



Birmingham Business School: Working for a Responsible Future

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Introduction

This case study highlights how Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham, is working towards a responsible and sustainable business future. The School has developed and cultivated a Responsible Business (RB henceforth) strategy, including its vision to promote curiosity and thought leadership for responsible business, and a commitment to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).

This case focuses on three developments fostering an enhanced sustainability orientation within the School. First, the School's new RB strategy is enabling a growing commitment to expanding world-leading RB research. Second, Birmingham Business School has launched the Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Responsible Business, an interdisciplinary research centre exploring how businesses can be rewired responsibly. Third, we have witnessed an evolution in the School's approach to teaching ethics, responsibility and sustainability, including the embedding of these subjects into discipline-focused programmes and learning outcomes. The sections that follow elaborate on each of these three core areas, illustrating them with relevant examples of RB activity.

1. A responsible business strategy

By articulating a clear vision, mission and values that align with RB, Birmingham Business School has progressed its sustainability orientation. The School enacts its mission by creating an environment where both staff and students are able to thrive and achieve their best work. The School's internationally recognised research focuses on the key challenges around RB that face our economy and society regionally and globally. Birmingham Business School continues to influence national and global leaders in responsible business. The School has generated impact and value for society, the economy and the environment for over a century, by pursuing sustainable development. The School's growing commitment to RB is at the heart of its organisational ethos and governance structure. This commitment has meant:

- Recruitment of additional RB research staff. A November 2019 audit found 16 new staff currently researching RB.
- An increased number of RB research outputs for 2019. The November 2019 audit found 69 unique RB-related research projects across the School, 16 more than in the previous annual audit, suggesting a 9% increase in RB-related research output compared to 2018.
- Seven RB-related research centres, including 2 new centres, namely Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Responsible Business, and the Work Inclusivity Research Centre.
- Increased number of doctoral research projects on RB (about 40%), and funding of 10 new RB doctoral scholarships in 2019-20.
- Recruitment of 2 RB Student Ambassadors, to strengthen student engagement with the School's RB activities.
- The launch of an Annual RB Research Conference.

The School's strategic research priority is to build upon thematic areas of strength, including: RB in its many forms; engaging with the work inclusivity agenda; and understanding how to build resilient regional economies. Further information is [available here](#).

2. The Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Responsible Business

The Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Responsible Business was officially opened in October 2018 by António Horta-Osório, CEO of Lloyds Banking Group. The Centre seeks to inform, shape and energise RB research and teaching, developing cutting-edge research, hosting annual conferences for academics and business leaders to share tools and ideas, building on existing research and teaching initiatives, and developing sector-leading educational modules.

The Centre aims to help businesses along the path towards achieving the United Nations' ambitious set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eliminate poverty, build sustainable cities, take action on climate change and create a world where all are equal.



University of Birmingham, Edgbaston Campus, UK.

The Centre has already gained a number of prestigious connections within the business world. The Centre's work with Business In The Community (BITC) has resulted in the joint creation of a Responsible Business Tracker, a product designed to alert businesses to their progress or lack thereof towards the SDGs.

Highly respected thought leaders, practitioners and policy-makers in the responsible business space were invited to join the Centre's Advisory Board, to play a pivotal role in guiding their work. The Board contributes pragmatic perspectives and ethical values from across academia, business, policy field and the third sector. Board members act as critical friends in reviewing the merits of current activities, knowledge exchange on future innovations, challenging the Centre's priorities and informing their future agenda.

The Centre has developed a network of interdisciplinary Responsible Business Associates, who provide them with diverse, high-quality academic research experience across the responsible business spectrum. Associates enable the Centre to build innovative and impactful research collaborations.

Outputs to date include a range of conference and journal publications, workshops and business engagement events. For additional information about the Lloyds Banking Group Centre for Responsible Business, please [click here](#).

3. Learning and teaching ethics, responsibility and sustainability

As a result of its RB strategy, Birmingham Business School has taken several steps to progress its approach to learning and teaching business ethics, responsibility and sustainability, in line with PRME (please see our PRME reports by clicking [here](#) and [here](#)).

These core areas have been mapped against key strategic learning outcomes, including ethical citizenship, awareness of the role of individuals and business in society. Business responsibility learning is embedded into discipline-specific programmes and modules, as well as into students' informal curriculum. Progress highlights include:

- Launch of a new compulsory module titled 'Responsible Business: Theory and Practice' within the School's new suite of undergraduate business programmes.
- Launch of a new 20-credit 'Responsible Marketing and Consumption' module, being delivered as a final year, optional module across all undergraduate programmes.
- Launch of a new optional module for the MSc Marketing Suite of Programmes titled 'Responsible Marketing and Society'.
- Launch of the Responsible Business MBA module, to be made compulsory starting 2020-2021.
- Redesign of existing suite of Master's programmes to include RB modules across all of the School's postgraduate taught provision (ongoing).
- Delivery of two RB workshops in 2019, including "Engaging International Students in Our Teaching" and "Cultural Awareness in Learning and Teaching." The workshops sought to expose staff to culturally inclusive approaches to learning and teaching.
- Design and delivery of the School's first PRME Day workshop addressing "Innovative Pedagogy for Responsible Business Teaching".

For further information about Birmingham Business School's taught programmes, please [click here](#).

Summary

Birmingham Business School is committed to developing the responsible business leaders of tomorrow, building capacity to transform organisations and deliver on sustainable development goals through world leading and internationally recognised research.

For additional information about Birmingham Business School's Responsible Business Strategy, please [click here](#).

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