DIGIFABS
Digital Change Agents for Food + Beverage SMEs



RDDCA Summer School

Concept

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01

INTRODUCTION

Digital Change

Summer School

The RDDCA Summer School is a core element of the DigiFABS Course Programme. It prepares students to understand and support responsible digital transformation in Food and Beverages SMEs through a combination of online preparation, intensive collaborative learning and practical challenge-based work.

The programme connects digitalisation, sustainability, resilience and sector-specific business challenges. Its main value lies in moving students from conceptual understanding to applied problem-solving in real SME contexts.

The Summer School concept is designed as a flexible and transferable model. It can be implemented as a full mobility programme, a blended low-budget format, a local replication model or a fully online pathway, while preserving the same pedagogical logic and competence-development objectives.

Summer School Goals

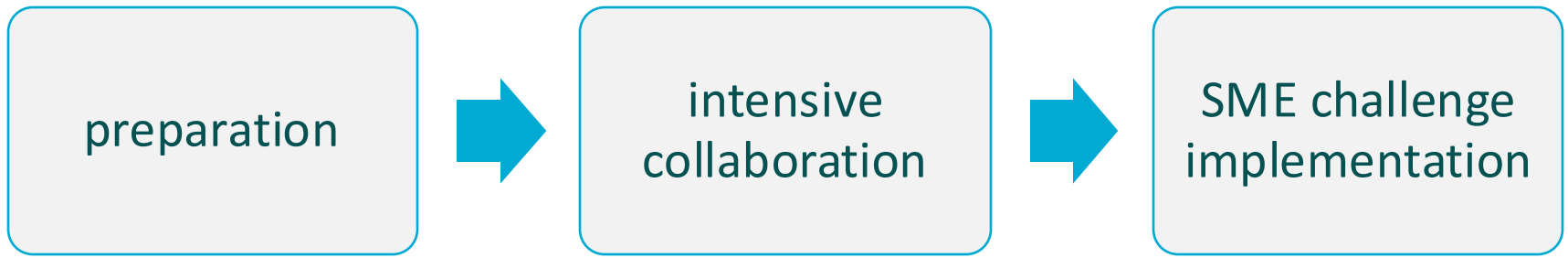
The goals of the Students RDDCA Summer School are:

- Provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of Responsible Dynamic Digital Change Agents (RDDCAs) in fostering digital transformation and sustainability within SMEs.
- Equip students with cutting-edge knowledge on technology trends, sustainability practices, and resilience strategies relevant to the F&B sector.
- Enhance participants' ability to identify and address challenges faced by SMEs, leveraging digital tools and sustainable practices.
- Prepare students for the SMEgoesDigital Challenge by integrating theoretical learning with practical team-based problem-solving exercises.
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, ensuring participants can effectively contribute to the future of the F&B industry.

Summer School Structure

The RDDCA Summer School is designed as a flexible learning pathway that can be adapted to different institutional calendars, mobility conditions and local business environments. The model combines online preparation, intensive collaborative learning and practical SME-oriented project work.

The model is not intended as a rigid programme format. Future organisers may adjust its duration and delivery mode while preserving the core logic:



Summer School Structure

Phase 1 – Online Preparation

Students are introduced to the DigiFABS project, the RDDCA concept, key challenges of the Food and Beverages sector, emerging technologies and best practice examples. This phase can be implemented through self-paced video materials, guided online sessions or blended classroom use.

Phase 2 – Intensive Summer School

The face-to-face or blended Summer School phase focuses on deep-dive learning, interdisciplinary teamwork, company interaction, practical exercises and preparation for the SME Goes Digital Challenge. The intensive format should maximise direct interaction, intercultural exchange and team development.

Phase 3 – SME Goes Digital Challenge Preparation

During the Summer School, students are gradually introduced to real SME challenges. The initial SME matchmaking and challenge scoping should start before or during the Summer School, so that students enter the challenge phase with a clear understanding of the business context, expected outputs and available data.

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Target Group

Digital Change

The **DigiFABS Summer School** is designed for a diverse audience, bringing together students from three distinct disciplines: **Business, Nutrition, and Engineering**. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a dynamic learning environment that caters to the unique interests, knowledge levels, and professional needs of each group.



Target Group

Eligibility

No prior F&B technical expertise required
3rd/4th year undergraduate or Master level
English for teamwork and presentations
Motivation, practical skills and SME-fit considered

Educational Disciplines

Business / management / marketing / analytics
Technology / engineering / IT / data science
Food science / nutrition / agri-food / agribusiness

Sources: FH Münster, 2024b; Melvin et al., 2024

Sample Student Profile



Name: Felix Schneider
Age: 23
Study Program: Master of International Marketing & Sales
Favorite Channel: LinkedIn





GOALS

- Understand the role of digitalization in transforming traditional industries, like food and beverage
- Gain insights into how technology can be leveraged for innovative marketing strategies
- Connect with industry professionals and like-minded peers

PAIN POINTS

- No previous exposure to the technical aspects of the food & beverage sector

KEY MOTIVATORS

- Learning how digitalization affects consumer behavior in the food and beverage sector.
- Company visits that demonstrate real-world applications of digital tools.
- Networking with students from different disciplines to gain diverse perspectives.

INTERESTS

- Brand Strategy
- Data-driven Marketing
- Learning via Case Studies

Sources: FH Münster, 2024b; Melvin et al., 2024

STUDENT RECRUITMENT & COMPETENCY MATCHING

Student recruitment should not be based only on general eligibility criteria. To support the quality of the Summer School and the later SME Goes Digital Challenge, organisers should consider the match between student profiles, practical skills and the expected needs of participating SMEs.

The recommended selection approach combines four criteria:

- study level and English proficiency,
- motivation to work on real SME challenges,
- practical skills relevant to digital transformation, sustainability, food systems or business development,
- fit between the student's background and the available SME challenge topics.

The objective is not to select only highly technical students. The Summer School benefits from diversity. However, each student team should include a balanced mix of competences that allows the group to understand the SME context, analyse the problem and propose a feasible solution.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT & COMPETENCY MATCHING

SME need	Preferred profile	Useful skills	Team role
Digital marketing	Business / marketing	content, customer insights, channels	market analyst
Process optimisation	Engineering / IT / data	process mapping, automation logic	technical analyst
Product / nutrition	Food science / nutrition	quality, nutrition trends, product logic	sector specialist
Business model	Business / agribusiness	value proposition, cost-benefit thinking	business strategist

Practical rule: if a competence is missing in the student team, adapt the challenge scope or add mentor support.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM COMPOSITION

The Summer School should actively support interdisciplinary student teams. A balanced team composition improves the quality of challenge analysis and reduces the risk of one-sided solutions.
Each team should ideally combine three competence lenses:

Business lens
Focus on customer needs, market logic, business model, feasibility and communication of the proposed solution.

Technical/data lens
Focus on digital tools, data availability, process mapping, automation potential and technical feasibility.

Food sector lens
Focus on the specific characteristics of Food and Beverages SMEs, including production, nutrition, sustainability, quality, safety and sector-specific constraints.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM COMPOSITION

When the ideal mix is not possible, organisers should adjust the SME challenge complexity. For example, teams without technical members should focus on digital readiness, process mapping, customer communication or low-threshold digital tools rather than advanced technical implementation.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM COMPOSITION

- Aim for all three competence lenses in every SME team.
- One student may cover more than one lens, but no team should be formed only from one discipline.
- Match the level of challenge complexity with the team's real technical and sectoral capacity.
- Confirm roles, communication rhythm and expected contribution before the SME Challenge starts.

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Flexible Mobility and Delivery Models

Digital Change

FLEXIBLE MOBILITY AND DELIVERY MODELS

The Summer School concept can be implemented through several delivery models. This flexibility allows future organisers to adapt the programme to different budgets, academic calendars, mobility constraints and institutional conditions.

Regardless of the selected model, organisers should preserve four core elements:

- structured preparation before teamwork starts,
- interdisciplinary collaboration,
- interaction with real SME challenges,
- final reflection and presentation of practical outputs.

FLEXIBLE MOBILITY AND DELIVERY MODELS

Model	Structure	Recommended use
Full Mobility Model	Online preparation + 5–6 days face-to-face Summer School + follow-up SME Challenge	Best option when mobility funding and international participation are available. Maximises direct interaction, intercultural exchange and team development.
Blended Low-Budget Model	Online preparation + 2–3 intensive face-to-face days + online mentoring and challenge work	Suitable when travel budgets or time availability are limited. Keeps the most important face-to-face elements while reducing cost.
Local Replication Model	Local in-class implementation supported by online materials, virtual guest sessions and remote SME interaction	Suitable for universities or training providers that want to reuse DigiFABS resources without international mobility.
Fully Online Model	Self-paced modules + online workshops + remote SME challenge work	Suitable when physical mobility is not possible. Requires stronger facilitation, regular check-ins and clear team engagement monitoring.

RECOMMENDED SUMMER SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- The schedule on following slides presents a **recommended** structure.
- Dates and duration can be adapted to the local academic calendar, mobility model and availability of SMEs.
- The learning sequence should remain stable, but the format can be adjusted.
- The order of deep-dive topics can be adapted.
- The programme should always include a structured transition from learning modules to SME challenge preparation.

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Recommended Summer School Schedule

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Online Preparation Phase

Day / Step	Learning focus	Suggested format
Step 0	Introduction to DigiFABS, Summer School structure and learner expectations	Online orientation session or self-paced introductory material
Step 1	Challenges of the Food and Beverages sector	Self-paced video, reading material, short reflection task
Step 2	RDDCA Concept	Video module, guided discussion or classroom use
Step 3	Emerging Technologies	Self-paced learning with optional advanced content
Step 4	Best Practices in the Food and Beverages sector	Case-based learning
Step 5	Team-building and introduction to SME Goes Digital Challenge	Online workshop, team allocation, first challenge briefing

INTENSIVE SUMMER SCHOOL PHASE

Day / Step	Learning focus	Suggested format
Step 1	Green trends and sustainability challenges	Deep-dive session, case work, group discussion
Step 2	Resilience of Food and Beverages SMEs	Practical exercise, retrospective, challenge link
Step 3	Nutrition, digitalisation and consumer trends	Deep-dive session or applied case analysis
Step 4	Team-building and interdisciplinary collaboration	Team exercise, role allocation, collaboration rules
Step 5	SME interaction / industry visit / challenge scoping	Company visit, SME presentation, challenge scoping workshop
Step 6	SME Goes Digital Challenge preparation and closing presentations	Team action plan, first solution direction, certificate of participation

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EARLY SME MATCHMAKING AND CHALLENGE SCOPING

EARLY SME MATCHMAKING AND CHALLENGE SCOPING

The link between the Summer School and the SME Goes Digital Challenge should be established as early as possible. Students should not start the challenge phase with unclear expectations, limited company information or insufficient access to data.

Early SME matchmaking should therefore be integrated into the Summer School through a structured collaborative process.

EARLY SME MATCHMAKING AND CHALLENGE SCOPING – RECOMMENDED PROCESS

1. **SME pre-selection before the Summer School:** Organisers identify suitable SMEs and verify their availability, motivation and capacity to provide information, data and feedback during the challenge.
2. **SME challenge briefing:** Each SME prepares a short challenge brief describing the company context, the problem to be addressed, expected outputs, available data and contact person.
3. **Student-SME introduction:** SMEs present their business context and challenge to students during the Summer School. This can take place during an industry visit, online presentation or facilitated workshop.
4. **Challenge Scoping Workshop:** Student teams work with facilitators and, where possible, SME representatives to clarify the challenge. The team should identify the main problem, user needs, constraints, available data, expected deliverable and first ideas for solution development.
5. **Feasibility check:** Facilitators verify whether the proposed challenge scope is realistic for the available time, student competences and SME capacity.
6. **Team Action Plan:** Before the Summer School ends, each team prepares a short action plan for the SME Goes Digital Challenge, including milestones, communication rhythm, internal responsibilities and expected outputs.

EARLY SME MATCHMAKING AND CHALLENGE SCOPING

Minimum Challenge Brief Information

Each SME challenge should include:

- company profile
- challenge title
- short description of the problem
- why the problem matters for the SME
- available data
- documents or internal insights
- contact person and expected availability
- expected student output
- limitations or confidentiality issues
- possible format of final deliverable

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Student Participation Commitment

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION COMMITMENT

- One of the key lessons from the pilot implementation is that student engagement must be supported beyond the face-to-face Summer School phase. To reduce the risk of declining participation during the follow-up SME Challenge, students should confirm their commitment before entering the programme.
- The commitment does not need to be a complex legal document. It should function as a clear participation agreement between students, organisers and facilitators.

Recommended Commitment Points

By joining the Summer School and SME Goes Digital Challenge, students confirm that they will:

- participate in the online preparation phase,
- attend the intensive Summer School activities,
- actively contribute to interdisciplinary teamwork,
- continue working with the team during the SME Goes Digital Challenge,
- respect agreed deadlines and communication rules,
- contribute to the final team deliverable and presentation,
- inform the facilitator in case of availability problems,
- respect confidentiality rules related to SME information,
- use feedback from educators, SMEs and peers constructively.

Facilitation Guidance for Future Organisers

The Summer School should be implemented as an applied learning environment, not only as a sequence of lectures. Facilitators play a key role in connecting content, teamwork and SME challenge preparation.

Future organisers should:

- use learning materials flexibly according to local needs,
- combine self-paced content with live discussion and practical tasks,
- make the link between each module and SME application explicit,
- support interdisciplinary team roles from the beginning,
- avoid overloading students with highly technical content when their background is not suitable,
- label advanced content as optional where needed,
- include regular retrospectives and team check-ins,
- confirm that each team understands its SME challenge before the Summer School ends,
- support continued engagement after the intensive phase.

The main facilitation principle is to help students move from understanding digital transformation concepts to applying them in a concrete SME context.

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Link between Summer School and SME Goes Digital Challenge

Transition from Summer School to SME Goes Digital Challenge

The Summer School should create a strong operational bridge to the SME Goes Digital Challenge. The challenge phase should not start as a separate activity, but as a continuation of the learning journey.

By the end of the Summer School, each team should have:

- a confirmed SME challenge
- a clear understanding of the company context
- an initial problem definition, agreed internal team roles
- confirmed communication rules
- a preliminary action plan
- first feedback from a facilitator or SME representative
- a shared understanding of the expected final output

This transition reduces ambiguity, supports student motivation and increases the likelihood that the final challenge outputs will be useful for SMEs.

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Draft Schedule for SME Goes Digital Challenge

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Note on SME Challenge Schedule

The SME Goes Digital Challenge schedule should be understood as a flexible implementation framework. The sequence of sensing, seizing and transforming opportunities remains the core methodological logic. However, the timing of coaching sessions, SME meetings, open working sessions and pitch preparation can be adapted to the academic calendar, SME availability and team progress.

To improve continuity after the Summer School, facilitators should organise regular check-ins, monitor team engagement and support workload distribution within student teams.

Draft Schedule for SME Goes Digital Challenge

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
M1	Factory Visit x 1 Facilitator Coaching Session: Challenge Kick-Off and Intro to Step 1	1st Step: Sensing Opportunities SME + Facilitator Session Facilitator Coaching Session	Open Working Sessions Facilitator Coaching Session	Open Working Sessions Facilitator Coaching Session
M2	Facilitator Coaching Session: Intro to Step 2 Open Working Sessions	2nd Step: Seizing Opportunities SME + Facilitator Session Facilitator Coaching Session	Open Working Sessions Facilitator Coaching Session	Open Working Sessions Facilitator Review 1 for Pitch
M3	Facilitator Coaching Session: Intro to Step 3 Open Working Sessions	3rd Step: Transforming Opportunities SME + Facilitator Session Facilitator Review 2 for Pitch	Open Working Sessions Facilitator Coaching Session	Final Pitch Presentations

Mandatory

Flexible
(week can be changed, month to remain same)

Subject to Availability

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Annex: Learning Objectives and Outcomes RDDCA Modules

Digital Change

Annex: Learning Objectives and Outcomes for RDDCA Modules

This annex summarises the learning focus, expected outcomes and possible assessment options for the RDDCA modules used within the Summer School. The module descriptions are intended as guidance for educators and organisers when adapting the Summer School to different delivery models, student profiles and SME challenge contexts.

The modules can be used flexibly. Advanced or highly technical content should be adapted to the background of the student cohort and clearly marked as optional where needed.

Challenges of F&B Sector

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Focused on identifying and exploring the unique hurdles faced by SMEs in the F&B sector.	Identify and analyse the specific challenges and trends facing SMEs in the F&B sector, such as food traceability, changing consumer preferences, and regulatory landscapes in the EU, including food safety regulations, labelling requirements, and data privacy considerations.	Students will be able to describe the main challenges and emerging trends impacting the F&B sector, understanding their influence on SMEs. Through case studies, they will analyse real-world scenarios and apply this knowledge to assess the potential impact of these factors on different F&B business models.	• Case Study Report: Students to submit a report analysing a chosen F&B SME case study, identifying challenges, and recommending digital transformation strategies. • Presentation on emerging trends and challenges in the F&B sector, demonstrating students' understanding of the industry landscape.

RDDCA Concept

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Stands for Responsible Dynamic Digital Change Agents, focusing on equipping students, educators, and SMEs with digital, green, and resilience skills critical for managing transformation in the F&B industry	• To provide a comprehensive understanding of digital transformation and its impact on business operations, customer engagement, and competitive advantage within SMEs. • Analyse the role of change agents and digital change agents in leading digital transformation within SMEs • Define and explain the role of Responsible Dynamic Digital Change Agents (RDDCAs) in driving digital transformation and sustainability within the F&B sector. • Understand the essential digital, green, and resilience skills needed by RDDCAs to effectively lead and manage change in F&B organizations.	• Students will understand how to cultivate an environment that encourages innovation, creativity, and continuous improvement within SMEs through effective leadership and digital initiatives. • Students will be able to develop and articulate a strategic vision for digital transformation, aligning business goals with technological advancements to drive growth and competitiveness. • Students will be able to articulate a comprehensive definition of the RDDCA role, explaining its significance within the F&B sector. They will be able to communicate the value proposition of RDDCAs to various stakeholders, including SMEs, educators, and policymakers.	• Based on self-assessments and feedback received during the program, students reflect and create a personalized RDDCA skill development plan outlining their strengths, weaknesses, and targeted areas for improvement.

Emerging Technologies

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Focused on cutting-edge technologies like IoT, AI, and blockchain, this module highlights how these can be leveraged to enhance efficiency, traceability, and quality in F&B operations, empowering SMEs to stay competitive.	• Understand the potential of emerging technologies like IoT, AI, blockchain, and data analytics in transforming F&B operations and business models. • Evaluate the impact of technology on efficiency, traceability, quality control, and customer engagement within the F&B sector. • Identify and apply ethical considerations and responsible practices related to data privacy, security, and the societal impact of digital technologies in the F&B sector.	• Students will be able to articulate the capabilities of various emerging technologies and their applications within the F&B sector, including enhancing specific operational areas like production, logistics, and customer engagement. • Students will be able to conduct comprehensive assessments of the impact of technology adoption on different aspects of the F&B value chain, considering positive and negative consequences for businesses, consumers, and the environment. • Students will be able to identify and analyse ethical considerations related to data privacy, algorithm bias, and the responsible use of AI and automation in the F&B sector.	• Students present on a specific emerging technology (AI, Blockchain, IoT) and its potential applications within the F&B sector. The report should include an analysis of its benefits, challenges, ethical considerations, and potential impact on the F&B value chain. • Technology Solution Pitch: Teams develop and pitch a technology-driven solution for a specific challenge faced by an F&B SME. The pitch should demonstrate an understanding of the technology, its application, feasibility, and potential impact on the business.

Best practices of F&B Sector

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Compilation of successful strategies and frameworks employed by F&B leaders, emphasizing scalable and replicable solutions for SMEs	• Identify and analyse successful strategies and frameworks implemented by leading F&B companies, focusing on their relevance and adaptability for SMEs. • Evaluate the scalability and replicability of these best practices for implementation in diverse SME contexts within the F&B industry.	• Students will be able to research and compile a portfolio of successful strategies and frameworks implemented by leading F&B companies, clearly presenting and explaining these examples while highlighting the key elements that contributed to their success and their potential relevance for SMEs. • Students will be able to critically assess the scalability and adaptability of different best practices for implementation in diverse SME contexts within the F&B industry, considering factors like company size, resources, and specific industry challenges.	• Best Practices Portfolio where students compile a portfolio showcasing successful digital transformation strategies implemented by leading F&B companies. The portfolio should analyse each case study, outlining key success factors, and discuss its potential adaptability for different SME contexts.

Deep Dive Green Trends

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Investigates sustainability trends in the F&B sector, such as reducing waste and transitioning to renewable energy sources, enabling SMEs to align with environmental expectations.	• Identify and explain key sustainability trends and best practices within the F&B sector, including waste reduction, resource optimization, circular economy principles, and the adoption of renewable energy sources. • Develop and propose sustainable solutions and strategies for F&B SMEs, considering environmental, economic, and social implications.	• Students will be able to conduct research and present a well-informed overview of current and emerging sustainability trends in the F&B sector. • Students will be able to identify innovative approaches and technologies that contribute to sustainable food production, packaging, distribution, and consumption. • Students will be able to develop and propose concrete, actionable solutions for enhancing sustainability within specific F&B contexts, analysing the feasibility and impact of these solutions, considering environmental, economic, and social implications.	• Students will participate in a design sprint focusing on a specific sustainability challenge within the F&B industry. They brainstorm, prototype, and present a feasible and impactful solution incorporating green technologies and practices.

Deep Dive Resilience

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Centres on building adaptability within SMEs to withstand market fluctuations, supply chain disruptions, and other challenges by integrating robust digital and operational strategies	• Analyse the factors impacting the resilience of F&B SMEs, such as market volatility, supply chain disruptions, and regulatory changes. • Develop and apply digital and operational strategies to enhance the resilience of F&B SMEs, ensuring their adaptability and ability to thrive in a changing landscape.	• Students will be able to conduct in-depth analyses of the internal and external factors impacting the resilience of F&B SMEs and develop frameworks and models for assessing resilience, considering factors like supply chain vulnerabilities, market fluctuations, and regulatory changes. • Students will be able to develop and present comprehensive strategies for enhancing the resilience of F&B SMEs, incorporating digital solutions and operational adjustments, demonstrating a holistic understanding of resilience building in the F&B sector.	• Students will analyse case studies of F&B companies facing disruptions and develop presentations outlining comprehensive strategies for enhancing resilience. They will present their strategies, incorporating digital solutions, operational adjustments, and risk mitigation measures.

Deep Dive Nutrition

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Addresses consumer-driven trends toward healthier food options, guiding SMEs in aligning their product development and marketing strategies to meet these demands.	• Explore and explain the connection between nutrition and digitalization in the F&B sector, analysing the impact of technology on food production, consumption patterns, and public health considerations. • Analyse the use of digital tools and platforms for promoting healthy diets, improving nutritional awareness, and addressing nutritional challenges within the F&B sector.	• Students will gain insights into the relationship between nutrition and digitalization in the F&B sector, analysing how technology impacts food choices, dietary habits, and public health outcomes. • Students will be able to research and critically evaluate the effectiveness of various digital tools and platforms aimed at improving nutrition in the F&B sector. They will be able to analyse user engagement, impact metrics, and best practices for leveraging these tools to promote healthy eating habits	• Students research and critically evaluate digital tools and platforms aimed at improving nutrition in the F&B sector. They analyse a case study to see user engagement, impact metrics, and best practices for leveraging these tools to promote healthy eating habits, presenting their findings and recommendations

Preparation SME Challenge

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Engaging students in practical exercises to identify and tackle their specific SME digital transformation challenge, supported by expert mentorship	• Identify and analyse real-world digital transformation challenges faced by F&B SMEs, applying their knowledge and skills to develop practical solutions. • Develop and present proposals and solutions to address these challenges, drawing on the understanding of digital technologies, sustainability principles, and best practices in the F&B sector.	• Students will be able to conduct thorough needs assessments of F&B SMEs, identifying and prioritizing the digital transformation challenges aligning with the company's strategic goals and operational context. • Students will be able to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams to develop innovative and feasible digital solutions for the identified challenges and create compelling presentations that clearly communicate the proposed solutions, their value proposition, and their potential impact on the F&B SME's performance.	• SME Goes Digital Pitch

Team-building Sessions

Description	Objectives	Expected Outcomes	Assessment/Deliverable Options
Aims to strengthen collaboration and communication within student teams, ensuring alignment and collective commitment to 'SME goes Digital' challenge.	• Enhance communication and collaboration skills, learning to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams to achieve shared goals. • Apply teamwork and problem-solving skills to address complex challenges related to digital transformation in the F&B sector.	• Students will demonstrate improved communication skills, actively listening to team members, providing constructive feedback, and conveying their ideas effectively. They will demonstrate the ability to collaborate in diverse teams, leveraging individual strengths and managing conflicts to achieve shared objectives. • Students will be able to effectively apply their teamwork and problem-solving skills to address complex, real-world challenges presented in the context of the SME goes Digital Challenge, demonstrating adaptability, resilience, and a solution-oriented approach when facing unexpected obstacles.	• Group Work: Students practice business operations (role playing) and team presentations.