



United Nations Global Compact Project

2009

Communication *on Progress*

contents

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List of Abbreviations

BMR	Bureau for Market Research
CCC	Centre for Corporate Citizenship
COP	Communication on progress
DCLD	Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development
DSPQA	Department of Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance
GRI 3	Global Reporting Initiative 3
HRCA-SA	Human rights compliance assessment tool for South Africa
HRP	Human rights policy
SEP	Stakeholder engagement policy
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
Unisa	University of South Africa

statement



In a historic move for South Africa and African academia Unisa became a proud signatory of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in January 2007. Indeed, Unisa's vision, towards "the African University in the service of humanity" is a statement that is deeply conscious of its educational and social responsibilities nationally and on the African continent.

Reaffirmation Statement by the Principal

The University of South Africa (Unisa) is South Africa's only dedicated comprehensive, open distance learning institution. This distinct characteristic sets Unisa apart from all other universities in South Africa. In a historic move for South Africa and African academia Unisa became a proud signatory of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in January 2007. Indeed, Unisa's vision, towards "the African University in the service of humanity" is a statement that is deeply conscious of its educational and social responsibilities nationally and on the African continent. This commitment is once more underscored in the Unisa 2015 strategic plan, in which Unisa commits to establish itself as a leader in sound corporate governance and promoting sustainability. The emphasis is on the alignment with and integration of the King III and the UNGC principles, within our sphere of influence, into the relevant institutional processes in respect of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

As a signatory to the UNGC, the world's largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative, Unisa endorses the relevant principles of the UNGC; these cover human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. Unisa remains committed to supporting and advocating these principles throughout its sphere of influence, including in teaching, research and community engagement.

Although voluntary, Unisa welcomes the invitation to produce a communication on progress as it forms an integral part of our commitment.

This gives Unisa an opportunity to contemplate the progress towards our set deliverables of integrating the principles into the fabric of the university. The principal aim of this report is to share our achievements of 2009 and to provide a glance into our aspirations and recommendations for 2010.



Professor NB Pityana
Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Unisa



message



Unisa is acutely aware that the graduates we produce will eventually through their actions and decisions in the corporate arena or world of work generally have an impact on the world we live in.

Vice Principal's Message

Becoming a signatory to the UNGC was a vital step for Unisa to unequivocally demonstrate its commitment and responsibility towards the environment, labour rights, anti-corruption and human rights. It also signalled that environmental preservation and the sustainable use of resources would enjoy heightened attention in our day to day practices, teaching, research and community engagement activities.

Unisa is acutely aware that the graduates we produce will eventually through their actions and decisions in the corporate arena or world of work generally have an impact on the world we live in. The concerns implicit in the UNGC principles resonate strongly with Unisa's own values and commitments towards an ethic of service to humanity, and social justice as a centripetal force that drives our day to day actions. We are conscious therefore of the responsibility to ensure that we create an appropriate level of awareness amongst our students and provide them with the necessary skills to uplift society today and secure an improved way of life for the future.

In extending participation to academic institutions, the UNGC referred to the critical dimensions that academia could add to advance the agenda of the Global Compact at the local and global levels. These could be achieved through thought leadership, research, educational resources and infrastructure. Unisa qualifies as one of the ten mega universities in the world and in order to realize its potential to become an influential player on the higher education landscape, it must adopt innovative projects that transcend traditional academic and geographical boundaries.

During 2010, one of the key areas Unisa will be focusing on is implementing a comprehensive environmental programme in the context of sustainability as highlighted in the University's 2015 Strategic plan. This report chronicles the significant groundwork already laid to provide the platform from which a range of planned activities will be driven.



Professor N Baijnath

Vice Principal: Strategy, Planning and Partnerships

Chairperson: UNGC Steering Committee

summary



Submitting a communication of progress (COP) affords Unisa the opportunity to take stock of its progress towards our goal of embracing the ten principles of the UNGC with regard to human rights, labour standards, the protection of the environment and anti-corruption.

Executive Summary

Becoming a signatory of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) in 2007 has solidified our commitment to being an exemplary academic institution and a leader in higher education in South Africa, the rest of Africa and globally. Reporting on our progressive alignment with the ten principles ensures that Unisa is consciously moving towards integrating self-regulating mechanisms into our institutional processes. Through this integration Unisa will be able to ensure its adherence to legal and ethical standards and agreed to norms.

Submitting a communication of progress (COP) affords Unisa the opportunity to take stock of its progress towards our goal of embracing the ten principles of the UNGC with regard to human rights, labour standards, the protection of the environment and anti-corruption. The integration of sustainability and social transformation is underscored in the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan: An Agenda for Transformation and allows for improved institutional efficiencies and benefits for staff, students and society at large.

Throughout 2009 the UNGC and the King III requirements to implement sustainability reporting as a core aspect of corporate governance have received management's concerted attention. The commitment to sustainability reporting will prevail well into the years to come and will contribute to a holistic report to stakeholders that takes into account the triple context of economic, social and environmental issues.

It is against this backdrop that the COP makes provision for the 2009 achievements and actions for 2010. The following can be highlighted as some of the milestones achieved:

- The positioning of the Unisa/UNGC project firmly in the Department of Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance (DSPQA) – this has ensured that the required focus is maintained on the goals of mainstreaming the UNGC principles into organisational strategies and operations
- Revision and alignment of institutional policies
- The approval of the Corporate Citizenship Statement by January 2010

Finally, in the current economic meltdown, it is of the utmost importance that the above milestones be pursued and that new, more innovative approaches towards institutional sustainability be developed. Only then will Unisa's reporting approach regarding the economic, social and environmental factors be more focused on sustainability in development, governance, management and operations.

Indeed, it is hoped that the information shared here will be of interest to all stakeholders and fellow academic institutions inside and those still outside the UNGC initiative.



Ms Liana Griesel

Executive Director: Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance

introduction

*Unisa is
committed to
establish itself
as a leader
in sound
corporate
governance*

Layout of the COP

This report complies with the stipulations as reflected in the general COP layout by the UNGC and comprises the following sections:

Section 2

Institutional activities and achievements for 2009

Section 3

Governance of the UNGC project at Unisa

Section 4

Summary of recommendations and institutional commitments for 2010

Introduction

Background

Unisa is committed to establish itself as a leader in sound corporate governance. In doing so it aims to inculcate the UNGC and King III into all relevant university activities. This highlights its endeavour to promote sustainability by developing an integrated strategy for corporate social responsibility in respect of economic, social and environmental areas and reporting on its responsibility in terms of the requirements agreed to by Council and the Department of Education. In its recently revised strategic plan: Unisa 2015 Revisited – An Agenda for Transformation, Unisa places emphasis on its social responsibility not only through its inspiring vision, but also in striving towards embracing the core values of social justice and fairness, and excellence with integrity.

This communication of progress (COP) reports on institutional activities and achievements, the governance of the UNGC within the institution and finally recommendations and institutional commitments for 2010.

Acknowledgements

The Department of Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance (DSPQA) has the responsibility to coordinate the drafting of the COP, and consulted with various members of staff in finalising the report before submitting it to management for their consideration and approval. This responsibility is associated with an annual review and update of the ongoing alignment with the UNGC principles to ensure the institution's continued contributions to an integrated self-regulatory framework. The following people are acknowledged for sharing their expertise and knowledge. Their collective contributions added significantly in drafting the COP.

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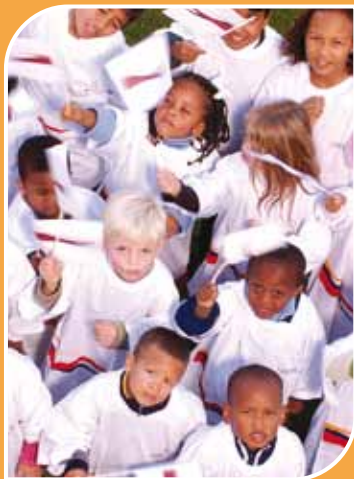
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activities



It is imperative for the institution to continue to review and revise the policies so that they remain relevant at all times and give expression to the UNGC principles.

Institutional activities and achievements for 2009

Revision and alignment of policies

Unisa's policies contribute significantly in shaping the preferred culture and climate of the institution so as to ensure a sound and well-organised workplace. Amending policies to give expression to new legislative and other committed requirements demonstrates our commitments to inculcate a culture that encourages staff, students and other stakeholders to comply with an institutional ethos of agreed standards.

It is against this backdrop that members of Unisa's executive management responsible for revising policies have taken up this opportunity to translate the UNGC principles into the relevant policy functions that will have an immediate behavioural impact. During 2009 a number of institutional policies were reviewed and aligned with the UNGC principles:

- Unisa code of ethics and conduct
- Enterprise and risk management policy to include environmental, social and broader economic issues, including fraud and corruption
- Diversity policy and sexual harassment policies to include staff (currently applicable to students only)
- Community engagement and Outreach Policy
- International relations and partnership policy to stipulate that Unisa is in the process of aligning all business and academic activities with the ten UNGC principles and encourages/requires partners to uphold these principles as a prerequisite for a partnership
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Employee Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Employment equity policy (approved)
- Procurement policy (approved)

It is imperative for the institution to continue to review and revise the policies so that they remain relevant at all times and give expression to the UNGC principles.

Corporate citizenship statement

During this reporting period, Unisa embarked a journey to draft a statement in which the institution's interpretation of its citizenship responsi-

bilities could be clearly articulated. Towards this end a discussion forum was held among members of extended management, academic leaders, professional and administrative support staff and members of Unisa's Centre for Corporate Citizenship (CCC). At this forum a draft statement was subjected to rigorous scrutiny and resulted in an amended version as agreed to during the session.

This was followed by a consultative process through the various committee structures of the university. Once Unisa's new strategic plan for 2015 has been approved by Council, the statement will be aligned with the new values and will be submitted to our management and Council for final approval.

Stakeholder engagement policy (SEP) ¹

The development of the SEP is in its second phase following a discussion document that was approved at various committees. The following is work in progress and will continue into 2010:

- A series of group interviews will be conducted with the principal aim to establish the level and intensity of stakeholder engagement as well as the classification of stakeholder groups.
- Various consultative sessions will be organised to finalise the policy for approval. The policy will then be disseminated to all staff, students and other stakeholders.

The inclusion of the UNGC principles into Unisa's curricula ²

During this reporting period, significant consideration was given to how UNGC principles could most effectively be injected into Unisa's curricula. This would ensure that Unisa graduates are knowledgeable and skilled to address the challenges of a sustainable future within their realm of expertise and influence.

Directorate, Curriculum and Learning Development (DCLD) identified three options of addressing the issue of incorporating the ten principles of UNGC into the curricula of Unisa. These are by

developing a separate module for all students to take before they graduate embedding the focus, skills and/or values of the UNGC in all curricula across modules, and/or

dedicating specific qualifications to address specific foci

Of the three options given above, there was ample evidence in support of one, namely that addressing core skills and/or values has greater impact when addressed as embedded in specific discipline and application con-

1 Discussion document on SEP (www.unisa.ac.za/ungc/)

2 Discussion document on the inclusion of the UNGC principles in Unisa curricula (www.unisa.ac.za/ungc/)



texts. It was also stated that teaching values and skills in generic modules is not always successful as there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution. As all Unisa qualifications and programmes already address the critical cross-field outcomes by embedding these outcomes in the curriculum, it should be possible to make use of those outcomes and address the UNGC principles in overt ways within appropriate contexts.

In addition, the need for a Unisa policy on curriculum development was highlighted. However, all modules in all qualifications and programmes offered by Unisa do follow specific approval processes and procedures. Therefore, addressing the UNGC principles in different Unisa qualifications and programmes can be made explicit in the documentation resulting from curriculum processes.

Creating awareness: UNGC website and logo³

The UNGC website was approved by Council and published in April 2009. A link to the site can be found on the footer on the Unisa online home page.

It was recommended that Unisa use the “We support the UNGC” logo alongside the Unisa logo on all official communication. This recommendation is yet to be implemented.

Environmental Sustainability Policy

The environmental sustainability policy will contribute towards environmental sustainability and, once the policy has been approved, Unisa will ensure institutional alignment of the environmental policy and its integration with all policies, processes, approved systems and technology requirements. The policy, among other research conducted, emanated from an intensive survey on sustainable environmental practices at Unisa, 2009.

The policy is out for commentary and will be approved in 2010.

3 www.unisa.ac.za/ungc/.

Environmentally sustainable practice survey⁴

The Bureau for Market Research (BMR) conducted a survey on environmentally sustainable office practices for all staff members of the institution. The primary objective of the research study was to explore the environmentally sustainable office practices of Unisa employees. On the one hand, the monitoring of such employee behaviour provides an ideal platform to measure the extent of contemporary environmentally sustainable office practices at Unisa. On the other, it also provides an ideal basis to design an environmentally sustainable rating tool to position Unisa as excellent, good, moderate or poor in terms of responsible office behaviour. The equilibrium of the research model was finally reached by including a focus on environmentally sustainable service practices at Unisa. As core, this second major component of the research investigation focused on environmentally sustainable business service practices to gain insight into the extent that the work environment at Unisa is currently designed to support responsible office behaviour by staff through the provision of the necessary policy guidelines, infrastructure and maintenance as well as office equipment and its related environmentally friendly features. This approach was also extended to explore the nature of procurement policies, procedures and practices when purchasing green office equipment or outsourcing catering and courier services.

The recommendations that emanated from the survey focused on short-, medium- and long-term guidelines for energy saving in buildings, paper usage, printing and storage, waste management, water usage and recycling behaviour. These practices would enable Unisa to lower its carbon footprint, thereby contributing to the future of the planet.

The full survey report can be viewed on the Unisa website.

4 Sustainable environmental practices at Unisa, 2009
([www.unisa.ac.za/ungc/.](http://www.unisa.ac.za/ungc/))



Environmental day

During the Global Climate Week (21-25 September 2009), Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations' Secretary General hosted world leaders at a United Nations High Level Event on climate change in New York. Unisa used this opportunity to publicly reinforce its commitment to the principles of UNGC and to show its support for environmental issues on 21 September 2009 by hosting a tree planting ceremony conducted by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Barney Pityana encouraging its employees to wear something green on that day to show support for and solidarity with environmental issues for both the meeting in New York in September 2009 and for the coming conference on global climate change in Copenhagen in December 2009

E-waste and recycling drive

Priority environmental areas such as waste management and recycling are being addressed.

There is an e-waste container located on the main campus which can be used for any electric or electronic goods that have reached the end of their useful life.

A paper recycling drive is under way whereby paper recycling bins will be placed on each floor. Cleaning staff will be trained on how to separate different categories of waste.





UNGC roundtable discussions

In order to mainstream the ten principles of the UNGC, various experts in the field of human rights, the environment and anti-corruption were identified and invited to a series of roundtable discussions. These discussions centred on the broad headings under which the ten principles of the UNGC fall, namely human rights, the environment and anti-corruption. The principal aim of these discussions was to engage with other experts on the impact and integration of appropriate processes, procedures and systems in support of the UNGC and other legislative requirements. Secondary to this was identifying areas of improvement and seeing how best these principles could be mainstreamed into the university's academic and support processes to develop an implementation plan, with assigned responsibilities, targets and milestones to be considered and incorporated into the next three-year Institutional Operational Plan 2011 to 2013.

The outcomes of the roundtable discussions are summarised below:

Human rights

- Principle 1: Business should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.
- Principle 2: Business should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

Outcomes and future commitments

- An institutional policy and strategy should be developed to support human rights.

- Staff training should be provided on human rights issues and how they are affected by day-to-day business of the institution.
- For Unisa to achieve a gradunateness of its students, each student should have a basic understanding of human rights. For a sustainable approach, a statement on human rights should be embedded in the learning outcomes and integrated into the policy on curriculum development.
- A greater awareness of human rights could be created through the Vice-Chancellor's office. This office could hold a series of discussion forums that could draw from the expertise inside and outside Unisa. These forums would be a platform for further discussions and debates on human rights issues.
- Unisa needs to develop an understanding of the current criteria of evaluation for procurement, vendors, service providers and investment partnerships and develop a set of criteria which will be aligned with the principles. These criteria should include compatibility screening. By promoting good practice in human rights Unisa will be able to select appropriate business partners.
- Licensees and international partnership agreements should include compliance with human rights.
- Unisa needs to create awareness of human rights and infuse a human rights culture in the institution's sphere of influence through staff and student training and community engagement. Offering short learning programmes is one of the means to highlight human rights issues.
- It was proposed that Unisa consider making human rights a research focus area. Special resources could be allocated to that focus area and students and staff could be encouraged to conduct research in this area.
- Unisa should develop a monitoring and assessment evaluation toolkit that would assess its compliance with the necessary indicators. In order to identify and manage human rights risks and opportunities, Unisa must also develop a systematic management approach.





Labour standards

- Principle 3: Business should uphold the freedom of association.
- Principle 4: Business should uphold the elimination of all forms of force and compulsory labour.
- Principle 5: Business should uphold the effective abolition of child labour.
- Principle 6: Business should uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Outcomes and future commitments

- Unisa complies with the various labour relations Acts of South Africa. However, a Roundtable Discussion on Labour Standards is planned for 2010 to consolidate Labour related policies and/or procedures that address UNGC labour standards principles.

Environment

- Principle 7: Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.
- Principle 8: Business should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.
- Principle 9: Business should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Outcomes and future commitments

- Finalise the development of an environmental sustainability policy for the institution.
- Initiate a student assignment/essay competition on Unisa's carbon footprint.
- Pilot an outreach programme involving solar energy.
- Undertake greening operations involving bursaries toward sustainability studies, curriculum research and green building initiatives.
- Conduct an environmental audit and link it to risk assessment.

- Create more awareness by conducting ongoing environmental education programmes for employees and students.
- Invest in initiatives that support environmental responsibility, including but not limited to recycling, reduced paper use, energy saving, efficient resource use and undertaking environmental assessments where relevant.
- Actively engage in environmental awareness activities within the community

Anti-corruption

Principle 10: Business should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

Outcomes and future commitments

- A human rights assessment is to be conducted at Unisa using the human rights compliance assessment tool for South Africa (HRCA-SA) to identify gaps and develop change initiatives. This generic tool automatically generates gaps, thus providing guidelines on how to mitigate and prevent various forms of human rights abuses and corruption in the institution.
- Critical policies and procedures relating to anti-corruption should be signed off by all new appointees and existing employees. Thereafter, these policies and procedures should be acknowledged and signed off annually.
- A supplier code of conduct should be introduced. This would ensure that suppliers are aligned with Unisa's procurement policies regarding anti-corruption.



Governance of the UNGC project at Unisa

During 2009, Unisa appointed new members to the Unisa/UNGC project. The project governance is highlighted in the schematic representation below and shows the responsible people as well as the committee structures to manage and oversee the activities of the project. Throughout the year and with the release of the King III report, there is a heightened need for self-regulation and sustainability reporting with the inclusion of emerging annual improvement initiatives into the institutional quality improvement plan.



Summary of recommendations and institutional commitments for 2010

Following the achievements of 2009, the following recommendations were put forward to management for their consideration, approval and inclusion into the relevant operational plans of portfolio managers:

No.	Recommendation	Actions
1	Strategically reposition the UNGC project by establishing a coherent and integrated framework in support of institutional sustainability reporting	<p>Analyse institutional annual reports in terms of sustainability and governance</p> <p>Compare findings to the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative 3 (GRI 3) and King III on triple bottom line reporting on sustainability in order to identify gaps</p> <p>Recommend a strategy to management for adopting sustainability reporting for the institution</p>
2	Draft a stakeholder engagement policy (SEP)	<p>Conduct group interviews to gather, analyse and interpret data</p> <p>Report outcomes to the SEP development task team</p> <p>Organise various consultative processes to finalise policy</p>
3	Develop a human rights policy (HRP)	<p>Carry out the HRCA-SA survey</p> <p>Disseminate the outcomes of the survey through consultative forums</p> <p>Develop the first draft HRP for further consultative forums to be approved</p> <p>Provide staff training on human rights issues in conjunction with Human Resources</p> <p>Develop a monitoring and evaluation toolkit that would assess Unisa's compliance with set indicators</p> <p>Introduce a Vice-Chancellor discussion forum on human rights</p>

No.	Recommendation	Actions
4	Finalise environmental sustainability policy and implementation plan	Consolidate the policy for management and Council approval
5	Review and develop a set of evaluation criteria for the procurement of goods and services which are aligned with the UNGC principles	<p>Review the current practices of procurement in selecting appropriate business partners</p> <p>Conduct a gap analysis between the current practices and Unisa's envisaged corporate citizenship statement</p> <p>Design a set of evaluation criteria to be infused into the procurement practices and the policy on international partnership and relations</p> <p>Introduce a supplier code of conduct</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive two-hour inclusive environmental induction programme for internal stakeholders</p>
6	Conduct an environmental audit and link it to the institutional strategic risk register	<p>Scope and compile tender documents</p> <p>Align audit outcomes with the environmental policy</p> <p>Define environmental indicators and include in the strategic risk register</p> <p>Monitor the risks through the Enterprise Risk and Ethics Committee</p>
7	Develop and launch an institutional environmental sustainability campaign	<p>Launch student essay competition on Unisa's carbon footprint</p> <p>Undertake greening involving bursaries towards sustainability studies, research and green building initiatives</p> <p>Promote environmental consciousness: Earth Day, Unisa Recycle Day, Global Climate Week etc</p> <p>Market Unisa's "green" achievements internally and externally</p> <p>Create a Unisa website dedicated to environmental issues</p>

No.	Recommendation	Actions
8	Conduct educational programmes for employees and students that support environmental responsibility	<p>Energy saving: raise awareness of energy/water consumption by publishing (online via Corporate Communication and Marketing) monthly/quarterly statistics</p> <p>Recycling: implement an on-site recycling system</p> <p>Waste: obtain sponsors to support dedicated waste management projects</p> <p>Implement a paper waste management system in Print Production Directorate and overall in printing and copying</p> <p>Procurement: monitor the implementation of environmentally friendly procurement practices in terms of paper and office equipment</p> <p>Through Unisa Estates, encourage clients and suppliers to illustrate their contribution towards green building principles</p> <p>ICT to implement a reliable centralised digital facility in terms of the following: filing system, consolidation of all servers and computerisation of all HR forms</p>
9	Piloting of an outreach programme involving solar energy	Develop an implementation plan for the renewable energy project
10	The policy on curriculum development to foreground the UNGC principles	This process is underway and therefore only seeks the inclusion of the UNGC principles into the critical learning outcomes
11	Unisa's CCC to consider the development of a short learning programme in the field of corporate social responsibility and reporting	CCC is in the process of transitioning to an institute with the emphasis on Corporate Citizenship Research
12	Signing off on the code of ethics by all staff members in the institution	HR to develop the procedures for the signing off on the code of ethics

conclusion

Conclusion

It is the aim of the Unisa/UNGC project to ensure the development of a framework for the sustainable implementation and disclosure of environmental, social and governance policies and practices. Furthermore the institution will be sharing best and emerging practices to advance practical solutions and strategies to common challenges as well as advancing sustainability solutions in partnership with a range of stakeholders.

This COP report captures some of the efforts of the institution to assess, execute and live out through a variety of mediums, including research, student activity and coursework, the aspirations of the UNGC principles.