PRME Report 2021

Sharing Information on Progress (SIP)
Contents

PRME Report 2021 .................................................................................................................. 1
  Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) .................................................................................... 1
Home to the curious, bold and brave ...................................................................................... 4
  University of Essex ................................................................................................................. 4
    Our success ............................................................................................................................ 4
Our values .................................................................................................................................. 5
  Committed to sustainability ..................................................................................................... 5
Essex Business School ............................................................................................................. 7
  EBS’ PRME commitment ......................................................................................................... 7
    Alignment with PRME strategic direction ............................................................................. 7
    Our Environmental Policy .................................................................................................... 8
    Equality, inclusion and diversity ........................................................................................... 8
Practical actions and progress .................................................................................................. 10
A transformative education ....................................................................................................... 11
  Example modules: ................................................................................................................... 11
    Corporate Governance ........................................................................................................ 11
    Business Ethics .................................................................................................................... 11
    Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility ..................................................................... 12
    Equality and Diversity .......................................................................................................... 12
    Democracy in Action ........................................................................................................... 12
    The Essex MBA ................................................................................................................... 12
Engaging our students ............................................................................................................. 13
  Sustainable recruitment ......................................................................................................... 13
  A place to call home ............................................................................................................... 13
  Supporting progression .......................................................................................................... 14
  Employability ........................................................................................................................ 14
Our ethical alumni ..................................................................................................................... 14
  Donating to charity and cutting carbon ............................................................................... 14
  Giving back to the community .............................................................................................. 15
Research excellence ................................................................................................................. 16
  Our research centres: .......................................................................................................... 16
    Centre for Environment and Society (CES) ..................................................................... 16
    The Centre for Research on Entrepreneurship Innovation Management and Internationalisation (REIMI) .................................................................................................................... 17
    The Centre for Accountability and Global Development ............................................... 17
Events ....................................................................................................................................... 17
  Accounting and Accountability in Emerging Economics (AAEE) Conference 2021 ............ 17
Equality Conference 2021........................................................................................................................................... 17
Research impact ................................................................................................................................................................. 18
Unlocking silos in health and social care ................................................................................................................................... 18
Embedding the Circular Economy in SMEs ................................................................................................................................. 18
Aiding financial stability .............................................................................................................................................................. 18
Sustainable transformation of food wastes ...................................................................................................................................... 18
Supporting disadvantaged female entrepreneurs .......................................................................................................................... 19
Investigating how fintech can deepen UK-India trade relations .................................................................................................. 19
Reducing the use of single-use plastic ...................................................................................................................................... 19
Working with the UN on gender equality ..................................................................................................................................... 19
Research publications ...................................................................................................................................................................... 20
Sharing knowledge ............................................................................................................................................................................ 21
Knowledge Transfer Partnerships .................................................................................................................................................. 21
Evaluating the social impact of the arts ........................................................................................................................................ 21
Reducing waste and increasing productivity through a Management KTP ...................................................................................... 21
Propelling growth at the Finishing Line ...................................................................................................................................... 21
Innovation Centre .............................................................................................................................................................................. 21
Workshop on Sustainability Reporting, Regulation and Practice ................................................................................................ 22
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 23
Reporting for EBS ........................................................................................................................................................................... 23
Home to the curious, bold and brave

University of Essex

We are Essex. We're a University where curiosity prevails and where exploring new ways of thinking and pushing boundaries isn't just encouraged – it’s expected.

We think right now that the world needs the creativity and courage of our community of graduates, students and researchers more than ever.

We have a powerful global outlook and our impact is growing. We now have close to 1,000 active researchers and over 17,000 students from more than 140 different countries, with 100,000+ alumni making a difference across the globe.

We were named University of the Year at the Times Higher Education Awards 2018 for our determination to do things differently and put student success at the centre of everything we do. We’re proud to be gold rated in the Teaching Excellence Framework 2017 and we’re in the top 25 for research quality in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2021. We are also 22rd in the world for International Outlook in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021.

We’re committed to two things: excellence in teaching and excellence in research. We put student success at the heart of our mission – supporting every student, from every background, to achieve outstanding outcomes and preparing our students to thrive in their future lives.

“Essex is committed to excellence in education and research, for the benefit of individuals and communities. We nurture and celebrate our shared commitment to social action and support every person in our University community to realise their potential.”

Professor Anthony Forster, Vice-Chancellor

Our success

- Top 10 for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships in the UK (Innovate UK).
- Winners of the Green Flag Award for the fourth year running (2020).
Our values

When we first opened our doors in 1964, our founding Vice-Chancellor, Sir Albert Sloman, wanted to create ‘a new kind of university… where students could live and learn… and research really mattered’. We’ve been challenging expectations about what a university could be ever since, making a difference through excellence in research and education for more than fifty years.

Today, we’re still proud to stand for inclusion, academic freedom and partnership. We’re just as committed to making the world a better place by putting ideas into action to benefit others, working together to improve the lives of people and communities through education and research. Our focus on social action is clear and builds on the commitment of our staff and students to advocacy, activism, social entrepreneurship and service to our communities.

Committed to sustainability

In December 2020, the University of Essex declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency, committing us to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2035. Sustainability is at the top of our agenda, ensuring all of our staff and students take responsibility for our environmental and social impacts. Together, we have developed our most ambitious Sustainability Sub-Strategy to date, focusing on 13 priory areas across the University’s operations to address our direct and indirect environmental impacts between now and 2026.

Our objectives include:

- reducing scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions by 76% by 2035
- defining, measuring and reducing our core scope 3 emissions
- ensuring our education and research is delivered and supported in a sustainable way
- increasing the proportion of our environmental research
- maintaining and enhancing our green spaces
- stabilising and reducing our water consumption
- increasing recycling and reducing our waste
- minimising the carbon and environmental impact of our travel and transport activities
- reducing the environmental impact of our food and drink provision
- minimising the environmental impact of our physical estate
- maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of our use of space
- ensuring sustainability is a key component of our financial decision making
- empowering our students and staff to think and act sustainably

Our work on sustainability has gained national recognition. In 2020, we were ranked as a top tier university in the USwitch Renewable University Report, meaning Essex is doing better than 50% of UK universities in terms of renewable energy on-campus. We were recognised for our renewable installations, such as solar panels, which currently produce 2.5% of our electricity, and our CHP (combined heat and power) units. In the same year, Wivenhoe Park, home to our Colchester Campus, won the Green Flag Award for the fourth year running.

Other recent sustainability initiatives include:

- we commit £1 million per year to sustainability staffing, initiatives and projects
- we have reduced our scope 1 and 2 emissions by 28% against a 2005 baseline
- we are accredited as a Hedgehog Friendly Campus (Silver)
• our #LittleChoicesBigChanges campaign encourages staff and students to make lifestyle changes that reduce their environmental impact
• in October 2019, we switched our electricity contract to a provider that produces 100% certified carbon neutral energy
• discounts are available to those who bring their own reusable cups to Essex Food and Student Union outlets
• water fountains are in place across our campuses so our community can refill and reduce single use plastic

“The University’s mission is to contribute to society through excellence in education and research. Our Sustainability Sub Strategy (SSS) is part of a suite of strategies that support these aims and will guide not only our work to reduce emissions and encourage biodiversity, but also our approach to education and research. It recognises the far-reaching nature of sustainability, from carbon emissions and biodiversity, to finance, communication and engagement. This is crucial as all of the University’s activities contribute to our carbon emissions and environmental impact.”

Rob Davey, Head of Sustainability and Grounds
At Essex Business School (EBS), we champion responsible, ethical and sustainable business. From global corporations and the public sector, to SMEs, family businesses and start-ups, we're interested in real-world business challenges.

Through our world-class research and teaching, we train our students to think critically about business and encourage them to make a positive impact on society. We want our students to learn that they have the power to shape their future world with the actions they take in the workplace. We want them to use business as a power for good.

We aim to teach leadership with integrity. We demonstrate the values of sustainability and responsible management through our teaching and research and through our environment; our home in Colchester is the UK’s first zero carbon business school building.

We are the largest department at the University of Essex, with five subject groups: Accounting, Finance, Management & Marketing, Organisational Studies & Human Resource Management, and Entrepreneurship. Our teaching and research is delivered across two campuses, Colchester and Southend, and our community is made up of over 2000 students and academics.

"At Essex Business School, we aim to teach leadership with integrity. We want our students to learn to think critically about business and to leave us with the knowledge and tools to do business better – for stakeholders, for the planet and for the community. Our continued dedication to PRME helps us to further these aims by embedding the values of responsible management into our teaching, research and knowledge exchange."

Professor Neil Kellard, Dean of EBS

EBS’ PRME commitment

Alignment with PRME strategic direction

We’re proud to re-commit to the guiding principles of PRME:

- **PURPOSE** – to develop the capabilities of our students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society
- **VALUE** – our holistic approach to business education adds both economic value and recognises the social, ethical and environmental implications of business strategies and practices
- **METHOD** – by embedding Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues across our curriculum, our teaching and learning methodologies equip students with the ability to understand the broader implications of business strategies. Through a blend of theoretical and practical applications, we enable students to gain excellent critical thinking skills so they can make responsible decisions in the workplace
• RESEARCH – we believe there is more to ‘the firm’ than simply a vehicle for value release and that long term returns are contingent on reinvestment. Our research aims to address important sustainability and social issues faced by commercial businesses, public sector bodies and not-for-profit organisations
• PARTNERSHIP – we work collaboratively with business and policymaking communities on social and environmental responsibilities. Through our partnerships, we provide degree courses, training programmes, policy-oriented research, and consultancy services
• DIALOGUE – we have long been champions of a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach to business education. We regularly collaborate on sustainability and social issue research with colleagues at Essex and other universities, academic and professional bodies, students, media, and national and international interest groups

Our Environmental Policy
In 2021, we created the School’s first Environmental Policy and Green Action Plan to formalise our approach to reducing our carbon footprint. The documents are sub-components of the EBS Sustainability Strategy and are overseen by the School’s new Sustainability Committee, launched in 2021 and led by our Deputy Dean of Colchester.

Our policy aims to:
• enable all members of EBS to contribute to our sustainability plans
• work proactively with University Estates and other partners to reduce our waste and carbon emissions and promote biodiversity
• embed environmental and social sustainability within all our programmes
• support and raise the profile of our cutting-edge sustainability research
• promote green transport options for our staff and students
• use our expertise to produce positive change across the University and wider community

Winning at sustainability
We’re proud to have won Gold in the University of Essex’s 2021 Sustainable Essex Awards. Revised for this year, the awards are an internal accreditation scheme that provides departments with a framework to help them become more sustainable. As part of our entry, we undertook sustainability training and ensured sustainability issues are included in new staff inductions. Our students and staff also sent out environmentally themed communications across the School and held events to gain our stakeholders’ input into our new Environmental Policy and Green Action Plan. The work built on our success in 2020, where we won Silver in the previous iteration of the scheme, the Green Impact Awards.

Equality, inclusion and diversity
EBS is a place where staff and students recognise each other as valued members of our department and wider community. We work together with mutual respect and integrity, fostering an environment where people are free to be themselves and are supported to reach their potential. We were awarded Athena SWAN Bronze in 2019 in recognition of our gender equality action plan, which sets out how the School champions equality in our research, teaching and professional practice.

The EBS Equality Committee is now leading our application for the Athena SWAN Silver Departmental Award, which will review the success and impact of our equality initiatives, such as our new Equality Café. Launched in 2020, the first event attracted more than 90 students and staff who met in a relaxed virtual environment to discuss and feedback on the School’s equality, diversity and inclusion polices.
Since the last PRME SIP Report, we have also launched a new research cluster on gender equality and held our first Equality Conference. Professor Martyna Sliwa was also appointed as the new Vice Chair for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the British Academy of Management and has worked with Professor Melissa Tyler to create the Inclusive Events Guide. The document ensures our meetings, events and conferences are organised inclusively around the needs of all groups and has been adopted across the University.

Colleagues in the School have also created an Anti-Racism Working Group and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Taskforce to encourage BAME diversity in relation to choosing interview panels, doctoral supervisory panels and research seminars, workshops and conference speakers. A BAME research cluster has also been created and the groups will consider student attainment data and make recommendations to the School’s Senior Management Team (SMT) to ensure BAME students are well-supported.

Inclusive recruitment

We are proud of our inclusive recruitment policies, which are working to broaden access to Higher Education (HE). In 2019-20, over a quarter of UK students came to EBS from geographic areas associated with low participation in HE. Our community is also internationally diverse, with 57% of our students and 55% of our staff joining us from overseas in 2021. Our culturally dynamic classrooms provide positive environments for intercultural collaboration, and this is promoted through a strong emphasis on discussion, teamwork, and group projects.

At the same time, we continue to recruit large numbers of students from our own region. This includes local business leaders, particularly through our Executive Education provision and Executive MBA. In our research and community engagement, we also collaborate with a wide variety of local organisations, providing local expertise with a global outlook.

Decolonising the curriculum

We are committed to being an inclusive place to work and study, regardless of background, ethnicity or nationality. In 2020, we began a project to decolonise our curriculum as one of a number of steps to address racialised disadvantage in HE. The project seeks to engage with what are, in many instances, the problematic historic origins of our disciplines, unpack diverse bodies of knowledge and approaches to learning, and to explore ways to make education as equal and just as possible. Our academics will examine our reading lists and course content to ask important questions about visibility and ensure we provide access to a range of resources which reflect the diversity of our student body and communities. We also want to ensure that our assessment and tasks enable our students to bring their own experiences into the classroom and allow space for reflection and diversity of opinion. A number of events are currently being organised as part of the project, with our academics reporting into our Senior Management Team (SMT) to raise issues that need to be addressed.

The BAME Enterprise

The BAME Enterprise links businesses and citizens to develop action-research and action-learning projects that address BAME contributions to entrepreneurial outcomes, in areas such as climate change, poverty, economic development and globalisation. Launched in 2021, the project aims to embed its learnings into education, research and outreach at EBS. In the first event, entitled ‘Black Innovative Power’, MBA students interacted with Black businesses and social entrepreneurs to develop case studies as part of their Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Business Models module, led by Professor Jay Mitra.
Practical actions and progress
A transformative education

EBS offers all students a truly transformative education that gives them the confidence, skills and knowledge to positively shape their lives and make a difference in their communities.

Our courses aim to teach leadership with integrity. By training our students to think critically about business, we know that they will be encouraged to act ethically and leave us committed to doing business better. Critical thinking skills are embedded into learning objectives on every programme and our compulsory capstone modules encourage students to become independent researchers.

Our students join us from all over the world and we place an emphasis on the global context in which businesses operate. We draw upon our cultural diversity to promote discussion, group work and presentations that encourage our students to develop a truly global outlook.

Employability is also important to us, with practical careers skills embedded into our content and assessment. Our module outlines detail the professional skills students can expect to gain throughout their studies and we have recently involved local employers in the delivering of two undergraduate accounting modules. We’ve also increased the number of professional exemptions from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and refreshed the membership and terms of our Advisory Board around employability.

“Students come to EBS for a transformative education. We provide this by teaching business with integrity. Our programmes challenge students to become independent thinkers, problem solvers and ethical leaders. We encourage them to question and interrogate, not just so they gain the skills that employers want, but so they can transform organisations for the better.”

Dr Noelia-Sarah Reynolds, Director of Education

Example modules:

We seek to develop our students’ social consciences by encouraging them to consider the impact of business actions on society. Issues of sustainability and responsible management are embedded into compulsory modules and offered as specialist advanced modules. Some examples include:

Corporate Governance

This undergraduate accounting module introduces students to key concepts, theories and issues in corporate governance. Topics include: corporate governance regulations; the relationship between corporate governance and corporate performance; board structure and managerial opportunism; CSR and the politics of corporate governance.

Business Ethics

In this undergraduate module, students are introduced to the origins, practice and theory of business ethics and CSR. They examine a range of literature and perspectives to critically examine the ethics of business and identify the assumptions that both inform and constrain the field.
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

This interactive and inter-disciplinary postgraduate module equips students with an understanding of key issues and debates around ecological sustainability, governance and corporate ethics and responsibility. Students are introduced to a range of theories to help them understand the relationship between management and corporations on the one hand, and society and nature on the other.

Equality and Diversity

This postgraduate module considers the ideas, debates and concepts underpinning the development of different policies and practices shaping the management of equality and diversity within contemporary work organisations. It also considers the changing contexts and practices shaping lived experiences of equality and diversity at work. Encouraging a critical, reflexive understanding of theory and practice, it outlines and evaluates the role played by Human Resource Management and by HR professionals in managing equality and diversity.

Democracy in Action

New to students across the University from October 2021, this interdisciplinary module is delivered in collaboration with Citizen’s UK, the University of Essex’s Department of Government and the Interdisciplinary Studies Centre. The module is led by EBS’ Dr Rebecca Warren and gives students the opportunity to work on practical projects with community organisations and local authorities to develop strategies that address the needs of local people. Students will receive training on community organising, including issues such as power relations, prioritisation, organising public events and communicating with the media. The module will provide a unique opportunity to make a difference in society whilst connecting with students’ academic studies, helping them to better understand the way social, political and economic issues are interconnected and shape the life of our communities.

The Essex MBA

The Essex MBA seeks to develop socially responsible entrepreneurs delivering sustainable business. The programme fosters our students’ entrepreneurial spirit, so our MBA graduates can build sustainable, resilient business models that make sense to shareholders and the environment, whilst responding to economic pressures.

Our MBA is built on four pillars – purposeful leadership, innovation, sustainability and entrepreneurship. Students develop the skills and mind-set required to be responsible and effective leaders in business with a deep appreciation of ethics, CSR, human rights, and the impact of business decisions on the wider environment. They acquire a greater understanding of the organisational setting in which business operates, located in the context of the global economy and the cultural, social and spiritual diversity found in communities across the world. Students explore the impact of internationalisation on businesses, suppliers and customers and gain the skills to lead in increasingly demanding marketplaces. Throughout the course, students develop a large number of transferable skills, including personal and interpersonal skills, the ability to work well in a team and an appreciation of working in a multicultural environment.

Issues of sustainability and responsible management are embedded throughout the MBA curriculum, in core modules such as:

- **Sustainable Operations**: students acquire the skills to manage business operations in a sustainable way that helps deliver the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit
- **Strategy**: this module explores how to design, evaluate and implement organisational strategy, how external and internal factors influence strategy and how organisations can go well, as well as doing well
- **Markets, Governance and Ethics**: students study how concepts and tools from economics can help guide the managers of successful organisations in making complex, ethical decisions
• Leading with Impact: this module examines organisational and team dynamics and analyses ethical and values-based approaches to leadership

Our Director’s Workshops place students into contact with external business practitioners through a series of hands-on workshops designed to emphasise the practical knowledge and skills gained throughout the MBA programme. Students recently attended an online workshop about sustainability issues and the circular economy, led by the Head of Corporate Affairs at local brewer Adnams PLC.

The Essex MBA was accredited by the Association of MBAs (AMBA) in October 2019, evidencing how we ensure the highest standards in teaching, learning and curriculum design; career development and employability; student, alumni and employer interaction.

“The typical Essex MBA student is a passionate, energised and positive professional. They believe that business has a critical role to play in benefitting society and that enterprise, profit and sustainability all go hand-in-hand. They aim to create lasting, positive change, not just for themselves, but also for those around them.”

Professor Nicolas Forsans, MBA Director and Deputy Dean of Colchester

Engaging our students

Sustainable recruitment

At EBS, we begin instilling the values of responsible management education before our students have even enrolled onto their programmes. Our one-week online introductory course for prospective postgraduates explains our approach to championing ethical and sustainable business, with a range of sessions from our academic team. Entitled ‘Sustainable and socially conscious? The reality of 21st century business’, the programme explores topics from consumer activism and the circular economy, to financing for sustainable development.

A place to call home

We’re a growing school, but our people will always matter. We work hard to create a collegiate, inclusive and supportive environment and help our whole community to feel at home, no matter where in the world they join us from.

Our student-run Student Engagement Team (SET) provides peer-to-peer support for our learners throughout the year. They are experienced students who share their knowledge of studying at EBS with new arrivals in seminars and tutorials, whilst the Pals and Bloomberg mentors help other students to develop specific skills in areas such as maths, EXCEL and the Bloomberg platform. The SET Connect team organises a range of cultural, social, intellectual and employability-focused events, recently moving online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, despite studying remotely in 2021, our students competed as individuals in the School’s BRIT Challenge Team, collectively walking more than 3,000 miles to raise money for the British Inspiration Trust (BRIT), which supports young adult mental health.

In 2020-2021, we introduced our Dean’s Lecture Series to increase networking opportunities for students, staff and alumni. Six online talks ran throughout the year to present the latest business research from EBS academics and
practitioners working in a variety of corporate and public sector organisations. Each lecture explored key aspects of our research fields, such as sustainability, financial management and social entrepreneurship. Our Dean, Professor Neil Kellard, kicked off the sessions with a talk entitled ‘A chaotic world: what can the long run tell us?’ His short presentation looked at what data from crises in the near and distant past can tell us about crashes, pandemics and recovery. The EBS Connects newsletter was also launched this year to increase communication with students during the pandemic, alert them to available support and share initiatives they can get involved in across EBS.

Staff also enjoy a supportive environment in which they are encouraged to fulfil their potential. Besides our thriving and collaborative research culture, we actively promote professional development opportunities for all of our staff. This ranges from the annual Education Away Day and training workshops for our Graduate Teaching Assistants, to our academics and professional services teams attending conferences run by the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) and other organisations.

Supporting progression

We encourage our students to be active participants in our lectures and seminars, and closely monitor their engagement to help them progress throughout their studies. For example, our Learner Engagement Activity Portal (LEAP) measures student participation across a number of learning events. It identifies those at risk of falling behind and facilitates meaningful interaction between personal tutors and their tutees. LEAP helps us to personalise the student experience, improve student outcomes, allow for early intervention where issues arise and ensure that every student feels a valued member of the EBS community, whilst remaining sensitive to student privacy.

Since the last PRME SIP, we have also increased the frequency of personal tutors’ sessions and piloted the Professional and Academic Development (PAD) course to support students at our Southend Campus. This compulsory undergraduate module helps our first-year students to build core academic skills that will help them to improve the standard of their academic work throughout their programmes. Students are also introduced to themes of career planning and employability skills, as well as how to establish a career path.

Employability

In 2021, our annual Successful Futures Conference moved online for the first time in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing careers expertise to more EBS students than ever before. The innovative event aims to engage, inspire, and raise the aspirations of all our students and prepare them for the future world of work. Students have a conference experience, make choices over their learning, build their commercial awareness, meet employers, learn how to network and put this into practice.

Held during a period of global upheaval, the theme for this year was ‘Surviving the Chaos’. Students heard from global and local organisations who explored the impact of COVID on their operations and discussed their future priorities. Speakers included KPMG, who explored resilience, the NHS and Colchester Citizens’ Advice, who looked at how the pandemic has accelerated digital change in the third sector. The conference is supported by EBS academics and professional service staff, as well as local, regional and international businesses.

Our ethical alumni

We aim to create sustainably minded managers and entrepreneurs through our transformative education.

Donating to charity and cutting carbon
BSc Banking and Finance graduate Chris Frogner, owner of ethical insurer Arma Karma, is just one example of what an EBS degree can help our students to achieve. Chris and fellow Essex graduate Ben Smyth provide contents cover specifically aimed at student’s needs, while at the same time giving back to charity. Ethically-minded students can insure just a few treasured possessions, such a phones, jewellery and bikes, whilst the company gives 25% of its income to a charity of their choosing. Recent ‘Karma Partners’ have included Railway Children, Young Minds, Rainforest Trust UK, and Shelter Box.

Ben and Chris are hoping to donate £1 million to good causes by 2024 through their business, which is based on the University’s Knowledge Gateway, home to our Colchester building. Arma Karma is also working towards B-Corp certification, meaning the company operates to the standards it promises its customers, and they have planted more than 500 trees to help offset the business’s carbon emissions through climate crisis solution platform, Ecologi.

Giving back to the community

International Marketing and Entrepreneurship graduate Alicia Torres was awarded £500 as part of the Essex Startups Big Pitch to invest into her co-working space for professionals who want to give back to their community. The Harbour Workspace is based in Germany and provides managed office solutions for creative professionals and businesses. After submitting complete business plans, Big Pitch participants were invited to present their ideas to a panel of judges in a Dragon’s Den style competition for the chance to win a slice of £10,000.
Research excellence

We have a world-class reputation for research, with 96% of our faculty submitting at least one output rated 3* or above into the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. Our academics aim to conduct and disseminate research that makes a positive impact on theory, practice and society by engaging academics, businesses and policy-makers. Much of our theoretical and applied work addresses the important issues currently being faced by commercial businesses, public sector bodies and not-for-profit organisations.

We are recognised for our cutting-edge research in:

- accounting in emerging economies and global development
- work, organisation and society in the global economy
- finance, banking and financial modelling
- entrepreneurship and innovation
- global sustainable supply chains
- workplace inequalities and injustices

“Our produce excellent, international quality research that seeks to help organisations and society to innovate and thrive. Our ultimate aim is to make a positive impact on the world around us, and we do this by undertaking theoretical and applied research that investigates key issues within businesses, the public sector, not-for-profits and the wider world. We engage in diverse areas of research, such as emerging markets, firm financing, corporate governance, financial econometrics and gender studies. Our research agenda has an emphasis on sustainability practices, corporate responsibility and key technologies.”

Professor Claudia Girardone, Director of Research

Our research centres

Our research strategy centres on creating an environment that encourages all of our academics to be research active at an international standard in order to maximise excellent outputs and impact. Our research centres play an important part in maintaining our exciting, collaborative and nurturing research culture, with many dedicated to exploring issues of responsible management in a stimulating and positive environment:

Centre for Environment and Society (CES)

CES is committed to informing the global transition to a green economy, which supports environmental well-being and social and economic justice. It brings together world-leading, impact-focused research on all aspects of sustainability science being undertaken at the University of Essex. The Centre acts as an incubator of community enterprises, a knowledge hub for green businesses, policy-makers, communities and academic organisations, and as a consultant to local sustainability initiatives. It is home to staff from a range of departments across the University, including EBS, and organises research seminars and workshops. Since the last PRME SIP, event topics included Agroecology Accounting, water pricing and climate finance in the COVID-19 era.
The Centre for Research on Entrepreneurship Innovation Management and Internationalisation (REIMI)

REIMI enhances the frontiers of knowledge in management and business studies for the sustainable growth of business, society and the economy. Current research projects include the exploration of refugee entrepreneurship and advising on entrepreneurship education and training in Iran.

The Centre for Accountability and Global Development

The Centre for Accountability and Global Development advances interdisciplinary research in the field of accountability across all sectors, in both developed and emerging economies. It is a vibrant hub within EBS, which hosts a wide variety of events. In 2021, this included the ‘Three Faces of Climate Justice’ research seminar, which explored three key dimensions of climate injustice – exposure to climate ‘bads’ (rising sea levels imposing disproportionate costs on the underprivileged), access to climate adaption policies, and the costs imposed by climate mitigation policies. In 2020, His Excellency Professor Kivutha Kibwana, Governor of Makueni County in Kenya, also shared his experiences of implementing a participatory budgeting system in his government, and the significance of public engagement in public administration. His seminar also explored how participative citizenry can be promoted, as well as its value as a foundation for human rights-based approach to development.

Events

Academics, students, professionals, organisations and other stakeholders can tap into our School’s vibrant research culture through regular talks, seminars and other events, which take place through the academic year. Below is a snapshot of some of the event’s held by EBS since the last PRME SIP.

Accounting and Accountability in Emerging Economics (AAEE) Conference 2021

Organised by the School’s Essex Accounting Centre (EAC) and the Centre for Accountability and Global Development (CAGD), this three-day online conference continued to build on the rapid growth of academic research in accounting in contexts other than the Western world. Together with its AAEE research group and the associated Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies (JAEE), the biennial event has opened up space for many researchers which otherwise would have been neglected. More than 70 papers from across 31 countries were presented on topics ranging from the effect of carbon intensity on debt fundraisings in the emerging markets, to corporate governance, and even the boundaries between safety and profit concerning combustible cladding. The conference was chaired by EBS’ Professor Shahzad Uddin and was organised by many of our School’s leading academics in the fields of accounting and accountability in emerging economies.

Equality Conference 2021

More than 60 delegates attended our inaugural Equality Conference in April 2021 to discuss ways to reduce gender, ethnic and sexual orientation inequality in HE. The event aimed to explore the ways in which equality practices can be better embedded into EBS, through a series of presentations and breakout sessions. Topics included promoting gender balance, developing an ethnically and racially inclusive culture, the LQBTQ HE experience and bridging the gap between academic and professional services colleagues.

Coronanomics: Challenges from the unequal impact on the labour market

Our Professor Simon Price chaired a webinar on behalf of the Resolution Foundation and the Money, Macro and Finance Society to explore the challenges caused by the unequal impact of COVID-19 on the labour market. The online event featured Nobel Prize winner and Essex alumnus Professor Sir Chris Pissarides, who set out his thoughts
Research impact

Unlocking silos in health and social care

EBS academics, Dr Martin Harris and Dr Danielle Tucker, have been working with two local health and social care providers, Essex County Council and Provide, to help them integrate care in Mid-Essex and provide a model for others to follow.

In 2020, our researchers introduced a management learning tool to capture the complex and systems-wide improvements the organisations had taken to enhance patient care. The tool helped managers from different health and social care organisations to communicate more effectively, find ways to share good practice and work together to redesign care services throughout the pandemic. Our management and organisational change techniques helped to build a shared project culture, fostering collaboration across previously fixed organisational boundaries, and reducing transaction costs that would otherwise have been incurred by contracting out care provision services.

Our partnership with the health and social care providers has made new ways of working possible and paved the way for localised service design. By embedding these tools and techniques, services can be planned more effectively in a way that puts patient needs at the heart.

Embedding the Circular Economy in SMEs

The Circular Economy (CE) is an economic model that aims to reconcile economic and environmental goals through a systematic approach of ‘closing the loop’ on material and energy flows in production and consumption. With slow CE take-up among small to medium enterprises (SMEs), which produce up to 70% of industrial pollution, EBS researchers Drs Juan Carlos Fernandez De Arroyabe Fernandez and Marta F Arroyabe are investigating the issue through a large-scale survey of SMEs in London and the wider East of England. They hope to determine the managerial capabilities, systems and cooperation processes required to implement CE models in SMEs and provide good practice guides for managers and institutions. Funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant, the project will contribute to scarce empirical evidence regarding exactly why current CE implementation is low amongst smaller organisations.

Aiding financial stability

Our researchers have joined the Community of Practice in Financial Research (CoPFiR), a total of 25 universities working to understand and resolve scientific issues in the field of financial research and ensure that all findings are used to benefit the economy and society. The collaboration will develop relationships with the European Commission and enable researchers to have a direct impact on policy and practice. Some of the scheme’s key objectives include fostering a robust science-based decision-making process within European financial policy and stimulating policy-driven research on financial issues by providing academic partners with research questions relevant for policy makers. Colleagues will also organise roundtables and workshops to share knowledge and good practice.

Sustainable transformation of food wastes

Professor Niraj Kumar is developing a network of researchers in the UK and Vietnam who are working to understand the value-potential of wastes in the seafood supply chain. Vietnam’s seafood industry is one of the largest in the world, but its expansion has placed immense pressure on the socio-economic and environmental health of the country. Professor Kumar is exploring how sustainable transformative processes can be used to convert Vietnam's seafood waste into commercial products. Through his work, residual matter may be able to be turned into raw
materials for secondary processes, or used as ingredients for new products, to help reduce the industry’s environmental impact.

Supporting disadvantaged female entrepreneurs

EBS academics are working to train 700 female entrepreneurs as part of a new collaborative project to address the gender imbalance in entrepreneurship. As a partner of the Accelerating Women’s Enterprise (AWE) project, we’re helping women living in some of the regions either side of the English Channel to increase their personal skills and develop their business ideas and knowledge. The project aims to create 35 hours of new learning content and carry out research into women’s enterprise to improve the quality and effectiveness of support to disadvantaged and under-represented groups. The programme’s results, learning content, research, mentor-bank and resources will all be brought together in a starter kit, which will be freely available to any stakeholder or organisation that wants to improve its services to female entrepreneurs. Over 160 mentors will also be recruited and trained to help more than 130 women to start new businesses.

Drs Caleb Kwong, Juan Carlos Fernandez-de-Arroyabe-Fernandez and Marta Fernandez de Arroyabe Arranz from EBS will lead a team of research assistants in the project, which is being delivered by a consortium of partners in the UK and France. AWE is supported by the Interreg France (Channel) England Programme, which is contributing €2,641,184.73 of European Regional Development Funds, and aims to address economic and social issues in regions on either side the Channel.

Investigating how fintech can deepen UK-India trade relations

EBS’ Professor Thankom Arun is leading the UK side of a three-year project designed to unleash the potential of fintech (financial technology) in deepening trade relations between the UK and India to produce economic growth. The partnership, supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), will assess current regulatory, policy and investment practices and identify what changes could be made to increase the quantity and benefits of fintech trade between the two countries. The aim is for companies in both countries to exchange knowledge, which will enhance trade between India and the UK enormously, benefitting consumers, businesses and governments in both countries. It is hoped that the accumulated knowledge can be scaled up in future to share the development experience with fellow developing countries in Africa and Pacific Island economies.

Reducing the use of single-use plastic

Consumers are increasingly aware of the ethical implications of their purchases. However, there has been relatively little research on how decisions are made within a household context, and the part that each member of the household plays in adopting – or ignoring – the push to reduce our environmental impact. With women often responsible for making decisions about household goods and groceries, EBS’ Dr Danielle Tucker is working with colleagues at the University of Kent and Birkbeck, University of London, to examine the extent to which assumptions about the role of householders in ethical consumerism is gendered. The project will provide policy-makers, retailers and producers with a much deeper understanding of how households manage single use plastic.

Working with the UN on gender equality

In April 2020, Elisabeth Kelan, Professor of Leadership and Organisation at EBS, was invited to join the Target Gender Equality Global Coalition, a group of organisations and thought leaders that support the rollout of Target Gender Equality. Run by the United Nations Global Compact, Target Gender Equality is a gender accelerator programme, which sets and meets targets for gender equality among Global Compact business participants. Currently more than 500 companies in over 40 countries participate in Target Gender Equality. As part of her work on the initiative, Professor Kelan has produced a video that was shown during the UN General Assembly Week in September 2020 and spoken at the Business and Human Rights Summit in March 2021.
Research publications

EBS academics publish cutting-edge research about sustainable management practices, the environment and CSR. Our Dean, Professor Neil Kellard, has recently argued that the European Union’s Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) needs to be improved if it is to help businesses to reduce carbon emissions, and Professor Mehmet Demirbag and colleagues investigated how different CSR activities are more impactful for certain industries than others. Drs Marta Arroyabe, Jun Li and Juan Carlos Fernandez de Arroyabe also shed new light on the mechanism through which firms engage in eco-innovation.


Sharing knowledge

Sharing our knowledge and research with businesses, policymakers, the wider community and across academia is an important part of how we make a positive impact on society. We engage with external stakeholders through our executive education programmes, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, and research projects and events to co-create and share knowledge that improves both enterprise and the lives of others.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

The University of Essex is the leading university in the East of England and London for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), which bring together businesses with research expertise. We have successfully acquired a number of new Management KTPs since our last SIP Report, which aim to transform business productivity to enable growth.

Evaluating the social impact of the arts

Dr Rebecca Warren is working with Colchester’s Mercury Theatre to develop an evaluation toolkit and methodology to measure the social impact of its performances and community groups. Although funders, such as Arts Council England, increasingly seek a social return on their investments, the arts and cultural sector often lacks the expertise to measure the impact it has on individuals, groups, and the wider society. The Mercury Theatre currently responds to seven different evaluation methodologies from different funding sources, but none these effectively capture important aspects of the organisation’s social impact. Instead, they primarily measure quantitative data, and often on a project-by-project basis, rather than considering less tangible outcomes and the individual journey of those who experience the theatre’s work. Dr Warren aims to create a clear and efficient framework that can be used across all of the Mercury's activities to measure its social and economic value.

Reducing waste and increasing productivity through a Management KTP

Dr Juneho Um is leading a team of academics on a Management KTP, funded by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), to help reduce waste at local company Laser 24. The Laser cutting company seeks to expand its product range and meet increasing demand, so is working with EBS to develop a comprehensive strategy to streamline its processes, increase efficiency and upskill staff. EBS academics will help the firm to innovate and develop better management practices, aiming to increase turnover by up to 20% and equipment efficiency by 90%.

Propelling growth at the Finishing Line

Professor Matthew Allen and Dr Shabneez Bhankaraully were awarded a Management KTP in 2020 to maximise efficiency at fulfilment and distribution specialist, The Finishing Line. The project seeks to boost productivity and increase commercial impact by focusing on three areas: innovation – which will include automating warehouse operations and ecommerce; people – upskilling staff, identifying the skills needed to innovate and the strategy to reinforce a great working culture; and places – looking at up-scaling and unifying operations in a larger space.

Innovation Centre

Over the last two years, we have continued to work closely with the University’s Innovation Centre to benefit our students, staff and local community. The £12 million business centre is located next to our Colchester building and is designed to bolster the region’s emerging science, technology and digital creative industries by delivering flexible
workspace and support for up to 50 enterprises. Focusing on tech start-ups, the Innovation Centre provides dedicated
desk and office space, as well as offering support and know-how, with the aim of growing new business in our region.

The Innovation Centre supports entrepreneurial students from across the University through training workshops,
bootcamps and networking events. It is also the home of Studio X, the university’s digital creative collaborative studio
and student start-up programme. In 2020, EBS graduate Martha Cook won a Student Employee of the Year Award
(SEOTY) for her internship at MSX International, which she secured after attending a networking event for Essex
students at the Innovation Centre. MSX International is located on the Knowledge Gateway at our Colchester
Campus, which is now home to more than 20 SMEs and offers a direct link between the University and business for
sharing expertise.

Workshop on Sustainability Reporting, Regulation and Practice

In April 2021, EBS and Norwich Business School held the first edition of the Workshop on Sustainability Reporting,
Regulation and Practice. The event brought together researchers, practitioners and policy-makers with a common
interest in environmental, social and governance (ESG) disclosure and performance in organisations. The workshop
aimed to identify emerging themes for future research in accounting, banking and finance, with presentation topics
including CSR, socially responsible investing and Green Finance.
Conclusion

In 2019, we committed to engaging in ground-breaking research on sustainability, more fully integrate PRME values into our curriculum, grow our executive education offering and expand our projects that can teach sustainability in action. We are proud to have reported our many achievements in these areas since the last PRME SIP but recognise there is still work to be done. We now commit to the following objectives.

The future

- We will continue actively integrating PRME values into our curriculum within all our undergraduate and postgraduate courses.
- We shall continue to engage in ground-breaking research in the areas of ethics and sustainability, not just for CSR, but increasingly for the benefit of public and non-for profit sectors and stakeholders.
- Our Executive Education provision will promote sustainable management practices on the basis of equality, diversity and inclusivity, with particular attention to gender and leadership issues.
- We shall continue to expand projects that can teach the practice of sustainable action, to support our physical environments as well as the well-being of our regional and international communities.
- We will pay attention to the wellbeing and mental health of students and staff members, sustaining a resilient learning community.

Reporting for EBS

- Professor Nicolas Forsans, Deputy Dean for Colchester
- Dr Manuela Nocker – Senior Lecturer in Organisation and Sustainability
- Vicki Graves – Outgoing Accreditation Manager