

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

CREDIT UNIT STATEMENT

Master of Social Sciences in Corporate Environmental Governance

The curriculum shall normally extend over one-year full time or two-year part-time of study, and is offered on a modular basis, with a maximum period of two year full-time study or three years of part-time study. Each course consists of 36 hours of teaching and 84 hours student-based learning time. Each course consists of a total of 120 hours of study. Candidates are required to take six compulsory core courses and two optional courses from a list of courses offered from time to time. Candidates are also required to prepare and submit a dissertation in the final year of study. The dissertation is weighted at the equivalent of two courses. Candidates are therefore required to complete a total of eight courses (or modules) and to successfully complete the dissertation to graduate from the Programme. The total study loads approx. 1,200 hours of the curriculum. Candidates are also required to attend the Dissertation Seminars which will provide an introduction to research methods. Candidates are also required to make a presentation on the subject of their dissertation.

There is no written examination and candidates are assessed through coursework only. Most assessments are based on papers/reports prepared by candidates working either individually or in groups. Particular emphasis is place on the research and analysis elements of assessed work.

1. Corporate environmental management (6 credits)

The aim of this course is two fold. Firstly, it examines various perspectives on business and the environment including a rationale for business involvement with environmental issues and reasons why they might voluntarily be involved. This will also include an analysis of the strategic reasons why a company would wish to engage with the environment including the issue of competitive advantage resulting from good environmental practice as part of its broader commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and risk management. Secondly, it begins to examine tools associated with environmental management that enable a firm to improve its compliance, compliance-plus performance and risk management strategies. A number of tools will be covered but will exclude environmental management systems, and environmental auditing which is considered as so important that they are given a course of their own (see below). Topics to be covered include: perspectives on business and the environment; strategic management and the environment; corporate environmental management techniques and tools; risk management; company-based environmental policies, supply chain codes of conduct; life cycle assessment; eco-labeling; green marketing; sustainability reporting; value chain management; business organization and the environment. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

2. Management systems and auditing (6 credits)

This course is dedicated to the fundamental management approach adopted by most companies involved in environmental activities, namely the construction of an integrated environmental management system (EMS) and associated auditing and measurement. The course will consider the design of the system, its implementation and issues of continuous improvement. It will be linked to quality management and risk management approaches. Environmental auditing will be dealt with in the context of the systems-based approach and will examine audit methodology, measurement, assurance and reporting issues. Emphasis

will be placed on practical approaches to improving environmental performance over time and measuring improvements in an effective way to different stakeholders. Topics to be covered included: environmental management systems; EMS standards (ISO14000); energy management standards (ISO50000); risk management standards (ISO31000); performance measurement; environmental auditing; benchmarking; assurance; energy efficiency; resource efficiency; best practice issues; reporting. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

3. *Environmental economics and analysis (6 credits)*

This course aims to equip students with the ability to undertake an economic analysis of environmental damage, its measurement and remediation strategies. It will examine the environment in the context of the market mechanism and policies for improving environmental performance. There will be an emphasis on market failure and strategies for internalising the external costs of environmental damage such as pollution. It will serve as a foundation for more advanced consideration of policy issues in the course on Business and Environmental Policy. A good deal of attention will be paid to cost-benefit analysis and methodologies for the valuation of the environment including conservation and biodiversity. There will also be a consideration of alternative policy instruments from an economic perspective. The aim is also to examine way of managing resources in a way that is both economically and environmentally efficient. Topics to be covered included: supply and demand models and the environment; market mechanisms; elasticity and implications for policy development; internalisation of external costs; valuation of the environment; resource management; cost-benefit analysis; economic analysis of policy instruments; the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity (TEEB). (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

4. *Business and environmental policy (6 credits)*

The three courses above provide the foundation for this course considering various policy options for dealing with business and the environment. At the heart of the course will be a comparison or instruments related to regulation, the use of the market mechanism and voluntary initiatives such as codes of conduct or negotiated agreements. The ecological modernization approach will be examined in depth and prospects for environmental transformation evaluated. Case studies will be drawn from a number of countries. International conventions and protocols will also be examined in the context for the search for global solutions to environmental problems. Topics to be covered included: policy approaches to the environment; regulation; market instruments; voluntary agreements; negotiated agreements; ecological modernization; international environmental policy; conventions and protocols. The course will examine lessons from the development of sustainable cities and implications for the localization of policy. It will consider the importance of policy at local, regional, national and international levels. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

5. *Business and sustainable development (6 credits)*

This course is a continuation of the course on Corporate Environmental Management but it looks at the wider context of sustainable development and considers ways in which businesses can operate in a way that is consistent with that concept. Emphasis will be put on

models of business and sustainable development and an evaluation of how they might be implemented. The course also introduces the important concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its various elements. This takes us into a discussion about issues such as human rights, labour practices, fair trade and community engagement. International standards and conventions of the United Nations and International Labour Organisation (ILO) will be examined as well as voluntary standards for environmental and social responsibility. Topics to be covered included: the meaning of sustainable development in the business context; the elements of sustainable development; corporate social responsibility (CSR); human rights and associated conventions including UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs); Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); tools associated with culture change and organizational change; stakeholder engagement and accountability; sustainability auditing and measurement; sustainable development reporting; Global Reporting Initiative (GRI); Standards (SA8000 and AA1000); free trade and fair trade. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

6. *Sustainability, globalisation and trade (6 credits)*

This course explores four major themes. First, it examines the emergence and principal features of discourses of sustainability. Second, it focuses on processes of globalization and their relationship with and impacts upon sustainable development at the national and global levels. Third, it examines various aspects of international trade and international movements of capital and the manner in which these both influence and are shaped by corporate and governmental perceptions of sustainability imperatives, including the implications of differing environmental standards and requirements on the trade in goods and services between nations and the way in which companies must position themselves to deal with the changing regulatory environment as it affects trade. Fourthly, it examines the globalization of supply chains and the implications for trade patterns as well as implications for international policy with respect to the environment and social responsibility. Topics to be covered include: discourses of sustainability and globalization, globalization and the international trading system, the emergence of the World Trade Organisation, WTO and the environment, 'pollution havens', TRIPS, GATS, Fair Trade, the globalisation of supply chains, and the impacts of regulatory controls on production design and marketing (e.g., EU RoHS and WEEE Directives). (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

7. *Corporate social responsibility (6 credits)*

This course adopts a case study approach of international and local companies to demonstrate and illuminate best practice in corporate environmental governance. It will explore and evaluate the motivation for corporate engagement with environmental and social issues and will examine how individual companies have integrated these considerations into their management structures and practices. It will examine the business case for CSR including links to brand reputation and competitiveness. The emphasis of the course will be on understanding the effectiveness of different approaches to environmental and social governance within the corporate sector. It will examine ways in which companies have linked CSR strategies to core business and how is evolving beyond traditional philanthropy and towards strategic community investment. It will also examine how CSR is an important part of risk management. Inputs from teaching staff will be supplemented by contributions from representatives of the corporate sector and local and visiting academics. Students will

develop their own case studies in groups. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

8. *Shared value and inclusive business (6 credits)*

This course examines the rapidly developing area of business strategy associated with commercial activities in society that simultaneously solve social and environmental challenges and improve the competitiveness of business. It will examine approaches including product design, the development of markets, improvements in productivity along supply chains and ways of creating clusters of economic growth that meet targeted social and environmental needs. It will examine the portfolio of approaches that companies can undertake to meet social needs, including philanthropy, social business, community investment and shared value. It will go on to examine ways in which poverty can be reduced through inclusive business strategies that involve more people in the value chains of large companies. The course will draw on case studies of shared value and inclusive business. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

9. *Business in a low carbon economy (6 credits)*

The low carbon sector is the focus of the course and it will begin by examining ways in which we have seen a major growth in this sector and the importance of this to achieving improved environmental and energy performance. It will emphasize the role of business innovation that is focused on the green, low carbon economy. The course will examine ways in which the low carbon economy is central to local, regional and national economies. The course will examine how business innovation can be supported (in particular for SMEs) and the importance of leadership of low carbon innovation across supply chains, localities and public services. It will consider we can help businesses share knowledge and connect expertise across the low carbon sector and undertake practical and applied research into low carbon business innovation. (100% coursework, the total written output approx. 2,000-6,000 words by essay/report)

10. *Dissertation (12 credits)*

All students are required to prepare a dissertation of 15,000 – 20,000 words, which is to be submitted by 31 July in the final year of study. The dissertation shall be on a topic within the field of corporate environmental governance and the topic shall be approved by the Academic Committee of the Programme. All students are also required to attend a dissertation seminar at which they will be introduced to basic research methods in the social sciences and will present progress reports on their dissertations.