



UK

SYLLABUS 2026-2027

Business Ethics

MODULE SPECIFICATION

Module Code	2627_RHO_1_EN_036
Campus	Oxford
Department(s)	Organisational and HR Studies
Level / Semester	Undergraduate Year 2 (U2); Equivalent to FHEQ level 5 Semester 04
Language of Instruction	English
Teaching Method	☒ In-person (face-to-face) ☐ Distance learning (live online) ☐ e-Learning (asynchronous) ☐ Hybrid: _____
Pre-requisite(s)?	None
ECTS <i>Reminder: 1 ECTS = between 20 and 30hr- student workload</i>	3
Equivalent FHEQ credits	6
Study Hours	100 hours which comprise of 28 directed learning and 72 independent learning/assessment hours

MODULE DESCRIPTION

Module Aims	This module introduces students to the ethical foundations and practical challenges of managing ethical issues in business. It examines how ethical reasoning and corporate citizenship intersect with contemporary business practices in a globalized world. Drawing on real-world cases, philosophical frameworks, and sustainability principles, students explore how businesses can operate responsibly
-------------	---

	while creating value for multiple stakeholders — including employees, customers, communities, and the environment. The module emphasises critical thinking, ethical judgment, and reflective decision-making in business contexts. Students learn to recognise ethical dilemmas, analyse competing values, and propose ethical solutions that balance profitability with social responsibility and sustainability.
Teaching Arrangement	This module adopts an interactive, student-centred pedagogical approach that integrates ethical theory with practical application in contemporary business contexts. Emphasis is placed on active learning, with students engaging in case study analyses, structured debates, ethical dilemma discussions, and group projects that reflect real-world challenges in corporate responsibility, sustainability, and global business conduct. Through collaborative learning, critical reflection, and guided ethical reasoning, students are encouraged to develop the ability to identify, analyse, and resolve ethical issues from multiple stakeholder perspectives. The in-person format supports rich dialogue and ethical deliberation, fostering moral awareness, critical thinking, and responsible decision-making skills essential for future business professionals and organizational leaders.
Learning Outcomes	By the end of this module, students should be able to: 1. Define core concepts in business ethics, corporate citizenship, and sustainability 2. Explain major ethical theories (e.g., utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics) and how they apply to business decision-making 3. Understand the role of globalisation in shaping business responsibilities and ethical challenges across borders 4. Recognise diverse stakeholder interests and how ethical considerations influence stakeholder relationships 5. Identify and analyse ethical issues and dilemmas in real business scenarios using appropriate ethical frameworks 6. Apply ethical reasoning to evaluate corporate policies, business strategies, and managerial decisions 7. Articulate the role of businesses as corporate citizens accountable to society as well as shareholders
Competency Goals <i>(Knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills)</i>	PGE_U_CG06 - Students will be responsible managers
Alignment with Programme Learning Goals	PGE_U_CG06_LO05 - To demonstrate responsible leadership and critical thinking to foster ethical and inclusive management

SESSION TOPICS / MODULE SCHEDULE

(Please note, a session/sequence may be more than one scheduled class)

Last reviewed: 23/09/2026

Session 1: What are Business Ethics and Why Does it Matter?

Content:

- Goals
- Define ethics vs. law vs. compliance
- Understand “ethical dilemmas” in business
- Present 3 core ethical theories: virtue ethics, consequentialism, deontology
- Introduction to module method: moral lenses, stakeholder analysis, debate

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 1)

Assignments:

- In class: mini dilemma warm-up and explanation of debate rules/roles

Session 2: The Role of Business in Society

Content:

- Globalisation
- Sustainability
- Stakeholders

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 17-36, 45-65)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: vaccine patents and global access (TRIPS waiver/pricing/technology transfer)
 - Motion: “Pharmaceutical firms should waive IP rights for essential medicines during global health emergencies”
 - Sides: innovation incentives & feasibility vs. equity, global justice, stakeholder duties

Session 3: Ethical Theories for Decision-Making

Content:

- Overview of ethical theories for decision-making and the limitations

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 85-127)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: “price hikes” for life-saving drugs (e.g. sharp increases after acquisitions)
 - Motion: “It can be ethical to charge very high prices for life-saving drugs if it maximises long-term innovation”
 - Sides: utilitarian/innovation argument vs. rights/justice/fairness argument

Session 4: Managing Business Ethics

Content:

- Culture

- Responsibility
- Leadership and governance

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 157-174)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: aggressive sales targets and widespread misconduct (e.g. account-opening scandals)
 - Motion: “Senior executives should be personally (civilly/criminally) liable for systemic ethical failures driven by incentive systems”
 - Sides: individual accountability & deterrence vs. complexity, scapegoating, governance design

Session 5: Workplace Ethics

Content:

- Employees
- Surveillance
- Discrimination
- “Algorithmic management”

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 369-377)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: employee monitoring (productivity tracking, keystrokes, cameras, wearable tech)
 - Motion: “Workplace surveillance is ethically acceptable if employees are informed and it improves safety/performance”
 - Sides: consent/efficiency/safety vs. privacy, dignity, power imbalance, chilling effects

Session 6: Marketing and Consumer Ethics

Content:

- Manipulation
- Vulnerability
- Responsibility

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 321-325)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: marketing ultra-processed food/sugary drinks to young consumers (especially in lower-income contexts)
 - Motion: “Companies may market unhealthy products as long as information is

truthful and consumers have choice”

- Sides: consumer sovereignty/market logic vs. vulnerability, public health ethics, paternalism vs. protection

Session 7: Innovation and Tech Ethics

Content:

- Data
- AI
- Bias
- “Move fast” cultures

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 420-423)

Assignments:

- Debate:
 - Case: facial recognition/biometric identification (retail, hiring, security, public spaces)
 - Motion: “Deploying facial recognition is ethical if it reduces crime/fraud and is legally compliant”
 - Sides: security/utility argument vs. Privacy, bias, consent, democratic freedoms

Session 8: Global Supply Chains and Sustainability

Content:

- Human rights
- Due diligence
- ESG and greenwashing

References:

- Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. (pp. 516-520)

Assignments:

- Debate (controversial):
 - Case: fast fashion and ultra-low-cost supply chains (labour standards and environmental impact)
 - Motion: “Lead firms should be legally responsible for labour and environmental harms throughout their supply chain”
 - Sides: feasibility/competitiveness/shared responsibility vs. human rights duty, leverage, accountability

KEY TEXTS

1. Eabrasu, M. (2019) *Moral disagreements in business: An exploratory introduction*. Springer.
2. Crane, A., Matten, D., Glozer, S. and Spence, L. (2019) *Business ethics: Managing corporate citizenship and sustainability in the age of globalization*. 5th edn. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

1. N/A

MODES OF ASSESSMENT

Continuous Assessment (40%)	Case study	30%
	Report	10%
Final Exam (60%)	Closed-book written exam	

MODULE DESIGN TEAM

- Author: *Marian Eabrasu*
- Reviewer: *Hendrik Lohse*
- External Reviewer: *John Mariampillai*