

LEVEL 7 STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

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QUALIFICATION OBJECTIVE

Sustainability leadership is increasingly crucial in today's business landscape, as organisations face growing pressure to balance economic, environmental, and social goals. For strategic managers and leaders, embracing sustainability is not just about complying with regulations or enhancing corporate reputation; it is about driving long-term value creation, fostering innovation, and ensuring resilience in an ever-evolving global landscape.

These qualifications are designed to support practising or aspiring strategic managers and leaders, accountable for setting the strategic direction of an organisation. These managers and leaders will likely be non-technical practitioners. Through these qualifications, they will develop an awareness of sustainability leadership, and develop skills to put learning into practice through strategy development and change leadership.

Extensive research has been undertaken to ensure that these qualifications reflect skills and knowledge required in the workplace. Sources of information include, but are not limited to:

- 1 Comparability to existing Level 7 Sustainability qualifications
- 2 Mapped to CMI Professional Standards
- 3 Stakeholder and Subject Matter Expert consultation and input

QUALIFICATION TITLE

The title given below is the title as it will appear on the qualification when awarded to the Learner. The qualification reference number is the number allocated to the qualification by the Regulator at the time of submission, which confirms that this is a regulated qualification on the RQF and on the Register. The CMI code is the code that should be used when registering Learners with CMI.

CMI Code	Qualification Title	Qualification Reference Number
7A45	CMI Level 7 Award in Strategic Sustainability Leadership	610/5513/X
7C45	CMI Level 7 Certificate in Strategic Sustainability Leadership	610/5514/1
7D45	CMI Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Sustainability Leadership	610/5515/3

KEY DATES

This qualification is regulated from 1st April 2025 and the operational start date in CMI Centres is 1st April 2025.

CMI qualifications are reviewed from time to time, for information on the next review date please see the CMI External Qualification List.

PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Upon successful completion of their qualification, learners are able to progress to further learning within the suite of CMI Level 7 Qualifications in Strategic Sustainability Leadership - i.e. completing an Award and topping-up to Certificate or Diploma.

Learners may also wish to further their ongoing personal and professional development by accessing other CMI qualifications, such as the CMI Level 7 Qualifications in Strategic Management and Leadership Practice.

All successful learners will be eligible for Foundation Chartered Manager (fCMgr) on completion of the CMI Level 7 Qualifications in Strategic Sustainability Leadership (subject to retention of CMI Membership). For more information on Foundation Chartered Manager, please see [here](#).

Chartered Manager

Learners who have successfully completed the CMI Level 7 Certificate or Diploma in Strategic Sustainability Leadership may be eligible to progress onto Chartered Manager (CMgr). Backed by a Royal Charter, this prestigious accolade demonstrates exceptional management and leadership skills. Pursuing Chartered Manager status highlights a commitment to continuing professional development and professional expertise to employers and peers.

For more information on routes to Chartered Manager, please see our [website](#).

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

These qualifications can be offered to Learners from age 19. CMI does not specify entry requirements for these qualifications, but Centres are required to ensure that Learners admitted to the programme have sufficient capability at the right level to undertake the learning and assessment.

CMI Centre must ensure Learners are recruited with integrity onto appropriate qualifications that will:

- meet their needs,
- enable and facilitate learning and achievement,
- enable progression.

In order to achieve this, the CMI Centre will need to:

- Provide relevant programme information, guidance and advice, to enable informed Learner choice
- Publish entry and selection criteria,
- Demonstrate that Learners are recruited with integrity,
- Carry out comprehensive Learner induction that:
 - addresses programme and organisational requirements
 - explains Learner facilities
 - identifies Learners' development needs
 - develops an Individual Learning Plan.

The qualification is offered in the medium of the English Language.

DEFINITIONS

Total Qualification Time (TQT) is defined as the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required, in order for a Learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification. Total Qualification Time is comprised of the following two elements –

- a) the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning, and
- b) an estimate of the number of hours a Learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by – but not under the immediate supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

Total Unit Time (TUT) is defined as the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required, in order for a Learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a unit.

Guided Learning Hours is defined as the activity of a Learner in being taught or instructed by – or otherwise participating in education or training under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

Immediate Guidance or Supervision is defined as the guidance or supervision provided to a Learner by a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training –

- a) with the simultaneous physical presence of the Learner and that person, or
- b) remotely by means of simultaneous electronic communication

Credit value is defined as being the number of credits that may be awarded to a Learner for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit. One credit is equal to 10 hours of TQT.

Rule of Combination is defined as being a rule specifying the combination of units which may be taken to form a particular qualification, any units which must be taken and any related requirements.

QUALIFICATION STRUCTURES

RULES OF COMBINATION

There are minimum requirements to achieve each qualification within this suite. The minimum requirements are based on the boundaries outlined in Ofqual's Guidance to the General Conditions of Recognition, namely Condition E2.

CMI LEVEL 7 AWARD IN STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Learners must select at least one unit to a minimum of 100 TQT hours to achieve this qualification. The minimum GLH is 40 hours. Minimum credits: 10

CMI LEVEL 7 CERTIFICATE IN STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Learners must select at least two units to a minimum of 200 TQT hours to achieve this qualification. The minimum GLH is 80 hours. Minimum credits: 20

CMI LEVEL 7 DIPLOMA IN STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Learners complete all four units to a total of 400 TQT hours to achieve this qualification. The minimum GLH is 160 hours. Minimum/Maximum credits:40

Unit Code	Unit Title	GLH	TUT	Credit
730	Principles of Strategic Sustainability Leadership	40	100	10
731	Leading an Effective Sustainability Strategy	40	100	10
732	Leading Systemic Change for Sustainability	40	100	10
733	Strategic Sustainability Project	40	100	10

SUGGESTED PATHWAYS

There are no mandated pathways or unit combinations, other than meeting minimum credit/TQT thresholds identified above, or completing all units for the Diploma.

However, it is recommended that for any strategic manager or leader re- or up-skilling in this area, they may wish to complete **Unit 730 - Principles of Strategic Sustainability Leadership**. This unit will give foundational knowledge and awareness of sustainability principles, which will complement other units.

QUALIFICATION DELIVERY

CMI does not specify the mode of delivery for its qualifications at Level 7; therefore CMI Centres are free to deliver the Level 7 qualifications using any mode of delivery that meets the needs of their Learners. However, CMI Centres should consider the Learners' complete learning experience when designing the learning programmes.

CMI Centres must ensure that the chosen mode of delivery does not unlawfully or unfairly discriminate, whether directly or indirectly, and that equality of opportunity is promoted. Where it is reasonable and practical to do so, it will take steps to address identified inequalities or barriers that may arise.

Please ensure that the content of the Centre Delivery plan is approved by the CMI Quality Manager.

For CMI requirements regarding Tutor/Deliverers of CMI qualifications please refer to the [CMI Quality Assurance Manual](#) for more information.

ACCESSIBILITY OF CMI QUALIFICATIONS

There may be incidents where Learners may require special consideration and reasonable adjustments to the delivery and assessment of qualifications. In the event of this, Centres should apply using the online form [Qualification Adjustment Request](#) in MyCMI.

Further information, please see the [CMI Reasonable Adjustments Procedure](#) and the [CMI Special Consideration Procedure](#)

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

There may be occasions where Learners request Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This can be applied by Centres. Further guidance on RPL and exemptions can be found in [CMI RPL policy](#).

ASSESSMENT & QUALITY ASSURANCE

The criteria of the assessment of a CMI qualification will be to meet the assessment criteria detailed within each individual unit.

The primary interface with the Learner is the Assessor, whose job it is to assess the evidence presented by the Learner. The Assessor should provide an audit trail showing how the judgement of the Learner's overall achievement has been arrived at.

The CMI Centre's assessment plan, to be agreed with the Quality Manager, should include a matrix for each qualification showing how each unit is to be assessed against the relevant criteria and which specific piece or pieces of work will be identified in relation to each unit. It should also show how assessment is scheduled into the delivery programme.

In designing the individual tasks and activities, CMI Centres must ensure that:

1. The selected assessment task/activity is relevant to the content of the unit
2. There are clear instructions given to Learners as to what is expected
3. Learners are clearly told how long the assessment will take (if it is a timed activity), and what reference or other material they may use (if any) to complete it
4. The language used in the assessment is free from any bias
5. The language and technical terms used are at the appropriate level for the Learners

In addition to the specific assessment criteria in each unit, the Learner's work must be:

- Accurate, current and authentic
- Relevant in depth and breadth

and must also show the Learner's:

- Clear grasp of concepts
- Ability to link theory to practice, and

Ability to communicate clearly in the relevant discipline at the expected level for the qualification

LEARNER AUTHENTICITY

Learners are required to sign and date a Statement of Authenticity. The Learner statement confirms the evidence submitted is all their own work and has not been completed by a third party. Additionally, the Learner statement confirms the evidence provided has been completed in accordance with CMI approved instructions. An electronic signature that is scanned is acceptable and also where there is a fully automated system for uploading evidence then a 'tick-box' to the statement is also acceptable. Where CMI evidence booklets are used, the statement of authenticity may be integral to the booklet and in this case, a separate statement is not required.

Centres are required to complete a Centre Statement of Authenticity to confirm the Learner is registered on a CMI programme of study.

Electronic copies of the Learner Authenticity Form are accepted for further information, please see the [Learner Authenticity Form](#)

ASSESSMENT GRADING

The grading system for CMI qualifications is "Pass/Refer". The external moderation of Learners' work confirms that the required criteria for achievement have been met.

CMI Centres are, however, free to apply their own grade scales, but it must be understood that these are completely separate from the CMI qualification.

It is important to ensure consistency of assessment, and that demands made on Learners are comparable within and between CMI Centres. A number of assessment methods can be used.

For CMI requirements regarding Assessors and Internal Verifiers of CMI qualifications please refer to the [CMI Quality Assurance Manual](#) for more information.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGIES

CMI does not state the assessment method for its qualifications, instead supporting Centres in creating assessment plans to suit the needs of Learners and/or Employers. It is encouraged that a range of methods are used to ensure that all Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria are met, and to enhance Learners' development.

In some instances, as well as written work, use can be made of technology. It is important, however, to ensure sufficient traceability for assessment and verification

The following table presents an overview of the type of activities that partners may use to assess each unit. Further details are provided in the 'Recommendations for Assessment' section of each unit specification.

CMI Code	Title	Briefing Paper	Case Study	Report	Business Case	Project
730	Principles of Strategic Sustainability Leadership	✓	✓			
731	Leading an Effective Sustainability Strategy			✓		
732	Leading Systemic Change for Sustainability		✓		✓	
733	Strategic Sustainability Project			✓		✓

WORD COUNT AND APPENDICES

The written word, however generated and recorded, is still expected to form the majority of accessible work produced by Learners at Level 7. The guideline word count for units within this qualification is **2000-2500 words** (refer to assessment brief for specific word counts). There is a 10% allowance above/below these guidelines. For more information, please refer to the CMI Assessment Guidance Policy

Learner work should aim to minimise the amount of unnecessary attachments or appendices. Information that is essential to the Learners work in order to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria should be included within the main body of the report. However, CMI understands that from time to time a Learner may need to include additional supporting information which enhances the overall work and it is recommended that it is kept to a minimum and does not over-exceed.

EXTERNAL MARKING

As part of our dedicated service, CMI Awarding Body offers the opportunity for all Centres to have their Learners' assignments externally marked.

Some CMI Centres choose to send one assignment of the qualification to be externally marked, as it gives the Learner a CMI quality stamp, as it is marked and assessed by the Awarding Body.

This service provides CMI Centres with a simplistic, professional and cost effective way to get their CMI Learner's work marked and certificated within a six week period. Please refer to the fees guide for current pricing.

APPEALS AGAINST ASSESSMENT DECISIONS

In the event that a Learner wishes to appeal against an assessment decision, they can do so by following outlined procedures.

Where an assessment decision has been made by the CMI Centre, Learners must follow the Centre's own Appeals Procedure in the first instance. If this procedure has been exhausted and remains unresolved, Learners may log a Stage 2 appeal with CMI.

For further information, please see [CMI's Appeals Policy and Procedure](#).

CMI QUALIFICATION SUPPORT

CMI MEMBERSHIP

If an individual is not already in membership at the time of registering on a CMI qualification then your Learner will be provided with free Affiliate membership of the CMI for the duration of their studies. For details of the benefits of membership please [click here](#). There may be the opportunity to upgrade during the Learner's studies dependent on successfully completing a qualification with CMI.

STUDY RESOURCES

ManagementDirect

<https://members.md.cmi.org.uk>

It's fast, comprehensive and free to members

ManagementDirect is a complete online library of comprehensive and up-to-date material that addresses current management practice, supports studying and those looking to enhance their knowledge and develop their skills.

- 231 Management Checklists and 60 Management Thinker profiles
- One page overviews of key Management Models
- Multimedia resources – 100s of leader insights videos, including Pearls of Wisdom from Eliesha
- CMI research and Professional Manager articles
- Authoritative definitions of management terms
- Over 11,000 articles and 9000 e-books to read online when you need them
- Learning Journey playlists for many units giving you easy access to resources specifically selected to support your studies
- Resources to develop your Study Skills, including factsheets on assignment writing, references and citations, learning styles, note taking and avoiding plagiarism.

All these resources are freely available to members from one source. Definitions give you a headline understanding of the topic; checklists and models provide the essentials; and books and articles enable you to research further. Depending on your need you choose how far you want to go.

- E-journals
- For in depth research try our e-journals service
- CMI has joined forces with EBSCO Information Services to offer members access to Business Source: Corporate, a database providing direct access to articles on management and business from a range of academic journals and business magazines. Members also have access to country, company and industry reports from leading providers.
- Access to Business Source Corporate is through [ManagementDirect](#).
- Online CPD

CPD can take many forms, but the most important feature of any activity you undertake is that there are clear learning outcomes. In many cases these may enable you to have a direct impact at work.

Our online CPD scheme enables you to record your learning objectives and the activities you have undertaken and encourages you to assess its impact in your role as a manager. Print reports for your reviews, appraisals or interviews.

Access to CPD is through [ManagementDirect](#).

CHARTERED MANAGER

Learners may wish to gather evidence for Chartered Manager as part of their learning programme. As such, we have included guidance on how this can be embedded in learning. This is not mandatory, but facilitates progression to Chartered Manager on completion of a qualifying qualification.

Below are the two activities learners need to complete to provide evidence of their application for learning and eligibility for Chartered Manager.

This can be embedded into your delivery model, at the end of the learning programme, or as part of a unit assessment.

Learners are only required to complete these activities once, however, reflective activity is encouraged throughout their programme to assess learning and application.

Learners must have at least three years of management and leadership experience to be eligible for Chartered Manager.

Should learners have any questions about completing this section, they should contact their Learning Provider/Tutor in the first instance.

Chartered Manager Activity 1: Reflective Account

Requires the learner to reflect on the positive impact that this learning experience and becoming chartered would have on:

- **Them, Their Role, Their Team and Their Organisation** *Including how they have made use of all available resources, including knowledge and experience, to achieve personal and life goals. Being self-aware, reflecting on their own performance, and the impact they have on others.*
- **Their Role In Supporting And/Or Building A High-Performance Team/Working Environment** *Including how they have created a sense of purpose within/across their team(s). How they set expectations and adapt to changing needs. How they lead with integrity and sustainability to build an effective and inclusive team. How they champion inclusivity and encourage/support others to achieve their goals.*
- **Continuing To Be Successful In The Achievement Of Their Organisational Goals/Objectives** *Including how they can demonstrate effective, conscious, and inclusive decision-making. How they regularly assess their impact on personal, team and organisational performance. How they measure and achieve results efficiently and effectively for all stakeholders.*

Evidence may include examples of work-based activities to support reflections (for example, appraisal and/or 360 feedback)

Chartered Manager Activity 2: PDP

Requires the learner to identify 3 (THREE) medium to long-term development goals that they want to achieve within the next 12 to 18 months.

This can be completed at your learning programme's beginning, middle, or end.

UNIT SUMMARIES

The units within these qualifications are different to other qualifications, and so the following summarises some key features:

- TUT refers to Total Unit Time. TUT is set based on estimated time expected for the average learner to be taught the content via formal Guided Learning, additional informal learning and preparation and completion of assessment.
- GLH refers to Guided Learning Hours. GLH is the estimated contact time the average learner has with tutors, trainers or facilitators as part of the learning process, it includes formal learning including classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars, live webinar and telephone tutorials, e-learning which is supervised. It is important to note that this also includes assessing learner's achievements for competency based assessments.
- Key words which highlight knowledge, skills and behaviours which will be developed
- Indicative content has been developed to support the learner to understand the aims of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. It can also be used by tutors to develop lesson plans and schemes of work.
- Recommendations for Assessment which provides a range of suggested assessment activities for actual or aspiring managers and leaders
- Suggested reading/web resource materials developed to complement the unit content. The primary resource/research tool referred to is ManagementDirect.
- Please note that the resources lists provided to guide the Learner to potential sources of information are by no means exhaustive. The websites, books and journals cited were correct at the date of publication. All references to legislation stated within the unit may be subject to subsequent changes, deletions and replacements. Learners may also make reference to other local or national legislation as relevant.

It is recommended that Learners have sight of each unit of study in preparation for assessment.

730 - Principles of Strategic Sustainability Leadership	In an era marked by climate change, resource scarcity, and evolving consumer expectations, strategic managers and leaders who prioritize sustainability can drive innovation, mitigate risks, and unlock new opportunities.
731 - Leading an Effective Sustainability Strategy	Leading an effective sustainability strategy is crucial for organisations as it enables them to navigate the complexities of an increasingly eco-conscious market while driving long-term growth. A well-executed sustainability strategy not only helps organisations reduce their environmental footprint and enhance social responsibility but also positions them to meet evolving regulatory standards and stakeholder expectations.
732 - Leading Systemic Change for Sustainability	Leading systemic change for sustainability is essential because it addresses the root causes of environmental and social challenges, driving lasting transformation across industries and societies. By influencing systems-level shifts, leaders can create more resilient, equitable, and sustainable frameworks that go beyond incremental improvements, fostering broad, impactful change for the future.
733 - Strategic Sustainability Project	Undertaking a strategic sustainability project is important because it allows organisations to focus their efforts on targeted initiatives that drive measurable environmental, social, and economic benefits. These projects not only align with long-term sustainability goals but also provide a roadmap for

	innovation, resource efficiency, and enhanced stakeholder engagement.
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UNIT 730 – PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Ofqual unit number M/651/5510

RQF level 7

Guided learning hours 40

Total unit time 100

Credits 10

Aims of unit In an era marked by climate change, resource scarcity, and evolving consumer expectations, strategic managers and leaders who prioritise sustainability can drive innovation, mitigate risks, and unlock new opportunities.

This unit aims to provide strategic managers and leaders with an introduction to the principles of strategic vision and purpose, in the context of sustainability leadership. They will explore global sustainability challenges which may impact organisations, as well as frameworks and leadership strategies.

Keywords Sustainability, Leadership, Global Challenges, Climate Change, Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability, Economic Sustainability, Frameworks, Strategies, Trends, Technologies. Organisational goals.

Learning outcome 1

Critically evaluate the sustainability frameworks that influence organisational strategic planning

Assessment criteria

- 1.1 Discuss the global sustainability **challenges** that impact on strategic planning
- 1.2 Critically evaluate the role of **sustainability frameworks** on setting organisational strategic sustainability goals

Indicative content

1.1 Challenges: Climate change, Climate adaptation and mitigation - physical risks, Biodiversity, Energy transition, Climate activism vs denial, Net Zero, Urbanisation. Inequality, poverty, access to education. Corruption, lack of governance.

1.2 Sustainability Frameworks: United Nations Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), Global Reporting Initiative, International Sustainability Standards Board, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directives, Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR), Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS), The Paris Agreement (2015).

Learning outcome 2
Critically appraise leadership strategies to drive organisational sustainability goals
Assessment criteria
<p>2.1 Critically evaluate approaches that promote strategic sustainability goals</p> <p>2.2 Critically appraise the role of emerging trends and technologies in shaping strategic sustainability goals</p>
Indicative content
<p>2.1 Approaches: Leadership (Top-Down commitment). Sustainability Champions. Sustainable business models. Employee engagement and training. Innovation. Green technology adoption. Collaboration and partnerships (for example, NGOs, government agencies, customers). Ethical procurement and supply chains. Transparency and reporting. Inner Development Goals. Target setting (measurable, science based). Data (for example, requirements, goals, carbon reporting, trends). Governance and internal policies. Business unit strategies. Communities of practice (internal and external).</p> <p>2.2 Emerging trends and technologies: Artificial Intelligence (AI). Machine Learning. Blockchain. 5G. Internet of Things. Supply Chain Tracking. Driving operational efficiency. Circular Economy. Renewable energy. Green building technologies. Electric vehicles. Smart cities platforms.</p>

Recommendations for assessment
<p>Learners may approach the assessment in several ways. All assessment criteria must be met. The following recommendations for assessment are for guidance purposes only.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write a briefing paper titled: 'Strategic sustainability leadership principles and frameworks' 2. Write a case study titled: 'Innovative approaches to drive sustainable transformation' <p>Further guidance</p> <p>It is not a requirement for the learner to cover all aspects of the indicative content when completing the assessment. The learner is encouraged to select and present well-chosen information and examples to demonstrate understanding of the assessment criteria.</p>

Suggested reading/web resource materials
<p>Please note: This list is provided to guide the learner to potential sources of information and is by no means exhaustive. The websites, books and journals cited were correct at the date of publication. All references to legislation stated within the unit may be subject to subsequent changes, deletions and replacements. Learners may make reference to other local or national legislation as relevant.</p> <p>Literature (Books, Journals, Articles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accenture, 2023. <i>Supply chains: Key to unlocking net-zero emissions</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/supply-chain-operations/supply-chains-key-unlocking-net-zero-emissions • BCG, 2020. <i>The quest for sustainable business model innovation</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/quest-sustainable-business-model-innovation • Circular Economy, 2025. <i>Ellen MacArthur Foundation</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/ • Deloitte, 2024. <i>The Sustainable Consumer</i>. [online] Available at: https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/Industries/consumer/perspectives/the-sustainable-consumer.html • Elkington, J., 1997. <i>Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business</i>. Oxford: Capstone Publishing. • Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013. <i>Towards the Circular Economy: Economic and business</i>

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- WSP, 2025. *The future of business is nature positive*. [online] Available at: <https://www.wsp.com/en-gb/insights/the-future-of-business-is-nature-positive>
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- NBS, 2025. *What is sustainable innovation and how to make innovation sustainable?* [online] Available at: <https://nbs.net/what-is-sustainable-innovation-and-how-to-make-innovation-sustainable/>

Frameworks & Standards

- Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, 2022. European Union. [online] Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32022L2464>
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- The Paris Agreement, 2015. UNFCCC. [online] Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2025. United Nations. [online] Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

UNIT 731 – LEADING AN EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Ofqual unit number R/651/5511

RQF level 7

Guided learning hours 40

Total unit time 100

Credits 10

Aims of unit Leading an effective sustainability strategy is crucial for organisations as it enables them to navigate the complexities of an increasingly eco-conscious market while driving long-term growth. A well-executed sustainability strategy not only helps organisations reduce their environmental footprint and enhance social responsibility but also positions them to meet evolving regulatory standards and stakeholder expectations.

This unit aims to enable strategic managers and leaders to lead and implement an effective sustainability strategy. They will determine sustainability priorities, identify barriers and opportunities and evaluate the implementation and impact of an organisational sustainability strategy.

Keywords Sustainability, Priorities, Organisational Strategy, Opportunities, Barriers, Sustainability Strategy, Leadership, Reporting

Learning outcome 1
Critically evaluate how sustainability priorities shape organisational strategy
Assessment criteria
1.1 Critically discuss tools and techniques to determine strategic sustainability priorities 1.2 Evaluate barriers and opportunities in developing an effective sustainability strategy 1.3 Justify how a sustainability strategy contributes to the achievement of organisational goals
Indicative content
1.1 Tools and techniques: SWOT Analysis. Materiality Assessments (including double and triple). Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). Triple Bottom Line Framework (Elkington). Scenario planning. Stakeholder mapping and engagement (RACI Matrix, Power/Interest (Mendelow)). BCG Growth-Share Matrix (Boston Consulting Group). Systems Thinking (Senge). Business Case. Target Operating Model (KPMG). Climate risk assessment. Carbon reduction plan. 1.2 Barriers: Lack of knowledge and capability. Financial resources. Change Resistance. Short Term Focus. Opportunities: Just transition and inclusive growth, Inclusion, Going beyond compliance,

Collaboration, Strategic partnerships, Innovation, Green finance, Intrapreneurship

1.3 Organisational goals: Meeting or exceeding legislative targets (for example, Net Zero, Gender Pay Gap). Strategic alignment (for example, vision, mission, values and purpose, sustainability frameworks). Supply chain resilience. Social goals (for example, ED&I, fair pay). Economic goals (for example, cost efficiency).

Learning outcome 2

Critically evaluate the implementation and impact of a sustainability strategy

Assessment criteria

2.1 Critically appraise the **role of leadership** in driving the implementation of a sustainability strategy

2.2 Assess how to **measure and report** on the effectiveness of a sustainability strategy

Indicative content

2.1 Role of leadership: Setting vision and direction. Communication and alignment. Resource allocation. Prioritisation. Setting organisational culture. Role modeling. Overcoming change resistance. Leveraging strategic partnerships.

2.2 Measure and Report: Achievement of objectives. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Critical success factors. Identifying impact areas (social impact - community engagement, employee wellbeing). Critical decisions. Timescales (milestones). Resource use. Costs/budgets. Cost-benefit analysis (for example, net social cost-benefit). Active reflection on the recommended implementation process. Alignment to sustainability frameworks (for example, SDGs). Continuous improvement (for example, feedback loops)

Recommendations for assessment

Learners may approach the assessment in several ways. All assessment criteria must be met. The following recommendations for assessment are provided for guidance purposes only.

1. Write a **report** titled: '*Leading an Effective Sustainability Strategy*'

Further guidance

It is not a requirement for the learner to cover all aspects of the indicative content when completing the assessment. The learner is encouraged to select and present well-chosen information and examples to demonstrate understanding of the assessment criteria.

Suggested reading/web resource materials

Please note: This list is provided to guide the learner to potential sources of information and is by no means exhaustive. The websites, books and journals cited were correct at the date of publication. All references to legislation stated within the unit may be subject to subsequent changes, deletions and replacements. Learners may make reference to other local or national legislation as relevant.

ManagementDirect Resources (CMI Membership Required):

- Checklists:
 - 005 Performing a SWOT Analysis
 - 261 Choosing a growth strategy
 - 249 Cost benefit analysis
 - 231 Setting SMART objectives

- Models
 - SWOT Analysis
 - RACI Matrix
 - Boston Matrix
 - Balanced scorecard
 - Cost-benefit analysis
- Pearls of Wisdom
 - Stakeholders - analysing power and interest
 - Marketing Strategy Development
 - Cost benefit analysis
 - Key Performance Indicators

Literature (Books, Journals, Articles)

- Cheryl Kiser, Deborah Leipziger and J. Janelle Shubert (2014) *Creating Social Value: A Guide for Leaders and Change Makers*. Sheffield, UK: Routledge
- CMI (Chartered Institute of Management) (n.d.) *Stakeholder analysis and management*. Available at: <https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/resource/stakeholder-analysis-and-management/>
- Deloitte (n.d.) *The business case for sustainability*. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consulting/articles/the-business-case-for-sustainability.html>
- Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (2022) *Double materiality: What is it and why does it matter?*. London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/news/double-materiality-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter/>
- IBM (n.d.) *Data-driven decision making*. Available at: <https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/data-driven-decision-making>
- McKinsey & Company (2023) *Take a human-centric approach to avoid AI's leadership traps*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/take-a-human-centric-approach-to-avoid-ais-leadership-traps>
- McKinsey & Company (n.d.) *Profits with purpose*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Sustainability/Our%20Insights/Profits%20with%20purpose/Profits%20with%20Purpose.ashx>
- UN ESCAP (n.d.) *Sustainability Outlook Tool*. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Available at: <https://sdghelpdesk.unescap.org/sustainability-outlook-tool>
- WBCSD (2024) *Building the business case for sustainability: Main report*. World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Available at: https://www.wbcsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Building-the-business-case-for-sustainability_Main-Report.pdf

External Weblinks:

- Climate change: risk assessment and adaptation planning in your management system: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-risk-assessment-and-adaptation-planning-in-your-management-system>

UNIT 732 - LEADING SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Ofqual unit number T/651/5512

RQF 7

Guided learning hours 40

Total unit time 100

Credits 10

Aims of unit

Leading systemic change for sustainability is essential because it addresses the root causes of environmental and social challenges, driving lasting transformation across industries and societies. By influencing systems-level shifts, leaders can create more resilient, equitable, and sustainable frameworks that go beyond incremental improvements, fostering broad, impactful change for the future.

This unit aims to enable strategic managers and leaders to drive strategic change for sustainability. They will be able to articulate the rationale for strategic change in the context of sustainability, and develop a plan to support a strategic sustainability change.

Keywords

Sustainability, Change, Leadership, Drivers, Barriers, Opportunities, Change Plan

Learning outcome 1

Critically appraise the rationale for strategic change in the context of sustainability

Assessment criteria

1.1 Assess the **internal** and **external drivers** for organisational change in the context of sustainability

1.2 Critically appraise the **barriers and opportunities** of implementing strategic change to achieve sustainability goals

Indicative Content

1.1 Internal drivers: Mission, vision, values and purpose. Workforce demands. Leadership commitment. Organisational culture. Employee engagement and training. Innovation. Operational efficiency. Policies and procedures.

External drivers: Global and local. Legislation (for example, Net Zero). Regulations. Procurement (for example, public sector, government). Supply chain. Consumer and customer demands. Investor demands. Technological advancements.

1.2 Barriers: Legal, regulatory and good practice requirements. Organisational culture (for

example, prevailing and desired, resistance to and support for change). Organisational development and design (for example, Human Resource Management, Impact of restructuring/de-layering). Stakeholder management (for example, relationships with partners, staff, unions and other representative bodies). Resourcing. Maintaining business as usual. Communicating, purpose, scope and definition of change. Managing and mitigating risk. Business priorities. Financial burdens. Technologies.

Opportunities: Financial efficiencies. Energy efficiencies. Brand and reputation. Competitive advantage. Customer loyalty. Legal and regulatory compliance. Driving innovation. Circular economy. Talent recruitment and retention.

Learning outcome 2

Develop a strategic sustainability change leadership plan

Assessment criteria

- 2.1 Develop a strategic sustainability change leadership **plan** aligned with organisational objectives
 2.2 Critically evaluate **theories and models** for leading strategic change

Indicative Content

2.1 **Plan:** Vision and objectives (strategic goals, measuring outcomes, timelines). Stakeholder analysis and engagement (identification, needs, concerns, strategies). Communications (channels, feedback mechanisms). Team and roles (Leaders, champions). Risk assessment and mitigation. Performance metrics and evaluation.

2.2 **Theories and models:** Models of Incremental and Transformational Change. Eight Step Change Model (Kotter). McKinsey's 7S Model (Waterman et al.). The Three Step-Model of Change (Lewin). ADKAR (Hiatt). Force Field Analysis (Lewin). Change Curve (Kübler-Ross). Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider, Srivastva, Bushe et al.)

Recommendations for assessment

Learners may approach the assessment in several ways. All assessment criteria must be met. The following recommendations for assessment are provided for guidance purposes only.

1. Write a **case study** on the rationale for strategic change relating to sustainability.
2. Write a **business case** for a sustainability change leadership plan

Further guidance

It is not a requirement for the learner to cover all aspects of the indicative content when completing the assessment. The learner is encouraged to select and present well-chosen information and examples to demonstrate understanding of the assessment criteria.

Suggested reading/web resource materials

Please note: This list is provided to guide the learner to potential sources of information and is by no means exhaustive. The websites, books and journals cited were correct at the date of publication. All references to legislation stated within the unit may be subject to subsequent changes, deletions and replacements. Learners may make reference to other local or national legislation as relevant.

ManagementDirect Resources (CMI Membership Required):

- Checklists
 - 038 Mapping an effective change programme
 - 040 Implementing an effective change programme
 - 234 Stakeholder analysis and management
 - 266 Risk management
- Models
 - 5-D Appreciative Inquiry
 - ADKAR
 - Change Transition Curve
 - Force Field Analysis
 - Kotter's 8 Steps to Transformation
 - McKinsey's 7s framework
 - Stakeholder Analysis
- Pearls of Wisdom
 - Risk Assessment
 - Gaining Stakeholder Support
 - Stakeholders - analysing power and interest

Literature (Books, Journals, Articles)

- Hiatt, J. M. (2006) ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government, and Our Community. Prosci.
- Cooperrider, D. L., and Srivastva, S. (1987) 'Appreciative inquiry in organizational life', *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 1(1), pp. 129–169.
- Bushe, G. R. (2013) 'Appreciative inquiry: Theory and critique', in Boje, D. M., Burnes, B., and Hassard, J. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Organizational Change*. Routledge, pp. 87-103.
- Kübler-Ross, E. (1969) *On Death and Dying*. Macmillan.
- Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers*. Harper & Row.
- Kotter, J. P. (1996) *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press
- Waterman, R. H., Peters, T. J., and Phillips, J. R. (1980) 'Structure is not organization', *Business Horizons*, 23(3), pp. 14–26.
- Burnes, B. (2004) *Managing Change: A Strategic Approach to Organizational Dynamics*. 4th ed. Pearson Education.
- Lewin, K. (1947) 'Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method, and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change', *Human Relations*, 1(1), pp. 5–41.

UNIT 733 – STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Ofqual unit number	Y/651/5513
RQF level	7
Guided learning hours	40
Total unit time	100
Credits	10

Aims of unit

Undertaking a strategic sustainability project is important because it allows organisations to focus their efforts on targeted initiatives that drive measurable environmental, social, and economic benefits. These projects not only align with long-term sustainability goals but also provide a roadmap for innovation, resource efficiency, and enhanced stakeholder engagement.

This unit aims to enable strategic managers and leaders to develop the knowledge and skills to design a strategic sustainability project. They will explore research design to inform a strategic sustainability project. This will enable the undertaking of a strategic sustainability project, reflecting on the outcomes.

Keywords

Sustainability, Strategic Project, Research, Project outcomes

Learning outcome 1
Design a strategic sustainability project
Assessment criteria
1.1 Propose a research design to inform the direction of the strategic sustainability project
Indicative Content
1.1 Research design: Quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods research. Data collection methods. Data analysis methods. Ethics consideration. Aims and objectives. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) goals. Scope of a literature review. Stakeholder analysis. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Trend analysis. Comparative analysis. Forecasting. Thematic. Content. Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA).

Learning outcome 2
Undertake a strategic sustainability project

Assessment criteria
<p>2.1 Deliver a strategic sustainability project</p> <p>2.2 Reflect on the outcomes of the strategic sustainability project</p>
Indicative Content
<p>2.1 Strategic sustainability project: <i>Environmental (for example, Zero waste programme, renewable energy transition. Social (for example, employee wellbeing initiatives, skills development programmes). Governance (for example, anti-corruption and bribery, establishing ethical sourcing or practice policies). Financial (for example, sustainable product line developments, sustainable investments).</i></p> <p>2.2 Outcomes: <i>Outcomes against the initial plan. Expected vs Unexpected outcomes.</i></p>

Recommendations for assessment
<p>Learners may approach the assessment in several ways. All assessment criteria must be met. The following recommendations for assessment are provided for guidance purposes only.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a strategic sustainability project 2. Write a project report on a strategic sustainability project <p>Further guidance It is not a requirement for the learner to cover all aspects of the indicative content when completing the assessment. The learner is encouraged to select and present well-chosen information and examples to demonstrate understanding of the assessment criteria.</p>

Suggested reading/web resource materials
<p>Please note: This list is provided to guide the learner to potential sources of information and is by no means exhaustive. The websites, books and journals cited were correct at the date of publication. All references to legislation stated within the unit may be subject to subsequent changes, deletions and replacements. Learners may make reference to other local or national legislation as relevant.</p> <p>Literature (Books, Journals, Articles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barker, S. (2014). <i>Brilliant Project Management: What the best project managers know, do, and say</i>. 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson. • Bell, E. Bryman, A and Harley, B. (2018). <i>Business Research Methods</i>. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Berkun, S. (2008). <i>Making Things Happen. Mastering Project Management</i>. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media Inc. • Maylor, H. (2010). <i>Project Management</i>. 4th ed. London: Pearson. • Project Management Institute. (2017). <i>A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)</i>. 6th ed. Newtown Square: PA: Project Management Institute.

ANNEX 1 - COMMAND VERB DEFINITIONS

Command Verb	Definition
Analyse	Break the subject or complex situation(s) into separate parts and examine each part in detail; identify the main issues and show how the main ideas are related to practice and why they are important. Reference to current research or theory may support the analysis.
Appraise	Assess, estimate the worth, value, quality, performance. Consider carefully to form an opinion.
Articulate	Express or clearly state your understanding of the topic.
Assess	Provide a reasoned judgement or rationale of the standard, quality, value or importance of something, informed by relevant facts/rationale.
Comment	Identify and write about the main issues, express an opinion, giving reaction to what has been read/observed.
Compare	Review the subject(s) in detail – looking at similarities and differences.
Complete	Ensure something is finished with all of its parts.
Conceptualise	Create a diagram, model, chart or graphic with annotations, providing a holistic overview of the process.
Conduct	Organise and perform a particular activity
Construct	To create or build something original
Consider	Take (something) into account (i.e. different ideas, perspectives, theories, evidence) when making a judgement
Create	Originate or produce a solution to a problem.
Critically Appraise	As with appraise, a systematic process used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of information in order to assess the usefulness and validity.
Critically Assess	As with assess, but emphasising on judgments made about arguments by others, and about what is being assessed from a different perspective. Making a reasoned argument, based on judgments. Criticality requires the consideration of the validity of sources used. Critical assessment not only considers the evidence above but also the strength of the evidence based on the validity of the method of evidence compilation.
Critically Analyse	As with analyse, but questioning and testing the strength of a person and/or others' analyses from different perspectives. Using the process of analysis to make an objective and reasoned argument. Criticality requires the consideration of the validity of sources used. Critical analysis not only considers the evidence above but also the strength of the evidence based on the validity of the method of evidence compilation.
Critically Discuss	As with discuss, but evaluating the pros and cons of the subject in hand critically. Discussing all the aspects and dimensions of the topic in hand. Discussing the effects and impacts of the topic. Critical discussion not only considers the evidence above but also the strength of the evidence based on the validity of the method of evidence compilation.

Critically Evaluate	<p>As with evaluate, but considering the strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences. The writer should then judge the evidence from the different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgement. Apply current research or theories to support the evaluation when applicable.</p> <p>Critical evaluation not only considers the evidence above but also the strength of the evidence based on the validity of the method of evidence compilation</p>
Critically Examine	<p>As with examine, but provides the opportunity to conduct a thorough examination involving carefully analysing and evaluating a subject/topic to understand its underlying assumptions, logic, and implications to clearly establish a need. It combines both analytical and creative thinking, allowing a deeper understanding and informed judgement and exploration of a process or alternatives. Critical examination aims to promote deeper understanding and informed judgement.</p> <p>Critical examination not only considers the evidence above but also the strength of the evidence based on the validity of the method of evidence compilation.</p>
Critically Reflect	As with reflect, but identifying, questioning, and assessing deeply-held beliefs and assumptions about a topic, the way in which we perceive events and issues, beliefs, feelings, and actions.
Critically	Typically used to qualify verbs such as evaluate, assess, appraise, analyse and reflect. Give in-depth insight, opinion, debate, verdict based on a wide variety of sources, theory, research which may agree and contradict an argument.
Critique	A detailed analysis and assessment of something, especially a literary, philosophical, or political theory.
Define	Show or state clearly and accurately.
Describe	Provide an extended range of detailed factual information about the topic or item in a logical way.
Deliver	Ensure something is conveyed or done with stakeholders/clients
Demonstrate	Complete a task or activity, showing an understanding of facts, procedures and ideas of a topic and competence through action or activity.
Determine	Settle/conclude an argument/question as a result of investigation or by referring to an authority.
Develop	Elaborate, expand or progress an idea from a starting point building upon given information.
Devise	Invent a system, solution or procedure from new/existing principles/ideas.
Differentiate	Recognise or ascertain a difference to identify what makes something different.
Discuss	Give a detailed account including a range of views or opinions, which include contrasting perspectives.
Distinguish	Draw or make distinction between
Draw	Present a conclusion or decision about what is likely to happen based on facts.
Establish	Discover, prove or show something to be true or valid by determining the facts.
Evaluate	Consider the strengths and weaknesses, arguments for and against and/or similarities and differences. The writer should then judge the evidence from the

	different perspectives and make a valid conclusion or reasoned judgement. Apply current research or theories to support the evaluation when applicable.
Examine	Inspect (something) thoroughly in order to determine its nature or condition.
Explain	Make something clear to someone by describing or revealing relevant information in more detail.
Explore	Go through the topic/issue thoroughly looking at all areas that affect the topic/issue.
Formulate	To devise or develop an idea or concept in a concise and systematic way.
Identify	Ascertain the origin, nature or definitive characteristics of something.
Interpet	To clarify/explain the meaning of something
Investigate	Carry out a systematic or formal inquiry to discover and examine the facts of (problem, options, incident, allegation etc) so as to establish the truth.
Justify	Provide a rationale for actions and/or decisions. Your rationale should be underpinned by research, academic theory, data analysis or experience.
Outline	A general description/broad account/summary of something showing essential features/outline the case briefly but not the detail.
Plan	Make a plan, for example, a change plan or a project plan, before starting activities to achieve an aim.
Prepare	To make or develop something ready which will happen in the future.
Present	To make clear to an audience of stakeholders the outcomes of a learner's studies/findings. (May take the form of a presentation).
Produce	To make, create or form something. Put together, assemble. leads to an outcome/result.
Profile	An outline giving a description of a role or organisation
Recommend	Put forward proposals, an alternative or suggestion(s) supported by a clear rationale appropriate to the situation/context.
Reflect	Consciously contemplate, appraise or give balanced consideration to an action or issue.
Report	To prepare a detailed account or statement about an event or topic in a specified format
Research	A detailed study or investigation of a subject in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.
Review	To examine, survey, reconsider a subject, theory or item.
Specify	Identify or state a fact or requirement clearly and precisely in detail.
Summarise	Sum up or give a brief account of relevant information in your own words.
Use	The action of using something for a particular purpose.

ANNEX 2 - ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY DEFINITIONS

Activity Definition	Activity Definition
Briefing paper	A summary of facts pertaining to a particular issue or problem. Often includes a suggested course of action.
Business case	A formal document, presented in an oral or written format, which provides justification for an idea or project to address an identified business need or challenge.
Case Study	A description of an event, activity or problem outlining a real or hypothetical situation.
Good practice guide	A structured document produced with the purpose of supporting individuals to develop their practice in a particular area.
Plan	A detailed outline providing an insight into a range of activities required to complete a task.
Profile	An outline giving a description of a role or organisation
Proposal	A formal document, presented in an oral or written format, which puts forward ideas or suggestions for consideration by others.
Reflective Statement	Learners describe their actions in particular situations and reflect on the reasons for practicing in that way. This is particularly useful to provide evidence that they can evaluate their knowledge and practice.
Report	A structured document communicated or presented in an oral or written form and organised in a narrative, graphic or tabular form referring to a specific period, event or topic area.
Research project report	A formal, written document, organised in a narrative, graphic or tabular form presenting findings and recommendations.
Scenario	A written outline or a situation or setting, providing insight into a sequence of events or actions.
Written account	A written document presenting knowledge of facts or event
Work Based Evidence	An activity from within the workplace that is used by the Learner to evidence and/or demonstrate competence and understanding

ANNEX 3 - REVISIONS TO DOCUMENT

The below table summarises any revisions made to this document since publication.

Revisions Summary	Rational for Revision	Document Version	Revision Date
First publication	First publication	Version 1	Apr 2025