

PhD Position in Sustainability and International Business

Company:

ESCE International Business School

Location:

France / Paris

Discipline:

Sustainability and International Business

Employment Type:

PhD Position

Posted:

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Contact Person:

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Call for Applications: PhD Position in Sustainability and International Business

Institution: University of Nanterre and ESCE International Business School

Location: Paris, France

Application Deadline: May 4, 2025

Start Date: April 1, 2025

About the Position

The University of Nanterre and ESCE International Business School invite applications for a 3-years fully funded PhD position in **Sustainability and International Business**. This position offers a unique opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research at the intersection of global business strategies and sustainability practices. The successful candidate will be part of a dynamic research team and contribute to ongoing projects that explore sustainable business models, corporate social responsibility, and the role of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), Small and Medium Enterprises, Family Firms, NGOs, and Institutions in addressing environmental and social challenges.

Topic

As global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequalities intensify,

businesses of all sizes must integrate sustainability into their strategies. Sustainable business practices are no longer optional but are increasingly seen as a source of long-term competitive advantage. Firms operating in international markets must navigate a complex web of regulatory frameworks, stakeholder pressures, and industry standards while balancing economic, social, and environmental responsibilities.

Multinational enterprises (MNEs) face the challenge of aligning global sustainability goals with diverse local regulations and stakeholder expectations. Given their vast operational reach, MNEs are often scrutinized for their environmental impact, labor practices, and corporate governance. Many firms are responding by embedding Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into their strategies, adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and integrating sustainability reporting standards, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). However, ensuring uniform sustainability practices across subsidiaries in different institutional environments remains a significant challenge.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often struggle with limited resources but can leverage agility and innovation to drive sustainable solutions. Unlike MNEs, SMEs may lack the financial and human capital needed to implement comprehensive sustainability strategies. However, their smaller scale allows them to adopt flexible, innovative, and niche sustainability solutions, such as eco-friendly production processes, sustainable sourcing, or local community engagement.

Family firms play a unique role in sustainable business practices, balancing long-term stewardship with economic pressures. The literature suggests that family businesses often prioritize intergenerational responsibility and long-term value creation over short-term financial gains. This orientation can lead to proactive sustainability initiatives, such as ethical sourcing, responsible investment strategies, and employee well-being programs. However, maintaining this commitment while adapting to evolving market demands and global competition presents a challenge.

Institutions, including governments, international organizations, and non-governmental actors, play a crucial role in shaping policies and incentives to support sustainable business transformations. Regulatory frameworks such as the European Green Deal, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and carbon pricing mechanisms are reshaping how firms approach sustainability. Institutional pressures, including consumer demand for ethical products, investor activism, and sustainability-oriented financial instruments (e.g., green bonds), are further driving firms to integrate sustainability into their core strategies.

A key aspect of sustainability in international business lies in supply and value chain management. Companies must find ways to enhance sustainability across global supply chains by reducing environmental impact, ensuring ethical labor practices, and improving resilience in times of crisis. Global supply chains are under increasing scrutiny for issues such as carbon emissions, waste management, and human rights violations. The shift toward circular economy principles—such as waste reduction, product lifecycle extension, and sustainable sourcing—has become a critical strategy for firms aiming to enhance sustainability performance.

Disruptions caused by economic instability, geopolitical conflicts, or pandemics highlight the need for businesses to build more sustainable and adaptable supply networks. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, accelerating discussions on resilience, sustainability, innovation and localization (reshoring and relocation decisions).

Moreover, firms must operate within complex institutional contexts, where regulatory frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and cultural attitudes toward sustainability vary widely across countries.

Different nations and stakeholders often prioritize sustainability issues differently—some focusing on environmental protection, while others emphasize social equity or economic growth—creating additional challenges for firms seeking to implement globally consistent sustainability strategies.

Ultimately, this call for applications aims to explore how different actors—MNEs, SMEs, family firms, and institutions—navigate sustainability challenges and develop effective strategies to promote responsible and resilient business practices. Understanding the interplay between firm-level strategies, institutional frameworks, and emerging sustainability trends will provide valuable insights into the future of sustainable international business.

Research Focus

The PhD candidate will engage in research related to, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Sustainable business strategies in MNEs, SMEs, and Family firms
- How MNEs align global sustainability goals with local regulations and cultural differences
- The role of SMEs in driving sustainable innovation despite resource constraints
- Sustainability challenges and long-term orientation in family businesses
- Institutional influences on corporate sustainability (government policies, regulations, NGOs)
- Localization vs. globalization: balancing efficiency and sustainability in supply networks and value chain activities
- Sustainable business model innovations for resilience in uncertain environments
- The impact of international regulations and policies on sustainability practices
- Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria in global markets and their implementation
- Green innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship
- The role of international organizations (UN, WTO, EU), institutions, and NGOs in promoting sustainability and shaping firms' strategies

Qualifications

Candidates should meet the following criteria:

- A Master's degree in **Business Administration, Management, Economics, Environmental Studies, or a related field**
- Interest in sustainability issues within an international business context
- Excellent written and spoken English skills; French is a plus
- Strong motivation to conduct cutting-edge research
- Experience with qualitative and/or quantitative research methods is a plus

Funding & Benefits

- **Duration:** 3 years
- **Stipend:** Competitive salary
- **Research Support:** Financial assistance to attend scientific conferences for presenting research papers.
- **Opportunities for Teaching and International Exchange:** 96 hours face-to-face teaching per year

The PhD scholarship is part of the partnership between the two schools. We offer a stimulating environment, which provides opportunities to present at national and international conferences, connections with scholars and practitioners.

PhD courses: The successful applicant will attend PhD courses to develop skills in advanced research methods, theory of the firm, data analysis and writing. The PhD Candidate must earn 180 ECTS during the three years of the doctorate program. 150 ECTS are earned by the defense of the doctoral thesis and the 30 ECTS are earned by courses dedicated to doctoral education.

Application Process

Interested candidates should submit the following documents:

- A **detailed CV**
- A **motivation letter** (max 2 pages) explaining research interests and fit for the position
- Contact information for **two academic referees**

All documents should be submitted in **PDF format** to Prof. Celine Barredy (c.barredy@parisnanterre.fr) and Prof. Alfredo Valentino (avalentino@esce.fr) by May 4th, 2025.

About ESCE International Business School

ESCE International Business School (Ecole Supérieure du Commerce Extérieur) is a private higher education business school founded in 1968 with a strong focus on international business. Its mission is to train students in international development, with respect for ethics, diversity, and cultures, preparing them to successfully integrate as contributing members of a globalized economy. It is located at La Défense (Paris) and Lyon. ESCE is a member of the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles* and delivers a five-year master degree, fully accredited by the French Ministry of Higher Education. As an accredited member of the *EFMD Programme Accreditation*, ESCE's program is internationally recognized. It holds the label *Bienvenue en France* and *BSIS Impact* as well as 4 stars in Q&S Stars Rating. ESCE offers 19 double degree programmes and has exchange agreements with over 190 international academic partners all over the world.

About University of Nanterre

From its very creation in the 1960s, University Paris Nanterre has dedicated itself to being a new type of institution of higher education. An institution of learning and research whose defining characteristics are its vibrant campus life, educational innovation, and scientific research with a social dimension. University Paris Nanterre is located to the west of the greater Paris area, just next to the largest business district in Europe and in a dynamic area full of major urban

developments. The Nanterre campus reflects the University's forward-looking policy with respect to sports and cultural activities, environmental commitment, and solidarity actions. In addition to its main campus in Nanterre, the University also has satellite sites in nearby Saint-Cloud and La Défense. Today University Paris Nanterre has 34,000 students in undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional continuing education with more than 20% of the student body from a foreign country. There are over 1,000 research professors and researchers in all disciplines of social and human sciences (law, economics, management, arts, humanities and languages, philosophy, linguistics, information and communication sciences, psychology and education, history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, geography) as well as in sports sciences and physical education, mathematics, computer science and engineering. The PhD candidate will be part of the research center in management Sciences, CEROS.

Contact Information

For inquiries regarding the position, please contact Prof. Celine Barredy (c.barredy@parisnanterre.fr) and Prof. Alfredo Valentino (avalentino@esce.fr).

We look forward to receiving your application!

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