Introduction

The focus to date for implementation of PRME has primarily (and rightly) been on business and management schools; yet, if we think about the range of professions, businesses, and organisations that graduates go on to work in (and many of them in management positions), it is important to consider how the PRME principles can be used to influence the strategy of all programmes, particularly in relation to ethics, responsibility, and sustainability.

In 2007/2008, a review of the Aston Business School curriculum was undertaken in order to provide a base line of information to enable progress to be made towards all Business graduates becoming ‘literate in social responsibility and sustainability.’ This review aimed to determine the content and delivery of ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability provided for Business School students. To this end, module outlines for the postgraduate (MSc and MBA) and undergraduate programmes were scrutinised for explicit reference to the subjects, and curriculum maps were developed. Following the review, recommendations were made for changes, including new modules, inclusion of these issues in the placement year report and the development of a new MSc in Social Responsibility & Sustainability. These recommendations have all now been implemented.

In 2012, Aston University was developing its strategy towards 2020 and discussions centred around the integration of ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability as part of the new strategy in all aspects of University life.

Challenges

Social Responsibility and Sustainability (and related issues) are of concern for private, public, and third sector organisations, professional bodies, community groups, and individual citizens locally, nationally and internationally, and its importance for the global economy is likely to increase as the global indicators relating to resource exploitation, global poverty and inequality, climate change, species extinction, energy consumption (especially fossil fuels), etc., continue to be serious cause for concern. Therefore, it is important that all students at the University are equipped with the relevant knowledge and understanding of current and future implications for businesses and these other groups. As managers/leaders of the future, all graduates will be required to be social responsibility and sustainability literate in order to directly address and make decisions regarding societal challenges in these areas.

Actions taken

The University 2020 Strategy was developed with Social Responsibility & Sustainability as one of the eight key strategic aims. The strategy states:
Aston Business School

PRME beyond the business school

**Aim 07** Sustainability and social responsibility are issues our staff, students and stakeholders feel passionately about, and are central to how we work at the University, and how we relate to the world around us. Sustainability and social responsibility are based on ethical values and underpinned by the idea of economic, social, and environmental obligations to our range of stakeholders.

07.01 Commitment to the United Nations backed Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). Improving the integration of sustainability and social responsibility by embedding our activities in this area into all aspects of University life.

07.03 Social responsibility and sustainability literacy. Extending across the University curriculum changes aimed at enabling all graduates to be ‘literate in social responsibility and sustainability.’

The **Curriculum Research Project** aimed to provide an overview of the extent to which ethics, social responsibility and sustainability (and related topics) were already included in the curriculum across the University to enable individual Schools to develop plans for any future changes they wish to make. The project researcher worked on mapping the curriculum for individual schools, using the methodology adopted by the Business School in its original review in 2008 (an update of the Business School review of the curriculum was also completed as part of the University project).

**Results**

The outcome of the project provided a base line of information about the curriculum in each School to enable progress to be made towards all graduates becoming ‘literate in social responsibility and sustainability.’ The first stage of the project, which involved a review at the module level, has been completed for all Schools, and interim reports have been produced. The second stage of the project involves developing curriculum maps for each of the programmes within individual Schools. This will enable the Schools to have an overview of their respective students’ access to content in this area in order to make plans for development of the curriculum in relation to ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability.

**The role of PRME/sustainability principles**

1. The Business School became signatory to PRME in 2008 and has been actively engaged in a variety of PRME events and activities, which contributed to influencing the development of the University strategy.

2. The fact that there had been a successful curriculum project on the integration of ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability in the Business School provided a ‘blue print’ for extending this across all Schools in the University. It also provided a persuasive case for research funding to use the same methodology utilised in the Business School review.

3. Although not a PRME ‘principle,’ the statement following the principles: “We understand that our own organisational practices should serve as examples of the values and attitudes we convey to our students,” became an important part of the
2013 PRME SUMMIT – 5th ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

**Aston Business School**

PRME beyond the business school

University strategy of ‘integrating these issues into all aspects of University life.’ This included the development of a University-wide Ethical Framework (see other case story by Aston) that integrates values and underpins changes in the curriculum.