

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Workshop: Responsible Research – Involving Circularity and Interdisciplinarity from the Beginning in the Research Process



Organized by Prof. Dr. Rainer Haag, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Hasenstab-Riedel, Dr. Dagmara Weckowska, Dr. Susanne Stein (Freie Universität Berlin), and Dr. Ponnapat Watjanatepin (KU Leuven)

Deadline for submission: May 31, 2026

Responsible research today faces the task of finding answers and solutions to pressing challenges such as climate protection, resource conservation, and social justice. This requires a change in the way we conduct scientific work. Questions relating to sustainability often transcend the boundaries of a single discipline, raising considerations such as: When is it necessary to involve other disciplines, and which ones should be involved? The same questions can be applied to cooperation with non-scientific groups of experts. Therefore, systematic reflection and networking are reasonable approaches. We will discuss and test this approach using case studies brought by participants or provided by us.

Responsible research in the field of material development and substance synthesis with a focus on sustainability means thinking in loops from the outset, as in a prospective life cycle assessment (LCA). Considering the resource input and spatial frame of the natural resources used early on makes it much easier to prepare data systematically for subsequent LCAs. Integrating LCA into projects early on ensures that sustainability becomes a design parameter and not an afterthought, as reflected in the Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSBD) principle. The workshop aims to develop a setup of the participants' research objects within the framework of a prospective LCA.

Vibe shifts pose significant challenges for traditional LCA. They force LCA practitioners to transition from retrospective analyses to dynamic, forward-looking models. Additionally, geopolitical changes in recent years have impacted the availability of raw materials and, consequently, the reference framework of an LCA. A stronger focus on regional and national raw materials strengthens the spatial aspects of sustainability considerations and circularity approaches.

Considering these challenges for forecast models as well as assessment under these dynamic conditions our workshop aims at bringing together researches from different disciplines and regions, in order to reach together the following goals:

- Systematic reflection on the involvement of other disciplines or expert knowledge in defining and answering one's own research questions.
- Fundamentals of life cycle assessment and the challenges in defining meaningful scopes and frames

- Elaborating on the role of prospective LCA, transforming it from a purely analytical tool into a central guideline for sustainability in material development.
- An initial assessment framework for a case study provided by a participant.

Overview of Workshop Sessions

September, 22 11:00 – 13:00	Input talk by CSR Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin with focus on materials for water purification Input talk by Dr. Ponnapat Watjanatepin, Sustainability Assessment of Materials and Circular Economy (SAM), KU Leuven <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges of definition of goal and scope - elaboration of an assessment draft (flow diagram)
September, 22 14:30 – 16:00	Responsible Research (optional input talk by Dagmara Weckowska, Freie Universität Berlin) Involvement of different disciplines/experts: Where is a need in my case and what kind of expertise is needed?
September, 23 11:00 – 13:00	Recap of identified challenges Networking/ open space

Ways to participate:

We invite contributions of research projects/test cases to set up an evaluation/assessment frame you would like to share and elaborate – including abstracts about new, unfinished, conceptual ideas.

Submitted abstracts must be in English and contain 200-300 words. Please submit your ideas as a PDF file, to the conference organizers via the registration platform: <https://www.conftool.net/higher-ed-sustainability-2026> by **May 31, 2026**.

You will be notified of acceptance by **June 15, 2026**.

Selected proposals will be published in our conference program and on our conference website. Selected contributions from the conference will be published in an editorial volume. You can find information about the editorial volume here: www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/higher-ed-sustainability-conf/editorial/index.html.

The workshop is part of the Sustainability in Higher Education Conference, “Between Transformation and Vibe Shifts.” For more information on the conference, please visit: www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/higher-ed-sustainability-conf/index.html.

Contact:

Moritz Zoellner (events@nachhaltigkeit.fu-berlin.de) is the central point of contact for the conference and registration process.

Questions about this workshop and the call can be directed to Susanne Stein (susanne.stein@fu-berlin.de).