

Ethics and responsibility

Title	Ethics and responsibility
Semester	E2025
Master programme in	Virksomhedsledelse / Business Administration and Leadership
Type of activity	Course
Teaching language	English
Study regulation	Read about the Master Programme and find the Study Regulations at ruc.dk

REGISTRATION AND STUDY ADMINISTRATIVE

You register for activities through [stads selvbetjening](#) during the announced registration period, which you can see on the [Study administration homepage](#).

Registration When registering for courses, please be aware of the potential conflicts and overlaps between course and exam time and dates. The planning of course activities at Roskilde University is based on the recommended study programmes, which should not overlap. However, if you choose optional courses and/or study plans that goes beyond the recommended study programmes, an overlap of lectures or exam dates may occur depending on which courses you choose.

Number of participants

ECTS 5

Responsible for the activity Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Head of study Maria Duclos Lindstrøm (marial@ruc.dk)

Teachers

Study administration ISE Registration & Exams (ise-exams@ruc.dk)

Exam code(s) U60026GB

ACADEMIC CONTENT

Overall objective Advanced study course in Business Administration

Via the course, students gain a critical insight into and understanding of the ethics and responsibilities of companies in relation to business and society. The student gains knowledge and understanding of corporate ethics and responsibility in relation to topical dilemmas concerning the relationship of companies with the outside world and democratic legitimacy. The course provides insight into the principal theories of business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and legitimacy, with in-depth case studies of companies in an international and global perspective.

Detailed
description of
content

This course analyzes corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental, social and governance standards (ESG), sustainable development goals (SDGs), corporate citizenship, public relations, public affairs, stakeholder engagement, globalization and trust in the framework of responsibility, ethics and legitimacy of corporations. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the theory and practice of responsible business in the perspective of ethics and legitimacy. We will investigate major theories of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business ethics—relating them to corporate practices and emerging trends and requirements of legitimacy. We will look at the major schools of corporate social responsibility (CSR), for example: the strategic conception (CSR as a tool for profit maximization), the international conception (CSR as respect for human rights in international business), the communicative conception (CSR as stakeholder management), and the ethical conception (CSR as business ethics). In addition, we will investigate major theories of legitimacy in business ethics, for example stakeholder management. Moreover, we will discuss conceptions of business and society based on CSR-impact and the voluntary-mandatory dichotomy of a stick and carrot approach to business compliance with ESG-standards and theories related to business and human rights and compliance with UN global compact standards. These theories will be related to legal developments of regulation of CSR and business ethics in Europe, United States and at the level of the United Nations with emergent trends of business and sustainable development goals (SDGs). Recent years have been characterized by a tremendous development in requirements of Legitimacy and compliance with environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards and UN global compact values of due diligence of business in society. Now, we do not only talk about business and society but indeed about business for society. In many cases, reporting procedures and accountability programs for corporate and social values are introduced into the organization to respond to increased

complexity and concern for legitimacy. The corporate boards see management of ESG, sustainability and SDGs as a means to ensure not only the responsibility and integrity of the organization but also efficient management, competitiveness and legitimacy of the firm in a complex democratic society with strong expectations to corporations. We can summarize this as an evolution towards a “new economy of legitimate corporate citizenship” that “brings together competencies from civil society, labour organizations, business, government and international bodies “. With business ethics and values-driven management corporations aim at contributing to civil governance of global sustainability and they become responsible for long term social processes of developing society in collaboration and dialogue with their stakeholders. We can say that corporations are changing their role in society not only through new partnerships with governments but also by making ethics, social responsibility and participation in governance processes part of their core strategies. A closer integration of ethics , responsibility and business in order to ensure corporate legitimacy seems especially necessary with pressing challenges of global sustainability and political change, which have persuaded critical stakeholders to require increased responsibility of corporations for sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Books:

Rendtorff, Jacob Dahl (ed.) (2020) . Handbook of Business Legitimacy. Responsibility, Ethics and Society. Cham: Springer International Publishers. (Available for free download online)

Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (2018). Cosmopolitan Business Ethics. Towards a Global Ethos of Management, Routledge, London 2018 (Available as free e-book from the University library).

Bonnafous-Boucher, Maria and Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (2016). Stakeholder Theory : A Model for Strategic Management. (Springer Briefs in Ethics). New York: Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

Articles:

Carroll, Archie B. (1999). Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct, Business and Society 1999 38: 268.

Course
material and
Reading list

Christensen, Lars Thøger Mette Morsing and Ole Thyssen (2013). CSR as aspirational talk. *Organization* 20(3) 372–393.

Freeman, Edward, S. Ramakrishna Velamuri, Brian Moriarty. (2006). *Company Stakeholder Responsibility: A New Approach to CSR*. Business Roundtable Institute for corporate Ethics.

Mitchell, Ronald K., Bradley R. Agle og Donna J. Wood (1997). “Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What really counts” i *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 22, nr. 4: 853-886.

Scherer, Andreas Georg and Guido Palazzo (2011). The New Political Role of Business in a Globalized World: A Review of a New Perspective on CSR and its Implications for the Firm, Governance, and Democracy, *Journal of Management Studies* 48:4 June 2011.

Scherer, Andreas Georg , Guido Palazzo and Dirk Matten (2014). The Business Firm as a Political Actor: A New Theory of the Firm for a globalized world, *Business & Society Review* 53(2) 143–156

Suchman, M.C., (1995): “Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches” i *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 3.

Overall plan and expected work effort

The classes will consist of lectures by the professors and instructors on the basis of prepared class readings by participants in the students. This will be combined with group preparations of class presentations for discussions in class based on case studies of home assignment. In addition, there will be short video presentations of cases of dilemmas of ethics and responsibility of business. Class discussions will lead to preparation of exams by groups of students who will present theory and practice of responsibility and ethics related specific business cases from particular business organizations.

It is expected that students will be about to analyze specific business ethics dilemmas using theories of responsible business to develop strategic decisions for taking appropriate action towards involved stakeholders. In this context, students are required to be able to apply ethical theory and reflective judgment to evaluate ethical issues of compliance and due diligence in business. This means that students should understand the different dimension of CSR, ESG and SDG

strategies and justify decisions regarding business and society. Students should also be able to understand the different positions of responsible ethics and business and they are expected to perform critical analysis of the challenges and dilemmas that business are facing. This implies abilities of understanding the challenges of reflective and responsible leadership in practical business between market and society.

The total workload is approximately 270 hours. This is into the following activities: 26 hours lectures (13 x 2 lectures), 26 hours on student presentations + peer feedback exercises, 60 hours for group work discussions of texts, 108 hours on weekly reading of curriculum texts (on average 8 hours reading per week), 50 hours for preparation of the exam (including the oral exam itself)

Format

Evaluation and feedback The course is a part of the study board's evaluation rotation this semester. The students will be asked to evaluate mid-term and by the end of the course (a survey) according to the [evaluation practice of the study board](#).

Programme

1. Introduction
2. Background. Major Theoretical Concepts. Research Methodology. Outline of the Course. Aim of the Course. Requirements for Exams. The lectures will be followed up by student exercises based on case studies of business corporations.
3. Global Political Corporations and Business Ethics
4. Values, Markets and Global Capitalism.
5. Values, Organization, and Management. From Values-driven Management to Business Ethics.
6. Discussion of Cases of Managing Legitimacy in Business Corporations.
7. Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Different Fields of Business.
8. Corporate Social Responsibility and Principles of Stakeholder Justice.

9. Ethics of the Internal Constituencies of the Corporation.
10. Ethics of the External Constituencies of the Corporation.
11. Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Ethical Principles: Environmental Dimensions of Business Ethics.
12. Legal and Political Developments: Challenges to Global Business Ethics.
13. Values-driven Management and Ethics Programs in the United States.
14. Business Ethics, CSR and Corporate Citizenship in Europe.
15. Towards Ethical Guidelines for International Business Corporations.
16. Policy Proposals for Corporate Strategy.
17. Basic Ethical Principles for Business Ethics and Corporate Citizenship.
18. Strategic Foundations of Policy Proposals. Corporate Governance and Stakeholder Management.
19. Basic Principles of Values-driven Management.
20. Critical conceptions of CSR and Business Ethics.
21. Discussion of Cases of Managing Legitimacy in Business Corporations.
22. Preparation for Exams.

ASSESSMENT

Overall learning outcomes

- Students acquire knowledge of the theory and practice of corporate ethics and social responsibility (CSR) in relation to legitimacy and society, and gain an understanding of ethical and responsible decision-making in managers in relation to the political and social role of companies in the societal complexity of globalisation. Through theory and case studies, students learn

to address ethical challenges in responsible management and formulate strategies for legitimate business in relation to stakeholders in various cultural and social contexts. Finally, students acquire ethical formulation skills in relation to complex strategic decision-making in a global perspective.

Oral group exam based on a product written by a group.

Permitted group size: 2-6 students.

The character limit of the written product is:

For 2 students: maximum 14,400 characters, including spaces.

For 3 students: maximum 14,400 characters, including spaces.

For 4 students: maximum 14,400 characters, including spaces.

For 5 students: maximum 14,400 characters, including spaces.

For 6 students: maximum 14,400 characters, including spaces.

The character limits include the cover, table of contents, bibliography, figures and other illustrations, but exclude any appendices.

Form of examination

Time allowed for exam including time used for assessment is for:

2 students: 30 minutes.

3 students: 35 minutes.

4 students: 40 minutes.

5 students: 45 minutes.

6 students: 50 minutes.

The assessment is individual and based on the student's individual performance.

The assessment is an overall assessment of the written product(s) and the subsequent oral examination..

Permitted support and preparation materials at the oral exam: All.

Assessment: 7-point grading scale.

Moderation: Internal co-assessor.

Form of Re-examination

Samme som ordinær eksamen / same form as ordinary exam

Type of examination in special cases

Demonstrate knowledge regarding the basic theories of business ethics and CSR
Analyze strategic problems and challenges of business ethics and CSR in business cases.
Develop and evaluate a business ethics case strategy based on theory and practice
Discuss reflect critically on the limits of different theories of business ethics and CSR
Compliance with all formalities and requirements for oral exams based on group products.

Examination
and
assessment
criteria
(implemented)

In this exam, the use of generative AI (GenAI) tools is allowed as per the university's guidelines for the use of AI. Specifically, the following points must be observed: • When using GenAI tools, you must include a description of the purpose of using GenAI and which GenAI are used and how they have used. The description is assessed the same way as other methodology sections regarding the use of relevant literature, course's general learning objectives, and assessment criteria. • Text copied from GenAI chats must be quoted the same way as citations from other texts. The citations and your demonstrated ability to interpret, evaluate and critically assess them is part of the overall assessment of the exam. Please consider including the prompt in a footnote to the citation if you find it relevant to demonstrate your description and analysis of the subject matter. • Ordinary spell checking and other language suggestions as known from Word or other word processing programs are allowed without declaration. While the use of GAI is permitted for this exam, the take-home assignment must demonstrate that the student has read, understood, and is able to apply the concepts and theories presented in the curriculum. Therefore, it is strongly advised that GAI is not used directly for parts of the assignment that relate to this, as GAI will provide answers based on other or broader interpretations of Marketing Management theory than exactly those presented in the curriculum.

Exam code(s) Exam code(s) : U60026GB

Course days:

Hold: 1

Ethics and Responsibility

time 11-09-2025 14:15 til
11-09-2025 16:00
location 21.2-032 - undervisningslokale (120)
Teacher Sameer Ahmad Azizi (saazizi@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 18-09-2025 14:15 til
18-09-2025 16:00
location 25.2-035 - auditorie 25 (145)
Teacher Sameer Ahmad Azizi (saazizi@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 25-09-2025 14:15 til
25-09-2025 16:00
location 25.2-035 - auditorie 25 (145)
Teacher Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 02-10-2025 14:15 til
02-10-2025 16:00
location 21.2-032 - undervisningslokale (120)
Teacher Sameer Ahmad Azizi (saazizi@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 09-10-2025 14:15 til
09-10-2025 16:00
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forberedelsesnorm D-VIP ikke valgt
location 00.1-009 - store auditorie (220)
Teacher Sameer Ahmad Azizi (saazizi@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 23-10-2025 14:15 til
23-10-2025 16:00
location 25.2-035 - auditorie 25 (145)
Teacher Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 30-10-2025 14:15 til
30-10-2025 16:00
location 21.2-032 - undervisningslokale (120)
Teacher Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 06-11-2025 14:15 til
06-11-2025 16:00
location 25.2-035 - auditorie 25 (145)
Teacher Sameer Ahmad Azizi (saazizi@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 13-11-2025 14:15 til
13-11-2025 16:00
location 21.2-032 - undervisningslokale (120)
Teacher Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 13-11-2025 16:15 til
13-11-2025 18:00
location 21.2-032 - undervisningslokale (120)
Teacher Jacob Dahl Rendtorff (jacrendt@ruc.dk)

Ethics and Responsibility

time 04-12-2025 09:00 til
04-12-2025 10:00

Ethics and Responsibility

time 15-12-2025 08:15 til
17-12-2025 18:00

Ethics and Responsibility

time 19-02-2026 09:00 til
19-02-2026 10:00

Ethics and Responsibility

time 26-02-2026 08:15 til
27-02-2026 18:00