Dear Jonas

Renewal of the commitment to Principles for Responsible Management Education

As an institution of higher learning involved in the education of current and future leaders, Aston Business School is committed to upholding the UN Global Compact Principles of Responsible Management Education and to engaging in a continuous process of improvement in the application of the Principles for Responsible Management Education. We undertake to report on progress to all stakeholders and to exchange effective practices with other academic institutions.

As a signatory to the principles since 2008, we believe that the values of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability are important in all areas of the School's activities. This includes the areas identified in the principles: the business school curricula, programme design, courses and learning, research as well as in partnerships and dialogue with all our stakeholders. We also understand that our own organizational practices should serve as examples of the values and attitudes we seek to convey to our students.

We continue to encourage other academic institutions, and associations to adopt and support these Principles.

Yours sincerely.

N. Driffield

Professor Nigel Driffield
Executive Dean
& Professor of International Business
Tel +44 (0)121 204 3209
Fax +44 (0)121 204 4916
E mail: n.l.driffield@aston.ac.uk
Aston became a signatory to PRME in 2008 and this report reflects on the achievements over this period but focuses on the achievements in relation to the implementation of the Principles in the last 2 years.

Aston Business School (http://www1.aston.ac.uk/abs/) is located in Birmingham in the UK. It is among 1% of business schools worldwide with triple accreditation from AMBA, AACSB and EQUIS. We are a full range business school with undergraduate, Postgraduate Masters and MBA programmes as well as research degrees and executive education.

Aston is a leader in employability with almost 80% of graduates in graduate-level positions within six months of graduation (DLHE survey). The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) confirmed our position as a leading research-lead business schools in the UK. Our student population comprises almost 50% students from 100 countries outside the UK. Changes in policies and practices in social responsibility and sustainability were recognised when Aston came 5th in the People & Planet UK Awards (Times Higher) in 2010 (from a position of 93rd in 2007). Aston was chosen as an ‘exemplar case study’ for integrating sustainability into the curriculum (HEFCE UK funded research project) and included in the PRME Inspirational Guide presented at the Global Forum at the Rio+20 Earth Summit and now published by Greenleaf.

As one of the largest and most successful business schools in Europe, Aston Business School is committed to influencing organisations and their leaders worldwide through world-leading research, inspirational learning and teaching, and business engagement. We aim to make a sustainable contribution to businesses, economies and societies worldwide. Our degree programmes equip our students to become responsible business leaders. Details of our vision and programmes can be viewed at; http://www1.aston.ac.uk/aston-business-school/about-abs/annual-review/

A. Curricula, Programme Design, Courses and Learning

In relation to the first 3 principles that relate to the ‘developing the capabilities of students’, ‘incorporating global social responsibility values into our curricula’ and creating educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments, the following achievements are reported;

The 2012 Aston Business School Strategy recognised that ethics, social responsibility and sustainability are of concern for businesses locally, nationally and internationally and their importance for the global economy was likely to increase. It was seen as critical that Aston Business School (ABS) students would be equipped with the relevant knowledge and understanding of the current and future implications for business. As managers/leaders of the future, ABS graduates would be required to directly address, and make decisions regarding societal challenges in these areas. This was reflected in the following statements; “Our curricula must reflect the increasing emphasis on services, knowledge management and specialisation in the global economy. We must prepare students for the organisations and economies of
today and particularly tomorrow and not the business of yesterday.... Our curricula and our own processes must reflect our own commitment to ethics, social responsibility and sustainability in organisational and public life.” (ABS Strategy, p.6) In addition, ABS ensures that the students “sense of social responsibility, commitment to contributing in their communities, safeguarding the environment and appreciation of the ethics of business and leadership is embedded in this transformation”. (ABS Strategy. P.9).

The recommendations of the curriculum review that involved auditing all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (undertaken in 2008 and aimed at creating ‘social responsibility and sustainability literate’ graduates) are now fully implemented.

The following provides an update on these recommendations;

1. The new core module on social responsibility & sustainability (SR & S) in the early years for all business undergraduates (to provide underpinning knowledge for SR & S elective modules in different disciplines in the final year) is now in its third year.

2. The requirement for all students undertaking an industrial placement year to write a report on the social responsibility and sustainability policies and practices of placement company (to connect theory to practice) is now in its second year.

3. All postgraduate courses to review core content to identify where issues of social responsibility and sustainability issues are addressed. This coming year all postgraduate module outlines have a section entitled, ‘Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability where module leaders identify where these issues are related to the content of their modules.

4. The MBA (that already has SR & S embedded within the programme should further develop the sustainability content). An ecological sustainability specialist is now part of the teaching team for the module. Further details of the approach to the Aston MBA can be found on the PRMETIME site; http://primetime.unprme.org/2012/10/08/taking-a-transdisciplinary-approach-to-teaching-ethics/

5. Consideration should be given to the introduction of a new MSc in Social Responsibility and Sustainability. A full time MSc in Social Responsibility and Sustainability (that takes a trans-disciplinary approach) ran in 2011/12 and this coming year, there will be both a full time on – campus MSc and an off-campus ‘blended learning’ MSc (see link MSc Social Responsibility and Sustainability).

We have now developed the Aston Business School strategy for 2020 and the commitments to embedding ethics, social responsibility and sustainability have not only been developed within the school but they have now been adopted across the whole University. The Aston University 2020 Strategy states that; we aim to extend “across the University curriculum changes aimed at enabling all graduates to be ‘literate in social responsibility and sustainability.’” Drawing on this experience, a project was begun in July 2012 to extend the curriculum review process used in ABS (previously reported) across the University to all schools in order to provide an overview of where sustainability and social responsibility are already included in the curriculum, enabling individual schools to develop further plans for future changes.
B. Research

In relation to Principle 4 ‘engaging in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics and impact of corporation in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value’, the following achievements are reported;

Since the last report, publications and research projects from academics in the broad areas of ethics, social responsibility and sustainability has been growing steadily. The key areas for research and publication in a range of academic journals and books include CSR, Governance, Ecological Sustainability, Social Entrepreneurship, Ethics, Diversity, Responsible Management Education, Environmental Education, Social Accountability, Sustainable Development, Public Policy, Green Supply Chains, Emerging Economies, Green Technologies, Emerging Markets, Risk Management, Climate Change, Stakeholder Analysis, Human Rights and Poverty.

Academics from Aston also regularly contribute articles on ethics, social responsibility and sustainability to professional and practitioner publications and through media channels in quality newspapers, TV, radio and social media. Example of this include; http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/business/2012/07/change-banks-we-must-first-change-business-schools and Connecting Spaces and Places.

An interdisciplinary and cross-university research centre (CSI - Centre for Sustainability and Innovation) was also set up. Academics from ABS have taken the lead on a number of the projects in the centre and many of these projects have developed in other areas. These projects include; Corporate climate change reporting and the media in BRICS; Engaging different communities with sustainability; Encouraging sustainable behaviours using information processing and behaviour change techniques; Tackling Climate Change at the Sub-National Level and Green Wash or Green Progress.

C. Partnership and Dialogue

There are a number of overlaps in Aston’s initiatives in relation to Principles 5 and 6. Principle 5 - ‘interacting 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 - ‘we will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, business government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability’

Examples of Aston’s initiatives are reported below;

Contribution to the Community: “Reaching out, raising aspirations and achievement”. Community engagement forms one of the three pillars to the mission of Aston Business School (ABS). ABS wants to contribute to the development and regeneration of the region, organisations and communities at a local and global level through knowledge transfer, innovation and inspiration. Contribution to the community at ABS can be seen through three channels; widening participation initiatives, voluntary activities and outreach work.

We have an excellent record on widening participation – ensuring high potential students from under-represented groups can gain the benefits of university education and the social mobility that comes with professional careers. Of the top 30 UK Universities, only Aston beats all the benchmarks and UK averages for social inclusion.
and participation. For example; 91.4% of Aston students come from state schools (benchmark 88%), 38.7% come from the lowest socioeconomic groups (benchmark 30%) and 11.2% come from areas where HE participation is low (benchmark 10%).

This is achieved through: an outstanding Schools and Colleges liaison team, working with partner schools locally and supporting schools and colleges more widely; Master classes; student mentoring and volunteering in schools; Scholarships, bursaries and interviewing in admissions. In addition, Aston beats benchmark and UK average for its low dropout rate and high rates of student progression and degree class awards.

Aston Business School regularly host events and conferences for business leaders and anyone who is interested in learning more about the business world. There is a wealth of opportunity for students and staff to be involved with the local community at both an academic and extra-curricular level.

Aston has a reputation for building strong relationships with business, professional and public sector organisations. This includes student support and placements, professional and executive development, collaborative research and consultancy. Collaborative funding schemes including Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE), Technology Strategy Board (TSB) programmes, and European Commission funding.

Contributing to the innovation and economic development landscape of Birmingham and the region. Leading partnership activity to deliver real benefits to SMEs in the West Midlands, e.g. graduate placements (Graduate Advantage), new university-business collaborations (Innovation Vouchers) and graduate entrepreneurship (BSEEN). Examples of other initiatives related to ethics, social responsibility and sustainability include;

In 2011/2012, Aston Business School has organised and hosted the following events;

1. A film event on Human Trafficking in the West Midlands with post film discussion with the film director and Human Rights organisations.
2. The 'Midlands CSR Summit - Business Critical' with key members of the government, business, community and voluntary sector leaders.
3. The ECCR (Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility) Report on Social Ethical and Environmental issues in Banking. Discussion meetings with senior banking representatives, academics, government representatives and the business community to discuss.
5. The Birmingham Centre for Business Ethics (an organisation with a 20 year history of developing and conducting ethical educational workshops and seminars for the business community and students) transferred to Aston Business School.
6. Aston provides targeted, high quality practical business education and support services to small businesses and social enterprises, designed to boost local economic growth, through the Goldman Sachs Foundation 10,000 Small Businesses programme.
At the PRME Global Forum at Rio+20 Earth Summit in June 2012, Carole Parkes (Aston Business School) was a discussion leader, contributed a case study for the ‘Inspirational Guide for Integrating Sustainability’ and co authored the Working Group Report on Fighting Poverty as a Challenge for Management Education. Carole has also hosted events at Aston to encourage UK Universities to become PRME signatories and has been involved in discussions on establishing a UK Chapter. Carole Parkes has recently been invited to be the Christopher Chair in Business Ethics at the Dominican University, Chicago, to work on the integration of ethics, responsibility and sustainability.

The final section of the PRME principles states; ‘We understand that our own organisational practices should serve as examples of the values and attitudes we convey to our students’. These are a few examples of our commitment to this;

Aston’s rise in the UK People and Planet awards is an example of this commitment. From 93rd in 2007 to 5th in 2010, Aston has maintained its award of ‘First Class Honours’ for the past 4 years. Aston’s strongest categories include Staff and Student Engagement’ as well as for ‘Environmental Policy’ and ‘Environmental Management’.

Aston Business School are active members of the Sustainable Aston University Working Group and sustainability initiatives have included a Sustainability Week on campus, Go Green Awards, and a wealth of staff and student committees including a Fairtrade group, Wildlife Group, Kestrel nest protection and webcam; Sustainable Working group and opportunities for staff and students to volunteer in the local community. Aston also won Gold EcoCampus award and is on track to gain the Platinum award this autumn. Aston’s campus initiatives have included many in the areas of energy, wildlife and transport. These include; the installation of wind turbines, grass roofs to encourage biodiversity, and rainwater collection units in new halls of residences; a combined heat and power plant on campus, which is drastically reducing carbon emissions; increasing the use of electric vehicles both on and off campus; student switch off campaign where students were encouraged to turn off electronic power in the halls of residences; several additional recycling posts, to allow for batteries, books and mobile phones to be recycled. Cycle to work schemes; low emission car lease scheme and public transport passes. Furniture reuse scheme, sustainable procurement policies and a biodiversity policy.

Aston People 2020 strategy builds on the Aston First – Aston’s culture transformation programme. Launched in February 2010, this is of one of the most important initiatives that Aston University has ever undertaken. As part of this initiative, the programme promotes responsibility and sustainability, fairness, equality and respect, and engagement within the University and externally in the wider community.
Key objectives for the next 18-month period with regard to the implementation of the Principles

As an institution of higher learning involved in the education of current and future leaders, Aston Business School is committed to upholding the UN backed Principles of Responsible Management Education and to engaging in a continuous process of improvement in the application of PRME. We undertake to report on progress to all stakeholders and to exchange effective practices with other academic institutions.

As a signatory to the principles, we believe that the values of social responsibility and sustainability are important in all areas of the School’s activities. This includes the areas identified in the principles: the business school curricula, programme design, courses and learning, research as well as in partnerships and dialogue with all our stakeholders. Specifically, we aim to;

1. Extend the principles of Social Responsibility and Sustainability literacy beyond the business school, across all Schools of the University.
2. Continue the integration of these areas into the Business School curriculum and further develop the MSc in Social Responsibility and Sustainability, for both on and off campus modes.
3. Review first year undergraduate programme to provide an ‘inspirational and transformative’ first year and includes the philosophy of sustainability, social responsibility and global citizenship, ethical thinking and working, self-awareness; multicultural awareness; employability and core attributes.
4. Celebrate the success of students not only in terms of their academic success but also for their citizenship and social responsibility. Award prizes at graduation to recognise students’ contribution to enhancing the Aston culture and values and to the wider community.
5. Be recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a credible institution in ethics, social responsibility and sustainability through research activities, publications, and community engagement and continue to encourage other academic institutions, and associations to adopt and support these Principles.

6. Finally, we understand that our own organizational practices should serve as examples of the values and attitudes we seek to convey to our students and will continue to review and revise our policies and practices to achieve this. One example of this is to embed a developing Ethical Framework into all areas of the University.