



THE  
BUCHANAN  
INSTITUTE



**Social Responsibility  
and Sustainability**

## Recommendations for the SRS Strategy Review 2018 A Commissioned Report by The Buchanan Institute

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### About the Report

In 2010, the Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability launched its ten-year strategy. The strategy highlights the growing salience and complexity of global issues such as human well-being and climate change. In turn, the 'need of governments, businesses, and other organizations to respond to these challenges creates significant opportunities for the University of Edinburgh community'. The Department goes on to outline how it can leverage its resources and practices to assist in addressing these issues.

The current review is intended to update the initial strategy. It will identify specific sectors and communities that the University can work with, using its resources and network, to move towards the implementation of objectives outlined in the strategy. The Buchanan Institute's report contributes to this review. It explores survey data on student and staff awareness of SRS activities and practices. It then highlights models set by other universities and companies within the United Kingdom. The report ends with a set of action items for the Department which, if implemented, will advance the SRS mission.

## **Existing Frameworks and University Policies**

The Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) and the University of Edinburgh governing bodies have put forth various strategies aiming to define its commitment to issues around social responsibility and sustainability. Across these documents, various objectives and strategies for achieving these objectives have been proposed. We found that strategies range across the various practices areas of the University: from the departmental level, such as equality and diversity plans, to infrastructural management, such as the Estates strategy.

The Zero by 2040 Climate Strategy for 2016 to 2026 is the predominant document detailing the climate strategy of the University. The Department has developed considerable measures and status updates on reaching its objectives. This has been evidenced by the recent Q4 highlights 2016-17. For example, we have seen that 17 locations within the University have been audited for energy efficiency and that the University is on its way to achieving its maximum potential energy savings of 1.8 million (units). With regards to specific programs, the University's Energy Engagement and Communications program includes Coordinators and a Sustainable campus fund. As observed on the program's webpage, the SRS offers support for those who would like to spread the word about the University's energy vision.

One document to particularly highlight is the Living Labs approach to sustainability in the University. This detailed strategy lays out various avenues of implementing sustainability standards into the daily practices on campus, from operations, to skills to be adopted by students, as well as in courses.

In terms of social responsibility strategies, this includes the Global Plan. The Edinburgh Global and Impact Plan, like the Zero by 2040 Climate Strategy Plan, is detailed in terms of its objectives. It details the establish of the Global Academies in encouraging academic research to address global issues as well as the set-up of global offices to connect with different regions, like the China Office in Beijing. This report also provided a clear assessment methodology (thumbs up, thumbs down) for assessing the objectives set out in the Internationalization strategy. For example, it demonstrated that the total number of international applications for academic posts – the goal – increased by almost 300%.

The Strategic Plan 2012-16 provides a clear set of indicators which are set to measure the performance in achieving its objectives. This is also the case for the University Governance and Strategic Planning apartment.

Part of these strategies have gone to further the University local impact with the broader 'Edinburgh Community', i.e. the councils, schools and organizations also locating within the city ecosystem. Recently, the University's investments which 'directly benefit the environment' - an amount of £60 million pounds - which go forward to furthering its Zero by 2040 strategy.

#### Awareness and Progress Staff and Student Survey Results

As apparent, there already exists a considerable scope of strategies for achieving the SRS issue-related objectives. The recent SRS Staff and Student Survey 2017 conducted by Sara Ford-Hutchinson also demonstrates that there has been some progress across awareness of the department and its activities.

For example, the staff are particularly keen on volunteering activities. Around half of the staff conduct volunteering outside of work. The staff also advocate for the implementation an annual leave opportunity solely for such activities.

There still remain gaps in terms of student's and staff's awareness of SRS strategies and activities. Students are the predominant portion of the University that are unaware of SRS. One of the key findings from the survey was, 'Just under half of students are aware of the Climate Strategy, and of those, over half do not understand how to help achieve this Strategy'. And 82 per cent of staff are unaware of the Living labs approach and its projects.

#### Recommendations from the Survey and Stakeholder Feedback

Based on the results, it seems that a predominant concern is the communication of SRS activities and engagement with students on SRS issues. In addition, there is considerable scope for the SRS to target students and facilitate the apprehension of the necessary sustainability skills (a more bottom-up approach).

This is not to ignore the staff's concerns who are the consistent portion of the University and therefore can constitute sustained efforts across the University. For example, developing new habits around SRS issues and implementing programs, such as 'volunteering days', will work towards full awareness and action of SRS issues.

## University Models

### Student Engagement

The University of Manchester serves as a model university for its commitment to SRS and of its implementation. Taking a holistic approach the University has clearly identified its five areas of priority: research with impact, socially responsible graduates, engaging our communities, responsible processes, environmental sustainability. This is applied across campus, in the community and worldwide. The University is especially successful in engaging students and staff in its SRS programmes.

Ethical Grand Challenges: a core part of the 'Stellify' student pathway, leading to the Manchester Leadership Award, the programme provides every Manchester undergraduate with the opportunity to confront key challenges concerning sustainability, social justice and workplace ethics. This is offered across the three year undergraduate course, with a different focus on each key issue each year.

In September 2016 the Sustainability Challenge was offered to all first-year undergraduates. Working in interdisciplinary groups, students considered the challenges arising from a new major construction project – a new campus site for the hypothetical 'University of Millchester'. They tackled the complex mix of environmental, social and economic dilemmas in a realistic scenario.

The Programme has been hugely in successfully engaging students and delivering on its commitment to socially responsible graduates. The University reports that over 5,000 students attended the Sustainability Challenge in September 2016 and so far 3,000 students have taken part in further pilots to shape the programme.

The programme delivers on its commitment to producing socially responsible graduates through educating them and providing them with the tools to tackle SRS issues. There are clear benefits to the programme for students in personal development. The programme forms a foundation in student awareness on the issues at hand that can lead to greater student action.

The University of Nottingham offers a similar programme to encourage student participation on issues of social responsibility and sustainability.

Students as Change Agents: is a programme open to all students across all years that allows students to work on a certain project to improve the university. The University actively supports individuals and teams in their projects. The project can also be used

to gain credits for the Nottingham Advantage Award. The awards offer recognition for student participation, offering a range of courses across 5 areas: career skills, mentoring, cultural awareness, entrepreneurship and volunteering. This award is included on your degree transcript and is recognised by future employers.

Students are incentivised to participate in the programme through recognition in the Nottingham Advantage Award Scheme and by clear personal development opportunities. In so doing students become more socially responsible and actively drive SRS changes in the university.

### Community Engagement and Volunteering

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) can be seen as a model university for SRS in its commitment to social responsibility and engaging the community. GCU has highlighted 'raising aspirations and widening access' as a key focus of its policies.

The Caledonian Club: A widening participation initiative that engages children and young people in the local community to develop a range of skills, across curriculum areas and different contexts and settings. The Club recruits student mentors to support all the activities alongside the Caledonian club and university staff. The role is also linked into the University's Student Leadership Programme.

Projects such as this exist at University of Edinburgh. The Literacy Through Latin programme goes into local primary schools to improve literacy levels through teaching basic Latin. Student mentors are supported by staff in delivering the curriculum. This is run on an inter-departmental level in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

The programme offers the chance for the University to engage with the local community, achieving positive social impact in an academic context. It also offers students and staff to develop new skills.

The University of Manchester shares a similar goal of positively affecting the local community especially in education.

School Governor Initiative: is a programme established to engage university staff and alumni in making a difference to the leadership in local state schools by becoming school governors. Schools where University staff are governors have also received higher than average inspection ratings, with many citing the quality of governance as being particularly notable.

The University of Leeds has just launched its own School Governor Programme to encourage and support staff to become school governors in local schools.

## Environment

UC Davis is ranked first in the world for campus sustainability practices by the 2016 UI GreenMetric World University Rankings. UC Davis is committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and it is particularly successful in engaging students to help tackle this issue through a number of programmes.

The Green Initiative Fund: provides funding that enables students to have a greater impact on sustainability within the university and local community, offering grants to projects that improve educational opportunities, promote environmental awareness, engage in sustainability research, advocate for climate and environmental justice, increase energy and water efficiency, and reduce the amount of waste created on campus. Project proposals are selected for funding by the annually appointed TGIF Committee, which is comprised of students, faculty, and staff. Students maintain a majority vote as the committee's voting members include five undergraduate students.

The programme offers students the chance to become more engaged through the grant programme. Importantly students also have the ultimate say as to where the money is spent due to the student majority vote of the committee. In so doing students are actively encouraged and supported in driving change on campus, being able to see direct results.

10,000 Actions: the UK's largest environmental sustainability initiative for staff in higher education. 10,000 Actions supports staff in being environmentally sustainable by providing an online tool which enables enable all staff to develop a personal sustainability action plan. We've also made an online tool made available to our 8,000 suppliers to encourage them to reflect on their own sustainability practices.

The programme tailors its action plan to you, taking into account commitments and priorities. It can be done at your own pace. It offers a tangible way to measure progress and recognise achievements.

Student Sustainability Architects: The Sustainability Service offers part-time paid positions to students to provide support for student engagement activities, events, campaigns and initiatives. They deliver projects to align the University's strategic objectives, such as the the Student Citizenship Programme and develop their own ideas to increase student participation with sustainability.

Students are actively engaged in SRS decisions, where they are well placed to develop ideas on how to increase student participation as the middle-man between the University and the student body. The programme offers students the chance to develop personal skills.

## Corporate Models

Corporations are increasingly required to have sustainability and social responsibility models included within their business models – in part due to the increasing pressure from consumers. Consumers, particularly those included within the ‘millennial’ category are increasingly expecting the private sector to play a key role in helping to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Global Citizenship, 2016). As such, two companies in particular have extensive corporate responsibility plans – Marks and Spencer and Unilever – within which environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and supply chains are paramount.

### General Overview

For both corporations, stakeholder and consumer input is becoming increasingly essential in the formation of corporate responsibility models. Consulting such key actors allows the companies to understand what is expected of their company, and thus allows maximum stakeholder satisfaction. In addition, growing transparency within supply chains and the corporations themselves are considered increasingly important by both corporations.

### Social Responsibility

Marks and Spencer have various schemes and efforts in place to increase their social responsibility. This includes helping to raise £25 million for charities that support cancer, heart disease, mental health, loneliness, and dementia by 2025, and supporting Marks and Spencer workers to commit to a total of 1 million hours of community work by 2025, and encouraging support of local charities through fundraising, volunteering, and donations from varying products.

By 2022, mental health training will be provided to Marks and Spencer colleagues, as well as launching an education programme in the UK to promote health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.

Unilever concentrate their social responsibility efforts on two main goals; improving the health and well-being of more than 1 billion people by 2020, and enhancing the livelihoods of millions of people. In order to improve the health and well-being of more than 1 billion people, the policy focuses on health and hygiene alongside improving nutrition.

To successfully enhance the livelihoods of millions of people, Unilever’s key focuses are on fairness in the workplace, opportunities for women, and ensuring that business



is inclusive. Unilever work with suppliers who commit to encouraging the fundamental UN Human Rights, are developing an inclusive business, and increasing the role of young entrepreneurs within the value chain. In addition, Unilever founded the 'Fair Wage Network' to increase their understanding of the living wage for its employees.

Unilever also aims to empower 5 million women through increasing advancement opportunities within the corporation and providing up-skilling opportunities, as well as increasingly sourcing from smallholder farms which are commonly managed by women. They also committed to the UN 'HeForShe' campaign and actively endorse the UN women's empowerment principles. 80% of all employment opportunities must attract equal numbers of female and male applicants.

Finally, Unilever intend to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of employees through a variety of schemes including the 'Lamplighter' system of health checks, thrive workshops on energy and purpose, and ensuring an appropriate support system is in place. The mental health initiatives are reliant on some key factors leadership and management, communication and culture, scoping resilience, managing pressure, and support.

To improve health and hygiene, Unilever aim to provide safe drinking water and improve toilets and sanitation to help reduce the incidence of potentially fatal diseases which are avoidable, for example diarrhoea. One primary method for this is through the WASH pledge which ensures clean water, sanitation, and hygiene within all location in which the company operates – from factories, to plantations, to workplaces. In addition, Unilever funded and built the first urban water, hygiene, and sanitation focused community centre within Azad Nagar, Mumbai. This focuses on education of communities to encourage handwashing and help reduce diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases. Unilever also aim to lessen the impacts of natural disasters and emergencies through focusing on community preparedness, relief, and rehabilitation. Working with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Unilever helps write reports, host conferences, mobilise resources and money, and share expertise in overcoming such issues. This can be done through matching employee donations, promoting hygiene using technology including radio, or training local nurses in dealing with specific issues.

Finally, Unilever also focus on improving nutrition for both workers and consumers. Through providing healthy eating information and removing sugar, calories, and saturated fat from their products, they aim to improve the nutrition and thus overall health and wellbeing.

## Environmental Sustainability

Marks and Spencer's 'Plan A: 2025' is a comprehensive policy to limit the environmental impact of the company on local, regional, and global scales. By 2020, 95% of M&S food will come from factories who are considered as 'Silver' on the Food Sustainability Scorecard, and 50% will be of 'Gold' standard by 2025. Food suppliers will also have to implement a ten-year climate mitigation and adaptation strategy by 2022. The environmental sourcing of food continues with the Forever Fish Programme which aims to ensure high welfare and responsible fishing management, demonstrating their advocacy for marine protection. Marks and Spencer also use independent environmental and social responsibility standards and indicators, for industries which involve clothing manufacture.

In terms of waste, Marks and Spencer have already committed to a 'zero waste to landfill' policy across the UK, but aim for this to be worldwide by 2025. Food waste will be reduced by 20% per square foot, and consider increasing the volume of waste food donated to charities, as well as encouraging customers to engage with the value of food beginning in 2019.

By 2025, energy efficiency of M&S establishments will be improved by 60% compared to 2006/7, as well as increasing the proportion of their energy mix which is renewable to 100% by 2035. Marks and Spencer have also committed to reducing their indirect greenhouse gas emissions by 13.3 million tonnes by 2030. To further limit their greenhouse gas contributions, they have committed to zero deforestation from the use of palm oil, soy, cattle, wood, and wood derived materials by 2020.

Similarly, Unilever have an extensive policy on limiting their negative environmental impact, focusing on greenhouse gases, water, and waste and packaging. Greenhouse gases is a prominent component of their corporate responsibility model, with a key aim being to become carbon positive in manufacturing. By aiming to use entirely renewable energy, including from the electricity grid, eliminating coal from the energy mix, and making surplus energy available to local communities, Unilever intends on considerably reducing their Greenhouse gas emissions. This also hopes to be achieved through reducing greenhouse gases from transportation, refrigeration, and energy consumption in offices. In addition, Unilever will invest in alternative fuels to diesel, with long term hopes of using hydrogen and biogases – while using CNG and LNG as transition fuels, and working alongside their infrastructure providers to ensure sustainability is a component of their working agreements.

Unilever also plan on contributing to zero net deforestation by 2020, which will also limit greenhouse gas emissions, which they intend to achieve by working on the sustainability of their supply chains particularly regarding palm oil.

Regarding water use, Unilever wishes to assist agricultural suppliers with improving irrigation techniques and equipment, as well as proactively mapping water effectiveness within the supply chain.

Finally, regarding waste and packaging Unilever have three main objectives – to reduce food waste, create a circular economy, and going beyond zero-waste to landfill. By becoming part of Champions 12.3, which is a global coalition of leaders, they work to reduce food waste. In addition to promoting the use of the 'Wise up on Waste' app which allows the tracking of food waste, Unilever also helps to set up food banks, enhance donations across Europe's food banks, and also encouraging employees to volunteer in food banks by sharing their professional skills with those who run the banks.

Reducing waste will also be achieved by helping create a circular economy within their corporation. Through running internal workshops and training sessions on the circular economy, and aiming to have 100% recyclable packing by 2025 – as well as recycling plastics within their packaging, and encouraging consumers to recycle (through raising awareness, and creating collection points), Unilever aims to reduce the environmental impact of their packaging. In addition, they are increasingly reusing their materials, e.g. cardboard boxes, and increasingly recycling plastics and turning them into uniforms for employees. However, Unilever believes that although reusing, recycling, and recovering are all key components in limiting their environmental impact, reducing their initial consumption is pivotal.

### Supply Chains

Marks and Spencer hope to have an increasingly transparent supply chain, and ensure that it is increasingly sustainable. This is furthered by the Global Community Programme, which aims to benefit 1 million people within their supply chain communities by forming partnerships to develop livelihoods, promote environmental protection, and improve human wellbeing.

Within Unilever's corporate responsibility policy sustainable sourcing is of key importance. Increasing the sustainability of their supply chains is primarily conducted through working with both producers, suppliers, and consumers. By ensuring inclusive supply chains for smallholder farmers, continually promoting change through repeated improvements of supply policy, and promoting certification among

suppliers, e.g. Rainforest Alliance. In addition, there is prominent community input through encouraging suppliers to self-assess their compliance with the Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code and increasingly building traceability into global supply chains through suppliers directly supplying data as to where their products are produced – both creating an increasingly transparent supply chain. In addition, Unilever are increasingly providing income-boosting agricultural training, education, and health insurance for farmers and their families. Further to this, Unilever are encouraging the development of financial literacy, nutrition, and hygiene training alongside experts, and providing access to labour and time-saving devices for employees, including cook-stoves.

Through creating a Sustainable Sourcing Advisory Board and actively encouraging consumers to care about sustainable sourcing of products through interactive social media campaigns about producers and suppliers, and communicating information on sustainability. Finally, Unilever also created a responsible sourcing policy, ensuring numerous values are adhered to, including no forced labour, workers are treated equally, all workers are legally allowed to work, and all workers are given fair wages.

## Policy Recommendations

Going forward, we recommend the following set of recommendations that will allow the University to further the awareness of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability department and to further its objectives as set across the various strategies and objectives statements that the University has published.

### Awareness

#### 1. Going to the Students:

Based on the concerns raised in the staff and student surveys, the SRS would benefit from developing the materials and programs with residency agencies that deal directly with students. Edinburgh Accommodation services, such as Pollock Halls and Collegiate, can serve as loci for dispersing information about SRS activities and recommended practices.

#### 2. Voicing activities through online and in-person:

The SRS should utilize social media channels to highlight its work in accordance with international campaigns. The network effects are powerful and demonstrate the University's intent to address about SRS issues. These effects can be amplified by encouraging schools and departments to voice their activities related to SRS activities. Furthermore, this can introduce a feedback loop from students to respond to their experience and starting online discussion of practices.

#### 3. A SRS School Ambassadors system:

To harmonize the SRS voice across the various schools, we recommend that the SRS establish a program for students to become SRS Ambassadors. There are similar programs that already run on campus. Ambassadors can be the physical presence on campus. Through lecture shout outs, these students can further the agenda and interests of the SRS on campus.

#### 4. Sustainability Workshops and Courses:

The opportunity to engage with SRS related issues needs to extend beyond the Sustainability awards. The SRS should offer workshops on food waste as well as events, like at Manchester, where students have the opportunity to think critically

and creatively about ways of addressing the objectives set by the SRS. These can also extend beyond the University to secondary schools and to the wider public.

### Implementation and Practice

#### 1. Increasing transparency around sources:

The global impact of the University is not just the research it conducts and issues it can address. It includes the use of resources to operate. The University's global supply chain is considerable. Transparency opens up the University to identifying new practices which are efficient in accordance with SRS objectives. Transparency can be improved through listing the ethical and fair trade brands that it uses.

#### 2. Supporting student initiatives:

Student initiatives are a key opportunity for encouraging student practice in SRS areas and for furthering student satisfaction. Greater funding can be provided to the innovative projects across the University. Furthermore, the SRS can facilitate workshops that encourage the genesis of these ideas.

#### 3. Implementation Plans for Resources and Estates:

The SRS should work alongside the schools and departments to build specific implementation plans. An exemplary plan is that for the Good Food Policy. This can be done with the support of the student ambassadors who can serve as the nexus between the SRS, student groups, and the schools.

#### 4. Working within and beyond Edinburgh:

Engage with other organizations and schools to make the 'Edinburgh community' one of the most SRS friendly. This includes sharing ideas and developing a Code of Responsibility to adopt. The University does not operate a vacuum, so its standards and conduct should reflect that.

### Monitoring Progress and Adaptability

#### 1. Annual Strategies and feedback.

It's not enough to report on the progress every three years or so. The entire strategies might not change however new policies of implementation need to adopt to annual

developments. Furthermore, with the addition of student ambassadors, they can assist with tracking these objectives and finding feedback. In a collaborative effort, the SRS engaged with students like those from Q-step students. Ultimately, the recognition is that achieving the objectives set by the University is a dynamic, not static, process and effort.

## 2. Developing an impact metric

The University is highly regarded for its research across all departments. The impact needs to be become more visible. This includes going beyond the number of articles published by an academic. A new system of impact measurement needs to be adopted to understand how academics are contributing to SRS objectives through their research. (This straddles giving academics more leeway in pursuing research and time to volunteer as well.)

## 3. Developing an online feedback portal

These can be used to allow students to offer suggestions about how to reach the objectives. Furthermore, it would an indication of the SRS ability to engage the student body. An example of this is found on the SRS energy resources page where there is an opportunity to request for custom materials.

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