To be a Reputable Business School for a Sustainable Tomorrow

PRME Report:
Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang,
Malaysia

2014-2016 progress report for the UN Programme,
Principles for Responsible Management Education
Welcoming Note by

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On behalf of the community of Graduate School of Business (GSB), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), I am very pleased to present the 2014-2016 SIP report on the implementation of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

Our school has a vision “to be a Reputable Business School for a Sustainable Tomorrow” which is in line with the university’s vision, “Ensuring a Sustainable Tomorrow”, and that we take this vision seriously. To us, a reputable business school should strive to achieve the highest form of academic, research and industry performance. So far, academic wise, our programmes are highly ranked and accredited by independent bodies; research wise, we have been rewarded with numerous research grants over the years and the spin off from these have been publications in top-tier journals, books, conference proceedings, as well as increased number of PhD students’ supervisions and public speaking; while in terms of the industry, GSB has unique and very good network with industry players in the marketplace; the good relationship has produced for instance consulting work, dialogues, and CSR activities. At GSB, these three aspects are intertwined with sustainability concept which has three pillars; namely, people, planet and profit. To us, all academic, research and industry activities should strive to achieve sustainability in terms of people’s quality of life; planet’s conservation and ethical profit gains for economic growth. Business leaders that we nurture here are the ones that should be able to promote the synergy between long term business growth and socio-environmental wellbeing at all times.

We look forward to continue endorsing the principles put forward by the UN Global Compact and the Six Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). We are very pleased to formally renew our commitment to both principles as we strongly believe that sustainability is best learned from a learning community such as what we have in this network.

‘Memastikan Kelestarian Hari Esok’
‘Ensuring a Sustainable Tomorrow’

AZLAN AMRAN
Dean
Introduction

This Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) report focuses on Graduate School of Business’s (GSB) continuous efforts on achieving PRIME’s Six Principles with its and other stakeholders; intention being to disseminate the efforts for public knowledge, as well as for application purposes on any part that will benefit the stakeholders as they see fit.

GSB has been built based on sustainability platform, hence, the emphasis of all our efforts are on the 3Ps – people, planet, and profitability. It is important to note that we are still trying our best to strive to achieve PRIME’s Six Principles and to apply it according to both our and university’s visions and missions; and as a learning community, we continue the effort. Please note that some of the activities we report may seem to be ordinary, but to ensure that the activities remain and continue long in the future is the real challenge. And the new activities or projects taken up has posed us with its own challenge; as we are all novices and hence, some of the things we do are based on trial and error, but we believe that with good intention, everything will work out and they do eventually. Before the chosen activities are presented, we are going to briefly introduce the school to those who do not know us yet.

Background of GSB

Although the root of Graduate School of Business (GSB) can be traced back to 1998 when the School of Management (SOM) USM started offering the Bachelor of Management programme and subsequently the Bachelor of Accountancy and Doctorate in Philosophy [Ph.D] programmes, it is the establishment of the Advanced Management Centre (AMC) operating under SOM that has marked a new milestone in the history of GSB since it functioned as a bridge to GSB’s set-up. On August 9, 2007, the senate started a Studies Committee to evaluate the idea of establishing the GSB in order to align the clear policies and objectives with the university’s mission as a University of Research and Development. The approval by the Higher Education Ministry in November 2008 led to the official launch of gsb@usm and finally to its official inception in March, 2009.

As a business school, GSB’s main aim is to fulfil the needs of the industry; particularly in promoting and nurturing business sustainability in Malaysia in the country’s Northern Region. Inspired to be as Top Business School in the neighbouring ASIA region, GSB is currently accredited by Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Framework, ABEST21 for its MBA programme and is an International level Top Business School (TBS) that provides post-graduate business programme on par with those offered by World-renowned universities.
Continuing to commit to six PRME principles (2014-2017)

GSB has been made to understand that our own organisational practices should serve as example of the values and attitudes we convey to our students based on the six principles of PRME.

PRME Principles and GSB Strategies

**Principle 1: Purpose**

We will develop the abilities capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

**Principle 2: Values**

We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

**Principle 3: Method**

We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

**GSB’s strategy to achieve P1, P2 and P3**

1. **Characterising GSB through its vision**

   It is fortunate that GSB has a vision and mission that is aligned to the university’s vision which is linked very closely to sustainability. These have been the guidance towards achieving the purpose for why we are being established in the first place. Based on the university’s and GSB’s visions, sustainability serves as and ‘is’ our character.

   It is important to note that the vision continued to be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it is relevant for our existence and operation. In school board (‘Majlis’) meeting in 2015, the school has deliberated further on this vision and decided that it should remain as it is.
**Vision:**
**To be a Reputable Business School for a Sustainable Tomorrow**

Reputability, like respect, is earned not given. In GSB’s case, we define ‘reputable’ from three perspectives - academic, research and industry.

Academically, our programmes are highly ranked and accredited by independent bodies. As a testament to that, the number of our students has increased steadily over the years.

Meanwhile, from the research perspective, our colleagues have published in top-tier journals in various fields of research. Many of our colleagues have also been invited to speak at events, to share their insights.

Finally, from the perspective of the industry, on many occasions, GSB academic staff have served as consultants to various firms, both international and local. The high level of representation of students from the industry, also serves as an indication that our programmes are industry relevant, and that the knowledge that we impart is current and practical.

**Mission:**
**GSB strives to nurture responsible business leaders with the relevant knowledge and skills needed to drive business sustainability.**

In GSB, it is always our mission to nurture business leaders that would able to promote the synergy between long term business growth and socio-environmental wellbeing.

Our programs is a result of close engagement with the industry with a clear intention to position ourselves as a strong B-school in helping sustaining human kind.

Our valuable students will be trained with necessary skills and exposed to the relevant knowledge in meeting the dynamic changes due to sustainability challenges. We simplify our mission by the following statement.

As stated earlier, since both vision and mission represent who we are, thus, GSB has made it a point to review the vision and mission from time to time to ensure we are relevant to our surroundings.

As an example, the effort to review GSB’s mission statement had led to its revision in 2015 with the new statement which is our current statement:

**To nurture responsible business leaders with the relevant knowledge and skills needed to drive business sustainability.**

Further reviews of the revised mission by the school faculty during GSB Strategic Planning 2016 and latest 2017-18 resulted in maintaining the vision and mission as they are.
As a note, our next revision of the school’s mission is scheduled to be in 2018. The aim is ensure that GSB is sustainable and that the mission statement will be able to assist and direct the school to be relevant to the demands and needs of the business world.

2. Sustainability as the theme in GSB’s broad strategic approach

With sustainability as GSB’s underlying theme since its inception in 2009, the motivation, planning and strategy for all the school’s offered programmes are driven by it. Sustainability has been the focus in our strategic plan – in academic, research and industry and it is continued to be applied today and in years to come. While we do offer few subjects that are specifically focused on sustainability issues, the school has taken a position that sustainability should be integrated and embedded in all subjects taught; research activities; ventures and networking with the industry and society at large would also be following the same emphasis as we attempt to ensure that sustainability becomes our culture.

GSB has also since 2014 secured the accreditation by ABEST 21 (THE ALLIANCE ON BUSINESS EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP FOR TOMORROW). The accreditation in a way helps the school to continue with its initiatives to improve and develop a community that is driven by sustainability.

During our Strategic Planning Workshop 2017-2018 held in November 2016, the school has developed and further refined action plans to ensure that this approach is continued to be utilized.

Overall, our own assessment of the action plans revealed that most of them have been performed in since 2014 (i.e. about 70% have been completed successfully, 20% have not been fully performed as planned (e.g. Action Plan 3b, 3c, 3e, and 4d), 10% will not be able to be executed well due to lack of control by the School (i.e. Action Plan 2b and 5b), in which the School has limited autonomy in the decision making process).

As an example, discussion on KPI strategy (Action Plan 1e) for GSB has been an on-going and regular process. At School level, the most recent KPI strategy was discussed during the Strategic Planning Retreat for 2017-18 (in November 2016). At institution level, the KPIs were set by the top management of the University and were cascaded down to the School. Discussions with the Institution’s top management are usually conducted in the beginning of the year and the results are then presented early in the following year.

In another example, the plans to undertake School Open Day, visits and road shows to companies, participation in education and career fairs, article write-ups in mass media, etc. (Action Plan 3a) has been actively taken up by GSB. For instance, the School’s programs were promoted during the Star Education Fair organized by the Star Media Group on 25-26 March 2017.

The School has also embarked on joint-degree programs with several international Universities to attract more international students. For example, the MBA ASEAN double degree, which is an international program jointly organized by GSB and the School of Business and Management, Institut Teknologi Bandung (SBM, ITB), has been planned and
will be officially launched in August 2017. There is also a collaborative arrangement with Glasgow University. Monetary incentives will be given to students/staff who successfully recommend/enroll a new international student (Please refer website for further details).

While these have been fully implemented, GSB has also come to a certain difficulty in carrying out other plans like enhancing the School's image and presence in the market (Action Plan 3b). We know that image plays an important part of our existence and in enhancing our presence particularly when we dream of being global player for sustainability purpose. The original plan was to update the school's corporate video. However, since this was not fruitful, the School has taken effort to redesign its website instead. Thus, we now have our new website since early 2017 with all relevant and updated information for all stakeholders' benefit. The website can be visited at http://www.gsb.usm.my/v2/.

3. Walk the Sustainability talk

The content of academic programmes offered by GSB (for MBA, DBA, PhD) not only followed what the industry needs but also the society needs in line with the 3Ps. As an example, GSB has made it a point for lecturers to share with students on the happenings (e.g. what ‘business unusual’ is as it is now the observed trend) in the marketplace. Regular meetings carried out amongst academic staff have encouraged flow of related and updated information about the marketplace and the knowledge is then disseminated to students and other stakeholders in classrooms, trainings and other platforms. One example of information sharing is the Dean’s welcoming note to GSB students in the school’s website that has stressed on the importance of businesses’ role in time of ‘business unusual’ (globalisation and technological breakthroughs have brought both positive changes and disruptions to the marketplace) reiterating how they must be sustainable so that ‘a virtuous cycle of value for all’ (businesses are able to generate positive economic outcomes, the society’s wellbeing is taken care of, the environment is preserved) can be created.

GSB’s MBA programme for instance has been designed to help our future leaders meet their career challenges head on. To do this, the programme is itself rigorous and contain comprehensive general management curriculum, complemented by a mastery of cross functional skills through hands-on learning experience and multimodal teaching strategies (including cases, simulations and discussions) to result in students being dynamic outcome-oriented business leaders.

Similarly, the DBA programme has been designed to achieve the following aims:

- Produce business leaders who possess advanced knowledge from the core business disciplines and have the ability to integrate them to enhance their decision-making skills,
- Produce business leaders with advanced and relevant skills in conducting scientific research, consultation and training for both public and private organisations,
• Provide knowledge of the modern techniques and tools that can be utilised to enhance and develop innovative practices in their respective organizations.
• Produce business leaders with the ability to view problems systematically, holistically and unravel complex business issues and subsequently provide practical and innovative solutions, and
• Stimulate creativity, critical and ethical thinking and to equip business leaders with skills in managing change and transforming organisations within the dynamic global business environment.

This is the reason for why in some of the subjects like AGW 618/ADW618 Marketing Management (MBA programme) and AGW725 Seminar in Marketing and Global Business (DBA programme), students have been tasked to site visits to meet with real clients, suppliers and end consumers and tackle real business issues so that they understand the happenings and reality of the marketplace, and thus can help solve the issues sustainably via feasible marketing planning and suitable strategies. Issues tackled vary from those concerning micro and SMEs to MNCs; and from simple operation within an organization to cause related marketing.

Other subjects have been specially created to ensure students have empathy towards issues concerning society and develop/enhance their ethics and integrity. For instance, AGW 624 Business Issues and Sustainable Development and AGC 608 Business Ethics and Governance are two subjects that focused on linking students to such issues and CSR. Students are expected to work on issues they selected; and all stakeholders are invited to participate in the project (e.g. students as the change agents, businesses, university and society as sponsors, advisors, team members and supporters for the noble cause). Participation from all walks of life in this project is also directly linked to Principles 5 and 6 PRME.

In addition, walk the sustainability talk is implemented through other activities as well. This includes a series of professional/invited talk and research seminars for all students and stakeholders. Examples of the professional/invited talks/research seminars organised in 2016 are:

a) Professional Talk: Problem-Based Learning (PBL) - 23 February 2016
b) Professional Talk: How to Apply for MOSTI Funds: Tips for Successful Research Proposal - 26 February 2016
c) Invited Talk: Supervision Tips for Graduation on Time (GOT) - 11 March 2016
d) Invited Talk: To Lead Change Using Sustainable Self-Transformation Model - 8 April 2016
e) Research Seminar: TPPA: From a Novice Analysis - 29 January 2016
f) Research Seminar: Brain Drain of Malaysian Professionals - 12 February 2016

**Principle 4: Research**

We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.
GSB’s strategy to achieve P4

1. Sustainability as key for any scientific research and endeavour
In GSB’s PhD programme, scientific investigations carried out by our students have been following closely the school’s vision and mission. The decision to focus on sustainability was easy to make since we are a new school and we as GSB community has the consensus on the vision. This is made clear in the PhD programme’s aims since achieving sustainability is key to us:

- Nurture business scholars who can apply business theory and practice towards promoting the wellbeing of the community and the environment.
- Develop business scholars who demonstrate a high-level of creativity, analytical thinking and problem-solving skills in offering robust solutions.
- Produce business scholars with advanced skills in research, writing and knowledge sharing on matters relating to business sustainability.
- Produce business scholars who are capable of examining any business enterprise and discern its strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats; and use these findings to make appropriate business recommendations.

However, as a new business school that offered PhD programme to candidates only in 2011, the belief and trust being put on the school’s reputation to date has seen that in 2017, we now have 134 active (full- and part-time; local – 81 and foreign - 53) students, and we have managed to produced our own PhD 11 doctorates since 2015. The topics and contents of the theses have also been catered and driven by the vision and mission of the school; and the needs of both the industry and society.

Our students have also been acknowledged by international communities. For instance, some managed to earn scholarships rewarded by foreign institutions (refer news strips - PhD student in GSB, for winning the Research Placement Sponsorship from University of Pardubice, Czech Republic (http://www.gsb.usm.my/v2/index.php/about-us-gsb/news-events/student-s-achievement)).

2. Development of research clusters
In GSB, we have developed 6 research clusters; namely,

3. Innovation in Operation Management.
5. Social Innovation and Sustainability.

These clusters on which GSB academics are members, serve as the platform whereby they can work together on specific research agenda based on their expertise and on
how best they can contribute towards solving/understanding marketplace and society’s issues.

Each clusters actively organized their own trainings, workshops, presentations, discussions, round tables and others on which all GSB community and stakeholders are invited to participate. Examples include the event by Marketing Cluster in 2014 entitled “Marketing Roundtable: Tourism in Penang State: Still Relevant?” on which both GSB researchers and captains of the industry shared their findings and issues relevant to tourism.

Such events are strategized to advance knowledge, enhance networking and recommend solutions for society as embraced in the 3Ps. The discussions, debates and issues brought up by invited speakers and participants are very much in line with Principles 5 and 6 PRME.

The outcome of the cooperation has been in terms of publication, research collaboration with other agencies, organizations in local and international scene, and other community related activities (knowledge transfer programmes, CSR, etc.).

These have in a small way contributed to the development of our nation and civilized society.

The following are examples of GSB staff journal publications touching on various issues as highlighted in the six clusters recently (year 2016-2017):

Principle 5: Partnership

We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Principle 6: Dialogue

We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

GSB’s strategy to achieve P5 and P6

1. Encouraging activities with stakeholders

GSB Orientation Day and GSB Family Day are amongst examples of activities carried out every year. These activities are to nurture respect, and enhance good relationship between GSB and its stakeholders (sense of belonging). The latest activity planned by GSB, i.e. USM Musical Delights Fundraising concert (22 July 2017) is to raise funds to advance the teaching, learning and research experience of GSB staff to support and offer students a high-quality education (see banner below).
2. Partnering with businesses to disseminate information and train professionals on responsible management and ethics

Mini MBA is an example of programs that GSB has developed with the industry as an effort to promote PRME. The first short course program started in August 2016 as joint collaboration with ITD World for instance has managed to expose and train 17 industry participants; completion of this Executive Development Programme (Mini MBA Graduation Day) was then celebrated on 3rd September 2016. With good inputs from participants, this program continues on to date (note: the second Mini MBA was conducted in March 2017 and another will be in August 2017). Details about MINI MBA is available at [http://news.usm.my/index.php/berita-mutakhir/3706-kerjasama-usm-mtd-lancarkan-mini-mba-programme](http://news.usm.my/index.php/berita-mutakhir/3706-kerjasama-usm-mtd-lancarkan-mini-mba-programme).

3. Partnering with stakeholders through industry-community participation grants, funds and sponsorships

GSB has been quite active in securing grants, funds and sponsorships with outside organizations on various issues concerning the development and sustainability of society and environment throughout the years. Examples include

a) an industry-community participation grant that was secured and used to help train secondary schoolers in rural areas on their entrepreneurship skills through creative economy mindset development (26 August-1 December 2016). By doing so, it is hoped that the students would be able to create their own future by thinking, planning to be and ended up being successful confident entrepreneurs in their own right and in their own surroundings.

b) sponsorship from UNESCO-IHP Malaysia that was used to organize Water Watch Programme for Young Leaders (secondary school students from various schools) and Domestic Water Management Workshop for Community Members in Penang (3 August-
5 August 2016). These two programmes were joint-collaboration with twelve other government agencies/private organizations in Malaysia who delivered ten modules on water resources and sustainable management (including Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID), Putrajaya Holdings, LESTARI UKM, UNIMAS, UTM). The aims were to train and develop participants to be ‘change agents’ within their community so that water related issues can be well managed; and to develop ethical and responsible consumers amongst youngsters. This programme was also used as platforms to identify and facilitate current issues pertaining to community needs. For GSB, this activity and joint-collaboration enhances our understanding of the major issues in regards to nation building and on opportunity to participate in a given and well known platform for community needs.

4. MoU

The School believes that in order to become a reputable business school and sustainable, being a global player is equally important. To ensure it can be listed amongst the globally-recognized business schools, GSB is now collaborating actively with international creditable business schools/institutions. In 2016 for instance, MoUs have been signed with Yunus Centre, Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA), while in 2017, an MoU has been signed with The Hull University, United Kingdom for various programs and activities. This effort is also in line with achieving Principles 5 and 6 of PRME.

Conclusion

This report highlights GSB ongoing efforts to achieve PRME which is also in line with GSB’s vision and mission. GSB is committed to all the six principles; and sustainability is driven by academics, research and industry.