



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Corporate Communication for Sustainability

2627-2-F7603Q031-F7603Q03101

Aims

The module addresses the corporate dimension of sustainability communication: how firms communicate their environmental and social performance to consumers, investors, regulators and employees, and under which conditions such communication is credible, compliant with European law and strategically valuable. Classes combine short theoretical framings, the discussion of real business cases, and hands-on analysis and rewriting of communication materials.

Knowledge and understanding

Understanding the principles, conditions and constraints of corporate sustainability communication: the economic foundations of credibility, the forms and drivers of greenwashing and greenhushing, stakeholder communication strategies, and the European regulatory framework on environmental claims and sustainability reporting.

Ability to apply knowledge and understanding

Auditing the sustainability communication of a real company through a structured protocol, and drafting corporate communication material that is substantiated, audience-appropriate and compliant with the applicable EU rules.

Autonomy of judgment

Critically evaluating the credibility and greenwashing risk — including legal risk — of corporate claims, reports and campaigns, and arguing and defending such evaluations with evidence.

Communication skills

Presenting and defending, in English, in writing and orally, the results of a communication audit, adapting register and format to different corporate stakeholders.

Learning skills

Independently monitoring the evolving regulatory, case-law and standards landscape of sustainability communication, identifying and critically selecting authoritative sources.

Contents

The teaching of this 2 CFU module is aimed at providing the student with: 1) an understanding of the conditions under which corporate sustainability communication deserves to be believed, grounded in the economics of credibility (information asymmetry, credence attributes, signalling) and in the European regulatory architecture applicable from 2026; and 2) practical tools to analyse and redesign the communication of real companies through a structured audit protocol (the Sustainability Communication Audit Framework), applied in class to selected cases and in the final project work.

Detailed program

Sustainability as a credence attribute; information asymmetry and signalling theory; the conditions for credible claims (evidence, specificity, verification, consistency). Forms and drivers of greenwashing; greenhushing. The European regulatory framework: Directive (EU) 2024/825 “Empowering Consumers”, the post-Omnibus CSRD perimeter, the voluntary VSME standard for SMEs. Enforcement in practice: court decisions, advertising self-regulation, consumer-protection authorities. Stakeholder communication strategies (information, response, involvement); double materiality as an engagement device; internal communication; communication governance. Audit protocol and worksheet applied in class.

Discussion sessions draw on international and Italian business cases, European and national enforcement cases on environmental claims, and communication examples from current business news, with attention to the Italian and territorial context. The case selection is communicated at the start of the module and may accommodate students’ proposals.

The module is directly linked to Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production: credible, verifiable sustainability communication is the condition under which consumers and markets can reward genuinely responsible firms, whereas greenwashing distorts consumption choices and penalises honest players. The topic is also addressed in its links to Goal 13 – Climate Action, since climate claims are the main terrain of European enforcement, and to Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, with particular attention to the communicative competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. Through the analysis and redesign of real communications, the module aims to foster student awareness of the role of credible communication in promoting behaviours, markets and narratives consistent with the achievement of the 2030 Agenda goals.

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisites required.

Teaching form

2 credits — 20 hours of in-person teaching, structured into five 4-hour sessions combining framing lectures on the theoretical and regulatory foundations (delivered diactics) with laboratory activities (interactive didactics): business-case discussion, hands-on work on communication materials, supervised project work and final presentations.

The distribution of contents across the sessions is published at the start of the semester.

Textbook and teaching resource

- slides;
- additional material provided during the lectures.

Semester

I semester (October - January)

Assessment method

Each student — individually or in small groups, depending on enrolment — completes a full audit of the sustainability communication of a real company, conducted with the protocol used in class (the Sustainability Communication Audit Framework) and including the redesign of corporate communication material (revised claims and a short piece). The audit is presented and discussed in class at the end of the module. Active participation in case discussions is required throughout the module.

The final grade for this module will range from 18/30 to 30/30 with honors and will be based on the following components:

- Participation in discussion and audit evaluation (60%) — assesses proactive, sustained participation in case discussions and the quality of the credibility audit: analytical rigour, evidential grounding and the correct application of the protocol across its six steps (claim, audience, credibility, strategy, risk, recommendation). Every judgment must cite the claim or document it rests on.
- Redesigned material, presentation and discussion (40%) — assesses the quality, credibility and compliance with applicable EU rules of the revised claims and communication material, the clarity of the oral presentation, the appropriateness of register for the intended audience, and the ability to defend one's evaluations in class discussion.

Overall, the assessment is not based on the recall of factual content through traditional exams, but on the demonstration of the core competences developed by the module: critical analysis of corporate communication, evidence-based redesign of communication, and active critical engagement in discussion.

Office hours

Always, after scheduling an appointment *via* phone or e-mail.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
