



SPOTLIGHT

Business Schools & Ethics/Sustainability

Featured School:

Cranfield University

Cranfield School of Management

Cranfield, Bedfordshire, United Kingdom

www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/

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Cranfield School of Management (SOM)

As a founding member of the European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS)¹, and signatory of the UN Global Compact's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), the Cranfield School of Management (SOM) and its faculty have long been engaged in developing research and pedagogy in the areas of sustainability and corporate responsibility. The School's Director, Professor Frank Horwitz, chairs the SOM's PRME taskforce, and considers embedding PRME into the culture, curricula, and everyday practices of the school fundamental to the success of the SOM, ensuring that they are an integral part of the School's mission and not just "bolted on"². Séan Rickard, the Full-Time MBA Director has said that Cranfield SOM takes "responsible management education very seriously and have ensured that all our student activities - whether in the classroom, in dealing with companies or the wider community - embrace core principles such as ethics, social awareness and sustainability."

The Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility

A major contributor to this objective is the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility. Hosted by the Cranfield SOM, the Centre is devoted to creating and disseminating the tools through which current and future managers can make corporate responsibility and sustainability issues central to the business strategy of their organizations. Since its founding in 2007, the Doughty Centre has taken the SOM's focus on these issues to a new level, operating in several directions to ingrain in Cranfield students the necessity for business to make a positive impact on global society.

The Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility is funded primarily through a £3 million donation made in 2006 by Cranfield alumnus Nigel Doughty³, co-founder and co-chairman of Doughty Hanson & Co., a private equity firm headquartered in London, and with offices throughout Europe. David Grayson, CBE, Professor of Corporate Responsibility and Director of the Doughty Centre for Corporate Responsibility, describes Mr. Doughty as "very committed to active citizenship," a person who makes sustainability and corporate responsibility central to his business strategy, and who desired to promote that mindset through the donation to his alma mater. Though careful to point out that the Centre does not operate as a consultancy service, Professor Grayson notes that faculty of the Centre also bring in some funds through consulting work for corporate clients. This, he says, also has the added benefit of granting Centre faculty greater understanding of the requirements for, and benefits of, successful sustainability strategies in real business environments.

Conducting research, be it for corporate clients or independently, is only one of the ways in which the Doughty Centre contributes to the Cranfield SOM's objective to inculcate their students with practical knowledge and awareness of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. An equally important role involves the development of opportunities for Cranfield students themselves to gain exposure to and explore such issues directly. In pursuit of this role, the Doughty Centre has, like the SOM itself, focused primarily on the development of materials and courses for the MBA program curriculum.

SOM Curricula: Instilling the Mindset

As the MBA is the flagship academic program of the Cranfield SOM, the faculty have focused primarily, though not exclusively, on using the MBA curriculum as a vehicle through which to reinforce the mindset of corporate responsibility in their students. From the beginning of their time at the Cranfield SOM, MBA students are exposed to ESG issues such as sustainability and corporate responsibility. During the orientation week, for example, SOM faculty stage a debate in which they argue different points of view on

the role of sustainable business practices and corporate responsibility. According to Professor Grayson, the debate serves three fundamental purposes: (1) raising students' awareness of the complexities of these issues; (2) signaling that a multiplicity of valid yet differing viewpoints on the topic exist, and (3) reinforcing a philosophy that the professors expect and welcome challenges to their own views in the classroom.

All incoming students also receive a booklet introducing them to the topic of corporate responsibility and listing issues that relate to various functional areas of business that will be explored within their program. The lists serve as a supplemental "primer" for students interested in engaging their professors and fellow classmates in a deeper discussion of corporate responsibility and sustainability throughout the program. Additionally, course instructors have been asked to describe the ways in which sustainable development will impact the subject they teach. The core Organisational Behaviour and Personal and Professional Development (OBPPD) module, for example, which is the only course that lasts the length of the year-long MBA program, now includes as one of its learning outcomes the development of "critical awareness of cultural, political and ethical similarities and differences and an awareness of the environment within which organisations operate⁴."

Students interested in incorporating a deeper focus on corporate responsibility may choose to take advantage of several options available in the second half of the MBA program. During the last two terms, students select a series of "elective themed modules" that enable them to customize the MBA program according to their own interests and career goals. The Sustainable Business module⁵, taught by Doughty Centre faculty, is specifically aimed at students wishing to learn how to incorporate sustainable and responsible practices into every aspect of their organizations. Another elective opportunity is an independent consulting project that will allow the student to confront issues of sustainability and corporate responsibility in the setting of a real business organization⁶. Interested students can call upon the Doughty Centre for help identifying an appropriate project⁷.

In addition, MBA students are also required to complete a week-long International Business Experience (IBE) trip. Several of the available destination and project options provide direct exposure to ESG issues. For example, part of the MBA cohort that graduated in 2010 went to the West African nation of Burkina Faso and worked to help increase the marketing ability of a co-operative of local artisans, while another part learned firsthand about Brazil's "Waste Picker Community," and how they were able to transform their profession into a business with support from government and local agencies⁸. Professor Grayson personally led the 2010 IBE trip to China, and says that doing so allowed him a valuable opportunity to showcase corporate responsibility in the Chinese context.

Other programs at the Cranfield SOM are also exploring where corporate responsibility can be effectively embedded in what is already taught. The Master of Science in Strategic Marketing degree has a core module dealing with ethical and sustainability issues as they relate to the practice of marketing. The SOM offers an open-enrollment non-degree executive education program on "Leading Sustainable Organisations." And some doctoral students also choose to pursue their research in the field, particularly under the aegis of the Doughty Centre⁹.

Beyond Curricula: Reinforcing the Mindset

In addition to championing the incorporation of the PRME into the Cranfield SOM curricula¹⁰, the Doughty Centre also sponsors a number of other extracurricular initiatives. The Cranfield Corporate Responsibility Network (CCRN), hosted by the Doughty Centre, is an open forum for faculty, students, alumni, and

others. Professor Grayson says CCRN meetings are held on a monthly basis, and often bring in visiting speakers from academia, business, and NGOs to explore corporate responsibility issues with the attendees. Other meetings provide a platform for Cranfield students and faculty to present their research and test out ideas¹¹.

According to Professor Grayson, the CCRN and the applied research generated by the Doughty Centre not only aids companies wishing to engage their employees in embedding corporate responsibility in their organizational strategy, but also becomes the foundation for useful instructional material at the SOM. He says that though the primary target of Doughty Centre research is the company for which it is done, either through consulting work or customized executive education programs, such work also serves to develop material for traditional MBA and other program courses.

In 2009, the Doughty Centre joined Oxford University's Said Business School, the London Business School, and the philanthropic London-based Pears Foundation, in the Pears Business School Partnership¹². This collaboration presents annual lectures and generates case studies in support of developing the understanding and commitment of business students to public service, philanthropy, and other forms of active citizenship. Professor Grayson says that the work of the Pears Business School Partnership nicely complements the Doughty Centre's individual efforts to generate applied research on ESG issues.

The Doughty Centre also supports students and student-led initiatives that embrace the issues it champions. The Centre provides modest travel funds for students to attend conferences and competitions related to corporate responsibility, such as CEIBS' annual Being Globally Responsible Conference in Shanghai¹³, or IESE Business School's Doing Good and Doing Well Conference in Barcelona¹⁴. Professor Grayson notes that the Cranfield SOM's chapter of Net Impact was encouraged by Doughty Centre faculty. Finally, the Doughty Centre has worked in previous years to find post-MBA career options in the field of corporate responsibility for Cranfield students. According to Professor Grayson, for the coming year's cohort of students, the Centre will begin to coordinate these efforts with the SOM's Career Services Centre, since more and more students are evidencing interest in such careers.

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End Notes

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