

Governance Professionals: The Strategic Role of the Company Secretary

7 February 2025, Friday

9.00am - 1.00pm

Speaker: PROF DR ZUBAIDAH ZAINAL
ABIDIN FCIS (CS) (CGP)

Virtual

Course code: CG070225W1

Closing date: 5 February 2025

**4 CPD
HOURS**

Introduction

In today's business landscape, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors have moved beyond being mere buzzwords to become integral components of corporate strategy. With increasing pressure from investors, regulators, and consumers for companies to demonstrate responsible business practices, the role of the company secretary has evolved significantly. Traditionally viewed as a compliance and governance expert, the company secretary now plays a pivotal role in shaping and driving corporate ESG strategies. The company secretary's strategic involvement in ESG is crucial for ensuring that sustainability and ethical considerations are embedded within the organisation's core operations and long-term vision. From advising the board on regulatory requirements and best practices to facilitating transparency in ESG reporting, the company secretary acts as a key enabler in the integration of ESG factors into governance structures. Furthermore, as businesses face growing demands for accountability in environmental impact, social responsibility, and governance, the company secretary's ability to align these areas with corporate objectives is vital for fostering a sustainable and forward-thinking organisation.

This paper explores the evolving responsibilities of the company secretary in shaping corporate ESG strategy, highlighting their role in integrating ESG into corporate governance, ensuring compliance with emerging regulations, and helping organisations navigate the complexities of sustainability in a rapidly changing global environment. Through strategic oversight and proactive engagement, the company secretary is essential to guiding the organisation towards achieving its ESG goals while enhancing long-term value creation.

Course objectives

The objective of this course is to explore and develop an understanding of the evolving and strategic role of the company secretary in shaping and implementing corporate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategies. Participants will learn how company secretaries can move beyond traditional governance functions to become key drivers of sustainable business practices that align with corporate goals and meet stakeholder expectations.

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the growing importance of ESG factors in modern corporate governance and business strategy.
2. Identify the critical role of the company secretary in advising the board on ESG issues, regulatory requirements, and best practices.
3. Develop the skills to integrate ESG into corporate governance structures, ensuring alignment with organisational objectives and long-term sustainability.
4. Learn how to facilitate ESG reporting and disclosure, ensuring transparency and compliance with global standards and regulations.
5. Analyse the company secretary's role in stakeholder engagement, risk management, and fostering a culture of sustainability within the organisation.
6. Explore the emerging trends and challenges in ESG governance, and how the company secretary can help navigate these complexities to drive long-term corporate success.

This course will equip company secretaries, governance professionals, and business leaders with the knowledge and tools needed to strategically influence ESG strategy, ensuring that their organisations thrive in a rapidly evolving business environment focused on sustainability and responsible governance.

Who should attend

Company secretaries, directors, corporate advisors, corporate governance professionals, lawyers, auditors, accounting professionals, risk management professionals and compliance officers.

Course outline

Module 1: Introduction to ESG and Its Impact on Corporate Governance

- Understanding ESG
 - Overview of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors and their growing significance in corporate governance.
 - The business case for integrating ESG into corporate strategy: value creation, risk management, and stakeholder expectations.
- The Evolving Role of the Company Secretary
 - How the role of the company secretary has expanded to include ESG responsibilities.
 - Overview of traditional governance responsibilities versus modern ESG-related duties.

Module 2: The Company Secretary's Role in Shaping ESG Strategy

- Advising the Board on ESG Strategy
 - The company secretary as an advisor on ESG trends, regulations, and strategic integration.
 - Guiding the board through the development and implementation of an effective ESG strategy.
- Aligning ESG with Corporate Governance
 - Integrating ESG factors into governance frameworks, policies, and procedures.
 - Ensuring that ESG becomes a core part of the company's long-term business objectives.

Module 3: Regulatory Landscape and Compliance with ESG

- Navigating ESG Regulations
 - Overview of global and regional ESG regulations (e.g., EU Taxonomy, Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), GRI standards).
 - The company secretary's role in ensuring compliance with ESG reporting and governance requirements.
- ESG Risk Management and Reporting
 - Identifying and managing ESG-related risks.
 - How the company secretary ensures accurate and timely ESG disclosures, aligning with global reporting frameworks and standards.

Module 4: Governance, Transparency, and Stakeholder Engagement in ESG

- Corporate Governance and ESG Leadership
 - The role of the company secretary in establishing a governance structure that supports ESG initiatives.
 - Leading the board's engagement on ESG issues and fostering a culture of ethical leadership.
- Stakeholder Engagement and Communication
 - Managing communication with internal and external stakeholders regarding ESG initiatives.
 - The company secretary's role in addressing stakeholder concerns, promoting transparency, and building trust through clear ESG reporting.

Module 5: ESG Implementation and Continuous Improvement

- Implementing ESG Strategy Across the Organisation
 - The company secretary's role in driving the practical application of the company's ESG strategy.
 - Overseeing the integration of ESG into business operations, decision-making, and company culture.
- Monitoring ESG Performance
 - Developing and tracking ESG Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
 - Conducting internal ESG audits and reviews to measure progress, assess effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement.

Module 6: Emerging Trends and Challenges in Corporate ESG Governance

- Technological Advances and Data Analytics in ESG
 - Leveraging technology and data analytics to improve ESG monitoring, reporting, and decision-making.
 - The role of the company secretary in using digital tools to enhance ESG governance.
- Navigating Challenges in ESG Governance
 - Addressing emerging challenges in ESG, including regulatory changes, stakeholder expectations, and balancing short-term financial performance with long-term sustainability goals.

About the trainer: Dr. Zubaidah Zainal Abidin, PhD, FCIS

Governance Professional | Academic Leader | Corporate Practices and Sustainability Expert

Dr. Zubaidah Zainal Abidin is a distinguished expert in governance, sustainability, and corporate practices, with over 40 years of experience spanning the corporate and academic worlds. She has held key roles, including Group Company Secretary for Safuan Group of Companies and senior leadership positions at Perwaja Terengganu Sdn Bhd and Malaysia Mining Corporation Berhad, mastering regulatory compliance and governance frameworks. An accomplished academic, Dr. Zubaidah served as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Internationalization) at Kolej Universiti Poly-Tech MARA and earned a Professorship at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), where she contributed significantly for over 25 years. She holds a PhD in Accounting from Curtin University and an MSc from the University of Southampton, reflecting her academic rigor. Her teaching and mentorship have guided countless professionals and students in subjects like corporate governance, boardroom dynamics, and corporate social responsibility. Dr. Zubaidah's areas of expertise include ESG and sustainability reporting, board governance, anti-money laundering compliance, and Section 17A of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act. She is a Certified HRD Trainer, a Fellow of MAICSA, and a Council Member for the Chartered Governance Institute Malaysia Berhad. As a prolific author, her eight books and numerous research contributions have influenced governance practices nationwide. A sought-after speaker, she has addressed global forums on governance risks, sustainable leadership, and ethical practices. Currently, she serves as an Academic Fellow at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), advancing research and education in governance. Dr. Zubaidah's legacy lies in her commitment to ethical leadership, sustainable growth, and mentoring the next generation of governance professionals. Her transformative work continues to inspire organizations and individuals to navigate the complexities of modern governance with integrity and foresight.

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