

# **Instructor Manual for *Navigating Sustainability in Asia***

## **About This Instructor Manual**

This Instructor Manual is designed to support faculty, instructors, and facilitators using *Navigating Sustainability in Asia* across a wide range of academic and executive education settings. It provides guidance on course design, learning objectives, teaching approaches, discussion structures, and assignment formats that can be adapted to different audiences and time horizons. Rather than prescribing a single teaching model, the manual offers flexible frameworks that reflect the book's emphasis on contextual judgment, practical decision-making, and real-world complexity. Together with the chapter materials, it is intended to help instructors translate the book's themes into engaging classroom dialogue, applied exercises, and meaningful learning outcomes.

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## Course Overview

*Navigating Sustainability in Asia* is designed as a practice-oriented guide for understanding how sustainability, ESG, and responsible business strategies actually function across Asia's diverse economic, political, and cultural contexts. Unlike conventional sustainability textbooks that approach ESG through abstract frameworks or Western institutional assumptions, this book situates sustainability within the lived realities of Asian markets—where regulation, governance, culture, geopolitics, and development priorities intersect in complex and often non-linear ways.

The book is intended for use across business schools, executive education programs, and policy-oriented courses, particularly those focused on:

- International business
- Corporate strategy
- Sustainability and ESG
- Corporate governance
- Emerging markets
- Investment and asset management
- Public policy and regulation

It is especially well suited for instructors seeking to move beyond theory and expose students to decision-making under real-world constraints, where trade-offs, uncertainty, and institutional diversity are central.

Rather than presenting sustainability as a universal checklist, the book emphasizes contextual judgment. Asia is treated not as a monolith, but as a mosaic of political systems, market structures, regulatory regimes, and cultural norms. Through concrete examples spanning China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, India, and cross-border investment contexts, the book demonstrates how sustainability strategies are shaped by local incentives, power structures, and stages of development.

## **Intended Audiences and Course Fit**

### **1. Undergraduate Business Courses**

Suitable for upper-level courses in:

- International Business
- Corporate Governance
- Sustainability Management
- Global Strategy

Instructors may select chapters selectively and emphasize structured discussion questions, short written reflections, and applied exercises.

### **2. MBA and EMBA Programs**

For MBA and EMBA audiences, the book functions best as:

- A core or supplementary text in sustainability, strategy, or global management courses
- A foundation for case discussions and executive simulations
- A reference for applied ESG decision-making

The material aligns particularly well with:

- Strategy and competitiveness modules
- Responsible investment and stewardship courses
- Global governance and risk management
- Asia-focused electives

### **3. Executive Education and Professional Programs**

The book is especially well suited for:

- Executive education programs
- In-house corporate training
- Board and senior management workshops

- Policy and regulatory training

Its modular structure allows instructors to select individual chapters or themes for:

- One-day or multi-day workshops
- Sector-specific programs
- Leadership development courses

The emphasis on real cases, checklists, and decision frameworks enables immediate application.

## **Pedagogical Approach and Teaching Philosophy**

This book is explicitly designed for discussion-based and applied learning. It supports instructors who wish to:

- Encourage critical thinking rather than rote compliance with ESG frameworks
- Train students to navigate ambiguity, trade-offs, and incomplete information
- Simulate real-world decision environments faced by executives, investors, and regulators
- Bridge theory with practice using contemporary Asian case material

The chapters combine:

- Conceptual explanation
- Empirical examples
- Regulatory and institutional context
- Practitioner insights
- Decision-oriented framing

As a result, the book works well in both lecture-plus-discussion formats and case-style teaching environments.

This book is built around five core pedagogical principles:

### **1. Context before compliance**

Sustainability outcomes in Asia depend less on formal rules than on institutional context, incentives, and power structures. Students are encouraged to understand why rules operate differently across jurisdictions.

### **2. Trade-offs over ideals**

Rather than promoting idealized ESG models, the book foregrounds trade-offs between growth, regulation, politics, and social expectations.

### **3. Strategy over slogans**

Sustainability is treated as a strategic function that affects competitiveness, capital access, and risk management—not as a communications exercise.

### **4. Stakeholder realism**

Executives, investors, regulators, and communities often operate under conflicting constraints. Understanding their incentives is critical to effective engagement.

### **5. Asia as a source of insight, not an exception**

Asian markets are presented not as deviations from a Western norm, but as laboratories of innovation whose solutions increasingly influence global practice.

## **Book-Level Learning Objectives**

Upon completing *Navigating Sustainability in Asia*, students and executive participants should be able to:

### **1. Understand the distinctive nature of sustainability and ESG in Asia**

Explain how historical, political, economic, and cultural contexts shape sustainability practices across Asian markets, and why approaches developed in Europe or North America cannot be applied mechanically in the region.

### **2. Analyze the roles and incentives of key stakeholder groups**

Identify and assess the motivations, constraints, and influence of major stakeholder groups in Asia—including corporates, investors, regulators, international executives, communities, and civil society—and understand how their interactions shape ESG outcomes.

### **3. Evaluate regulatory and institutional diversity across Asian markets**

Compare regulatory approaches across jurisdictions (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, ASEAN, India), including disclosure regimes, enforcement capacity, and policy objectives, and assess how these differences affect corporate behavior and investment decisions.

### **4. Interpret sustainability as a strategic business issue rather than a compliance exercise**

Assess how sustainability considerations influence competitiveness, market access, cost structures, capital allocation, and long-term resilience, rather than treating ESG as a reporting or reputational function.

### **5. Apply ESG concepts to real-world corporate decision-making**

Use practical frameworks, checklists, and case examples to diagnose sustainability risks and opportunities in areas such as supply chains, labor practices, climate risk, governance structures, and stakeholder engagement.

### **6. Evaluate investor behavior and stewardship practices in Asia**

Understand how institutional investors, asset managers, and asset owners engage with companies in Asian markets, including stewardship tools, voting practices, engagement strategies, and the limits of shareholder influence in different governance systems.

## **7. Assess governance risks and ownership structures**

Analyze the implications of concentrated ownership, state influence, family control, and dual-class share structures for minority shareholders, accountability, and long-term firm performance.

## **8. Navigate geopolitical and regulatory uncertainty**

Identify how geopolitics, trade tensions, sanctions, and policy shifts shape corporate strategy and investment risk in Asia, and evaluate how firms and investors adapt through diversification, localization, and scenario planning.

## **9. Design context-sensitive sustainability and engagement strategies**

Develop sustainability, engagement, or investment approaches that are tailored to local realities while remaining aligned with global standards such as ISSB, TCFD, and international human rights frameworks.

## **10. Communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders**

Demonstrate the ability to frame sustainability messages appropriately for different audiences—including boards, regulators, investors, employees, and partners—taking into account cultural norms, institutional expectations, and power dynamics.

## **11. Critically assess trade-offs and unintended consequences**

Recognize that sustainability decisions often involve competing priorities and second-order effects, and evaluate trade-offs between growth, regulation, social outcomes, and political constraints.

## **12. Apply judgment under uncertainty**

Develop the capacity to make informed decisions in environments characterized by incomplete data, uneven enforcement, and rapid change—reflecting real-world conditions faced by executives and investors operating in Asia.



## Key Themes and Why They Matter in Asia

This book is organized around a set of interrelated themes that reflect how sustainability, governance, and business strategy actually operate in Asia. These themes cut across chapters and stakeholder groups, providing instructors with conceptual anchors that can be revisited throughout the course. Together, they explain why sustainability in Asia cannot be understood through a single framework or ideology, but instead requires contextual judgment, institutional awareness, and strategic adaptability.

These themes recur across chapters and can be used as conceptual anchors for discussion, assignments, and comparative analysis.

### 1. Diversity of Contexts: Asia Is Not a Monolith

**Theme:** Asia is defined by heterogeneity—political systems, stages of development, legal traditions, and cultural norms vary widely across the region.

#### Why this matters in Asia:

Unlike more institutionally harmonized regions, Asia encompasses advanced economies (Japan, Singapore), large middle-income markets (China, Malaysia, Thailand), frontier economies (Cambodia, Laos), and hybrid systems combining state and market logics. Sustainability strategies that succeed in one context may fail in another. Treating “Asia” as a single category obscures material differences in enforcement capacity, governance maturity, and stakeholder expectations.

For instructors, this theme reinforces the importance of comparative analysis. Students should learn to ask *where* a practice is applied before judging *whether* it works.

### 2. Sustainability as Strategy, Not Compliance

**Theme:** In Asia, sustainability is most effective when embedded in competitive strategy rather than treated as a reporting or compliance exercise.

#### Why this matters in Asia:

In many Asian markets, enforcement capacity is uneven and regulatory mandates alone rarely drive behavior. Instead, sustainability gains traction when linked to market access, cost

efficiency, supply chain resilience, or capital availability. Companies that frame ESG as a strategic lever—rather than an external obligation—are more likely to internalize it into decision-making.

This theme helps students understand why ESG in Asia often advances through incentives, industrial policy, or investor pressure rather than litigation or activism.

### **3. The Central Role of Institutions and Political Economy**

**Theme:** Institutions—formal and informal—shape how sustainability operates in practice.

#### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Political systems, state capacity, and governance traditions play an outsized role in shaping corporate behavior. State ownership, industrial policy, and close government–business ties are common across the region. Regulatory enforcement may be uneven, adaptive, or selectively applied.

Understanding these institutional dynamics is essential for interpreting why:

- rules may exist but be weakly enforced,
- reforms advance unevenly,
- informal norms often matter as much as written law.

This theme enables students to analyze sustainability not only as a technical issue but as a political and institutional one.

### **4. Stakeholder Capitalism with Asian Characteristics**

**Theme:** Stakeholder engagement in Asia differs fundamentally from Western models.

#### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Stakeholders in Asia—including regulators, families, employees, communities, and investors—operate within distinct hierarchies and cultural norms. Relationship-based engagement, long-term trust, and indirect communication often matter more than formal confrontation or litigation.

This book emphasizes how:

- family ownership shapes decision-making,
- state-linked entities influence outcomes,
- communities and NGOs act as informal regulators,
- investors must adapt engagement strategies to local realities.

Understanding stakeholder dynamics is essential for effective stewardship, negotiation, and risk management.

## **5. Governance Structures and Ownership Concentration**

**Theme:** Ownership structures fundamentally shape incentives, accountability, and risk.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Concentrated ownership—through families, founders, or the state—is a defining feature of Asian capitalism. Dual-class shares, cross-shareholdings, and pyramidal structures alter power dynamics between controlling and minority shareholders.

Rather than treating these structures as inherently deficient, the book examines:

- how they function in practice,
- when they enable stability or long-term investment,
- when they create governance failures.

This equips students to analyze governance quality beyond formal checklists.

## **6. Investors as Catalysts—and Their Constraints**

**Theme:** Investors play a growing but constrained role in shaping ESG outcomes in Asia.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Stewardship is increasingly important, yet its effectiveness varies by market. While Japan and parts of Southeast Asia have embraced stewardship codes, engagement elsewhere is constrained by ownership concentration, political sensitivity, and limited legal recourse.

This theme highlights:

- the evolution of stewardship practices,

- differences between domestic and international investors,
- the limits of shareholder influence,
- and the conditions under which engagement can succeed.

Students learn to assess investor influence realistically rather than idealistically.

## **7. Regulation, Fragmentation, and Convergence**

**Theme:** Asia's regulatory landscape is fragmented but gradually converging around global baselines.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

The coexistence of local rules with international standards (such as ISSB, TCFD, and global human rights norms) creates both complexity and opportunity. Some markets adopt global standards rapidly; others localize or selectively implement them.

This theme allows students to explore:

- regulatory arbitrage and uneven enforcement,
- hybrid regulatory models,
- the strategic implications of convergence over time.

It also clarifies why compliance strategies must be adaptive rather than uniform.

## **8. Geopolitics as a Business Variable**

**Theme:** Geopolitics is no longer external to business strategy—it is embedded within it.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Trade tensions, sanctions, technology controls, and regional conflicts increasingly shape investment decisions, supply chains, and market access. Asia sits at the center of these dynamics.

This theme equips students to analyze:

- geopolitical risk as an operational constraint,
- diversification and resilience strategies,

- the interaction between national security and corporate decision-making.

## **9. Crisis as Catalyst for Change**

**Theme:** Crises often accelerate reform more effectively than gradual policy evolution.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Natural disasters, financial crises, governance scandals, and geopolitical shocks frequently trigger institutional change in the region. Firms and regulators often respond pragmatically, using crises to justify reforms that were previously resisted.

Understanding crisis-driven reform helps students interpret why progress appears uneven yet punctuated by rapid shifts.

## **10. Pragmatism, Adaptation, and Hybrid Solutions**

**Theme:** Effective sustainability practice in Asia is pragmatic, adaptive, and hybrid.

### **Why this matters in Asia:**

Rather than importing models wholesale, successful approaches blend global standards with local realities. Hybrid solutions—combining regulation, market incentives, social norms, and experimentation—are common.

This theme reinforces a central message of the book:

sustainability in Asia is not about choosing between global principles and local realities, but about designing workable bridges between them.

## **How Instructors Can Use This Book**

Instructors may adopt the book in several ways:

### **Option A: Full-Semester Course (12–14 weeks)**

- One chapter per week
- Combination of lecture, discussion, and applied assignments
- Suitable for MBA or advanced undergraduate programs

### **Option B: Modular Course (5–6 weeks)**

- Thematic grouping of chapters:
  - Stakeholders & governance
  - Investors & capital markets
  - Regulation & geopolitics
  - Corporate strategy & execution

### **Option C: Executive or Short Programs**

- Selected chapters used as standalone modules
- Heavy emphasis on discussion, cases, and frameworks
- Short pre-reading plus in-class exercises

## **Suggested Assignment Structures (Book-Level)**

This section provides instructors with flexible assignment formats that can be applied across chapters. The assignments are designed to support a range of teaching contexts, including undergraduate courses, MBA and EMBA programs, and executive education. They emphasize analytical judgment, applied reasoning, and real-world decision-making rather than technical mastery or rote knowledge.

Instructors may select or adapt assignments depending on course length, student background, and assessment philosophy. The following assignment formats are intentionally modular and adaptable across chapters, course lengths, and participant profiles.

### **1. Short Analytical Reflection (Individual)**

#### **Purpose:**

To encourage students to synthesize concepts and reflect critically on trade-offs, incentives, and contextual constraints.

#### **Format:**

- 500–800 words
- Individual submission
- Based on one chapter or theme

#### **Typical prompts:**

- Identify a key tension discussed in the chapter and explain why it is difficult to resolve in an Asian context.
- How does institutional context shape sustainability outcomes in one market discussed in the reading?
- What assumptions embedded in Western ESG frameworks may not hold in Asia?

#### **Assessment focus:**

- Conceptual understanding
- Ability to apply ideas to real contexts
- Clarity of reasoning

## **2. Applied Case Analysis (Individual or Group)**

### **Purpose:**

To develop students' ability to diagnose sustainability challenges and propose feasible responses under real-world constraints.

### **Format:**

- 1,500–2,500 words (or 10–12 slides)
- Individual or small group
- May draw on real companies discussed in the book or instructor-approved alternatives

### **Typical structure:**

1. Case context and stakeholder map
2. Key sustainability or governance challenge
3. Institutional and regulatory constraints
4. Strategic options available
5. Recommended course of action and rationale

### **Assessment focus:**

- Quality of analysis
- Use of course concepts
- Feasibility and realism of recommendations
- Awareness of trade-offs

## **3. Executive Brief or Board Memo**

### **Purpose:**

To simulate real-world communication with senior decision-makers.

### **Format:**

- 1–2 pages
- Written in professional, non-academic language
- Structured as a memo or briefing note



**Typical prompt examples:**

- Advise a board on how to respond to an emerging ESG controversy
- Recommend an engagement strategy for a major investor
- Outline risks and priorities related to a regulatory change

**Assessment focus:**

- Strategic clarity
- Prioritization
- Persuasiveness
- Practical judgment

This format works especially well for MBA and executive participants.

**4. Group Presentation or Role-Based Simulation****Purpose:**

To develop negotiation, communication, and stakeholder-awareness skills.

**Format:**

- Small groups assigned different stakeholder roles
- 10–15 minute presentation or role-play
- Followed by class discussion

**Possible roles:**

- Corporate management
- Institutional investor
- Regulator
- NGO / civil society
- Community representatives

**Assessment focus:**

- Understanding of stakeholder incentives

- Ability to articulate and defend positions
- Responsiveness to counterarguments

## **5. Comparative Country or Policy Analysis**

### **Purpose:**

To strengthen cross-country analytical skills and comparative reasoning.

### **Format:**

- Written paper or presentation
- Comparison of two or more jurisdictions

### **Example themes:**

- ESG disclosure regimes across Asian markets
- Approaches to labor protection
- Corporate governance models
- Climate or energy policy implementation

### **Assessment focus:**

- Depth of comparison
- Use of evidence
- Ability to explain divergence rather than simply describe differences

## **6. Capstone Project (Optional)**

### **Purpose:**

To integrate learning across the entire book.

### **Format options:**

- Sustainability strategy for a company
- Investor engagement plan
- Regulatory reform proposal
- Risk assessment for entering an Asian market

**Key components:**

- Context and stakeholder mapping
- Identification of key risks and trade-offs
- Strategic recommendations
- Reflection on implementation challenges

**Assessment focus:**

- Integration across themes
- Strategic coherence
- Realism and feasibility

## Discussion Flow Templates (Reusable Across Chapters)

This section provides reusable discussion structures that instructors can apply regardless of chapter topic. These templates are designed to support different class lengths, teaching styles, and participant profiles.

### 1. Standard 75–90 Minute Discussion Flow

#### I. Opening prompt (5–10 minutes)

A provocative question, short scenario, or headline that surfaces assumptions.

Purpose:

- Activate prior knowledge
- Surface intuitions and biases

#### II. Concept framing (10–15 minutes)

Instructor briefly outlines key ideas from the chapter:

- Core concepts
- Tensions
- Analytical lenses

#### III. Applied discussion (25–30 minutes)

Students apply concepts to:

- A case example
- A regional scenario
- A stakeholder dilemma

Discussion may be plenary or in small groups.

#### IV. Trade-offs and counterarguments (15 minutes)

Instructor guides debate around:

- Competing incentives
- Unintended consequences

- Feasibility constraints

**V. Synthesis and takeaway (5–10 minutes)**

Wrap-up linking discussion to broader course themes

**2. Case-Based Discussion Template**

Designed for chapters with strong empirical or narrative content.

**Flow:**

- i. Case recap (student-led)
- ii. Problem definition
- iii. Stakeholder mapping
- iv. Options available
- v. Decision point
- vi. Consequences and learning

Useful for:

- Governance failures
- Supply chain controversies
- Regulatory interventions

**3. Executive / Boardroom Simulation Format**

Designed for MBA and executive programs.

**Structure:**

- Assign roles before class
- Provide a short scenario or trigger event
- Each group prepares a position
- Simulated board discussion
- Instructor moderates

Focus questions:

- What decision must be made now?
- What risks matter most?
- What information is missing?
- What compromises are acceptable?

#### **4. Investor-Centric Discussion Flow**

Useful for chapters involving stewardship, governance, or capital allocation.

##### **Key prompts:**

- What leverage does the investor actually have?
- What tools are available (engagement, voting, exit)?
- What constraints limit action?
- How should success be measured?

Encourages realism about investor influence in Asia.

#### **5. Comparative Country Lens**

Applicable across nearly all chapters.

##### **Suggested prompts:**

- How would this issue differ in China, Japan, and Southeast Asia?
- What role do institutions play in shaping outcomes?
- Which approaches travel well, and which do not?

This helps reinforce the book's core message: context matters.

#### **6. Managing Classroom Dynamics and Sensitivities**

Instructors are encouraged to:

- Frame discussions analytically rather than normatively
- Allow multiple interpretations
- Avoid framing issues as moral binaries
- Emphasize trade-offs rather than “right answers”

- Encourage respectful disagreement

This approach is especially important when discussing:

- geopolitics
- state–business relations
- labor rights
- national development models

## **7. Linking Discussion to Assessment**

To reinforce learning, instructors may conclude discussions by asking students to:

- Write a short reflection memo
- Identify one insight they would apply in practice
- Propose a decision they would take if accountable
- Summarize key tensions revealed

These outputs can feed directly into graded assignments or participation evaluation.