

PRiME

*an initiative of the
United Nations Global Compact*

Sharing Information on Progress 2026

Essex Business School

September 2026

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About the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations-supported initiative founded in 2007 that aims to raise the profile of sustainability in their classrooms through Seven Principles focused on serving society and safeguarding our planet.

PRME engages business and management schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals, while drawing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact. Driven by its mission to transform management education, PRME equips today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow. As a voluntary initiative with over 800 signatories worldwide, PRME has become the largest organized relationship between the United Nations and management-related higher education institutions.



“*The PRME initiative was launched to nurture responsible leaders of the future. Never has this task been more important. Bold leadership and innovative thinking are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Antonio Guterres

Secretary-General (2017 - Present)

United Nations

”

Principles of PRME



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of Agenda 2030 are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs clearly define the world we want – applying to all nations and leaving no one behind. Successful implementation of the SDGs will require all players to champion this agenda; the role of higher education is critical to this.





Getting Started

This section provides foundational information about Essex Business School, including key details and basic institutional data.

Mission

Essex Business School (EBS) is based at the University of Essex and is located at the Colchester Campus. The School houses five broad subject groups which form the basis of the teaching and research portfolio: Accounting, Business and Management, Marketing, Finance and Banking and Entrepreneurship.

*Our mission is to offer a transformative education
and research excellence that has a positive impact on business and society.*

Our values are central to all that we do at Essex Business School (EBS). We aim to lead with integrity, challenging students to think critically about business. We seek to equip learners and graduates with the knowledge and tools to do business better – for stakeholders, for the planet, and for their communities. We set ourselves the same goals, and we are committed to producing genuinely impactful research and working with business, public and voluntary organisations to deliver real societal benefits and help to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

We have a truly global outlook and are proud to offer an environment where students from every background connect in an inspiring, stimulating atmosphere to share their diverse perspectives. We constantly seek to improve and innovate so that we can continue to deliver a cutting-edge, genuinely transformative education to our students by embracing new technologies and challenging ourselves to constantly do better. It is these values that ensure learner success and inform the delivery and design of our degree courses at all levels.

To achieve its mission, EBS is committed to ten core values, integral to the delivery of the School's strategy and mission:

- - Excellence (in education and research)
 - Academic freedom
 - Integrity
 - Community
 - Sustainability
 - Inclusivity
 - Innovation
 - Global outlook
 - Partnership and collaboration
 - Accountability

These values inform and are embedded into all policies, procedures, and practices across the School. They align to those of the University, which value partnership and collaboration, inclusivity and having a truly global community placing people, knowledge, and communities at the heart of everything.

At Essex Business School we are committed to ethical behaviour and responsible practices that help to build a more sustainable environment. This means taking into consideration the impact that our actions have on economic, social, and environmental factors, both in the short and long term. We promote equality and diversity principles in all our activities and culture and educate our students to become responsible managers and leaders that are concerned for the long term and future generations.

Professor Claudia Girardone, Dean of Essex Business School

Vision

Essex Business School is committed to providing excellence in both Education and Research and proudly holds multiple accreditations across five subject groups including AMBA and AACSB. This serves as testimony to the high-quality education delivery which aligns with industry standards. EBS also runs a successful MBA programme and is currently involved in 15 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships with businesses. As per July 2026, EBS is made up of an academic population of 163 staff members and 1,814 students (UG: 1,181, PGT: 463, PGR: 170).

Our specific goals are to advance our reputation as a leading UK business school. We are committed to being ranked in the top 20% in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Good University Guide* at subject level, continuing to be placed in the top 200 of the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, and be rated in the top 20% for REF and retain Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Our primary research aim is to ensure that all ASER staff meet University criteria for REF inclusion, to increase the proportion of publications at 4* and develop a suite of strong impact case studies.

We seek to ensure that our portfolio of programmes reflects the expertise and research strengths of our faculty, is attractive to applicants, and that our students have a first-class experience when part of EBS. We do all that we can to allow our staff – both academic and Professional Services – to develop and excel in teaching, research and leadership to achieve their full potential. We continually work to develop the scale and scope of our research and provide an intellectually challenging, research-led learning experience for our students.

Sustaining our strong record of growing student numbers is central to our strategic aim of becoming a leading business school. We constantly search for new opportunities for growth and are developing a diverse programme portfolio across subjects and levels, refining and enhancing our Executive Education provision, and building strong new partnerships. We believe very strongly that our students are full members of our community regardless of whether they study on campus at Colchester and Southend, at the University of Essex Online, or at a partner institution. We believe it is vital for our graduates to have strong critical thinking, team-working and communicative capabilities to achieve maximum success in their future careers and are committed to developing these capacities in all our students.

As the School grows and develops, we will remain true to our values of inclusiveness, mutual belonging and responsibility. Creating positive societal impact is central to our mission. We are proud to hold a departmental Athena SWAN award, as well as our decade-long association as a signatory to the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education, and we continue to focus on areas of strength such as sustainability, responsible consumption and production and decent work and economic growth to create lasting positive societal impact.

We will strive to consolidate thought leadership and improve our research reputation, building new research clusters as we expand in new areas, which in turn will allow us to deliver new, innovative programmes. We will diversify sources of income, encourage and support interdisciplinary research, and promote the impact and engagement aspects of research.

Strategy

EBS Departmental Strategy

View document  Download document 

Strategy Alignment

EBS Sustainability Strategy Alignment

Professor Silvia Gaia - Director of Sustainability

In an era where environmental and social concerns are at the forefront of the development of our society, it has become crucial for Business Schools to adopt a sustainable strategy that aligns with global efforts to address environmental and social challenges and promote responsible business practices.

Sustainability has been part of Essex Business School (EBS) for many years. Sustainability is at the core of our mission to “deliver a transformative education and research excellence that has a positive impact on people, business and society” and it is one of our ten core values. At EBS we embrace a broad definition of sustainability that encompasses more than just the natural environment but also focuses on the need to ensure that communities and societies can flourish in a healthy, fair, and equal way.

EBS’ goal is to raise awareness about the importance of sustainability and to shape the way our students, staff and members of our local and business community think about and embrace sustainability. We aim to advance our education, research and engagement on sustainability and to contribute in this way to address the environmental and social challenges faced by our local and global society. This implies a responsibility to promote a focus on sustainability that enables important changes in how our society embeds sustainability into various aspects of life.

We aim to build an extensive educational curriculum focused on sustainability to equip our students with the skills and knowledge that are needed to create positive changes in our society. We aim to intensify the focus of our research on sustainability to provide our society with the tools to address the current social and environmental challenges. We aim to enable our stakeholders and the members of our local community to think sustainably in their decision-making process and daily life.

The United Nations (UN) Sustainability Goals (SDGs) and the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) represent the international framework followed by EBS in developing this sustainability strategy and action plan. Our sustainability strategy also follows the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy and the EBS Strategic Plan. In line with the thirteen priorities identified in the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy, the EBS Sustainability Plan aims to focus on four main areas to deliver real societal benefits and help to create a more equitable and sustainable world:

- Education
- Research
- Engagement
- Life on our Campus

EDUCATION

In line with the EBS Strategy Key Priority 1 *“Excellence in Education: providing a transformative education”* and with the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy Priority 3 *“To ensure our education to be delivered and supported in a sustainable way”* we aim to:

Enable our students to apply the knowledge, understanding and skills developed during and beyond their studies to address the challenges of our society and contribute to creating a more equitable and sustainable world.

Strategic goals

1. Offer and deliver UG and PG programmes that empower and provide students with the necessary competencies to make a positive impact on people, businesses and society.
2. Embed sustainability in the existing courses and our curriculum and promote extracurricular activities that will help to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability among all our students.

RESEARCH

In line with the EBS Strategy Key Priority 4 *“Excellence in Research”* and with the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy Priority 4 *“To have increased the proportion of our research that supports the enhancement and protection of the environment, and ensuring our research is conducted in a way that minimises our environmental impact”*, we aim to:

Consolidate our research focus on sustainability issues and strengthen our efforts to produce research able to create meaningful and positive impacts on our society.

Strategic goals

1. Strengthen the EBS research on sustainability and its visibility.
2. Strengthen internal and external research collaborations and bid for large research grants that will provide the opportunities and the means to conduct meaningful research on sustainability.

ENGAGEMENT

In line with the EBS Strategy Key Priority 5 *"Increasing social impact through engagement with external stakeholders and internal initiatives"* and with the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy Priority 13 *"Support our community as we normalise sustainability by emphasising environmentally conscious behaviours and providing the mechanisms to empower prospective and existing students, staff, alumni and partners to think sustainably and integrate it into their lives"*, we aim to:

To address societal needs and empower civic engagement for the creation of a more sustainable society via knowledge transfer and impact and change-based initiatives.

Strategic goals

1. Raise awareness of the importance of sustainability in our local community
2. Strengthen our engagement with our business community around sustainability.

LIFE ON OUR CAMPUS

Priority 4. Making a positive impact on our environment

In line with the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy Priorities 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, we aim to improve our environmental performance in the following areas:

- Climate Change
- Biodiversity
- Waste and recycling
- Water management
- Food and Drinks
- Travel and Transport

Strategic goals

1. Reduce EBS direct and indirect contributions to Co2 emission.
2. Raise awareness of biodiversity importance.
3. Reduce waste production and increase the proportion of recyclable material collected in EBS.
4. Reduce water consumption in the Business School.

5. Minimise the carbon and environmental impact of EBS travel and transport activities including commuting to work.
6. Being a leading Department in the University in relation to Sustainability.

Institutional History

UoE/EBS Institutional history (RME)

The University of Essex is a public institution founded in 1964. It received university status and degree awarding powers by Royal Charter in 1965 and has since graduated more than 100,000 students. The University offers undergraduate, Masters and doctoral programmes across its Colchester and Loughborough campuses. After 20 years, the Southend Campus is closing in September 2026 marking an important new institutional chapter. The University also hosts online learning opportunities and works in close partnership with institutions in the UK and internationally. Over a third of its students are from outside the UK, and represent approximately 140 countries, making it the most international UK university outside London.

EBS, the largest department in the University, was formed in 2008, following a merger of the School of Accounting, Finance and Management and the School of Entrepreneurship and Business. It sits within the Faculty of Social Sciences and delivers undergraduate, Masters and doctoral programmes on the Colchester and Southend Campus. From October 2026 all courses will be located at the Colchester Campus.

In 2015, the School opened a zero carbon, award-nominated £21 million business school building at its Colchester Campus. In July 2015, EBS Colchester relocated to this landmark new business school building. A first for the sector, its zero-carbon design reflects EBS' strong commitment to responsible business practice delivered through teaching and research. More than one tonne of carbon is saved per day through the building's energy efficient design and low carbon technologies. Combining this ethical and sustainable focus with EBS' dual mission of research and education differentiates it from its competitors and offers a unique value offer for learners, partners, and colleagues.

In 2015, when the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity, University of Essex committed to achieving these goals and, present an annual report to show

what is being done, across the whole University, to meet every one of them. The report shows how, through research and education, as well as how we operate as an organisation, we are making a difference.

<https://www1.essex.ac.uk/misc/sustainability/sustainable-development-goals-report-2024/index.html>

In 2020, the Environmental Sustainability Action Group (ESAG) (formerly the Climate and Ecological Emergency Advisory Group (CEEAG)) was formed, with the remit of deciding whether the University should declare a climate and ecological emergency, and if so, how to respond to it. Membership of the group is from across the University; this includes individuals from the Students' Union, People and Culture, Research, Education, Academic Faculty, Sustainability, Estates and Campus Services, Finance, and Trade Unions. There has also been support from an external consultancy for technical expertise on carbon management. The Group is chaired by Chris Oldham, Deputy Registrar (Infrastructure and Environments).

On 9 December 2020, the University of Essex joined many organisations around the world in declaring a climate and ecological emergency. The University declaration recognises the impact it has on the local, national and global environment and the need:

- to understand better how to reduce the environmental impact, support biodiversity and achieve net zero emissions
- to listen to voices from across the community, to arrive at a plan that has widespread support

The University is working to deliver its most ambitious Sustainability Sub-Strategy and Climate Action Plan to date, which was launched in 2021. <https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability>

EBS PRME membership history and engagement

EBS joined PRME as a signatory already in 2011. Dr Manuela Nocker, Senior Lecturer in Organisation and Sustainability and EBS PRME Lead since inception, was teaching Business Ethics at the time and thus had the original idea for the School to become a PRME signatory. In those years, she worked together with the Dean, Professor Michael Sherer, and with EBS Senior Management to initiate communication about PRME and support activities across the School. Concomitantly, she worked with the Vice-Chancellor's Office and Mrs Monica Illsley as well as Professors in the Human Rights Centre and Law Department for the University of Essex to become a UN Global Compact member, thus launching university-

wide attention towards CSR and related collaboration. Essex Business School and the Law Department were collaborating and supporting joined projects at the intersection of CSR and Human Rights – an initiative that was led by Professor Sheldon Leader.

PRME engagement at EBS has been supported by successive Deans, namely Professor Geoffrey Wood, Professor Neil Kellard and Professor Claudia Girardone who is the current Dean in her second mandate. In 2023, the School proudly celebrated the 10th anniversary of SIP reporting in the EBS Sustainability Day. After

EBS Building

- The Essex Business School building in Colchester is the UK's first zero-carbon business school building and houses our Accounting, Finance and Management and Marketing groups as well as over 2,000 students and staff.
- It has been estimated that the design of the building reduces emissions by 18% as a result of solar panels, making use of natural light, heat circulation.
- The central courtyard is open to the sky and forms a water garden, collecting roof surface rainwater, which is in turn used to irrigate the winter garden planting.
- The building has been orientated to make maximum benefit of solar energy, both through passive heat gains and PV energy.
- The 500sqm solar array offsets 47.9 tonnes of CO₂ annually generating enough electrical energy to offset over 20% of the site's carbon emissions.

University Buildings

The University of Essex believe in responsible construction and refurbishment.

- All new build and refurbishment projects are assessed for sustainability performance and impacts, with BREEAM 'very good' as the minimum rating expected for major building projects.
- Any new building must incorporate in 15% renewables, this is increased where funding allows.
- University has a preference to invest in FSC certified furniture that complies with our ethical purchasing commitments.
- Solar panels: installing solar photovoltaic panels (PV) across eligible roofs has already proved to be a cost-effective approach to reducing reliance on energy imports. Panels have already been installed on many roofs, including The Albert Sloman Library and Sports Arena, enabling the University to cover 5% of its electricity needs. In the next three years, we plan to install solar photovoltaics on the remaining eligible roofs to meet an additional 10% of our electricity requirements.
- All of the University's electricity is obtained from 'green' sources. There are multiple solar arrays on our buildings across campus including the multi storey car park and the electricity we import from the national grid is also sourced from renewables.
- The University has embraced the reuse of furniture by introducing a furniture reuse scheme. Since 2023 this has saved 4500kg going into our waste stream which is the equivalent of the weight of ten polar bears! This scheme has not only helped departments get the furniture they need but has saved an impressive 9000kgs of CO₂(e) in carbon footprint.

- In October 2024, further recycling bins were provided across the University showing commitment to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2035, and one of the key priorities is increasing the proportion of recyclable material collected on campus. The average recycling rate reached 34% in 2023-24

Energy efficiency and infrastructure projects (buildings)

- The University have adopted and aims to maintain a comfortable temperature set point (as set out in the Energy Management policy) during the building's predominant occupancy hours, to provide a suitable environment for its occupants and to maximise energy reduction, cost savings and our commitment to being net zero scope1 and 2 carbon emissions by 2035.
- Sub-metering of individual building will allow the University to monitor utility usage and take remedial actions for wastage. Detailed audits have been completed.
- Introduction of TRV. TRV stands for Thermostatic Radiator Valve. Smart TRVs allow for room-by-room control of radiators, to help avoid heating empty spaces. The trial has revealed savings of approximately 30% on energy use for heating. Project to be extended to link Smart TRVs.
- Upgrades to replace traditional lighting to LED bulbs across three campuses to reduce energy use by 40%.
- Upgrade to Building Management Systems; Current SERCK BMS systems will be replaced with TEND systems in several locations, allowing greater control of energy management, audit works in progress.
- Presence Infrared (PIR) sensors installed to Air Conditioning units to switch off/heating based on room occupancy. 38 units are being trialled.
- Other projects (running or to be actioned) include:
 - Temperature monitoring sensors (on trial)
 - Tap flow restrictors (date to be confirmed)
 - Shower head replacements (1200 so far)
 - Window upgrades to 1960's estate (single glazed) (date to be confirmed)
 - Roof replacements and insulation (1100m2 complete; phase in development)
 - Building Decarbonisation Plan (£181k in funding awarded in Summer 2023)
 - Hand dryer replacements (audit date to be confirmed)

Parking

- In 2017 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points were introduced at the Colchester Campus, since then these have supplied over 228,300 kWh of electricity to EV owners and stopped 253 tonnes of carbon going into the atmosphere.
- There are 12 charging points and plans are in place to increase this number.

On campus Food and Drink

- All food outlets on campuses offer vegetarian options every day, and all delivered catering has vegetarian and plant-based menus.
- On Monday 15 January 2024, a 25p surcharge was applied to all hot drinks in Essex Food outlets known as a 'latte levy'. Customers who bring in any reusable cup will have this surcharge waived. Implementing 'latte levy' will help reduce waste and the use of disposable cups.
- In 2021, EBS stopped using plastic cups at all water points and staff are encouraged to bring in reusable bottles/cups. Food waste bins were introduced in all kitchens and tea points.

Events

- In 2025 Event Essex created practical tips to make events such as, conferences, seminars, or training, with tips on: sustainable venues, reducing commuting and staying on campuses, implement waste reduction strategies, green catering options, collaboration with sustainable partners.
- Example of events November 2023 <https://www.essex.ac.uk/blog/posts/2023/11/20/essex-startups-sustainability-event>; Making Careers Week more sustainable December 2023 <https://www.essex.ac.uk/blog/posts/2023/12/07/making-careers-week-more-sustainable>

University Sustainability Team <https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/meet-the-team>

UST organise a range of events throughout the year across our Colchester Southend and Loughton campuses. These events focus on environmental issues, from reducing carbon emissions to exploring the grounds and biodiversity at campuses.

Events include:

- Sustainability Awareness Week in which we look at ways we can reduce our impact on the environment.
- Our Sustainable Essex environmental accreditation programme, bringing together staff and students to make the University more sustainable.
- Pop-up stalls, allowing students and staff to discuss, learn and suggest ideas regarding sustainability at the University.

Carbon literacy training is available to all staff on Moodle. It is delivered by a certified carbon literate staff member. All staff will then be certified after training.

- The Sustainable Essex Awards is an environmental accreditation internal programme run by the Sustainability Team. It brings staff and students in a department together in a team and provides them with a tangible framework to make their department more sustainable whether that is in the office or at home. EBS currently have the Gold Award.

Curriculum

- The University are embedding education for sustainable development (ESD) in courses so that students gain ESD knowledge. A wide range of taught modules with subject-relevant content to support sustainable development are offered. Through these courses students will understand how to address social, environmental, and / or economic concerns and develop key competencies for sustainability. The University undertakes an annual curriculum audit to review and report on the progress of integration of ESD into the curriculum.
- Development of Resources: a Moodle page for Education for Sustainability provides staff and students links to policy, organisations, and resources that may be of use for research or when embedding sustainability into the curriculum.

Awards and Rankings

- People and Planet University League –
The University has risen from 58th place last year to 49th in 2024/25. Latest scores:
 - 100% for our Policy and Strategy for Sustainability;
 - 100% for Staffing and HR;
 - 90% for Staff and Student Engagement;
 - 88% for Education for Sustainable Development;
 - 80% for Workers' Rights.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/blog/posts/2025/01/09/top-50-for-sustainability>

Policies relating to Sustainability

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/policies,-strategies-and-reports>

Engagement

- Student and Staff Engagement Plan

Finance

- Investment Sector Weights 2024
- Statement of Investment and Banking Principles 2024
- Procurement Audit 2021-22
- Financial Procedure Note 24 - Procurement of Supplies November 2020

Food

- Sustainable Food Policy 2023

Social Responsibility

- Equality Diversity and Inclusion report on Access (UG and PG) and UG Continuation

- Gender Pay Report 2020
- People Supporting Strategy

Sustainability Policy and Strategy

- Sustainability Sub-Strategy and Climate Action Plan 2021-26

Travel

- Sustainable Travel Plan 2021-26 (Master)
- Sustainable Travel Plan 2021-26 (Colchester Campus Sub Report)
- Sustainable Travel Plan 2021-26 (Southend Campus Sub Report)
- Sustainable Travel Plan 2021-26 (Loughton Campus Sub Report)

Waste Reduction and Recycling

- Waste and Recycling Policy 2022
- UoE Waste treatments 2022
- Waste data for 2023

Further information about the University of Essex:

<https://www.essex.ac.uk>

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/sustainability/environmental-sustainability-action-group>

BREEAM is the world leading sustainability assessment method for the built environment and infrastructure <https://breeam.com/>

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) <https://fsc.org/en/what-the-fsc-labels-mean>

Further information about Essex Business School:

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/essex-business-school>

Graduates & Enrollment

2025 Statistics	Number
Graduates	564
Faculty & Staff at the Institution	163
Student Enrollment at the Institution	1814
Undergraduate Attendance	1181
Masters-Level Postgraduate Attendance	463
Doctoral Student Attendance	170

Degrees Offered

Masters Programs

- Integrated Master in Accounting: Accounting and Finance
- Integrated Master in Management: Marketing Management
- MBM Master of Business Management

Doctoral Programs

- PhD Accounting
- PhD Accounting and Finance
- PhD Business Administration
- PhD Business Analytics
- PhD Entrepreneurship
- PhD Finance
- PhD Human Resource Management and Organisation Studies
- PhD Management
- PhD Management Studies

Additional

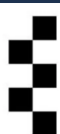
- BA Business and Modern Languages
- BA Business with a Modern Language
- BBA Business Administration
- BSc Accounting
- BSc Accounting and Finance
- BSc Business Administration and Supply Chain Management
- BSc Business and Analytics
- BSc Business and Human Resource Management
- BSc Business Management
- BSc Finance
- BSc Finance and Management
- BSc International Business and Entrepreneurship
- BSc International Business and Finance
- BSc Marketing
- BSc Marketing Management
- MRes Accounting
- MRes Finance
- MRes Management Research
- MSc Accounting
- MSc Accounting and Finance
- MSc Accounting and Financial Management
- MSc Business Analytics
- MSc Corporate and Investment Banking
- MSc Digital Marketing and Analytics
- MSc Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- MSc Finance
- MSc Finance and Management
- MSc Financial Engineering and Risk Management
- MSc Financial Technology (Finance)
- MSc Global Project Management
- MSc Human Resource Management
- MSc International Business and Entrepreneurship
- MSc International Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- MSc International Marketing and Business Intelligence
- MSc Investment and Wealth Management
- MSc Management
- MSc Management (International)
- MSc Management (Marketing)
- MSc Management (Social Economy)
- MSc Marketing
- MSc Organisational Change Management
- The Essex MBA
- MSc Finance and Data Analytics



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.

Letter of Commitment



University of Essex

16 June 2026

To whom it may concern,

Letter of Commitment to PRME

We are an internationally oriented, research-intensive university dedicated to excellence in research and research-led education and to providing an environment that nurtures socially responsible students and citizens.

Essex Business School is committed to ethical behaviour and responsible management practices that support sustainable action and leadership. The PRME framework and network are very important in supporting us to achieve sustainable development goals in alignment with University's sustainability strategies. I am therefore, absolutely delighted to confirm our continued commitment to PRME.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Frances Bowen
Vice-Chancellor
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Continue telling your story



EBS Dean - Professor Claudia Girardone



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



Who Champions Responsible Management Education at Our Institution

- ❖ Disciplinary efforts within business school
- ❖ Individual leader
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across parent organization



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



How We Define Teach

At EBS, students embark on a journey of transformative education. Our teaching approach strongly focuses on integrity. We challenge students to become independent thinkers, adept problem solvers, and ethical leaders. We equip them with the skills desired by employers, empower them to question the status quo, and critically analyse it.

Courses that support RME

Essex Business School reports 8 courses in 2025 that support responsible management education and sustainable development goals.

Innovation and Sustainability | BE448-6-AU-CO

This module will explore the role innovation can play in the transformation of economic activity and organisational design in order to promote sustainable development, including (but not limited to) its importance in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Faced with runaway climate change, mass extinction, and persistent pollution, sustainability is the most pressing concern of the 21st century. With scientists suggesting there is little more than a decade to dramatically transform our economies and societies, innovation and innovation management has never been more crucial.

The module is organised around three key themes: analysis of contemporary environmental and sustainability issues; managing sustainable innovation in technology and organisation design; managing sustainable transition and disruption.

A number of key ideas will be used to provide a framework for learning. These include past and current theories on sustainability, growth and innovation (with specific reference to the role of technology), understanding and influencing directions of innovation, and the governance of socio-technical transitions.

This module explores the role that innovation plays in the transformation of economic activity and organisational design to promote sustainable development, including (but not limited to) its importance in mitigating and adapting to climate change. This module is organised around three key sustainability themes: analysis of contemporary environmental and sustainability issues; managing sustainable innovation in technology and organisation design; managing sustainable transition and disruption. Past and current theories on sustainability, growth and innovation (with specific reference to the role of technology), understanding and influencing directions of innovation, and the governance of socio-technical transitions represent the key ideas used in this module to provide a framework for learning.



Organisation and Leadership in a Globalised World | BE460-7-SP-SO

This module introduces the students to the challenges of organisation and leadership that are shaped by ongoing changes at work and in today's society at large. The purpose is to examine past and new approaches and draw relevant connections between organisational theory and practice, where issues of organisation, collaboration and leadership are given particular attention.

The module will emphasise the principal role of people and human behaviour alongside the study of management systems and models. The module will address organisational processes by examining the conditions for developing sustainable organisational strategies and viable leadership approaches in both the private and the public sectors. Finally, the module will examine critically organisation and cooperation as socially accomplished activities of individuals, teams, and communities as well as projects in emerging contexts.

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Sustainability Accounting and Reporting | BE123-5-SP-CO

This module is designed to engage second-year undergraduates to acquire critical knowledge and understanding of the interplay between accounting practice and the notions of corporate social (and environmental) responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development. It will introduce students to relevant theories and practical implications of rapid development in sustainability accounting and reporting practices within contemporary corporations.

Over the past decade, it has been a global concern that firms' prolonged pursuit of profitability and shareholder value maximisation has generated serious social problems (such as labour abuse, perilous working condition, employee mistreatment, human rights violation, and inequality) and environmental deterioration (such as greenhouse and toxic gas emissions, water and soil pollution, and global warming), which threaten long-term development of the economy, society, and the earth. Nowadays, social and environmental sustainability issues have drawn serious attention from governments, policymakers, corporate executives, NGOs, as well as accounting standards setters across the world. In addition, burgeoning social and environmental accounting research has offered numerous empirical evidence regarding the potential and actual roles of sustainability accounting and accountability in enabling businesses to achieve sustainable development.

This module will enhance students' understanding of accounting and reporting as a socially constructed reality rather than merely technical practices. It will provide students with a framework so that they can place accounting studies into a sustainable development context. Students will be equipped with important knowledge, expertise, and techniques with respect to how the practices of accounting and corporate reporting process can play a significant part in leading contemporary corporations to implement impactful structural changes and renovate their business models to achieve social responsibility and environmental sustainability in the foreseeable future.

This module covers major issues in sustainability accounting and reporting practices, including the development of various sustainability reporting frameworks and standards, as well as the existing practice of accounting for climate change, biodiversity, and human rights. In addition, we also consider the external verification and assurance of sustainability reporting and its important impact on the corporate decision-making process, capital markets, and society at large.



In the past decade, it has become evident the need to operate businesses by adopting a sustainable development approach. How businesses impact the environment, and our society is at the centre of the attention of investors, regulators, and other stakeholders. This module will introduce students to the accounting principles and techniques that businesses should follow to account for their environmental and social impacts and promote sustainable development.

The module will start by introducing students to the concepts of sustainability reporting and its conceptual foundation. It will provide an overview of the current regulatory requirements in relation to sustainability reporting and discuss in detail the reporting issues associated with key sustainability issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, water management, waste management, workforce and local communities. The module will also explore how key capital market participants and corporate stakeholders incorporate information on these key sustainability issues into their decision-making processes. From this module, students will take away a solid understanding of how sustainability reporting can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, the current regulatory requirements for reporting on a series of key sustainability issues and the usefulness of sustainability reporting for investors and stakeholders.

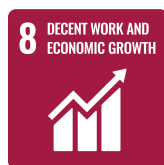


Debates in Public, Social and Environmental Accounting | BE133-6-SP-CO

This module explores critical debates on accounting by locating the subject within a variety of economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. The module goes on to evaluate contemporary accounting research and developments in the context of practical 'real-life' business case studies. The module discusses and applies conventional and contemporary (management) accounting principles and techniques to practical problems and scenarios. In the light of recent dramatic changes to the business environment such as deregulation, globalisation, climate change, financial scandals, environmental disasters and violation of human rights, the module looks at accounting from a broad perspective. Key issues such as gender budgeting, performance measurement and environmental accounting will be examined in detail. The module also critically evaluates the diffusion of accounting systems in the third and public sector and critically appraises the influence of new organizational forms and new technologies on the role of accounting nationally and internationally.

This module explores critical issues in accounting within a variety of economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. The module incorporates elements of sustainability in discussing and applying conventional and contemporary (management) accounting principles and techniques to practical

problems and scenarios related to sustainability, such as climate change, environmental disasters and violation of human rights. The module also analyses key sustainability issues from a management accounting perspective, such as gender budgeting and environmental accounting.



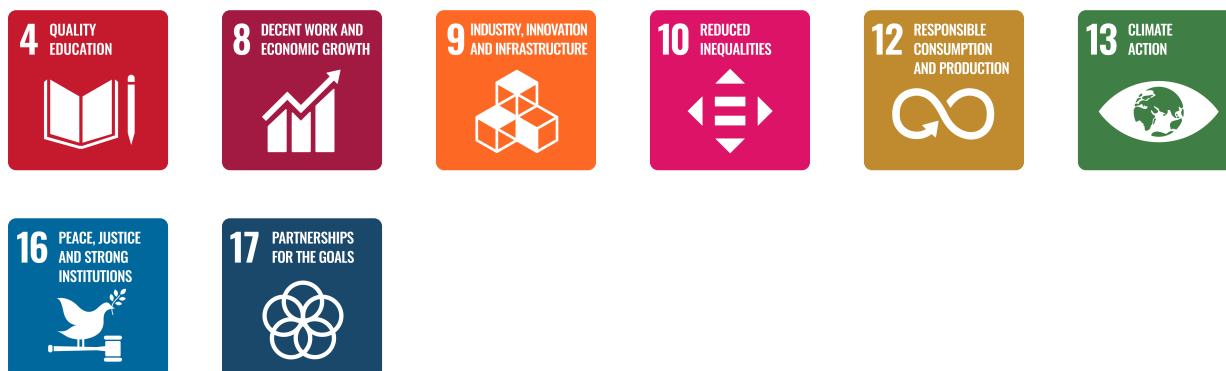
Corporate Governance and Sustainability | BE156-7-SP-CO

The purpose of this module is to provide students with a critical understanding of current issues in corporate governance theory, regulation, and practice and its association with sustainability.

The module begins with a critical review of the traditional view on corporate governance using an agency perspective and then extends to a stakeholder-oriented perspective that addresses corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Next, the module examines the relationship between corporate governance and corporate reporting, covering both financial and sustainability information. In addition, the module examines the development of codes and regulations which influence corporate behaviour, such as the Combined Code and Operating and Financial Review in the UK, and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the US as well as corporate governance classifications around the world. The module will then dive deeper into various corporate governance mechanisms such as the board of directors, large shareholders, shareholder activism, mergers and acquisitions, and executive compensations, and then examine their impacts on corporate financial and sustainability performance. Finally, the module considers several case studies relating to companies where corporate governance is seen to be an issue. The case studies are designed to reinforce understanding of the conditions under which corporate governance can break down and/or promote discussion of what is involved in trying to define 'good' and 'sustainable' corporate governance.

This module provides students with an understanding of corporate governance from the perspectives of ethics and sustainability. Sustainability is one of the main themes of this module, being explored in conjunction with corporate governance and corporate reporting. The module emphasises the importance of developing ethical and responsible leadership practices. Students are asked to think about the ethical consequences of leadership and governance choices through the study of corporate governance mechanisms such as the board of directors, executive compensation, and shareholder activism. Students are also asked to analyse alternative stakeholder-oriented approaches to the

traditional agency theory. In doing so, the module invites students to exercise their critical thinking skills and highlights the importance of taking into account wider societal effects when making business decisions. The module also uses corporate governance case studies focused on sustainability issues, which prompt students to make practical and values-based decisions which align with the RME principles.



Development Finance and Microcredit | BE339-5-SP-CO

This module focuses on the crucial role finance has for economic development with particular reference to emerging countries.

The aims of this module are:

- To provide students with a good knowledge of the nexus of finance and development and the importance of microfinance in particular for emerging and developing countries. In order to fully appreciate the dynamics of these economies, the topics covered include financial liberalisation, a review of the process of financial institution building in developing and emerging market economies and an analysis of their interactions with the global financial system.
- To learn about microfinance theory and practice, including products and services, risk management issues, sustainability and regulation.

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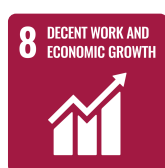


Managing for Ethics and Sustainability | BE423-6-SP-CO

This 10-week module is an introduction to Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility, with a particular focus on issues of Sustainability and Environmental Governance.

In this module you will explore the origins, practice and theory of business ethics and corporate social responsibility. You will be provided with the conceptual and theoretical resources to critically examine recent developments in corporate practice in a globalising world, in which business organisations are being expected to take on new responsibilities for social wellbeing and environmental sustainability. Identifying the particular assumptions that inform, but also constrain, the practices of corporate social responsibility and sustainability, this module explores a number of cases and perspectives to facilitate critical examination of the ethics and sustainability of business today.

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Educator Recognition

At Essex Business School, we recognize educators for quality of teaching in the following ways:

- ❖ Annual teaching excellence awards
- ❖ Course evaluation scores
- ❖ Faculty promotion and tenure consideration
- ❖ Professional development opportunities

Teaching Voices

The following statements demonstrate ways in which educators at Essex Business School support sustainability and responsible management in their classrooms.

Innovation & Sustainability - Teaching Voice

Innovative approaches, course designs, and teaching strategies that align with sustainable development and/or responsibility used in BE448 - Innovation & Sustainability

BE448 Innovation & Sustainability is a recent addition to our undergraduate program and is one of the few courses in the UK specifically dedicated to sustainable innovation. Innovation is considered critical to efforts to not only develop new technologies and infrastructures, but organisational forms, organisational practices, and entrepreneurial strategies. The gap between existing socio-economic and business practices and a sustainable future will largely be bridged through the deployment of innovation across public, social and private sectors.

BE448 is organised as a course not around a textbook 'spine', and uses multiple texts as learning resources, and is instead organised around three key themes:

- the analysis of contemporary environmental and sustainability issues;
- practices and theories of managing sustainable innovation in technology and organisational design;
- practices and theories of managing sustainable transitions and disruption.

The course is designed to integrate each of the three throughout all the teaching events, to generate a clear understanding of how issues, practices and process of change are all integral aspects of sustainable innovation. While some teaching events are more clearly focused on one aspect or another, each includes all three as a foundational concept for the module's teaching strategy.

The course begins with foundational material (what do we mean by sustainability, what are the key issues, and what is innovation) and ends with a return to this material in order to develop a critical narrative in continuity with the course content arch (i.e., the limits to sustainability). The body of the course sets out facets of sustainable innovation in practice to enable the clear articulation of the three key themes. The course covers innovation management, organisational design, the social economy, leadership practices, entrepreneurship, the circular economy and the service industry.

The approach we take aims to blend delivered content, including lectures, video material and guest speakers, with practical exercises and group work. Typically, our teaching events will start with some introductory material, then move through some examples and detailed case studies, before moving onto group work and exercises, followed by more expansive and critical work through lectures, videos and more practical exercises. We supplement this with extensive course resources, that include not

just academic research but contemporary reports, journalism, video and audio content, with an understanding that a range of contemporary media will enable a broader range of learning styles to flourish and paint a more detailed and real-world picture of innovation and sustainability.

Assessment is based on both a final case study where students draw on the entirety of the course's materials to develop an analysis of sustainable innovation in practice, and on a weekly journal where students must connect their understanding of that week's teaching to real world examples. While the former is an opportunity for students to bring their learnings together, the latter enables a more incremental approach where assessment is reflexive and encourages a more continual engagement with the real world application of the teaching content.

Managing for Ethics and Sustainability - Teaching Voice

Innovative approaches, course designs, and teaching strategies that align with sustainable development and/or responsibility used in BE443 - Managing for Ethics and Sustainability

This 10-week module provides an introduction to Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility, with a particular focus on sustainability and environmental governance issues. In the module, we explore the origins, theory, and practice of business ethics and corporate social responsibility. Students are given the conceptual resources to critically examine recent developments in corporate practice by researching their own case studies. The module aims to develop students' understanding of the new responsibilities for social wellbeing and environmental sustainability that business organisations are expected to take in response to civil society and consumer expectations. We encourage students to identify the particular assumptions that inform, but also constrain, the practices of corporate social responsibility and sustainability, through different cases.

The teaching methods and assessment are designed to develop students' ethical reflexivity and prompt thinking about their own agency and its limits within business ethics, building a greater appreciation of issues of power and rhetoric in corporate social responsibility. The module employs weekly lectures, interactive class discussions that engage students with real-world ethical dilemmas, structured debates, stakeholder analysis, and ethical decision-making simulations to foster nuanced perspectives on business ethics. Additionally, it incorporates group activities to engage students in the topic and promote greater ethical reflexivity. Through class discussion, reading, and assessment, students build critical argumentation skills that are informed by, and sensitive to, their own and others' ethical perspectives and values. Students build up a discussion journal over the course of the module that facilitates critical examination of the ethics and sustainability of business in theory and practice.

The learning journal is developmental and undertaken alongside individual and group research into a specific consumer product and the business practices behind it that students must research. The final entry in students' discussion journals requires them to reflect on their own learning and development in the module, which complements a case study group presentation and research report, encouraging them to apply their enhanced critical reflexivity in practice. In the group work, students select a brand/product and examine the supply chain, customers' perspectives, civil society activism, and the companies' responses. They then present the case to the class, fostering peer collaboration, oral presentation skills, creativity, and ethical engagement. This approach is central to gaining a greater appreciation for the limits and possibilities of sustainable development through business practices.

Corporate Governance and Sustainability

The purpose of BE156 Corporate Governance and Sustainability is to provide students with a critical understanding of current issues in corporate governance theory, regulation, and practice, as well as their relations to the financial and sustainability performance of the publicly listed firms.

The module begins with a critical review of the traditional view on corporate governance from an agency perspective, then expands to a stakeholder-oriented view that covers corporate social responsibility and sustainability. The module also explores the relationship between corporate governance and corporate reporting, including both financial and sustainability information. Additionally, it examines the development of codes and regulations that influence corporate behaviour around the world, such as the UK Corporate Governance Code 2024, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (US), and other corporate governance classifications worldwide. The module will then analyse different corporate governance mechanisms, such as boards of directors, large shareholders, shareholder activism, mergers and acquisitions, and executive remuneration, assessing their effects on corporate financial and sustainability performance. Lastly, it presents several case studies involving companies where corporate governance issues are prominent. These case studies aim to deepen understanding of the conditions that can lead to governance failure and foster discussions on what constitutes 'good' and 'sustainable' corporate governance.

Our teaching approach combines delivered content with real-life corporate governance examples and cases, and group activities such as group discussions and role-playing games that put students in the hat of the board of directors in assessing firm strategy and sustainability issues. We supplement this with extensive course resources including academic research, regulatory documents, and practitioner reports to give students a broader and real-life perspective of contemporary corporate governance and sustainability challenges.

Sustainability Reporting

Embedding Critical Sustainability Reporting in Postgraduate Accounting Education: The BE171 Case Study

BE171 (Sustainability Reporting) is designed to embed responsible management education within postgraduate accounting by developing students' critical understanding of corporate sustainability disclosures. The module moves beyond technical compliance to focus on how sustainability reporting shapes accountability, transparency, and decision-making in practice.

A central feature of BE171 is a comparative case study assessment requiring students to analyse sustainability disclosures from different organisational contexts. This approach enables both longitudinal and cross-sectional evaluation of reporting practices, encouraging students to assess the credibility, completeness, and quality of disclosures rather than simply describing them. The module integrates theoretical perspectives, including Legitimacy Theory and Stakeholder Theory, with evolving regulatory frameworks and professional standards, supporting a critical interrogation of why organisations disclose sustainability information and how such disclosures are constructed.

Student feedback indicates that this applied and analytical approach enhances engagement and deepens understanding. Students highlighted that the module *"helps to see beyond what companies say to what they actually report"*, and that working with real-world reports *"develops critical thinking and practical skills relevant to future careers"*. This reflects the module's emphasis on bridging academic knowledge with professional practice.

The module also contributes to the development of key employability skills, including analytical reasoning, evidence-based evaluation, and professional communication. These competencies are increasingly important in the context of expanding ESG regulation and stakeholder demand for transparent and reliable sustainability information. By working directly with corporate disclosures, students gain experience in interpreting complex datasets, identifying selective reporting, and evaluating the reliability of sustainability metrics.

BE171 is explicitly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Through engagement with topics such as climate change, resource use, and social responsibility, students are encouraged to consider the broader societal and environmental implications of corporate reporting practices.

Overall, BE171 supports the development of graduates who are critically aware, ethically informed, and equipped to engage with the complexities of sustainability reporting. In doing so, it contributes to Essex Business School's commitment to transformative education and the preparation of responsible leaders capable of addressing global sustainability challenges.

Barriers to Innovative Curriculum

In 2025, Essex Business School identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing curriculum:

- ❖ Accreditation constraints
- ❖ Assessment challenges
- ❖ Time constraints

Barriers to Innovative Pedagogy

In 2025, Essex Business School identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing pedagogy:

- ❖ Accreditation limitations
- ❖ Administrative hurdles
- ❖ Budget constraints
- ❖ Resource constraints
- ❖ Student engagement concerns
- ❖ Assessment rigor concerns
- ❖ Standardized testing pressures

Continue telling your story

Considerations for sustainable development – a career development perspective

Essex Business School hosted a dedicated student session titled "Considerations for sustainable development – a career development perspective" to address the intersection of responsible management and professional growth. The session was delivered by Michel Mason from Sustainability Essex and coordinated by Prof Silvia Gaia, EBS Director of Sustainability.

The event emphasized that modern businesses must successfully balance profit, ethics, and sustainability in order to maintain competitiveness. The session was designed to demonstrate to students how sustainable development integrates systems thinking alongside practical professional skills. The discussion covered the following primary areas: Examining how sustainability actively shapes current industries and individual career trajectories. Understanding the fundamental business case for integrating sustainability into corporate strategy. Exploring the Systems Theory Framework (STF) as it applies to these challenges. Identifying the key sustainability-related skills that modern employers actively seek in graduates and professionals.

The initiative was positioned as highly relevant for students across a broad spectrum of business disciplines. It specifically targeted individuals studying accounting, banking, finance, business management, marketing, HR, entrepreneurship, and consulting, framing sustainable practices as a universal "game-changer" for their future career viability.

The event was well received by students, reflecting a strong engagement with responsible management principles and a readiness to integrate these concepts into their future professional roles.

Embedding Sustainability in Business Education

A dedicated workshop titled "Embedding Sustainability in Business Education: Mapping Curriculum to the SDGs" was organized by Silvia Gaia, Director of Sustainability at Essex Business School to explore how educators can effectively surface issues of sustainability within their current teaching practices. The session was facilitated by Michel Mason, Sustainability Engagement Manager at the University of Essex, who provided valuable insights into integrating sustainability directly into business education. The workshop offered educators a structured approach to mapping curriculum content to ensure it contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session included interactive tasks and covered the following primary areas:

- Providing a brief overview of the University of Essex Sustainability Sub-Strategy and Climate Action Plan (2021-2028) and its specific role for EBS.
- Developing a foundational understanding of the SDGs and how to accurately read them.
- Introducing an SDG mapping framework designed to help educators align their academic modules with relevant SDGs.
- Engaging in practical applications where educators mapped course content to SDGs using real-world case studies.
- Discussing actionable ways to embed sustainability principles into course curricula and assessments.

The initiative provided a comprehensive and actionable approach to embedding sustainability into EBS courses. By focusing on aligning teaching methodologies with the SDGs, the workshop successfully equipped educators with the tools needed to situate business students' learning within a broader global context of responsible business practices.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.

How We Define Research

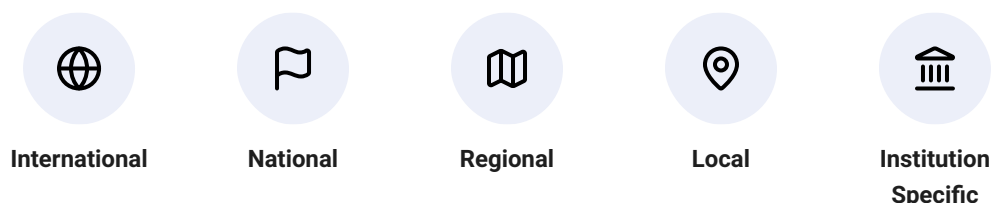
At EBS, we aim at advancing the frontiers of knowledge through ground-breaking, transformative research in business, that empowers individuals, society, and organisations. We aspire to deliver innovative and unconventional approaches to empirical and analytical problems that draw inspiration from our core values of social justice, environmental sustainability, and inclusivity.

Research vs Research for RME/Sustainable Development



Research Funding

In 2025, Essex Business School was awarded funding for research that is:



Socializing Research

In 2025, Essex Business School contributed research findings to:

- ❖ Community organizations
- ❖ Government and policy makers
- ❖ Industry and business networks
- ❖ Local media
- ❖ International media
- ❖ National media
- ❖ Open-access platforms
- ❖ Public events and lectures
- ❖ Research collaborations
- ❖ Social media and digital outreach

Research Projects

In 2025, Essex Business School reported 11 research projects that implemented responsible or sustainable activities.

CIEMBLY

Period Covering: January, 2024 - December, 2027

Department: Accounting

EU-CIEMBLY is an international research project funded by the European Union's Horizon Research and Innovation Programme, which addresses the need for the introduction of new forms of citizens' participation and deliberation in EU political life, inspired by intersectionality logics. EU-CIEMBLY will provide the analytical framework and the prototype through which such an instrument can be created in the form of Citizens' Assemblies that can be established at the EU level and with features allowing for the transfer of a (modified) prototype to the national and local levels of EU Member States. To do this, the project moves from theorising to evaluating and finally piloting such a prototype, and concludes with recommendations.



Ethnicity, racism and the labour market in the UK – a literature review

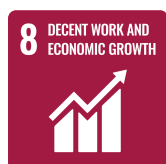
Period Covering: February, 2025 - December, 2025

Department: Management | Human Resource Management

The project was led by Maria Hudson, Pasi Ahonen and Jity Bajaj from Essex Business School and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). JRF is a social change organisation focused on alleviating poverty in the UK. Its mission is to inspire action and change that will create a prosperous UK free from poverty, working with private, public, and voluntary sectors, as well as people with lived experience of poverty. JRF uses its position, and draws on research, to engage with and apply pressure to those who hold official power today, through the quality of its arguments and ideas and by building powerful coalitions and movements for change, centring the voices of those who benefit least from the status quo.

JRF commissioned a literature review of supporting evidence relating to ethnicity, racism and the labour market in the UK with a particular focus on Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani communities most at risk of poverty. The research team produced an evidence review which was published on the JRF website. Drawing on a range of studies, this review examines how labour market

structures and institutions play a role in the disproportionate poverty levels experienced by Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani communities. With a particular focus on in-work inequalities, it discusses job quality, barriers to better paid work and the role of visa status. The review presents a complex picture of labour market-related factors that contribute to poverty risk and work outcomes. It also explores labour market-related levers for fostering more equitable experiences of work and improving livelihoods. The findings have already been helpful in supporting the work of JRF colleagues working on employment policy.



BJM Special Issue Call for Papers: Unpacking Circular Economy Capabilities for a Pathway to Net Zero

Period Covering: December, 2023 - April, 2026

Department: Entrepreneurship

Between late 2023 and early 2024, the *British Journal of Management* issued a call for papers for a special edition titled "Unpacking Circular Economy Capabilities for a Pathway to Net Zero."

Submissions were open from December 10, 2023, to January 10, 2024. The publication was guided by an editorial team spearheaded by Managing Guest Editor Marta F. Arroyabe from Essex Business School.

The objective of the special issue was to investigate the practical capabilities companies require to transition to a circular economy (CE). This model focuses on continuously looping materials and energy, in contrast to the conventional linear system of extracting, producing, and discarding. Imagine a family that frequently purchases new furniture and trashes the old, compared to one that mends, upcycles, and recycles their existing belongings: the circular economy scales this concept up to whole industrial networks, overhauling goods, production methods, and corporate structures to ensure resources remain in circulation for extended periods.

The editorial team presented this transition as fundamentally linked to achieving net zero—the state where a company's greenhouse gas emissions are fully offset by an equal atmospheric removal. They highlighted three core tenets of the circular economy: eradicating pollution and waste, maintaining resources at their peak value for as long as possible, and restoring natural capital, such as freshwater and forests. Nevertheless, the publication pointed to a sobering statistic: at that time, a mere 8.6% of consumption and production worldwide was circular, emphasizing the massive scale of the required

transformation. Companies striving to make this shift encountered genuine hurdles, including the immense difficulty of creating circular-compatible products and manufacturing systems, as well as restructuring supply networks so materials are recovered rather than discarded as waste.

This special edition differentiated itself from previous literature through two main approaches. First, it expanded its focus past a company's internal administrative skills to include the broader network of partners, stakeholders, and institutions the business relies upon. This was based on the premise that true circularity requires a thriving, collaborative ecosystem rather than the isolated efforts of a single firm. Second, it adopted a holistic perspective, examining how circular practices influence multiple tiers and divisions across a business, pushing back against the notion that sustainability is the responsibility of just one isolated department.

The call invited paper submissions covering a variety of themes. These included the specific organizational, managerial, and technical proficiencies required to develop realistic net-zero strategies; the unique obstacles encountered by difficult-to-decarbonize fields such as heavy industry; and the ways in which market dynamics and regulations influence a company's capacity to acquire circular skills, whether via internal training, university programs, or peer learning. Furthermore, they welcomed research on how businesses could weave "circular thinking" into daily operational choices, and how the architecture of supply chains—along with a company's specific position within them—impacts the diffusion of circular competencies throughout a sector. The call encouraged diverse disciplinary and methodological perspectives to address these questions.

The special issue was ultimately published in March 2026, appearing in *British Journal of Management* under the same guest editorial team, and brought together the various strands of research the call for papers had originally set out to solicit.



Wild Essex Imaginarium

Period Covering: January, 2025 - N/A

Department: Management

Led by Tony Sampson, Reader at Essex Business School, the Wild Essex Imaginarium is a collaborative initiative that advances cultural-ecological approaches to sustainability, specifically aligning with the delivery of statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies. At its core, the project applies Sampson's concepts of emotional geography and mezzo-level frameworks to bridge the gap between grassroots community participation and macro-level environmental policy delivery. By bringing

together universities, local councils, artists, environmental organisations, and businesses, the project fosters a new ecosystem of collaboration that moves beyond abstract policies to leverage the deep, affective attachments people have with their natural environments.

A major milestone for the project was the first Wild Essex Imaginarium symposium, held on 27 September 2025, at the University of Essex's Essex Business School. Gathering over a hundred attendees, scientists, and creatives, the event functioned as a creative space for aesthetic experimentation to challenge current perceptions of nature and communicate policy in alternative ways. Discussions ranged from scientific provocations on how human culture defines, manages, and often tries to "tidy up" the wild, to historical reflections on East Anglia's legacy of eccentric pioneers living in active partnership with the land. A central theme of the gathering was the recognition that conservation is a cultural endeavour just as much as a scientific one.

Building on the momentum of the September symposium, the project expanded its influence through a presentation of the Imaginarium engagement framework at the I-Place conference on 27 November 2025. This was accompanied by the submission and acceptance of a peer-reviewed research article for a Key Cities All-Party Parliamentary Group report. Launched in Parliament, this policy-facing output evidences clear pathways from local community participation to national environmental policy.

The initiative continues to generate tangible outcomes in the region, including a successful application to the Innovation Fund for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership project with Uttlesford District Council and Sustainable Uttlesford. In recognition of its outstanding impact and commitment to environmental goals, the project won the University of Essex Sustainability Award at the Platinum level, the highest tie, for the 2025/26 academic year.

Furthermore, the project continues to focus on biodiversity planning support, stakeholder network development, and the planning of further funded impact activities to empower communities and realise ecological policy objectives.



Freelancers Make Theatre Work

Period Covering: January, 2020 - December, 2025

Department: Management | Human Resource Management

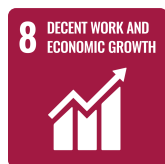
The Big Freelancer Survey is a collaborative research initiative conducted by Freelancers Make Theatre Work in partnership with the Centre for Work, Organisation and Society at the University of Essex. Melissa Tyler from Essex Business School, as the Centre's co-director, plays a pivotal role in this partnership by providing the rigorous academic framework underpinning the five-year initiative.

Initiated in 2020 to capture the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts sector, the project culminated in its fifth and final 2025 report, titled 'Who's Taking the Hit'. Aimed at key stakeholders including funding bodies, unions, practitioners, and politicians, Tyler and the broader research team provide crucial, evidence-based recommendations designed to improve equality, sustainability, and accessibility within the UK's creative industries.

The 2025 report reveals a worsening financial and structural crisis for freelance theatre workers, exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis, and widespread organisational funding cuts. Alarming, the data shows that 44% of respondents earned less than the 2024 UK National Living Wage during the 2023-24 tax year, a stark increase from 34% the previous year. This financial marginalisation disproportionately affects those with protected characteristics, with over half of disabled practitioners and those from less-privileged socioeconomic backgrounds earning below the legal threshold for salaried positions. Compounding this, the average freelancer in the sector remains unpaid for 36% of their working hours and lacks access to fundamental safety nets such as maternity pay, sick pay, or a workplace pension.

As a direct consequence of these pressures, less than half of the survey respondents are able to earn their entire income through freelance industry work. A quarter of the workforce is currently considering leaving the sector entirely, citing low pay, a lack of available work, job insecurity, and deteriorating mental health. The research challenges the pervasive industry assumption that arts professionals accept these conditions simply 'for the love of it', highlighting that only 48% are freelance by choice. Instead, freelance creative practitioners increasingly function as a 'squeezed middle', absorbing the impact of slashed organisational budgets through criminally low fees and increased workloads, while navigating a landscape where only 8% receive funding from major arts councils.

Despite presenting a critical portrait of a struggling workforce, the project serves as a vital catalyst for change. The robust evidence base generated over five years has achieved significant real-world impact, being widely cited in the mainstream media, professional press, Hansard, and Parliamentary Committee reports. Furthermore, the rigorous data insights gathered through Tyler's academic partnership have successfully helped Freelancers Make Theatre Work secure three years of funding from Arts Council England, ensuring their continued advocacy for a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive future for the sector.

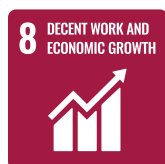


Financial and strategic challenges faced by women-led SMEs in the UK

Period Covering: March, 2025 - March, 2025

Department: Finance

This submission examines the financial and strategic barriers faced by women-led SMEs in the UK, drawing on recent empirical research. It highlights persistent challenges in accessing finance, differences in investment behaviour, and the disproportionate impact of economic shocks, including COVID-19, on women-led businesses. The research identifies structural constraints affecting women's ability to start, sustain and scale businesses. The findings were submitted as written evidence to the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee and cited in its report on Female Entrepreneurship, contributing to parliamentary discussion on the barriers facing women entrepreneurs in the UK.



Love food hate waste - an analysis of food losses and waste reporting by UK firms

Period Covering: July, 2024 - July, 2027

Department: Accounting

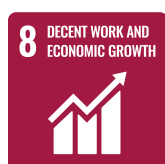
The research project, titled "Love food hate waste - an analysis of food losses and waste reporting by UK firms," is an initiative led Chaoyuan She and Silvia Gaia from Essex Business School. Supported by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), the project commenced in July 2024 and is currently ongoing.

The primary aim is to inform stakeholders about the current state of FLW disclosures and offer practical guidance to improve overall transparency and the usefulness of corporate reporting. Specifically, the research investigates three core themes:

- **Disclosure Characteristics:** Analyzing the reporting channels, the extent of the reporting, and the level of innovativeness in FLW disclosures made by firms.
- **Drivers and Impacts:** Identifying the core determinants that drive firms to disclose this information, as well as the subsequent consequences of doing so.

- Practical Realities: Exploring the specific challenges companies face when reporting FLW, balanced against the potential corporate and environmental benefits.

By assessing this landscape, the project seeks to provide actionable guidance to improve corporate transparency and information usefulness. The findings are designed to directly inform business leaders in food-waste sensitive sectors, professional practitioners, and relevant government bodies such as DEFRA in the UK and EFRAG in the EU.



When firm boundaries meet planetary boundaries – examining corporate land use and local biodiversity with a metacoupling perspective

Period Covering: December, 2023 - July, 2026

Department: Accounting

This study investigates the collective interactions between corporate land use and biodiversity using the lenses of the metacoupling framework. Focusing on corporations in English and Welsh local councils between 2014 and 2019, we find that land use by intensive land use corporations is associated with reduced local species richness through intracoupling processes and causes negative outward spillover interactions with species richness in neighbouring areas via pericoupling processes. These intra- and pericoupling effects are stronger for ectotherms, small-bodied, and low-dispersal species. We also find telecoupling effects where declines in ectotherms, terrestrial species, small-bodied species, and low-dispersal species richness intensify when local councils are part of the neighbouring, regional, and national road and rail network. International connections via seaports and airports are associated with reduced endotherm richness. By adding a spatial dimension to the analysis, this study outlines the importance of tracing the impacts of corporate activities beyond their conventional firm boundaries.



The effect of environmental regulation on local biodiversity – evidence from the Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Period Covering: October, 2023 - December, 2026

Department: Accounting

This study examines the effectiveness of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 in halting biodiversity loss. Using a difference-in-difference approach with matched Welsh and English councils between 2010 and 2022, we find that species richness on average increased by 1.376% in Welsh councils post regulation. This effect is more predominant in councils with higher regulatory risk exposure and declared climate and biological emergencies. Last, we find that the regulation led to a reduction of planning application approval rate in the post-regulation period, indicating councils' action in halting biodiversity loss. Our findings call for more binding initiatives to conserve biodiversity in local authorities.



Early years of Mandatory Structured Digital Reporting in the UK: Improvements, Ongoing Concerns and Possible Solutions

Period Covering: January, 2022 - N/A

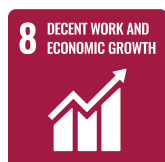
Department: Accounting

The project examines the implications and challenges of mandatory structured digital reporting in the UK, where UK-listed companies have been required to publish their annual reports in Inline XBRL (iXBRL) format since January 2022. The research considers whether mandatory digital reporting achieves its intended benefits of improving the accessibility, comparability and transparency of corporate information, and examines the organisational capabilities and governance arrangements required to support high-quality digital reporting.

The project has a strong connection to ethics and responsibility, particularly in relation to corporate transparency, accountability, regulatory responsibility and the interests of stakeholders who rely on corporate information. Findings from 28 in-depth interviews identified challenges including limited in-house expertise, reliance on external reporting providers, difficulties in selecting appropriate tags, the use of company-specific extensions, reporting errors, and underdeveloped review and assurance processes. These findings highlight that digitalisation alone does not guarantee responsible or reliable reporting. Organisations have a responsibility to ensure that information provided to stakeholders is accurate, accessible, transparent and fit for purpose.

The project also highlights the importance of digital and professional skills and technological capability, as organisations need appropriate expertise to realise the potential efficiency and economic benefits of structured reporting. This links the research to SDG 8, while its focus on responsible organisational practices and the production of reliable corporate information supports SDG 12. Its strongest connection is to SDG 16 through its focus on transparency, accountability, access to information and the governance of corporate reporting.

During 2025, the findings from this research project were presented to the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and subsequently to XBRL International following an FRC recommendation/referral. These presentations provided opportunities to share the findings with key organisations involved in the regulation, development and implementation of structured digital reporting.



Apsley Trail Frogmore Paper Mill Knowledge Transfer Partnership

Period Covering: August, 2024 - July, 2025

Department: Management

This project was a Knowledge Transfer Project (KTP) funded by Innovate UK, which featured University of Essex faculty members from the Essex Business School and Psychology Department, working together to help a 200 year old paper mill, Apsley Trail Frogmore Paper Mill, to become more sustainable in terms of their activities and heritage offerings to the public. The project contributed to SDG 4, 11 and 12 by helping the charity in several ways. Firstly, in understanding their heritage education audiences and communities for which we conducted audience surveys and a report on the results. Secondly, by using innovative service designs tools, such as journey mapping and stakeholder analysis, which helped the charity plan new tours, events and exhibits. Thirdly, the project upgraded the charity's digital capacities, establishing an e-ticketing system for events, revamping the main website, and extending social media usage / engagement. Each of these impacts contributes to the charity's capacity to share quality heritage education and build sustainable community, all centring on their unique place in the heritage of paper production and paper recycling in the UK through the industrial revolution to the present day. The project came to a close in summer 2025, but discussions for further opportunities are ongoing.



Research Awards

In 2025, Essex Business School was awarded 2 research awards for responsibility- and/or sustainability-related research.

2025 Highly Commended Paper for Accounting Forum

Granter: Accounting Fourm

Grantee: Pawan Adhikari

Award Description:

In 2025, the editorial board of Accounting Forum awarded its Highly Commended Paper distinction to "Environmental and social accountability in emerging economies: strategic pressures from and responses to vulnerable local communities." Authored by Abdurafiu Olaiya Noah, Pawan Adhikari (from Essex Business School), and Pik Kun Liew, the research was selected as a standout piece from the journal's 49th volume.

The manuscript explores the specific dynamics between organizations and marginalized populations in emerging economies, detailing the strategic pressures these local communities apply and how organizations respond. The award, conferred by editors Charles H. Cho, Zhongwei Huang, Aziza Laguecir, and Joanne Tingey-Holyoak, serves as a formal acknowledgment of the authors' rigorous empirical work and their valuable addition to the ongoing academic discussion surrounding social and environmental accountability.

2025 Highly Commended Paper for Accounting Forum

Granter: Accounting Forum

Grantee: Ian Roper

Award Description:

In 2025, the editorial board of Accounting Forum awarded its Highly Commended Paper distinction to "Soft law regulation and labour rights reporting: a deficit in moral legitimacy?" published in Volume 49, Issue 1. Authored by Sepideh Parsa, Ian Roper (from Essex Business School), Iris Maurer, and Michael Mueller-Camen, the research was selected as a standout piece from the journal's publications that year.

The manuscript critically examines the intersection of corporate reporting and labor rights, specifically questioning whether "soft law" (non-binding regulatory frameworks) suffers from a lack of moral legitimacy when it comes to holding organizations accountable.

The award, conferred by editors Charles H. Cho, Zhongwei Huang, Aziza Laguecir, and Joanne Tingey-Holyoak, serves as a formal acknowledgment of the authors' rigorous analysis and their valuable addition to the academic discourse surrounding regulatory frameworks and social accountability.

Research Presentations Related to RME and/or Sustainability

In 2025, Essex Business School gave 4 research presentations related to RME and/or sustainability.

The Spectacularization of NGOs Accountability in Disaster Situations: Evidence From the 2015 Nepal's Earthquakes

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Pawan Adhikari (University of Essex) | Bedanand Upadhaya (University of Essex) | Shovita Dhakal Adhikari (London Metropolitan University) | Sanjaya Aryal (University of Essex) | Chaminda Wijethilake (University of Essex)

Date of publication: August, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

Drawing on Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle, this article aims to extend our understanding of the way in which certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs) spectacularize their performance in the context of disaster situations and the continued co-existence of a multiplicity of accountabilities, with reference to the 2015 Nepal earthquakes. Data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study demonstrate how the voices of many Nepalese NGOs involved in the relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts following the 2015 earthquakes remained unheard and how they were forced to compromise their felt responsibilities by having to adhere to the control-oriented and accounting-based requirements imposed by the government and funders. Such requirements put certain NGOs, which were established to pursue political and personal goals, in a position to benefit from the situation, allowing them to obfuscate the ground level reality, for instance by manipulating the number of beneficiaries and geographical areas served, showcasing their performance on social media, and facilitating pseudo-ceremonies and participation. The spectacle created by NGOs was oppressive, exacerbating inequalities in aid distribution and excluding certain groups of beneficiaries from the relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts. The key contribution of the study lies in illustrating how both wider society and NGOs' stakeholders have been relegated to the role of passive spectator-consumers, as they accepted and consumed the NGO-led representation.



Lead Investor Nominee in Equity Crowdfunding | [DOI](#)

Authors: Jerry Coakley (University of Essex) | Douglas Cumming (Florida Atlantic University) | Aristogenis Lazos (Audencia Business School) | Silvio Vismara (University of Bergamo)

Date of publication: April, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

The lead investor nominee structure in equity crowdfunding (ECF) integrates the strengths of the pure ECF and angel ECF models. By committing their own capital, lead investors address two key challenges: mitigating adverse selection through thorough due diligence and reducing moral hazard by monitoring the firm post-campaign to secure returns. The digital nominee governance structure ensures equal ownership and voting rights for all investors, resolving potential conflicts between angels, accredited investors and the crowd. This model fosters collaboration between professional investors and the crowd, leveraging their respective strengths. Analysis of extensive UK data shows that nominee ECF campaigns outperform direct ownership campaigns in both the short and long term. These findings provide valuable governance insights for platform managers and policymakers.



Bank Competition, Loan Portfolio Concentration and Stock Price Crash Risk: The Role of Tone Ambiguity

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Nikolaos C. Gkoumas (Athens University of Economics and Business) | George N. Leledakis (Athens University of Economics and Business) | Emmanouil G. Pyrgiotakis (University of Essex) | Ion Androutsopoulos (Athens University of Economics and Business)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

We examine the association between loan portfolio concentration, competition and stock price crash risk in the US banking industry. We find that during economic downturns, banks with poorly diversified loan portfolios that operate in competitive markets are more likely to crash. Importantly, we show that this link is channelled through aggressive earnings management and ambiguous annual reports. Therefore, managerial ambiguity can serve as an early warning signal of information obfuscation, which can eventually lead to stock price crashes. As a quasi-natural experiment, we use the passage of the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act in 2018. This policy lowered the regulatory requirements and oversight for a specific group of large banks. The

results of a difference-in-differences analysis support our baseline findings and add to the ongoing debate on the roots of the 2023 banking crisis. Therefore, our findings can be informative to market participants, regulators and policy makers.



Third-Sector Organizations as Intermediaries in Climate Action: Engaging Vulnerable Communities in Co-Production in Bangladesh

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Farjana Nipa (University of Essex) | André Feliciano Lino (University of Essex) | Thankom Arun (University of Essex)

Date of publication: September, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

Addressing “wicked” problems like climate change requires collaborative efforts from public, private, and third-sector organizations (TSOs), making a co-productive approach especially promising. However, traditional co-production research often overlooks the contributions of TSOs and the voices of marginalized populations. This study addresses these gaps by exploring the role of TSOs as intermediaries in co-producing climate actions by empowering vulnerable communities. Through a case study of a project led by BRAC, a prominent hybrid TSO in Bangladesh, we find that creating a relational space for co-production—in this case, Climate Action Groups—is the key strategy used to foster active engagement and build long-term climate resilience. These spaces reach their full potential when intentionally supported by mechanisms such as awareness raising and shared goals, the incorporation of local knowledge, and inclusive engagement strategies. Our research contributes to the literature by demonstrating how TSOs facilitate meaningful co-production with vulnerable groups, thereby broadening our understanding of their role in climate governance and providing a comprehensive, practice-based model of sustainable, community-led adaptation. These findings offer valuable insights and emphasize the vital role of TSOs in developing practical and sustainable strategies for climate change adaptation.



Publications Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Does Soft Information Mitigate Gender Bias in Corporate Lending? | [DOI](#)

Authors: Udichibarna Bose (University of Essex) | Stefano Filomeni (University of Essex) | Elena Tabacco

Date of publication: May, 2025

Department: Finance

Gender bias in leadership and decision-making is a well-documented and pervasive topic that continues to garner significant attention in academic research and business literature. In this paper, by exploiting a unique proprietary dataset of 550 mid-corporate loan applications managed by a major European bank, we explore how the use of soft information influences lending decisions of female loan officers as compared to their male counterparts. We find that use of soft information reduces information asymmetry which helps female officers in making diligent lending decisions resulting in increased granted credit with a lower default probability. We also investigate gender affinity within the banking organisation and find that female loan approvers are more likely to be supportive of their subordinate female loan officers by approving more credit to the loan applications handled by female loan officers. Finally, we examine the possible mechanisms that can explain these results, and find that female loan officers are able to better collect and use soft information as they cultivate and maintain deeper firm-bank relationships with their clients due to higher threat of losing or being penalized in their jobs for any possible errors. We also rule out any other possible explanations such as differences in workload, work experience, loan officers' optimism, managerial ability, and screening capabilities between female and male loan officers. Our findings carry important policy implications, reflected in the optimal allocation of capital in the economy and the reduction of gender-related exclusion, which is vital in creating an equitable society and fostering a more ethical and inclusive workplace.



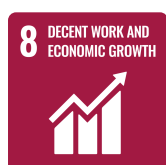
Can Soft Information Survive Organizational Distance? Evidence from SMB Lending | [DOI](#)

Authors: Paola Cerchiello (University of Pavia) | Stefano Filomeni (University of Essex) | Alessandra Tanda (University of Pavia) | Anca Mirela Toma (University of Pavia)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Department: Accounting | Finance

This paper examines whether and how soft information in corporate loan applications influences the lending decision process, and whether organizational frictions moderate this influence. In this context, soft information refers to the text data collected, analyzed, and transmitted by loan officers to the bank's headquarters. Using a proprietary dataset from a large European bank, the study finds that soft information impacts both the outcomes and the speed of lending decisions. However, this effect is moderated by the organizational distance between the loan officer and the bank's headquarters. Additionally, we provide evidence that soft information embedded in comments serves as a strong predictor of company defaults, supporting its use in lending to small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), particularly when branches are distant from the bank's headquarters. Our findings remain robust across additional analyses and tests, consistent with the presence of communication frictions within banking organizations that hinder the effective 'hardening' of soft information as organizational distance increases.



Counter-accounts of the absent state: accounting for violence, silence and resistance

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Danture Wickramasinghe (University of Glasgow) | Chaminda Wijethilake (University of Essex) | Nuwan Herath (Kotelawala Defence University)

Date of publication: September, 2025

Department: Accounting

Purpose

This paper examines the gap between idealized accountability and governance realities during crises, focusing on Sri Lanka's mandatory cremation policy amid COVID-19. It shows how states exploit crises to entrench informality, evade accountability and marginalize vulnerable groups.

Design/methodology/approach

Drawing on Ananya Roy's concept of state informality, the paper traces how the Sri Lankan state bypassed legal and scientific norms, framing an exclusionary directive as public health policy. A qualitative case study approach analyses government statements, legal texts, media and social media to examine how the cremation mandate was constructed, contested and overturned.

Findings

The policy enabled authoritarian consolidation through informality, disproportionately targeting Muslim and Christian minorities and deepening existing inequities. However, civil society mobilized counter-accounts – via protest, legal action and transnational advocacy – reclaiming democratic space and prompting the policy's reversal.

Practical implications

Policymakers must recognize the dangers of informal rule during emergencies. Transparent, inclusive governance is vital to preventing discriminatory crisis responses.

Social implications

The case highlights civil society's role in resisting authoritarianism and reasserting accountability in times of crisis. Civic voice and solidarity are key to defending democratic values.

Originality/value

The paper theorizes dissonant accountability to show how crises both dismantle and provoke new forms of accountability, especially in postcolonial contexts.



Losing my job and family? How power shapes the boundaries between work and family life

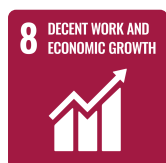
| [DOI](#)

Authors: Mohammed Yekini (Newcastle University) | Bomanaziba Idiko (University of Bedfordshire) | Anastasia Kulichyova (Queen's University) | Rekha Rao-Nicholson (University of Essex)

Date of publication: April, 2025

Department: Management

Job insecurity is often understood as the perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in one's job, and experiences of it can have significant implications for both work and family life. Despite the crucial role of power in conceptualising the effects of job insecurity, little is known regarding the role of power dependence in the relationship between job insecurity and work-family enrichment. To address this gap, we analysed three-wave data from 267 UK white-collar employees to test a model linking job insecurity to work-family enrichment. Our findings reveal that (1) job insecurity negatively impacts work-family enrichment, (2) approach and avoidance power-balancing operations mediate this relationship, and (3) the negative effect is weaker when psychological contract breach is low. This study advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating that asymmetric power dependence is a critical factor in determining when and why job insecurity diminishes work-family enrichment.



Soft law regulation and labour rights reporting: a deficit in moral legitimacy?

| [DOI](#)

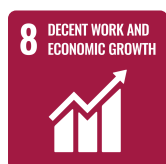
Authors: Sepideh Parsa (Middlesex University) | Ian Roper (University of Essex) | Iris Maurer (Vienna University of Economics and Business) | Michael Mueller-Camen (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Presented at: National or international issue or theme-specific conference

Department: Human Resource Management | Accounting

This paper compares and contrasts British and German transnational corporations' (TNCs) reporting on the labour rights of workers in their global value chains (GVCs) for the years 2012 and 2018, using the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines – an initiative that comes under the category of soft law regulation. Between these dates, regulatory changes took place in Britain and in the EU which had relevance to the reporting of labour rights issues more generally. Simultaneously the GRI reporting guidelines shifted to more flexible requirements in the transition from G3.1 to G4. This paper examines the consequences of these changes and finds that, in combination, these changes did not lead TNCs to improving the labour rights reporting. The paper suggests that even though reporting to international guidelines tends to be context-based, there was some convergence in this broadly negative outcome. This all suggests that there was an element of regulatory capture in the shifts to softer regulatory regimes. Conceptually, this points to a reduction in substantive disclosures and leads to a deficit in moral legitimacy and its displacement by more pragmatic legitimacy.



Efficiency and financial risk management practices of microfinance institutions

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Konstantinos N. Baltas (University of Essex) | José M. Liñares-Zegarra (University of Essex)

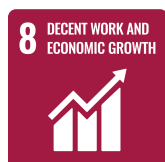
Date of publication: April, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

Microfinance institutions (MFIs) have evolved in different and complex ways to solve various market frictions, with some of them providing a wide range of financial products and using different lending technologies to reach poor and underserved populations. As a result, some MFIs are more efficient than others, but are efficiency gains aligned with risk management practices? The specific characteristics of the microfinance industry make the answer to this question less obvious than that of commercial banks. This paper tries to shed light on these issues by analysing the efficiency and

risk management of MFIs and describing the potential implications of these relationships for the microfinance industry. After considering several measures of financial risk management ratios commonly used in the microfinance literature, our results show that cost efficiency improves asset quality and solvency of MFIs, but also reduces the need for holding idle cash or liquid assets. The results of this paper can help academics, policymakers, and regulators to better understand the impact of cost efficiency on financial risks management practices in the microfinance industry.



Generalist CEOs and stock price crash risk | [DOI](#)

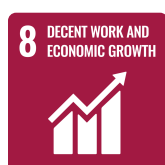
Authors: Xiaohua Fang (Florida Atlantic University) | Claudia Girardone (University of Essex) | Yiwei Li (University of Essex) | Yeqin Zeng (Durham University)

Date of publication: February, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting | Finance

We investigate whether generalist chief executive officers (CEOs), that is, CEOs who gain transferable skills across firms and industries, have less incentive to hoard bad news. To address endogeneity concerns stemming from firm–CEO matching, we deploy a difference-in-differences method utilizing exogenous CEO turnovers, propensity score matching and entropy balancing matching methods, and Oster's coefficient stability test. Supporting our conjecture, we find a negative relation between CEOs' general ability index (GAI) and future stock price crash risk. The effect of CEOs' GAI on crash risk is stronger when labor demand is stronger and when firms have more agency conflicts. Our analysis further suggests that generalist CEOs attenuate crash risk by increasing conditional accounting conservatism and reducing real earnings management. Taken together, our findings highlight the role of CEOs' general human capital in increasing their tolerance for failure and mitigating the agency problem.



Digital equity and government support during COVID-19 | [DOI](#)

Authors: Shabnam Kazembalaghi (University of Essex) | Jerry Coakley (University of Essex) | José M. Liñares-Zegarra (University of Essex) | Silvio Vismara (University of Bergamo)

Date of publication: April, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

The advent of COVID-19 portended a dire liquidity crunch for small firms as traditional external funding sources were severely curtailed. Defying expectations, initial equity crowdfunding (ECF) campaigns not only withstood the pandemic's onslaught but also saw unprecedented growth in funding volume, investor participation and overfunding. The upshot was that external equity, the traditional funding of last resort, became the first choice. Increased ECF funding especially for seed ventures are likely linked to government-backed loan guarantee schemes that acted as a quality signal for investors. The paper highlights the unanticipated positive synergies between public support mechanisms and private equity dynamics where equity was funding of first choice for many small firms seeking external funding. These developments underscore ECF's central role in digitally channelling equity capital to small firms during a period of heightened economic uncertainty.



Accountability and sovereignty: Financial controls in the Palestine-Israel Indigenous-settler relationship

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Dalia Alazzeh (University of the West of Scotland) | Shahzad Uddin (Univeristy of Essex)

Date of publication: June, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

This paper examines the intricate dynamics of accountability within the context of historical and political power imbalances in the Palestine-Israel relationship. It explores the paradoxical nature of accountability in settler-colonial contexts, focusing on why accountability mechanisms frequently fail to serve Indigenous populations. Using empirical illustrations of revenue-sharing mechanisms, the study reveals how the settler state—Israel—exerts control over tax revenues accrued to the Palestinian Authority (PA), arbitrarily deducting expenses without transparency or oversight. This lack of transparency leaves the PA uninformed about actual revenue figures and unable to scrutinise deductions, exacerbating power imbalances, weakening internal accountability mechanisms, and increasing vulnerability to corruption. The paper contributes to the growing body of research on accountability practices affecting Indigenous populations by examining their intersection with settler colonialism. It highlights how settler states prioritise their sovereignty to undermine accountability structures and marginalise Indigenous governance. Drawing on concepts such as “settler sovereignty”

and “primitive accumulation,” the paper advances the literature on accounting’s role in dispossession, disempowerment, and systemic oppression. Furthermore, it underscores the pivotal role of financial control as a tool of settler-colonial domination, offering valuable insights into the broader implications of accountability within such frameworks.



Multinational enterprises’ lobbying and foreign subsidiary performance: Evidence from the U.S. in the context of the global financial crisis

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Vikrant Shirodkar (University of Sussex) | Palitha Konara (University of Essex)

Date of publication: June, 2025

Department: International Business | Management

Whether corporate political activity (CPA) benefits firm performance is contested in the literature. However, the CPA-performance relationship has been less explored in the international business context or in the context of macroeconomic shocks—notably the global financial crisis—during which multinational enterprises (MNEs) may be forced to revisit their market and non-market strategies. In this study, we draw upon insights from the institutional theory and legitimacy perspectives to argue that the performance consequences of MNEs’ lobbying in a host market are contingent upon the MNE’s experience of operating in the host market, their lobbying frequency, and the subsidiary’s technological intensity. The empirical analysis used to test our hypotheses is based on a panel dataset of 224 subsidiaries of foreign MNEs operating in the United States, spanning the 8-year period 2005–2013, covering the years of the financial crisis. We find support for most of our hypotheses and contribute to the performance implications of CPA in international business contexts.



Banks, financial markets, and income inequality | [DOI](#)

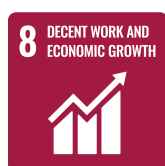
Authors: Yousef Makhoul (University of Nottingham) | Neil M. Kellard (University of Essex) | Dmitri V. Vinogradov (University of Glasgow)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

While financial development is often found to raise income inequality, it remains unclear whether the composition of the financial system makes a difference. In our sample of 99 countries over the period 1975–2020, increased activity of banks relative to markets in the provision of financial services is robustly associated with less inequality in the developing world yet with more inequality in developed economies. Accounting for redistribution systems does not alter this finding; banking sector concentration amplifies the effects. Results suggest that banks work at the extensive margin at earlier stages of economic development yet shift to the intensive margin at higher levels of development, where they increasingly serve the interests of the rich. Higher market power enables banks to better pursue their objectives at each of the margins



Environmental and social accountability in emerging economies: strategic pressures from and responses to vulnerable local communities

| [DOI](#)

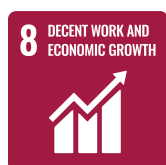
Authors: Abdurafiu Olaiya Noah (Coventry University) | Pawan Adhikari (University of Essex) | Pik Kun Liew (London School of Economics)

Date of publication: October, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

Drawing on Oliver's typology of strategic responses (1991), this study demonstrates the strategic pressures that vulnerable local communities in Nigeria have exerted on cement companies and the multiple strategies that these companies have devised to discharge their environmental and social accountability (ESA). The data for this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. By exploring the role of local communities in Nigeria, our findings highlight the changing context of ESA in emerging economies in which local communities, often referred to as weak and passive stakeholders, have forced multinational companies to respond to their commitment to ESA. However, the extent to which local communities' voices can alter companies' profit maximisation that compromises people's welfare and the environment has caused concern. The power and influence wielded by companies, which has enabled them to devise a multitude of strategic responses, has subtly dominated local voices and actions, confining ESA practices largely to the content of their annual statements. This raises concerns about current mechanisms for discharging ESA to promote sustainable development and attain sustainable development goals (SDGs) in emerging economies. In investigating the aforementioned, the paper also addresses the call made by prior work delineating the nexus between corporations and local communities in shaping ESA in the unique contexts of emerging economies.



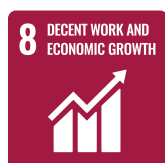
No poverty” (SDG 1), “Zero hunger” (SDG 2) and HRM | [DOI](#)

Authors: Chandima Hettiarachchi (Middlesex University) | Sepideh Parsa (Middlesex University) | Ian Roper (University of Essex)

Date of publication: December, 2025

Department: Human Resource Management

The link between HRM and poverty and hunger is complex. While workers’ general welfare could be thought of as being in the separate private domain, the absence of poverty is dependent, in capitalist society, upon paid employment, and so poverty is directly related to wages. In addition, while access to food may seem like an even further point of separation, hunger is directly related to wages, and, furthermore, any working day will traverse a time when food would normally be consumed: the lunch break. Historically, while general workplace conditions improved in the West as a result of regulation, unionization and paternalism, this trend reversed in the period identified with neoliberalism from this point in the early 1980s. This chapter identifies the links between HR practice, food and poverty. It traces the history of these links and then presents two contrasting national case studies: the UK and Sri Lanka.



Lead Investor Nominee in Equity Crowdfunding | [DOI](#)

Authors: Jerry Coakley (University of Essex) | Douglas Cumming (Florida Atlantic University) | Aristogenis Lazos (Audencia Business School) | Silvio Vismara (University of Bergamo)

Date of publication: April, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

The lead investor nominee structure in equity crowdfunding (ECF) integrates the strengths of the pure ECF and angel ECF models. By committing their own capital, lead investors address two key challenges: mitigating adverse selection through thorough due diligence and reducing moral hazard by monitoring the firm post-campaign to secure returns. The digital nominee governance structure ensures equal ownership and voting rights for all investors, resolving potential conflicts

between angels, accredited investors and the crowd. This model fosters collaboration between professional investors and the crowd, leveraging their respective strengths. Analysis of extensive UK data shows that non-inee ECF campaigns outperform direct ownership campaigns in both the short and long term. These findings provide valuable governance insights for platform managers and policymakers.



Bank Competition, Loan Portfolio Concentration and Stock Price Crash Risk: The Role of Tone Ambiguity

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Nikolaos C. Gkoumas (Athens University of Economics and Business) | George N. Leledakis (Athens University of Economics and Business) | Emmanouil G. Pyrgiotakis (University of Essex) | Ion Androutsopoulos (Athens University of Economics and Business)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Finance

We examine the association between loan portfolio concentration, competition and stock price crash risk in the US banking industry. We find that during economic downturns, banks with poorly diversified loan portfolios that operate in competitive markets are more likely to crash. Importantly, we show that this link is channelled through aggressive earnings management and ambiguous annual reports. Therefore, managerial ambiguity can serve as an early warning signal of information obfuscation, which can eventually lead to stock price crashes. As a quasi-natural experiment, we use the passage of the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act in 2018. This policy lowered the regulatory requirements and oversight for a specific group of large banks. The results of a difference-in-differences analysis support our baseline findings and add to the ongoing debate on the roots of the 2023 banking crisis. Therefore, our findings can be informative to market participants, regulators and policy makers.



Third-Sector Organizations as Intermediaries in Climate Action: Engaging Vulnerable Communities in Co-Production in Bangladesh

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Farjana Nipa (University of Essex) | André Feliciano Lino (University of Essex) | Thankom Arun (University of Essex)

Date of publication: September, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

Addressing “wicked” problems like climate change requires collaborative efforts from public, private, and third-sector organizations (TSOs), making a co-productive approach especially promising. However, traditional co-production research often overlooks the contributions of TSOs and the voices of marginalized populations. This study addresses these gaps by exploring the role of TSOs as intermediaries in co-producing climate actions by empowering vulnerable communities. Through a case study of a project led by BRAC, a prominent hybrid TSO in Bangladesh, we find that creating a relational space for co-production—in this case, Climate Action Groups—is the key strategy used to foster active engagement and build long-term climate resilience. These spaces reach their full potential when intentionally supported by mechanisms such as awareness raising and shared goals, the incorporation of local knowledge, and inclusive engagement strategies. Our research contributes to the literature by demonstrating how TSOs facilitate meaningful co-production with vulnerable groups, thereby broadening our understanding of their role in climate governance and providing a comprehensive, practice-based model of sustainable, community-led adaptation. These findings offer valuable insights and emphasize the vital role of TSOs in developing practical and sustainable strategies for climate change adaptation.



The Spectacularization of NGOs Accountability in Disaster Situations: Evidence From the 2015 Nepal's Earthquakes

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Pawan Adhikari (University of Essex) | Bedanand Upadhaya (University of Essex) | Shovita Dhakal Adhikari (London Metropolitan University) | Sanjaya Aryal (University of Essex) | Chaminda Wijethilake (University of Essex)

Date of publication: August, 2025

Presented at: National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Accounting

Drawing on Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle, this article aims to extend our understanding of the way in which certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs) spectacularize their performance in the context of disaster situations and the continued co-existence of a multiplicity of accountabilities, with reference to the 2015 Nepal earthquakes. Data for the study were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study demonstrate how the voices of many Nepalese NGOs involved in the relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts following the 2015 earthquakes remained unheard and how they were forced to compromise their felt responsibilities by having to adhere to the control-oriented and accounting-based requirements imposed by the government and funders. Such requirements put certain NGOs, which were established to pursue political and personal goals, in a position to benefit from the situation, allowing them to obfuscate the ground level reality, for instance by manipulating the number of beneficiaries and geographical areas served, showcasing their performance on social media, and facilitating pseudo-ceremonies and participation. The spectacle created by NGOs was oppressive, exacerbating inequalities in aid distribution and excluding certain groups of beneficiaries from the relief, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts. The key contribution of the study lies in illustrating how both wider society and NGOs' stakeholders have been relegated to the role of passive spectator-consumers, as they accepted and consumed the NGO-led representation.



Smart city governance: assessing modes of active citizen engagement | [DOI](#)

Authors: Rama Krishna Reddy Kummitha (University of Essex)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Department: Entrepreneurship

This paper discusses how to govern smart cities that nurture and promote citizen engagement. By reviewing the emergent literature on the topic and rooting in a pluralistic – a descriptive and normative orientation, we identify three novel governance models: embedded, blended and networked. Our review indicates that the depth of citizen engagement varies between models based on the roles played by closely aligned resourceful actors. A collaborative environment driven by, for and with citizens seeks to build smart cities embedded in local realities. Drawing on examples from smart cities across the globe, we offer policy suggestions for building futuristic citizen-engaged smart cities



How do Green Acquirers Select Targets? Value of Green Innovation in Takeovers

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Tanveer Hussain (University of Essex) | Niraj Kumar (University of Essex)

Date of publication: February, 2025

Department: Management | Entrepreneurship

A burgeoning literature on green mergers and acquisitions (M&As) is based on the assumption that acquirers are polluting firms and buy targets with green resources to gain sustainable development, ignoring the fact that acquirers can also have green resources. This study explores how green acquirers select their targets and realize benefits in the international takeover market. Drawing upon the resource-based view and information asymmetry perspective, we argue that green acquirers have a competitive advantage and prefer targets with lower firm-level (publicly listed target) and industry-level (targets from the related industry) information asymmetries in order to better estimate the target's value and avoid the risk of overpayment. Findings from 7788 M&As announced between 2005 and 2021 support our argument, showing that green acquirers buy targets with lower information asymmetries and earn higher returns. We also find that board characteristics and takeover experience are boundary conditions affecting the target selections of green acquirers. Our study contributes to green M&As and information economics by emphasizing the interplay of green innovation and lower information asymmetries in target selection and value creation.



Exploring Government-Citizen Interaction in Public Service Performance Assessment: Trade-Offs, Synergies, and Critical Issues

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Carmela Barbera (University of Bergamo) | Mariafrancesca Sicilia (University of Bergamo) | Ileana Steccolini (University of Essex)

Date of publication: May, 2025

Department: Accounting

Citizens' participation and direct initiatives are on the rise, including in assessing public service performance. Performance measurement and government-citizen interactions have been traditionally studied separately in public administration scholarship. To bridge this gap, this article integrates these two bodies of literature, proposing a typology of approaches to government-citizen interactions in public service performance assessment and highlighting their features. It also discusses the possible synergies and trade-offs emerging at the intersection between "interaction" and "assessment." In particular, the article focuses on how relevance, reliability, and understandability shape and are shaped

by the interaction between governments and citizens in both government-led and citizen-led initiatives of performance assessment. Finally, the paper puts forward a research agenda for the study of interactive forms of public service performance measurement.



Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services: A Systematic Review of the Public Administration Literature and Reflection on Future Research Avenues

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Tana Licsandru (Queen Mary University of London) | Elina Meliou (Brunel University of London) | Ileana Steccolini (University of Essex) | SinMun Chang (Brunel University of London)

Date of publication: January, 2025

Department: Accounting

Despite a resurgence of interest in social equity, citizens' inclusion in public services has attracted limited attention in the public administration literature so far, having often remained in the background of studies focusing on citizens' participation and representative bureaucracy. To fully comprehend and enhance the role of public administration in promoting inclusive public services and building inclusive societies, it is necessary to prioritize citizens' inclusion in public services as a central phenomenon. A first step in this direction is assessing existing knowledge and identifying new research avenues. Drawing on the "name, blame, claim" framework, this systematic literature review of 119 studies extends public administration scholarship by mapping and analyzing knowledge of citizens' inclusion in public services and identifying ways forward to strengthen the research and practice in this area.



Atlas Unplugged: Re-Imagining the Premises and Prospects of Capitalism for Business and Society

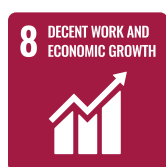
| [DOI](#)

Authors: Rick Delbridge (Cardiff University) | Charlene Zietsma (University of Michigan) | Roy Suddaby (University of Victoria) | Rashedur Chowdhuryd (University of Essex) | Christopher Wickert (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Date of publication: December, 2025

Department: Management

Atlas Shrugged, Ayn Rand's dystopian work of fiction, became a cornerstone of libertarian philosophy and its influence continues as an articulation of contemporary capitalism. In introducing this Special Issue, we revisit its core assumptions and contradictions in order to reimagine capitalism and reflect on the potential of management studies to contribute alternatives. These aspirations are reflected in the contributions. They discuss Indigenous views of capitalism, the ethics of care, insights from self-determination theory, the logic of marketization, and how capitalist institutions foster violence, racism, inequality, and environmental crisis. Building from these insights, we discuss the potential for future research to draw on a combined critical lens of place and intersectionality in developing systemic analyses of capitalism. Place situates action in its meaningful social and geographical spaces, recognizing the specific historical, political, and community relations through which global forces are (re-)produced and experienced. Intersectionality interrogates the capitalist system through various axes of identity to understand its consequences and inequalities. We use this framing to assess key aspects of contemporary capitalism: labour markets, globalization and global value chains, and access to resources. We then reflect on the prospects for alternative imaginings of capitalism and how management research might contribute to these.



Do networks get emotional? The role of leaders' emotions for (network) success

Authors: Benedetta Trivellato (University of Milano-Bicocca) | Daniela Cristofoli (SDA Bocconi School of Management) | Giovanna Galizzi (University of Bergamo) | Mariafrancesca Sicilia (University of Bergamo) | Ileana Steccolini (University of Essex)

Date of publication: December, 2025

Department: Accounting

Emotions are an important component of human life, influencing dyadic and organization-wide interactions. More specifically, leaders' emotions affect positively and negatively not only their followers, but also organizational and group outcomes. Through a multiple case study of four collaborative governance networks, this paper explores whether and how leaders' emotions influence network success. The results show that the emotional states that leaders bring into the network seem to influence its functioning: positive emotions seem to propel its activities and outcomes; negative emotions appear to curb them. Emotions seem also to interact with network identity and trust in affecting network success.



Experience of Marginalization in Noncooperative Spaces: The Case of Undocumented Migrant Workers in Italy

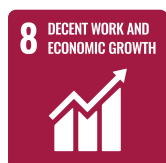
| [DOI](#)

Authors: Roya Derakhshan (University College London) · | Rashedur Chowdhury (University of Essex)

Date of publication: March, 2025

Department: Human Resource Management | Entrepreneurship

Undocumented migrant workers are among a group of marginalized stakeholders who are severely exploited at their workplace and across broader society. Despite recent scholarly discussions in marginalized stakeholder theory and migration studies, our understanding of how undocumented workers experience marginalization in noncooperative spaces remains very limited. In noncooperative spaces, uncooperative powerful actors deliberately thwart cooperation with local marginalized stakeholders and fail to develop supportive institutional frameworks, such as regulative and transparent governance principles. To address these issues, we conducted interviews with 47 undocumented workers and civil society workers in Italy. Our findings reveal that the marginalization experienced by undocumented workers encompasses socio-economic immobility, systemic incapability, and a sense of meaninglessness. Further, our research challenges the principles of stakeholder capitalism inherent in traditional stakeholder theory, revealing the inadequacy of conventional notions in noncooperative spaces where marginalized stakeholders deal with disempowerment and immobility. We delve into the silent and tacit collusion among uncooperative firms in these spaces, shedding light on the ways in which this problematic cooperation leads to the creation of normative harm. Moreover, we introduce the experience of meaninglessness as an internal barrier hindering migrant inclusion, underscoring the imperative need for widespread immigration reforms and normative changes to foster an environment conducive to meaningful transformations for migrants.



Research Voices

The following statements demonstrate ways in which researchers at Essex Business School bring sustainability and responsible management into their research.

Public Service Accounting And Accountability Group (PSAAG) Biennial Workshop 2025 & Early Career Colloquium

In 2025, the Public Sector Accounting and Accountability Group (PSAAG) held its annual workshop under the banner "Accounting for What Matters: Rethinking Public Sector Accounting and Accountability for Social Sustainability and Equity." The choice of theme was not incidental. Public sector organisations — the hospitals, local authorities, and government bodies that keep everyday services running — had been squeezed from several directions at once: unstable economies, prolonged austerity (government policies of spending cuts), the spread of misinformation, climate emergencies, and inequities that were baked into the system rather than incidental to it.

The workshop's organisers argued that the dominant way of running public services, known as New Public Management (NPM) — essentially, importing private-sector efficiency thinking into government — had, together with years of austerity, pushed organisations to chase efficiency at the expense of fairness. Think of it like a family budgeting so tightly for the month that they cut corners on their child's health checks to save money now, only to face a far costlier problem later. The organisers' point was that accounting is not a neutral scorekeeping exercise; the way you choose to measure and report performance quietly decides who gets resources and who gets overlooked.

Two problems sat at the heart of the workshop's agenda. The first was how to actually put "social sustainability" — a fairly abstract goal — into practice, in a way that made room for many different values: participation, collaboration, equity, and justice, rather than a single financial bottom line. The second was how to build organisational capability sturdy enough to survive shocks like economic crises or changes in government, rather than social sustainability being the first thing sacrificed when times get hard.

To explore this, PSAAG brought together academic researchers and practitioners — people actually working inside these organisations — to debate questions such as how equity gets embedded into accounting frameworks, what trade-offs exist between financial stability and social fairness, and how to build systems that are both financially resilient and socially just. The organisers also hoped the discussions would feed into a special issue of the journal *Financial Accountability & Management* (FAM) on the same theme, and they had actively encouraged joint papers written by academics and practitioners together, to strengthen the bridge between research and real-world practice.

The event followed PSAAG's usual "lunch-to-lunch" format — running from midday one day to midday the next — with each day opened by a keynote speaker, followed by breakout sessions on two sub-themes: building organisational capabilities for collaborative, sustainable outcomes; and strengthening democratic accountability while putting social sustainability into operation.

New that year was an Early Career Colloquium, held at the start of the workshop, giving researchers early in their academic careers a chance to pitch their work, get feedback, and network with peers and more established academics.

Grave Matters' (4th May 2025) - workshop for professionals working in the death industry

Based on British Academy funding, the Centre for Work, Organisation and Society (CWOS) from Essex Business School has published a report on theconversation.com/urban-cemeteries-are-at-capacity-heres-how-they-can-be-more-sustainable-252711

Research Barriers

In 2025, Essex Business School identified the following barriers to conducting research related to sustainability and/or responsibility:

- ❖ Data access and management
- ❖ Funding challenges
- ❖ Retention and engagement
- ❖ Technology and resource access

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Exploring Sustainability in Business Practice: Highlights from the first EBS Sustainability Research Event

Exploring Sustainability in Business Practice: Highlights from the first EBS Sustainability Research Event

[Essex Business School](#) (EBS) hosted its first Sustainability Research Event on 20 March 2025, which brought together leading EBS Academics from across different research groups to present cutting-edge research on corporate sustainability, environmental regulation, and social responsibility. The virtual event offered an engaging afternoon of presentations that spanned environmental regulations, green innovation, and biodiversity reporting through to community food systems and local non-profit sustainability experiences.

The event was opened by the EBS Research Director, [Prof. Ileana Steccolini](#), and the EBS Director of Sustainability, [Prof. Silvia Gaia](#), who underlined the importance of fostering academic dialogue around sustainability in business and society.

Tackling Environmental Regulations and Corporate Behaviour

The first speaker, [Dr. Debabrata Ghosh](#), talked about the effectiveness of certain environmental regulatory policies in his presentation Effectiveness of Environmental Regulations: Firm's Decisions and Welfare Implications. From a game-theoretic model, Debabrata compared four widely used policy instruments: taxes, subsidies, binding emission standards, and cap-and-trade systems. His work illustrated that binding standards and taxes are largely equivalent in terms of firm decisions, but subsidies or taxes yield the highest societal welfare depending on the extent of environmental damage. He further suggested that hybrid policies, such as multi-part tariffs, have the potential to align both corporate and policymaker incentives, providing a practical roadmap for developing more effective regulations.

Green Spaces as Drivers of Innovation

Next, [Dr. Yiwei Li](#) presented her research on the unforeseen role of green infrastructure in corporate innovation. In Cultivating Innovation: The Role of Outdoor Green Space, Yiwei demonstrated that proximity to green spaces promotes firms' green innovation activities. Using data from China, she found that firms located within a one-kilometre radius of parks and green areas file more green patents and have stronger environmental governance. This effect was stronger in firms operating in competitive markets, firms with weaker pioneering innovation capabilities, higher business diversification, greater media coverage, and lower corporate social responsibility performance. This research points to a powerful and often overlooked link between urban planning and corporate sustainability.

Governance Quality and Biodiversity Reporting

The event then turned to the global stage with [Dr. John Malagila's](#) presentation, Corporate Governance, National Governance Quality, and Biodiversity Reporting: Global Evidence. Analysing data from 36 countries over a decade, John highlighted how strong corporate governance and effective national governance systems are crucial drivers of corporate biodiversity reporting. He also found that national governance quality amplifies the positive impact of corporate social responsibility practices on biodiversity disclosures. These results stress the necessity of cooperation between governments and businesses in fostering biodiversity conservation.

The Hidden Complexities of Food Surplus and Donations

Shifting focus to community-level sustainability, [Dr. Jordon Lazell](#) shared insights from a two-year ethnographic study of a community food project in Clacton. His talk, Between Surplus Food and Food Donation: Negotiating Sustainable Consumption at a Community Food Project, unpacked the tensions between surplus food use and charitable food donations. Jordon revealed that while surplus food helps reduce waste and address food insecurity, it also raises ethical questions about dignity, access, and dependency on corporate overproduction. His research called for greater transparency and critical reflection on how surplus food is sourced and distributed.

Small-Scale Sustainability at Frogmore Paper Mill

The event concluded with a presentation from [Dr. Paul Kelly](#) and Mr. Charlie Leedham, who introduced a new Knowledge Transfer Partnership project developed in collaboration with Frogmore Paper Mill, a historic, non-profit paper recycling mill in the UK. Their talk, Big and Small Sustainability at Frogmore

Paper Mill, highlighted how small non-profits can navigate the complexities of sustainability, balancing grassroots environmental efforts with professional business sustainability frameworks. The project aims to support Frogmore's post-fire relaunch in 2025, blending heritage preservation, volunteer engagement, and innovative recycling practices.

Key Takeaways: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Business

The event's discussions provided several key takeaways:

- **The Complexity of Sustainable Policy Instruments:** Regulatory design is nuanced; hybrid solutions can balance societal welfare with firm-level incentives.
- **Sustainability and the Built Environment:** Green spaces can make businesses more productive. Further research is needed to identify long-term effects, sectoral differences, and possible unintended effects.
- **Data and Disclosure Challenges:** The biodiversity reporting ecosystem faces significant measurement, verification, and regulatory challenges, particularly in relation to what data is material to capital markets and society.
- **Rethinking Food Surplus Economies:** Community food projects uncover ethical conflicts concerning food waste, dignity, and dependency. It is necessary to critically interrogate whether surplus systems reinforce overproduction and inequality.
- **The Value of Small-Scale, Real-Time Cases:** The Frogmore Paper Mill case study reminds us that sustainability is not just an issue for large corporations; the day-to-day operational challenges and learning of small organisations also have important lessons for sustainable business practices.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.

Institutional Partnerships

- ❖ AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)
- ❖ AMBA (Association of MBAs)
- ❖ EFMD Global
- ❖ Athena Swan
- ❖ Times Higher Education (THE)
- ❖ University Councils

Student Organization Partnerships

- ❖ Enactus



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.

Institutional Policies and Practices

- ❖ Buildings/real estate
- ❖ Campus operations guides
- ❖ Carbon reduction or offset commitments
- ❖ Climate action plan
- ❖ Curriculum guidelines
- ❖ Environmental stewardship policies
- ❖ Ethical data sourcing guides
- ❖ Ethical leadership or good governance policies
- ❖ Faculty hiring, tenure, and promotion guidelines
- ❖ Greenhouse gas emissions
- ❖ Local staff/student/faculty transportation
- ❖ Open-access guides
- ❖ Responsible procurement policies
- ❖ Student equity, diversity, inclusion
- ❖ Sustainability strategy or strategic plan (school or university level)
- ❖ Travel guides
- ❖ Water
- ❖ Zero-waste guides

Policy Documents Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy

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Sustainability Sub-Strategy 2021-28 FINAL

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Waste & Recycling Policy 2025

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Financial Procedure Note 24 - Procurement of
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Open Research Position Statement

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UoE Sustainability Policy 2026

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UoE Sustainable Travel Plan (Master)

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UOE Staff and Student Engagement Plan 2025-2026

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UoE Equality-diversity-inclusion-policy

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Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

Engagement Opportunities

Essex Business School offers transparent engagement opportunities for members of our institution and community to contribute to our sustainability and responsibility efforts in the following ways:

- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Annual reports
- ❖ Community events and consultation forums
- ❖ Feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, suggestion boxes)
- ❖ Sustainability-focused research and collaboration Opportunities

Communication Audiences

Essex Business School communicates its policies and progress on sustainable development and responsibility with:

- ❖ Accreditation bodies
- ❖ Alumni and donors
- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Faculty and staff
- ❖ Research and academic networks

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