



Aalto University  
School of Business

# Sustainability Highlights



# Sustainability Highlights

**At Aalto University School of Business, sustainability is not a standalone topic but an integrated approach that connects education, research, campus operations, and student-led action.**

Across its programmes and initiatives, students and researchers are empowered to tackle global challenges – such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequality – with creativity, responsibility, and impact.

Aalto University School of Business has been recognized by The Financial Times Responsible Business Education Awards as one of the most impactful institutions tackling some of the world's most pressing problems. This commitment is also reflected internally: students actively develop their own sustainability projects and initiatives, supported through programmes such as the Sustainability Action Booster, which provides funding for student-led experiments, ideas, and prototypes.

Aalto's greatest societal impact lies in its graduates. The knowledge, skills and attitudes they develop during their studies shape their decisions and influence throughout their careers.

This commitment to sustainability is reflected in academic output as well, with a significant share of publications and student theses addressing sustainability-related topics. In addition, Aalto's researchers and professors contribute actively to society by bringing sustainability expertise to public decision-making, policy development, expert panels, consultations and media discussions, helping to advance informed public debate.

By having a diverse and inclusive student pool and faculty we are able to foster well-being, innovation, and creativity. Celebrating diverse talents will lead to better research, education, and impact – a better us.

Together, these elements form an integrated sustainability ecosystem at Aalto University School of Business. Education equips students with the necessary knowledge, research generates solutions, campus operations demonstrate implementation, and student initiatives turn ideas into action.

**Aalto is a champion member of the global PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) network for sustainability education, bringing together more than 800 academic institutions in nearly 100 countries. Through PRME, Aalto advances responsible business education, fostering collaboration and sharing best practices worldwide.**

**PRME**  
**CHAMPIONS**  
**2026 – 2027**



**'Aalto is one of Europe's leading business schools, and our combination of art, business and technology is unique. At Aalto, interdisciplinarity is at the core of everything we do. Combined with strong academic excellence and international perspective, we're equipped to address global sustainability challenges.'**

**Timo Korkeamäki, Dean of Aalto University School of Business**

# Educating for impact

## Creative Sustainability Master's Programme

Complex sustainability challenges require new mindsets and skills. Addressing interconnected global and local issues calls for multidisciplinary perspectives and education that links environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. Higher education and research therefore play a central role in advancing sustainable solutions in society.

The Financial Times acknowledged international Master's Programme in Creative Sustainability is a unique joint degree offered by the School of Arts, Design and Architecture, the School of Business, and the School of Chemical Engineering.

The programme integrates business, design, and engineering perspectives into an interdisciplinary learning platform. For business students, it develops capabilities for promoting sustainable development through organizational and managerial practices. Understanding the relationship between business and sustainability is increasingly essential – whether pursuing a specialist role in sustainability or a broader management career.

In addition to multidisciplinary, tackling sustainability challenges requires cross-cultural understanding and global cooperation. The Creative Sustainability programme is a learning environment that is genuinely international: to date, it has been the programme of choice for students from 54 countries worldwide.

In Capstone in Creative Sustainability, students work in interdisciplinary teams to develop solutions to real-world environmental and social challenges in collaboration with partner organizations. These partners represent diverse sectors, ensuring that the projects address current and relevant issues.

### Focus

Interdisciplinary learning across business, design, and engineering.

### Goal

Equip students with systems thinking, design thinking, and change-making skills to address complex sustainability challenges.

### Highlights

- International and diverse learning environment.
- Hands-on projects with partner organizations.
- Emphasis on circular economy, resource efficiency, and regenerative futures.

**Duration:** 2 years | **Credits:** 120 ECTS

**Language:** English

→ [aalto.fi/en/creative-sustainability](https://aalto.fi/en/creative-sustainability)

A photograph of a modern, multi-level university hallway with wooden walls and floors. Three students (two men and one woman) are walking towards the camera, smiling. The hallway has glass railings on the upper level and various signs on the wall, including a fire exit and accessibility symbols.

**Better  
Business —  
Better  
Society**

**A"**

Aalto University  
School of Business

**'Sustainable development is central to the learning goals of all Aalto bachelor's and master's programmes. Programme-specific objectives have been aligned with faculties and integrated into the course feedback system to guide and shape course content.'**

**Tiina Ritvala, Assistant Dean of the  
Aalto University School of Business.**

**'Achieving a just and global sustainability transformation requires engaging with perspectives from the Global South. In our programme, these perspectives are integrated into teaching and brought to life through opportunities for students to participate in in-person study projects.'**

**Apurva Ganoo, Lecturer**



## Sustainable Entrepreneurship Master's Programme

Today's complex sustainability challenges require not only expertise, but also purpose-driven action. There is strong demand for professionals who can transform existing business processes and develop sustainable solutions across sectors.

In response, the Master's Programme in Sustainable Entrepreneurship educates the next generation of sustainability leaders committed to both positive social and environmental impact and long-term economic value creation.

The programme takes a critical yet holistic approach to the intersection of sustainability and entrepreneurship. It equips students with the mindset and capabilities needed to question, challenge, and transform existing business models and societal paradigms.

Sustainable entrepreneurship focuses on creating and managing ventures that prioritise environmental and social impact alongside financial success, driving positive change for the planet and society.

As sustainability challenges intensify, future entrepreneurs must be able to lead profitable organizations while addressing systemic issues in responsible and innovative ways.

The programme brings together students from diverse academic backgrounds and applies interdisciplinary teaching methods that combine academic rigour with real-world relevance.

Graduates are prepared to engage in entrepreneurial activity across multiple contexts, including startups, corporations, NGOs, and policymaking. Sustainable entrepreneurs are

equipped to balance economic viability with societal impact and to contribute to large-scale transformation.

'Achieving a just and global sustainability transformation requires engaging with perspectives from the Global South. In our programme, these perspectives are integrated into teaching and brought to life through opportunities for students to participate in in-person study projects', says Apurva Ganoo, lecturer in the sustainable entrepreneurship programme.

### Focus

Creating and managing businesses that prioritize environmental and social impact alongside profitability

### Goal

Educate future leaders to innovate sustainable solutions across startups, corporations, and policymaking.

### Highlights:

- Holistic and critical approach to entrepreneurship and sustainability
- Strong links to Aalto's entrepreneurial ecosystem (e.g. Aalto Ventures Program, AaltoES)
- Diverse career paths in corporate sustainability, social enterprises, and innovation

**Duration:** 2 years | **Credits:** 120 ECTS |

**Language:** English

→ [enttu.aalto.fi](https://enttu.aalto.fi)



**'We need professionals who  
can see beyond numbers,  
reports, and strategies:  
to educate people who  
understand what impact means  
in practical terms.'**

**Associate Professor  
Taija Turunen**

## Bachelor's programme major: Responsibility and impact

Starting in autumn 2026, Aalto University's bachelor's programme in business expands its range of majors with a new multidisciplinary major: Responsibility and impact. It prepares students to become forward-looking business professionals who understand how organizations can combine economic success with meaningful social and environmental impact. The programme is offered in Finnish.

The major brings together expertise from across the School of Business – including management, accounting, marketing, finance, economics, information and service management, and business law – into a cohesive understanding of responsible business and societal value. Students learn to approach complex sustainability challenges from multiple angles and to develop solutions that are both viable and impactful.

‘Businesses have a substantial role to play in the sustainability transformation. Across all sectors, there is a shared understanding that sustainability is not a question of choice. At the same time, there is lack of holistic expertise in sustainability. That's why we need professionals who can see beyond numbers, reports, and strategies: to educate people who understand what impact means in practical terms.’

– Associate Professor Taija Turunen

The major responds to growing demand from both companies and students. Organizations seek graduates with cross-cutting, integrative competences in sustainability, while students

have called for a programme that goes beyond fragmented perspectives and instead offers a coherent, multidisciplinary approach.

### Focus

Understanding how businesses can create societal and environmental value alongside economic performance. The major emphasizes responsible decision-making that considers sustainability, justice and long-term impact as core elements of business strategy and practice.

### Goal

To educate future business professionals who can critically engage with responsibility, sustainability and impact, and who are equipped to drive meaningful, informed and courageous change in organizations and society.

### Highlights

- Strong emphasis on holistic understanding needed to engage with questions related to sustainability and justice
- Multidisciplinary perspective within the School of Business
- Preparation for career paths in impact-driven organizations and roles focused on sustainability, responsibility, and transformative leadership
- Development of practical, real-world understanding of how impact is created, measured, and managed in business contexts

**Duration:** 2 years | **Credits:** 120 ECTS | **Language:** Finnish

→ [aalto.fi/fi/vastuu-ja-vaikuttavuus](https://aalto.fi/fi/vastuu-ja-vaikuttavuus)

## **Advancing knowledge and solutions: Sustainability in Business Research Group**

Founded in 1993, the Sustainability in Business Research Group, SUB, has a long-standing track record in advancing sustainability research. The group is internationally recognized and has received multiple awards for its pioneering contributions to sustainable development.

SUB's mission is to generate knowledge on innovative business models and transition pathways that support sustainable development. Responding to complex, systemic sustainability challenges, the group emphasizes multidisciplinary approaches and collaborates closely with partners across academia, industry, and society to co-create impactful solutions.

The group's research areas include sustainability innovation, sustainability transitions, circular economy and corporate responsibility, reflecting a broad and integrated perspective on business and society.

'Sustainability in Business research group was established in 1993, and we also launched our first course on environmental management then. Today, over 30 years later, sustainability is embedded in the spirit, strategy, and structure of Aalto University School of Business.'

We lead numerous strategic, interdisciplinary projects that co-create research-based solutions to complex sustainability challenges in collaboration with disciplines beyond business studies, addressing topics such as water scarcity, forest resilience, poverty, and inequality.

In education, we offer specialized master's programmes and a new bachelor's major focused on sustainability. At the same time, we actively promote the integration of sustainability perspectives across all courses at the School of Business', says Minna Halme, professor of Sustainability Management.

### **Mission**

Develop knowledge on innovative business models and transition pathways that enable and accelerate sustainable development.

### **Key Areas**

- Collaborative innovating for sustainability.
- Circular economy strategies.
- Corporate responsibility and sustainability governance.

### **Activities**

Monthly seminar series, interdisciplinary projects, and global collaborations.

### **Impact**

Contributions to UN Sustainable Development Goals and cutting-edge research on systemic change.

→ [sub.aalto.fi](https://sub.aalto.fi)

**'Sustainability in Business Research Group was established in 1993, and we also launched our first course on environmental management then. Today, over 30 years later, sustainability is in many ways embedded in the spirit, strategy, and structure of Aalto University School of Business.'**

**Minna Halme, Professor**



# Research in action

## Rethinking hope and technology

The SUSTHOPE project explores the role of hope in sustainability transitions, exploring both its motivating potential and its risks as a potential distraction. The dual impact of hope has received growing scholarly attention.

Led by Academy Research Fellow Johanna Ahola-Launonen, the research critically addresses techno-optimism – the belief that technological solutions alone can solve sustainability challenges without changes in consumption or power structures.

The project combines academic research with public discourse, producing accessible articles on topics such as carbon capture, the hydrogen economy, and climate engineering.

‘Hope can empower and unite us, but not all hope is constructive. It can enable avoidance of accountability and constrain your thinking. The most harmful form promises solutions without addressing consumption of power. This is what is meant by the phenomenon known as techno-optimism.’

– Johanna Ahola-Launonen, Academy Research Fellow

## Driving impact through sustainable finance

While sustainable investing aims to reward green companies and penalise polluters, this logic often fails in practice. Many ESG funds favour large tech firms, where capital costs matter little and

environmental impact is limited. At the same time, excluding high-emission industries such as oil or steel can raise their financing costs and discourage the costly investments needed to cut emissions.

ESG alone is not enough to make finance and investing sustainable. The research emphasizes the importance of active ownership: investors can create real change by placing pressure on high-emission industries to reduce their environmental impact. When capital becomes expensive, companies respond.

‘Solving the climate crisis is one of humanity’s most pressing challenges. As an investor, I would focus on the ‘E’ in ESG – environmental factors.’

– Vesa Puttonen, Professor of Finance

## Researching business collaboration for a sustainable future

Associate Professor Samuli Patala studies how businesses and industries can drive the transition toward a more sustainable future. A central theme in Patala’s research is how organizations can create systemic change through collaboration and innovation ecosystems.

‘Businesses are facing unprecedented challenges related to resource use, and conventional management thinking is not adequate to address those challenges’, says Patala.

Patala is also leading Aalto’s business research contribution in the GloWater project, a major



**'Businesses are facing unprecedented challenges related to resource use, and conventional management thinking is not adequate to address those challenges.'**

**Samuli Patala, Associate Professor**

**'Climate change impacts supply chains and it is important to identify risks, prepare and adapt. Mistakes made by subcontractors or weather-driven consequences ultimately fall on the company whose logo is on the product, which is why every stage of the supply chain must be well understood.'**

**Katri Kauppi, Associate Professor**



multidisciplinary initiative developing solutions for sustainable and equitable water use in a world shaped by climate change, geopolitical tensions and growing resource pressures. Within the project, Patala's team focuses particularly on corporate water stewardship and value-chain governance, investigating how companies can strengthen water responsibility across global supply chains. Bringing together researchers, public-sector actors and businesses, GloWater reflects the School of Business's commitment to research that supports both sustainability and societal resilience.

## **Diversity as a driver of value and innovation**

Research led by Associate Professor Jukka Sihvonen demonstrates that inclusive workplace practices and leadership are linked to stronger business performance. Companies with progressive diversity policies show higher profitability, stronger market valuation, and enhanced innovation outcomes.

Sihvonen's research shows that LGBT-friendly firms have higher profitability and higher stock market valuations. The positive effect of progressive LGBT policies on firm performance is more pronounced for firms located in more liberal states. Overall, the results show that socially progressive corporate policies and diversity management may create value for the firm. The research received attention from U.S. media outlets, including Forbes.

'Overall, the findings indicate that effective diversity and inclusion management can translate into tangible competitive advantages, supporting long-term value creation.'

– Jukka Sihvonen, Associate Professor

Another research article by Sihvonen studies the association between LGBTQ-friendly employee policies and corporate innovation. The results show that companies with LGBTQ-inclusive workplace practices demonstrate stronger innovation performance, including higher patent output and greater patent impact.

These companies also produce patents with higher innovation quality, reflected in increased originality, broader applicability and stronger international relevance. LGBTQ-friendly policies are also associated with a higher concentration of innovative talent at the firm level.

## **Building resilient and responsible supply chains**

As the ecological crisis risks increasingly affect global supply chains, research at Aalto focuses on how companies can anticipate, manage, and adapt to these challenges. Climate change, regulatory pressures, and supplier practices all shape business outcomes.

Growing student engagement reflects the importance of this topic, with courses attracting participants across disciplines and universities.

'Climate change impacts supply chains and it is important to identify risks, prepare and adapt. Every stage of the supply chain matters – risks ultimately fall on the company whose name is on the product.'

– Katri Kauppi, Associate Professor



**'One of the things I love about the Aalto University campus is how easy it is for students to get involved in activities around sustainability, such as Aalto Sustainability Club, Sustainable Action Booster, and the Dean's Impact Award.'**

**Didier van Overveld, student**

# Enabling student action

True impact at Aalto is increasingly driven by student-led sustainability action.

Established in May 2023, the Sustainability Action Booster provides low-threshold funding for student-driven initiatives, enabling rapid experimentation and hands-on solutions. The grant supports creativity, experimentation, and grassroots initiatives that advance a more sustainable future, both on campus and in the wider community.

The UN-PRME awarded initiative funds students' own ideas and prototypes, and is praised for its bold, student-centred approach.

'One of the things I love about the Aalto University campus is how easy it is for students to get involved in activities around sustainability, such as Aalto

Sustainability Club, Sustainable Action Booster, and the Dean's Impact Award,' says Didier van Overveld, student in Creative Sustainability Master's programme.

Examples include critical discussion events, such as the widely attended *Green Growth or Degrowth – What Saves Our Planet?* seminar and *Moral Ambition Aalto Summit*, which address questions related to economic growth and systemic transformation. In addition, the grant supports practical initiatives such as foodsharing, repair workshops and sustainability game nights.

→ [aalto.fi/en/sustainability-action-booster](https://aalto.fi/en/sustainability-action-booster)

→ [aalto.fi/en/news/deans-impact-award](https://aalto.fi/en/news/deans-impact-award)

→ [aaltosustainabilityclub.com](https://aaltosustainabilityclub.com)





# Sustainable Aalto campus

The key environmental impacts of the Aalto campus are related to energy consumption, commuting & traveling, construction projects and procurements.

The Business School buildings are carbon neutral, supported by a highly energy-efficient system that provides heating, cooling, and hot water through large air-to-water heat pumps.

Aalto University Campus & Real Estate, responsible for managing the university's properties, is committed to increasing on-site, environmentally friendly energy production.

On its campus, Aalto University, for example, offers an area called the Test Site for students to grow vegetables, set beehives and the like. There is also an Aalto food sharing system and space, to which campus shops and restaurants donate left-over food for students. Kipsari, a student-union run vegan restaurant is highly popular among the students. Aalto campus is biking friendly and the Otaniemi E-cargo-bike, a community-led logistics service, is available for students when they need to transport heavier items.



Test Site offers students space to practice gardening.



E-cargo-bike is a community-led logistics service.



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