

UN-PRME – Sharing Information on Progress

University of Edinburgh Business School

Introduction and context

This is our second SIP report, following on from our inaugural, and rather long, submission in 2018 in which we presented the School mission, vision and values. Available via our website¹, these remain unchanged. At the time, we elected to report against the required University-wide planning and reporting framework. The University of Edinburgh has changed this framework twice since our inaugural SIP report and the new framework bears little resemblance to the framework in use in 2018. This has made it rather difficult to track UN-PRME related activity “as part of normal routines”, a stated objective in our first SIP, and we are therefore electing to report against the *Six Principles*. As we will see below, a new framework is emerging which may allow this.

The single-most disruptive event in recent years is the COVID-19 pandemic and at the time of writing, the School, like any other individual and organisation around the world, is seeking to understand how this will impact short and medium term, and developing plans for how to deal with this. At the time of reporting we, like the rest of the world, have little insight into the global consequences of COVID-19 so we shall refrain from reporting on that.

Brexit has led to the University demanding that schools within the University plan for specific action related to income from student recruitment and research funding. In common with other UK business schools, we rely heavily on tuition fee income. The increased risks around student recruitment means we need to increase our efforts to ameliorate these. The School has for some years now reported formally to the University on a critical lack of space. Insufficient space prevents progress on specific actions enhancing the students’ sense of community, prompting the need for temporary or ameliorating action, but a new school building promised for 2022 has now been put back to 2027 at the earliest. This delay is caused by the University’s concerns relating to the impact of Brexit. These challenges have taken away resources and therefore momentum from other projects.

Notwithstanding, recent news items suggest activity and progress made in engagement, dialogue, learning and research:

- *Why Lending to Farm Businesses That Support Biodiversity Is the Way Forward*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/why-lending-to-farm-businesses-that-support-biodiversity-is-the-way-forward>
- *New Course to Help Finance Professionals Address Sustainability and Climate Concerns*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/new-course-to-address-sustainability-and-climate-concerns>
- *Ethical Tourism and a Mental Health App: Business School Students Make Their Mark*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/make-your-mark-2020>
- *Business Can Be a Tool for Good Says Recipient of MBA LGBT+ Scholarship*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/business-can-be-tool-for-good-says-recipient-of-lgbt-scholarship>
- *Firms That Act on Their Social Responsibilities Likely to Perform Better*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/firms-acting-on-social-responsibilities-likely-to-perform-better>
- *Business School Undergrad Course Awarded Global Prize*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/undergraduate-course-awarded-global-prize>
- *Equity Law Can Disadvantage Women in Algorithmic Credit Decisions*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/equity-law-can-disadvantage-women-in-credit-decisions>

¹ <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/mission-vision-values>

- *Training Teachers to Deliver Financial Education Key to Protecting Students from Identity Theft*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/training-teachers-key-to-protecting-students>
- *New Research Holds Potential for Step Change in Carbon Management of Infrastructure Projects*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/step-change-in-carbon-management-of-infrastructure-projects>
- *Recognition for Firms Who Employ Diverse Age Groups*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/recognition-firms-employing-diverse-age-groups>
- *Business School Student Opens New Chapter in Social Entrepreneurship*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/student-opens-new-chapter-social-entrepreneurship>
- *Why Business Should Embrace This International Day of Older Persons - As the UN says, empowering older people, including promoting their active participation in economic life, ensures inclusiveness and helps reduce inequalities*, see: <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/international-day-of-older-persons>
<https://www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday/>

We shall refer to some of these news items below.

Principle 1: Purpose

As mentioned above, our mission to develop “*effective and responsible leaders by creating insightful knowledge and inspiring minds in dialogue with the world around us*” remains unchanged. Our values remain unchanged too and as part of an ongoing University-level project, we are ensuring that these align, in intent if not in wording, with those of the wider university.

In annual planning, the School’s Executive Committee (SEC) from this year consider how planned activity map onto and support relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals. In this first iteration, we have identified activity relating to these SDGs:

- Good Health and Well-Being;
- Quality Education;
- Gender Equality;
- Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure;
- Responsible Consumption and Production, and
- Climate Action.

This is very much work-in-progress and as we become more accustomed to this, we will be in a better position to use the SDGs to steer activity and for general reporting.

Supporting the SEC, we have, with the participation from the Board, reviewed the role of our International Advisory Board¹ and reviewed membership for increased diversity.

The Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability Committee (ERSC), described in our first SIP, has now become established and we are working to develop the Sustainability Director role into a new academic leadership role to better co-ordinate our activities across these areas. We have reviewed our engagement with UN-PRME and the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS), and benchmarked this against other UK business schools. Developing a plan and a framework for engagement with both UN-PRME and ABIS, and related reporting, will be part of the remit for this new leadership role but it will also include activity relating to teaching and learning; research; engagement, and School Operations. We expect to advertise this role internally in the spring of 2020, once the job description has been approved by the SEC.

We have appointed our first Equality & Diversity Director and established an E&D committee. An initial focus of the new E&D committee will be on Widening Participation. As part of our 100-year anniversary in 2019, we launched specific Equality and Diversity Scholarships² in February 2019. The *Access Edinburgh Scholarship* aims

¹ <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/structure/advisory-board>

² <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/msc/banking-risk/scholarships-funding/school>

at particular Widening Participation¹ markers applied in the UK, while the *Positive Action for LGBT+ MSc Scholarship* and *Somewhere MBA LGBT+ Scholarship*² are awarded to candidates who are committed to making a difference to the LGBT+ community within the business environment. As an interesting aside – recruitment for the *Sustainable Fashion* field trip to India was via written application and we saw that the profile of students was quite different from event and activities with recruitment by interview. This opened for widening participation for those who feel less comfortable in the interview situation.

Principle 2: Values

Our programmes continue to include programme level learning outcomes relating to ethics, responsibility and sustainability in addition to outcomes relating to critical assessment and evaluation. We mentioned in our inaugural report our activity to map programmes according to these principles. We have, to some extent, delayed this in order to add digital skills as part of this; thereby mapping all skills in one map/matrix. As a parallel activity, we are working with the University's Social Responsibility and Sustainability unit on trial mapping of our programmes against the SDGs.

A number of courses have been reviewed. In our 2018 SIP, we mentioned the *Global Challenges for Business* course. The focus of the course is the impact of globalization and global inequality on business; the shift to a low carbon economy and resource constrained world, and the impact of technology and digital disruption. It also supports the at times difficult transition into University. We were extremely proud to learn that the course, organised by Dr Sarah Ivory, in 2019 won one of the prestigious *Ideas Worth Teaching* awards from the Aspen Institute³.

We have also seen some very positive outcomes from working more closely with our students. For example, *Edinburgh University Women in Business* is now a fully-fledged student society with the support of the Business School, having originated as a collaboration between the Business Society and the School Council in 2016/17. On a related note, just recently we featured in *The 25 Best MBA Programs For Women* from Business Because⁴, our MBA programme continues to attract a high proportion of female students.

Principle 3: Method

We mentioned above our programme-mapping project and in January 2020, we appointed a Senior Teaching Fellow in Business Education to help drive these changes in collaboration with the ERS Committee. Our 2020-2023 plan lists targets to map “Skills, graduate attributes and ERS themes mapped across all taught courses/programmes” by the end of 2020/21 and the additional target “Skills, graduate attributes and ERS themes fully integrated into curricula” by 2022/2023.

We continue to enhance extra-curricular activity. Building on a successful portfolio of recognition for skills development, we successfully piloted an Edinburgh Award⁵ for Professional Development for non-honours students in 2019/20. We are building on that to extend our offer to more students and are piloting an Honours Edinburgh Award in Effective and Responsible Leadership in the current academic year. In addition, on MSc and MBA level we have introduced workshops on ‘Developing Personal Resilience’ within the professional development curriculum to recognise the increasing importance of proactively promoting wellbeing to our student communities.

We continue to offer international treks on all levels. In our 2018 SIP, we reported on our research-led development of an innovative interdisciplinary *Sustainable Fashion* field trip to India in partnership with Edinburgh College of Art. Reported in Vogue India⁶ and available via an online video⁷, this hugely successful field trip allowed students to follow the fashion supply chain from the cotton fields to the couture houses of

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation>

² <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/mba/full-time/scholarships-funding/school>

³ <https://www.ideasworthteachingawards.com/2019-course-winners/global-challenges-for-business>

⁴ <https://www.businessbecause.com/news/mba-rankings/6775/25-best-women-mba-programs>

⁵ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-award>

⁶ <https://www.vogue.in/content/university-edinburgh-takes-sustainable-fashion-india/>

⁷ <https://youtu.be/l460ebsYfGQ>

metropolitan Mumbai. Students were asked to consider the environmental, social and economic implications of India's primary export. This trek has been offered on two occasions. A spin-off is the interdisciplinary, student-led initiative *Focus India*¹, which concentrate on aspects of fast fashion supply-chains.

We have also worked hard to strengthen our relationships with the University Counselling and Disability services to ensure better signposting and visibility of the support available to our students. This has for example, included inviting staff from these services to present to students during Welcome Week and sharing materials/resources on an ongoing basis. We do this in order to gain the trust of students, especially international students some of whom may come from countries where disability and impairment may carry a stigma.

Principle 4: Research

As explained in our 2018 SIP, we have advanced processes in place for carrying out ethics approval for research projects. All processes have been reviewed following on from new Data Protection legislation, commonly referred to as GDPR, which came into play in May 2018.

There is an increasing focus in looking at how our academic research and consultancy can effect positive environmental and sustainable outcomes. Members of the ERS Committee are reviewing REF 2021 submissions and we are mapping our research grant applications. We are working towards the creation of a comprehensive reporting or mapping framework which will help in the development of new research opportunities, in resource prioritisation, in School marketing and communications, and in wider engagement.

ERS values are also reflected in the impact of our research beyond academia. In autumn 2018, we chose to showcase two examples via online video² – improving financial literacy for young people and improving carbon accounting – in a UK-wide awareness-raising campaign led by the Chartered Association of Business Schools. Project FAIR³ looks at the practices of the international aid sector where most organisations remunerate their national and international employees on different scales. Please see more detail under “Partnership”.

We have just had approval for the creation of a new research centre, *Centre for Business, Climate Change, and Sustainability (CBCCS)*. This is planned to launch in Spring 2020 (subject to final approvals) and will bring together our existing research into carbon management and finance, climate change and sustainable business.

Submitting for the first time to the Better World MBA in 2017, the School was placed 20th. In 2018, we are placed 21st, while in 2019 we had improved our position to 16th. Sixty percent of the ranking result is based on a school's research activity including publications and research centres based at the school. This is assessed based on a number of topics considered as part of 'sustainable development' by the Corporate Knights organisation.

Principle 5: Partnership

There is an increasing focus in looking at how our academic research and consultancy can effect positive environmental and sustainable outcomes. Examples include our international industry collaboration with BHP on the de-carbonisation of the steel manufacturing industry in China; our research partnership with engineering services firm Costain Group to identify and reduce carbon in the construction supply chain, and the Low Carbon College in partnership with Shanghai Jiaotong University. Other activity in China relates to carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) which addresses a problem of critical global significance—the need to avoid more than 2°C of climate change by achieving substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. The Young Money project in collaboration with the UK Government has generated research with far-reaching impacts for the financial wellbeing of young adults across the country, prompting a decision to develop teacher training in financial education specifically for teachers of post-16-year-old students. Project FAIR found a 'dual-salary' system in international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) with some international workers being paid up to 900 percent more than local colleagues doing similar jobs. The project has influenced nine major international aid organisations to pursue fairer pay structures for a combined workforce of 81,000 humanitarian workers in more than 135 countries, and has now engaged and trained more than 90 international NGO HR leaders.

¹ <https://sustainablefashion.business-school.ed.ac.uk/>

² <https://charteredabs.org/the-impact-factor/>

³ <http://project-fair.org/project-findings/>

We have very recently appointed to a new post as Industry Liaison Manager with a remit to, via engagement with Practice, raise awareness of relevant research as well as highlighting our “services” that may meet challenges faced by industry, the public sector and NOGs.

Principle 6: Dialogue

Our events programme focuses on developing opportunities for enhanced dialogue and we have reviewed the model for enhanced value-add, choosing to offer fewer but more impactful events. As mentioned in the section below about School Operations, we are also developing a *Sustainable Events* policy to reduce the environmental impact. This will be a key area of development for us going forward.

We actively seek input from practitioners in relation to the currency and suitability of our programmes and we continue with our local engagement activities, e.g. the Dragon’s Glen charity fundraising challenge and similar events and competitions on an ad-hoc basis. Our annually a high profile, interdisciplinary cross-school competition called *#makeyourmark*, which challenges students to turn their ideas for global change into a social enterprise business, where profit is matched with purpose, has been a huge success. A smartphone app that helps students with their mental health and a Scottish-themed dancing experience that supports the homeless¹ were the two winning ideas from this year’s *#makeyourmark*. The *Sustainable Fashion* field trip, mentioned above, is another example.

Repeat delivery of the executive education to organisations as wide-ranging as National Trust for Scotland² and STV³, and the Non-Executive Directors’ programme in collaboration with FWB Park Brown⁴ allows for dialogue on all aspects of the School’s activity: teaching, programmes and impact. This also includes engagement with local entrepreneurs and business angels via the Edinburgh Entrepreneurship Club and taking a leading role in the curriculum development first Masters (in Finance, Technology and Policy) offered via the Edinburgh Futures Institute⁵.

School Operations

School Operation is an area where we have made considerable progress. Pursuing the principles of Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability in Operations led us to apply the University’s Sustainability award on Silver⁶ level. Secured in 2018, the award encompasses themes affecting our operations, activities, processes and people: Engagement and Communications, Resource Efficiency, Travel, Energy, Purchasing and Health and Wellbeing. Having reviewed the sustainability framework, we saw that we were already engaging in many of the principles but also that we could adopt a more systematic approach in some areas. Examples include: requiring new staff to complete online “Be Sustainable” training as part of their induction, publishing sustainable travel information for visitors, training staff responsible for purchasing, e.g. to avoid over-catering, appointing a Waste and Recycling Coordinator, energy saving measures, and promoting physical activity.

In 2020, we will seek to secure the 2020 Gold Award via our in-house *Sustainable Events* policy and a draft policy statement has been developed by our Conferences and Events team:

At the Business School, sustainable thinking is essential to our mission of developing conscientious leaders with an awareness of the world around them. We are mindful that event planning and practises could potentially have damaging effects on the local environment, city and planet. We are committed towards reducing these as much as possible and integrating more sustainable methods into all aspects of our events, from initial organisation to the marketing and delivery.

At the Business School, we believe that no event is too small to make a difference. Our objective is to have a positive impact by putting sustainability at the centre of our events planning, to improve our sustainable practices and share best practice with others. With the guidance of the University’s Social Responsibility

¹ <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/news/make-your-mark-2020>

² <https://www.nts.org.uk/>

³ <http://www.stvplc.tv/>

⁴ <http://www.fwbparkbrown.com/>

⁵ <https://efi.ed.ac.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability/what-we-do/awards>

and Sustainability Department (SRS), we will continue to look for new ways to incorporate sustainable methods into our event systems.

The plan is to implement this across the Business School, as part of an *Events toolkit*. The draft policy is an outcome of emerging practices within our Conference and Events team to reduce the environmental impact of our events collateral:

- We used to print:
 - Numerous calls for abstracts.
 - Conference leaflets (and sent direct mailings).
 - All conference Papers.
 - Delegate lists.
- We used to give delegates:
 - Branded often-heavy satchel delegate bags.
 - USB sticks.
 - City maps and tourist literature.
 - Sponsor literature.
 - Branded gifts for speakers.
- For conferences we now:
 - Send targeted email and social media campaigns.
 - Print limited amounts of promotional leaflets.
 - Use conference apps to provide delegates with papers, contacts, city information etc.
 - Try not to use conference bags - if the academic lead insists, we use canvas shoppers made from organic cotton.
 - Ask sponsors and exhibitors to bring only limited amounts of print materials (and recycle what is left).
 - Reduce the use of gifts - if we give anything it is a University item or on recyclable materials / ethically purchased / local or a donation.
 - Use non-branded lanyards made from recycled material - and reuse at other events.
 - Reuse plastic badge pockets.
 - Selected signage, which can be recycled/reused.
 - We avoid collateral with dates (e.g. pop up for #makeyourmark) so that it can be reused.
 - Ask students / delegates to bring own water bottles (rather than use plastic).
 - For the 35th European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) Colloquium, welcoming 2,200 organisational experts from around the world in July 2019, we worked with waste management so we could use compostable items and with caterers to select seasonal and local produce on menus.
 - We are increasing vegan and vegetarian items at lunches.

Similarly in student recruitment:

- Five years ago we used to print the following:
 - MSc Brochure
 - MBA Brochure
 - EMBA Brochure
 - PGT/Combined Brochure
 - Destination surveys
 - Christmas Cards
 - We also used to post out Direct Mail pieces to all offer holders internationally.
- We now don't do the Direct Mail piece and we only print:
 - MSc Brochure
 - MBA Brochure
 - EMBA Brochure

For brochures and the alumni magazine *Aluminate*¹ we use FSC certified paper.

We have reduced the amount of merchandise we produce and give out a lot less at Student Recruitment fairs e.g. generally just brochures; thus reducing transport of these and indeed production of materials that were

¹ <https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/alumni/aluminate>

often just thrown away after a fair. We have also reduced fair attendance from about 45 weeks' of travelling to about 20 weeks and we combine activity across teams where possible so that we send one person to a destination and they do recruitment fairs but also cover other activity like alumni events etc.