

This document is the first report on progress since becoming a signatory of PRME. We are pleased to report substantive progress in a wide range of areas within Aberdeen Business School and within the wider context of Robert Gordon University of which the Business School is one of the three faculties.

The report is structured under the 6 Principles.



## 1. Purpose

The University has refreshed its strategy (<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/about/strategy-and-planning>) and has been developing a number of external facing positioning papers that address the sectors we serve, our emphasis on employability<sup>1</sup>, and our role in the region in supporting firms locally and with their international growth aspirations.

**RGU's mission** is to transform people and communities. It does this by ensuring that our discovery of knowledge and our dissemination of scholarship have the greatest possible economic, social and cultural impact.

**RGU's vision** is to be recognised, in Scotland and beyond, as a distinctive university leading and shaping the debate on the future of higher education and placing students at the centre of the education that it offers. It will be known for the impact of its teaching, scholarship and translational research, the employability of its graduates, its influence in the region, its growing global profile, and its strong interdisciplinary focus on a small number of key issues and concern to the local and global community. It will achieve its goals in partnership with academic, voluntary, public and business organisations that share its ideals and aspirations.

Over the last year, all the provision in Aberdeen Business School has been involved in a quality assurance and enhancement process known as Institutional Led Subject Review (ILSR). This process has involved a mixture of internal (non business school) academics, external academics and practitioners in a consultative dialogue about the currency and relevance of our provision. The outcome of this process is the re-validation of all our awards in line with our mission and mission and informed by our status as a signatory to PRME.

Many of our graduates work for international oil & gas companies or in companies that provide services to the industry and we take every care to prepare them employment in line with the 6 principles.

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<sup>1</sup> Best UK University for Employment – Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2012



## 2. Values

Our values in relation to our purpose are manifested in a number of ways. For instance, we are the first Scottish University to sign up to the Healthy University initiative (<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/healthy-university>). This approach takes a whole systems view and helps to create an environment that enhances health and wellbeing and facilitates learning and personal development for both staff and students. We believe that by setting an example that this will translate into a drive to create healthier workplaces elsewhere. For some time we have had a Fair Trade Policy and our current Environmental and Sustainability Policy is just going through the final revisions in its latest draft. The areas covered by the policy include:

- An **energy use plan** which aims to make efficient and environmentally responsible use of energy and water;
- A **waste management plan** which aims to minimise waste production as far as is practicable, to reuse or recycle waste where appropriate and to regulate the treatment and disposal of residual waste;
- A **sustainable procurement plan** which aims to promote environmentally responsible procurement of goods and services;
- A **green travel and transport plan** which will aim to minimise the impact of transport on the environment arising from its own vehicles and those brought on to the Estate;
- A **carbon management plan** which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of the university and support compliance with the carbon reduction commitment.
- A **sustainability auditing system** will be developed specifically for the University to monitor and communicate progress on sustainability issues

Our Estates Master Plan will see all of our teaching co-located on one campus at Garthdee and this substantial investment has had environment and sustainability as a key objective in line with the above policy.

Our MBA programme was ranked 50 in the world in the last year that the Aspen Institute conducted their "Beyond Grey Pinstripes" assessment exercise (2011)

CSR and Sustainability has driven the development of a number of major new course developments such as:

- MSc Corporate Social Responsibility and Energy
- MSc Commercial Practice for the Energy Sectors
- MSc Energy Management
- MSc Energy and Sustainability



### 3. Method

RGU was an early adopter of virtual learning environments and has been using Moodle as its platform for some years. This platform continues to offer considerable benefits for students in all modes of delivery. Some examples include:

- The dual benefit of wider geographic reach without the need for students to travel to Aberdeen and this has carbon footprint benefits (locally and globally)
- There is a reduction in paper utilisation (fewer handouts, electronic submission of assignments, electronic feedback etc)
- The use of ebooks also reduces energy and paper consumption
- The global reach allows students from widely different backgrounds to engage in learning and share their experiences (the classic example of this is on our distance learning MBA where we have around 60 nationalities enacting the adage that 50% of the learning on an MBA comes from within the cohort)

With respect to our curriculum coverage of UN Global Compact Principles we have modules aligned as follows:

- Human Rights – 46 modules covering all years from first year UG to Masters
- Labour – 42 modules again covering the full spectrum of levels
- Environment – we have a very diverse range of modules that to a greater or lesser extent embrace principles of the environment and a keyword search reveals the existence of some 979 modules and this gives an indication of the pervasiveness of this dimension across our courses.
- Anti-corruption – 279 modules address ethical issues whilst only three specifically have “bribery” as a keyword.

One of the hallmarks of RGU is its deep business interaction and some of the commentary on methods will be dealt with below in the sections on research and partnerships as these are ways in which we inform and update our teaching. We have a range of modules on leadership as well as a number of regular events such as master classes, leadership lectures given by industry leaders. Examples include:

1. Redefining Leadership in a Flat World – a Master Class delivered on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 by Kate Cowie, academic, author and coach
2. Contemporary Leadership – an insight into leadership across different sectors – Major General David Shaw (now an Honorary Professor at RGU) – annual RGU leadership lecture
3. Sir Bill Gammell, CEO Cairn Energy delivered the Dana sponsored Leadership lecture in 2012



#### 4. Research

The University has clustered its applied research activities into three research institutes:

- Institute for Health and Welfare Research
- Institute for Innovation, Design and Sustainability
- Institute for Management, Governance and Society

These institutes are encouraged to be multi-disciplinary and house some specialist centres, for example, within the Institute for Innovation, Design and Sustainability there is a research theme entitled "Energy, Environment and Sustainability"

(<http://www.rgu.ac.uk/research/research-institutes/institute-for-innovation-design-and-sustainability/themes/energy-environment-and-sustainability/energy-environment-and-sustainability>) and within this there is a very active research centre entitled the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Practice.

The Institute for Management, Governance and Society is closely aligned with the activities of the Aberdeen Business School. Environmental sustainability is also a key strand within the Business and Enterprise theme. Two examples of cross research institute working are:

**Care North** and **E Harbors** - two European projects examining practical ways of reducing energy use and CO2 emissions from local transport and port activities, undertaken by researchers from IMaGeS and RGU's IDEAS Research Institute.

Applied research can also take the form of supervised student projects and an example of where this took place in the field of CSR involved students on both our MSc Corporate Communications and MBA course. An international oil company with a significant presence in Aberdeen asked if we could help with the development of their CSR policy. This was developed by the MSc Corporate Communications students and then presented to the MBA students for further scrutiny and this resulted in a number of improvements and a very happy client.

Also on the MBA programme we have had a number of student consultancy projects that relate to decommissioning and this has embraced the minimisation of environmental pollution and has been a

great learning opportunity, particularly for our FT students as they prepare to re-enter employment.



## 5. Partnership

The essence of RGU is in its deep association with industry, the public and not for profit sectors, managerial practice and professional bodies. Wherever possible the strategy has been to seek professional, statutory or regulatory body recognition and accreditation for our courses. New courses are the subject of considerable market research with organisations and validation events involve both academic and those from professional practice. We attempt to have a mix of academics and professional practitioners as external examiners. All of these quality assurance and enhancement processes ensure that we have current and relevant offerings. In addition, on the MBA programme we have made a number of appointments of associate staff – some of whom are honorary “professors of practice” who provide ongoing advice on module development and delivery and also guest lectures. Through these sorts of relationship we seek to ensure that sound knowledge of best CSR practices are embedded in our curriculum and instilled in our graduates.

We have forged partnerships with a number of blue-chip companies including consultancies to underpin the MBA programme and through this strand of business interaction we are able to develop and deliver the other three pillars underpinning the MBA – academic integrity, attitudes and behaviours, and career development.

Academic partnerships are also important in a globalised context and we ensure that any relationships that we forge are subject to due diligence check including appropriate approaches to CSR. One of our long standing partners – Curtin in Western Australia is also a PRME signatory and we regard this status as an important indicator in developing partnerships.

One of our proposed research agendas is to work with local signatories of the UN Global Compact in the Oil & Gas industry and conduct an issue mapping that will further develop the relevance of our offerings as a PRME signatory.

The oil and gas industry has gone through an upheaval in quality, health, safety, security and environmental management post the Macondo incident in the Gulf of Mexico. At RGU we are collaborating with a range of companies and also with sector bodies such as Oil and Gas UK to address a number of issues. Activities range from contract research on health and safety schemes, advice on deployment and management development.

As an institution we are committed to playing an active role in the UK and Ireland Chapter of PRME and will attend its inaugural meeting at Aston University where we hope to work more closely with other like-minded institutions in raising the game vis a vis each of the 6 principles.



## 6. Dialogue

One of the roles that universities can play is in engaging impartially in local debates as a member of the community in which the university is located. A classic example over the last year is where RGU put together a multi-disciplinary panel of experts to raise the level of debate about inner city regeneration in Aberdeen. Unfortunately an impasse had arisen that had split the community and the local authority found itself in a dilemma. The crux of the debate was on the use of an historic park in the centre of town with preservationists championing the status quo and modernisers wishing to create a new public space adjacent to the (former) main shopping thoroughfare.

The panel developed a regeneration report ([www.rgu.ac.uk/file/aberdeen-city-centre-regeneration-report](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/file/aberdeen-city-centre-regeneration-report)) that put the debate into a new light and has allowed a number of local agencies to seek new ways forward. The report produced by RGU took a very holistic perspective and embraced a range of ideas and considerations including transport, environmental pollution, mixed use occupation to revitalise areas and create a safer environment where the public treated the area with greater respect.

The success of this work has inspired others in RGU to develop a dialogue across a range of issues. The above example merely highlights a lot of good work that has been going on across the university in the way that it engages with the community that it serves.

Our commercialisation agenda (developed over a number of years in response to the need to be less dependent on government sources of funding) has led to a number of initiatives. Another one that we wish to highlight in this report is the development of RGU Wellness. This service is available to local companies and individuals for example to reduce the amount of time that an individual is off work due to an injury. The service can also advise businesses on ways to ensure a healthier and safer working environment with onsite ergonomic assessment and functional capacity evaluation.

Finally we look forward to be able to providing our next update against the 6 principles of PRME