UN-PRME – Sharing Information on Progress
University of Edinburgh Business School

Introduction and Context

We have elected to prepare our progress report based on the University-wide planning and reporting framework which helps connect UN-PRME activity to other School plans and reports.

The University of Edinburgh Business School has in the last 18 months seen changes in positions key to our status as a UN-PRME signatory. Our former Dean stepped down early, in June 2016, producing the appointment of our Deputy Dean as interim Dean until February 2017, when she was appointed full Dean. In addition, the Director of Educational Innovation who had taken the lead on the process of becoming a UN-PRME Signatory left the School in August 2016. Owing to interim arrangements our aspirations in the area had to be postponed.

The University of Edinburgh has long been committed to understanding and acting ethically, responsibly and sustainably. The Department for Social Responsibility & Sustainability was established in 2013 and the University embedded sustainability within its Estate Strategy 2010-2020. In this, specific strategies, policies, and plans on important aspects of Social Responsibility & Sustainability, Biodiversity, Climate Action, Energy, Recycling & Waste Management, Travel, and Fair Trade were devised. Each school, including the Business School, is guided by these policies and the School operates within the Community Strategy of the University of Edinburgh, which has an objective of making a significant, sustainable and socially responsible contribution to Scotland, the UK and the world.

School mission, vision and values

Our mission, vision and values are posted on the School website.¹

Our Mission:
Developing effective and responsible leaders by creating insightful knowledge and inspiring minds in dialogue with the world around us.

Our Vision:
To be recognised as a progressive and connected community for thought leadership on the international business stage.

Since our application to become a Signatory we have clarified values that are important to the School. These values are connected in that we want our work to be visionary and to inspire individuals and organisations, which we believe is best achieved through active collaboration internally (such as between groups, or between academics and support staff) and externals (such as between schools), so that it has impact at the individual, organisational and societal level, and is achieved through sustainable operation.

Our Values:

We are in the process of reviewing our mission statement. We believe that we need to engage students more proactively in the communication of these values and are considering the extent to which we can involve the Student Council in this matter.
Strategy for implementation

Led by our newly appointed Sustainability Champion, the Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability (ERS) Committee was set up by the School Executive in November 2017 with a view to “furthering Sustainability as a core value at the Business School”. It should be noted that in School communications we often use ‘sustainability’ or ‘ERS’ as short-hand for ethics, responsibility and suitability.

The ERS Committee comprise 15 members from the School, both academic staff and members of professional support staff, and a member of the University’s Social Responsibility and Sustainability department acts as an advisor to the School. The Committee has been tasked with reviewing and propose plans for the implementation of our draft sustainability framework (see Appendix 1). We will work with our stakeholders (internal and external to the School) to create positive environmental, social, and economic impacts throughout our operations and research, learning and teaching. One action point identified at the Committee’s first meeting was to consider applying for the University’s different types of Sustainability Awards but especially to investigate the current position, gaps and potential opportunities in teaching; research; operations, and community. Through this we will also contribute to the wider Social Responsibility & Sustainability (SRS) Strategy of the University of Edinburgh. We envisage, as the ERS Committee settles in, that priorities, plans and objectives will be identified and brought to the School Executive Committee for approval and wider integration. Our preference is to track information relating to UN-PRME related activity through existing means both at School and at University level, thereby integrating this in ‘normal’ routines.

Our commitment to responsible management education is also reflected in the School’s Learning & Teaching Strategy of 2017, where we state one of our objectives to be: “To engage students on all our programmes in discussions about responsibility and sustainability in a global economy”. Apart from embedding our work in School plans and strategy we also want to ensure that this work is aligned with both our work towards maintaining our School-wide accreditations (AACSB and EQUIS) and our commitment to equal and fair treatment of all our employees. Athena SWAN granted the School a Bronze Award in 2017 and the School’s Equality and Diversity Committee will work with the School Executive to implement that action plan, which takes into consideration issues such as principles of equal opportunities to participate; positive role models; sustainability of people, and sustainability of careers.

Leadership in Learning

Respect for others and ethical conduct in learning is encouraged through the Student Code of Conduct, which students sign up to at the time of matriculation, through the Codes of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students, and through policies and guidance on plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability (ERS) is increasingly being promoted across the curriculum. The Semester 1 course “Global Challenges for Business”, available to all undergraduates, was introduced in 2017/18. 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. Also implemented this academic year, its ‘sister’ course “The Business of Edinburgh”, offered in Semester 2, explore the same aspects but from a local perspective. Students on MSc programmes and the MBA programme are provided the opportunity to engage in work-based projects or dissertations such as the “Carbon Consulting” project; the review commissioned by Buccleuch Estates of their land-use decision-making processes to align with ‘triple bottom-line’ objectives; the review commissioned by Costain of the company’s approach to greening the supply chain, or the work undertaken for “The Homeless World Cup” – a global charity that supports the homeless by organising football tournaments in 74 countries – to produce a video to help pitch more effectively to corporate donors. The #MakeYourMark event, open to Business School undergraduates from years 2, 3, and 4, encourages students to think critically about the social purpose of business. Students work in teams to develop business ideas that aim to tackle inequalities and transform local communities. Some students undertake pro-bono consulting, e.g. through organisations such as “FreshSight”, through participating in the “Dragons Glen”
supporting the charity “Children 1st”\(^6\) as well as participating in the local chapter of “Net Impact” (supported by the Sustainable Business Initiative)\(^7\). Initiatives relating to local community engagement can be captured and recognised as part of the “Edinburgh Award”\(^8\). We want to continue to offer this type of activity and, demand permitting, increase the number of projects on offer to students.

A research project with colleagues in India (see below) supported the development of an international interdisciplinary undergraduate student trek to India focussing on “Globalisation in Context”. The purpose of the interdisciplinary field trip, developed in collaboration with Edinburgh College of Art, is to understand the dilemma of Indian farmers and artisans within the context of globalisation. The trek will examine the role of farmers and artisans through site visits and talks that allow students to follow the fashion supply chain from the cotton farms of Gujarat to design houses in Mumbai. Through this experience, students will gain a more critical perspective on the question on whether fashion can be sustainable.

We have formalised a collaborative agreement with Shanghai Jiatong University (SJTU) whereby some of their students would take the MSc in Carbon Finance in Edinburgh as part of a 2½ year degree at SJTU. On a yearly basis a cohort of SJTU students will join our Carbon Finance. Students will receive a Master from the University of Edinburgh and then will continue their education in China at SJTU during the second year of this double degree.

In addition to knowledge and skills related learning outcomes, all programmes have a defined and assessed learning outcome in the area of ERS. Attainment of this outcome at an individual level is monitored on an annual basis by each Programme Director in the School. Recognising that we need to do more in pursuit of our mission, an intern has in the latter half of 2017 supported the School in reviewing the undergraduate curriculum to understand where and how the School covers ethics, responsibility and sustainability. As a next step we want to map the postgraduate curriculum in a similar manner and, based on this, develop what we commonly refer to as our ‘ERS matrix’. Resembling our Skills Matrix, which maps the skills we want our graduates to attain, the ERS matrix will identify attributes that we want to see University of Edinburgh Business School graduates possess and map where we support our students in developing these attributes. In doing that, we aim to ethics and responsibility becoming built-in, rather than a bolt-on to our programmes.

**Leadership in Research**

**Research into ethics, responsibility and sustainability**

Our research output evidences that our research is published in numerous journals related to ethics, responsibility and sustainability. Our return to the 2017 Corporate Knights “Better World MBA Ranking”, which listed us 20\(^{th}\) out of 40 schools, listed 128 peer reviewed publications (1.21 per Faculty fte) over a 2-year period, falling into one of their categories used to identify social and/or environmental issues with ten of the School’s research centres/networks also included under that ‘umbrella’. A number of these publications are related to business and climate change but also to ethics in the conduct of business, and responsible behaviour.

A large proportion of the work undertaken in the Centre for Business and Climate Change is cross-disciplinary. Here, a key project of global import is the development of the Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage facility in the Guangdong Province of China (see below). The Sustainable Business Initiative research centre is focused on sustainability and the challenges and opportunities it presents. Ongoing research projects include the Africapitalism project; the Circular Economy, Ideology and CSR, Responsible Investment, Sustainability and Complexity, and Sustainability Strategy. The Sustainable Business Initiative supports the local chapter of Net Impact\(^9\). The School is working with colleagues in India to research the Honey Bee Network; a non-profit network consisting of farmers, businesspeople, scientists and other experts with the goal of cross-pollinating grassroots knowledge, an often overlooked and disregarded source of innovative and sustainable practices. When these marginal communities become integrated into the global market economy, their unique ‘local’ culture and the valuable knowledge of sustainable practices within are often lost and thus overwritten by more
resource intensive and less sustainable ‘global’ ways of doing things. This research project supported the creation of the interdisciplinary student trek to India mentioned above.

We plan to maintain similar levels to the above and to continue to engage widely in and support research into sustainability and responsible business but we do not wish to dictate research agendas; for staff or for Doctoral students.

**Ethics and responsibility in the conduct of research**

The University and the School hold research ethics in high regard and the Research Misconduct Policy works to ensure that research is carried out legally, in the public interest and in accordance with best practice. The research ethics policy provides specific guidelines for ethics approval of research. We are required to report annually to the University on the number of ethics applications and on how we ensure compliance. As yet we have had no cases of non-compliance.

**Influencing globally**

As can be seen from the above two sections, we seek to influence globally both through teaching and learning, including executive education, and through research activity. This continues to be an objective. Through the development and implementation of an ERS matrix for our undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts we hope to equip our graduates to grapple with difficult questions in their future careers, no matter where they be based. We see this as the best way of influencing globally – and contributing locally.

An ethical and responsible approach is integrated into student recruitment through widening access and participation, through the award of scholarships and also through a phased approach to candidate selection at postgraduate level. In the case of the latter initiative, we seek to act responsibly by selecting the best qualified candidates, notwithstanding their background. While a challenging task because of the unpredictability of the current economic and political context we will continue to balance international diversity of student cohort versus numbers on programmes.

The biannual Credit Scoring and Credit Control conference, hosted by the School’s Credit Research Centre is the world’s premier conference in the area. Comprising speakers from academia and industry, the most recent of its kind, Credit Scoring and Credit Control XV, saw 438 delegates from 42 countries.

We also enjoy internationally recognised research capability in climate change, as evidenced by our work in collaboration with our partners in China, and in carbon accounting and finance. In December 2017, research into Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage to gain better understanding of the regulatory frameworks and policy instruments that support Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in developing countries was secured for another two years. The £1.1 million research project funded by BHP Billiton – one of the largest mining companies in the world – will focus on the development and evaluation of innovative and sustainable technology and business solutions for CCS, and their applicability in a major developing economy, namely China.

In addition to our status as UN-PRME Signatory, the School is a member of the Academy of Business in Society (ABIS), a global network of over 100 companies and academic institutions whose expertise, commitment and resources are leveraged to invest in a more sustainable future for business in society. So far our engagement with ABIS has been limited. We have attended their “Knowledge into Action Forum” twice, primarily to assess opportunities and learn through networking. We will continue to explore this as well as other avenues for engagement.

**Contributing locally**

As outlined in Appendix 1, our draft sustainability framework expresses as our objective to work with all our stakeholders, internal and external, to create positive environmental, social, and economic impacts throughout...
our operations and research, learning and teaching. In operations we are mindful of the sustainability impacts of our operations and encourage a culture of efficiency, responsibility, and communication among all staff and students. We particularly seek to understand the behaviours of our staff and students and how to best support sustainable practices.

The #MakeYourMark” event (see above) see undergraduate students work in teams to develop business ideas that aim to change local communities. The second #MakeYourMark event involved 35 entrepreneurs and businesses who took part in the opening panel, provided expert clinics, acted as judges, and provided the mentoring prizes. We want to build on the success of #MakeYourMark and have begun talks with the University Careers Service and Edinburgh Innovations (Launch.ed) to bid for funds from Santander to develop enterprise training for undergraduates across the University with the aim of offering paid internships in SMEs and third sector organisations.

Traditionally, and in common with many other universities in the UK, engagement with the community for staff has been an activity of personal choice. Policies set down by the University HR Department allow the School to support and advise faculty wishing to engage in community outreach in a consistent manner. Contribution to the community is recognised in criteria for promotion14, and faculty are encouraged to carry out such engagements. The time taken on such activities falls within the ‘research and impact’ allowance within the School’s workload model. As we implement our sustainability framework, however, we envisage that some staff may have specific allowances toward different tasks and activities.

While occasionally international in nature, such as the bespoke offering on “Sustainable Business“ for the National Pension Commission of Nigeria, much of our executive education is designed to embed the School and University in the local business community. We have delivered successful programmes to, among others, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Television (STV), and our “Executive Women’s Leadership” programme has now prepared two cohorts of women across Scotland for senior management positions. Our new opportunities focus around combining the global with the local: in 2017, led by one of our part-time professorial fellows, we developed a course for Copenhagen Business School (CBS) executives on strategy using Edinburgh City Council as the case study. This was attended by local executives from Edinburgh City Council and Visit Scotland. CBS are sending a second cohort of 20 students in June 2018 and we have confirmed the NHS as the case study for this event.

Following the success of the 2016 e-club Festival, we ran a “StartUp Festival” in March 2017. This free one-day event attracted 700 visitors, of whom 55% were University of Edinburgh students. Ten teams entered the pitching competitions completing for £5k of prize money for venture development. The leaders’ debate with speakers from international ‘start-up cities’ inspired Edinburgh City Council to pursue further dialogue with Waterloo in Canada. The 2018 version of the “StartUp Festival” launches on 7 March.

**Partnership with Industry**

The above sections evidence, through examples, our engagement with industry, the public sector and the third sector. Another example is seen in our work with Costain, where also students engaged via project work. We originally made contact with the Costain at an AIM Construction day, an event where companies and universities meet to consider options for collaboration. A project was agreed, covering barriers to carbon reduction and validation of solutions. It focused on a selection of Costain sites, including the Shieldhall tunnel in Glasgow (a three-mile long waste water tunnel being created in the south of the city) and a section of London’s Crossrail. As part of the project we undertook site visits, where we discussed issues with Costain and their partners, such as JCB12, Caterpillar13, and plant hire firms. Subsequently, we received support from Innovate UK, the UK’s innovation agency. By that point Costain had introduced another partner, Cenex14, a UK-based non-profit centre of excellence for low carbon technology. The project had several outcomes including a model of emissions for vans that use major construction sites and options for replacing all or some of those with electric vehicles. As a result of this work new funding has been secured from car and truck manufacturer Volvo. A follow-up project
focusing on ‘embodied carbon’ – the carbon captured in the materials that make up a building – has been scoped and, once again, Costain are involved.

The School’s Director of Engagement works closely with the Deputy Director for Research and the Heads of our engagement related teams (especially Partnership Development, Executive Education (including MBA) and PR and Comms) to maximise impact of this activity. In another initiative we have re-scoped the former e-club officer into a broader role to promote entrepreneurship development activities more generally. The new appointee started in January 2018 and will be working closely with a team of internal and external advisors to help promote activities across the University and City (complementing the work of our Chair in Entrepreneurship in building relationships).

Digital Transformation and Data

We have restructured the working processes of the School’s Senior Executive committee. It was agreed that this committee should be ‘paperless’. Instead, meeting papers are now shared via SharePoint, and all committee members have been provided with a mobile device which enables them to access papers at all times. All other committees post papers on SharePoint sites as well. Unfortunately we do not have the resources to issue mobile devices to every member of staff.

Our MSc Carbon Finance touches on important aspects relating to responsible business and we are about to conduct a market poll for an online (OL) version of this programme; an online version could widen access and thereby expand the global impact of this programme.

We have conducted further research on OL models and resourcing requirement in autumn 2017 and we will use the ensuing report to inform decisions on the School’s strategy and approach to developing future OL courses and programmes, including training needs for staff to develop, deliver and support OL teaching. As is the case for an online MSc in Carbon Finance, other online offerings have implications for outreach and sustainability.
# Appendix 1: Sustainability framework

## Research, Learning and Teaching
We recognise our responsibility to ensure that our research, learning, and teaching takes account of environmental, social, and economic impacts, locally and globally.

## Internal to the Business School
- We work to equip tomorrow’s business leaders with the skills and knowledge to manage in a changing world.
- We consider how our research contributes to society, locally and globally.

### Across the University of Edinburgh
- We work with academics across the University to address global challenges through collaborative teaching and research.

### External to the University of Edinburgh
- We work with academic and community partners locally and globally to collaboratively create positive environmental, social, and economic impacts.

## Operations
We are mindful of the sustainability impacts of our actions and encourage a culture of efficiency, responsibility, and communication among all staff and students.

## Facilities
We work in line with central University targets and practices on carbon emissions from energy, travel, waste, and procurement.

## Behaviour
We seek to understand the behaviours of our staff and students and how to best support sustainable practices.

## Communication
We tell our sustainability story and are open and transparent about our sustainability impacts and what we are doing.

## Learning and Teaching
We work to ensure effective use of resources within our learning and teaching.

### Endnote references

1. [https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/mission-and-vision](https://www.business-school.ed.ac.uk/about/mission-and-vision)
2. [http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Discipline/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf](http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Discipline/StudentCodeofConduct.pdf)
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