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campus fryslân

Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship



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Introduction

Planet Earth is a very small but unique particle in our galaxy. Evolution on earth presents a wide variety of ecological, social, and economic systems. Unfortunately, the balance between these systems has been lost. This may have severe consequences for our existing and future ecosystems, welfare, and social relationships.



The Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship believes we can balance and preserve our valuable systems. Sustainable entrepreneurs generate new business models which substantially reduce social and environmental impacts whilst simultaneously improving the quality of societies.

The Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship wants to create a circular society. This choice translates in new programmes for university students, business leaders, and academic scholars. We provide university students, business leaders, and academic scholars with all knowledge and competencies they need to make sustainable entrepreneurship successful.

The Centre invites you to join one of our programmes.

Dr Gjalt de Jong,
Director Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship



“The transformation from an oil- and gas-based economy into a circular society is the main challenge of the modern world economy.”

1. The what and why

What is the challenge?

Many countries and regions face unprecedented crises and disruptive events. International financial dilemmas and ecological catastrophes are challenging our existing economic systems more than ever. The United Nations has identified 15 critical challenges for the 21st century, including climate change, clean water, democratisation, health, energy, and global ethics. The World Economic Forum highlights income disparity, chronic fiscal imbalance, rising greenhouse gas emissions, and water supply as the most important of all issues.

The impact of these global challenges can no longer be ignored. Many Western and Asian countries continue to report below-average economic growth rates and persistent high levels of unemployment. Welfare growth of newly industrialising and developing countries is hampered by ever-increasing rates of pollution. International organisations consistently show a discrepancy between the demand and supply for services and products due to population growth and rising income levels.

The international grand challenges require a fundamental redesign of existing production systems. Without social or environmental considerations there will not be enduring welfare. We need to transform the current oil- and gas-based economy into a circular society. In a circular society,

the intertwined relationships between economic, ecological, and social virtues are balanced and preserved.

The transformation from an oil- and gas-based economy into a circular society is the main challenge of the modern world economy.

Why sustainable entrepreneurship?

Sustainable entrepreneurship is the key answer to the main challenge. Sustainable entrepreneurship transforms the current oil- and gas-based economy into a circular society. Sustainable entrepreneurship differs from mainstream entrepreneurship. Mainstream entrepreneurship only focuses on maximising profits at all costs.

Sustainable entrepreneurship is moving beyond profit maximisation. Sustainable entrepreneurs are opportunity-oriented and aim to generate new products, services, production processes, techniques and organisation models which substantially reduce social and environmental impacts, whilst simultaneously improving the quality of societies. Sustainable entrepreneurship offers the creative potential needed to develop a circular society in which economic, social, and ecological systems are simultaneously balanced and preserved.

Sustainable entrepreneurs face many challenges. They produce new products and services for new markets with new business models. The market reports great variation in the degree and success of sustainable entrepreneurship. Some corporations such as Unilever and Friesland Campina incorporate sustainability company-wide and are also very successful. Other firms are in earlier stages towards sustainability.

The main question that we face is: how can we design, implement, and manage successful sustainable entrepreneurship?

Why a Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship?

The Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship is the crucial answer to this question. The Centre will foster the design, implementation, and management of successful sustainable entrepreneurship because:

- 1) It educates a new generation of sustainable leadership by means of an academic fulltime master for university students;
- 2) It inspires and supports existing and new firms by means of certified masterclasses for business leaders;
- 3) It generates in-depth academic knowledge by means of sustainability labs for academic scholars

The joint efforts of university students, business leaders, and academic scholars will disentangle the causes and consequences of successful sustainable entrepreneurship.





“Preserve our planet for future generations through successful sustainable entrepreneurship.”

2. About us

Mission and values

Our mission is to preserve our planet for future generations through successful sustainable entrepreneurship. We provide students, business leaders, policymakers, and academic scholars with all the knowledge and competencies they need to make sustainable entrepreneurship successful.

Four values guide the Centre’s efforts to develop the design, implementation and management of successful sustainable entrepreneurship. These values are the measure for our thinking and actions. They are the essence of what ties us together today and tomorrow.

Relevance. All our activities start with business experience and business challenges with respect to sustainability. We are inspired to constructively foster sustainable entrepreneurship. For our stakeholders, we are focused on providing useful knowledge and insights on sustainability that matter to business.

Inclusion. We are committed to building enduring relationships with all of our stakeholders. We connect business leaders with students, academic scholars, and policymakers in an open environment that appreciates and values differences. We believe that inclusive and multidisciplinary relationships are best for fostering sustainable entrepreneurship by teaming up to create new products and services across sectors, firms, disciplines, and institutes.

Innovation. We take pride in discovering radical new ways to create sustainable entrepreneurship for our members. We are open to disentangling new and unknown challenges driven by intellectual curiosity and societal relevance. We actively promote a culture of invention by encouraging continuous learning among all of our members reflected in new ideas, concepts, and services about sustainable entrepreneurship.

Authenticity. We are open, trustworthy, and down-to-earth with all of our members. We are transparent in our way of working, methods, and services. We are convinced of the need for, and added value of, sustainable business and are rigorous and authentic in advocating our mission without compromises.

Vision and strategy

Our vision is that successful sustainable entrepreneurship will result in a circular economy that preserves our planet for future generations. We aspire to be a world-wide acknowledged source of expertise for the development, implementation, and management of successful sustainable entrepreneurship.

Our strategy is tailor-made for three groups of stakeholders: students, business leaders, and academic scholars.

First, we are observing an increasing interest from students to specialise in sustainable entrepreneurship. As the new generation of future leaders, students value sustainability as an important topic in and of itself. The first strategy of the Centre of Entrepreneurship therefore is to develop and implement a top-level fulltime academic Master's degree programme. Based on research-driven education, this Master's programme fosters vision and competencies relevant for future business careers in sustainability. In so doing, we respond to the call for more leadership on sustainability from business and policy organisations.

Second, we are increasingly receiving calls for evidence-based sustainability toolkits from business. Large international corporations present best practice examples of sustainability. These thought leaders spark an increasing demand to understand the foundations of their successful business models of sustainability. The second strategy of the Centre of Sustainable Entrepreneurship therefore is to develop and implement a business programme of masterclasses in sustainability. Based on evidence-based training the business programme offers state-of-the art insights for successful business models of sustainable entrepreneurship.

Third, academic scholars are being pushed and pulled towards in-depth studies of sustainability. We can observe a growing demand from academics to show the added value of their research. The third strategy of the Centre of Entrepreneurship therefore is to develop and implement sustainability labs. Sustainability labs explore and exploit new elements in business models for sustainable entrepreneurship. The sustainability labs disentangle the key principles and opportunities of sustainability in co-creation between business and academic scholars.

Added value

The Centre provides university students, business leaders, and academic scholars with all the knowledge needed to successfully serve the sustainable enterprise. We will do so by means of in-depth research and best practices; objective information and fact-based analyses; and international platforms for thought leadership.

The added value for students is an academic degree in sustainable entrepreneurship. Our master degree qualifies students for future careers in all business sectors; national and international policy institutes, ministries, and public organisations.

The added value for business leaders is developing and using new business models of sustainability. Our masterclasses present best practices and evidence-based toolkits to start or accelerate sustainable business based on state-of-the art research and theories.

The added value for academic scholars is the design of relevant research agendas and the collection of new data. Our sustainability labs offer academic scholars unique opportunities to develop and test new concepts, theories and models reflected in a wide range of publications and student products such as Bachelor's, Master's and PhD theses.

The added value to the regional economy is new employment, sustainable clusters, and resilience. The Centre shows one of the other 273 similar European regions how innovative, resilient, and successful sustainable entrepreneurship can be developed and maintained. The Centre will offer all-encompassing opportunities to its members to learn, share and inspire about the causes and consequences of successful sustainable entrepreneurship.

The added value to the University of Groningen is its profile as the internationally acknowledged sustainability expert. This supports the recruitment of new students and staff. The Centre fosters the University's top position in international rankings. The Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship actively builds new communities dedicated to the sustainable society collaborating with existing Faculties and research groups. The Centre fosters valorisation, that is, knowledge interventions in practice and academic research – translated in evidence-based experience and business relevant academic teaching – which is a key factor.



“The courses of the programme integrate research-driven education with hands-on business challenges of sustainability.”

3. Sustainability for University Students

Our master programme

The Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship intends to offer a 1-year fulltime Master of Science programme in Successful Sustainable Entrepreneurship. Our master programme is unique in its aim, profile, and organisation.

First, our programme enables the development of personal vision and competencies next to and on top of academic skills. This threefold combination of vision-competencies-research enables thought leadership that is relevant for business, public organizations, or policy institutes.

Second, the content of the programme is fully dedicated to understanding and developing successful sustainable entrepreneurship. Our programme reflects the ambition: being successful in sustainable business. A specific academic master that is 100% dedicated to Successful Sustainable Entrepreneurship is unique and one of its kind.

Third, we offer extensive interaction with leading business firms and public organisations. We believe that learning comes from action in different settings. Site visits, best practices, consultancy assignments, and internships learn how sustainability drives leadership, organisational culture and design, strategic alliances, internationalisation, and public policy.

Structure of the master

Our programme builds on research-driven education enabling students to learn in-depth state-of-the-art theories and research methods. The programme consists of two parts:

Vision-based learning is the first pillar of the programme. Successful sustainable entrepreneurship – be it within large multinational corporations, small or medium-sized enterprises, government institutes, network organisations, universities, educational institutes, or a new start-up company – starts with the design and formulation of a personal vision of “successful sustainable entrepreneurship”. For this reason, the first part of the programme explicitly consists of a vision-based learning environment.

competency-based learning is the second pillar of the programme. We use the University of Oxford Leadership profile adapted to sustainable entrepreneurship:

- › Leadership: the ability to motivate and influence others,
- › Communication: inter/intrapersonal skills, observing and listening,
- › Team working: respecting others and awareness of interdependence,
- › Business and context awareness: understanding the key drives for successful sustainable entrepreneurship in the modern world economy,
- › Initiative and problem solving: applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions,
- › Entrepreneurship: the ability to demonstrate an innovative approach, creativity, collaboration and risk taking,
- › Self-management: readiness to accept responsibilities, planning & organisation.

The courses of the programme integrate research-driven education with hands-on business challenges of sustainability. Within each course, students have the opportunity to design personal projects.

Career opportunities

The career opportunities for students that successfully finish the programme are substantial. Students will have received research-driven academic courses and developed vision and competencies for successful sustainable entrepreneurship.

Sustainability is relevant for a career in multinationals such as Akzo Nobel, DSM, FrieslandCampina, Heineken, KLM, Philips, ING, and Unilever. These companies have already accepted sustainability as the key value for the strategy and decision-making process.

Sustainability is relevant for a career in fast-growing niche companies in the bio based economy or high-tech systems.

Policy-making national institutes such as provinces or municipalities also require that new employees and current staff members reinvent their personal value system with a sharp eye for sustainability.

Enrolment and entry criteria

The programme will select students based on motivation, research competencies, and managerial skills. Approximately 40-50 positions are available in the programme each year.

The programme is open to Dutch and international students with a qualified Bachelor's or Master's academic degree.

The programme is conditionally open to Dutch and international students with a qualified bachelor's degree from universities of applied sciences. Students may receive opportunities, such as summer schools or honours programmes to align their existing knowledge and competencies with the entry requirements for the Master's programme.





We offer a set of business masterclasses that enable entrepreneurs to learn about best practices of sustainable entrepreneurship and to identify opportunities for existing business models.

4. Sustainability for Business Leaders

Our certified business programme

Entrepreneurs are of crucial importance for the transition of the current gas- and oil-based economy towards a sustainable society. We offer a set of business masterclasses that enable entrepreneurs to learn about best practices of sustainable entrepreneurship and to identify opportunities for their existing business models.

Our programme is dedicated to the business success of sustainable entrepreneurship. We therefore present an overall business model approach of sustainable entrepreneurship ranging from strategy and leadership to successful teams, innovation, and business functions such as marketing, logistics, and human resource management.

We use the Oxford Leadership Profile adapted to sustainable entrepreneurship for our business masterclasses. Participants in our business classes will receive certificates from the University of Groningen.

Business masterclasses

We have organised our business masterclasses in three sets. The first set of classes on strategy, leadership, personnel, teams, models, and organisation focuses on sustainability within firms or organisations. The second set of classes on strategic alliances, clusters, networks, and value chains focuses on sustainability between organisations. The third set of classes on export, cultural differences, public policies, and globalisation focuses on the context within which sustainable entrepreneurs operate.

Results and opportunities

The masterclasses will actively support the success of sustainable entrepreneurship. Sustainable entrepreneurship requires investment in time and resources for the development of new management processes, products, and services.

Sustainable entrepreneurs are opportunity oriented. They generate new products, services, production processes, techniques, and organisation models that balance the interest of people, planet, and profit.

The business masterclasses of the Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship will answer a large number of challenging questions related to successful sustainable entrepreneurship:

- › What are the current activities of sustainability?
- › Which firms are the best practitioners of sustainability?
- › What is the contribution of strategy, leadership, teams, and alliances in current practices of sustainability?
- › What are the sustainability potentials of firms?
- › Which policy instruments are effective for sustainability and which are not?
- › What accelerators are needed to foster successful sustainable entrepreneurship?
- › Which lessons can be learned from other national and international regions?

- › How can we design and implement successful business models of sustainable entrepreneurship?
- › What are the conditions for a successful management of sustainable business models?

The most important results from this programme are:

- › New business models: innovative and relevant product and services that have been designed based on state-of-the-art business and academic insights;
- › Best practices: patterns of sustainability in existing business models will be analysed and the results will be shared among the participants;
- › Evidence-based toolkits: instruments that connect to sustainable entrepreneurship including methods for organisation analysis and organisation design at all levels;
- › Inspiration and education: state-of-the-art insights and knowledge of successful business models in sustainability;
- › Networks and opportunities: opportunities to connect to business partners and academic scholars in different domains.





“In the sustainability labs fundamental academic research is combined with business practice. The labs will show how business can benefit from sustainability.”

5. Sustainability for Academic Scholars

Research meets business practice

In our Centre, academic scholars collaborate with business to develop and implement sustainable entrepreneurship to enable a social, environmental, and value-creating society. Joint teams of academic scholars and business leaders will disentangle the complexity of sustainable entrepreneurship.

The teams work in sustainability labs. The sustainability labs reflect on existing business models and design new ones. They will use peer groups, cases, interviews, and experiments.

The labs will show how business can benefit from sustainability by transforming their product configurations, supply chains and their value propositions to their customers. The labs will report best practice examples of successful sustainable entrepreneurship that are relevant for business, teaching and research.

Sustainability labs

The sustainability labs are organised in themes such as sustainable marketing, sustainable energy, sustainable innovation, sustainable leadership, sustainable cities, sustainable regions, or sustainable biobased economy.

The sustainability labs will define and solve business challenges including:

- > How can we visualise and measure the sustainability of an organisation?
- > What are the most important instruments to make organisations more sustainable and to obtain sustainable growth?
- > What are the key principles in changing an existing business model into a sustainable one?
- > How can companies become both, sustainable and successful?
- > How can managers use multiple and coherent instruments in one business model for sustainable enterprises?
- > How do we communicate changes in strategy, mission, vision, structure, and products successfully to stakeholders?

Organisation of sustainability Labs

The labs work according to our principles of effective collaboration. We apply four distinctive phases.

In the first and inventory phase we will collect information concerning current business models and current expertise with sustainability.

In the second and design phase the companies select and design appropriate knowledge, instruments and methods, and the design of the toolkits. In the third and application phase the cases for successful entrepreneurship are designed along the firm-specific business challenges.

In the fourth and evaluation phase the companies offer feedback on the usefulness of the toolkits, information is collected concerning the level and experience with sustainable business models, and toolkits will subsequently be redesigned.

Results and opportunities

In the sustainability labs fundamental academic research is combined with business practice. The sustainability labs offer a large number of products and services.

The labs serve business challenges of sustainability. The labs offer sustainability monitors for firms, industries, and regions. They present consultancy tools that measure and advise on successful sustainability for corporations. These tools enable the identification of new challenges and opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurship within participating corporations.

The labs serve academic knowledge creation of sustainability. The labs offer academic theories and evidence concerning the causes and consequences of successful sustainable entrepreneurship. The insights are translated in articles, conference presentations, PhDs and student theses at all levels.

The labs serve teaching and society. The products of the labs are input for our academic master programmes. The labs offer training modules for business classes and educational institutes at large. The labs offer inspiration to society reflected in senior learning classes and open learning environments.





“Campus Fryslân’s core philosophy is to connect regional themes with interdisciplinary global issues.”

6. Organisation

About the organisation

Since its foundation in 1614, the University of Groningen has enjoyed an international reputation as a dynamic and innovative university of higher education offering high-quality teaching and research. Balanced study and career paths in a wide variety of disciplines encourage the 30,000 students and researchers to develop their own individual talents. Belonging to the best research universities in Europe and joining forces with prestigious partner universities and networks, the University of Groningen is an international place of knowledge.

Campus Fryslân is a Faculty in the making and is a part of the University of Groningen. Campus Fryslân focuses on the grand challenges of our society. Rather than teaching one particular discipline, the Faculty is aimed at the multidisciplinary study of academic questions connected with the social and economic themes. The Faculty’s core philosophy is to connect regional themes with interdisciplinary global issues.

Within Campus Fryslân, the Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship is dedicated to one of the main challenges in the modern world economy: the transformation from an oil- and gas-based economy into a circular society. Sustainable entrepreneurship offers the creative potential needed to develop a circular society in which economic, social, and ecological systems are simultaneously balanced and preserved. The Centre will offer a Master of Science in sustainable entrepreneurship for students, masterclasses for business leaders and sustainability labs for academic scholars.

About Gjalt de Jong

Dr Gjalt de Jong is the Director of the Centre for Sustainable Entrepreneurship. De Jong has extensive experience in research into strategic issues of organisations. He has developed and supervised various Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes and postgraduate studies. He provides strategy advice to leaders of companies and public organisations. De Jong plays an active role in public debates on sustainability and strategy.

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“Becoming a circular society
 in which our unique ecological,
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 the biggest challenges of mankind ever”

Professor Jouke de Vries
 Dean University of Groningen/Campus Fryslân

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