

**National University of Singapore
NUS Business School
Department of Management and Organisation**

MN03714: Business with a Social Conscience

Session: *Semester 1, 2026/2027*

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Course Description

Business is of the community and by the community. What effect can and should businesses have on the communities in which they operate? This module is designed around four inter-related themes/questions.

1. What is a business for?

We start by surveying the evolution of thinking about the relation between business and social conscience. We examine the assumptions that have underpinned different models of business.

2. What is a social conscience and why does it matter in business?

Our purpose is to identify and improve our understanding of the elements of conscience, including ethics, responsibility, and values. The social nature of business is also explored.

3. Is it enough to have a social conscience?

We shall learn how to integrate social conscience into business systems, processes, functions, and outcomes.

4. New forms of business

We trace the recently evolved forms of business in which conscience is at the nucleus – social businesses, social-purpose organisations and social investors.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you should:

- Have a deeper understanding of the purpose of business and the social dimensions of business.
- Be able to suggest how social conscience can be integrated into business processes and functions.
- Be more aware of changing stakeholder and societal expectations of business.
- Know about the new business forms that have evolved to meet the demands for a social conscience in business.

Modes of learning and learners' responsibilities

Classes will be conducted in a seminar format. The course will be learner-centered. I will set norms of openness, participation, and preparedness because much of the learning in this course will be through peer- and self-learning.

Before each class, you will be given a set of questions to think about. To gain the most from each class, you should:

- Be prepared for all classes, having completed the readings and assignments.
- Be responsible for participating actively in class
- Be willing to question, think critically, and learn from others.

Most classes will be held face-to-face, in person. Some will be online and self-directed. More details will be provided in class.

You will learn from the variety of readings and resources that we will examine throughout the course. Learning activities will include analyses of cases (local/regional and foreign), debates, critiques of papers, simulation/role-play and talks by invited speakers.

Outside of classes, my main mode of communication with the class will be via Canvas and e-mail. It is your responsibility to check your NUS mailbox regularly, and to read the announcements, updates and other materials uploaded to Canvas.

Some sessions will include group exercises as part of the learning process. You have a responsibility to the class to be prepared for the exercise and to show up for the class to play your part.

Learning resources

To gain different perspectives, you will read journal articles, book chapters/books and published cases. The readings present ways of thinking, illustrative cases, and experience-based reflections. They will be made available in Canvas.

Academic honesty

Please acknowledge all references and sources that you use in your work.

Assessment

Individual participation and contribution to learning	30%
Individual "expert for the day" oral presentation and Q&A	35%
Group project (Presentation 10% & Report 25%)	35%

Schedule

This is an **indicative** schedule. It may be adjusted, when necessary, e.g., to accommodate guest speakers and take advantage of other opportunities for learning.

Session	Topic
1	What is the purpose of business? • Introduction to the module • What is conscience? Why does it matter? • The changing landscape of business • Evolution of business models and social conscience
2	Embedding and measuring Social Conscience • Dimensions of Social Conscience • Operationalizing conscience: Conscience in practice or action • Conscience through the value chain
3	Sustainable development – personal and business • The Global Goals • The reality — SDG dashboard • Adopt a Goal — for yourself
4	Business and the Natural Environment • Manufacturing with a conscience • Harms, benefits and constraints • Case study MAS
5	Marketing with a conscience • Marketing & consumption • Consumer Culture • Creation of desire • Activity: Bazaar
6	Conscience in Employment: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at work • Dimensions of diversity • The tyranny of merit • What does it mean to be inclusive? • Case study: On Cheong's HR legacy
	RECESS
7	How can organisational conscience be cultivated or eroded? • Leaders' role in setting the tone • The acceptance and perpetuation of corruption in organisations • Case study: Good Intentions Gone Awry at the NKF

8	University Wellness Day, 9 October 2026
9	Treating Employees with Conscience: Health at work • Why does health matter? • Safety, Health, Wellness at work • Towards a healthier workplace • Activity: Design your healthy workplace
10	Working with stakeholders & community • From CSR to social change • Collaborating with stakeholders for good • Stakeholder analysis & Stakeholder management • Case: The Zuellig Family Foundation
11	Blending business with social purpose • Socially innovative businesses • Multiple short cases (text and video)
12	Ecosystems for business with conscience • New forms of organization with social conscience • Funding businesses with conscience • Multiple short cases (text and video)
13	Integration & Project presentations

Details on “Expert for the Day” Presentation (35%)

You will be assigned a topic related to the themes from Weeks 4—10 in the above schedule

- You will read widely about the topic and search for an interesting or innovative example of a business related for the topic.
- In class, make a 5-minute oral presentation of the example you have found and provide your own perspective: your thoughts, criticisms and questions.
- If you wish to use slides, keep to a maximum of 5 slides.
- Please keep your presentations to 5 minutes. No extensions will be given.
- After the presentation a Question & Answer session will follow.

Purpose — Encourage you to:

- Think critically and with greater depth a topic on Business with a Social Conscience
- Communicate your opinions in a concise and persuasive manner.

Assessing your Topical Presentation

You will be assessed on:

- Relevance to the assigned topic.
- Clarity, conciseness of presentation
- Quality of ideas and reflections
 - Creative?
- Intellectually stimulating?
- Timeliness
- Quality of answers during Q&A

Deliverables:

- A 5-minute class presentation
- Upload slides/other presentation materials to Canvas Assignments 24 hours before your presentation
- Q&A

There will be running deadlines, depending on the week assigned.

Details on Group Project and Presentation (35%)

In this assignment, you will examine how an organization of your choice has incorporated social conscience into its work.

Based on your project, you will write a report and make a presentation.

The presentation is due on the last class session in Week 13.

Your project can take the form of any ONE of the following

A) An in-depth analysis of how ONE organization (of your choice) has incorporated a specific aspect of social conscience into its work. Based on your analysis you should give an evaluation. Read widely to identify possible companies to write about. For instance, you may want to consider how well a company has incorporated environmental factors into its strategy and operations, and after your analysis give the company a grade of A, B, C, D or F.

As another example, you may want to study how well a company has incorporated employee health and well-being into its operations, reward systems and so on, then give the company a grade.

DO NOT try to evaluate a company on all aspects of social conscience. If you do you might not be able to finish the report on time! Select ONE OR at most, TWO related aspects of social conscience and conduct an analysis based those.

OR

B) An alternative approach would be to select an organisation which has committed itself to one or more Sustainable Development Goals. You can then write your

project on how well the organisation has done so far, and how it could continue to try to meeting one or more of its SDG commitments. Go for DEPTH rather than breadth. Take a good look at the SDG indicators and suggest how the company might go about meeting its adopted goals.

OR

C) You may also choose a cross-cutting topic, for example how businesses have responded to an aging workforce. Your analysis would then focus on the challenges and how businesses have tried to create elder-friendly workplaces, and their varying degrees of success and lessons learnt.

Make sure that the topic you have selected is substantial and interesting. Use media, books and journals, library and other resources. The Factiva and Business Source Ultimate databases at NUS Libraries would be good sources for this project. Also refer to websites such as those of the UN Global Compact, World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

It is NOT necessary to conduct fieldwork, surveys or interviews of the relevant organisations.

Project report

You may use the following questions as a **guide** to writing the report.

What is the company's background? (Make this brief. Any other information that is interesting but not directly useful to the case can be shown in an appendix).

- Which aspect(s) of social conscience are you choosing to focus on? Why is it relevant and important to the company?
- What are the criteria that you are using to assess the aspects of social conscience?
- What data are you using to make your assessment?
- Give your assessment and suggest how the company could do better in future. (NOTE: It does not have to be completely positive. I am not asking you to study only shining examples. That would be too boring. The most interesting cases are those that are mixed: companies who have tried but perhaps could do better)
- What are the main learning points?

This report should be submitted to the Project Submission folder on Canvas, by **11.59 pm the day before your presentation** The main text **should not exceed 2800 words**. Aside from the main text, your report should also include a complete list of references naming all the sources that you used. You may also any other appendices you judge necessary. The reference list and appendices **will not** count

towards the length limit. You may use any standard referencing and citation style: <http://libguides.nus.edu.sg/citation>
Just be consistent – adopt one style and use it throughout.
Another good writing reference is the site, “Harvard Guide to Using Sources” <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>
Links to an external site.
Links to an external site.

If you have used AI you must indicate what it was used for and indicate the parts of the report for which you used it.

Type your report using double spacing, one-inch margins and font size 12. Check grammar and spelling.
At the end of your report, please give a short description how each group member contributed to the project. At the last class of the semester, you will be asked to do a peer evaluation of the performance and contribution of all the members in your project group.

Presentation

Your presentation will be done in a concise manner in 12 minutes. Focus on the main points – you don’t have to mention everything that you intend to include the report.

This will be followed by 5 minutes of questions from the class.

You may use any format for the presentation: role play, debate, seminar, interaction with the class, etc. Be as creative as you like.

Bring a copy of whatever you have read in preparation for this case, to class. You will need it to answer questions and verify facts.

Checklist of items to submit — Please upload these to the Canvas

- Soft copy of presentation materials (e.g., slides) **11.59 p.m. the day before your presentation**
- Soft copy of your report (including appendices, references) by 11.59 pm one week after your presentation.

Peer review

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to do a peer review of members of your project group. You will also review the other groups’ project presentations.

Enjoy working on your project and presentation!