

SCA Sustainability Foundation Course Outline

Venue Requirements

All participants must have access to reliable high-speed internet in a quiet space without ambient noise (i.e. not in a roastery or cafe, or driving). Headsets are recommended. All participants are expected to keep people, pets, and other household members and/or work colleagues out of sight and sound range for the duration of each class session. Students are expected to treat each class session as a "live course" and be prepared to take notes on paper as the sound of typing can be distracting. Students should arrive at least 5 minutes before the start of the first class session, and at least 2 minutes before the start of the remaining class sessions. Finally, participants should prepare their coffee or take their bathroom breaks before the start of each class session. There will be a 5-minute break during each class.

Course Hours

Eight (8) hours, excluding the exam.

Course Goals

Sustainability must be embraced by all actors in the value chain if the specialty coffee industry is to survive and thrive. This course is designed to offer baseline knowledge of what the term sustainability means and the challenges of acting sustainably across the coffee value stream. It is focused on developing a common vocabulary and understanding of sustainability, with a focus on economics, the environment, social issues, and the connections between them. At the Foundation level, students will be exposed to sustainability terminology, a brief history of sustainability in coffee, and key sustainability challenges across the value chain.

They will also begin to understand the trade-offs and complexities of different approaches and current practices, and access some of the tools that exist to address a variety of sustainability challenges. The course is designed for people at all points in the value stream. Participants will leave the course understanding the complex, but not impossible, challenges related to sustainability issues, and will begin to recognize some ways to best implement solutions. Students will leave the Foundation course prepared for the Intermediate level. By successfully completing the Foundation level, students will be able to: i) articulate broad sustainability challenges at different points in the coffee value stream; ii) discuss possibilities for sustainability solutions and best practices at various levels of the coffee value stream; and iii) Explain the trade-offs of different sustainability projects and practices.

Exam Format

Students will have 35 minutes to complete the exam, unless otherwise discussed between them and the AST. The exam is available in English or Spanish. To pass the exam, students must answer 70% of the questions correctly. The questions are a mixture of true or false and multiple choice. Upon receiving a passing score, students will receive a certificate from the Specialty Coffee Association for the Foundation level.

Course Sessions and Outline

Session 1 (two hours)

- Introduction to the course
- The meaning of sustainability
- Brief history of sustainability as related to coffee
- Power and political considerations of sustainability in the coffee industry
- Wrap-up of first session

Session 2 (two hours)

- Recap of first session
- Introduction to sustainability stakeholders in coffee
- Introduction to current challenges:
 - Climate change throughout the industry
 - Agronomy at the farm-level
- Wrap-up of second session

Session 3 (two hours)

- Recap of second session
- Current challenges continued:
 - Price and price fluctuations
 - Economic inequality throughout the industry
 - Gender equity up and down the supply stream
 - Labor across the sector, farmworkers, and age of farmers
- Wrap-up of third session

Session 4 (two hours)

- Recap of third session
- Common solutions:
 - Price improvements
 - Farmer organizations
 - Coffee certifications and ethical marketing
 - Use of industry-wide toolkits
 - The meaning of Research & Development in the coffee sector
- Summary of opportunities and limitations to common sustainability solutions
- Understanding of what to do next
- Key takeaways