

GRACE ACADEMY

REGULATION

Academic Year 2024/2025

1. Overview

GRACE – Empresas Responsáveis is a public utility association focused on promoting corporate responsibility and sustainability, and on strengthening a global movement of responsible companies committed to sustainability principles in their various dimensions and to active corporate citizenship.

Aware of its responsibility to expand the positive impact of companies on the community by developing projects that create synergies among diverse stakeholders and cooperating with other civil society organizations, GRACE has identified Higher Education Institutions as key partners, given their fundamental role in training and empowering young people.

In this context, and to achieve its objectives, GRACE implemented the **Uni.Network** project, aimed at fostering closer connections between Portuguese Academic Institutions and companies on the topic of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability. This initiative encourages alignment between the academic and professional spheres to ease students' transition from academia to the workplace.

GRACE Academy is one of the pillars of the Uni.Network, designed to support the development of academic projects (individual or group) focused on Social Responsibility and Sustainability.

The essential framework of GRACE Academy is as follows:

- ✓ Development of an academic project, either individually or in groups, on topics set annually by GRACE's Board, with applicability to a business context;
- ✓ Evaluation of the projects by a Jury appointed by GRACE (see point 10. Jury);

- ✓ Recognition of the best academic project authors, under the terms defined in these Regulations.

2. Topics

For the academic year 2024/2025, students are expected to address the following topics:

Upskilling & Reskilling

The annual Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) has shown that Portugal remains below the European average in terms of digital skills among its workforce. Portugal ranked 15th out of 27 EU Member States in the 2022 DESI edition. Portugal's relative progress remains slightly below that of comparable countries, leaving room for accelerated digitalization efforts.

As society and labor markets constantly evolve, the rapid growth in these areas, driven by technological advancement, has prompted companies to offer training to employees to optimize their performance (upskilling) or to acquire new skills for a different role (reskilling). Investing in training and skill acquisition will yield benefits such as a workforce better prepared to meet market and business demands, increased productivity, and reduced turnover.

Considering the importance of Upskilling & Reskilling for companies and employees, present a proposal, in project format, **on how companies (an individual company, business group, sector, etc., at a national level) can and should address technological advancement, particularly in training and skill acquisition for their workforce.**

Artificial Intelligence: Contribution to ESG

ESG factors are environmental, social, and governance indicators designed to measure organizations' commitment to sustainable development goals. Originating from the English acronym ESG, these factors have become part of the strategic objectives linked to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and serve as criteria for evaluating companies' and institutions' performance in sustainability, within the European framework for sustainable finance. Climate change effects from fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, and livestock farming have increased the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, intensifying the greenhouse effect and planetary warming. In 2015, the EU signed the Paris Agreement, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C and later committed to becoming the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 through the European Green Deal, a set of measures allowing companies and EU citizens to benefit from a

sustainable, fair, and inclusive transition.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), capable of mimicking human abilities like reasoning, learning, planning, and creativity, is one of the most impactful tools for promoting sustainable business practices and could drive significant transformations within industries and the global economy. Key advantages include process optimization and creating and reconfiguring value chains to make them more sustainable.

In light of ESG principles and AI developments, present a project proposal **on how companies (an individual company, business group, sector, etc., at a national level) can use AI to build a more sustainable and inclusive future by addressing ESG factors.**

3. Objectives

This initiative aims to:

- Provide awarded students, based on the criteria defined in point 7. Evaluation Criteria, with access to participate in an initiative in the field of innovation, entrepreneurship, or sustainability, benefiting from relevant networking for their personal and professional development.
- Raise students' awareness of the importance of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability and promote good practices in these areas among companies through innovative academic work with potential applicability in the Portuguese business sector.

4. Eligible Participants

GRACE Academy is open to undergraduate, postgraduate, and master's students, Portuguese or foreign, from GRACE partner Higher Education Institutions.

The following individuals are not eligible to apply for GRACE Academy:

- Members of GRACE's governing bodies and technical team;
- Direct relatives of Jury members;
- Previous winners who have received the award.

5. Participation Conditions

Applications can be submitted individually or in groups (maximum of 4 members) in English or Portuguese, with each candidate (or group) limited to a single submission. No student may participate in more than one individual or group application.

Projects should address the themes set by GRACE's Board, aiming to develop a practical project that meets the proposed challenge.

Although media materials (images, videos, audio) are accepted, submissions must be based on a written work, up to 30 pages, font size 11, including the following sections:

- Title
- Summary
- Introduction/Background
- Main Body
- Conclusions
- Bibliography

Applications must include the entire project content and a completed application form with full identification details. In the case of group applications, a spokesperson must be designated for communication with GRACE.

Each application must be supervised by a Coordinating Professor, responsible for ensuring compliance with the Regulations and project alignment with the chosen theme. The supervisor's name and email contact must also be provided on the application form.

The application form is available [here](#) and is also available at: <https://grace.pt/academia/>

All documents should be submitted via the designated form or, if not possible, sent to the email address **academiagrace@grace.pt**. In case electronic submission is not feasible, documents should be sent in digital format, including a copy of the application form to:

GRACE ACADEMY

GRACE – Responsible Companies

Rua do Viriato, 13B, 1050-206 Lisbon

6. Deadlines

- The deadline for submitting applications will run until **April 28, 2025**.
- The winners will be announced at a public event in **June 2025**.

7. Evaluation criteria

The evaluation of applications to ACADEMIA GRACE will be carried out according to the following criteria:

- Pertinence of the approach to the chosen theme;
- Originality in approaching the theme;
- Applicability to the Portuguese business context;
- Impact on the Community;
- Internal impact on the company;
- Replicability.

8. Prize Categories

In order to differentiate the works to which the PRIZE is awarded, the Jury may assign the following categories:

- GRACE Academy Award, for work that stands out in all or most of the evaluation criteria;
- Idea Award, for work that stands out in terms of Pertinence and Originality;
- Action Award, for work that stands out in the Applicability and Replicability criteria;
- Impact Prize, for work that stands out in the Internal Impact and Community Impact criteria.

9. Prizes

The GRACE Academy will distinguish the winners with four prizes, according to the categories defined in point 8., in the area of innovation, entrepreneurship or sustainability, benefiting from relevant networking for their personal and professional path.

Lastly, all winners will have the opportunity to publicly present their work in pitch format during the PRIZE announcement and delivery ceremony, and to see it publicized on the various GRACE communication channels and partners. The aforementioned public ceremony will be organized by GRACE and will take place around the month of June.

10. Jury

The Jury will be composed of people of recognized competence and suitability, representatives of the associative, business, academic and institutional areas, as well as of the Social Economy/Civil Society Organizations. GRACE will be responsible for nominating all members of the Jury and designating its President.

The Jury will be assisted in the evaluation of the projects by a Technical Team, whose constitution will be the responsibility of GRACE.

The GRACE Technical Team and the Jury may ask the identified candidates or coordinating professor for additional clarification on the projects presented and demand the delivery of supporting documents for some of their declarations, having the prerogative of disqualifying them if their veracity is not confirmed.

The Jury will have the following attributions:

1. Ensure rigor and transparency throughout the process of analysis and evaluation of applications;
2. Elect the GRACE Academy winning projects;

3. Decide not to grant GRACE Academy awards if the lack of quality of the projects or non-compliance with the objectives established in point 2, so justifies it.

The deliberations of the Jury will be taken by simple majority of the votes of the members present, with the President of the Jury having the casting vote. In the decisions of the Jury, there will be no appeal. Jury members cannot designate substitutes. In case of impediment or definitive absence of any of the members of the Jury, this will work with the remaining members.

11. Communication

GRACE assumes responsibility for disseminating the GRACE Academy through its website, for publicizing it to associates and national Higher Education Institutions, as well as for using the media or any other means deemed appropriate for this purpose.

12. Final considerations

GRACE guarantees the confidentiality of projects throughout their evaluation process, with information being used only for the purposes defined in this Regulation.

GRACE does not contribute to the costs of travel or stays spent by awarded students within the scope of achieving the awards, the respective costs being the responsibility of the students.

GRACE may, for weighty and well-founded reasons, amend this regulation, as well as the composition of the Jury.

GRACE will be indifferent to any lasting collaboration relationship, whether of a work nature or otherwise, that may be established between the awarded students and the companies or organizations with which they come into contact as a result of the Award, however, it must be informed of the establishment of such relationship.

Any questions related to the GRACE Academy can be clarified by email address academiagrace@grace.pt or by the website <https://grace.pt/academia/>.