UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

UN Global Compact
Communication on Engagement

January 2023

1. Period of Coverage

This report covers the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

2. Statement of Continued Support

I am very pleased to reconfirm the University of Birmingham's commitment to supporting and championing the values of the United Nations Global Compact.

The University of Birmingham undertakes research that achieves lasting, transformative change. Our researchers address global challenges, generate new knowledge and understanding, and deliver impactful outcomes.

The values of the UN Global Compact align closely with our work: through collaboration with our valued partners we seek to tackle key contemporary challenges including inequality and exclusion, global health threats, and climate change. We shape regional, national, and international agendas, and anticipate and respond to the challenges of the future.

We are committed to supporting our global community – of students, staff, alumni, and collaborators – to make meaningful change in our world.

Professor Adam Tickell
Vice-Chancellor

3. Description of Actions

3.1 Human Rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses

The University of Birmingham works in accordance with a number of robust policies to ensure the protection of human rights is embedded across our operations. The University also conducts research which contributes to the upholding of human rights across the world.

Safeguarding is a priority for the University, recognising that the safeguarding of young and/or at-risk individuals is of the utmost importance, and is everyone's responsibility. The University's safeguarding policy is available on our website, and puts procedures in place to prevent and address safeguarding concerns.

Freedom of speech is not only a key part of the higher education experience; it is also a human right and is mentioned under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The University believes that sharing ideas is crucial, allowing us to engage with different perspectives, and that respectful debate enables us to challenge discrimination, intolerance and harmful attitudes. The University's Code of Practice on Free Speech is in place to provide clear procedures and policies to promote freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Principle 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights notes that '*motherhood and children are entitled to special care and assistance*'. The University is designated the World Health Organization's (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health for our research supporting WHO's programme on maternal and perinatal health. The Centre's goal is to end the preventable deaths of mothers and babies globally, by undertaking research shaped by the views of women, communities and local stakeholders. Research includes evidence syntheses, clinical trials, multi-country surveys and qualitative and implementation studies supported by capacity building activities.

Research Centres at the University also contribute more widely to upholding Principle 1, by conducting research for the benefit of groups who may face barriers to education. The Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) in the School of Education brings together teaching and research activities in the area of vision impairment and education. The Autism Centre for Education and Research (ACER) is shaping autism education to support improved provision for young people and their families.

The School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion launched the first issue of Voice magazine in December 2022; the magazine features contributions from academics, students and professional services staff, aiming to show-case research, analysis and opinions in the area of Human Rights. It coincides with a year-long campaign from the United Nations celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Other actions taken by the University to uphold Principle 2, such as those related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, are included in Section 3.2 (Labour), as they also relate to Principle 6.

3.2 Labour

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour;

Principle 6; the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

The University recognises four Trade Unions (UCU, Unison, Unite and GMB) and has two recognition agreements – one with UCU and the other jointly with all three support staff trade unions.

Representatives of the University meet formally with UCU 5 times a year and with the support staff trade unions more regularly (approximately every 6 – 8 weeks). All formal meetings are minuted and actions assigned, and progress against those actions monitored.

A number of comprehensive HR and health and safety policies are in place to protect and support University staff. Occupational Health Services provide support to staff exposed to specific work hazards or who require reasonable adjustments to accommodate health conditions. Staff also have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (provided by Health Assured), which includes a 24/7 crisis support phone line, up to 6 sessions of counselling, legal information, and bereavement support.

The University of Birmingham does not tolerate Modern Slavery and is committed to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to minimise the risk of Modern Slavery taking place anywhere within the University. This covers our activities, supply chains, or activities through our collaborative partners. The University does not support or deal with any business or institution knowingly involved in Modern Slavery practice in any part of our operations and has taken steps to reduce principal risk, including:

- Use of the national Supplier Engagement Tool, which supports suppliers to develop action plans in line with our own environmental, sustainability and organisational priorities.
- Operating at Level 5 (highest level) of the Flexible Framework for Sustainable Procurement; the framework is a self-assessment mechanism which allows us to measure and monitor our progress on sustainable procurement.
- Providing appropriate training to staff members, where relevant.

The University is not aware of any Modern Slavery activities within our operations or supply chains; should any non-compliance with the University's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy be discovered, it will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and remedial action will be tailored appropriately.

The promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is central to the mission and vision of the University of Birmingham, and the policies and activities resulting from this seek to uphold Principle 6 (elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation). The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme 2021-2024 sets out our objectives and actions based on the interlocking themes of creating an inclusive environment, dismantling barriers, and integrating EDI across our activities. The 2021-2024 framework is also a priority in the People and Culture pillar of our Strategic Framework, and its work is supported by a dedicated Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equalities.

We currently hold an Athena Bronze Award as an institution from the Athena Swan Charter, which recognises and celebrates employment practices that address gender inequality in higher education.

The University is a member of Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC) and has been awarded a Bronze REC award in recognition of our commitment to the Charter's aims to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education. Our Race Equality Plan includes information on how we developed our approach, how we listened and responded to our Black, Asian and Minority ethic staff and student communities, and how we will monitor and be held accountable for outcomes.

A number of staff networks are run independently by colleagues across the university to provide a supportive environment for staff to discuss shared issues and concerns; the staff networks also act in an advisory role to the University through the Equality Executive Group. Staff networks include the Enabling Staff network for staff with disabilities, the Parents and Carers network, the Race Equality network, the Rainbow network for LGBTQ+ members of staff, and the Women's network.

The Work Inclusivity Research Centre (WIRC) is based in the University's Business School, but includes colleagues from across disciplines such as sociology, economics, industrial relations and psychology. The Centre's research focusses on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in employment, guided by principles of social justice. Themes being explored include diversity and inclusion within organisations, wellbeing in the workplace, labour market inequalities and disadvantages, inclusive labour government and employee voice, and trust within and between organisations.

3.3 Environment

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility

Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

Sustainability is one of 6 core pillars of the University's 'Birmingham 2030' strategic framework, demonstrating its importance in the University's ambitious future plans. A newly-created central Head of Sustainability role pulls together and coordinates the many cross-institutional sustainability initiatives.

We are proud of our work to improve Sustainable Operations to meet the challenges of running a sustainable estate housed across many older buildings, while recognising there is still much more to be done. We are committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2035 (Scopes 1 and 20 and 2045 (Scope 3), which will require continuous improvement across the University.

Sustainability is a core part of our new Estates and Campus Strategy. Recent new building projects across campus, including the new Teaching and Learning building, are the beginnings of the University's 'Smart Campus', where 'Internet of Things' devices are embedded into the physical estate. This gives real-time data, which allows the building to respond to need, thereby saving energy, for example by responding to changes in occupancy throughout the day to optimise lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

Many university staff are engaged in sustainability through the national Green Impact scheme, co-ordinated through colleagues in the Campus Services Team. The programme aims to facilitate environmentally-friendly actions by teams across the organisation; these smaller-scale actions compliment institutional initiatives to reduce the impact the University has on the environment. We are signatories and/or members of a number of different sustainability-related agreements and networks, including the UN's Race to Zero, United Nations Academic Impact and the UK Universities Climate Network.

The University of Birmingham is Zero to Landfill; all general waste which cannot be recycled is sent to an Energy from Waste facility, where it is incinerated to produce heat and power.

The University's fleet of onsite vehicles is one of the most sustainable in the UK with 40% of the fleet being powered by electricity.

Research

The University of Birmingham is tackling some of the biggest issues faced by the planet, and ranks 13th in the UK for 4* research (Times Higher Education). A significant proportion of the University's ground-breaking research is focussed on the environment, and understanding and meeting the challenges of global climate change; in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) results, University of Birmingham ranked 3rd (by Grade Point Average) for 'Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences'. Examples of our outstanding research include:

- The Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action (BISCA) provides a collaborative platform to nurture expertise and develop partnerships to tackle global sustainability challenges.
- The Birmingham Institute for Forest Research (BIFoR) provides fundamental sciences, social science and cultural reach of direct relevance to global forested areas, through a virtual institute of over 100 academics. The BIFoR FACE facility in Staffordshire is the site for research into the effect of rising CO_2 on ecosystems.
- The UNESCO Chair in Water Sciences, based at the University, operates within the UN network to underpin SDG6 – Water and Sanitation for All

- Researchers in the School of Biosciences are helping to reduce the threat to humanity from food insecurity by safeguarding and improving its availability for crop enhancement. Their expert advice has changed global practices and policies - influencing the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to establish a global network for agrobiodiversity *in situ* conservation. The EU also now provides incentives for continued tradition crop variety cultivation within the revised common agricultural policy, and the UK government actively conserves the wild relatives of crops in the existing National Nature Reserve network.
- The Birmingham Energy Institute (BEI) brings together interdisciplinary research from across the University and external partners, to develop sustainable energy solutions and support the regional, national and global transition to a zero carbon energy system.
- The Centre for Responsible Business, part of the University's Business School, works on sustainable solutions to the challenges facing global commerce. One research project is focused on analysing the UK's move to more electric vehicles, and how attitudes, infrastructure, and policy will affect the transition.

Education

The University aims to include sustainability education in all of our courses, and to that end we are appointing a cross-university Director of Sustainability Education. Many courses already include a sustainability element, such as BSc Accounting and Finance, which now includes Carbon Accounting as part of its curriculum. The University's College of Life and Environmental Sciences has recently launched a number of new programmes aimed at preparing a new generation of environmentally aware students, ready to tackle the environmental challenges facing the Earth. These courses include a BSc in Global Environmental Change and Sustainability, and a BSc Human Sciences course which includes not only Human Biology, but the impact of humanity on the Earth. In January 2023, the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences welcomes the first cohort of learners on to its Net Zero Together Skills Bootcamp, which aims to develop a new generation of regional environmental champions, who will have a tangible impact on carbon emissions in the West Midlands.

3.4 Anti-Corruption

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

It is the policy of the University of Birmingham that all staff and students conduct business in an honest way, and without the use of corrupt practices or acts of bribery to obtain an unfair advantage. An Anti-Bribery and Corruption policy has been adopted by the University (and is available on the University website). We attach the utmost importance to this policy and apply a 'zero tolerance' approach to acts of bribery and corruption by any of our employees or third-party representatives (including students). Steps taken to prevent Bribery and Corruption include thorough risk assessment, accurate books and record-keeping and effective monitoring and internal control.

We also publish our anti-fraud policy, and will investigate all instances of actual, attempted and suspected fraud committed by staff, students, suppliers, subsidiaries and other third parties, and will seek to recover funds and assets lost though fraud. Perpetrators will be subject to disciplinary and/or legal action.

4. Measurement of Outcomes

4.1 Human Rights

The University has developed robust systems of ethics review for our research to protect all stakeholders in our research projects. In order to improve Ethics processes for research, the University has moved to a new online research Ethics review system, called Ethics Review Manager (ERM).

The WHO Collaborating centre for Global Women's Health has produced a wide range of papers to improve global maternal and perinatal health. Research papers cover topics such as prevention of miscarriage, and improved treatment of postpartum haemorrhage and pre-eclampsia. Research into prediction models for pre-eclampsia has resulted in the development of 12 IPPIC (International Prediction of Pregnancy Complications) models, which showed promising performance on average across all datasets.

The first issue of Voice magazine was published in December 2022; run by the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion, the project aims to show-case research, analysis and opinions in the area of Human Rights.

4.2 Labour

In response to the cost of living crisis, the University has awarded staff in grades 6 and above an additional temporary supplement of 2% of salary for the financial year (i.e. August 2022 – July 2023 inclusive).

Pay for support staff is currently in negotiation with local trades union representatives, and the University has already agreed and implemented a pay increase for this group of staff of a minimum of 5%.

We set out our vision for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for 2021-24 in our new framework; activities which took place in 2021 as part of that framework included:
- Delivery of Talking Confidently about Race workshops, and training on micro-aggressions
- Development of a reverse mentoring scheme as part of the Senior Leadership career development programme
- Development of the LGBTQ+ Allies Scheme
- Becoming members of Disability Confident and Business Disability Forum to support the attraction and recruitment of disabled members of staff

Education on decolonisation of curriculum, and white privilege, aimed at early career lecturers and graduate teaching assistants via the Introduction to Learning and Teaching course, has been delivered to 108 staff to date.

The College of Social Sciences has piloted a scheme in which any all-white shortlists are challenged and reviewed. Evaluation has shown that this is effective in reducing all white shortlists and increasing appointments from minority ethnic groups.

The gender pay gap at the University reduced from 19.9% in 2017 to 16.3% in 2022. The University published ethnicity pay gap data for the first time in 2021, when the mean pay gap was found to be 12.2%. This had reduced to 11.7% when data was collected in 2022.

The University also produced updates on percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff employed at different job grades. Between our Race Equality Charter starting point in 2020 and January 2022, the percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff had increased in all but one academic grades, and had increased or remained the same in all professional services grades (Appendix 1).

4.3 Environment

The University published our 'Keeping 1.5C Alive' report in 2022, presenting our work on three key areas:
- **Energy in Motion**, outlining our work on the transition to clean energy
- **Environmental Systems**, looking at research efforts aimed at quantifying and modelling climate change and its impacts
- **Universities as Living Labs,** exploring the role of the University as a change agent

The report details policy takeaways and recommendations for decision makers at local, regional and national level as well as businesses.

On our journey to Net Zero, we have reduced our operation's carbon emission by 20% since 2005/6 baseline; we are committed to reaching Net Zero (Scopes 1 and 2 by 2035, and Scope 3 by 2045). Work is on-going on a Road Map to Net Zero.

4.4 Anti-Corruption

Anti-fraud and Anti-bribery and corruption policies are published in full on the University's website.

The Serious Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Evidence (SOC ACE) research programme is based in the International Development Department in the School of Government. The programme has commissioned a number of research projects, looking at areas including the effectiveness of sanctions on organised crime, and effective messaging on serious crime and corruption.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Data on percentages of University of Birmingham Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff employed at different job grades.

University % Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff		REC starting point	2024 Race Equality Charter target	January 2022 position
Academics	Professors	9%	13%	10%
	Grade 9	17%	17% (Readers) 24% (Senior Lecturers)	16.1% overall
	Grade 8	24%	33%	28%
	Grade 6-7	33%	None set	35%
Professional Services	Grade 10	5%	8%	6%
	Grade 9	8%	13%	10%
	Grade 8	13%	17%	16%
	Grade 7	17%	20%	18%
	Grade 6	20%	23%	20%
	Band 500	23%	23%	24%
	Band 400	18%	24%	20%
	Band 300	24%	24%	25%
	Band 200	40%	None set	47%