



SCIENCE AND EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE LIFE

PRME Principles for Responsible
Management Education

an initiative of the United Nations Global Compact

An aerial photograph of a modern university courtyard. The courtyard features a central circular area paved with irregular grey stones, surrounded by a winding path of similar stones. Several young trees are planted in the courtyard, and there are two black metal benches. The surrounding building is a multi-story structure with large windows and a brick facade. The overall scene is well-maintained and modern.

**Sharing Information on Progress Report
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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences**

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Confirming our commitment to PRME

2020 has been a year when society has been gravely affected by a global crisis. A pandemic, and the actions taken to suppress it, have affected a majority of the global population in different ways, from travel restrictions and distance to beloved ones to unemployment and starvation. The underlying causes are rooted in a basically unsustainable way of life on Earth and around the corner we notice the undisputable signs of climate change and loss of biodiversity.

These words sounds sad and gloomy, but I prefer to think that they are the opposite. The situation has raised peoples' awareness of the need for scientific knowledge to change the situation and calls for novel thinking to solve problems arising from yesterday's thinking. In addition, we at SLU are in the fortunate

situation of being able to contribute. As a world-class international university of agricultural sciences, the mission of SLU is to focus on the interaction between humans, animals and ecosystems and the responsible use of natural resources.

Our new vision from 2021, *SLU plays a key role in development for sustainable life, based on science and education*, is established firmly within SLU and the strategies, principles and actions needed to reach our goals are part of the agenda for all of us. We have initiated a new policy for the university's global contribution to Agenda 2030 and raised our ambitions for the inclusion of sustainable development or the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) in an increasing number of our courses. Education for sustainable development is today integrated in all degree programmes and the quality is continuously improved. Sustainable development is also the focus of much of our collaboration with partners and the society.

Much of our work is therefore already aligned with PRME, but of course, there is still room for improvement. I am deeply grateful for our engaged faculty teaching in management and economics who improve education to transform our understandings of value creation and integrate circular economy, novel business models, complex system thinking, "wicked problems" and international perspectives. I am proud that our students are offered the curriculum and tools to develop relevant competence, and that we do our very best to prepare our students to be able to handle the complexity of ecological, economic and social aspects of a growing population that has to live within the planet boundaries.

As a signatory to the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) since 2013, I am therefore pleased to confirm our continued commitment to the principles and on behalf of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, I am proud to present our third Sharing Information on Progress report. This report marks our sustained commitment to PRME and the SDGs and shows the process with which we incorporate these in our business management programmes on the master's level.

Maria Knutson Wedel

Vice-Chancellor Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Introduction

Sustainable development has in recent decades become increasingly important for a number of sectors in society. As expressed in Agenda 2030's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainable development should secure both current and future generations the right to a healthy and good environment, and economic and social welfare and justice, both in the local and global.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) takes the work towards these targets seriously. SLU's strategy for 2021–2025 states that one of the university's key tasks is to be a driving force for sustainable development. An important aspect in this regard is to educate students who can understand and handle contemporary and future sustainability issues, integrate all sustainability dimensions, and depart from systems perspectives. For the Department of Economics, the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) certification is an important means for facilitating SLU's overarching sustainable development strategy.

This report informs on the Department's work with PRME in 2019–2020, and its outcome, in relation to the six PRME principles. Lastly, the report outlines the planned strategy for the ensuing time period 2021–2022.

PRME strategy 2019–2020

The Department of Economics has strived towards continuous improvements in the previous time period. In this section, the work accomplished is summarised in accordance with the six PRME principles; i.e. purpose, values, method, research, partnership and dialogue.

Principle 1 | Purpose

‘We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.’

As part of SLUs all-encompassing sustainable development strategy, sustainable development should permeate, and be brought up, in all courses. The Department of Economics has been evaluating to what degree students perceive its courses cover sustainable development. The results have overall been satisfactory, ranging from 2.7 to 4.8 on a 5-grade scale, with an increasing trend in the time period.

Based on the course evaluations, the Department of Economics has made a revision of a majority of its Master-level courses, notably Leadership and Sustainability; Marketing, Responsibility and Ethics; Sustainability and Financial reporting; Innovation and Sustainability; Production Economics; and the course on Value Chains and Networks in the Bio-Economy. Below the report elaborates more specifically on the changes made, and the methods implemented.

In 2019-2020, 18 of 34 of the Department’s MSc theses addressed topics focusing on sustainability/sustainable development, circular economy and/or CSR, and an additional 9 included sustainability issues in topics focused on agri-food production. The majority of these 27 theses were based either on business case studies or consumer preferences/behaviour, with the remainder focusing on institutional structure, such as certification schemes.

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. The remaining course syllabi for courses in the business programmes have been revised for the inclusion of sustainable development in the content.	9 out of 10 courses have been revised to include sustainable development in the content, but the pace on the revisions were slowed in 2020 due to the pandemic.
2. A follow-up measure in the general part of the course evaluation will ask students to assess their capability in relation to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.	The course evaluations contain a question on the sustainable development content of the course; however, the self-assessment of the students’ capability to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society has not been implemented.

Principle 2 | Values

‘We will incorporate into our academic activities, curricula, and organisational practices the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.’

The Department has initiated an initiative for equal opportunities and against discrimination amongst students and employees. The Department’s employees were surveyed in 2019. In sum, the results were satisfactory, albeit one issue that emerged was a perceived lack of information regarding the procedures, as well as the persons at the Department who can be contacted to provide support with equal opportunities related issues. A workshop departing from these results were organised in 2020, addressing this, as well as ideas for future improvements.

Teachers have participated in the university’s Educational Development Unit (EPU) courses. Furthermore, three teachers at the Department attended the 6th Responsible Management Education Research (RMER) Conference hosted by Jönköping International Business School in 2019. Insight from the EPU courses and the conference were later discussed in the department’s Marketing and Organisation Teaching Track (MOTT). The discussions in MOTT have resulted in the development of an information literacy initiative and an international students’ initiative. Together, the initiatives aim to facilitate critical thinking, and familiarise international students with the Swedish education system and culture.

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. The goal is for 75% of our teaching staff to have participated in the workshop on educating sustainable development organized by the Educational Development Unit.	10 out of 17 (59%) teachers have participated in the workshop. Four new staff members joined in 2020, temporarily lowering the share.
2. A proposal submitted and a pedagogical project with a case study approach will be initiated with the aim to improve critical thinking capacity within context on sustainable development.	Postponed due to the pandemic.
3. Examination of critical thinking capacity in all courses with sustainable development goals.	Implemented in all courses.

Principle 3 | Method

‘We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.’

A project for development of a new course concept, in line with the flipped classroom logic (FC), ran over the course of the period, finishing its work in 2020. In sustainable development, the need for systems thinking and a holistic perspective is often emphasised. As FC aims to train students in complex thinking, the concept offers alternatives in SLU’s daily education on sustainable development. A workshop on the new course concept was organised in 2020, communicating results and knowledge from the practical work with FC. Insights from the project and the workshop were thereafter used in the master’s course Leadership and

Sustainability, with satisfactory course evaluation results (the course received 4.5 in overall impression, an increase of 0.5 from the previous year; and 4.7 on the coverage of sustainable development, a 0.2 increase).

The Department has further developed its student-participatory cases, as it is considered an important vehicle for learning and critical thinking. In Leadership and sustainability, the cases were revised, and the number of cases were increased from three to four. The work with case-oriented education has also been strengthened in the department’s other master’s courses. Table 1 illustrates the other methods implemented in the time period.

Table 1. PRME methods

Methods	Courses	Description
Case work	Leadership and Sustainability; Marketing, Responsibility and Ethics; Innovation and Sustainability; Value Chains and Networks in the Bio-Economy	Case studies as a vehicle for learning and connecting education and research
FC logic	Leadership and Sustainability; Marketing Responsibility and Ethics	FC as a vehicle for exploring complex issues
Faculty outreach	Marketing, Responsibility and Ethics	Outreach as a vehicle for coping with sustainability issues from transdisciplinary perspectives
Guest lecturers	Marketing, Responsibility and Ethics; Production Economics; Innovation and Sustainability	Guest lecturers as a vehicle for connecting theory and practice

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. The courses “Leadership and sustainability” and “Innovation and Sustainability” will include a tailored case study on responsible leadership.	Implemented, see Table 1.

Principle 4 | Research

‘We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.’

All the Department’s research applications have included sustainability issues in the time period. One of the Department’s research group has been renamed from Rural Entrepreneurship Group (REG) to Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainability group (EIS), further emphasising sustainable development issues in its research activities.

Table 2 illustrates other research activities through which the Department has engaged in conceptual and empirical research on sustainable development and sustainability.

Table 2. Empirical and conceptual research activities

Activity	Description
Completed PhD	One PhD candidate has completed her PhD on entrepreneurship and gender
Rural Keys	A Kamprad-funded project for business development in Swedish rural areas
Rubizmo	A European initiative for developing entrepreneurship and successful business models in rural areas
New lectureship in bioeconomy	The new senior lecturer has been working with research related to Foodhills, Rubizmo, and SLU Future Food
Foodhills case study	Foodhills aims to develop a more innovative, sustainable and resource efficient food production
SLU Future Food	SLU Future Food is a research platform aiming for making the food system more sustainable
Seminar series	An open seminar series on business and economics research related to sustainable development has been running in the time period

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. We will take account of the number of research grant applications with a sustainable development content.	32 research grant applications contain a sustainable development content, out of 41 grant applications.
2. The new senior lectureship in bioeconomy and innovation will actively work to establish research collaborations with other SLU Departments on projects with sustainable development content. The aim is to have at least one multidisciplinary sustainable development-oriented funding proposal per year.	The new senior lecturer has been working with research related to Foodhills, Rubizmo, and SLU Future Food.
3. Two research (open) seminars with externally invited guests with prominence in the sustainable development field will be organized annually.	Implemented.

Principle 5 | Partnership

‘We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.’

Researchers at the Department has interacted with the following key stakeholders during the reporting period: CEMUS, Greein Innovation Park, Foodhills, Lantmännen and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. Collaboration between Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in CEMUS continues.	The collaboration has continued.
2. All new grant applications are encouraged to actively include industry managers as part of the reference group or as co-applicants.	A majority of grant applications during this period have included industry representatives.
3. Students are invited to seminars and workshops with industry managers are organized by the research groups to identify priority research topics and funding strategies.	Students are invited when relevant seminars are organized and during the pandemic the announcements have been available on the department webpage.

Principle 6 | Dialogue

‘We will facilitate and support dialog and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.’

The Department has deepened its work with the alumni network and encouraged alumni to join it. The network has primarily communicated through emails and social media.

The Department has engaged in municipality collaboration within the frame of the Rural Keys project, including three workshops with local politicians, municipality representatives, and entrepreneurs.

Objectives 2019-2020	Outcome
1. The alumni network: an annual survey will be sent out to examine how alumni perceive to what degree SLU is oriented towards sustainable development. Ideas and suggestions collected will support future focus and ideas for improvement.	The implementation has been postponed for 2021.
2. All new grant applications should include sustainable development-implications in the communication plan. All ongoing externally funded projects will be encouraged to engage in public and/or stakeholder dialogue and debate with respect to the sustainable development implications of the project.	A majority of grant applications during this period have met this objective.

Objectives for 2021 – 2022

The Department has decided on eight new goals for the next time period.

Objectives 2021-2022	
Principle 1 - Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A PRME workshop will be held bi-annually. The intensions are to communicate the work that is being done to enact the PRME targets, and to further knowledge on how PRME values and methods can be more extensively implemented in the Department’s master’s courses. 2. In the thesis course, ask students to assess their capability in relation to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society, and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.
Principle 2 - Values	<p>The goal is for 80% of our teaching staff to have participated in the workshop on educating sustainable development organized by the Educational Development Unit.</p>
Principle 3 - Methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A PRME introduction will be included in the master’s courses to ensure students’ awareness of the concept, and of the Department’s actions towards the PRME targets. 2. The development of new teaching cases will continue, and existing cases will be assessed. In the Leadership and Sustainability course, all four cases will be revised accordingly. 3. The collaboration with invited guests will continue. Two guest lecturers will henceforth be invited to every iteration of the Leadership and Sustainability course.
Principle 4 - Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage master’s students to integrate SDG criteria in their theses. 2. Encourage that students together with their supervisor develop the thesis material for publication in a scientific journal. 3. Use research by Department faculty relevant to SDG criteria in our teaching programs.
Principle 5 - Partnership	<p>The Department will deepen its collaboration with Green Innovation Park, both in terms of research and education.</p>
Principle 6 - Dialogue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The work with the alumni network will continue. An alumni survey will be conducted, polling how Department alumni perceive their capabilities in relation to the PRME targets. 2. Students will be encouraged to participate in established seminar series with external stakeholders.