Research Project Part I – Winter Semester: Sustainability Reporting and Disclosure after ESRS

This research project investigates the practical application and implications of the now implemented European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), with a specific focus on the ecological standards. It is designed as a group research exercise (3–4 participants per team) and progresses through three interconnected stages, each contributing to the final grade.

1. **Foundation**

This part involves group-based exploration of individual ESRS Standards, culminating in a professional slide deck and oral presentation. The objective is to build and share foundational knowledge of the assigned standard, supporting a general understanding of its purpose, structure, and key concepts, while allowing each group discretion in how the content is framed and delivered.

2. **Sectoral Application**

This part focuses on an analytical examination of a selected ESRS Standard as it applies to a specific industry or sector. The participants will explore how the standard manifests in practice, considering for example relevant material topics, potential disclosure challenges, and broader sector-specific considerations, while allowing for variation in scope, emphasis, and methodological approach.

3. **Market Alignment**

This part examines the relationship between sector-specific materiality analysis outcomes and Refinitiv ESG Scores. The work culminates in a slide deck and presentation that explore patterns, alignments, or discrepancies between identified material topics and ESG scoring results, while allowing flexibility in analytical approach, depth, and interpretation.

The project delivers actionable insights into how regulatory sustainability reporting (ESRS) interacts with market-based ESG metrics. By bridging regulation, industry practice, and financial market evaluation, it prepares participants to navigate the evolving landscape of sustainability disclosure and its impact on corporate strategy and stakeholder perception.

The lecturers are Prof. Dr. Jörn Block (block@uni-trier.de), Dr. Minnu Pynadath (pynadath@uni-trier.de) and Felix Pilger (pilger@uni-trier.de), whom you should contact if you have any questions.

Research Project Part II – Summer Semester: Using Meta-Analysis to Make Sense of Sustainability Research

The objective of the course is to complete all major phases of an empirical research project, with a specific focus on conducting a meta-analysis. Meta-analyses have become an indispensable tool in modern empirical research, particularly in highly researched fields where a large and diverse body of evidence exists. By systematically integrating results from primary studies, meta-analyses allow researchers to derive more reliable conclusions and to identify the sources of heterogeneous findings.

The course places a strong emphasis on topics at the intersection of sustainability, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As these areas become increasingly important for firms, policymakers, and society, the corresponding research has grown rapidly, often resulting in fragmented and occasionally contradictory findings. Meta-analytical methods are therefore particularly valuable for synthesizing existing evidence, generating robust insights, and informing both academic debates and practical decision-making across these domains. Possible topics for which student teams will conduct a meta-analysis include:

- Social and sustainable entrepreneurship
- Top management characteristics and diversity
- Effectiveness of policy and regulatory interventions
- Environmental and technological innovation
- Corporate sustainability strategies and performance
- Innovation ecosystems and knowledge transfer.

Each team will formulate a research question, carry out a comprehensive literature review, and systematically code all relevant study information, including effect sizes and key study characteristics. Based on this database, teams will conduct unconditional meta-analyses to estimate average effects as well as heterogeneity analyses using meta-regression techniques. All analyses will be performed in R using the metafor package. A dedicated instructional phase on conducting meta-analyses in R is an integral part of the project. Evaluation is based on the presentation of results and the submission of a comprehensive final report. The course is in English

The lecturers are Dr. Holger Steinmetz (steinmetzh@uni-trier.de) and Darius Lambrecht (lambrecht@uni-trier.de), whom you should contact if you have any questions.

Prerequisite for Participation

Participation in this research project requires students to have successfully completed the statistics refresher course taught by Dr. Holger Steinmetz. Alternatively, students may demonstrate equivalent statistical qualifications to ensure they possess the necessary methodological foundation.

The research project consists of both Part I (winter semester) and Part II (summer semester). Both must be successfully completed in order to pass the module.

Also, please note that the information is still preliminary at this stage and will be finalized at the beginning of the coming semester.