



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM  
Economics & Business

TLC-EB Magazine 2026

# Societal impact of our education



## A fantastic story to tell

Jeroen Hinloopen on how economic thinking can support better choices in society

## Small seeds of change start in the classroom

By Willemijn van Dolen and Sasha Al Busaidy

## Teaching first-years how economics can shape society

With Maarten Pieter Schinkel

## Amsterdam Living Case Lab

Rick Hollen on connecting lecturers and organisations for challenge-based education

## The role of impact in international accreditation organisations

Maurice Oudejans explains

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## Colophon

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# Education with impact: from classroom to society

It is with great pleasure to present the 2026 edition of the TLC-EB magazine, dedicated to a theme that carries great relevance: the societal impact of our education. The magazine shares its theme with this year's EB Education Conference, and complements various ideas and examples that are shared at the conference.

Education has, of course, always impacted society through the contributions of students and alumni. The magazine highlights deliberate efforts to integrate societal impact into our Bachelor's and Master's programmes. By designing courses and activities with intentional societal impact components, we can make the student learning experience more meaningful and purposeful.

The magazine addresses the importance of societal impact for our education and illustrates examples of courses with intentional societal impact components from across Economics and Business (EB). These vary from examples of fostering societal awareness and responsibility in students to courses that engage directly with local communities.

A big thanks to all contributors, to Tiara Rivano for her tremendous work on this magazine, to our interviewers Bibi Buurman and Paula Stal, and to TLC colleagues Hakan Körlü, Job Radelaar, and Esther van Schaik.

Enjoy the magazine!

*Wilma Jongejan,*  
*manager Teaching & Learning Centre EB (TLC-EB)*



*From left to right: Wilma Jongejan, Daniel Roelfsema, Job Radelaar, Hakan Körlü, Pepijn Trietsch, Esther van Schaik*

# Our Educational Directors on societal impact of our education



## Karin Venetis

### Director College of Economics and Business

#### Societal impact in Economics and Business

In a world grappling with climate change, growing inequality, digital transformation, and geopolitical uncertainty, higher education carries a responsibility to cultivate graduates who understand not only how economic systems or organisations function, but also how they affect the environment, people, institutions, and societies.

Economics and business are social sciences with real consequences, and they should be framed as such for our students from the very first year of their Bachelor's programme. Students should learn to analyse value creation while also engaging with questions of sustainability, inclusion, ethical governance, and long-term societal welfare. This requires integrating quantitative rigour with critical reflection: data analysis alongside normative debate, financial models alongside social outcomes, and innovation alongside responsibility.

A future-oriented Bachelor of Science programme equips students with systems thinking – the ability to see organisations, markets, and policies as interconnected parts of broader social and ecological systems. Through real-world cases, interdisciplinary perspectives, and problem-based learning, students learn that economic and business decisions are never neutral: they affect individuals, communities, organisations, markets, and the broader (global) environment.

Teaching for societal impact means that our Bachelor's students should graduate as professionals who can navigate complexity, question assumptions, and contribute constructively to societal challenges. At Economics and Business (EB), we are working to integrate this mindset across our different Bachelor's programmes. Despite the large size of some programmes, we can be proud of the many options and initiatives offered to prepare students for real impact.

All programmes include components related to ethics and the societal impact of business and institutional decisions, including the ethical use of new technologies such as (Gen) AI. Students are also encouraged to learn about impact by doing: some are invited to create their own company as early as year 2, and all students have a 'free choice' semester in year 3. Increasingly, students use this semester for an internship supported by our EB Career Centre or for an international exchange.

One of our programmes offers analytical thesis projects in collaboration with companies to solve real-world problems – an initiative so successful that more programmes are considering adopting this thesis format. Active learning pedagogies encourage students to reflect on the meaning and impact of the models and theories they learn, and challenge lecturers to bring the outside world into the classroom. We see inspiring collaborations with companies and guest lecturers through our growing Amsterdam Living Case Lab (ALCL) and corporate (alumni) network.

Looking ahead, we expect many further developments in this direction across our Bachelor's programmes. Our faculty is uniquely equipped through the expertise and networks of our Impact Centres, as well as our close connections with the municipality of Amsterdam and the international business and (financial) institutions located in our immediate surroundings.



## Ward Romp

### Director of the Graduate School of Economics

#### The societal impact of our education

The societal impact of education is becoming increasingly important. The recent coalition's ambition to strengthen the Roeterseiland Campus as an engine for start-ups, scale-ups, and collaboration between education, research, and companies underlines the need for education that actively connects theory to practice.

Economics students have impact – something we can rightly take pride in. Our graduates contribute to policy debates, evaluate interventions, and work at the intersection of economics and society. As a graduate school of economics, we offer a strong policy orientation, with tracks and courses in public policy, monetary policy, health economics, and impact evaluation. These programmes equip students with the analytical tools needed to engage with real-world economic challenges.

Yet societal impact goes beyond individual courses or specialisations. It raises a broader question: how can our teaching practices consistently embed societal relevance throughout the curriculum? Answering this question requires more than good intentions. It calls for innovation in teaching and learning, including institutional arrangements that support case-based education, the integration of current policy questions, and sustained engagement with external partners. Making our educational practices visible and recognisable – both to students and to society – is part of this challenge.

Our responsibility does not end at graduation. Alumni remain part of our academic community, and lifelong learning is becoming increasingly essential. Innovative educational formats and initiatives such as EB Next! provide opportunities to reconnect, exchange perspectives, and ensure that learning remains relevant throughout professional careers.

The question, then, is not whether our education has societal impact, but how we innovate our teaching and learning to strengthen and sustain that impact in the future.



## Mark van der Veen

### Director of the Graduate School of Business

#### We don't have education without impact

The societal impact of our education is enormous. The Dutch economy faces a shortage of talent, and we help address this by educating both Dutch and international students to a high standard. We regularly monitor how our graduates perform on the labour market, and they consistently do very well. Beyond our contribution to the labour market, we also respond to a strong need for personal learning and development – on a large scale. From this perspective, we could almost sit back and relax when it comes to societal impact.

Yet we go a step further. When we speak about impact, we also mean that our education contributes directly to solving societal challenges and prepares students to have a positive impact through their work after graduation. This is reflected in courses that address these issues in an integrated way, as well as in collaborations with external partners on real-world projects, where students are trained and challenged to tackle societal problems.

An example I am particularly proud of is the UvA Impact Challenge, which we organise together with the EB Career Centre, the Entrepreneurship section, REC Impact, Faculty of Science (FNWI), and Faculty of Medicine (Amsterdam UMC). One hundred student teams from different faculties – most of them from Economics and Business (EB) – work on developing business plans with positive societal impact. Students are supervised by both UvA faculty and partners from the business community.

This year, we are running the challenge for our third time, improving it a little more each year. One of our current goals is to encourage closer collaboration between EB students and students from FNWI and the Faculty of Medicine. After all, impact does not come from a good strategy alone; students must also learn to embrace technology.

I hope you find inspiration in this magazine. And if you have ideas to further strengthen the impact of our education, you know where to find me.

# How business students can make a difference

The course *Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship* shows third-year Bachelor's students in Business Administration how business can be used for social and environmental impact, not just profit. Students explore how commercial activity can tackle societal issues while reflecting on their own values.



Kevin Curran researches and teaches the role of businesses and entrepreneurship in building a sustainable and fair society. He teaches social entrepreneurship to bachelor's, master's, and executive students, and has advised organisations such as the United Nations, Social Impact Hub (UK), and the Centre for Charity Effectiveness (UK) on entrepreneurship and social impact.

## What is the focus of your course?

The course is about turning activism into real action. It is designed to help students understand what social entrepreneurship is. Basically, it's about doing business that not only makes money but also focuses on social or environmental goals. Tony's Chocolonely is a great example. The aim is also to change the students' mindsets; they are young and open to new ideas. It's important to give them an idea that business could be done in a different, more meaningful way.

## Which societal issues does it address?

Social entrepreneurship is a vehicle to tackle social issues, so it could be anything. For example, Tony's Chocolonely is all about fighting slavery in the supply chain, which is a systemic issue and hard to change. But it can also be more local: social entrepreneurs can help a community solve local problems. It really varies. What I teach is a practical method for addressing social and environmental issues through commercial activity.

*"Finance isn't just about numbers – it's about the decisions that shape companies and society"*

## What do students actually do in your course?

In the lectures, we talk about what social entrepreneurship is and how we can conceptualise its different aspects. In the seminars, students work in groups; they develop a social entrepreneurial idea over the first six weeks. In the last week, they present their business plan for a social enterprise. They need to pick an issue that they all agree on, which they want to solve through commercial activity, and then develop the building blocks of a social enterprise.

I also try to bring in the students' experiences a lot. In the individual assignments and projects, students are encouraged to think about who they are as people, what their personal values are, and how they would approach being a social entrepreneur.

## How has the course evolved?

When I first joined UvA six years ago, the Bachelor's in Business Administration was just being set up as an independent programme. I was asked to develop a course on corporate entrepreneurship, which was great, but I personally didn't find it very inspiring. So last year I actually replaced it with this social entrepreneurship topic with the help of Frank Belshak, the programme director.

*"Analysing real companies helps students see the broader impact of financial choices"*

## How do you know it works?

One student emailed me saying he hadn't realised before this course that a business student could make a positive social impact. He said he found it transformational to realise that there exists a different way of thinking about how to do business other than maximising shareholder value. I was really humbled by this comment. I hadn't thought about it this way. I developed a course because I was interested in social entrepreneurship and I am passionate about it, but I didn't think of it as a way of giving students a new way of thinking about the world. Receiving this feedback from students was great.

## What was the hardest part to implement?

Getting a slot for the class was challenging, especially when all the other slots were already full. Another challenge was keeping the course science-based despite its practical element. It's a balance: the lectures must be based on research articles and rigorous, but they also need to relate to the assignments students are doing in class. I'm still refining that balance after only a year.

## What's one practical tip for colleagues wanting to try something similar?

With anything to do with social impact, it's important not to seem morally superior. Try to remain neutral. I aim for a neutral tone in the course and avoid coming across as pushing a leftist or anti-capitalist perspective and focus on it being a way of teaching commercial activity combined with a social goal. I don't want to make students feel bad about being business students - because they shouldn't.

## What should we not misrepresent in the write-up?

When you are developing something new, existing practices have to change, and people don't always like that. Also, the world is increasingly critical of anything labelled "social," which is a challenge we must acknowledge.

*"When students debate and defend their recommendations, learning goes beyond the textbook"*



# Small seeds of change start in the classroom



How do you teach marketing in a time of climate crisis, AI disruption and growing concerns about wellbeing and equity? In the honours and minor course *The Future of Marketing*, Professor Willemijn van Dolen and Sasha Al Busaidy experiment with guest speakers, reflective assignments and a final “future of marketing” event to challenge how students think about their field. In this joint column they share how they connect theory and practice, which dilemmas they bring into the classroom, and why they see their teaching as planting seeds of future impact.

## Connecting theory and practice

We were asked to develop a course on the future of marketing. Together with our colleague Hendrik de With we turned that into the honours and minor course *The Future of Marketing*.

In this course, one principle is central: students should see how theory meets practice. We invite a practitioner roughly every other week and combine their stories with academic articles. We send guests the literature in advance; over time some become so familiar with it that they want to be there for the theory part as well and then show how the same concepts play out in their organisation.

Students learn to look at real cases through a theoretical lens; practitioners discover new ways of thinking about their work through student questions. This year, for the final assignment, students worked for weeks on the question “What will marketing look like in 2040?” and presented their ideas in an evening event to a panel of external marketers and one lecturer. That format makes the assignment feel real for everyone in the room.

## Sustainability, wellbeing and dilemmas

Societal impact is not an add-on; it is the core content of the course. Sustainability is the biggest theme, in a broad sense: overconsumption, climate change, circularity, greenwashing, digital influence and “dark patterns” in online environments all feature in the syllabus. We also increasingly talk about AI and what it means for consumers and firms.

Wellbeing runs through this. One group assignment asked: how can we ensure that marketing does not hinder the wellbeing of individuals in the future? Students started from their own experience, doomscrolling and constant attention-grabbing on social media for example, and worked towards alternative marketing approaches for 2040.

We do not present a simple good-versus-bad story. Many guests work inside real tensions: for instance, a sustainability impact manager at a company that sells affordable sportswear while also trying to build a circular model. They are honest about trade-offs, and so are we. Students quickly see that there are few easy solutions, which is precisely why critical, reflective marketers are needed.

Sometimes the impact is very concrete. After one session, a student was so inspired by the Decathlon guest that she connected with her on LinkedIn and said it gave her real hope that a meaningful, environmentally positive career in business is possible. Another student contacted TomTom cofounder Corinne Vigreux and is now interviewing for

an internship. At the same time, Corinne’s focus on first-generation students inspired us to bring the *Baanbrekers* programme for first-generation students to our own faculty. By integrating people into teaching and research, you create relationships that change everyone involved.

## Building a vision of marketing in 2040

To make these themes tangible, students work on two assignments that run throughout the course: one individual, one in groups.

Individually, they write a reflective log every week. After each session they receive two questions that link the reading to their own behaviour. A key example is the SHIFT framework (Social influence, Habit formation, Individual self, Feelings and cognition, Tangibility). We ask them to apply it to something ordinary but meaningful, like food choices, exercise or online shopping.

*“What we do see is that it changes how students think and feel about their field”*

Over twelve weeks, abstract concepts become personal. Students start to notice contradictions in their own lives: wanting to live sustainably yet loving fast fashion; disliking doomscrolling yet still doing it. That tension is exactly where a different way of looking at marketing can emerge.

In groups, they build a vision of marketing in 2040. It can be utopian, dystopian or in between, as long as it is grounded in the literature. Working backwards from that vision, they propose a product, service or approach that tackles or illustrates a problem. Some struggle with the open-endedness; others flourish. The final “conference” with external panel feedback gives their work weight and visibility.

*“That is a realistic level of impact for a single course, and it feels meaningful”*

## Seeds of impact

We are careful about claiming direct societal impact. Our course has not redesigned the marketing industry. What we do see is that it changes how students think and feel about their field. In reflective sessions they say things like: “*I had only seen marketing as profit maximisation; now I see a different perspective,*” or “*This course made me think critically in a way I hadn’t before.*” They also realise that companies they saw as “just commercial” are actively wrestling with sustainability and ethics and that this tension is present in their own behaviour and ambitions too.

That may sound modest, but it matters: dozens of students who will navigate the world differently and ask harder questions in their future jobs. That is a realistic level of impact for a single course, and it feels meaningful.

Designing such a course is not straightforward. The honours format gives us a lot of freedom in assessment and design, which is both a gift and a challenge. We experiment with forms - from an exhibition in the ABS building last year to this year’s reflective logs and conference - and we adjust based on student feedback and what happens in the world (for example adding AI).

If we have one practical tip for colleagues, it is this: invest early in knowing who is in front of you and consciously put on a “naive hat”. As experts, we easily forget what it is like not to be an expert. Starting from students’ everyday experiences makes it easier to connect heavy topics to their lives - and, ultimately, to the world they will help shape.



**Willemijn van Dolen and Sasha Al Busaidy** (Marketing) connect marketing theory with real world dilemmas by bringing practitioners into the classroom and designing reflective assignments that link big issues like sustainability and AI directly to students’ everyday choices.

# Impact Centres: where science and society strengthen each other



Bart van Zelst is Communications Adviser for Impact, supporting Impact Centres and highlighting the societal impact of Economics and Business.

How can we ensure that knowledge from UvA Economics and Business (EB) doesn't remain behind academic walls, but contributes to society. One key way is through Impact Centres. While new centres are being established and existing ones expanded, many colleagues are still unsure how they operate and what they deliver. Bart van Zelst, Impact Communications Adviser, explains.

## Impact as a core task of the faculty

The faculty now hosts 14 Impact Centres. The two most recent additions are the Amsterdam Accounting Impact Centre and the UvA Impact Lab, the latter of which investigates how charities can increase their societal impact.

Societal impact – or valorisation – is a core mission of the university. The centres make this concept tangible. They are primarily research-driven platforms where academics collaborate with industry partners, while increasingly integrating educational activities to strengthen engagement and knowledge exchange. Although Impact Centres differ in their goals and methods, they share one key principle: **collaboration enhances both scientific quality and societal relevance**. This mix of theory and practice generates new questions, data, and applications.

## From challenge-based learning to strategic partnerships

Impact Centres collaborate with partners in different ways. Some, like the AI4Business Lab and the Amsterdam Living Case Lab, focus on challenge-based education. Here, students tackle real-world problems and gain hands-on experiences. Their projects lead to research collaborations. Other centres build long-term research partnerships. For example, the Research Centre for Longevity Risk (RCLR) was set up with insurer NN and studies how rising life expectancy effects pensions, healthcare, and inequality. Its independent analyses help pension funds, policymakers, and insurers prepare for aging populations.

Another example is Analytics for a Better World (ABW), which partners with tech company Ortec to connect NGOs with UvA EB data scientists and AI experts. ABW supports organisations such as Amref Health Africa with data-driven projects while helping them strengthen their analytics capabilities.

## Impact as an enrichment of education

Collaboration with real-world practice also benefits classroom learning. The Amsterdam People Analytics Centre (APAC) combines research and practice to support, data-driven HR policies. Through partners such as PostNL, KLM, and NS, APAC enriches the curriculum by allowing students to work on real-life cases and learn directly from professionals who participate as guest speakers.

The centres act as a bridge between research, education, and society. Researchers gain access to data and networks, students work on real-world issues, and partners benefit from academic expertise. Far from being stand-alone projects, Impact Centres are a core part of how UvA EB delivers societal impact.



Want to learn more about EB Impact Centres or start your own impact project? Visit the EB Impact website

# Spotlight on EB facilities

At Economics and Business (EB), we are continuously striving to foster an environment that enhances the educational experience for both students and lecturers. Our innovative key facilities all support and enhance teaching and learning at EB. They are designed to promote creativity, engagement, and interactive learning, aligning with the dynamic needs of modern education.

## Active Learning Classrooms

Our Active Learning Classrooms (E0.03 and E0.22) are designed to transform traditional teaching formats into collaborative, student-centered experiences. These classrooms are equipped with flexible furniture, technology-enhanced spaces, and tools that support dynamic group work and active participation. With movable tables and chairs, interactive whiteboards, and audiovisual setups, these classrooms are ideal for both in-person and hybrid courses. They are purposefully designed to encourage student engagement, critical thinking, and peer collaboration in real-time, making learning more interactive and immersive.

## Knowledge Clip Studios

Our studios offer a state-of-the-art space for lecturers to create high-quality podcasts, vodcasts and educational videos, known as knowledge clips, for blended and flipped learning environments. These studios come equipped with advanced cameras, microphones, and lighting setups, ensuring that content is captured with professional standards.

One standout feature is the **lightboard**, a transparent writing surface that allows lecturers to write and draw while maintaining face-to-face engagement with viewers. This tool is especially useful for explaining complex concepts in an intuitive and visually engaging way, making content more dynamic and accessible.

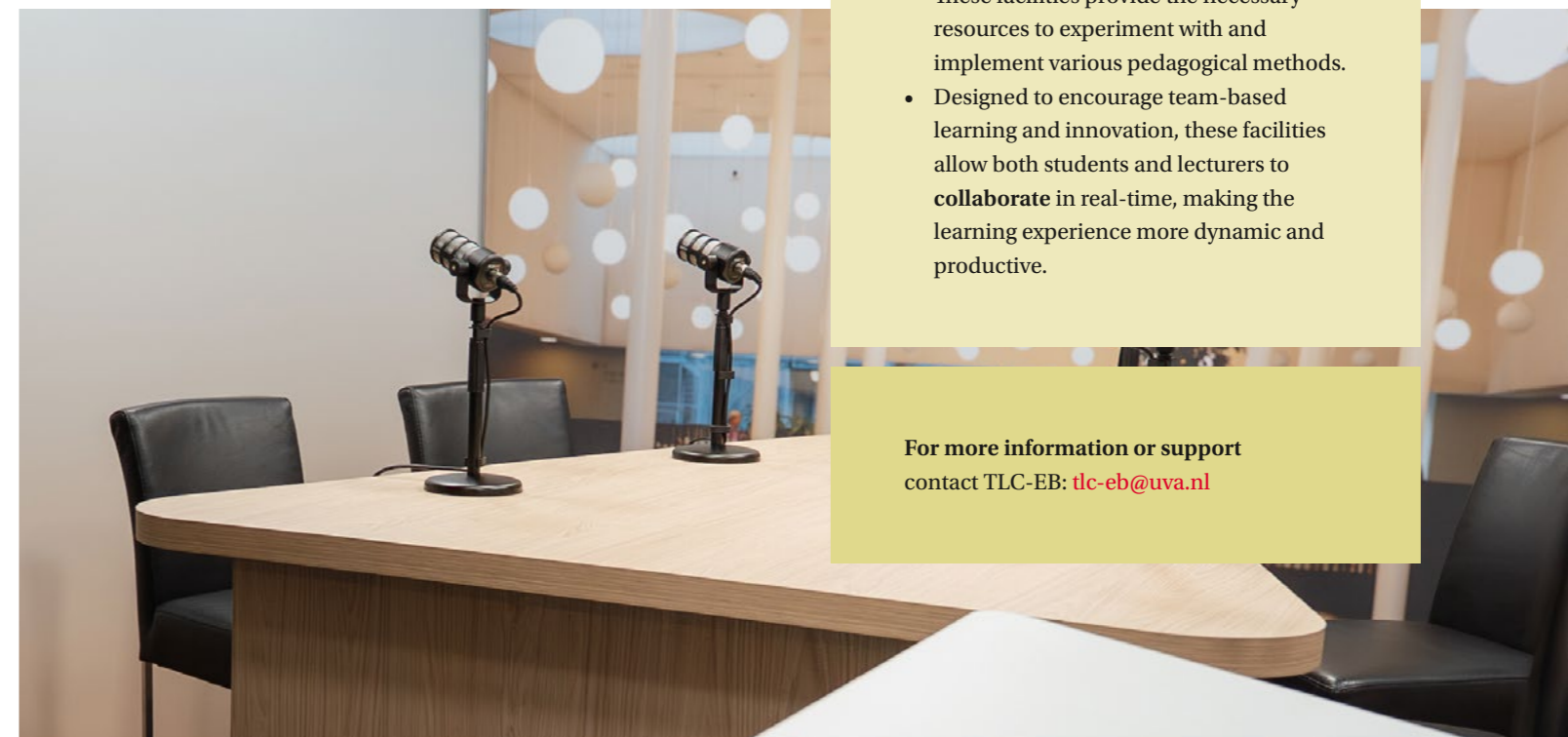
## Online Classroom

The Online Classroom is a cutting-edge online learning space designed to facilitate remote teaching, providing both lecturers and students with the tools necessary for seamless interaction in an online or hybrid learning environment. This facility is equipped with high-quality audio and video technology, real-time collaboration tools, and a user-friendly interface, ensuring that learning continues to be engaging and interactive, no matter the physical distance. It allows for live lectures, discussions, and group work, creating a rich, collaborative virtual experience for all participants.

### Why should you give these facilities a try?

- **Enhance student engagement:** Interactive and technology-driven spaces support the development of skills like collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.
- Learning is not limited to traditional lectures with these **flexible learning options**.
- **Support for diverse teaching styles:** These facilities provide the necessary resources to experiment with and implement various pedagogical methods.
- Designed to encourage team-based learning and innovation, these facilities allow both students and lecturers to **collaborate** in real-time, making the learning experience more dynamic and productive.

For more information or support contact TLC-EB: [tlc-eb@uva.nl](mailto:tlc-eb@uva.nl)



# Education meets society: how students help businesses innovate with AI

Data and AI are increasingly part of day-to-day decision-making in organisations of all sizes – from SMEs to global corporates and NGOs. At the AI4Business Lab, students work on real-life AI and analytics challenges as part of their thesis projects, ranging from optimising coffee roasting to improving global finance systems. In this lab, Inez Zwetsloot shows how challenge-based learning can connect education, research and societal impact, driving innovation in companies while giving students hands-on experience and tangible results.

*“Students learn that AI is not just a theoretical concept – they can create solutions that have real impact for companies and society”*

## Can you briefly describe your lab and its objectives?

We collaborate with students from the Bachelor’s in Business Analytics and the Master’s in Business and IT Management. As part of their dissertations or course work, students work in teams on analytics and AI challenges posed by partner organisations. These projects offer students valuable learning experiences while producing real impact for the companies involved.

## How does your project address societal challenges?

Our projects involve a diverse range of organisations, including large companies, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), educational institutes and NGOs. This year, for the first time, we matched students with 30 SMEs. SMEs are a vital part of the Dutch economy but often have limited research and development resources. Through challenge-based learning, students help SMEs experiment with AI technologies, making innovation accessible and supporting economic growth.

## Could you give an example of a case?

One project was with Coffee and Coconuts, a coffee company. They wanted to understand how to roast coffee beans in a more energy-efficient way. They already collect data from their roasting machines, and students will build a model to map energy usage. From there, they can investigate whether the beans could be roasted with the same quality using less energy. It’s a practical, real-world problem that students can tackle with data analytics skills.

## What have you changed compared to the earlier version of the course (or the standard approach)?

This is the first collaboration with SMEs in this format. Previously, we’ve run similar challenge-based learning projects for 2 years with a range of organisations. What’s new now is the link between education, research, and impact. Students not only learn to build analytics systems, but we also study the effect of these interventions on employee satisfaction and organisational productivity.



Inez Zwetsloot is Director of the AI4Business Lab and Associate Professor of Statistics and Business Analytics. From start-ups and SMEs to large corporates and NGOs: she works with many different partners to tackle real-world data and AI challenges together with students.

The projects are supported by consultants who supervise the students, ensuring that ideas are actionable, not just theoretical. If successful, we hope to scale this pilot from 30 SMEs to potentially 10,000 SME owners in the longer term.

*“These projects go beyond assignments – they create tangible outcomes for organisations”*

Website  
AI4Business Lab



LinkedIn  
AI4Business Lab



## How do you assess the impact of the course?

Impact is evident in multiple ways:

- Companies are enthusiastic and return each year. Just this morning, I spoke with a company where a student did a challenge during the Bachelor’s thesis then worked there part-time during his Master’s programme and is now a full-time employee proposing a challenge for the next cohort.
- Students find it extremely useful. They learn how to put classroom knowledge into practice.
- Concrete impact examples: At ING, students improved upon a solution the company had already developed. At Zengate, students helped create a business analyst position, and that student is now working in Japan. FrieslandCampina implemented a student-developed model in its global finance system. These projects clearly go beyond assignments, generating tangible outcomes.

## What was the most difficult part to implement?

Recruiting suitable projects takes time and effort, which isn’t formally part of our job descriptions. Supervising projects in companies is new for the university, and students need professional skills such as preparing meetings, presenting themselves, asking the right questions, and explaining analytics concepts to non-specialists.

Some projects inevitably fail because of these challenges. Still, it is extremely rewarding to see how education, research, and societal impact can be combined in a single project, showing the real potential of challenge-based learning.

## Any practical tips for colleagues who want to try something similar?

Start small, focus on a few projects on meaningful topics. Ensure that students’ work produces tangible value for partner organisations. Combining educational rigor with societal relevance enhances both student learning and institutional impact.

## Where can readers find more information about your work?

On our website you can find videos about past projects, such as the Zengate project, and highlights from last year’s event, which showcase the students’ impact.

# Connecting lecturers and organisations for challenge-based education

With the Amsterdam Living Case Lab (ALCL) Rick Hollen and his team connect teaching across Economics and Business (EB) with organisations that bring in real-life challenges. By linking academic rigour with practical relevance, this platform-based entity, which may be renamed later this year, supports meaningful learning experiences for students while strengthening EB's engagement with society.

When students work on real-life challenges that truly matter to organisations, their motivation and learning deepen significantly. These experiences also provide valuable practical exposure and skills that can positively influence their employability and career paths. For years, the National Student Survey has consistently shown that our students want stronger connections between their academic curriculum and the world of business or economics beyond academia. With this in mind ALCL facilitates challenge-based collaborations where theory meets practice.

*“We focus on facilitating challenge-based collaborations in our faculty's education, where theory meets practice”*

## Rigour and relevance

In academia, we often emphasise the importance of rigour and relevance. Rigour means that our research and teaching are thorough and of high academic quality. Relevance means that our work matters beyond the university and connects to real-life issues, rather than only to academic debates. By creating a direct link between what students learn in theory and the issues organisations actually face, ALCL enhances the relevance and impact of academically rigorous education.



Rick Hollen is the director of the Amsterdam Living Case Lab (ALCL), a role he combines with various other positions at UvA Economics and Business (EB). ALCL is a platform-based entity that connects lectures of bachelor's, master's and executive education courses with organisations. Students work on real-life challenges that these organisations bring into the classroom.

The societal link is broad. Recent challenges have addressed themes such as sustainability, internationalisation, digitalisation, business analytics, entrepreneurship, and strategy. Because EB includes many specialisations, organisations with very different types of questions can reach out to us and potentially be matched to a suitable course or project. A key condition is that a challenge aligns with the scope and learning goals of a course and addresses an issue an organisation is struggling with. Established firms, start-ups, scale-ups, public organisations, and other partners bring in their questions; students then work on possible solutions.

## Challenge-based education formats

What students actually do depends on the course. We support multiple formats. In some courses, a guest lecture is combined with a short case. Students work on this case during the session and share their ideas at the end. In

other courses, the collaboration spans several weeks. For instance, an organisation presents a challenge and answers clarifying questions, students work on it over time, and then present their solutions and advice back to the organisation. We recently facilitated seven-week challenges from multinational employment agency Randstad (Bachelor's course in Corporate Entrepreneurship), the Port of Amsterdam Authority (Master's course in Business Strategy and Sustainability), and global industrial technology company Sensata Technologies (Master's course in Globalisation and Offshoring).

There are also formats where a challenge is linked to a thesis project. For instance, Bachelor's students from Business Analytics work on companies' AI and analytics challenges and propose innovative solutions as part of a three-month thesis trajectory. This trajectory, which offers considerable added value for companies, is coordinated by the AI4Business Lab, which recruits companies via our platform, with operational support from our team. This team was recently strengthened by the arrival of Rein Jonkman (former master's admissions coordinator at EB).

*“We basically operate a multi-sided platform that links economics and business lecturers, students, and organisations”*

As these examples illustrate, challenge-based education can take many shapes and forms. What these variations have in common is that students apply theory to a concrete, real-life challenge presented live - on campus or online. Although still relatively modest in volume, various challenge-related initiatives already existed within EB. However, they were not always connected and were coordinated by different people and units. By bringing existing and new challenge-based education initiatives together under one umbrella, we can create substantial synergies.

## Alumni and matching platform

Since becoming the new director of ALCL last year, one of my foci has been to make much better use of our large pool of alumni. Many of them work in organisations with interesting questions and know both the academic and the practical side. This naturally strengthened our collaboration with the EB Career Centre headed by Charmianne Lemmens. Together we are now linking the ALCL platform to the university's central CRM database so we can involve alumni more systematically. ALCL is an important vehicle to support our students' professional

competence building and career readiness, by connecting them to practice and our alumni.

Our new digital platform facilitates the matching process. On our website, which we highlight during alumni events and in mailings, alumni and others can see a menu of upcoming courses that work with real-life challenges. They can click on a tile to read more details and submit their challenge through the system. When multiple challenges are submitted for the same course, lecturers can allocate them to student teams or invite students to indicate their preferences. Altogether, this enables a much more structured matching of challenges with courses than before.

## When impact meets complexities

Organising for challenge-based education is complex, as it involves many stakeholders, each with their own viewpoints and priorities. For instance, our platform caters to both the Amsterdam Business School (ABS) and the Amsterdam School of Economics (ASE). The word 'case' can feel somewhat alienating for some ASE colleagues due to its business-like connotation, which is one reason a name change is currently being considered. Likewise, talking predominantly about 'companies' does not help, as ASE has many ties with other types of organisations as well. Having an adequate sense of different sensitivities, priorities, and interests is important and requires ongoing conversations.

Another challenge is that 'impact' is still a relatively new focus for the university, despite the growing number of impact centres at EB. Some colleagues feel they should 'simply' deliver academic content and that there is no room in their course for impact-oriented activities such as working with real-life challenges. Timing can also be an issue: sometimes an organisation approaches us with a very interesting idea or urgent need when there is no suitable course at that time. If there is little interaction or opportunity for matching during the year, partners can lose interest and drift away. More regular communication and the frequently updated matching platform should help us keep partners informed and involved.

For me, this is at the core of our endeavours: building and maintaining sustainable, valuable connections between lecturers, organisations, and other stakeholders, so that working on real-world challenges becomes a normal part of how we teach and how students learn.

ALCL



# The role of impact in international accreditation organisations



**Maurice Oudejans**, Project Manager for accreditations, explains what ‘impact’ means within AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS, and BSIS, and how their standards guide UvA Economics and Business in developing and communicating the societal impact of its education.

UvA Economics and Business (UvA EB) is accredited by three prestigious international accreditation bodies: AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS. Only 1% of all business schools worldwide hold this so-called *Triple Crown* accreditation. For UvA EB, these accreditations recognise the high quality of its research and education – and the impact they generate.

These accreditations act as a driving force behind innovation, deeper engagement, and the strengthening of positive societal impact. They not only stimulate internationalisation and support the continued development of UvA EB as a leading European business school, but also serve as an important benchmark and help

attract talented students and lecturers. In addition, these accreditations are widely recognised within international networks of business schools and among the faculty’s stakeholders.

In the past, accreditation standards primarily focused on the quality of education and research. Over recent decades, however, the positive impact of students and researchers on society has become increasingly important in assessing business schools. This shift is clearly reflected in the standards and evaluations conducted by international accreditation panels.

For example, the three core concepts underpinning AACSB standards are *Impact, Engagement, and Innovation*. Business schools are required to demonstrate progress in all three areas. AACSB has also introduced a dedicated Impact standard, requiring schools to describe the impact of their students and researchers in concrete terms. AMBA has similarly added an Impact standard, asking MBA programmes to demonstrate the positive societal impact of their lecturers, students, and alumni.

Finally, the European Foundation of Management Development (EFMD), which also administers the EQUIS accreditation, has introduced a separate assessment framework: BSIS (Business School Impact System).

## BSIS: assessing impact in a comprehensive way

BSIS is the first comprehensive impact assessment system for business schools. It covers more than 130 indicators across seven dimensions of impact and provides a tailor-made data collection framework for monitoring, assessing, and developing impact.

The BSIS process includes defining the school’s impact zone and institutional scope, collecting data, conducting an impact assessment, and producing a report with recommendations for future development.



By demonstrating a school’s impact on internal and external stakeholders, BSIS functions both as a communication and negotiation tool externally and as a way to foster an impact-oriented culture internally. Schools that successfully complete the process are awarded the BSIS label for a period of three years.

The BSIS assessment at UvA EB took place in 2023. Following this assessment, the panel provided recommendations to further strengthen both impact and the communication of impact.

## Valuable international accreditation examples of our educational impact

What are some examples of the educational impact at UvA EB that are particularly valued by international accreditations and BSIS?

In 2020, the AACSB panel commended UvA EB for the strong connections many lecturers maintain with the business community and other organisations, ensuring that educational content reflects professional practice. In 2023, the EQUIS panel identified the research in Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS) - and its integration across all degree programmes - as a best practice. BSIS likewise considered this integration a major strength of UvA EB’s education.

In 2023, the BSIS panel highlighted the following aspects of educational impact:

- UvA EB’s strong ability to attract high-quality students from the impact zone, other regions of the Netherlands, and abroad (attraction and retention impact);
- a high-quality and distinctive educational offer, with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embedded in the curriculum and combined with active learning pedagogy;
- active learning and related pedagogical research as an emerging field supporting and enhancing educational impact;
- widespread use of student panels and focus groups to improve programme quality;
- a comprehensive careers service, housed in an attractive new building, strengthening employability and educational impact;
- enrichment of the curriculum through international study trips, community service, and internships or project-based learning;
- a significant contribution to upskilling the regional workforce through executive education and professional degree programmes (employability impact);
- a strong alumni network with substantial potential to further support the university and the regional and national economy.

In 2024, the AMBA panel was particularly impressed by the social impact of Amsterdam MBA alumni. At the same time, international accreditation panels have offered a wide range of recommendations to further increase educational impact.

UvA EB is actively working to follow up on these recommendations. One concrete example is the focus on societal impact in education at the Teaching and Learning Centre’s annual conference in 2026 - illustrating how UvA EB continues to build and strengthen a culture of impact.



# A fantastic story to tell

From rewriting the Dutch secondary school economics curriculum to teaching a research seminar in Economic Policy; from academic papers to opinion pieces in national newspapers, Professor Jeroen Hinloopen continuously moves between education, research, and the public policy debate. In this article, he reflects on his professional life and explains how economics education can have real societal impact – especially at a time when AI and misinformation put additional pressure on clear economic reasoning.



**Jeroen Hinloopen** (Microeconomics) uses his classrooms, textbooks and columns to show how economic thinking can cut through noise and support better choices in society.

*“We economists have a fantastic story to tell.”* I truly believe that – not because economists themselves are exceptional, but because economics, when done properly, helps make sense of a complex world. It organises seemingly independent facts into a consistent framework. And that is precisely what we need in a time overwhelmed by informational turmoil.

## Seeing the whole chain

Let me start with where I come from, because that shapes how I look at impact. I studied econometrics in Rotterdam in the late 1980s: a demanding, rather theoretical programme. After that, I completed my PhD in mathematical economics at the European University Institute in Florence, and then worked at universities in Copenhagen, Delft, and Utrecht, as well as at Purdue University, De Nederlandsche Bank, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

*“Less obsession with technicalities, more focus on economic analysis”*

In 2001, I joined the UvA full-time, later becoming Director of Education at EB. Since 2017, I have combined one day a week at the UvA with a position on the board of the CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis. Along the way, I also chaired the committee that rewrote the national secondary school economics exam programme, and I continue to co-author a textbook that is used at roughly one in three schools.

At this stage of my professional life, I have a reasonably complete view of the entire “education chain.” I know what pupils learn about economics before they come to us, what we teach them, and what society expects from our graduates. That perspective also offers a clear view of the societal impact of economics education.

## From questions to solid answers

In my current master’s course at the UvA – a research seminar in Economic Policy – everything revolves around one deceptively simple question: how do you move from a policy-inspired research question to a well-founded answer? Formulating such a question is not the difficult part. The real challenge lies in finding a path toward an answer that is both methodologically sound and meaningful for policy.

The course prepares students for writing their master’s thesis, but it also trains them for their later role in society: learning to distinguish a popular story from a solid economic argument.

## Keeping a cool head

We live in a world filled with economic stories – some true, others less so. The internet is flooded with flawed narratives and strongly held opinions that appear coherent at first glance but fall apart under closer scrutiny. It is easy to become trapped in echo chambers where every new piece of information simply confirms what you already believe.

The task of education is to acknowledge that all these stories exist while equipping students with a cool head. Economics and business administration did not emerge yesterday; both disciplines have a long history and are rooted in a well-established scientific tradition. They offer frameworks that help us move beyond intuition and ideology towards careful analysis.

One of the most important contributions economists can make to the public debate is to show that choices are unavoidable – and that choices involve trade-offs. Not everything is possible, and certainly not all at the same time, as former Prime Minister Willem Drees already taught us.

You see this in debates about climate, housing, agriculture, and public finances. When too few policymakers are economically literate, this basic lesson is quickly forgotten – and then we drift.

*“Fine that all these stories exist, but keep a cool head”*

## Making economics accessible

To reach people beyond the lecture hall, I try to explain my observations as an economist as clearly as possible. Sometimes that takes the form of a research paper, sometimes an opinion piece, and sometimes a textbook chapter for teenagers who are not particularly eager to read. In each case, the question is the same: how do I draw the reader in and make them think, *“Ah, now I actually understand what is going on?”*

That is also why I enjoy working on the school textbook. When I start writing, I imagine a blank page and a pupil who would rather do almost anything than read about economics. What do I need to write to make them keep reading anyway?

One somewhat unexpected discovery is that we really do have a great story to tell. Economics can explain much of what we observe around us in a consistent way. Once students begin to see that, you can almost watch the light go on: *“Oh, so that’s how it fits together – and that too.”*

## More focus on economic analysis

Artificial intelligence is currently transforming our field. Much of the technical work can already be automated, and that trend will only accelerate. Soon, anyone will be able to generate tables and graphs with just a few clicks.

So what remains for the economist or business graduate? The interesting part: explaining what those numbers and graphs actually mean. Anyone can produce a graph; not everyone can interpret it correctly.

That, I believe, is where economics education is heading: less obsession with technicalities and more focus on economic analysis. This is certainly not a licence to talk freely without discipline – that is how you end up with “bar-room economics.” The technical side remains essential, but it will no longer dominate the story of what it means to be an economist.

## One link in a chain

If I had to summarise my role, it would be this: I am one link in a long production chain. I try to analyse, explain, and equip students with a way of thinking that helps them see through the noise. What happens after that is up to others.

But if my teaching and writing help even a few more people recognise trade-offs, ask better questions, and resist easy but misleading stories, then that already counts as meaningful societal impact.

*“I am one link in a long production chain”*



# Teaching first-years how economics can shape society

In the first-year course *Principles of Economics and Business 1*, Professor Maarten Pieter Schinkel introduces students to the big ideas in economics and business. In large shared lectures, students link classic economic ideas to current issues like Big Tech market power, carbon emissions trading, and war economics. They learn early on that economics is not just about models and numbers, but about choices that shape society.

## Can you tell us about the course and who it's for?

*Principles of Economics and Business 1* is the first course for new Bachelor's students who enrolled in Business Administration and Economics & Business Economics. Around 1,500 students take it each year. Because the group is so large, we teach in theatres across the city, such as Carré and DeLaMar. This makes the start of their studies very special. I find it a privilege to teach this amazing course that acquaints our incoming students with our great discipline.

The main goal is for students to understand the shared basic ideas of economics and business and see why these ideas matter in the real world. Insights such as: how specialisation and trade generate welfare, why firms exist, how prices convey information, and when wasteful inefficiencies can persist. I treat students as future academics from day one. The course is broad and not very technical, but nevertheless deep. Some topics may be familiar from high school, but are extended by linking them to their intellectual history and real-time events.

We study classic texts by economists like Smith, Coase, and Hayek, linking their ideas to current real-world examples that we update each year. Some of our leading researchers give guest lectures. The idea is to illustrate how economics and business insights apply in practice. My experience is that students discover the aspects of the field that interest them most.

## How does the course connect to societal issues?

The course is larded with current social and political issues. Each Friday lecture, the principles of the week are applied to a timely public interest matter on which popular press



Maarten Pieter Schinkel teaches *Principles of Economics and Business 1*, the introductory course that brings together around 1,500 first-year students. He uses current news topics to illustrate fundamental principles and show how economics and business impact society.

articles and videos are provided on the course's website. Also, each year I pick a big theme from the news that recurs and I close the course with. During the energy crisis, for example, we looked at the spike in European energy prices and government support through price caps. With some basic microeconomics, students learn to understand some very real effects on people's lives and how to design good policy to help them effectively.

*"GDP is a useful measure, but it does not always tell us if resources are used effectively or if people's lives improve"*

We also often discuss Big Tech. For example, we explored the merger between Microsoft and Activision Blizzard, the maker of *Call of Duty*. Many students know these games well, so they see directly why it matters if one company gains more power in cloud gaming and online markets.

*"If you enjoy it and believe in it, you can create a course with real impact"*

This year, the idea of a "war economy" was central. The objective, of course, should be peace through deterrence. But some argue that war efforts look good in GDP figures. We discussed how this can be misleading. GDP is a useful measure, but it does not necessarily tell us if resources are used effectively or if people's lives improve. The "broken window fallacy" illustrates this well.

## How has the course evolved over time?

The core literature - the textbook and classic papers - has been stable in the 10 years since I designed this course. But every year I update the lectures with new cases and current events. Preparing this takes a lot of time each summer. The guest lecturers speak about on-going research. The course thus keeps evolving, but the basic idea remains: a broad, socially relevant introduction to economics and business. If you enjoy it and believe in it as a lecturer, you can create a course with real impact.

*"If you enjoy it and believe in it, you can create a course with real impact"*

## How do you know it works?

Student evaluations have been very positive over the years; the course receives around an 8, which is high for a first-year course. Also, at the end, I ask students how their interests have developed. Many discover they want to focus on a different area than they first thought, because of a topic that got them interested.

Each year there is a group of very engaged students who continue the discussion after class. Since last year, for them and students with specific questions on the material, we offer an extra feedback class on Friday. Many of these students are international and very motivated to use economics to improve welfare in their own countries. These discussions are wonderful and inspiring.

## What is the biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge for me with this course is organisation. A course for 1,500 students is like a big production. It needs good rooms, technology, and support staff. Responsibilities are spread over many staff members, so it can be hard to get everything coordinated. During COVID-19, for example, we set up the Hybrid Learning Theatre, a studio-like teaching space with professional cameras and screens. I thought of it, because I did not see myself teaching this big course from my kitchen table. It was a success, but also showed the value of in person interaction in the academic discourse. I am very glad we are 'back on campus' and in the theatre again, where students can mingle and interact.

## Looking ahead, what do you want to improve?

Across universities, impact is becoming an important part of how academic work is judged, alongside research and teaching. In economics and business, this makes a lot of sense because our field is about very real social developments. Still, impact could be given more weight in our faculty, I think, for example by providing specific support for creating impact through research and teaching.

I think the EB Teaching and Learning Centre's most important role is to support inspired lecturers. Not all tools fit each course. While I am open to exploring new learning methods and AI, I think it needs to be embedded in classic teaching of established principles. Students may use AI tools, but the key is to think for themselves and apply concepts to real issues. *Principles of Economics and Business 1* has an interactive website that grows annually. I think we should cherish what works well. In my experience, long, focused lectures can still work well if they are lively and interactive.

*"Students may use AI tools, but the key is to think for themselves and apply concepts to real issues"*

As student learning evolves, TLC can help teachers adapt. The best approach is then, I think, to work directly with teachers and by asking them what works for their course and style. How can we improve quality together? Collaboration is key, also for keeping economics and business education meaningful and socially relevant.

# Teaching the next generation to invest for impact

In the Honours Course on Impact Investing, Professor Paul Smeets asks Master's students to design investments that create both financial returns and social impact. Working in teams, they build and pitch real impact cases to a professional jury in a Dragons' Den-style final. His research on effective giving helps them think critically about how to measure and maximise impact.

## Can you tell us more about the course you are teaching?

I teach a Master's course that is part of the Honours Course on Impact Investing. Students work in teams and pitch an impact investment case to a professional jury. The course is for motivated Master's students who want to go beyond traditional finance and learn how to invest for impact.

I want them to see that investing is not only about money. It can also be a way to improve society if you design investments in a smart and evidence-based way.

## How is the course linked to societal problems?

Each team chooses for itself which social problem it wants to address. They pick one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), such as climate action, good health, quality education or reducing poverty. I encourage them to choose something they really care about personally, because that gives energy and ownership.

This means the impact of the course can be very broad. Some groups focus on clean energy in low-income countries, others on health, education or inequality. If their ideas are strong, the benefits can reach beyond the classroom: to communities, organisations and impact investors who are looking for concrete solutions.

## What do students have to do?

Students work in groups of 6 to 8. First, they decide which SDG they want to work on and why. Then they search for an investment opportunity that offers both a financial return and a clear social return. The investment must really make a measurable difference on their chosen SDG.

For example, if a team chooses climate action, they might look at investing in renewable energy companies in Nigeria. They then build a full business case around this idea. They have to explain why this country and this sector need more investment, why the timing matters, and what the main risks are.

*"The benefits can reach beyond the classroom"*

They also have to do the hard finance work: a cashflow analysis, a risk analysis and clear impact indicators. At the end of the course, they pitch their case to real impact investors in a Dragons' Den-style final. The jury questions them critically on both impact and financials.

## What makes this course different from the usual way of teaching?

I developed this course myself, based on the UvA vision where sustainability, creativity and curiosity are key themes. In traditional finance courses, students mostly learn theory from a book and solve set exercises. In my course, they still need that theory, but they also have to be creative and proactive.



In his Master's course on impact investing, Paul Smeets helps students turn Sustainable Development Goals into real investment cases. Teams pitch their ideas to professional impact investors in a Dragons' Den-style final.

Sometimes this even means calling companies in other countries to ask questions and get information. That is very different from only reading chapters and doing standard problem sets. I believe a Master's course should build a real bridge between theory and what students will actually do later in their jobs.

My own research on effective philanthropy and impact measurement also plays a role. I use it to help students think clearly about how to measure social impact and how to compare different options, instead of trusting only marketing labels or gut feeling.

## How do you know the course has impact on students?

Student evaluations show that they really value the practical side of the course. Many tell me that, through this project, they finally understand what they might do in an impact investing job or in a sustainability role in finance. Some did not even know that a career in impact investing was possible before taking the course.

We sometimes see that students receive job offers or internships from the partners who are involved as coaches or jury members. If they perform well, they really put themselves in the spotlight. The competitive element helps too: it is a contest, and only 1 team wins. The winning team is highlighted on LinkedIn with a photo, which is very motivating for them.

*"Master's course should build a real bridge between theory and what students will actually do later in their jobs"*

More broadly, I see a change in mindset. Students start to look at investments through both a financial and a social lens, and they become more critical of products that promise "green" or "social" impact without clear evidence.

## What is the most difficult part, and what would you advise colleagues?

The biggest challenge is that this kind of course needs close contact with professionals. I am lucky that I have worked in the impact investing world for years, so I know many practitioners who are happy to be coaches or jury members. Their involvement is essential; without them, the cases would stay too abstract.

For students, the open structure is also demanding. They are used to courses with clear instructions and model answers. In this course there is no single right solution, and the task is not fully defined, which can feel uncomfortable at first.

My advice to colleagues is: just start, even if the first year is not perfect. Students usually appreciate that you are trying something new and different from a standard lecture course. You can improve the format with each cohort.

## If you look ahead, what is the next step for this course?

I have run this course for several years now, so the basic structure works well. One concrete change I want to make is to improve the way we do peer feedback. At the moment, students give each other feedback in a more informal way.

In the future, I want to build in written peer feedback after the two practice pitches. Students will give each other structured comments on the four criteria that the jury will later use in the final. This should help them reflect more deeply on their own work and learn more from the ideas of other teams.

*"They also have to be creative and proactive"*

# Rethinking sustainability with healthcare professionals



**Burcu Küçükkeleş** teaches *Ethics and Sustainability in Healthcare* in the MBA healthcare programme. She works with experienced healthcare professionals on projects that aim to make care more sustainable without compromising quality.

In the MBA course *Ethics and Sustainability in Healthcare*, Assistant Professor Burcu Küçükkeleş works with experienced healthcare professionals on ethical and sustainability challenges that they face within their everyday practice. Through debates, projects with hospitals, and individual practice-based assignments, students learn how small changes in their own work can make a big difference. The course shows that good care, costs, and environmental impact can be balanced in smart ways.

## Can you tell us about the course?

The participants in the course *Ethics and Sustainability in Healthcare* already work in healthcare and have, on average, around 13 years of experience. They include surgeons, oncologists, other doctors, and professionals from hospitals and healthcare institutes in the Netherlands.

The programme is in Dutch, and all students are Dutch, but I teach my course in English. I am the only international faculty member in the programme. This mix works well: students bring in their local knowledge, and I bring broader international and pharmaceutical perspectives.

## What do students actually do during the course?

There is no written exam. Instead, students complete three assignments: a structured debate, a group project with an external organisation, and an individual project linked to their own job.

For the debate, I bring in a controversial case. A well-known example is the Theranos scandal, where a company claimed to have a revolutionary blood test that did not actually work. I divide students into groups and they debate questions such as whether a whistle-blower should speak up in such a situation. Sometimes the case comes from another sector, like agriculture, and I invite an external expert to give background information in class.

The second assignment is a group project, usually designed together with an external partner such as a hospital or pharmaceutical company. In past years, I have worked with Amsterdam UMC and with Teva Pharmaceuticals. Experts from these organisations bring in real questions. Student teams then design practical interventions, for example greener practices in a gynaecology department or ways to improve access to medicines in low- and middle-income countries.

*“The triple bottom line – social, economic and environmental sustainability – helps students see that sustainability and good care can go hand in hand”*

The final assignment is individual. Each student chooses a topic that fits their own discipline or role at work. They design a concrete sustainability intervention “from A to Z” for their own context. A cardiologist might, for example, propose a more sustainable device, reduce unnecessary paper use, or rethink how transport and logistics are organised in their department. The focus is always on realistic changes that could actually be implemented.

*“Small changes in routines or purchasing can have a big impact in a high-volume sector like healthcare”*

## How did the course come about, and what changes have you made over time?

I set up the course together with my colleague Arno Kourula, an expert on ethics and sustainability, who was first asked to teach it. I joined because of my background in pharma and healthcare, especially my PhD on drug discovery and development. After a few years of co-teaching, I took over the course.

Since 2020-2021, the course has kept evolving. When I started, I knew little about the Dutch healthcare system. Over time, I have added more local examples, policies, and institutions. With each new edition, I adjust the content so that it better matches Dutch practice and the questions students bring from their own organisations. I also enjoy the course more when it continues to develop.

## How do you know the course is effective? What impact do you see on students?

The groups are small, around 15 students per cohort, so instead of relying only on quantitative analysis, I value feedback that is personal and qualitative. After the last session, I always organise a small “borrel” so students can relax and share honest reflections. This is important because many of them combine the MBA with demanding jobs and even night shifts.

A common pattern is that students start the course simply because it is part of the programme. At first, they are not always very interested in ethics or sustainability. Over time, many tell me they have become more aware of their own behaviour and influence.

I remind them that they have real power: they see many patients, use large amounts of materials, and some are managers or policy makers. In such a high-volume sector, small changes in routines or purchasing can have a big impact. Students often leave feeling more empowered and sometimes try to implement their project ideas in their own department after the course.

One big misconception is that sustainability is only about being “green.” In healthcare, people can easily say: “We are here to save lives; the environment is not our first concern.” To move beyond this, I introduce the “triple bottom line” framework, which looks at social, economic, and environmental sustainability together. Students respond especially well to “win-win strategies”: ideas that reduce environmental harm and also lower costs or improve care.

## What challenges have you encountered when running the course, and how do you address them?

It definitely did not go perfectly from the start. Some students arrive with strong scepticism. They may expect an activist lecturer with a fixed political agenda and feel resistance. I therefore put a lot of effort into creating an open, safe classroom where criticism is welcome, even if it goes against my own views.

*“Many students arrive sceptical, but over time they become more aware of their own influence and feel empowered to make a difference”*

I ask students to think in “grey zones” instead of black and white. Real healthcare dilemmas often involve conflicting values. For example, in response to the Russia-Ukraine war, political and ethical questions came into the classroom. We use such moments to discuss nuance and tension, not to close the discussion.

Another important element is understanding where students come from. Many work in traditional, hierarchical settings, not in a startup culture. I try to connect theory to their daily reality and I am very open about what I do and do not know. I never claim to know more about medical practice than they do. Instead, I say: “I know this, and you know that - let’s meet in the middle.” For executive education, this shared-expertise approach is key.

# Teaching and learning events and training opportunities

To inspire and support lecturers throughout the year you can attend a variety of events and training sessions offered by the Teaching and Learning Centre EB (TLC-EB). We provide a platform for you to enhance your teaching skills, share experiences with colleagues, and explore the latest trends in education.

## Classroom visits: tailored support for your teaching development

TLC-EB offers you a personalised approach to teaching development through classroom visits (formerly Formative Teaching Advice). Whether you are just starting out or have been teaching for years, a classroom visit provides you valuable feedback. It encourages reflection and supports your further professional development in teaching and classroom practice. You will receive an invitation to schedule an appointment, but you can also make an appointment yourself.

## Annual EB Educational conference

The annual EB Educational conference is the ideal place to connect with fellow lecturers, exchange ideas, and gain inspiration from the latest trends in teaching. Explore innovations and best practices that you can apply right away.

## Lunch sessions - knowledge sharing

Our popular lunch sessions are a chance for lecturers to gather in an informal setting, share best practices, and discuss various teaching topics. Each session focuses on a different theme, offering a relaxed atmosphere to exchange ideas, tackle challenges, and learn from colleagues. We encourage you to share your experiences and practical solutions, whether you're addressing classroom engagement, assessment strategies, or innovative teaching tools.

## Workshop Active learning: enhancing student engagement

Students who actively participate in their learning generally achieve better results and stay more motivated.

In this workshop, you'll learn how to integrate active learning techniques into your lessons to encourage critical thinking and deeper student engagement. You'll leave with practical strategies and insights to make your teaching more dynamic and impactful.

## Workshop International classroom: promoting diversity and inclusion

Learn how to foster an inclusive classroom where all students, regardless of cultural background, feel valued and engaged. This workshop will provide you with practical tools to create an environment where every student can thrive.

## Workshop Exploring GenAI in teaching: practical applications

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the landscape of education, offering exciting possibilities for both lecturers and students. In this workshop, you will explore actionable strategies to enhance your teaching using Generative AI (GenAI).

## Workshop Rethinking Assessments with GenAI

GenAI is transforming education, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Are your assessment methods prepared to adapt and meet these new challenges? In this workshop you'll explore AI's impact on unsupervised assessments and discover strategies for future-proofing your approach.

For info or bookings, visit our website [tlc.uva.nl/eb](https://tlc.uva.nl/eb) or email [tlc-eb@uva.nl](mailto:tlc-eb@uva.nl)

## E-learning modules



To enhance your teaching skills at your own pace you can do e-learning modules. These modules are available on our TLC-EB website, ready for you to start whenever it's convenient.

# Grants for educational innovation

At UvA we are committed to fostering innovation in teaching and learning. UvA's TLC Network in collaboration with ICT Services (ICTS) and the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) offer various grants designed to empower UvA lecturers and employees to bring innovative ideas to life. If you have a concept that can improve your teaching methods, enhance the learning experience of students, or address specific educational challenges, these grants may be your opportunity to make a difference. We look forward to supporting you to shape the future of education at the UvA!

## TLC Didactic Innovation Grant

The TLC Didactic Innovation Grant supports you in finding innovative solutions for your didactic challenges. These solutions can contribute to behaviour change, engagement, and knowledge transfer in education. Each year, the grant focuses on a different theme relevant to contemporary educational challenges.

### What's involved:

- Financial support to experiment with new teaching methods.
- Personal coaching from TLC educational experts to help bring your ideas to life.
- Opportunities to collaborate with other lecturers exploring innovative practices.
- Ongoing collaboration with TLC Central to evaluate and potentially further develop the results of your project

## Grassroots and Grassroots+ Grants: educational innovation with ICT

Grassroots are small-scale, accessible projects in which lecturers and/or students enrich, enhance, and/or intensify education using an ICT application. Grassroots grants are ideal for lecturers with innovative ideas that integrate technology into education.

### Grassroots Grant - What's involved:

- Financial support to develop ICT-based educational innovations.
- Support in implementing and refining projects within your courses.

### Grassroots+ Grant - What's involved:

- Additional funding to scale successful ICT-based teaching innovations across UvA.
- Technical and pedagogical guidance from TLC Central.

## Impact Learning Grant

The Impact Learning Grant supports teaching teams who want to innovate their education by connecting learning with real societal challenges. Impact Learning actively engages students in tackling real-world problems, collaborating with external partners, communities, or interdisciplinary stakeholders, and applying their knowledge to create meaningful impact.

### What's involved:

- Time and resources to develop and co-create an educational innovation project focused on impact learning.
- Guidance and support from the SIG Impact Learning network, the Education Lab (IIS), and TLC Central.
- Opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from other grant recipients throughout the academic year.
- Inspiration from previous projects that integrate societal engagement, transdisciplinary approaches, and innovative methodologies such as design thinking and citizen science.

For the latest details on applications and deadlines, visit the TLC website:

TLC Grants



Impact Learning grant



