Applying Circular Economy in Product Innovation (B32)

Credit weighting:	2.0 ECTS credits
Teaching period(s):	13 July 2026 – 17 July 2026
Level:	Bachelor level
Teaching methods:	52 hr(s) lectures/field excursions + assignments (including self-study)
Course leader:	Jens Gijbels, MSc
Lecturer(s):	Jens Gijbels MSc

Description

his one-week hands-on summer course, offered jointly by Dutch and Finnish circular design experts, will challenge your assumptions and will equip you with the tools to navigate the intersection of profitability and circularity! This course is driven by both Dutch and Finnish circular design experts, that challenges assumptions and equips you with the tools to navigate the intersection of profitability and circularity!

With a growing demand on sustainable solutions as a result of international efforts to reduce climate change, we see that product innovation too is in transition. We have to challenge preconceived notions, where circular design was viewed as inherently more expensive than conventional approaches to product innovation. Not anymore.

E.g. Finnish researchers, being at the forefront of this shift, have pioneered extensive research showcasing how circular business models can be not just sustainable but surprisingly more profitable. Join us in this hands-on course, as we explore what this new approach can do when *applied* to practice. Discover how businesses can thrive by adopting innovative models that prioritize sustainability without compromising the bottom line.

What can you expect?

A deep dive in theory about circular economy and apply it directly in a design process. In Finland, the government has made it their responsibility to enable circularity without loss of revenue in order to make it a more common practice. Their universities have collaborated for several years to generate knowledge to boost this. The theory we share in our course is the latest from Finland, brought to you by our Finnish partner Turku University of Applied

Sciences (TUAS). We offer short theoretical lectures, however we will spend most of our time actually redesigning products into a more circular and economical alternative.

What will we be doing?

We believe in Learning by Doing, so learning on the job. We will apply the knowledge we share directly, and by doing so deepen our understanding as much as possible. The coaching will be done by both university lecturers specialised in Design Thinking and Circular Economy, and enriched with work field coaches from the field of product designer.

Join us for this one-week Learning by Doing summer course, driven by both Dutch and Finnish circular design experts, that challenges assumptions and equips you with the tools to navigate the intersection of profitability and circularity!

NB: This course is part of:

The two-week track Circular Economoy (B56)

Target audience

This course is intended for everybody who wants to know more about, and experience product innovation that serves both sustainable requirements as well as financial goals of organizations (and society at large).

You could be a student (any business or management studies, industrial design, product design, mechanical engineering, arts) or a young professional (either self-employed or working for a design agency). You are eager to learn about sustainable product innovation. Maybe you even have your own product (idea) and want to (re)design this product in a more sustainable way. Or you have been part of a student project team about product innovation (or expect to be in the course of your study/life) and want to know how it is done to apply in your professional context.

A good command of English is necessary! Given the interactive nature of teaching, students must have the capabilities to actively contribute in class and communicate (understand and speak) in English well, ideally min level B2.

Learning Goals

After successful completion of this course, you:

- Are able to explain the economic value of circular economy;
- Are able to explore potential changes for product innovation;

- Have applied effective circular economy models to an actual product;
- Have given recommendations to improve a specific product and make it more circular.

Study load

52 hr(s) lectures/field excursions + assignments (including self-study)

The course is highly interactive: experiencing is key. With every challenge, you enter a new stage, a new level of maturity, discovering new insights and secrets about life and living. AND: it is so much fun doing it, together with fellow students from around the globe.

Please note: You must attend all learning activities (e.g. workshops, fieldwork) to be able to receive the Certificate of Participation and/or the credits for this course, unless absence is officially approved by the teachers and the coordinator of the Utrecht Summer School.

Course calendar

Saturday and Sunday, 11 and 12 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
12.00-18.00	**Key pick up**	You will find the exact key pick up location in the pre-departure information, which becomes available after you have paid the course fee.

Monday, 13 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
09.00-09.30	**Campus tour**	
09:30-12:00	**Welcome session**	Meet & Greet and course introduction
12:00-13:00	**Lunch break***	
13:00-17:00	**Setting culture**	

Tuesday, 14 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
09:00-12:00	**Theory**	

12:00-13:00	**Lunch break***	
13:00-**19**:00	**Theory / Excursion**	

Wednesday, 15 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
09:00-12:00	**Project work**	
12:00-13:00	**Lunch break***	
13:00-17:00	**Project work**	

Thursday, 16 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
09:00-12:00	**Project work**	
12:00-13:00	**Lunch break***	
13:00-17:00	**Project work**	

Friday, 17 July 2026		
Time	**Activity**	Description
10:00-12:00	**Workshop**	Expo preparation
12:00-13:00	**Lunch break***	
13:00-17:00	**Expo**	Expo for visitors

*Please note: Students must bring/cover their own lunch

The lunch times in the programme can vary, these times are just an indication.