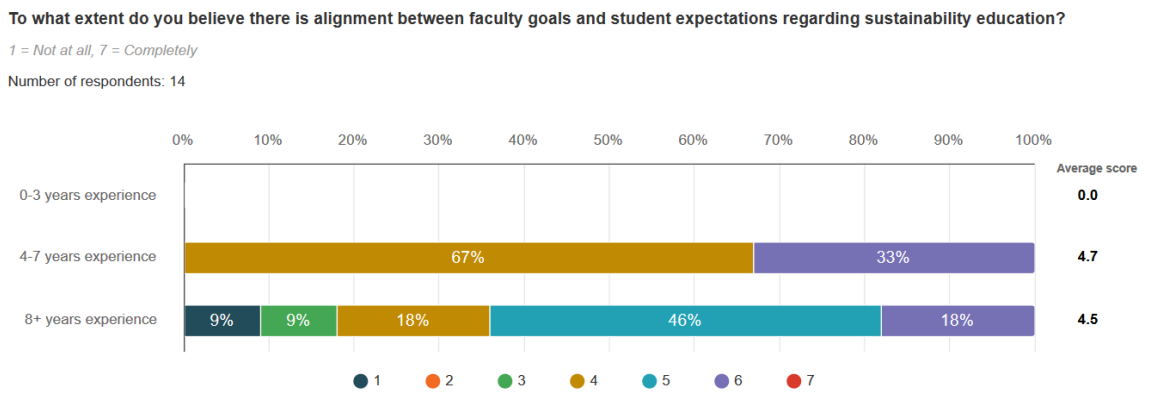


Figure 19. Faculty perspectives on alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education by years of experience (1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely; N = 14)

When considering the extent to which sustainability integration in their program meets expectations, both experience groups provided the same average rating of 4.7, though the responses differed somewhat in distribution. Faculty with 4-7 years of experience primarily chose mid-scale responses, indicating moderate satisfaction, while those with over eight years of experience showed a slightly broader spread again, including some respondents who rated it as either very high or low. Additionally, engagement with real-world sustainability case studies and projects was rated highest among faculty with 4-7 years of experience, who averaged 4.3 and had a notable concentration of responses in the middle of the scale, indicating moderate engagement. Faculty with over eight years of experience rated their engagement lower, with an average of 3.5.

In comparing faculty responses between Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, notable differences emerge in the perceived integration and practical application of sustainability concepts within their respective programs. Faculty at Lapland UAS reported an average score of 4.7 regarding the extent to which sustainability integration meets their expectations, while FH Aachen faculty had a comparable score of 4.8. However, a more significant gap is observed in real-world application, with Lapland UAS faculty rating the frequency of engagement with real-world sustainability case studies and projects at an average of 4.8, compared to only 2.9 for FH Aachen, shown in Figure 20. This suggests that while both institutions show a similar level of satisfaction with the overarching integration of sustainability, Lapland UAS may provide a more hands-on approach, exposing students to practical, real-world applications to a greater extent. This practical exposure at Lapland UAS aligns with the faculty's emphasis on engaging students in real-world sustainability challenges as a core component of their educational experience.

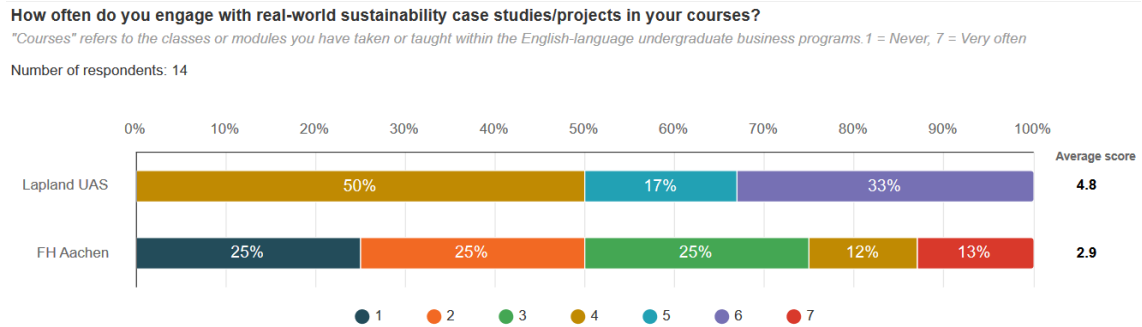


Figure 20. Faculty engagement with real-world sustainability case studies/projects in courses by institution (Lapland UAS vs. FH Aachen; 1 = Never, 7 = Very often; N = 14)

## 6.5 Qualitative Analysis for Faculty Responses

### 6.5.1 Challenges and Barriers in Sustainability Education

When examining the key challenges and barriers identified by faculty in their responses to the two open ended questions in the survey, several themes emerged which reflect both the practical and ideological difficulties in preparing students for an economy and business world changing due to sustainability considerations. Faculty noted regulatory complexity, changing legal landscapes and requirements for businesses, and the resulting curricular lag as significant obstacles, along with heavy teaching workloads and a lack of time for personal development and updating sustainability related content, to the effect that has left much of the integration to individual “enthusiast” rather than as a systematic institutional approach. Traditional business priorities which emphasize profit over sustainability, remain deeply ingrained and difficult to overcome in practice, and the interdisciplinary complexity of sustainability topics pose additional time constraints. Faculty also noted the disconnect between values promoted in sustainability education and those of conventional business practices, which is further exacerbated by a lack of future thinking and pessimism in the classroom, or rather how future thinking about sustainability often leads to a pessimistic view of sustainability. These comments drew attention to the difficulty of educating students about sustainability while also empowering students to feel like their actions mattered. Faculty also noted a lack of practical or work experience from students poses a barrier to approaching such complex topics.

### 6.5.2 Suggestions for Enhanced Institutional Support

Faculty responses provided a range of suggestions to enhance institutional support for integrating sustainability and ethical business education more effectively into the curriculum. Here key themes included the need for greater faculty engagement and interest in sustainability topics, paired with increased opportunities for training, development, and systematic integration of sustainability across courses. This view was not universally shared; one faculty member indicated that, as it stands, there is no room for sustainability in the course they currently teach. However, they conceded that additional courses or restructuring could allow for integration, which demonstrates the need for greater institutional support. Additionally, faculty suggested a shift beyond traditional business models, emphasizing long-term thinking and curriculum alignment to position sustainability as a holistic core discipline. They noted the importance of preparing students not only with skills for today's business environment but also for the evolving demands they will encounter upon graduation.

Faculty also recommended the inclusion of specialized courses that relate sustainability to traditional subjects, core classes dedicated to sustainability, and more opportunities for sustainable business projects, as well as collaborative industry projects in sustainability similar to those already available in traditional business areas. Finally, there was support for faculty access to seminars and training in sustainability and ethics, with suggestions that such training could be made mandatory. This would create a structured foundation for ongoing sustainability education across the institution, particularly within business schools.

## 6.6 Comparative Analysis of Student and Faculty Perceptions

### 6.6.1 Shared Values in Sustainability Goals

The analysis shows a strong consensus among both student and faculty respondents regarding the importance of sustainability in business education. Responses consistently affirmed the need for curriculum content that addresses sustainability challenges in both local and global contexts, which mirror the program goals of each institution surveyed. This shared value indicated a broader understanding

where modern business practices must integrate sustainability not only as a theoretical concept but also as an actionable priority which prepares students for real world applications in the business environment.

Both faculty and students agree sustainability is a core aspect for responsible business management and that future business leaders should be equipped to address the ethical, social, and environmental implications of their decisions, and understand them in a more integrated and holistic way. The commitment to sustainability is visible across survey responses where students expressed a desire to see sustainability topics applied in practical scenarios, through case studies, projects, and collaborations with businesses to understand complexity in real world scenarios. This desire agrees with the faculty perspectives on the need for experiential learning, again demonstrating an understanding for the dynamic approaches to a fast changing and complicated subject. This alignment underscores a mutual recognition of sustainability's role in driving long term organizational and societal value which business plays a part.

The course content analysis further corroborates this shared understanding. For instance, sustainability focused courses at both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen include modules on sustainable business practices, ethical decision making, and the socioeconomic impact of sustainability, indicating institutional support for these priorities, at least on the surface. While each institution approaches sustainability differently as it fits into their larger objectives, both acknowledge the importance of including sustainability related topics in business education and have found ways to do so, even while the programs prepare students for different overarching objectives. Although alignment between students, faculty, and institutions is not without gaps, it appears progress is being made to make a more holistic approach towards sustainability integration. Each institution can advance this development by engaging with students and faculty alike to understand their needs and aspirations, to allow for greater development. Greater alignment of values, of which some has been revealed in this study, between students, faculty and institutional goals contributes to a cohesive educational experience, which is grounded in the shared objective of advancing a business education that is both ethically responsible and future.

### 6.6.2 Divergent Perspectives on Curriculum and Institutional Support

While there is shared agreement in the significance of sustainability, notable disparities are apparent in the perspectives of students and faculty regarding the curriculum and the support structures in place for sustainability education. Student respondents predominantly highlighted gaps and concerns about depth in curriculum content, expressing a desire for more robust, interwoven, and applied sustainability and ethics topics within their courses. Many students feel that current offerings only partially address the complexities of sustainable business, often focusing on theoretical concepts without sufficient practical applications or integration across subjects. Students' respondents demonstrated an awareness of how quickly the field is changing and understood the gap between theoretical and practical experiences of sustainability integration in business and demonstrated a desire to engage.

By contrast, faculty responses point towards institutional and structural barriers which hinder the deeper integration of comprehensive sustainability content in curriculum. Faculty respondents cite limitations such as time constraints for personal and curricular development, resource availability, and rigid curricular frameworks, which often restrict the depth and breadth of sustainability related topics which they can cover in their courses. Some faculty members expressed concern over the need for institutional support, including additional training and resources to effectively teach sustainability concepts in a meaningful and practical way which considers the complexity of the field. Fewer faculty members noted a lack of understanding for how or why sustainability integration could benefit their subjects as they are currently taught, which may also point to a lack of willingness to integrate sustainability more broadly without institutional restructuring and support.

This divergence between student expectations and faculty challenges draws attention to significant areas for potential development in business education. While students seek a curriculum which mirrors real world sustainability demands and challenges, faculty are constrained by systematic factors, indicating how institu-

tional support would be instrumental in bridging this gap. Addressing these structural issues could enable faculty to meet student expectations more fully, facilitating a more dynamic and applied approach to sustainability education.

### 6.6.3 Implications for Curriculum Development

The analysis shared and divergent perspectives on sustainability integration and goals in business education suggests several actionable insights for curriculum development. The agreement among students and faculty in recognizing sustainability as an important component of business education offers a foundation upon which to expand practical, applied learning opportunities. By interweaving sustainability concepts more deeply into course content and connecting them with real world applications, business curriculum can better meet students' aspirations for practical learning and preparedness for an economy changing due to sustainability challenges and in their future careers.

To address the identified gaps, curriculum adjustments could incorporate cross- and inter- disciplinary projects and experiential learning models which allow students to engage directly with sustainability issues. This can take the form of real-world case studies, theoretical projects, partnerships with local businesses or NGOs, and simulations that incorporate sustainability considerations and constraints, or simulations that emphasize ethical decision making within a sustainable framework. This shift towards practical applications considers the student feedback and ensures learning is both relevant and actionable.

For faculty, greater institutional support is essential to overcoming current barriers in delivering comprehensive sustainability education. This may involve providing additional resources, such as sustainability focused training (voluntary or mandatory), curriculum development workshops, and access to updated teaching materials. Institutional investments in these areas can empower faculty to broaden the scope of sustainability within their courses and facilitate deeper student engagement both by increasing exposure to sustainability concepts and the depth of those concepts covered over their academic careers. By addressing these structural and resource-based limitations, the curriculum can evolve in a

way which reflects both the values shared by students and faculty and the practical demands of meaningful sustainability education.

## 6.7 Summary of Key Insights and Recommendations

### 6.7.1 Summary of Findings

The analysis of student and faculty responses, in conjunction with a review of program objectives and course offerings, provide a nuanced overview of the current state of sustainability education within the English language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. A strong, shared commitment to sustainability emerged as a central theme, with both groups and both institutions recognizing the importance of equipping future business leaders with sustainability-focused knowledge, skills, and ethical business frameworks. Studies such as those by Brunstein et al. (2020) and Triana & Peterson (2022) similarly emphasize the value of integrating ethical frameworks and sustainability to prepare students for responsible leadership in global contexts. This shared set of values found in this research demonstrates a foundation upon which further curriculum development can build, particularly through practical and applied learning opportunities that reflect real-world sustainability challenges.

Key differences were also evident, particularly concerning curriculum and program structure and support. Student participants expressed a clear desire for more comprehensive and practical sustainability content integrated across courses, reflecting their need for real-world applications which extend beyond theoretical learning in such an important and complex topic. This connects with research by Gawel (2022) and Tormo et al. (2016), which indicates that practical sustainability applications in curricula enhance engagement and deepen students' understanding of sustainability's role in business. Conversely, faculty responses in this research demonstrated systematic constraints, such as limited institutional resources and curriculum flexibility, which currently hinder the depth of sustainability-related content they can offer. This disparity underscores the need for greater institutional support to bridge the gap between student expectations and faculty capabilities within business education institutions. Similarly, Emblen-Perry (2018) and Triana & Peterson (2022) note that inadequate resources

and structural barriers within institutions often restrict faculty's ability to fully implement sustainability content.

These findings suggest actionable insights for curriculum development prioritizing applied learning experiences to meet student demands while simultaneously addressing faculty needs for resources, training, and support. Through intentional, systematic, and targeted curriculum adjustments and increased institutional backing, sustainability education can change to more effectively meet the objectives of both students and faculty, promoting a more aligned and practical approach to business education. Again, this is reflected in other studies, such as Parrique's (2019) recommendation for comprehensive curriculum frameworks that incorporate both student and faculty needs to support sustainability as a foundational aspect of business education. These insights provide the foundation for synthesizing findings and discussing implications in the section seven.

#### 6.7.2 Recommendations for Integrating Sustainability

To address the identified gaps in curriculum with both student expectations and faculty capabilities, several targeted recommendations can be made. First, incorporating sustainability and ethics focused projects across courses would provide students with hands on experience in addressing real world challenges, including an introduction to real world complexity, matching theoretical learning with practical applications. Research by Tormo et al. (2016) supports the integration of applied projects to increase student engagement and understanding, particularly in sustainability focused disciplines. Projects like these could involve partnerships with local businesses, case studies that simulate sustainability-related decision making in diverse business contexts, and integration of sustainability and ethical components into existing business simulations.

Interweaving sustainability and business ethics principles across all business disciplines and courses is another essential step. Again, studies like those by Emblen-Perry (2018) and Parrique (2019) emphasize the need for cross disciplinary integration, corroborating that sustainability's interconnected nature requires inclusion across various business fields. By including sustainability and ethics into courses such as finance, marketing, and management, the curriculum can ensure

students understand the relevance in all areas of business, and the interconnected nature of these topics more comprehensively. A cross disciplinary approach would reflect the interconnectedness and complexity of sustainability and reinforce its role as a foundational aspect of responsible business practices.

Finally, increasing resources and support for faculty is critical to enhancing sustainability in business education. As noted by Triana & Peterson (2022), and faculty respondents in this research, faculty often face limitations in curriculum development due to restricted institutional resources, making targeted support essential for achieving comprehensive sustainability education. Institutional investments and reallocations in faculty training, access to updated materials, and opportunities for professional development in sustainability and ethics topics can empower educators to deliver more comprehensive, impactful, and transformative content. By addressing these structural needs, institutions can support faculty in bridging curriculum gaps and meeting student demands more effectively, better preparing students to enter a changing market.

Together these recommendations lay a foundation for institutional changes to business education which could create a cohesive and practical sustainability framework, building skills that match with the evolving demands of an economy changing due to sustainability considerations.

### 6.7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This research provides insights into sustainability education within the English language bachelor's business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. However, the research has several limitations which can point the way for future areas of research. The study's small sample size limits the potential for broader applicability and represents only a single point in time. To better understand how attitudes towards sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic education evolve, future research could incorporate a larger sample size to achieve more generalizable results. Additionally, future research could incorporate longitudinal studies, tracking changes in both student and faculty perceptions over multiple years of study and instruction. Such an approach would offer a clearer view of the long-

term impacts of curriculum adjustments and institutional support in sustainability education (Saunders et al. 2007).

Additionally, expanding the study to include more institutions could provide a broader comparative analysis, understanding how different educational and cultural contexts influence the integration of sustainability in business education. As noted in the literature review, successful integration of sustainability concepts often requires considering local contexts and resource allocation (Gawel 2022; Bergman et al. 2024). Research focusing on diverse institutional models and varying levels of resource allocation could explain structural factors that impact sustainability education in business schools.

Research investigating specific student learning outcomes related to sustainability and ethics topics, potentially through qualitative case studies or practical assessments, would deepen understanding of how well current curricula prepare students for real world sustainability challenges. These areas of further research would help refine and strengthen sustainability and ethics education, contributing to a curriculum that meets both academic goals and evolving industry demands as sustainability considerations continue to put pressure on the business landscape and economies. It is the view of this researcher that research in these areas will become increasingly important.

Another limitation of this study is that it focuses only on student and faculty perceptions and does not follow students or faculty over time to assess how they apply sustainability concepts in future careers (for students) or adapt their teaching methodologies (for faculty). Future studies could implement longitudinal tracking to explore these aspects, helping to identify and address potential gaps.

Finally, understanding how thoroughly sustainability is embedded within the curriculum could be conducted through a comprehensive analysis of course offerings, including not only course titles and descriptions but also a detailed examination of syllabi. This approach would allow for a deeper view into how thoroughly topics are covered and would help to uncover any gaps. In-depth interviews with faculty could further clarify the barriers to greater sustainability integration, offering insights to bridge these gaps (Triana & Peterson 2022; Emblen-Perry 2018).

## 7 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

This section integrates the main findings from the curriculum analysis and survey data, applying the theoretical framework introduced in Section 3. By synthesizing the results and situating them within existing literature, it examines broader implications for sustainability integration in business education. Considerations include sustainability, business ethics, power structures, the role of business in society, and alternative approaches as applied in education as discussed in the theoretical framework. Building on the insights summarized in the survey analysis, this section considers stakeholder dynamics, particularly the interplay between student expectations, faculty capacities, and institutional priorities, as these perspectives inform the analysis of the research. The synthesis demonstrates areas of alignment and divergence between institutional goals, curricular content, and stakeholder perceptions, providing a foundation for actionable recommendations. These recommendations emphasize addressing structural barriers and enhancing curriculum flexibility to promote comprehensive sustainability education. This discussion also explores how business schools can better prepare students for economies increasingly shaped by sustainability challenges, addressing gaps and building on existing strengths.

### 7.1 Alignment with Theoretical Framework

#### 7.1.1 Capitalism's Influence on Business Education

The findings of this research stress the pervasive influence of capitalist ideology within business education, particularly as it relates to sustainability and broader ethics integration. Fisher's concept of "capitalist realism," which argues that capitalism is so deeply ingrained that it appears as the only viable economic and social system, provides a compelling lens through which to analyze curriculum and attitudes toward sustainability observed in both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen's business programs (Fisher 2009). According to Fisher, capitalist realism not only shapes individual beliefs and behaviors but also institutional practices, creating a cycle where alternative approaches are often perceived as impractical or unattainable (Fisher 2009). This research demonstrates that while students and faculty express a shared commitment to the importance of sustainability, the

structures and curricular content reflect the limitations that Fisher's theory describes.

The concept of capitalist realism suggests that any critique or alternative economic models are undermined by an underlying assumption that there is no viable alternative to capitalism. This perspective was evident in the structure and content of the business programs analyzed from a surface view, where sustainability was often presented as an elective or supplementary topic rather than as a core principle (Fisher 2009). Lapland UAS offered a more integrated approach to sustainability concepts throughout the course of study; however, survey respondents still indicated a wish for deeper and more practical approaches to how sustainability was actually covered in their courses. By treating sustainability either as a peripheral concern rather than a core component or treating it with insufficient depth due to concerns over complexity, these programs reinforce capitalist frameworks that prioritize profit and growth over environmental and social considerations (Fisher 2009). This curricular approach aligns with Fisher's argument that the dominance of capitalist logic in education minimizes the potential for alternative economic paradigms, such as those explored in this paper, to gain traction.

The survey responses corroborate the constraints that capitalist realism imposes on business education. For example, while students showed strong interest in integrating sustainability more deeply into their education, they also noted a general lack of support for such integration within their educational structures. Faculty responses similarly pointed to constraints such as limited resources and inflexible curriculum requirements, which prevent a more systematic and expanded focus on sustainability (Fisher 2009). These limitations further reinforce Fisher's argument that institutional frameworks serve to perpetuate the status quo, even when unintended, prioritizing economic outcomes over holistic education and reinforcing a sense of inevitability around capitalist ideals.

Moreover, Fisher's idea that capitalism co-opts its critiques to maintain its dominance also appears in the way sustainability topics are addressed within these programs. While sustainability and ethical considerations are introduced, they are

often framed within traditional capitalist objectives, such as the creation of sustainable profits, ethical business practices, greenwashing, and generally considering sustainability as a tool for profit and strategy rather than a complete and contrary objective and are thus aimed at brand enhancement rather than genuine systematic change. This approach suggests that, although there is acknowledgment of sustainability's importance, it is ultimately integrated in ways that do not change the foundational principles of profit maximization and market-driven growth (Fisher 2009). Framing sustainability within the bounds of capitalist realism, these programs contribute to what Fisher (2009) describes as the illusion of change while maintaining the core tenets of capitalist ideology.

Taken together, the integration of Fisher's concept of capitalist realism into this analysis offers a critical perspective on the structural and ideological barriers to meaningful sustainability education within business education programs. The findings suggest that, while sustainability is both in demand and acknowledged as important, the dominant capitalist framework in business education limits the extent to which sustainability can be meaningfully integrated (Fisher 2009). This constraint points to the need for institutional action and reforms that not only incorporate sustainability as a core curricular element, as we are beginning to see, but also challenge the prevailing capitalist narratives that prevent breaking through to transformative change.

#### 7.1.2 Impact of Management Theories on Educational Practices

The constraints faced by faculty as described in the literature and voiced by faculty respondents in this research, as well as constraints institutions face, in effectively integrating sustainability into business education and curricula can be critically examined through Ghoshal's (2005) critique of traditional management theories. Ghoshal (2005) argues that management theories rooted in economic rationality, those prioritizing profit maximization and competition above other values, have not only shaped corporate behavior but have also profoundly influenced business education, often at odds with and at the expense of ethics and social responsibility. This view shows and can help understand the barriers to sustainability and ethics integration observed at both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, particularly as it relates to faculty limitations and institutional structures.

Ghoshal's (2005) critique places an emphasis on the prevailing management theories which endorse a view of business that is largely detached from ethical and social considerations. This perspective is reflected in the curriculum structures at both institutions included in this research, albeit unevenly, where sustainability and ethics are frequently treated as electives or simply overlaid over traditional topics, rather than as an integrated component of each course and business studies overall.

The way of treating curriculum is described in Ghoshal's (2005) assertion that business schools inadvertently reinforce the ideology of economic rationalism, thus perpetuating an approach to business that often conflicts with sustainability and ethical priorities, which again connects back to the critique Fisher also postulates. The analysis of course descriptions and student and faculty responses indicate that while there is a recognition of sustainability importance, institutional norms and management education practices still place traditional, profit-centered approaches at the forefront or underlying assumption, limiting deeper integration of transformative sustainability practices and views.

The faculty responses gathered in this research further demonstrate the challenges described by Ghoshal (2005), as many educators pointed to structural constraints like limited curriculum flexibility and limited resources, which restrict their ability to include sustainability more comprehensively. According to Ghoshal (2005), such constraints are symptomatic of deeper issues in management education where business schools have largely adopted the logic of economic efficiency, often at the cost of fostering critical, ethical, and sustainable practices beyond the promotional aspects. Faculty who lack institutional support and flexibility in course design are, therefore, positioned in a system that prioritizes traditional business metrics, which prevents the potential to develop a more ethically robust and sustainability-oriented curriculum.

Ghoshal's (2005) critique of "bad management theories" as drivers of unethical practices, business as usual creating business as usual, is particularly relevant to findings on student and faculty perceptions of ethics within the curriculum. Faculty in this study expressed concern that the current curriculum did not sufficiently

address complex ethical dilemmas associated with sustainability, even at Lapland UAS where integration of sustainability topics is more widespread, reinforcing Ghoshal's (2005) argument that when ethics is treated as secondary, business education produces graduates who may not be truly prepared for the ethical challenges they will face in the business world they enter during and after graduation. This gap between institutional objectives and curriculum offerings points to a need to reevaluate the theories and pedagogical frameworks that are the mainstays of business education, ensuring support for, rather than impediments to, ethical and sustainable practices

To conclude, Ghoshal's (2005) critique provides a framework for understanding the constraints observed in integrating sustainability and ethics into business education at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen and pairs well with the challenges and concerns Fisher also mentions in *Capitalist Realism* (2009). By continuing to rely on management theories that emphasize profit and competition, even green competition, business education risks failing to meet the demands of economies changing due to sustainability considerations and the societies in which they operate. A shift towards integrating ethics and sustainability as core components, recognizing how the concepts are deeply connected, rather than as electives or add-ons, would align educational practices more closely with the evolving priorities of responsible business leadership. This analysis suggests that reevaluating fundamental management theories and encouraging flexibility in curriculum design are necessary steps for institutions prepared to embrace more ethical and sustainable approaches to business education.

### 7.1.3 Alternative Economic Models and Sustainability

Building from the view of a capitalist framework presented by Fisher, and how management theories perpetuate bad management practices described by Ghoshal, Raworth (2017) offers a compelling framework for reimagining business education by shifting away from the traditional focus on growth and profit maximization towards models which emphasize sustainability and social responsibility in Doughnut Economics. The doughnut model presents and delineates a "safe and just" space for humanity within planetary boundaries, illustrating how busi-

ness curricula might adapt to address sustainability in a more integrated and comprehensive way (Raworth 2017). In Raworth's (2017) framework, the importance of preparing future business leaders to operate within ecological and social constraints is described, and this perspective resonates with the responses expressed by students and faculty in this research, both from Lapland UAS and FH Aachen.

Raworth (2017) challenges the growth-oriented economic models prevalent in traditional business curricula, advocating instead for a regenerative and distributive economic system that is deeply intertwined with sustainability goals. The findings from this research reveal that while there is recognition of sustainability's importance among students, faculty, and institutions, current curricula at both institutions still largely operate within conventional economic paradigms and prioritize short-term financial gains, a pattern also noted by Triana and Peterson (2022), as explored in the literature review. Lapland UAS has made greater strides in integrating sustainability throughout their core course offerings; however, conflicts between sustainability and traditional business practices are still observed. By incorporating alternative economic models like Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017), business programs can provide students with broader understandings of the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainability, which in turn equips them to navigate the complex challenges of a rapidly changing global market. Raworth (2017) also challenges traditional business education structures by suggesting that the introduction of alternative economic models should not wait until after traditional economic models have been taught but rather be integrated from the beginning, allowing for more critical engagement with how economic models should look.

The application of alternative economic models, like Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017), in business education offers an opportunity to deepen students' understanding of the interconnectedness of economic activity, social welfare, and environmental health—not as an optional consideration, but as an essential reality. This framework addresses students' desire for more comprehensive and practical sustainability content while also providing faculty with ready-to-use materials to integrate into their courses, directly addressing the needs expressed by both groups in this research. Integrating Raworth's (2017) model, or similar alternative

models, into core business courses such as finance, marketing, and management would encourage students to think critically about traditional assumptions of perpetual growth and explore alternative metrics of success not just in theory but also in practice.

Faculty responses in this study also indicate a need for curriculum frameworks that better align with sustainability goals, and the regenerative principles discussed in Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017) could guide faculty in developing course content that goes beyond traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Environmental Social Governance (ESG) topics. This type of shift could help move the measure of business from extractive to more inclusive (Triana & Peterson 2022). Proactive sustainability practices in business education promote curricula that support future leaders in creating positive environmental impacts rather than merely mitigating harm (Raworth 2017; Triana & Peterson 2022).

To end, Raworth's (2017) Doughnut Economics presents a model that could expand the sustainability discourse within business education beyond superficial treatment into transformative change. Moving beyond a narrow focus on growth and understanding the real limitations of these traditional models, this new model presents a way to meet the calls from both students and faculty for a curriculum that emphasizes long-term, holistic approaches to economic and environmental stewardship, where business can meaningfully contribute. Adopting such alternative economic models could support a curriculum that not only addresses the technical skills needed for economies adapting to sustainability concerns but also instill a deep commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices from the start, equipping students to lead responsibly in a complex and resource-constrained world. This analysis underscores the relevance of alternative economic models, such as Doughnut Economics, in addressing gaps in sustainability education. For a visual representation of the key shifts proposed by this framework, see Appendix 1 (DEAL 2017).

#### 7.1.4 Institutional Power and Knowledge Structures

As stated throughout this paper, acknowledging the interconnectedness of any subject is essential for understanding how to apply and adapt to transformative

change. Foucault's power/knowledge framework is useful for examining the interdisciplinary nature of the role of institutional authority in shaping sustainability education within business education and programs (Foucault 1980). According to Foucault, knowledge and power are deeply interconnected, where those who control knowledge dissemination also shape the underlying values and norms within a society or institution (Foucault 1980). Taken in a limited way and applied directly to the topics covered in this research, this concept is particularly relevant to understanding how sustainability is integrated, or limited, within the curricula at institutions like Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. The findings of this study suggest that while there is interest in sustainability among both students and faculty, institutional structures and power dynamics significantly influence the extent and manner in which sustainability topics are included in business education offerings.

In both institutions examined, decision-making around curriculum design appears constrained by existing power structures and established educational norms, which prioritize traditional economic models and corporate-focused business practices, even when applied to entrepreneurship. Further research is needed to understand the exact nature of these relationships, as it is beyond the scope of this study. Faculty responses evoke a sense of limited autonomy to make substantial curricular changes, often due to administrative policies and a lack of resources for sustainability-oriented professional development. Foucault's framework helps explain these limitations by emphasizing how institutions prioritize certain types of knowledge, often reflecting the dominant culture and economic paradigms while marginalizing others (Foucault 1980; Kolenick 2018). It is difficult to imagine a publicly funded institution wholly breaking free from this constraint, nor is it necessarily feasible or inherently desirable. The dominance of profit-driven, capitalist frameworks within business schools can be seen as an institutional power, shaping the educational landscape and reinforcing established norms that view sustainability as secondary to conventional business objectives (Foucault 1980; Ghoshal 2005).

This dynamic reflects a form of 'knowledge control,' a concept that aligns with Foucault's discussions on the interplay between power and knowledge in institutional systems (Foucault 1980), in which sustainability-related content is often

incorporated only as an elective or addition to traditional material when integrated into core competencies, rather than being woven into core subjects in a way that allows for deep, critical engagement. The findings of this research suggest that institutional power shapes the types of knowledge students are exposed to, resulting in sustainability being treated as an optional addition or overlay rather than an essential component of comprehensive business education (Emblen-Perry 2018).

Foucault asserts that power operates not through overt repression but by structuring the field of possibilities, subtly guiding what is deemed appropriate or valuable knowledge (Foucault 1980). Tormo et al. (2016) extend this idea by discussing how ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) topics are often marginalized within educational curricula, reflecting broader systemic constraints. For meaningful change, institutions must reconsider their structural limitations and actively support faculty in curricular and program development that integrates sustainability as a foundational aspect of business education, enabling a shift in educational priorities that better aligns with contemporary ecological and social needs (Brookfield 2001; Beamond et al. 2024).

The power/knowledge concept illustrates the need for institutional transparency and stakeholder engagement in curricular development. Transformation happens when transformative action is taken. Including diverse voices, particularly those advocating for sustainability beyond promotional concepts and regulatory compliance, can help challenge prevailing power structures and encourage a more comprehensive integration of sustainability topics. Engaging students, faculty, and local communities in curriculum decisions could democratize knowledge production within business schools, aiding in creating an environment where sustainability is valued as an integral component of responsible business education. This aspiration would require substantial effort to balance institutional responsibilities and regulatory obligations as public entities, yet it remains an achievable goal. Business education is expected to engage with the marketplace, and this approach provides a framework for evolving within that engagement. By applying Foucault's framework to understand the complexity of sustainability integration beyond topics discussed earlier, we can see the necessity of addressing not only

the content of sustainability in education but also how the power structures govern its inclusion and prominence within business programs (Emblen-Perry 2018; Rasche & Gilbert 2015).

Foucault's power/knowledge concepts offer critical insights into the structural and ideological constraints that shape sustainability education within business schools (Foucault 1980; Kolenick 2018). Recognizing these constraints can guide institutions in rethinking curricular priorities and developing more inclusive decision-making processes to drive meaningful change (Brookfield 2001; Beamond et al. 2024). While Foucault's view of power/knowledge is not universally accepted, taking an interdisciplinary approach remains essential for any substantial and integrative transformation (Luke 1995; Beamond et al. 2024). No action occurs in isolation, and no field of study exists entirely apart from others. Here, Foucault (1980) provides a valuable perspective for understanding the interdisciplinary dynamics of how traditional business education can challenge the status quo and drive transformative change. This need for interdisciplinary approaches to address structural limitations has been long recognized (Luke 1995) and remains a critical focus in contemporary research (Annelin & Boström 2024). Such a shift would enable sustainability to emerge not as a peripheral topic but as a core element of business education, demonstrating a commitment to preparing future leaders equipped to address complex global challenges (Hargreaves 2019).

## 7.2 Recommendations for Curriculum Development

### 7.2.1 Practical Recommendations for Integrating Sustainability

This research adds emphasis to the growing importance of integrating sustainability as a core component of business education, not as an elective or supplementary topic. To achieve this, applied projects and interdisciplinary integration can offer students hands-on experience and understanding of sustainability within diverse business contexts. The following recommendations provide a path for curriculum enhancement that meets both practical needs of students and faculty but also considers theoretical insights and frameworks for power, knowledge, and institutional structures.

First, applied projects offer an opportunity for students to actively and critically engage with real-world sustainability challenges. Collaboration with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government entities is a way for students to work on projects that require them to apply theoretical knowledge to concrete problems. This approach challenges capitalist paradigms, as Fisher (2009) suggests, by encouraging students to think beyond profit maximization toward creating social and environmental value, while also working within traditional teaching structures where projects have been carried out with businesses in more traditional ways. These projects can serve as a space for students to critically examine how sustainable practices are implemented in real ways within organizations, including the limitations and barriers they may encounter, while also exploring opportunities. Partnering with entities that are committed to sustainability also supports Fisher's notion of resisting capitalist realism as it potentially exposes students to alternative frameworks and practices that prioritize long-term societal well-being over immediate financial gain or offers an opportunity to encounter well-intentioned applications gone awry.

However, it is important to acknowledge the role of geographical location when considering opportunities and constraints in integrating applied and practical projects sustainability and business ethics within curricula. While rural regions, like Finnish Lapland, and metropolitan areas, such as the Rhine-Ruhr region of Germany, present different opportunities and constraints for local partnerships, these differences are not necessarily barriers but instead offer unique opportunities to foster meaningful community relationships and real-world understanding for students. Effectively implementing these projects requires strategies that carefully consider regional contexts, populations, and community goals. Creativity in curricula design and institutional effort can ensure that students, regardless of location, have access to sustainability projects, whether through partnerships, simulations, or locally adapted initiatives. As Brunstein et al. (2020) emphasize, sustainability education benefits from flexible, locally adapted approaches that engage students in addressing contextual challenges.

Second, interdisciplinary integration is foundational to creating a comprehensive understanding of sustainability's interconnected nature and complexity. Building from Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge, interdisciplinary courses

can help dismantle traditional hierarchies in knowledge production by combining insights from economics, environmental science, and sociology within business curricula ensuring they are applied in ways that move beyond extractive purposes. Introducing sustainability into core courses like finance, marketing, and management can assist in facilitating a shift in students' understanding, allowing a view to these disciplines not as separate and isolated subjects but as interconnected areas that influence and are influenced by sustainability issues. Ghoshal's (2005) critique of management training argues that business school faculty have perpetuated the belief that some subjects are neutral with respect to ethics and sustainability. This integration not only deepens students' knowledge but also encourages critical thinking by prompting them to question traditional business assumptions and norms in a facilitated environment.

Third, curriculum flexibility also supports faculty in implementing changes effectively. Faculty respondents in this research cited constraints, such as rigid curricular structures and limited resources, which hinder their ability to incorporate sustainability more comprehensively. By establishing flexible guidelines that allow faculty to adapt their course content to include interdisciplinary and applied sustainability projects, considering the complexity of the issue and rapid rate of change in information, institutions can empower educators to develop course materials that are both relevant and transformative. This flexibility, informed by Foucault's framework (1980), acknowledges that faculty are both recipients and agents of knowledge production within their institutions, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to necessary curricular change.

Finally, applied projects and interdisciplinary coursework should be coupled with reflective assessments that allow students to critically evaluate the ethical and social implications of their work. These assessments can foster a deeper understanding of the limitations and opportunities within current business practices under the guidance of an instructor, as well as encourage students to envision alternatives. A shift toward considering long-term sustainability over short-term gains, such assessments reinforce Ghoshal's (2005) critique of traditional management theories that often prioritize profit maximization at the expense of ethical and social considerations.

### 7.2.2 Faculty Training and Support Recommendations

Successful integration of sustainability into business curricula requires faculty receive adequate support, resources, and professional development opportunities. Faculty training in sustainability must go beyond basic content knowledge to include frameworks and pedagogical strategies that empower educators to challenge dominant business paradigms. Adopting this approach is supported by Ghoshal's (2005) critique of traditional management theories and Foucault's (1980) exploration of institutional power structures, emphasizing that sustainable transformation within business education depends not only on individual initiatives, but also on structural and ideological support from within institutions.

First, ongoing professional development in sustainability and ethics in business can bridge the knowledge gap cited by many responding faculty members in this study, equipping faculty with tools and frameworks to critically engage students. Ghoshal's analysis of "bad management theories" as perpetuating unethical practices is poignant in describing the need for faculty to be well-versed in alternative economic models and business ethics theories. Training programs that include approaches like Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017) and regenerative growth encourage faculty to expand beyond profit- and growth-centric models, allowing them to impart a more holistic view of business as well as long-term thinking for societal and ecological well-being.

Second, promoting an institutional culture that values sustainability at a structural level is essential for transformative change. Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge lends itself to the idea that faculty autonomy in shaping curricula is limited by institutional norms and priorities. Institutions must, therefore, prioritize sustainability not only in name but in practice, ensuring it is embedded into core organizational values and priorities, supporting faculty who seek to integrate these themes in their courses. By creating a culture where sustainability and ethics are valued at all levels, from senior administration to faculty hiring and performance evaluations, institutions can create an environment in which sustainability becomes a shared institutional goal rather than an isolated topic in selected courses or a buzzword used without meaningful engagement (Triana & Peterson 2022; Rasche & Gilbert 2015).

Third, resource allocation and access to materials play an important role in ensuring faculty are well-prepared to implement sustainability-focused curricula effectively. Faculty members often cite time and funding constraints as significant barriers to sustainability integration, a finding echoed in both this research and the broader literature (Triana & Peterson 2022; Tormo et al. 2016). Institutions can address these constraints by providing access to up-to-date teaching materials, digital resources, and academic networks that focus on sustainability and ethics. This support empowers faculty to keep pace with the latest developments in sustainability, which is changing rapidly, ensuring course content remains relevant and impactful (Emblen-Perry 2018).

Finally, peer networks and interdisciplinary collaboration can provide faculty with ongoing support and engagement, creating a sustainable, self-reinforcing model of professional development. Ghoshal's critique points to the limitations of isolated efforts within traditional management frameworks, while Foucault's theory emphasizes the importance of distributed knowledge production. Faculty development initiatives that encourage cross-disciplinary exchanges allow educators to share insights and strategies for addressing sustainability from various academic perspectives (Brunstein et al. 2020). These peer networks and interdisciplinary collaborations can foster a sense of shared purpose and innovation, encouraging faculty to challenge and rethink traditional business paradigms collectively without feeling overburdened individually.

## 8 LIMITATIONS

### 8.1 Methodological Constraints

The research has several methodological constraints, primarily concerning survey sampling and data collection through the online platform Webropol, which impacted the data representativeness and reliability. The survey distribution relied on institutional mailing lists. At Lapland UAS a limited number of active students were reached through email, with a follow-up reminder email sent two days prior to the close of the survey. The survey was active for a ten-day period, most of which was fall break at Lapland UAS possibly contributing to reduced engagement. Consequently, faculty response rates were significantly higher than students as they were emailed individually. FH Aachen students received the survey through a broader mailing list, likely including business students across various business programs (estimated at around 2500 students). Despite the wide distribution at FH Aachen, limited follow-up reduced potential engagement, and the English language requirement may have dissuaded some respondents.

The data collected through Webropol also posed certain limitations, both due to the constraints of the application and the skill of the researcher. Webropol's default analysis provides averages and basic statistical outputs, however advanced statistical analysis was not conducted, which limits the interpretative depth of the survey responses (Taimitarha 2021). Additionally, while Webropol allows data export to platforms like Excel and other statistical analysis tools, the analysis conducted remained within the platform's basic features, further restricting the exploration of data validity and robustness (Saunders et al 2007). The methodological decision to rely on descriptive statistics impacts the generalizability and depth of analysis, potentially limiting insights into subtler trends within the data. Additionally, the course description analysis focused primarily on title and description keywords, limiting the analysis to general observations on sustainability themes without a structured qualitative coding framework.

## 8.2 Limitations in Survey Data

The survey data is limited in its scope, sample size, and possible response biases. The final sample included a total of only 51 respondents after excluding one who did not affiliate with either institution, leading to an effective sample size that limits the generalizability especially within diverse student populations. As a double degree student enrolled in both institutions' international business programs, the researcher may have unintentionally introduced interpretive bias, including personal experiences of sustainability discussions and experiences in both institutions to analysis. This potential bias is mitigated through adherence to a standardized coding framework, yet the small sample size, combined with subjective analysis, introduces a limitation to objectivity (Saunders et al 2007).

Response bias is also likely in the survey. The use of a seven-point Likert scale intended to capture a more nuanced responses and to reduce central tendency bias and overreporting of favorable views. However, personal response styles and subjective interpretations of provided descriptors may have introduced variance not strictly aligned with actual attitudes (Taimitarha 2021). Finally, the survey was inspired by existing frameworks and themes, but was developed by the researcher rather than based on a validated instrument which could contribute to variances in response consistency and reliability.

## 8.3 Generalizability and Scope of Analysis

The findings of this research are bounded by the specific institutional contexts of Lapland UAS and FH Aachen's English language undergraduate business programs, which vary significantly in approach and student and faculty demographics. Generalizability to broader business education contexts remains limited, as this research does not account for curriculum and student diversity across institutions beyond the two included. Consequently, the research recommendations are not always tailored individually to each institution, as the observed sustainability themes may resonate differently depending on each program's curricular emphasis and student body characteristics.

The course descriptions at both institutions reveal thematic commitments to sustainability, ethics, and alternative models. However, these are not consistently integrated across all courses, reflecting institutional and program priorities rather than universal curriculum standards. This selective representation of sustainability within the curricula limits the analysis to observed trends rather than establishing a comprehensive understanding applicable to all business education settings.

#### 8.4 Ethics

The ethical considerations of this research were carefully addressed throughout the process, ensuring compliance with relevant ethical standards and guidelines. This includes adherence to the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity's guidelines (TENK 2012), relevant articles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), specifically Articles 13 and 14, which were cited in the survey introduction, and institutional policies of both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. These measures ensured the integrity of the research by protecting participants' rights.

Data collection and analysis adhered to GDPR principles and prioritized confidentiality, security, and proper handling of personal data. Participant consent was obtained prior to participation in the survey. The introduction informed participants that continuing with the survey, by actively engaging and clicking "Next" from the introductory page, constituted their consent. The introduction ensured clear communication regarding the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of participation. Data was anonymized automatically by the application used for data collection, Webropol, to prevent identification of individual responses to encourage honest participation and trust and ensure privacy.

The research also adhered to the ethical principles outlined by both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, with particular attention paid to the impartiality and objectivity of the data analysis. As the researcher is a member of both institutions and attended courses of all three programs represented in the research, significant effort was made to differentiate personal experience from the reported and analyzed responses expressed through the survey. This was reflected in the survey design, which aimed to limit potential confusion or conflation of information in participant responses. By emphasizing transparency, the research aligns with a broader

commitment to ethical academic practices. Efforts were made to mitigate bias, ensuring that findings accurately reflect participant perspectives rather than researcher predispositions. This included employing established methodologies, as described in *Research Methods for Business Students* (Saunders et al. 2019) and *Methods for Development Work* (Moilanen et al. 2010).

The theoretical framework and literature review were conducted with academic integrity, avoiding plagiarism and ensuring proper attribution to sources. This also aligns with TENK guidelines and institutional policies, which emphasize the respect for intellectual property and ethical scholarship (TENK 2012).

Finally, this thesis recognizes the critical role of ethics in sustainable business education, both as a research subject and within its own methodology. Ethical considerations extend beyond compliance, as this paper explores, reflecting a deeper commitment to fostering responsible research practices which align with the principles of sustainability and equitable academic inquiry.

## 9 CONCLUSIONS

This research analyzed the integration of sustainability and ethics concepts, as well as alternative economic theories, into business curricula at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen's undergraduate English-language business programs. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study involved a survey distributed to students and faculty, supplemented by an analysis of course offerings and institutional information to provide context. Through the lens of four theoretical perspectives, Fisher, Ghoshal, Raworth, and Foucault, it examined how student and faculty perceptions and expectations aligned or diverged, and how these corresponded with institutional priorities in preparing students for a sustainability-focused economy. The findings outlined the role of sustainability in institutional commitments while revealing gaps in practical application and depth, indicating the need for systematic changes to align educational priorities with global sustainability needs and objectives.

The theoretical framework guiding this research was informed by critical perspectives that contextualize and provide insight into the challenges of sustainability in business education. Fisher's (2009) critique of capitalist realism describes the conflict between sustainability goals and the profit-driven focus of traditional business practices. Ghoshal's (2005) critique of management theories illustrates the need to rethink business ethics, stressing the value of integrating ethical considerations consistently across disciplines, a point this research found inconsistently addressed, even in sustainability-focused programs. Raworth's (2017) Doughnut Economics proposes alternatives to traditional metrics of success, calling for revising business education frameworks while offering solutions for incorporating sustainability principles across disciplines and understanding alternative economic theories. Foucault's (1980) concept of power/knowledge clarifies how institutional structures shape both autonomy and limitations, demonstrating the importance of institutional support for faculty and interdisciplinary curriculum design. Collectively, these perspectives expose the systemic challenges in realizing transformative sustainability education and emphasize the necessity for institutional support, interdisciplinary curriculum design, and alternative economic models that redefine traditional frameworks.

The analysis identified two distinct institutional approaches to business education, shaped by their geographical and societal contexts, and the influence these factors had on the inclusion of sustainability in their respective programs. Lapland UAS developed a program with an explicit focus on sustainability concepts and skills, positioning them as foundational to course progression, while also prioritizing entrepreneurial and international competencies. FH Aachen adopted a more modular approach, offering sustainability through elective and specialization courses, with a stronger focus on internationalization and digitally oriented skills. Findings suggest that, regardless of institutional efforts, sustainability is still often treated as supplementary rather than integral across disciplines. Even where sustainability is directly incorporated, it tends to be added on rather than fundamentally transforming the curricula.

The findings show students and faculty shared a recognition of the importance of sustainability in business education, however, significant gaps emerged in other areas. Students expressed a need for more practical, real-world applications and interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability in their coursework. Faculty, on the other hand, cited structural barriers such as limited resources and institutional constraints. These findings align with broader research reinforcing the importance of comprehensive, holistic, and applied sustainability education to prepare graduates with the skills required to succeed and advance systemic transformation. Specific recommendations emerging from this research include increasing faculty access to professional development in sustainability topics, restructuring curricula to integrate ethics and sustainability across disciplines, and fostering collaboration between departments to create interdisciplinary program structures.

Ethical considerations, although acknowledged, remain insufficiently integrated across curricula. Research suggests that incorporating ethics alongside sustainability makes sustainability concepts more accessible and enhances critical engagement with them (Dziubaniuk & Nyholm 2020; Tormo et al. 2016). At Lapland UAS, while sustainability is included throughout the program, ethics often lacks depth and cohesion within course offerings, as indicated by course titles and descriptions. Similarly, at FH Aachen, ethics is treated as a peripheral subject, confined primarily to a stand-alone course rather than spread across the curriculum.

Addressing this gap requires embedding ethics and sustainability throughout business education, not as isolated subjects, but as interconnected principles that shape decision-making across disciplines and reflect their significance in real-world business practice.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on sustainability and ethics in business education, providing insights that align with and advance prior research emphasizing the value of interdisciplinary and applied sustainability education. Brunstein et al. (2020) and Triana & Peterson (2022) demonstrate the effectiveness of applied learning methods, such as case studies and simulations, in bridging theoretical and practical gaps. The study builds upon Gawel's (2022) observations about practical engagement deepening students' understanding of sustainability's role in business, while providing curriculum development insights that bridge theoretical understanding, recognize limitations, and align practical application. The findings describe the importance of closing gaps between educational objectives and the evolving demands of sustainability-focused economies, ensuring future students are equipped with not only knowledge but also critical perspectives and skills necessary for transformational leadership. By explicitly aligning education with the demands of sustainability-driven economies, institutions can contribute to creating leaders who are equipped to address complex challenges and drive meaningful change.

## 10 DISCUSSION

### 10.1 Review of Main Insights

Detailed findings on student and faculty perspectives, curriculum integration, and institutional challenges are discussed comprehensively in sections 6 and 7. In summary, this research identified a shared commitment to sustainability across both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen and noted challenges faced. Both students and faculty value sustainability as essential to business education considering quickly changing market and environmental factors. While both institutions acknowledge the importance of sustainability, the findings reveal a gap between faculty confidence in curriculum effectiveness and student perceptions of their preparedness for sustainability-focused careers. Students seek more hands-on practical applications while faculty note the complexity and pace of change as barriers to full transformative integration. This research contributes to the view for a cohesive interdisciplinary framework to embed sustainability and ethics consistently, aligning institutional objectives with the evolving nature of an economy shaped by sustainability considerations.

### 10.2 Contributions to Business Education

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the role of sustainability in business education, offering theoretical and practical insights into curriculum development and pedagogical approaches.

- **Theoretical Contributions:** Examining the perspectives of students and faculty on sustainability and ethics contribute to understanding the importance of institutional goals connecting with sustainability focused educational outcomes. The findings support the view that effective sustainability education requires more than isolated courses or surface level theory. Effective integration involves an interdisciplinary approach which creates ethical and ecological awareness (Beamond et al. 2024; Dziubaniuk & Nyholm 2020). The continued relevance of Ghoshal's (2005) work which discussed similar issues nearly two decades ago suggest that systematic changes are necessary to overcome these continuing challenges.

- **Practical Contributions:** This research provides, if limited, evidence that student and faculty alike desire more robust frameworks for sustainability in business curricula. At Lapland UAS efforts to incorporate sustainability comprehensively are visible, but students still report a need for deeper practical applications and frequent ethical discussions. The faculty's varying levels of engagement with sustainability indicate how professional development and greater institutional support can ensure consistent curriculum quality. At FH Aachen the variance in faculty engagement levels and curriculum integration suggest that a clearer institution wide approach could strengthen sustainability education there.

The research demonstrates the evolving role of business education in preparing students to respond not only to market demands but to lead transformational change in sustainability. This aligns with global initiatives like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN n.d.), which advocate for educational institutions to contribute to sustainability minded graduates capable of addressing complex business challenges.

### 10.3 Addressing the Research Questions

#### 10.3.1 Primary Research Question: How well do business schools prepare students for a sustainability-focused economy?

The research findings indicate that, while business schools surveyed increasingly acknowledge the importance of sustainability, they face challenges in fully preparing students for the complexities of an economy changing due to sustainability considerations. Both Lapland UAS and FH Aachen incorporate sustainability to varying degrees, yet inconsistent integration may leave students underprepared for real world challenges when they graduate. A more embedded, foundational approach across courses could better equip students for ethical and sustainable business practices in their future careers.

### 10.3.2 Sub-Research Question 1: How do business students and faculty perceive their preparedness to address sustainability challenges in their future careers?

The results show a notable gap between faculty and student perceptions of preparedness. Faculty generally believe the current programs provide sufficient training in sustainability, while many students feel underprepared, citing a lack of depth and hands-on learning experiences. This indicates a need to better align educational content with student expectations for real-world applicability.

### 10.3.3 Sub-Research Question 2: How well do student expectations and faculty goals align in preparing students for a sustainability-focused economy?

While both groups acknowledge the importance of sustainability, there is a misalignment between student expectations for practical skills and faculty goals, which may be influenced by resource and time constraints. Faculty feel current efforts are sufficient, whereas students desire a more comprehensive, real world, skills-oriented approach. This mismatch suggests potential curriculum reforms to bridge this gap and better reflect student needs.

### 10.3.4 Sub-Research Question 3: To what extent are sustainability and ethical business practices integrated into the course offerings at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, based on course titles and descriptions?

The curriculum analysis shows that sustainability topics are inconsistently integrated, often appearing as electives or supplementary topics rather than core competency courses. This limited exposure may hinder students' ability to fully incorporate sustainability principles. Structured integration across required courses, particularly integrating deeper ethics discussions, could improve students' holistic understanding of sustainability.

At Lapland UAS, sustainability is more visibly incorporated into the program structure, with courses specifically designated to cover sustainability topics. However, students have expressed a desire for deeper, more practical applications of these

principles and more frequent integration of ethical discussions across the curriculum.

At FH Aachen, sustainability is addressed less comprehensively and tends to be confined to electives, which leads to variability in student exposure to these topics. Faculty engagement with sustainability also varies, suggesting that a clearer, institution wide approach to curriculum development could enhance both the consistency and depth of sustainability education within the programs.

#### 10.3.5 Sub-Research Question 4: How do students and faculty perceive the role of ethics in business management, and how does it influence their understanding of sustainability?

The study indicates that both groups view ethics as essential to business management, yet they differ in their emphasis. Faculty often approach ethics from a traditional perspective, while students advocate for a closer alignment of ethics with environmental and social responsibility. Expanding ethics discussions to include sustainability focused frameworks could create a more comprehensive understanding of ethical business practices relevant to today's global challenges which go beyond thinking of sustainability as limited to environmental concerns. Models like Doughnut Economics (Appendix 1) exemplify this integration, providing a clear pathway for balancing social and ecological needs.

#### 10.4 Implications for Further Research

A detailed discussion of future research directions is found in sections on limitations and curriculum implications (see sections 8.3 and 6.7.3). In summary, this research identified several potential areas for further research within sustainability integration in business education. First, expanding this research to include a broader sample size or additional institutions could increase the generalizability of findings and provide comparative insights across diverse educational contexts. Second, longitudinal studies tracking changes in student and faculty perceptions over multiple years would aid in assessing the long-term effects of integrated sustainability practices within curriculum. Finally, exploring faculty professional development models focused on sustainability integration, including training on

alternative economic frameworks such as Doughnut Economics (Raworth 2017) could reveal strategies for addressing institutional challenges in comprehensive sustainability education.

### 10.5 Concluding Remarks

This research indicates a need to better integrate sustainability and related topics as a foundational and transformative topic in business education. Integrating practical applications and ethical considerations as core elements throughout the course of study, exploring the complexities and intricacies of sustainability as a topic beyond strictly environmental or promotional views. Meeting both student expectations and global sustainability objectives requires an interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach that includes institutional support, program development, professional development for faculty, and comprehensive curriculum reform. Addressing these areas more effectively can transform business schools in a way which prepares future leaders with the skills capable of driving substantive change within a sustainability-oriented economy, thereby closing the gap between academic preparation and practical real-world application.

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## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1. Illustration of "Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist" (DEAL 2017).
- Appendix 2. Survey

Appendix 1 1(1). Illustration of "Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist" (DEAL 2017).



### Seven ways to think like a 21st century economist

Seven Ways to Think:	From 20th-Century Economics	To 21st-Century Economics
<b>1. Change the Goal</b>	<p>GDP</p>	<p>the Doughnut</p>
<b>2. See the Big Picture</b>	<p>self-contained market</p>	<p>embedded economy</p>
<b>3. Nurture Human Nature</b>	<p>rational economic man</p>	<p>social adaptable humans</p>
<b>4. Get Savvy with Systems</b>	<p>mechanical equilibrium</p>	<p>dynamic complexity</p>
<b>5. Design to Distribute</b>	<p>growth will even it up again</p>	<p>distributive by design</p>
<b>6. Create to Regenerate</b>	<p>growth will clean it up again</p>	<p>regenerative by design</p>
<b>7. Be Agnostic about Growth</b>	<p>growth addicted</p>	<p>growth agnostic</p>

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Figure 21. Illustration of "Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist" (DEAL 2017)

## Appendix 2 1(13). Survey

Appendix 2 provides the full survey used to collect data from students and faculty at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen for this thesis. The survey was designed to gather insights on perceptions of sustainability and ethical business practices in education.

### **Sustainability in Business Studies: Perceptions at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen**

Mandatory questions are marked with a star (\*)

#### Introduction

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Survey for Lapland UAS and FH Aachen Undergraduate English-Language Business Students and Faculty

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey, which forms a key part of the bachelor's thesis research conducted by Emily Van Matre, a double-degree student at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. The survey aims to explore how well business students and faculty feel prepared to address sustainability challenges through their exposure to topics such as sustainability, ethics, and alternative economic models. Your insights will help shape recommendations for the English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen.

This survey is intended for undergraduate students and faculty of the English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen. Students include those currently enrolled in these programs, and faculty encompasses all teaching and curriculum staff, such as full-time professors, lecturers, part-time instructors, adjunct faculty, and program coordinators.

The survey will take approximately 10–20 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and by submitting your answers, you consent to participate in this research. Your responses are automatically anonymized and cannot be traced back to you. All data will be kept confidential, securely stored, and used solely for

## Appendix 2 2(13). Survey

this thesis. It will be deleted one month after the thesis process is concluded. More information about your rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR Articles 13 & 14) can be found at (here)[<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679>].

If you have any questions or need further details, please contact me:

Emily Van Matre

Thank you for contributing to this research! Your input is greatly appreciated.

## Demographics

---

### **Which institution are you primarily affiliated with?\***

*Students: Choose your home university, even if you've been on exchange. For example, double-degree students from Lapland UAS studying at FH Aachen should select Lapland UAS.*

*Faculty (including adjunct/part-time):*

*If you teach at both institutions, select the one where your teaching role is more substantial. For example, if you primarily teach at Lapland UAS but offer one course at FH Aachen, select Lapland UAS.*

*If your primary affiliation is elsewhere, but you teach part-time or a course at either Lapland UAS or FH Aachen, select the institution where you teach within the English-language business programs. For example, if your main work is elsewhere but you teach part-time at FH Aachen, select FH Aachen.*

*If none of these apply, select Neither to exit the survey.*

- Lapland UAS
- FH Aachen
- Neither (If selected, you will exit the survey)

## Appendix 2 3(13). Survey

**Question Rules:**

- **Lapland UAS:** No option rules
  - **FH Aachen:** No option rules
  - **Neither: Rule: End Survey:** *"Thank you for your interest. This survey is intended specifically for those affiliated with Lapland UAS or FH Aachen."*
- 

**What is your role within the institution?\***

- Student
- Faculty (teaching/curriculum staff)
- Other (e.g., researcher, administrative staff, etc.)

**Question Rules:**

- **Student:**
    - **Rule: Show Question(s):** For Students
  - **Faculty (teaching/curriculum staff):**
    - **Rule: Show Question(s):** For Faculty
  - **Other (e.g., researcher, administrative staff, etc.):**
    - **Rule: Jump to page:** If this option is selected, jump to the question: *"How familiar are you with the following sustainability-related concepts?"*
- 

**What is your gender?\***

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Other (self-describe)
- Prefer not to say

## Appendix 2 4(13). Survey

For Students

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**What is your current semester of study?\***

- 1–2 (1st year)
  - 3–4 (2nd year)
  - 5–6 (3rd year)
  - 7–8 (4th year)
  - 9+ (5th year or more)
  - Other / Does Not Apply
- 

**What type of student are you?\***

*Domestic student: I am studying in my home country.*

*International student: I am studying in a country that is not my home country.*

*Exchange student: I am temporarily studying in this country as part of an exchange program from my home university.*

- Domestic student
  - International student
  - Exchange student
  - Other (please specify)
- 

**What are your career aspirations following graduation? (Select all that apply)**

- Sustainability-focused roles
- General business / management roles
- Entrepreneurship / start a business
- Further academic studies (Master's, PhD)
- Undecided
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

Appendix 2 5(13). Survey

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**What was the primary factor that influenced your decision to study at this institution?\***

- International opportunities
- Quality of life in the region
- Proximity to home / family
- Connections to the local business environment
- Language and culture
- Other (please specify)

For Faculty

---

**How many years of teaching or working experience do you have in business education, at any institution?\***

- Less than 1 year
  - 1–3 years
  - 4–7 years
  - 8+ years
  - Other / Does not apply
- 

**What is your current role?\***

*Please indicate your role at the institution you selected earlier (Lapland UAS or FH Aachen), not any other institution where you may be employed.*

- Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Senior Lecturer
- Lecturer
- Part-Time Lecturer
- Program Coordinator
- Adjunct Faculty
- Other (please specify)

## Appendix 2 6(13). Survey

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### **What are your main teaching subjects? (Select all that apply)**

*Please select the subjects you teach at the institution you indicated earlier (Lapland UAS or FH Aachen), not any other institution where you may be employed.*

- International Business & Trade
  - Sustainable Business & Development
  - Business Management & Strategy
  - Marketing & Sales
  - Finance & Accounting
  - Economics
  - Operations & Logistics
  - Entrepreneurship & Innovation
  - Business Law / Employment Law
  - Human Resource Management (HRM)
  - Other (please specify)
- 

### **What are your primary goals for preparing students in the business program at Lapland UAS or FH Aachen? (Select all that apply)**

*"Business program" refers to the undergraduate English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen, such as International Business (IB) or Global Business & Economics (GBE).*

- Providing comprehensive business/management training
- Fostering entrepreneurial and innovative thinking
- Preparing for further academic studies
- Developing sustainability-related skills
- Other (please specify)

## Content Introduction & Questions for Students and Faculty

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### **Understanding Sustainability in This Survey**

In this survey, sustainability refers to practices and concepts that balance economic growth, environmental responsibility, and social well-being. This applies to how businesses, educators, and society address sustainability challenges within the context of work life, business practices, and education. It focuses on decision-making and responsible management, not personal habits.

## Appendix 2 7(13). Survey

For this research, sustainability follows the United Nations' definition: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987).

I understand that not everyone will be familiar with all the sustainability-related terms or concepts presented. There are no right or wrong answers—your responses should reflect your own experiences. If you are unsure whether a term has been discussed in your courses or professional life, selecting "Not at all" is a valid response.

Your responses are completely anonymous and will not be linked to you personally. Once the research is completed, all collected data will be deleted. Please answer every question based on your experiences, knowing that all perspectives are valuable.

United Nations. (1987). *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Report)*.

Available at: <https://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

### **How familiar are you with the following sustainability-related concepts?\***

*If any terms are unfamiliar, please respond based on your current knowledge.*

*1 = Not familiar at all, 7 = Very familiar*

The following concepts include a Likert scale for responses:

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)\*
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)\*
- Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)\*
- Degrowth\*
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)\*
- Regenerative Growth\*
- Stakeholder Theory\*
- Circular Economy\*

### **In your view, how important is sustainability in business education?\***

*1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

Appendix 2 8(13). Survey

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**To what extent do you feel responsible for addressing sustainability in your future career (for students) or teaching (for faculty)?\***

*1 = Not responsible at all, 7 = Extremely responsible*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

---

**How confident are you in applying sustainability concepts in your future career (for students) or in your teaching practice (for faculty)?\***

*This includes any sustainability-related ideas or practices relevant to your field.*

*1 = Not confident at all, 7 = Very confident*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

---

**How significant do you think sustainability will be in the next 5–10 years for your future career (for students) or teaching (for faculty)?\***

*1 = Not significant at all, 7 = Very significant*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**To what extent are the following sustainability terms discussed in your courses?\***

*If any terms are unfamiliar, please respond based on your current knowledge.  
"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Very often*

## Appendix 2 9(13). Survey

The following terms include a Likert scale for responses:

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)\*
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)\*
- Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)\*
- Degrowth\*
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)\*
- Regenerative Growth\*
- Stakeholder Theory\*
- Circular Economy\*

**How often do you engage with real-world sustainability case studies/projects in your courses?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Never, 7 = Very often*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

**How effective are your courses at providing the skills necessary for addressing sustainability challenges?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Not effective at all, 7 = Extremely effective*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

**To what extent do you believe sustainability is integrated across your courses?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Not integrated at all, 7 = Fully integrated*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

## Appendix 2 10(13). Survey

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**How often are potential conflicts between sustainability goals and business objectives discussed in your courses?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Never, 7 = Very often*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**In your view, how important is the role of business ethics in sustainability practices?\***

*1 = Not important, 7 = Extremely important*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**To what extent are ethical practices discussed in your courses?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Fully integrated*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**For courses where economic models are relevant, how frequently are traditional models critically evaluated?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*"Traditional economic models" refer to mainstream approaches such as neoclassical economics, which emphasize concepts like free markets, growth, and efficiency.*

*1 = Never, 7 = Very often*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

Appendix 2 11(13). Survey

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**How often are alternative approaches to economic growth (e.g., regenerative growth) discussed in your courses?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*"Alternative economic models" include approaches such as degrowth, steady-state economics, and other models that focus on sustainability, social equity, and environmental responsibility. Regenerative growth refers specifically to improving environmental and social conditions while supporting economic development within planetary boundaries.*

*1 = Never, 7 = Very Often*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**For courses where economic systems are a relevant topic, to what extent do they present multiple perspectives?\***

*"Courses" refers to the classes or modules you have taken or taught within the English-language undergraduate business programs.*

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Fully*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**How well do you feel your program prepares you for sustainability challenges?\***

*"Program" refers to the entire degree program, encompassing all courses, content, and learning experiences within the undergraduate English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen.*

*1 = Not prepared at all, 7 = Very well prepared*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

Appendix 2 12(13). Survey

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**To what extent does the level of sustainability integration in your program meet your expectations?\***

*"Program" refers to the entire degree program, encompassing all courses, content, and learning experiences within the undergraduate English-language business programs at Lapland UAS and FH Aachen.*

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely meets expectations*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**To what extent do you believe there is alignment between faculty goals and student expectations regarding sustainability education?\***

*1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely*

This question includes a Likert scale for responses.

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**In your opinion, what suggestions do you have for integrating sustainability and ethical business practices more effectively in your program?**

*Please provide examples of course content, teaching methods, or activities that could improve sustainability education. Your input is optional, but your thoughts are greatly appreciated!*

This question includes a text box for open-ended responses.

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**In your experience, what are the main challenges faced in preparing students for sustainability-focused business practices?**

*Consider challenges such as gaps in course content, difficulties in connecting theory to practice, or institutional barriers. Your input is optional, but your thoughts are greatly appreciated!*

This question includes a text box for open-ended responses.

Appendix 2 13(13). Survey

Closing Page

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**Thank you for participating!**

Please remember to submit your responses on the next page.

If you would like to stay informed about the results of this research or have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me. I would be happy to share insights or address any concerns you may have.

**You can reach me at:**

Thank you again for contributing to this important research!