



## An Open Letter to Academic Institutions Educate Future Managers and Leaders on Business and Human Rights

**Demand for multidisciplinary business and human rights education is growing worldwide.** Governments, business enterprises, civil society organizations and multilateral institutions are increasingly engaged in managing business and human rights challenges. In all sectors, there is a need for university and professional school graduates who: 1) understand the relevance of international human rights standards<sup>1</sup> for business; 2) are familiar with the Principles of the UN Global Compact and the corporate responsibility to respect human rights as detailed in the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework for Business and Human Rights (2008) and elaborated in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011);<sup>2</sup> and 3) have been exposed to best practices for managing the human rights impacts of business. Leading companies are integrating human rights considerations into their strategy and operations, and reporting on their performance. More companies are looking to hire graduates with the knowledge and skills to effectively recognize and manage the human rights risks and opportunities of business activities and relationships.

**Management education should include business and human rights topics.** Human rights considerations are increasingly important to leadership strategy, planning and execution. A business that respects human rights has a lower risk profile and greater opportunities for delivering innovation, financial returns and sustainable value. Managing human rights impacts is becoming a required competency for a wide range of business functions, including but not limited to: corporate strategy, risk management, legal compliance, human resources, procurement, finance, product design, investor relations, marketing, communications and public affairs. A growing number of academic institutions around the world incorporate human rights standards, concepts and tools in management and leadership courses and curricula. We welcome these efforts. [Resources are available](#) to assist institutions seeking to promote management education on human rights. UN Global Compact Local Networks are a potential source of expertise and collaboration for local academic institutions.

**Academic institutions are well positioned to prepare students to manage the human rights impacts of business.** Students pursuing management and professional education today will become tomorrow’s business leaders. In a world of reputation risk and increasing calls for accountability, students need academic institutions to equip them with an understanding of human rights, what it means for companies to respect human rights, and how to leverage business and human rights opportunities. Students preparing today for careers in business, law and government expect universities to equip them with the knowledge and skills to manage the human rights impacts of business.

---

<sup>1</sup>The list of internationally recognized human rights is contained in the International Bill of Human Rights (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its codifying treaties), coupled with the fundamental rights in the eight ILO core conventions as set out in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

<sup>2</sup>The UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for implementing the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework. Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council, “Human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises,” 6 July 2011 (UN doc. A/HRC/RES/17/4).



**United Nations**  
Global Compact

**PRME**

*This letter was drafted jointly by the **UN Global Compact Office** and the **Secretariat of the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)**, and has been endorsed by the multi-stakeholder **UN Global Compact Human Rights and Labour Working Group (HRLWG)**. The UN Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted [principles](#) in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. The PRME initiative champions the incorporation of human rights into management education through research, teaching methodologies and institutional strategies. The HRLWG provides advice and guidance to the Global Compact's human rights and labour work. HRLWG members include thirty multinational companies across industry sectors. For guidance, see [Resources on Managing the Human Rights Impacts of Business](#).*

**The companies, organizations and individuals that sign the Open Letter support the incorporation of human rights into management and professional education globally. We call on academic institutions worldwide to incorporate business and human rights education in their curricula and equip students with the knowledge and skills businesses need to fulfill their corporate responsibilities and deliver sustainable value to stakeholders**

**Sign the Open Letter [here](#).**