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Shaping Skills for Sustainable Innovations.

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Sustainable innovation, when put in a business management context, is currently for the most part a matter of intentions, inventions, implementing standards, market try-outs and - last but not least - marketing rhetoric. This can be corroborated by numerous case studies and conceptual papers presenting ideas like products and models for circular economy or for fair trade – just to name two examples – as showcases for sustainable innovations. However, if one tries to integrate the ideas of sustainability into product, process and business innovations in the long term, there are still two questions to answer:

1. What are the skills needed for integrating ideas for sustainability into new products, processes and business models?
2. How can these skills be shaped in an academic study course?

This paper provides preliminary answers to abovementioned questions by depicting how these questions have been answered in the design of the new study course 'sustainable product management' at Nuertingen-Geislingen University in Germany. In particular, the paper focuses firstly on the topic, what the underlying concept of 'sustainable product management' could and should be. Based on this foundation, it will secondly point out and justify, what the essential skills are which are expected by the business side on the one hand and the social and ecological systems on the other hand. Thirdly, it will give an impression of the methods employed in order to develop these skills in the context of an academic study course. The answers provided in this paper are to be viewed as preliminary in that the first graduates have just completed their studies in 'sustainable product management' and there are still numerous questions open. Presenting the open questions and providing an outlook for further work is therefore an equally crucial part of the paper presented.