

LEADING IN A COMPLEX WORLD



Develop the skills to think long-term, adapt to complex challenges, and build resilience in your leadership. Explore how to navigate sustainability dilemmas and create meaningful, lasting change in your organization and beyond.

CBS EXECUTIVE SUMMER SCHOOL 2025

CENTRAL THEMES

- Adaptive leadership practices
- Navigating complex sustainability challenges
- Long-term strategic thinking
- Addressing the challenges of human impact on the planet

CBS Executive reserves the right to make changes

FACULTY



Rasmus Johnsen

Associate Professor, PhD,
Vice Dean, Copenhagen
Business School (CBS)

With a background in philosophy, Rasmus Johnsen specializes in adaptive leadership and the role of emotions in addressing complexity and uncertainty. He teaches leadership and leadership development in CBS's Master programs, helping leaders build resilience and navigate meaningful change. As Vice Dean for Lifelong Learning, he develops innovative executive education initiatives that equip individuals to thrive in a dynamic and evolving world.



Frank Meier

Associate Professor, PhD,
Copenhagen Business
School (CBS)

An established researcher in leadership, leadership development and digital transformation, Frank Meier focusses on the complexity of adaptive leadership when faced with societal, organizational and digital challenges. In Frank's executive teaching, participant's leadership and organizational practices are foregrounded, whereas leadership theory helps us question the situations we find ourselves in. The work of the analyses then generates experiments and even hope for new, adaptive actions for your leadership and the world.

In addition, there will be guest talks from experienced managers who provide insight into their practices and experiences e.g. Peter Møllgaard

COURSE STRUCTURE

3 days at CBS Executive Summer School 18-20 August:

The course begins with 3 intensive days on campus in August, where you will engage with frameworks, real-world cases, and collaborative discussions to broaden your leadership approach and enhance your toolbox. Throughout the program, you will continuously work with your own sustainability leadership challenge – exploring whether it is purely technical or, in fact, a truly adaptive challenge.

2 half days on campus (with online option) 11 September and 6 October:

Following the initial days, you will return to campus (or join online if you are not located in Denmark) for 2 additional half-day sessions, spaced out to allow time for reflection, experimentation, and application of the concepts in the context of your unique sustainability challenge. These follow-up sessions provide an opportunity to share insights, refine your individual roadmap for sustainable change, and deepen your understanding of adaptive leadership.

LEADING IN A COMPLEX WORLD

INTRODUCTION

In an age of climate disruption and growing complexity, leadership must adapt to meet unprecedented challenges. Sustainability issues demand more than technical fixes; they call for rethinking systems, building partnerships, and reshaping business practices.

This course, grounded in adaptive leadership theory, encourages you to tackle complex sustainability challenges with courage and purpose. Together, we will explore how leadership can address the profound impact of human actions on the organization, environment and society. By embracing long-term thinking, adaptability, and emotional resilience, you will learn to develop leadership practices that foster a sustainable and thriving future.

CONTENT

Sustainability challenges require an adaptive and reflexive leadership approach. For example, reducing plastic waste in fast food chains may seem as simple as replacing plastic straws with biodegradable ones. However, deeper complexities soon emerge – customers still expect convenience, businesses treat packaging as a brand asset, and waste systems remain misaligned. These challenges go beyond technical fixes. What if, instead of just swapping materials, we reimaged packaging's role entirely? How might we transcend organizational silos, shift consumer mindsets, foster industry-wide collaboration, and align waste infrastructure for real systemic change?

This course invites you to explore leadership as a contextual and relational practice, focusing on mobilizing energy for development and navigating complex challenges that require learning, collaboration, and innovative solutions. Leadership is seen not as an indi-

vidual trait but as a dynamic practice shaped by each situation. It requires asking difficult questions, challenging entrenched routines, and confronting privileges and loyalties that may no longer serve the broader purpose.

Through *Leading in a Complex World*, you will engage with practical tools, frameworks, and real-world examples to develop your capacity for long-term strategic thinking and innovation. The teaching combines short lectures, group exercises, reflexive conversations, and experiments in your own organizational context, creating a direct link between theory and practice. This approach enables you to foster meaningful, lasting value in addressing sustainability leadership challenges.

KEY BENEFITS

After completing the course, you will have

- Identified key sustainability challenges in your own context and a roadmap for addressing them
- Tangible tools to distinguish between and address adaptive vs. technical challenges in sustainability leadership
- Frameworks and capabilities to balance exploration (innovation and risk-taking) with exploitation (optimizing current resources) in your sustainability leadership practice
- A clear understanding of complexity in sustainability challenges and illustrative examples of how to engage with them in your context.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Professionals with current or prospective people, functional, and/or strategic leadership responsibilities across the private, public, and civil sectors. Participants are encouraged to bring sustainability challenges from their own organizations to explore throughout the program.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TEACHING STYLE

The teaching approach is highly explorative, offering participants practical concepts to apply within their own organizations. The course also leverages the diverse, cross-sectorial backgrounds of participants to foster discussions and explore opportunities for partnerships across organizations, sectors, and industries.

PREPARATION

Before the start of the course, participants will get access to the course web portal, where relevant articles, material, assignments, and case studies will be found. The material is in English.

ABOUT CBS EXECUTIVE SUMMER SCHOOL

Every summer CBS Executive Summer School offers several intensive courses covering both traditional and cutting-edge business school subjects. The courses run over 2-5 days with research-based theory being converted into practical tools and methods.

Focus is on active participation, dialogue and sparring with the other participants, as well as on inspiration and perspective from highly engaging faculty, teaching at a high academic level. No examination will take place.

A typical participant is an experienced employee with a medium or long secondary education. Participants are typically managers, leaders or specialists across all professions and will be able to include and process own professional challenges and experiences throughout the course.

DATES

18-20 August 2025, daily 09:00 - approx. 16:30,
and 11 Sep. + 6 Oct. 2025 (2 half days)

VENUE

Copenhagen Business School - Frederiksberg

CERTIFICATE

A digital certificate is issued after the course,
given active participation all days

TUITION FEE

DKK 24,000 (excl. Danish VAT: 25%)

Includes all expenses associated with the
course apart from accommodation and transport

REGISTRATION

Deadline for registration 1 June 2025

Signup at sommerskole.dk

CONTACT INFORMATION

Nina M. Ingvarstsen, nmi@cbs-executive.dk

Phone +45 3511 6000



CBS
EXECUTIVE
FONDEN

**SUMMER
SCHOOL**

cbs-executive.dk · +45 3511 6000