

UN Global Compact Communication on Progress

July 2021

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Letter of support for the UN Global Compact



Manchester, July 2021

The Global Compact is the largest and most important worldwide alliance for responsible business management. The commitment to conduct business responsibly in alignment with the ten principles is of great significance in progressing the enactment of human rights, the realisation of international workers' standards, environmental protection and the prevention of corruption.

As an SME, AlphaPlus signed up to the Global Compact in November 2018.

Our business involves contact with many national and international customers and suppliers. In addition, our core team is a tightly knit group with close connections to our associates. We therefore find the commitments to labour particularly meaningful. The environment is also a key concern for our employees and the Board and we actively promote initiatives in this area. We have tried to communicate the principles of the Global Compact and our responses not only to our employees but also to our partners in all areas of work.

The adoption of the principles also aligns with sustainable business practices. As a company, we take a holistic view of the success of the company. An enterprise can only be profitable in the long term when it considers social and environmental factors alongside those of profit.

This past 18 months has been defined by Covid. Our Manchester office was closed as a result of the pandemic in March 2020, and all staff moved to working entirely from home. We closed the office at 5pm on one day and were fully operational from 9am the next day, with no interruption to the service in any of our live projects. This situation has driven a new understanding of how to apply the principles of the UN Global Compact, particularly as a framework to support the AlphaPlus team during a difficult year.

We set out in this report our ongoing commitment to the principles of the Global Compact progress and how this is reflected in our daily business practice. We will then aim to build on this base in future years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Kerr'.

John Kerr

Chairman of the Board

AlphaPlus' profile

AlphaPlus is an education consultancy that specialises in the design, development and deployment of qualifications and their underpinning assessment, and in the evaluation of their performance and impact.

AlphaPlus helps organisations make their educational assessments better. Many organisations use assessments – academic examinations, portfolio assessments of skills, observational workplace assessments for professionals. In all cases, good assessments make sure that people get the outcome they deserve: the right people pass and fail; the grades awarded are fair; the results are honest, reliable and defensible, and reflect the attributes that stakeholders value.

We work with our customers across many types of education (school, college, vocational and professional education) both in the UK and internationally. Sometimes our work starts with helping people to write better tests and questions. At other times it involves undertaking statistical analysis of assessments to check they are fair, or reviewing the way assessments are run to check that they are consistent. We've all done exams where we felt we didn't get a fair chance to shine – at AlphaPlus we work with the people who run these assessments to help give everyone a fair chance.

Assessment theory (the academic discipline that explores how assessments work) is a highly technical area, which a small number of universities around the world specialise in. Our approach is relatively unusual in that we combine the best that academic theory has to offer with the outcomes-focused approach that modern assessment businesses need – taking account of the practical requirements in everyday life that can make academic theory difficult to apply in an unmodified form.

ABOUT ALPHAPLUS

£17.5 Million | Largest Project (approximately)



15 Years
in business



300+ Projects in
20 Countries

6 Directors

25+ Core team

350+ Associates



AlphaPlus is a well-established, substantial and trusted consultancy organisation providing research, design, development and delivery services for qualifications, certification, assessment and related educational matters to customers in the UK and overseas.

AlphaPlus is responsive to customer need, adaptable and profitable, combining the best of commercial and educational sectors. We have a deserved reputation for high levels of educational expertise and for conducting our work with ethics and integrity. AlphaPlus uses progressive working methods: we are collaborative and innovative; bringing useful solutions to our customers. We bring best-in-class teams together and compete on quality rather than cost.

Our processes are well-founded, robust and resilient. Our whole team are skilled, big enough to deliver on large delivery projects, and there are no single points of failure in teams or processes. Our team is stable and sustainable, including through changes in key personnel.

Our potential and current customers trust us on national and international high-stakes delivery projects, and we are able to deliver these projects without overstretching. We are careful about what we commit to and then we work hard to keep our promises. Our customers depend on our high-quality delivery.

Results and Measures

The following measures and results are those which are currently carried out as a part of our wider company policies and ethos. These align with the ten principles of the Global Compact and we will seek to further expand these particularly in the areas of Labour and Environment.

Human Rights



The company has policies that are regularly reviewed at Board level which cover all areas of working including an anti slavery statement. In general, we work only with clients and suppliers where we have a personal relationship and are confident in their business practices.



The board considers every new contract both at home and, particularly, abroad in the light of human rights or ethical issues that may arise during the fulfilment of any such work. They reserve the right not to proceed should any concerns or conflicts become apparent.



We work with a range of associates. Our onboarding processes include the taking up of references and the review of CVs so that we ensure that they are committed to the ethos and principles of our business.

Labour



Women are represented at all levels of the business, including board and senior management levels. They make up 37% of the workforce at current levels. We now voluntarily report on Gender Pay Equality at AlphaPlus.



In 2021, the company maternity and adoption pay policies have been enhanced in response to staff feedback.



The company has recently increased its sick pay policy to cover up to 13 weeks. After this, an insurance policy covers 75% of salary for up to 2 years. This policy also provides a range of benefits including GP access.



We practise equal opportunities recruitment, including the guaranteed interview scheme for people with disabilities. Recruitment is based solely on applicant skills and suitability for the job description.



Appraisals are carried out annually. These are constructive in nature and aim to develop all staff, professionally, educationally and emotionally.



A forum for line managers now provides support to all line managers to develop best practice and to share ways of working.



Training needs are identified as part of the annual appraisal. All requests are considered and a budget is put in place to support training requirements. These are tailored to the professional needs of the staff.



The company has supported five apprentices, four of whom are still with the company in more senior roles. Two are being funded through part time university degrees by the company.



As part of development, the company encourages internal promotion. Two directors have recently been promoted from the wider team, and three former apprentices have been promoted into positions of greater responsibility.



Flexible working is available to all staff with a range of start times between 7.30am and 9am. Working hours can be adjusted through the week at the employee's discretion to enable personal or family commitments to be fulfilled. Pre and post pandemic, staff can also arrange to work from home if necessary. This ability to juggle family commitments, whether they relate to children, parents or other needs leads to improved mental health and lower stress levels as well as low levels of absenteeism within the workplace.



There is a strong company ethos that encourages the use of vacation time. Overtime is monitored quarterly and, in general, should be taken as time off in lieu (TOIL) rather than being paid out. Workload is also monitored monthly and mechanisms are in place to support staff where workload builds up.



The company holds regular seminars for all staff where different areas of the business are explained in a way that is accessible for all. This also includes administrative areas. This promotes inclusivity and a feeling of ownership of the business amongst all staff.



Ergonomics: staff physical wellbeing is supported through ergonomic working practices. This has been particularly important with all employees working from home. Several reviews have been carried out and all necessary equipment purchased by the company, including desks, chairs and monitors.

Covid



Greater use of video calls e.g. through Microsoft Teams for work meetings and for social events to encourage social interaction.



Line managers have been encouraged to keep in closer contact with their line reports, particularly junior staff members who may require more support.



The company have paid for a personal trainer to run weekly virtual exercise sessions for employees for the duration of the pandemic. These sessions include stretches to help posture after sitting at a desk, and were tailored to suit a wide range of physical ability.



All necessary ergonomic equipment for working from home has been purchased by the company, including desks, chairs and monitors.



Once legally allowed, staff have been given the flexibility to go into the office in limited numbers if they are unable to work at home.

Environment



Company policy is based on the principles of reduce/ reuse/ recycle. There is a deliberate decision on whether to use resources. Once that is taken, reusable resources are used where possible, for example, all crockery in the office is non-disposable. All non-reusable items are recycled where possible.



The office is deliberately based in an area of Manchester with links to a wide range of public transport hubs and networks. There are cycle racks outside the front door. The toilet facilities also include a shower so that staff can shower if they run or cycle to work. Staff are encouraged to use rail travel rather than their cars for business purposes wherever possible.



There is an extensive range of recycling initiatives in the office, including paper, batteries, printer cartridges and plastic. Suggestions are welcomed from staff for further initiatives and, where possible, these are acted on.



The lights in the office are controlled by a master switch by the front door. This means that the last person to leave can easily turn off every light in the building without risk of forgetting one.



Kitchen and dining facilities are provided for staff, including a fridge where food brought from home can be stored. Fresh, filtered drinking water is always available as well as tea, coffee and milk.

Anti-corruption



The ethos of the company is one of openness and disclosure. The company has policies on anti-corruption and bribery, which are communicated to staff. Registers of connected parties and interests are kept and are reviewed monthly at each board meeting.



Board meetings are summarised by a non-board member of staff and reported back to the wider team to encourage transparency about how the company is led.



All staff receive training on company ethics and values (most recently in June 2021).



Unit 109 Albert Mill
10 Hulme Hall Road
Castlefield
Manchester
M15 4LY

www.alphaplus.co.uk
john.winkley@alphaplus.co.uk

+44 (0) 161 249 9249

