Hochschule Konstanz
University of Applied Sciences

Course number: 16WP00008
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
Study Level: Master / Graduate

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Language of instruction: English
ECTS Credits: 3

Objectives:

Do we still agree with Milton Friedman's position that "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits"? And what about the "rules of the game" of the economy that he was referring to in order to back this position in 1970? Are they still the same?

Based on the ethical and other theoretical implications of the concept of responsibility on the one hand, and today's concepts, theories, definitions, global standards and practical management approaches in the field of CSR and sustainable development on the other hand, we will explore why and to what respect Friedman's assumptions have to be questioned. Joint discussions, examples and case studies from business practice will help to understand the change of relevance of "social responsibility" for corporate success in the 21rst century and how companies may deal with the resulting new challenges.

The focus of this master course is to understand and to be able to apply major approaches (like stakeholder engagement) and normative CSR frameworks (like ISO 26000 and GRI G4) for the development of socially responsible corporate strategies, including integrated management systems, governance mechanisms and reporting schemes.

Contents:

Introduction
Relevance of doing business in a responsible way for corporate success in the 21rst century – discussion of reasons, threats and opportunities

Understanding the concept of (social) responsibility
The theoretical concept of responsibility will be analysed and explained against the background of Friedman's understanding of Social Responsibility and today's definitions and concepts of CSR (including stakeholder theory, linkages to sustainable development

Global standards and frameworks of CSR
Introduction, explanation and discussion of the subjects and issues of CSR today, based on the contents of major international guidelines, standards and principles of CSR (OECD, UN GC, GRI, …)

Developing a responsible corporate strategy and implementation program
Based on the first global management standard on Social Responsibility (ISO 26000), the different steps towards a CSR respectively responsible corporate strategy and deployment program will be explained (status quo analysis, stakeholder mapping, materiality check, etc.)

Managing and improving CSR
Presentation and discussion of instruments, approaches, and processes to develop an integrated CSR management and governance approach and to realize crucial CSR related principles (transparency, accountability, etc.)

Communicating and reporting about CSR
Presentation of important reporting frameworks like GRI, discussion of conditions and preconditions of credible communication processes about CSR

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CSR in business practice
Presentations from business practitioners and CSR managers of different (German) companies about their experiences in the "real world"

Outlook: Future trends of CSR
Final remarks and discussion of future trends in the field of CSR (e.g. integrated reporting, the concept of shared value and of a sharing economy, social business, etc.)

<u>Assessment:</u>

Assessment of this course will be based on

- Either an individual presentation (including a written elaboration) about a specific topic of your choice in the CSR context;
- Or on a group presentation (including a written elaboration) working on the prescribed task to develop a CSR strategy and program for a specific organization of your choice