Principles for Responsible Management Education

SHARING INFORMATION ON PROGRESS REPORT 2012

Griffith Business School
Renewal of commitment to PRME

Griffith Business School (GBS) is committed to upholding the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). Since our last Sharing Information on Progress Report we have substantially reviewed our prestigious Master of Business Administration (MBA) program to further align it with the principles and values of PRME. We were also fortunate to host Jonas Haertle, Head of the PRME secretariat to the UN Global Compact office, for a series of workshops and seminars, which assisted faculty to understand the Principles for Responsible Management Education and give guidance on how to embed them into their curriculum.

Griffith’s MBA is already distinguished from other MBAs by our commitment and focus on responsible leadership, corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practices. Each semester the courses within the MBA program are audited for learning and teaching activities and assessments that actively engage students in the aspects of sustainability, sustainable enterprise, corporate responsibility and ethics.

In 2011/12, the Griffith MBA continued to score highly in the Aspen Institute’s Beyond Grey Pinstripes survey, which identifies the Global Top 100 academic institutions offering MBA programs with a strong focus on the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainability. This year we improved on our previous position and we’re now ranked 26th in the world and 1st in the Asia Pacific region for a combination of relevant teaching and student exposure. We are also ranked 6th in the world for relevant research in this area.

We’re delighted to report that the Griffith MBA program is now even more dedicated to developing responsible, internationally focussed leaders who are committed to sustainable business practices than it was before. The program has been thoroughly reviewed and its course content, personal development activities, industry engagement and networking opportunities will ensure that graduates will now leave the program with a thorough understanding of the sustainable enterprise economy.

So, I hereby renew our commitment to PRME, and share with you our recent improvements to the Griffith MBA Program. We hope you enjoy reading about how and why we instigated these changes, and we would encourage you to do the same.

Professor Michael Powell
Pro Vice Chancellor (Business)
Griffith Business School
Implementation of PRME principles

Principle 2: 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.

While GBS has been actively implementing a range of PRME improvements across all our courses, a large focus has been placed on Principle 2: Values.

In 2012, the Griffith Master of Business Administration Program (MBA) moved into an exciting new era and the program has changed substantially. This new program builds upon our commitment to prepare students to become responsible leaders of financially, environmentally and socially sustainable organisations – the type of organisations that the world clearly needs to bring about changes that will minimise the problems that have surfaced in global financial markets, environmental disasters, climate change and growing social unrest.

The Griffith MBA was first proposed in 1991 and approved for introduction in 1992. The MBA program has undergone a number of significant changes since its inception to ensure it remains current and provides students with high quality learning experiences. The five year MBA review commenced in 2009. The aim of the review was to ensure that the structure and content of the program remains in keeping with the world’s best practice. Widespread consultation took place with employers, alumni, current students, senior academics and administration staff, course convenors and other program directors.

The feedback received from these consultations clearly indicated that significant changes were required to the MBA program if it is to continue to attract high quality students and retain its high standard. The program needed distinctive, identifiable positioning in the very competitive Queensland and Australian MBA markets. It also needed to provide the sort of education both students and employers are seeking.

Recent international research on the effectiveness of MBA programs has identified that most MBA programs have a number of major gaps in graduate attributes (Datar, Garvin and Cullen, Rethinking the MBA, Harvard Business Press, 2010). These gaps include the following:

- globalisation
- leadership development
- critical thinking
- innovation and creativity
- experiential/action learning.

Datar, Garvin and Cullen (2010), also found that there needs to be a re-balancing of the content of the MBA to reduce the emphasis on content or knowledge in favour of the development of key skills and students’ self-awareness; particularly with respect to values, attitudes, and beliefs. These findings are supported by feedback from industry, alumni and current students, which suggested that the program goals needed to be reviewed to include critical thinking, systems thinking, analytical skills, persuasive communication, cross-discipline integration and innovation.

To incorporate this new thinking and the continually evolving needs of industry, the Griffith MBA introduced two new courses that focus on developing such skills – Sustainability and Systems Thinking, and Business Law: A Critical Thinking Approach. In addition, an action learning or experiential approach (Datar, Garvin and Cullen, 2010) is a new feature of the Griffith MBA, whereby all courses actively and intentionally draw on the life and work experiences of the students.

Importantly, all core courses within the MBA program must now actively engage students in aspects of sustainability, sustainable enterprise, corporate responsibility and ethics to demonstrate and reflect the commitment of the School to these values as underpinning business practice in the 21st century.

We hope that these improvements to the Griffith MBA program will ensure a future of responsible business leaders.
Desired support from the PRME community

Over the next two years, GBS will continue to work towards implementing each of the six principles of PRME, including developing a Master of Sustainable Enterprise program.

Last year GBS welcomed Jonas Haertle, Head of the PRME secretariat to the UN Global Compact Office, for a series of faculty workshops and public seminars. Mr Haertle outlined how PRME provides an organisational change framework for business schools to embed corporate responsibility and sustainability into their curricula, research and learning methods, as well as delivering recognition for institutions seeking to advance corporate sustainability and providing access to global and learning communities dedicated to this purpose. GBS faculty welcomed the opportunity to clarify their understanding of PRME and to share ideas on how to incorporate it into their teaching.

In addition, Jonas was in Australia to support the inaugural Australia New Zealand PRME forum, aimed at establishing the PRME initiative more firmly among universities and business schools in Australia, New Zealand and the wider region. The forum brought together faculty from schools participating in PRME and provided a platform for collaboration, exchange of good practices and experiences in embedding PRME, and discussion around the institutional and operational capacities needed to advocate and promote PRME and the UN Global Compact.

The forum included contributions from Professor Michael Powell, Pro Vice Chancellor of GBS, Professor Malcolm McIntosh, Director of the Asia Pacific Centre for Sustainable Enterprise, and Chris Hill, a recent GBS graduate. The forum was hosted by the University of New South Wales and co-managed by GBS, who will host the Australia New Zealand PRME forum in 2012. The 2012 forum takes place within a larger three day international conference, The Necessary Transition 2012. This conference is being held in Brisbane, Australia from 26 – 28 September 2012 and will focus on transition and transformation towards the sustainable enterprise economy. Please visit the conference website www.thenecessarytransition.com for more information.

We would encourage other regions to set up networking activities with other PRME signatories in their region and to invite the Head of PRME along.

Jonas Haertle, Head of the PRME secretariat to the UN Global Compact Office at Griffith University workshop
For enquiries regarding this Sharing Information on Progress Report or questions about Griffith Business School’s involvement in PRME generally, contact us.

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