

### **Making way for student participation in responsible management education through Student-led extracurricular activity.**

Many business and management schools are embedding sustainability in the curriculum and using different approaches. With the existential threat of climate change, internal and external risks to organisations, and social polarization, businesses are looking for employees with the skills to manage risk and crisis. Accreditation bodies such as the [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business](#) (AACSB) and the UN-initiated [Principles of Responsible Management Education](#) (PRME) advocate for management schools to embrace more sustainable practices. Although some business schools are already advanced in mapping and embedding responsible management into the curriculum, some business and management schools are still in the initial process of integrating sustainability into the programme content. The debate is to move away from tick-box exercises to impactful imparting of skills that lead to transformative change. This opens up questions about how the approaches inspire students to engage with sustainability in a meaningful way. The theory-focused nature often, in formally assessed and mapped learning, can lose students' interest. Therefore, what alternative ways are there to inspire and motivate students to lead and engage with sustainability?

Much focus has been given to the formally assessed activities mapped to the programme learning outcomes. However, not much attention has been given to integrating sustainability through extracurricular activities so that students connect to the subject and feel they are contributing to a socially just cause. Though they pose some issues, such as a lack of students and staff time to engage in activities and issues of exclusion, they can be instrumental in developing skills. So, how do educators design activities that engage students and inspire them to develop lifelong ambition in tackling some of the world's most pressing issues?

### **The School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London Business Case Competition.**

A student-led business case competition at a postgraduate level was launched at the School of Business and Management, Queen Mary University of London, to respond to the above-mentioned challenges. The student-led business case competition is led by students and based on working on real-business cases and formulating solutions. It is student-led in the aspect that students design, help plan and

organise the event. The pedagogical strategy behind the student-led business case competition is to inspire students to think through business cases revolving around sustainability, reflect on the cases and formulate solutions. Integrating sustainability through the student-led case competition is twofold: First, raising student awareness and interest in sustainability through problem-driven issues. Second, contributing to authentic learning, where students lead and actively participate in their learning by identifying, formulating problems, and recommending solutions.

The organisations partnered with are diverse, ranging from nonprofit organisations to social enterprises, and national and international organisations. The organisations provide the cases based on a brief around the case competition and sustainability theme. Students select the business case they want to work on based on the organisational issues. The students are given a period to work on their selected cases and a submission deadline to submit their proposals. Before the submission, two sessions are scheduled to develop problem-solving and consultancy skills. The consultancy skills session enhances students' capability in solving real business cases, which is useful for students who do not have work experience or experience in management. Once the cases are submitted, they go through shifting, where the top five groups are selected for presentation by academic staff to go through the next round, which is to present their report to their peers, academic staff, and organisations.

### **Lessons learnt**

The student sustainability champions behind the business case competition are volunteers who bring expertise from previous jobs or consultancy experience. They devote time to planning, organising and coordinating the event. They are motivated by being involved in something they help develop and adding to a just cause. The competition is not compulsory, and only students interested in the idea of the competition participate.

Skills developed include soft and hard skills and working in teams to solve complex business issues. The students that participate gain more curiosity on sustainability and create substantial output that they could link to their development. The output provided to the organisations and published on a website helps build a community of shared practice and learning resources.

The 'extra' in extracurricular activities need to be put into consideration. First, the time devoted to planning, coordinating, and organising the business case. So many things take time, from putting together the terms of reference to academics taking time out of their busy schedules to shift through the submissions. Building partnerships with organisations is also crucial and takes time. Institutions and

schools without a business enterprise team or are new to developing a business enterprise team, will have to depend on their networks and contacts to get organisations involved. Students will also need to devote some time to extracurricular activities, which can affect the quality of work produced or how engaged they are with sustainability.

The timing of the competition is also crucial. The phases of the competition were organised to start in the first few weeks of the second semester so as not to clash with students' assignment preparations and dissertation supervision. Students can get inundated with assignments and dissertation supervision meetings any time after the first few weeks. Therefore, to get maximum participation, it has to be done when the students have yet to have any competing activities that are formally assessed.

### **Moving forward**

However, business case competition is a worthwhile activity that encourages students to participate and build a community of practice involved in solving sustainability issues by reflecting on sustainability and solving real business problems. More extracurricular activities, such as student-led workshops, business showcases, or any interactive activities should be considered and initiated to raise students' awareness and interest in sustainability topics. In addition, a strategic recognition scheme should be developed to recognise students' contributions to the responsible management agenda and enhance their employability. Such recognition schemes include Student Enhanced Engagement and Development (SEED) award, digital badge, or supplementary certificate in their HEAR report.

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