

International Law and Sustainable Development (B001700)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 6.0

Study time 180 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

B (semester 1)	English	Gent	independent work	0.0h
			lecture	0.0h
			peer teaching	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Cavallin, Elisa	RE22	lecturer-in-charge
Cliquet, An	RE22	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Social Sciences(main subject Laws)	6	B
Master of Laws in Laws	6	B
Master of Laws in International and European Law(main subject International and Human Rights Law)	6	B

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

International law, sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goals

Position of the course

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Basic principles underpinning sustainable development are social justice and respecting the planetary boundaries. The concept of sustainable development was introduced in international law by the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It has been included in many international, regional and national laws and policies. Important are the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2015. The SDGs contain 17 goals and range from reducing hunger and poverty, gender equality, peace and security, climate, etc. Sustainable development is much broader than environmental issues. This course wants to focus on the role that international law can play in achieving a more sustainable society. It does not only look at the existing legal framework, but also looks at possible changes that are needed in international law. Sustainability issues are often complex issues, so this course will focus on the interaction between different disciplines within international law and other disciplines (including politics, economy, science).

Contents

Introduction class on sustainable development and international law. Guest lectures on various aspects related to sustainable development (e.g. sustainability in certain countries; degrowth...).

There is a group assignment in which students are asked to propose sustainability measures for an entity (company, university).

Presentations by students on sustainability issues and international law. This can include the different aspects of sustainable development (economic development, social justice, peace and security, environment...). In the presentations, students explain the sustainability issue or problem, the role that international law plays and the different visions that exist. The presentations are divided in several subthemes

and thoroughly discussed in group.

Students write a paper on their own topic and opinions on several other presentations.

For master students, the paper and opinions can be in Dutch. For LLM students this is in English.

Initial competences

To have a basic knowledge of public international law.

Final competences

- 1 Having knowledge of and insight into the role, the relevance and the functioning of public international law in relation to sustainability issues.
- 2 Being able to analyse and interpret current issues and problems of public international law in relation to sustainability issues.
- 3 Argument - both written and orally - on sustainability issues and the role of public international law.
- 4 Being open to insights from peers.
- 5 Be aware of the complex character of sustainability issues and the role that lawyers can play in solving sustainability problems.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Group work, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

There is a limited number of (guest) lectures on several aspects of sustainable development and international law.

Students propose sustainability measures for an entity (such as a company or university). These proposals are explained and discussed in class.

Students each prepare a presentation on a sustainability issue and international law. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can serve as a source of inspiration to select a theme. Issues can include poverty, social justice, gender equalities, violation of human rights, right to health, sustainable production, sustainable cities, etc. After the presentations, there is a group discussion.

Each student writes a paper on the theme of their presentation. Each student writes an opinion on some of the presentations on the problem and the role of international law, based on the class discussions.

Study material

Type: Handouts

Name: Handouts of the lectures and guest lectures

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

A. Gillespie, The Long Road to Sustainability, Oxford University Press, 2018.

N. Roorda, Fundamentals of Sustainable Development, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2017.

Course content-related study coaching

Introductory course to explain the purpose of the course.

Individual feedback possibilities for all students.

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Students are evaluated on their written paper, their oral presentation, their written opinions on the other presentations, and their input during the oral group discussions.

Students are evaluated based on their understanding of the role and practice of public

international law related to sustainability problems.

For master students the paper and opinions can be in Dutch. For LLM students this is all in English.

Calculation of the examination mark

Written (paper) 35%

Oral (presentation) 35%

Participation in group discussions and opinions 30%

Students (except working students) who do not participate in all evaluations will be declared as unsuccessful for this course. In concrete terms, this means that if the final score is nevertheless a figure of ten or more out of twenty, the final score will be reduced to a figure of 7/20.

Evaluation 2nd chance:

The students only have to retake those parts for which they did not succeed. In case that the student did not pass for the oral presentation, then the presentation is replaced with a discussion about the paper. The end score is 35% paper; 35% discussion about the paper; 30% opinions.

Facilities for Working Students

Working students that cannot attend classes, do not have to attend the presentations by other students and are not evaluated during group discussions.

Marks are: 35% paper; 35% presentation; 30% written opinions.