

Course: Conscious Supply Chain

Philosophy of the program

The impact of supply chains on the environment, society and the economy is significant, complex and multifaceted. Through activities such as transportation, manufacturing, and packaging, supply chains contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion. For society, the impact can be both positive, through the creation of jobs and economic opportunities, but also negative, as they can contribute to poor working conditions, impact people's health and safety, among others. Finally, supply chains are a key driver of economic growth, both at the local and global levels. They create jobs, generate revenue, and enable trade and commerce. However, supply chains can also contribute to economic inequality, as wealth and power are often concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations.

In this intricate context, governments around the world are increasingly introducing regulations to promote sustainable practices, and organizations that fail to comply may face penalties or reputational damage. It is therefore important for businesses, and other stakeholders to work together to create more sustainable and socially responsible supply chains that balance economic, social, and environmental considerations. This course is created specifically for this aim, so students can understand the real impact of supply chains and gain insight on how to move forward consciously.

This course is structured as follows. First, an introduction to logistics and its historical evolution towards sustainable supply chains is explained. Second, it focuses on customers and processes. Third, the triple transformation is explained, which touches on technology, sustainability and resilience. The final topic is on leadership in operations.

This course is unique, because:

This course can help students understand the environmental, social, and economic impacts of supply chains, and how to balance these factors in order to create a more conscious supply chain. In particular, the following learning targets are proposed:

1. To understand the historical evolution of supply chains, and gain insight on the latest emerging trends on technology, sustainability and social responsibility, and supply chain resilience.
2. Supply chains are complex systems that involve multiple stakeholders, from suppliers to customers, it is therefore critical to understand the importance of designing operations that balance the needs of all stakeholders involved in the supply chain
3. To learn how to manage processes with a continuous improvement mentality, emphasizing the key issues and challenges supply chains are currently facing, and learning about the tools and techniques needed to address them.
4. To identify the three transformations that affect value chains and to learn strategies to face them: technology, sustainability and resilience.

5. To master two of the main aspects of running operations effectively: organization and objectives.

Plus, as sustainability and social responsibility continue to grow in importance for consumers and businesses alike, there is a need for professionals who are knowledgeable about conscious supply chain management. Therefore, this course is directed towards students interested in the past and future of logistics, junior logisticians, potential business managers, and undergraduate or graduate students who aim to learn about the real impact of supply chains. Further, this course can also be a steppingstone to further professional development, such as certifications from the European Logistics Association (ELA) or advanced degrees in related fields.

Suggested tools from the toolbox

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Sources that were used to create this course

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Suggestion for assessment

To teach this course, a combination of various teaching methods is encouraged to create a dynamic and effective learning environment. First, the use of the PowerPoint presentation provides visual aids and examples that can help students understand complex concepts. However, it should be used in combination with debate questions to prompt critical thinking among students. Students should be encouraged to share personal experiences gained from working in logistics, as this can help others to illustrate key concepts and demonstrate real-world applications of the topics discussed. Professors in this course should also reinforce students to debate opinions, as strong points of view and conflicting perspectives can emerge. Finally, assigned readings supplement the discussions in class and can provide additional insights.

The following questions for discussion are suggested:

- Should sustainability be the primary consideration for companies when designing their supply chains, or should they prioritize other factors such as cost and efficiency?
- What role should governments play in regulating and incentivizing sustainable supply chain practices? Should there be mandatory environmental and social standards for companies to follow?
- How can companies ensure that their suppliers are also committed to sustainability? Should they hold their suppliers accountable for environmental and social practices?

- Is it possible to achieve both sustainability and profitability in supply chain management? Or are there inherent trade-offs between these goals?
- How can technology be leveraged to improve sustainability in supply chains?
- How can companies balance the need to source raw materials globally with the desire to reduce their carbon footprint? Is local sourcing always the most sustainable option?
- How can companies address the social impact of their supply chains, such as labor rights and working conditions?
- What is the role of consumers in promoting sustainable supply chains? Should consumers be willing to pay more for sustainably produced goods?
- How can companies measure and report on their sustainability performance in their supply chains? Are there standardized metrics that should be used?
- Are there industries or products that are inherently unsustainable and should be phased out of supply chains altogether?
- Are there any other aspects to sustainability in supply chains that are not encompassed in the social, environmental and economic sustainability categories?

Suggested assessment criteria (e.g. rubric)

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Information about the creator(s) of this course

Oriol Montanyà began his professional career in the field of communication, but soon moved into retail, where he worked for over a decade, holding a range of managerial roles, especially in the field of supply chain and logistics.

He is current vice-dean of Development & Partner Programmes at UPF-BSM, where he also teaches and does research.

He carries out knowledge transfer activities through the media, including fortnightly articles for the economics section of La Vanguardia, and sits on the board of advisers for several leading companies. He also runs the Sustainability Observatory at UPF-BSM, a key bridge between academic knowledge and real-life business needs.

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