

## Accounting and Sustainability Reporting

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### Course description

This course analyses the topic of Accounting and Sustainability Reporting by focusing on the four main instruments/areas of corporate reporting: Sustainability Reporting under the EU Directives and its evolution, Human Rights and Social Due Diligence Reporting, Intellectual Capital Disclosure and Integrated Reporting. The aim of the course is to examine the most important and topical aspects of corporate reporting and sustainability, to stimulate analyses and discussions among PhD students as well as to deepen the topic and identify some research gaps that could be filled and areas for future research.

### Course format

The course is divided into 6 four-hour sessions plus 4 hours of interactive teaching, dedicated to seminars and activities supporting the students' final work development.

- 1) Session 1 provides a theoretical framework for the evolution of corporate reporting tools, analyses the reasons that have led to this evolution and focuses on the recent evolutionary aspects of the topic. Finally, an overview is given of the main theories that attempt to explain the reasons that lead companies to disclose non-financial information.
- 2) Sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5 are devoted to analysing 6 articles covering the areas of reporting mentioned above. Each session will generally cover the following topics:
  - Describe and articulate the research question(s) raised in an article and explain the arguments relating to the research questions and the theories used to support the discussions.
  - Assess how relevant the research questions and hypotheses are to scientific and societal progress and how sound and convincing the theoretical arguments developed are.
  - Describe the research methods and assess the extent to which they are suitable for answering the research question(s).
  - Summarise the results and conclusions and indicate the scope, limitations, strengths and weaknesses of the study.

In line with the above, before the session each student must:

- Read and analyse the papers.
- Prepare two presentations of approximately 12 slides in PowerPoint (the first one alone and the second together with a colleague designated by the professor), emphasising the following: The theoretical context/framework of the paper, the research question(s)/hypotheses, the methodology used by the author(s), the findings, the main conclusions and implications, strengths and weaknesses, the limitations and directions for future research suggested by the author(s), and finally your own critical perspective and new possible research questions.

The assignments for each session will be communicated to the PhD students. Presentations must be submitted via the classroom at least one day before the respective session date (midnight!).

- 1) Sessions 6 is dedicated to the presentation of possible ideas for future research. The aim is to stimulate the identification of a possible research topic that can be elaborated later (also as a possible final paper). Therefore, at least two days before the date of the session (midnight!), each student must prepare and send over the classroom a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the research objectives, the gap to be filled and the aspects to be analysed.

### Course evaluation

The final assessment consists of:

- Class participation (20%).
- Evaluation of the assignments of each session (30% of the grade).
- Final paper (50% of the grade), which consists of writing a paper on the course topics. The paper must focus on the topics covered during the course and may consist of:
  1. a literature review;
  2. a qualitative research paper (single or multiple case study);
  3. a quantitative research paper.

A fully developed paper is required. Proposals or extended abstracts will not be accepted. The deadline for submission will be announced by the director of the PhD program.

### Detailed syllabus with sessions' assignment

Session 1	April 13 <sup>th</sup>
Topic	<i>The development of sustainability reporting tools: from voluntary to mandatory disclosure</i>

Session 2	April 20 <sup>th</sup>
Topic	<i>Sustainability reporting under the EU Directives and its evolution</i>
Assignments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Doni, F., Martini, S. B., Corvino, A., &amp; Mazzoni, M. (2019). "Voluntary versus mandatory non-financial disclosure: EU Directive 95/2014 and sustainability reporting practices based on empirical evidence from Italy". <i>Meditari Accountancy Research</i>, 28(5), 781-802.</li> <li>2. Zarzycka, E., &amp; Krasodomska, J. (2022). "Non-financial key performance indicators: what determines the differences in the quality and quantity of the disclosures?". <i>Journal of Applied Accounting Research</i>, 23(1), 139-162.</li> <li>3. Bigelli, M., Mengoli, S., &amp; Sandri, S. (2023). ESG score, board structure and the impact of the non-financial reporting directive on European firms. <i>Journal of Economics and Business</i>, 1-13.</li> <li>4. Mahmood, A., Mehmood, A., Terzani, S., De Luca, F., &amp; Djajadikerta, H. G. (2025). The effect of ESG disclosure on firm value in the European context. <i>Management Decision</i>.</li> <li>5. Hummel, K., &amp; Jobst, D. (2024). An overview of corporate sustainability reporting legislation in the European Union. <i>Accounting in Europe</i>, 21(3), 320-355.</li> <li>6. Krasodomska, J., Zarzycka, E., &amp; Zieniuk, P. (2024). Voluntary sustainability reporting assurance in the European Union before the advent of the corporate sustainability reporting directive: The country and firm-level impact of Sustainable Development Goals. <i>Sustainable development</i>, 32(3), 1652-1664.</li> </ol>



Session 3	April 27 <sup>th</sup>
Topic	<i>Human Rights and Social Due Diligence Reporting</i>
Assignments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lopatta, K., Tideman, S. A., Scheil, C., &amp; Makarem, N. (2023). The current state of corporate human rights disclosure of the global top 500 business enterprises: Measurement and determinants. <i>Critical perspectives on accounting</i>, 96, 1-30.</li> <li>Rogerson, M., Scarpa, F., &amp; Snelson-Powell, A. (2024). Accounting for human rights: Evidence of due diligence in EU-listed firms' reporting. <i>Critical Perspectives on Accounting</i>, 99, 1-19.</li> <li>Reustlen, S., &amp; Stawinoga, M. (2024). Do internationally operating companies act in a socially sustainable manner? An empirical comparison of disclosure regarding employee matters and human rights matters. <i>Sustainability Nexus Forum</i>, 32(1), 1-22.</li> <li>Trinh, T. H., Bui, V. H., Nguyen, H. D. A., &amp; Vu, T. V. (2025). Due diligence: a bibliometric review and future research agenda. <i>Benchmarking: An International Journal</i>, 1-30.</li> <li>Al-Shaer, H., Albitar, K., &amp; Hussainey, K. (2024). Corporate accountability for human rights: Evidence from conflict mineral ratings. <i>Business &amp; Society</i>, 63(8), 1887-1936.</li> <li>Hubers, F., &amp; Thijssens, T. (2023). Protect, respect, remedy, and report? Development of human rights reporting in the context of formal institutional settings. <i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i>, 30(6), 2783-2798.</li> </ol>

Session 4	May 5 <sup>th</sup>
Topic	<i>Intellectual capital disclosure</i>
Assignments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cuozzo, B., Dumay, J., Palmaccio, M., &amp; Lombardi, R. (2017). Intellectual capital disclosure: a structured literature review. <i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>, 18(1), 9-28.</li> <li>Hidalgo, R. L., García-Meca, E., &amp; Martínez, I. (2011). Corporate governance and intellectual capital disclosure. <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>, 100, 483-495.</li> <li>Salvi, A., Vitolla, F., Raimo, N., Rubino, M., &amp; Petruzzella, F. (2020). Does intellectual capital disclosure affect the cost of equity capital? An empirical analysis in the integrated reporting context. <i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>, 21(6), 985-1007.</li> <li>Manes Rossi, F., Nicolò, G., &amp; Tartaglia Polcini, P. (2018). New trends in intellectual capital reporting: Exploring online intellectual capital disclosure in Italian universities. <i>Journal of Intellectual Capital</i>, 19(4), 814-835.</li> <li>Vitolla, F., Raimo, N., Rubino, M., &amp; Garzoni, A. (2022). Broadening the horizons of intellectual capital disclosure to the sports industry: evidence from top UEFA clubs. <i>Meditari Accountancy Research</i>, 30(1), 142-162.</li> <li>Nicolò, G., Ferullo, D., Aversano, N., &amp; Ardito, N. (2022). Intellectual capital disclosure and its determinants in healthcare organisations—Evidence from Italy. <i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i>, 36(1), 20-45.</li> </ol>

Session 5	May 12 <sup>th</sup>
Topic	<i>Integrated Reporting</i>
Assignments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soriya, S., &amp; Rastogi, P. (2022). A systematic literature review on integrated reporting from 2011 to 2020. <i>Journal of Financial Reporting and Accounting</i>, 20(3/4), 558-579.</li> <li>Vitolla, F., Raimo, N., &amp; Rubino, M. (2020). "Board characteristics and integrated reporting quality: An agency theory perspective". <i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i>, 27(2), 1152-1163.</li> <li>Dumay, J., Bernardi, C., Guthrie, J., &amp; Demartini, P. (2016). "Integrated reporting: A</li> </ol>



	<p>structured literature review”. <i>Accounting forum</i>, 40(3), 166-185.</p> <p>4. Barth, M.E., Cahan, S.F., Chen, L., &amp; Venter, E.R. (2017). “The economic consequences associated with integrated report quality: Capital market and real effects”. <i>Accounting, Organizations and Society</i>, 62, 43-64.</p> <p>5. Vitolla, F., Raimo, N., Rubino, M., &amp; Garzoni, A. (2019). The impact of national culture on integrated reporting quality. A stakeholder theory approach. <i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>, 28(8), 1558-1571.</p> <p>6. Gerwanski, J. (2020). Does it pay off? Integrated reporting and cost of debt: European evidence. <i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i>, 27(5), 2299-2319.</p>
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<b>Session 6</b>	<b>May 20<sup>th</sup></b>
<i>Topic</i>	<i>Presentation of research ideas</i>