

# GD903-60 Practice-based Project

**22/23**

**Department**

Global Sustainable Development

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Jonathan Clarke

**Credit value**

60

**Module duration**

22 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module is the capstone project module for GSD Masters students wishing to develop their agency for positive social and environmental change, through a career in consultancy and project based work.

### Module aims

The module builds on the opportunities offered by contributing to an external partner's sustainability operational plans, which aim to promote sustainability across different areas of practice, and which would be facilitated by student practitioners.

Working closely with sustainability practitioners, students would act as sustainability consultants within a defined organisational area, appraising, assessing and formulating proposals, which would lead sustainable transformations, for example aiming towards a net-zero economy. It is expected that students will adopt an iterative, 'design thinking' methodology, of formulating proposals and evaluating potential impacts, as a way to develop the most appropriate strategies for implementation.

While students are encourage to identify their own opportunities, the department has partnered with University of Warwick Estates, Energy and Sustainability Team, to facilitate a default option: to work with a given operational area within the University, and support the delivery of the current

## Carbon Management Plan.

- Provide students with real-world experience of leading change, within a practice-based sustainability context,
- Engage students in the process of assessing and designing interventions aimed at enhancing sustainable development within a defined sector,
- Communicate findings to a practitioner audience,
- Develop practical employability skills and consultancy experience,
- Assist partners in leading change.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Whilst the students would be offered some foundational materials and online resources, articulating the processes of consultancy, appraisal and designing interventions, the syllabus is shaped by self-guided learning and supervision/practice-based support. This work would be initiated by some intensive workshops, covering consultancy practice and design thinking approaches to designing and developing practice strategies.

Students would be jointly supervised by managers in sustainability practice and academics from the Department of Global Sustainable Development. Scheduled meetings would be used to agree project milestones, deliverables and evaluate ongoing progress. These supervision meetings would also function, as an opportunity to identify individual project and student needs, including training resources and whether the organisation itself needs to access further specialist expertise. The organisation partners will either be external organisations identified by the student or the School's Placement Officer or University of Warwick specific sustainability projects linked to the University's sustainability strategy.

The work of students will iteratively shape the development of real-life strategies.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Comprehend, analyse and critically engage with a 'client' project brief for promoting sustainable development; undertaking engineering or re-engineering of the briefing where necessary
- Develop and maintain positive and constructive working relationships with a designated 'client' and its specific representatives and stakeholders
- Develop a project proposal in response to client desires and needs in the sphere of social and environmentally positive change and transformation
- Accessibly and persuasively articulate a comprehensive overview of consultancy findings and recommended interventions to a 'client' practitioner audience.

## Indicative reading list

Brandon P., Lombardi P (eds) (2017) Future Challenges in Evaluating and Managing Sustainable

Development in the Built Environment. Wiley-Blackwell, London.

Galea, C. ed., (2017) Consulting for business sustainability. Routledge.

Green, J. ed., (2015) Designed for the Future: 80 Practical Ideas for a Sustainable World. Chronicle Books, San Francisco.

Helm, D., (2015) Natural capital: Valuing the planet. Yale University Press, London.

Liedtka, J., Salzman, R. and Azer, D., (2017) Design thinking for the greater good: Innovation in the social sector. Columbia University Press.

Pelsmakers, S., (2014) The Environmental Design Pocketbook. Riba Publications Limited, London.

Pressman, A., (2018) Design Thinking: A Guide to Creative Problem Solving for Everyone. Routledge.

Sadler, P. ed., (2001) Management Consultancy: a handbook for best practice. Kogan Page Publishers.

Schumacher, E. (1973) Small is Beautiful. Blond & Briggs, London.

Sustainability: science, practice and policy (Journal)

Reference materials will be developed for the online component of the module.

## **Research element**

Healey & Jenkins (2009) propose that Research-led-teaching design should consider four discrete opportunities. This module has been designed to include four of these opportunities.

1. Research-led learning, where the module syllabus is developed from current research in relevant fields, being based on contemporary and seminal, peer reviewed and other high quality research literature.  
As such, all knowledge for student engagement will be consciously and specifically chosen for its merits in reference to broader academic understanding. This will initially include work with sustainability practitioners.
2. Research-tutored learning, where students engage actively in discussing high quality, contemporary and seminal research literature.  
This module will provide students with the opportunity to discuss the applicability of literatures and concepts, with their supervisors.
3. Research-orientated learning, where students are actively taught methodological understanding and skills for the independent creation of new knowledge.  
This module will provide students with the opportunity to practice 'design thinking' approaches to generate and evaluate ideas and interventions.
4. Research-based learning, where students use developing methodological skills to create original knowledge of their own.  
This module will provide students with the opportunity to generate their own strategies and interventions, underpinned by their own empirical practice.

## **Interdisciplinary**

Positive global transformations are widely recognised to require transdisciplinary approaches. This module has been designed according to our signature problem-based, response focused

pedagogy, and as such will draw on a transdisciplinary knowledge in the design and delivery of learning opportunities. By working in a practice context, students will need to engage with different forms of expertise and knowledge, formulating strategies that span traditional professional silos.

Similarly, the assessment will require students to demonstrate this transdisciplinary aptitude, with interventions from across areas of organisational practice and advising on the deployment of professional expertise.

Transdisciplinary aptitude will be explicitly embedded in relevant marking rubrics, as adapted from the standard university scale and descriptors, and marking will include feedback from a cross-section of practitioners.

## **International**

This is a module on the Master's in Global Sustainable Development which offers a transdisciplinary and international learning experience allowing students to achieve breadth and depth of knowledge.

Specifically, this module aims to engage students with the real-world, global challenges of sustainable development, and provide practical experience of consultancy, leading to research-informed interventions and strategies.

## **Subject specific skills**

The module seeks to apply students' learning of sustainable development to a real-life context, requiring them to analyse sectors of operational practice, research strategies and prototype potential interventions. A critical methodology will be provided by a 'design thinking' approach, which seeks to iteratively develop creative strategies for overcoming complex institutional challenges. Students will need to be able to successfully transfer the resultant knowledge, in a variety of ways.

## **Transferable skills**

Students will develop consultancy, analytical and project management skills, specific to their project. They will also need to develop a variety of communication skills, including interpersonal negotiation, verbal presentations and report writing of often technical strategies, for a non-technical audience.

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## **Study**

### **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Seminars	2 sessions of 2 hours (1%)
Project supervision	10 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Total	360 hours

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Online learning (independent)	16 sessions of 1 hour (4%)
Other activity	250 hours (69%)
Private study	80 hours (22%)
Total	360 hours

### **Private study description**

Students will work independently to develop business proposals, supported by online material and supervision.

### **Other activity description**

Practice-based activity in/for the organisational partner.

### **Costs**

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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### **Assessment**

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

#### **Assessment group A**

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
Reverse Brief	25%	60 hours
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an appraisal of the business sector needs</li> <li>• Provide a brief back to the business area client for the subsequent strategy.</li> </ul>
Business Sector Sustainability Strategic Report	60%	144 hours
To be included in the report:-		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how the business sector can promote sustainability objectives,</li> <li>• Advise on potential expertise needed,</li> <li>• Provide evidence for proposals,</li> <li>• Propose interventions for transformation.</li> </ul>
Critique	15%	36 hours

A presentation to practitioners will require a verbal and visual presentation of findings, and recommendations. The presentation will be followed by questions from a range of stakeholders.

## **Weighting**

## **Study time**

Note: it is anticipated that practitioner 'clients' would provide feedback and contribute to marking, although this cannot be guaranteed.

## **Feedback on assessment**

Written feedback for all elements, with some additional practitioner feedback.

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## **Availability**

## **Courses**

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 1 of TGDA-L801 Postgraduate Taught Global Sustainable Development