



BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY

HÁSKÓLINN Á BIFRÖST

PRME Principles for Responsible
Management Education

an initiative of the 

Sharing
information
on progress

(SIP) report
2018-2021

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COOPERATION

INITIATIVE

RESPONSIBILITY

What is PRME?

[The Principles for Responsible Management Education \(PRME\)](#) is a United Nations-supported initiative founded in 2007. As a platform to raise the profile of sustainability in schools around the world, PRME equips today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow.

Working through Six Principles, 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.

As a voluntary initiative with over 800 signatories worldwide, PRME has become the largest organised relationship between the United Nations and management-related higher education institutions.

PRME's vision is to create a global movement and drive thought leadership on responsible management education. PRME's mission is to transform management education and develop the responsible decision-makers of tomorrow to advance sustainable development.

PRME works closely with UN Global Compact to have management schools and business collaborate on common aspirations and create collective impact.

Bifröst University is a proud member of the PRME initiative since 2011.



PRINCIPLE 1

PURPOSE: We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.



PRINCIPLE 2

VALUES: We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.



PRINCIPLE 3

METHOD: We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.



PRINCIPLE 4

RESEARCH: We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.



PRINCIPLE 5

PARTNERSHIP: We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.



PRINCIPLE 6

DIALOGUE: We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

Introduction to Bifröst University

For over a century, Bifröst University has proudly been in the forefront of Icelandic society, educating people for impact and responsibility within business and society at large. The school was founded in 1918 as a Cooperative College and was owned and run by the Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies Movement in Iceland. Bifröst University became a higher education institution in 1988 and was reorganised in 1990 as a private non-profit University.

Bifröst University is rurally located in the western part of Iceland, the magnificent natural surroundings, characterised by volcanic landscapes amongst lakes and greenery. The majestic landscape continues to be a constant source of inspiration for the students, faculty and administration who make up this dynamic community. In this setting an interest in environmental issues and sustainability comes naturally.

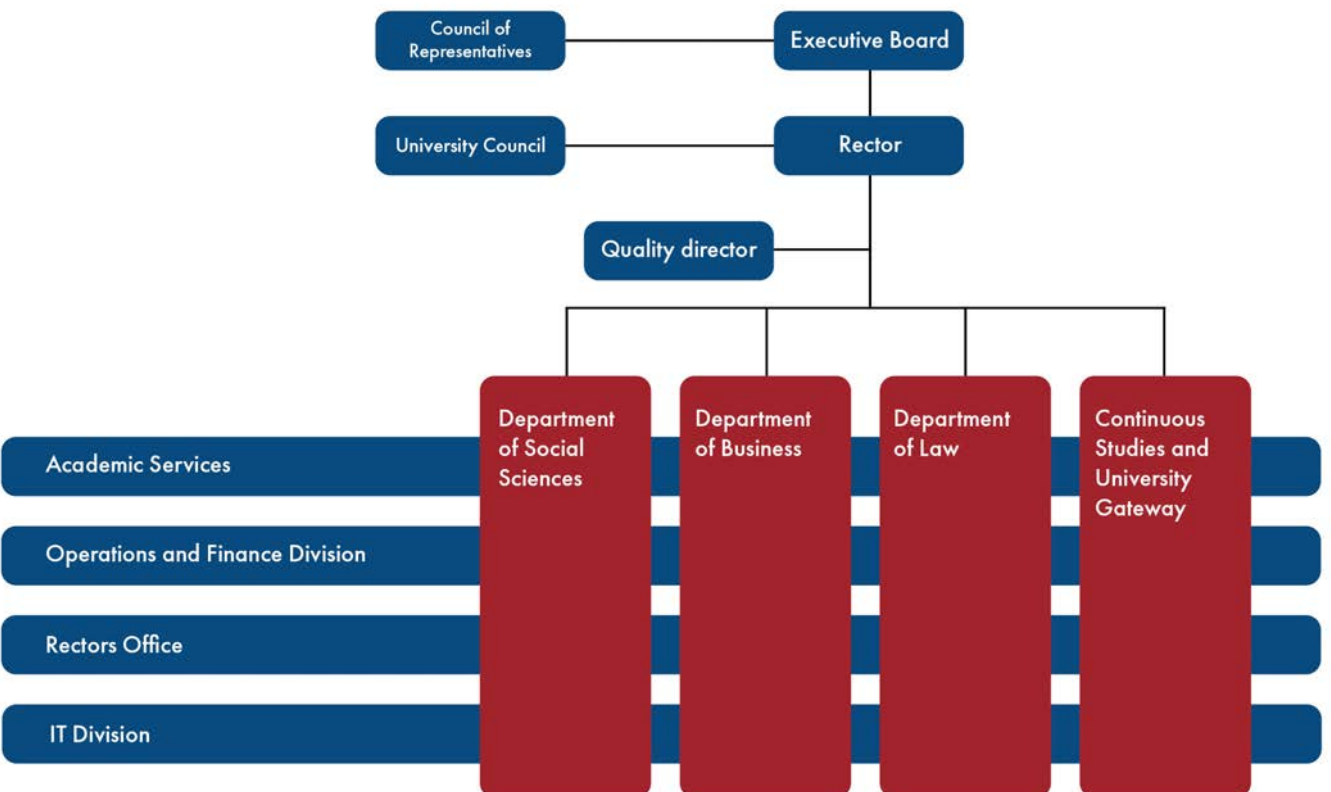
After a century of vibrant campus life, BU has in the last decade been in the forefront of developing and providing digital education. The aim is to strengthen Icelandic businesses and society by offering quality education in the fields of business, law, and social sciences. As a rurally based University, Bifröst University strives to ensure equitable access to education, regardless of place of residence, to people of all walks of life who endeavour to attain a higher education.

The University operates in a three-term structure; offering a fall term, a spring term and a summer term in addition to Lifelong Learning courses. The University also offers a preparatory Gateway Programme to prepare students without requisite matriculation exams for entry to University. For non-native Icelandic speakers in the Gateway, the focus is on content-based language learning with the aim to facilitate access to the higher education departments. In the last 15 years, BU has also become a leading school in Iceland in the field of leadership education for women with the programme Empowering Women.

The streamlined decision-making structure allows the University to rapidly adapt to societal educational demands which has led to the development of a unique and niched curriculum. The faculty have a good connection to the Icelandic business community, and they use innovative digital teaching methodologies. Students work on solving authentic tasks based on real life challenges, both in teams and as individuals while receiving personal and group support from their teachers.



Bifröst University Organization Chart



Established

1918

Students

1.138

Employees

60 fulltime positions divided between permanent and sessional staff

Located

Rurally located in the western part of Iceland

Partner schools

62 Erasmus partnerships and 18 bilateral partnerships in addition to membership in NordPlus and the North2North exchange programme organised by the University of the Arctic.

Departments

The Business Department. 8 undergraduate degrees. 4 graduate degrees.

The Law Department. 1 undergraduate degree. 2 graduate degrees.

The Department of Social Sciences. . 4 undergraduate degrees. 2 graduate degrees.

Teaching methodology

Digital education with modular campus session elements.

PRME member since 2011

See our 2012, 2014, and our 2018 report [here](#).



Rector's foreword

The best way to predict the future is to adapt our behaviour to the latest findings on how to implement sustainability and social responsibility through our teaching and research.

Bifröst University is proud to present its progress on engaging in PRME related activities during the last three years. Each year has given us opportunities to change our strategy, behaviour and attitude as well as each department has found its way to adapt sustainability to its curriculum.

Bifröst is in the forefront of digital education in Iceland thus making access to higher education possible for working students, for students with children who do neither have time nor flexibility to drive to classes. This reduces our carbon footprint and makes University education accessible to students who would otherwise not be able to pursue higher education.

During the development of our new strategy, Strategic Intent 2030, the University decided that enhancing our societal engagement and social impact is one of the main goals in the coming decade. We will prioritize our engagement to regional development of the area and interaction with society. As such, one of our main projects in 2021 was to establish a collaboration with the Agricultural University of Iceland, which is also based in our region, focusing on the future of Food-Production in Iceland. In this venture we bring together the know-how of the worlds of Business and Agriculture and together they analyse opportunities regarding agriculture, food production, sustainability and climate challenges as well as the utilization of natural resources. This project allows us also to build bridges between educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and extend our knowledge of the social and environmental challenges we collectively face to develop jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Bifröst University is a founding member of the newly established West Iceland Innovation Network. The network connects parties involved in innovation and entrepreneurship in the western region of Iceland with a special emphasis on collaboration with the business community and society. Our students are offered internships in the region and entrepreneurs have office space at the University, as do local companies and institutions that need office space for "jobs without a location" at Bifröst. This is a win-win solution to utilise campus grounds that otherwise are standing empty as we go further into our digitalisation.

Last but not least, in these challenging times, Bifröst University decided to exercise responsible management in practice and to open our doors to refugees coming from Ukraine. An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Municipality of the Region to host 150 Ukrainians on campus. For a small University this is a huge task, yet the students, the staff and the community are all rallying together to make them welcome and receive them in the best manner possible.

We are fortunate to occupy a campus which provides not only a magnificent natural oasis, but an environment that supports our organisational values: cooperation, initiative, responsibility. We will continue our journey as responsible custodians of this oasis, the journey of global sustainability cooperation and, we hope to instil in our students' courage and initiative to be responsible citizens in all their endeavours.

Dr. Margrét Jónsdóttir Njarðvík





Our vision and values

Bifröst University is a Business School educating people for impact and responsibility in business and society. Our fundamental values are described in the Magna Charta of the European Universities. We safeguard freedom of research and expression. Open dialogue, tolerance and diversity are the foundation of the university's mission. Since we regard universities as one of the pillars of society, we assume co-responsibility for the ongoing development of a flourishing, democratic, sustainable society.

Our vision for Bifröst University is for it to:

-be committed to academic independence and conduct research connected to society.

We conduct research in accordance with the Bifröst University Research Policy, while also focusing on social impact and benefits for society, including fostering business development and building important bridges between academia and the community.

-be in the forefront of delivering digital learning with a flexible approach.

We offer a unique assortment of programs: including digital learning combined with on-campus learning and teacher interaction sessions. This provides students with flexibility in structuring their studies and allows the university foster innovation, quality, and excellence in teaching.

-emphasise a personal teaching approach centred on a balance between theory and practice.

We offer personal academic support and teacher interaction through the structure of small classes solving real-life problems while working as a team.

Our values define who we are and who we aspire to be as a community. The ideological and ethical core values reflecting all activities within the University are:



COOPERATION

Cooperation that aims to:

- Encourage interaction and participation in a socially thriving digital university environment while working in teams to solve real life projects.
- Foster societal relationships and strengthen research collaborations with institutions and companies.
- Building the “Bifröst We”, team spirit which gives us a shared sense of purpose and desire for achievement



INITIATIVE

Initiative that involves:

- Innovation in developing digital teaching methodologies, study options that respond to society’s needs, research, and entrepreneurship.
- Developing proactive work habits that support creative and critical thinking, skills that create effective problem-solvers.
- Student agency in designing their own transformative learning experience.



RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility apparent in:

- Safeguarding freedom of research and expression- providing education to support a democratic and sustainable society.
- Providing an equitable access to education regardless of place of residence while embracing student diversity.
- Student and staff commitment to pursue their studies and work with integrity and dedication.

The digital transformation

Historically the Bifröst campus has played a central part in the student learning experience, facilitating social interaction, ideological debate, the establishment of networks and friendships, as well as direct interaction with faculty and administration. The digital learning transformation of BU was initially developed in 2004 and has continuously evolved until becoming University wide praxis in 2015.

A new modular system for course schedules was developed at Bifröst University in 2013. The aim was to streamline the curriculums within all departments of the University and to increase both quality and efficiency in teaching and learning. Since fall 2014, teaching is organised on seven weeks long modules, with two modules every semester and with three semesters in an academic year. This entails that during the module students have a possibility to focus and work more intensely on each subject.

All lectures are recorded beforehand and available online, giving the students access to the lectures anytime they want wherever they are located. Students have regular online interaction with the teacher and other students focusing on dynamic discussions and a strong emphasis on group work targeting real life scenarios. Although interaction via digital channels is also real-life interaction, once per module the students gather on campus for face-to-face interaction and social networking.

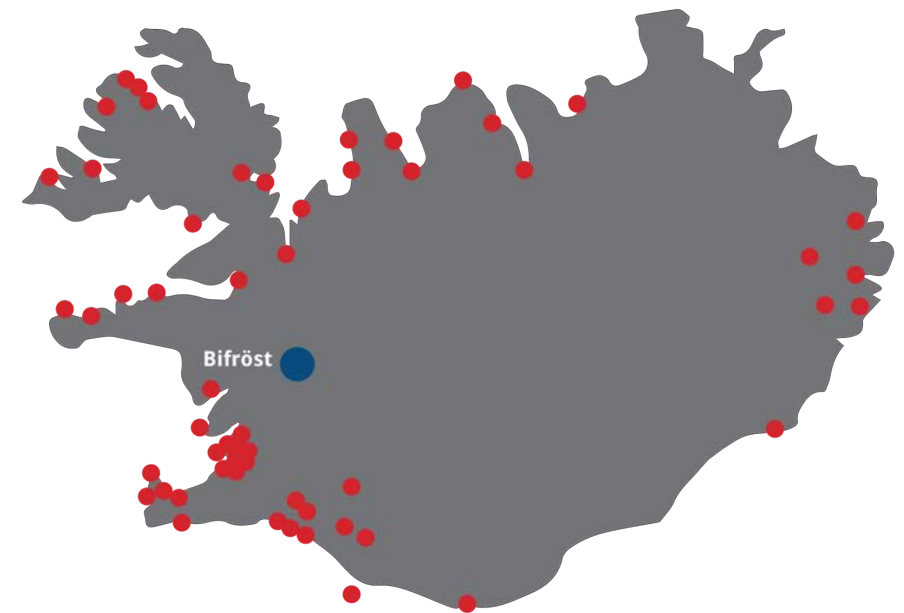
For any University, the education of students and the creation of new knowledge through research is the pinnacle of social responsibility. The digital transformation is though, as of yet, the greatest contribution Bifröst University has made towards reducing our carbon footprint and addressing the global challenge of climate change. We have not as of yet made the calculation of the reduction of our carbon footprint, but according to a Dutch study on the pros and cons of online education as a measure to reduce carbon emissions in higher education, it could be as high as a 90% reduction compared to a fully on-site operation.¹

Due to the rural location of Bifröst University, both students and staff primarily use private cars as their main mode of transportation. Reducing the campus-based activities means that there has been a substantial reduction in transportation to and from Bifröst, hence corresponding with a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. However, there are still plenty of campus activities and as such it is one of our goals to lobby for increased public transport use by requesting improved public transport connections to the Campus.

In addition to reducing pollution and emissions from transportation, we can estimate a significant reduction in the use of paper, energy, water, and waste on campus.

Key PRME related highlights 2018-2021

How the Bifröst students reside all throughout Iceland.



¹ Pros and cons of online education as a measure to reduce carbon emissions in higher education in the Netherlands. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, Volume 28, October 2017, Pages 80-89
Marieke Versteijlen, Francisca Perez Salgado, Marleen Janssen Groesbeek, Anda Counotte
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877343517300349>



The digital transformation of the teaching methodology has implications that go well beyond students attending lectures. Providing students, teacher and researchers with a well-equipped and updated library is at the heart of any University, yet without students and teachers at campus, books tend to gather dust. We have hence been significantly investing in e-books, access to on-line databases, academic journals, evaluating purchases such as ProQuest Academic Complete or EBSCO Business Source Elite which are online educational package solutions being developed for the higher education digital learning environment.

The decision has been made to fully digitalise our library and keep only a small physical presence on campus and go further into providing our students and researchers with a global access to information at a scale which has been impossible with a physical library. The impact on our carbon footprint is as such even further reduced as there is no need to purchase several copies of printed books and transport them to this remotely located island. How the Bifröst students reside all throughout Iceland.

Teaching at Bifröst University will continue to be based on a well-rounded faculty who involve diverse teaching methods that emphasise autonomous work methods for students, with solid academic support from instructors. Innovation and distinction in digital education will continue to be one of the trademarks of Bifröst University. Our teachers all work on a “jobs without location” contract although they can choose to work from our small Reykjavík office or come to the campus if they so prefer. Today our teachers are based all over the world depending on their residency or research programs.

In 2020, 98% of students enrolled at Bifröst University were living off-campus all throughout the world and engaged in digital education. The current and future educational model for Bifröst University is built on a module-based digital learning combined with sessional on campus learning and teacher interaction. We aim to offer students a high-quality education that provides students with a strong proficiency in their field of study. We will continue to emphasize strengthening students’ ability to employ professional work methods and apply theories and concepts in problem-solving and we will enhance their ability to find solutions for concrete and current challenges.



Covid 19

The COVID-19 pandemic had various effects on the university activities albeit it did not negatively impact the student progression due to the digital aspect of the learning. The University had previously invested in extensive digital Learning Management Systems and teacher training meaning that the whole University was well prepared for the partial lockdown of the society.

We monitored the wellbeing of our students and staff through various surveys, we invested in their mental health with gearing up our student advisory services and by employing a psychologist for our students. We enrolled our staff in a private healthcare package in addition to the excellent public services available in Iceland to facilitate their access to extended physical and mental health services.

The pandemic did however entail rapid technological advancement well suited for digital education, which we have made good use of. Additionally, it has transformed the public's perception in regard to the advantages of digital education. Student numbers are steadily rising as currently digital education is not only viewed a quality-based form of learning, but also an environmentally responsible one drawing minimally on a multitude of communal resources.





The social impact of Covid 19

The Bifröst University educational model includes a voluntary on-campus component in the modular structure. Each term is structured into two modules, in each module a full-time student is registered into two to three courses. A 6 ECTS credit course requires a student workload of 150-180 hours, out of these hours each course has a timeslot of 4 hours as an on-campus session. The courses are scheduled throughout a 4-days; Thursday to Sunday, which means that a full-time student comes and spends 1 and ½ day of the potential 4 days interacting with each other and their teachers on the Bifröst campus, utilising the remaining time for studying, potential group work or to simply only attend the sessions for which he/ she/ they are registered for. The Student Union then conducts social activities, primarily during the evenings. In the third term of the year, the summer term, the interaction takes place during the “Missó” project presentation, which is a 3-week interdisciplinary collaborative research project obligatory for all students.

The major impact of the pandemic for BU is the student participation in the campus sessions. The advancement of Teams/ Zoom and other forms of digital interaction has presented a new avenue for social interaction, and this has made it pertinent for BU to ask itself; Does being in the forefront of digital education mean exclusively interacting with students in a digital manner and as such, are the on-campus sessions a historic relic with no place in modern education?

Through debate and discussion amongst students and staff, we have a collective clear answer which is that through our experience prior to and during Covid, we have learned the crucial importance of social interaction. Human interaction supports and enhances social health, builds connections and collaborations and is essential in higher education. We have learnt that we can with surprising ease provide a complete online experience, yet we choose to not do so exclusively.

In a recent conference held by the The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC), owned by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA), the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB), the Ministry of Finance and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland, a presentation on the future skills need of the labour market in Iceland was discussed. A strong emphasis was placed on the importance of social intelligence as a skill in the work force, that as much as we need to develop advanced technical and digital capacity; the top skill to possess in the future work force is social intelligence and good communication skills.²

In the Bifröst University Strategic Intent 2030 we commit to adapt to the rapid pace of advancement within all level of society and to the new and evolving challenges the world faces and to develop our curricula accordingly. Thankfully the main venue to practice social intelligence is to interact with other people and we hope that our campus sessions will continue to provide our students with ample opportunity for that.

New educational offerings within the PRME framework

Bifröst University is consistently re-evaluating the program portfolio in order to meet societies' educational needs, the rapid pace of advancement within all levels of society and the new and evolving challenges the world faces. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will bring us advanced robotics and autonomous transport, artificial intelligence and machine learning, advanced materials, biotechnology, and genomics. The advances in technology facilitating digital work, education and communication are transforming long established societal trends and these changes are expected to cause widespread disruption not only to business models but also to labour markets, with enormous change predicted in the skill sets needed to thrive in the new landscape. The World Economic Forum estimates that 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist. In such a rapidly evolving employment landscape, the ability to anticipate and prepare for future skills requirements is essential for a University. We aim to look towards the future in portfolio development, our most recent portfolio changes relating to PRME are the BS program in Business Administration with an emphasis on sustainability management and Master in Crisis Management.



BS program in Business Administration with an emphasis on sustainability management

In the fall of 2022 Bifröst University will be commencing a new undergraduate emphasis, the BS program in Business Administration with an emphasis on sustainability management. It is a specialized business program, tailored to the needs of those who want to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities in sustainability.

The program is intended for those who already work for/ or aim to work towards sustainability within companies, institutions, or other organizational units. Emphasis is placed on the environmental, social, and regulatory aspects of business operations, as well as the associated assessment.

Particular emphasis is placed on students gaining experience and skills to utilize their knowledge in a practical way. Teachers are experts in sustainability and have extensive experience to share.



Master of Crisis Management

After extensive consultations with the labour market, the BU Department of Social sciences launched a new graduate level study line, Crisis Management, in 2021. Experience has shown that various authorities throughout the country lack structured preparedness to respond to the multitude of crises which tend to occur in the volatile natural environment of Iceland. The growing need for a more targeted crisis management has encouraged academics to develop knowledge and understanding of the processes in play and how human behaviour is affected when disasters strike.

Natural disasters, economic shock, war, terrorism, and epidemics are among some of the most challenging crises the world has had to address in recent decades; authorities, institutions, private companies, and even entire communities have had to deal with increasingly complex disasters due to urban development, climate change, increased globalization and increased complexities in human relations.

Crisis management, as an academic field, focuses on prevention and preparedness, on response management, rehabilitation and on extracting learning for future crises situations. Bifröst University is the only Icelandic University that offers a degree in crisis management in collaboration with Iceland's main crises response institutions.

The Social Sciences have sought the cooperation of first responders to curate a graduate degree designed to enhance the societal capacity to respond to disasters of any kind. In addition to the Department of Social Sciences the following societal institutions participate in the execution of the curricula; the Department of Civil Protection, the National Commissioner of Police, the Accident Prevention Association Landsbjörg, the Icelandic Red Cross, the Association of Icelandic Municipalities and the Fire Brigade of the Reykjavík capital area. Crisis management is a young discipline, in rapid growth and has already provided better insight to those managers and policy makers who, with the acquisition of new knowledge and training, have been able to deliver more targeted crisis management.



Gender equality

Iceland is the world's best country for gender equality, topping the Global Gender Gap [World Economic Forum index](#) for the 12th year in a row. Iceland's success is characterized by a strong performance in all four of the index's gauges: economic opportunities, education, health and political leadership.

Equality is at the heart of every institution in Iceland, including Bifröst University. We work closely with authorities to ensure that we are upholding all legislative requirements; we have a newly updated Equality Plan from 2021 and a dedicated response plan on sexual and gendered harassment and violence, which is a part of the University's Equality Plan. The objective of Bifröst University's equality plan is to ensure gender equality between employees within the University, including with respect to salaries and other terms of employment, participation in administration, facilities and opportunities for study. The central objective of the Equality Plan is to prevent discrimination based on sex, gender, disability, age, religion, beliefs, racial or ethnic origin or sexual orientation. The University makes reasonable adjustments to accommodate the different needs of students and employees.

In addition, we have a permanent Gender Equality Committee constituted by two staff members and a student. They are elected by their peers for a two-year term on the committee. The committee monitors the progress of the University's gender equality program and reports on its work with an annual report to the Rector and the University Council. The committee also oversees Bifröst University's preparations for the so called "Gender Equality Days" where all the universities come together to discuss these matters.

Our main achievement in regard to gender equality during the reporting period, 2018-2021 is achieving our Equal pay Certification, a certification we take much pride in.

The equal pay standard is an administrative standard for equal pay systems, on those grounds companies and institutions can receive an Equal Pay Certification. The standard can work within every institution regardless of size, operations, goals, and gender ratio within the workplace. The standard ensures professional methods that can prevent direct and indirect discrimination regarding gender.

The purpose of the certification is to enforce the current legislation prohibiting discriminatory practices based on gender and requiring that individuals of all genders working for the same employer are paid equally and have the same terms of employment in the same jobs or jobs of equal value. It is therefore designed to eliminate gendered pay differences and adhere to the equality of all genders in the workforce. The Equal Pay Certificate was ratified in June 2017 according to the [act on Equal Stats and Rights Irrespective of Gender no. 150/2020](#) and an accredited certification authority evaluates bi-annually if all the conditions of the standard are upheld and if they are they grant the company or institution an Equal Pay Certification.



JAFNLAUNAVOTTUN
2020 - 2023

"I have found it extremely important and rewarding to as a student take part in work on behalf of the Bifröst Equality Committee. In my opinion, it's important as a student and independent individual to be involved in both strengthening and promoting new ways in the modern society that deals with equality issues both within and outside the school environment.

I believe it's part of the school's social responsibility to be vigilant in equality issues and it has been a privilege for me to step into the world of equality issues and also very informative to have been able to participate in the discussion as well as stand for and participate in seminars on the basis of equality on behalf of Bifröst University as well as for the Bifröst University Student Association.

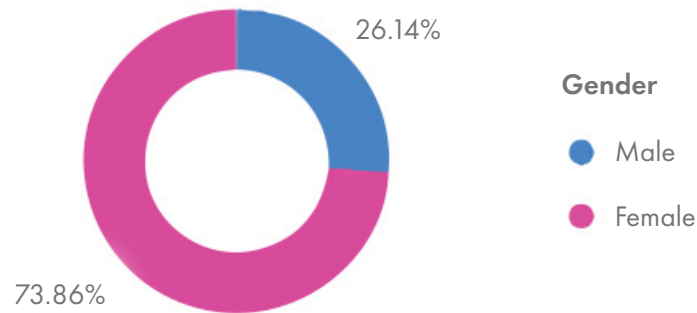
I have expanded my network through the work of a gender equality representative and at the same time gain an incredible perspective on the issue of gender equality. I therefore urge everyone to open their eyes to this issue and take one step at a time for the better for the next generation."

Erla Björg Eyjólfsdóttir, graduate student in MS in Leadership and Management with emphasis on Project Management.



Pressing issues to focus on regarding equality

Icelandic society has been very successful in the past century in correcting the gender imbalance which has previously negatively impacted women's access to all levels of education. The efforts have been so successful that women are now, generally in Iceland, in the majority in University enrolments and graduations. A total of 70% of students enrolled in Bifröst University are women, albeit it being a global trend- we still need to address the imbalance of it. If we look at student graduations it is at 74% women versus 26% men.



In our own management structure, concerns are being raised regarding gender equality and as radical as it might seem, suggestions have come forward questioning the need for introducing potential positive reinforcement incentives for hiring males in management positions. The current Executive council is 71% women and 29% men, the total average for all councils and boards within the University is at a more balanced 53% women and 47% men.

Equitable gender access to education is a priority for Bifröst University and we will explore ways to address this imbalance. The same applies to equal opportunities to employment within the University





PRINCIPLE 1

PURPOSE: We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.



PRINCIPLE 2

VALUES: We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

Elín Jónsdóttir LL.M.

Dean of the Law Department

The Department of Law celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2021. From the establishment in 2001 the department's central study line has been an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in Business law where the students' study both law and business subjects. It is therefore fitting that a renewed focus on PRME's principles was recently confirmed in the department's strategy. To educate business lawyers of today and for the future, an emphasis on sustainability along with knowledge of technology and innovation law is essential.

Sustainability issues are addressed within the law department through its courses. A compulsory course on Sustainability and CSR will be offered for undergraduate students starting in 2023, it is currently an elective course, along with an elective course on Sustainability Management for graduate level students. An elective course on Corporate Governance with a focus on sustainable governance is offered for all undergraduate students. Once a year the law department gives selected students the opportunity to take part in the international experiential learning co-operation „Law Without Walls“ with 16 law and business schools in 14 countries who are placed on 4 continents. During the program the Bifröst students get the chance to work in international groups who are tasked with solving real problems from a corporate social responsibility standpoint. In addition to this, all teachers are encouraged to include sustainability issues in their topics and cases and to encourage students to focus their research and thesis writing within the fields of sustainability and law. In order to enable established teachers to do this, seminars on sustainability issues are offered for teachers.

The research of faculty members already reflects the focus of the department on sustainability related issues; one faculty member recently published their PhD thesis on shareholder activism.

In the future, our aspirations are that the faculty and students of Bifröst University' Law Department will be actively participating in discussing and solving the pressing sustainability issues facing our communities, both local and global, with the application of legal principles.



Department of Law

BS in Business Law

Bachelor degree

ML in Law

Masters degree

MBL in Business Law

Masters degree

**Diploma in
Business Law**

Masters degree

Dr. Stefan Wendt

Dean of the Business Department

The Department of Business at Bifröst University has made sustainability one of the key topics in all its activities, including teaching, research and collaboration with companies and other organizations.

The Department of Business at Bifröst University has integrated a strong focus on sustainability and responsible management in all study programs. All students in the undergraduate program in business administration take the course Sustainability and Social Responsibility which is offered in the second year of the program. All students in the graduate programs take the course Sustainable Management. In addition to these courses, which are taught in Icelandic, the course Business Ethics is offered in English for both Icelandic and exchange students in the undergraduate program. Further courses that are directly related to topics of social responsibility and good governance include, amongst others, Equality and Diversity in Management and Culture of Organizations, Wellbeing at Work: Challenges and Opportunities, and Corporate Governance and Organization. Students are actively involved in the discussions around sustainability, business ethics and responsible management via project work and assignments as well as in-class discussion.

From fall 2022 on, the department offers a specific emphasis on sustainability management in the undergraduate program in business administration. This emphasis allows students to specialize on topics such as ESG measurement and Reporting, Resource and Environmental Economics, Risk and Climate Change and Corporate Governance. Integrating this emphasis in the undergraduate program reflects the department's commitment to even stronger focus on sustainability and responsible management education in the future.

Beyond the course offering on responsibility and sustainability, the content and discussions in a broad variety of the courses offered in our programs relate to these topics. They provide students with extensive understanding of how essentially all areas in business administration are interlinked with the question of responsible decision making and business practices.

The faculty's collaboration with industry evolves in the context of (1) teaching, for example via guest lectures, integration of real-life case analysis in course curricula, term projects and theses in collaboration with industry partners and further organizations, (2) research in collaboration with companies and other organizations such as the local municipalities (association of municipalities in the west of Iceland), and (3) as part of consultancy projects. In each of these areas, topics in the field of sustainability and responsible decision-making have gotten increasing attention. Given the further increase in the importance of these topics at the academic and company/industry level as well as for the entire society, we expect even more joint projects around these topics. Furthermore, the department has made increasing efforts to offer students internship opportunities in companies and further organizations in the region and beyond which allows them to apply their knowledge and skills in sustainability and responsible management in these companies.



Department of Business

BS in Business Administration

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Marketing

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Sustainability

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Financial Management

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Retail Management

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Service Management

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Business Intelligence

Bachelor degree

BS in Business Administration with emphasis on Project Management

Bachelor degree

MS / MLM in Leadership and Management

Masters degree

MS / MLM in Leadership and Management with emphasis on Human Resources Management

Masters degree

MS / MLM in Leadership and Management with emphasis on Project Management

Masters degree

MS / MMM in Marketing

Masters degree

Diploma in Business Administration and Retail Management

Diploma

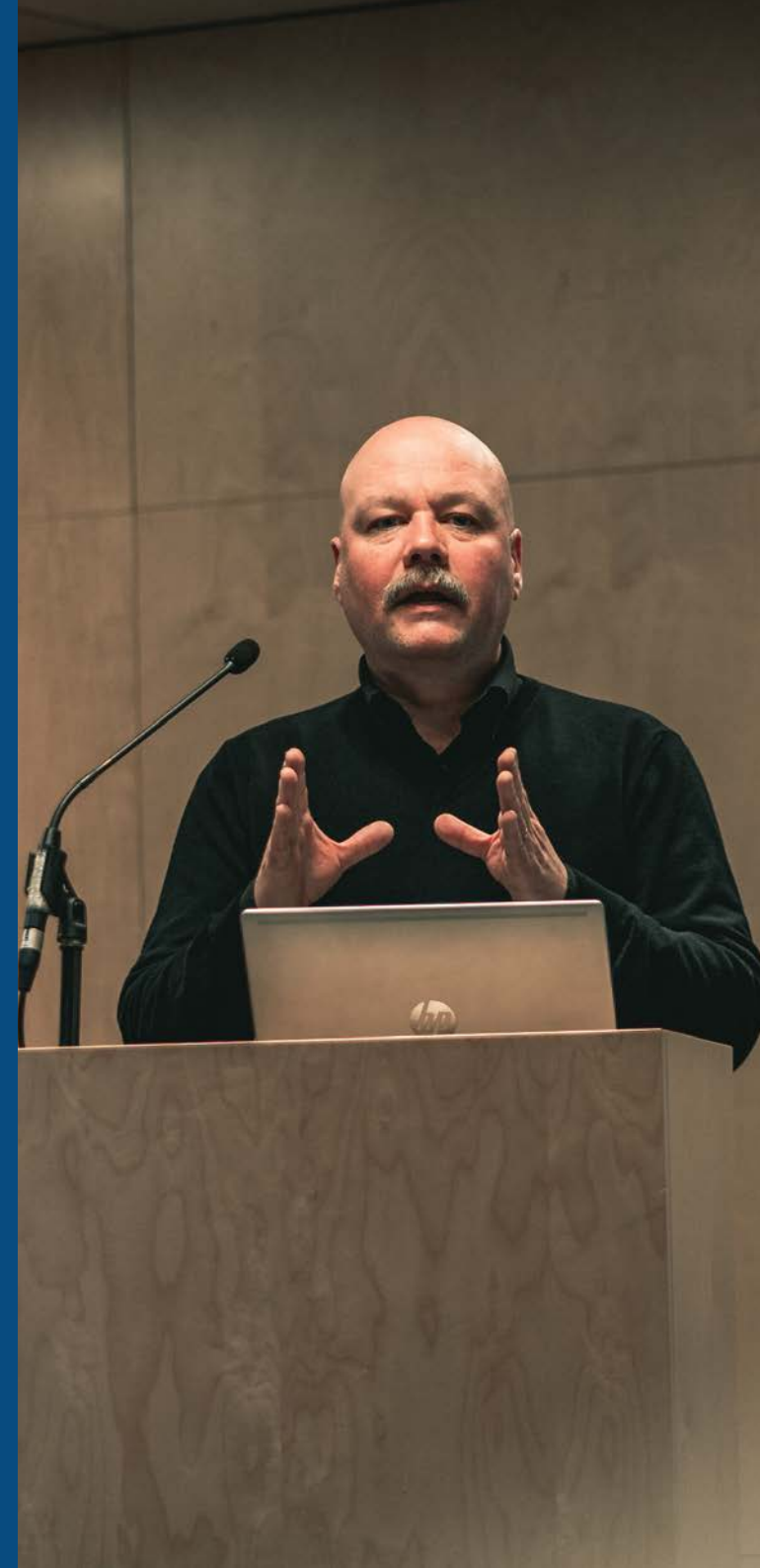
Dr. Njörður Sigurjónsson

Dean of the Social Sciences Department

The Department of Social Science addresses issues of sustainability through the programs and courses offered. All of its six study lines, both the undergraduate programmes and the postgraduate programmes, are built on interdisciplinary approach where the values of democracy, critical thinking, and creativity help to stimulate discussion and thinking about societal problems, and global and local environmental challenges. Whether it is the BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE), or the MA in Disaster Management, ethical issues are discussed, and the department's academic vision is informed by the Bifröst University's long-standing tradition of preparing students for assuming leading roles in business and society. The department is firmly committed to the University's vision of educating students for active and responsible citizenship, and thus seeks to provide students with the essential required for a critical and constructive participation in public discourses on politics, culture, economics, and public policy.

The department engages students in discussion and debate around global issues, sustainability, ethics, and other global challenges through coursework and projects. All the undergraduate programs, such as the Public Administration (BA) and Creative Industries (BA) have an ethics module and then the issues of sustainability are discussed in different ways as they relate to the course material. As an example, in Media and Public Relations (BA) classes related to public relations and crisis communication are used to address issues of sustainability in relation to stakeholders' expectations. It is now expected of organizations to be sustainable and ethical and when an organization does not meet its stakeholders' expectations it can have dire consequences for stakeholders' trust and hence the organization's reputation. Students discuss the public relations practitioner's ethical duty to serve the interests of various parties, be it the organization they work for or the organization's stakeholders, and then more general the public and how important issues of sustainability and ethics are in building trust in the organization. Students then learn how many of the biggest organizational crises relate to issues of sustainability and ethics and how to be proactive in addressing such issues. There is strong focus on the importance of proving words by deeds and being sustainable and ethical behind the scenes, not just „on the stage“. Issues of greenwashing are discussed in relation to this and how it can negatively impact an organization. Case studies of organizations that have done both poorly and well in addressing these issues, are provided so that students learn from good and bad practices. A module in mass communication and media focuses on issues of sustainability and ethics and takes a critical approach. Questions such as whose interests' organizations are actually serving with initiatives such as Facebook providing free access to its services in underdeveloped countries and Google's Next Billion Users are being posed and discussed in forums. The final essay of the course relates to current ethical challenges related to mass mediums. Students are asked to provide a critical perspective on these challenges, how they are being dealt with and what can be further done.

We see further opportunities in engaging with issues of society and environmental challenges through research and public debate, with an emphasis on active citizenship and social engagement. Courses such as Ethics, Social Responsibility and Active Engagement, International Politics, and Conflict and Peace Studies will continue to offer students ways to discuss and debate social and environmental challenges. Furthermore, the department will offer a new module in spring 2023 on Risk and Environmental Change.



Department of Social Sciences

**BA/Diploma in Philosophy,
Politics, and Economics (PPE)**

Bachelor degree

BA in Media and Public Relations

Bachelor degree

**BA/Diploma in
Public Administration**

Bachelor degree

**BA/Diploma in
Creative Industries**

Bachelor degree

**MA/MCM in Cultural
Management**

Masters degree

**MA/MCM/Diploma in Crisis
Management**

Masters degree

The challenges we have collectively faced in the last few years due to the Covid 19 pandemic have undeniably affected the world as a whole, and our lives as University students. Just as we are looking brightly towards the future, widespread conflict looms on the horizon with a fast-developing refugee crisis, global climate change is escalating at an alarming rate and we as students need to continuously adapt our worldview and future plans with all the uncertainty which follows. These events have and continue to have a negative effect on student's mental health and on our economic situation.

We are also experiencing the 4th Industrial Revolution. Artificial intelligence and job automation will have a major impact on the number of jobs in the coming years and could have a negative impact on economic sustainability and social sustainability. This development is happening at a fast pace, and we all need to do our part to set the rules we want in the society of the future. We need to look at these from an ethical point of view to ensure that the development of the 4th Industrial Revolution increases sustainability rather than counteracts it.

Students at Bifröst University are aware of the need to find solutions to these huge problems facing our world in order to ensure a sustainable life and ensure quality of life for future years and future generations. Having responsible leaders who are aware of social responsibility and sustainability is the only way for us to ensure a just and sustainable future. The leaders of the future need to safeguard a sustainable economy, a sustainable society, and a sustainable earth, hopefully, we can become those leaders as our education in Bifröst University equips us to be the responsible managers the world needs.

Egill Örn Rafnsson Chair of the Student Union



Educating students to become ethical and responsible decision makers

It is the aim of Bifröst University to offer a high-quality education that provides students with a strong proficiency in their field of study. We emphasize strengthening students' ability to employ professional work methods and apply theories and concepts in problem-solving and enhancing their ability to find solutions for concrete and current challenges.

Teaching at Bifröst University is based on a well-rounded faculty who involve diverse teaching methods that emphasise autonomous work methods for students, with solid academic support from instructors. Innovation and distinction in digital education is one of the trademarks of Bifröst University.

Teaching methods in Bifröst University are designed to foster independence, an entrepreneurial mindset, communication and leadership skills and critical thinking, in addition to preparing students for their future role in society. We believe that this approach, enhancing students analytical and critical thinking skills, will ultimately facilitate us in fulfilling our missions which is educating people for impact and responsibility in business and society.

Common to these diverse teaching methods is an emphasis on autonomous work methods for students. Our students engage in extensive project work, which sharpens students' initiative, responsibility, and cooperative skills. Diversity and professionalism are emphasised in course assessment. We adopt teaching methods based on the use of online lectures, rigorous project work and examinations or final projects. Students can engage with instructors in person during the regular campus sessions.



PRINCIPLE 3

METHOD: We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

Communication Skills

We recognise that in addition to digital skills also social skills and communication skills are highly desirable skills to have in the future labour market. As such, enhancing these skills is designed into our learning outcomes and activities geared at honing these abilities are integrated into our methodologies.

Teachers are responsible for choosing the teaching methods most suited to their respective subjects, while the Handbook for Teaching and Learning provides guidelines. Online lectures outline the main topics of a given subject, which are further elaborated through teacher-led discussions and practical individual, pair and group assignments. Providing frequent assignments is not least important for those students who pursue their studies primarily or solely through distance learning. Assignments render inactivity less viable and encourage students to engage with their peers through group assignments.

Twice per term there is the campus session at the Bifröst Campus where the students gather, undergraduate and graduate respectively. The students meet with their instructor for some hours to discuss the curriculum, prepare projects, listen to guest lectures or engage in other undertakings. Students are expected to take active part in discussions and to complete assignments submitted by their teachers at any given time. Teachers can also organise online meetings with their students as needed, where students can submit questions to their instructors and/or instructors can set out the meeting topic in advance.

Examples of teaching methods during the campus sessions include:

The fishbowl method involves engaging students in a discussion of their views on a given issue. This teaching strategy functions to encourage dynamic discussion and connectivity within the student group.

Discussion and questioning methods are used to elicit students' knowledge and spark their learning. These methods include various conversation strategies, discussion groups, seminars and panel discussions. Instructors at BU have utilised these methods in settings where students have prepared an oral presentation on a specific project and their findings have been discussed within the group.

Explanatory instruction is a teaching method involving methods such as lectures, demonstrations, field trips and guest lectures. On-campus sessions feature guest lecturers from the business world and other positions in the community. There are also several courses that systematically incorporate student excursions to workplaces, including Icelandic companies, media services and courts.

Case studies are used extensively by BU instructors. Students receive real-life problems with which to work, seek answers, apply theories and knowledge that they have gained and examine and evaluate possible solutions.

Formative evaluation with support from the teacher as students' hand in "work in process" and the teacher gives feedback that is taken into consideration before final delivery of assignments. Such evaluation is not necessarily related to working weekends.

We believe that our methods foster responsible leadership and the appreciation for the approach is clearly articulated by our students who express feeling well prepared for the labour market having practiced employing professional work methods in problem-solving.

Empowering women

For 15 years now, Bifröst University has run a vocational management program called Empowering women. Despite the advancement on equality in Iceland, women are still underrepresented when it comes to entrepreneurial activity, this program seeks to address this. The aim of the program is to empower women and their networks, encourage them to start or expand their own businesses and thus have a positive effect on local economies, particularly in rural areas of Iceland.

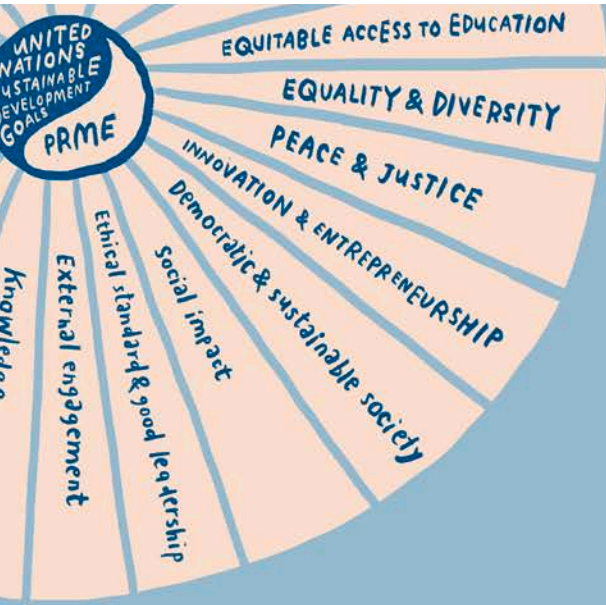
Further to its successful implementation in Iceland, the project concept of the Empowering women was transferred to a much different setting in Africa, where it was adjusted to the conditions of underprivileged women in rural areas of North Tanzania. Its purpose was to work actively on increasing the welfare of African women by providing them with tangible tools to identify business opportunities in their microenvironment and the ability to carry them forward. The Empowering Women Africa project ran from 2015 to 2019.

Bifröst University Strategic Intent 2030

Bifröst University was in 2021 guided in forming a new holistic strategy by Dr. Kristín Friðgeirsdóttir; Adjunct Associate Professor in Management Science and Operations at London Business School and doctorate graduate from Stanford University in Operational Engineering.

The result of this inclusive and University wide process is the [Bifröst University Strategic Intent 2030](#) and the Action Plan 2021-2024 that accompanies it. We have set ourselves nine goals structured within four strategic pillars: Learning and Teaching, Research, Culture and Management, and Societal Engagement. The goals have subsequently been divided into sub-goals for clarity, and each goal has been defined by actions, responsibility, timeframe, means of verification, and indicators. The Strategic Intent 2030 has a long-term perspective, and the Action Plan focuses on a three-year perspective with an annual update.

Within this process we have as a University committed ourselves to greatly enhance our efforts to increase our societal engagement. While fulfilling our educational mission we will uphold and promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in regard to Education, Gender, Climate Change, Innovation, and Justice as these are closely related to our current curriculum. We will continue to work with and increase our involvement with the PRME initiative with the aim of furthering the awareness and commitment of our students towards sustainability and responsibility in management.



BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY- STRATEGIC INTENT 2030

BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY OFFERS A PERSONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE BASED ON A BALANCE OF THEORY AND PRACTICE.

BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY IS IN THE FOREFRONT IN OFFERING DIGITAL LEARNING WITH A FLEXIBLE APPROACH.

IN BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY WE SAFEGUARD ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM IN OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.





PRINCIPLE 4

RESEARCH: We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.

Bifröst University is a part of the national and international scientific community which places emphasis on the advancement of research. We are committed to academic independence and freedom, including departmental emphasis on research related activities. It is University policy to hire faculty with strong research profiles. Bifröst also aims to develop partnerships with institutions and networks to increase research opportunities for graduate students.

Bifröst has in recent years maintained a Centre for Retail Studies and a peer reviewed journal published in open access, Bifröst Journal of Social Sciences. Bifröst has engaged in various research initiatives run by individual faculty members such as Centre for Labour Law and Equal Rights, Centre for European Studies and the Cultural Research Centre.

The main PRME related research projects Bifröst University has engaged in during this reporting period are:

PRME related research within the Department of Social Sciences and Department of Law

(The departments were joined as one department from 2016 until they were divided in 2021).



Bifröst University has since 2018 been a part of the ifempower consortium, that was funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ program to develop an interactive and mentorship-based course in entrepreneurship, focused on women and the particular challenges women are met with in today's business environment.

During its three years of implementation, ifempower aimed to empower female students to become potential entrepreneurs by providing the necessary knowledge and skills (both soft and hard) to start their successful businesses. To reach this goal, the project developed innovative tools, educational & training methods and a mentoring system with the collaboration of 9 partners – mostly universities and consultancies.

Based on our preparatory research investigating the role of women in European SMEs (Study on Women Entrepreneurs in Europe), as well as gaps, obstacles and market needs, the project elaborated an International Curriculum for Higher Education in 5 languages for University students on entrepreneurship-related topics to support their engagement in self-employment. The accredited modules were launched and piloted at partner universities in Austria, Hungary, Iceland, Romania and Spain, and backed by our International Teaching Material for the participating teachers. More than 100 students have enrolled in the courses developed by ifempower to immerse in the world of female entrepreneurship.

All the main findings of the project, curricula, teaching material and the online educational platform can be found at the [ifempower website](#).

The Advancing Migrant Women, 2017-2020, project aims to develop high quality training material and support for migrant women in order to empower them by developing their employability and entrepreneurship skills through a holistic programme based on training and mentoring which will increase their self-efficacy.

There are two main issues at hand that are visible around all EU countries and therefore need to be addressed on an EU-wide level. Firstly, the issue of migrant employment and integration in general, and secondly the specific challenges that are faced by women on top of these employability problems. Advancing Migrant Women (AMW) aims to address both issues by specifically targeting female migrants. Its main aim is to empower women migrants by developing their employability and entrepreneurship skills through a holistic programme based on training and mentoring which will increase their self-efficacy. This programme will enable migrant women to set up a business or find employment where they can fully use their talents and strengths.





The project A Comparative and Transferable Approach to Education for Democratic Citizenship (ACTA) is promoted by the University of Craiova (Romania) with the partnership of Bifröst University (Iceland) and University of Iceland. It is supported by an EEA grant (a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), has a total budget of 78,658 EUR and is developed between September 1, 2018, and April 30, 2020.

This project provides an innovative perspective on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) that results from the comparative approach that brings together two countries that are fundamentally different in terms of state of democracy and educational policies and practices: Romania and Iceland. Its transdisciplinary focus reinforces the role of different school subjects, such as native language and foreign language, for the development of EDC and integrates ICT in problem-based teaching/learning for these subjects.

The results of this project will help inform the definition and description of competences and the use of problem-based teaching/learning for the development of transversal competences.



INTERFACE

The aim of the INTERFACE project is to support Fragile Communities in finding innovative and entrepreneurial responses to the problems affecting them. Fragile communities are urban and rural communities (city quarters, towns and villages) that have been experiencing a persistent demographic, economic and social decline – an issue which has become a policy concern in all European countries.

The “Fragile Communities” approach stems from Iceland, where this bottom-up approach was applied in various communities affected by depopulation. The main idea is to stimulate and activate the community resources, by launching a grassroots process accompanied by coaches and trainers allowing members of communities to find innovative and entrepreneurial solutions for the betterment of their living environment.

The INTERFACE project will also build on the curriculum and training materials that were developed in the “Furthering Innovative Entrepreneurial Regions of Europe” (FIERE) project. These materials will be further developed in the INTERFACE project, and the partnership will create and implement a long-term coaching programme for community members and representatives of local authorities.

The key principle of coaching is a creative process that inspires beneficiaries to maximize their personal and professional potential. The role of the coach is to ask questions and be passionate about helping people pursue their own solutions, ensuring and emphasizing clients’ ownership and responsibility of his/her ideas and solutions. This approach will be crucial, as the focus of INTERFACE project will be on self-empowerment of fragile communities striving to define and achieve their own goals.

<https://interface-project.eu/>

Despite the small size of the department academic research at the department has indeed had a significant impact on society and public debate.

Dr. Eiríkur Bergmann Einarsson, Professor of Political Science, is one of the leading scholars in his field of international politics, populism and nationalism. During the last three years, he has published two books on Populism and politics with Palgrave MacMillan Publishing. Furthermore, Eiríkur is a frequent commentator in the Icelandic media, providing his expertise and insights into the political debate. Furthermore, Eiríkur has written several articles for the UK newspaper The Guardian. His research topic is very current in light of recent surge in nationalism and populism both in Europe and in the United States.

Dr. Auður H Ingólfssdóttir conducted a research project on climate change and safety in the Arctic from a feminist perspective. She was one of the leading scholars presenting at an annual conference Arctic Circle and is frequently a guest at Icelandic media, when the topic refers to climate change policies, locally and internationally.

Dr. Njörður Sigurjónsson is a professor in Cultural Management. The MA-programme in Cultural Management has been run since 2004. It has proved to be among the most successful programmes offered at BU and is unique in Iceland. Njörður’s research has been a major influence on the development of the. Therefore, his research, as well as the research by Dr Sigrún Lilja Einarsdóttir (whose field of speciality is sociology of the arts) have impacted the development of the MA/MCM programme during the past 5 years.

Dr. Francesco Macheda recently published two extensive book chapters on economic growth and theories of development and edited by Peter Lang Academic Publisher and Palgrave MacMillan respectively. A draft version of these works has first been developed as class notes for his course of Economic growth and Development (6 ECTS), which he has been teaching throughout the last few years. In developing the course material, Dr. Macheda has benefited enormously from the feedback, discussions, and constructive critiques provided by his students at Bifröst.

Dr. Helga Kristín Auðunsdóttir, assistant professor in Law completed her PhD in Law from Fordham University, New York. Her project deals with hedgefund laws and her knowledge and expertise has been valuable for the University’s participation in the programme LawWithoutWalls.

PRME related research within the Department of Business

Faculty members in the department of business are actively involved in research projects on topics related to environmental and social responsibility as well as corporate governance. These research projects have resulted in various publications and conference presentations both in Iceland and internationally. Faculty members also integrate their research activities and corresponding research results in their teaching. While research on sustainability and responsible management has been one of the research topics in the department for a long time, recent and newly started research projects reflect the increasing focus of our research on these topics, a trend that is expected to continue during the next years. Recent examples of conference presentations and publications in the context of sustainability and responsible decision-making involving Department of Business faculty include:



Arruda, G.M., Jóhannsdóttir, L., Wendt, S., Sigurjónsson, P.O., 2022, The Role of Businesses in Climate Change Adaptation in the Arctic. In: Walker, T., Wendt, S., Goubran, S., Schwartz, T. (eds.), *Business and Policy Solutions to Climate Change: From Mitigation to Adaptation*, Palgrave Studies in Sustainable Business In Association with Future Earth, Springer, 341-364.

Gunnarsdóttir, P. H., Þorgeirsdóttir, P., 2021, Áhrif fjarvinnu á starfsánægju og líðan starfsfólks Ícelandair á Covid tímum [The effect of working remotely on job satisfaction and well-being of Icelandair employees during Covid]. Þjóðarspejillinn 2021.

Sigurjónsson, P.O., Wendt, S., 2021, Flækjur við mælanleika UFS þátta [The Dilemma of ESG Measurement]. In: Aðalsteinsson, G.D., Guðlaugsson, P.Ö., Steinþórsson, R.S. (eds.), *Rannsóknir í Viðskiptafræði II*, Háskólaútgáfan.

Svansson, E., 2018, Social entrepreneurs and lead users: The case of the Blue Lagoon, Iceland. *Equidad y Desarrollo*, (31, suplemento), 95-110. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19052/ed.4446>

Svansson, E., Einarisdóttir, S. L., 2019, Social Entrepreneurs & Lead users: The Case of the Blue Lagoon, Iceland. 8th International Conference on Social Responsibility, Ethics and Sustainable Business, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal, October 2019.

Svansson, E., Einarisdóttir, S. L., 2020, Hvernig ríma helstu einkenni góðrar stjórnunar og forystu við norrænan stjórnunarstíl? Dæmi frá forystukonum á Íslandi [How do the main characteristics of good governance and leadership fit the Nordic management style? Examples from female leaders in Iceland]. Þjóðarspejillinn 2020.

Svansson, E., Þorsteinsson, B. P., 2021, CO2 Mitigating Cosmetics Production in the Blue Lagoon, Iceland. Sixth International Conference on Climate, Tourism and Recreation – CCTR 2021.

Walker, T., Wendt, S., Goubran, S., Schwartz, T. (eds.), 2022, *Business and Policy Solutions to Climate Change: From Mitigation to Adaptation*, Palgrave Studies in Sustainable Business In Association with Future Earth, Springer.

Walker, T., Wendt, S., Goubran, S., Schwartz, T., 2022, Climate Change Adaptation: An Overview. In: Walker, T., Wendt, S., Goubran, S., Schwartz, T. (eds.), *Business and Policy Solutions to Climate Change: From Mitigation to Adaptation*, Palgrave Studies in Sustainable Business In Association with Future Earth, Springer, 3-12.

Student project work – as part of term projects or research projects as undergraduate or graduate theses – allows students to deepen their understanding and to develop their skills and competences in sustainability and responsible decision making.

Examples of undergraduate theses within the PRME area includes

Jóhannudóttir, E. V., Prioritization of Corporate Social Responsibility: a call for a review of the prioritization of corporate social responsibility actions by factors, categories and types of actions, Fall 2019.

Prastardóttir, H. B., Black Friday: Have Consumers in Iceland Been Deceived? Spring 2021.

Guðmundsdóttir, E., Financial Companies with a Sustainability Policy: Benefits and Incentives, Fall 2021.

Ólafsdóttir, H. M., Job satisfaction of employees of financial companies, Fall 2021.

Hilmarsdóttir, H. R., What is the situation in sustainable tourism in Iceland?, Fall 2021.

Examples of graduate these include

Traustadóttir, A. U., "You should be able to work full time, it's only fair." The experience and effects on work/life balance of nurses in Iceland working 8-hour shifts, Fall 2020.

Tryggvadóttir, H., If's this arm's length between the state and municipalities" – On climate strategies in Icelandic municipalities, Fall 2020.

Gunnarsdóttir, Þ. H., Effects of telework on job satisfaction and well-being of employees during Covid times, Fall 2020.

Guðmundsdóttir, Á. K., The leader and sustainability: Implementing sustainability to business practices and leaders role in that process, Spring 2021.

Gunnarsson, E., "It's all about eliminating waste" How Isavia's Business insights and Optimization use lean management tools to implement automation and are there opportunities for improvement, Spring 2021.

Albertsdóttir, H. M., Signs of burnout: How do managers and employees experience the prelude to burnout? Fall 2021.

Pétursdóttir, K. I., Conflict between employees and effects on well-being, the experience of middle managers in the public sector, Fall 2021.

Frontiers for COOPs in the Icelandic service sector

2nd Virtual Annual Nordic Chapter PRME Symposium,

December 15th, 2021

Kári Joensen, Assist.Prof. Bifröst University

Cooperatives, a collection of retail and consumer cooperatives in regions around Iceland, were important institutions throughout the 20th century, economically, socially and politically. The 1980s were a period of some economic turmoil in Iceland, with high inflation and labour market unrest. The Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies faced serious difficulties in the 1980s and was to a large extent dissolved, cooperatives have since been largely dormant in Iceland.

The project received a grant from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund to create a one-stop site for key information and resources on starting and running cooperatives in Iceland with a focus on Case-studies and lessons learnt from abroad.

Cooperatives offer opportunities across the whole economy and society. They offer resilience and growth and can function as engines of local growth. There are lessons to be learnt to support a more diverse economy and society, sectors such as; Tourism, Public services, f.ex. kindergartens, social services, The Gig economy, The Creative economy (see f.ex. their challenges during Covid) to mention but a few.



PRINCIPLE 5

PARTNERSHIP: We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.



PRINCIPLE 6

DIALOGUE: We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.

During the development of the Strategic Intent 2030 the University decided that enhancing our societal engagement and social impact is one of the main goals in the coming decade. Our ambitions are high, yet we realize the constraints our size places on us. We are a University with a total of 60 positions, academic and management, serving a growing number of students. With that in mind, we will focus on a select few ambitions we believe to be within our grasp and do them well. The main goals in this regard are;

Enhance our societal engagement and social impact.

- Sub-goal Deepen our commitment to engage the in the regional development of the West/ North-West/rural areas of Iceland, supported by the teaching provided at Bifröst University as well as by research, and business activities. Bifröst regional development partners include municipal leadership, companies, public organisations, and third-sector stakeholders.
- Sub-goal Establish a new centre focusing on Creative Industries, Entrepreneurial Innovation, Retail, and Collaboration space.
- Sub-goal We will champion environmental awareness and practices across our campus and in the Reykjavík office. We aim to improve recycling rates, and reduce waste, buy ethically, and engage our community on sustainability issues. We will encourage all students and staff to consider healthy living and environmental awareness. We will lobby for increased public transport use by requesting improved public transport connections to the Campus.
- Sub-goal We commit to a significant escalation in our efforts to ensure that the PRME principles are incorporated into our operations and develop an implementation plan to support us in this mission.



Engagement in regional development

Project on innovation and development centres

Following the University's strategy in the spring of 2021, negotiations began with The Agricultural University of Iceland to establish a joint innovation and development centre. Both universities are located in the western region of Iceland.

A letter of intent was signed in August 2021 and since then work has been underway to establish the center. Meetings have been held with the government and various stakeholders and they have been offered direct participation in the establishment of the centre. The aim is for the Innovation and Development Centre to be formally established in May / June 2022 and to be able to start operations in the future.

The aim of the universities is to analyse the opportunities that Western Iceland and Iceland as a whole have to offer when it comes to agriculture, food production, sustainability and climate issues, the utilization of natural resources and tourism and cultural activities. In particular, to support technological development, research, international cooperation and development and analysis in the fields of agriculture, tourism, creative industries and food production.

The establishment of the centre is in line with principles 5 and 6; building bridges between educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and extend our knowledge of the social and environmental challenges faced and to develop jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Other related activities

Bifröst University is a founding member of the West Iceland Innovation Network. The network connects parties involved in innovation and entrepreneurship in the western region of Iceland with a special emphasis on collaboration with the business community and society.

Bifröst University offers individuals and start-ups facilities and support to work on innovation projects (collaboration space). Companies and institutions have facilities for "jobs without a permanent location" at Bifröst.

Bifröst University regularly seeks companies and institutions in the West regarding collaboration on student projects. There, students get the opportunity to tackle real and challenging issues from business and society. University students are also offered internships at a company or institution internship which counts as 6 ECTS credits which corresponds to the credits for one elective course.

Cooperation agreement on research in regional community development

Bifröst University entered in 2021 into a cooperation agreement with the municipalities in the western region, where the municipalities agreed to fund an academic researcher from Bifröst University, the project is led by Dr. Vifill Karlsson.

The main purpose of the venture is to look at the position of immigrants in the labour market of the western region and to identify opportunities for improvement. The project will also analyse factors driving the success in these matters within a number of the western municipalities and evaluate how these results can be duplicated.



Environmental awareness and practices

In recent years students and staff at the Bifröst Campus have dreamed of creating an eco-village. In the recent strategy process, we were quite far along with articulating the idea and determining it as a firm goal for the University. In the end, the decision was to push it towards the future, not abandon the idea, the capacity to implement such a transformation is not at hand at the moment. The students in particular have been a driving force in such a vision and we hope for it to be realised at an advantageous time.

Regardless of not implementing a full eco village the sheer location of Bifröst University oozes sustainable possibilities. We are located as a campus in the middle of a lava field, the nature surrounding us is spectacular, the various offerings for outdoor activities are endless, hiking, mountaineering, biking, skiing, following rivers and bathing in lakes, even forest bathing which is a popular concept nowadays. Our energy is green as the electricity we use is a combination of hydro and geothermal. Our hot water comes pre-heated and ready to heat our campus directly from the lava field itself. Our vegetables come from local greenhouses heated by the same water and produced with some of the cleanest water in the world, the same groundwater which flows from our taps.

For a decade now, all our waste throughout the campus is recycled, while on campus no transportation is needed as everything is within walking distance.

Our goal however is to take our environmental practices to a higher level, we want to ensure that we have sustainability as our guidance in all our purchase. Meaning; investing in high quality technological equipment made to last, ensuring all cleaning products throughout campus are environmentally certified and biologically degradable, that we support local vendors regarding the food we purchase. We will in the coming years develop our approach, benchmark with other Icelandic higher education institutions to capture best practice

We have installed charging stations for electrical vehicles at the campus, facilitating staff and students to utilise driving their electrical vehicles to work. We are also in the process to exchange the University vehicles from fossil fuel vehicles to electrical vehicles, a process we hope to complete in the coming years.

Most importantly though, our digitalisation is reducing our carbon footprint in a massive way, regarding transportation, paper, water, energy and waste. A consequent and consistent environmental approach towards all remaining aspects of University affairs should bring us closer to the dream of an eco-village one day.

PRME principles and the PRME Nordic chapter

We aim to significantly escalate in our efforts to ensure that the PRME principles are further incorporated into our operations. Compiling a SIP report is always useful in order to take stock and as a basis for determining the course of action. The next step is to establish a trans-departmental PMRE committee consisting of both academics and management and update the workplan with clear objectives of what we want to achieve. This will be interlinked with our new undergraduate emphasis, the BS program in Business Administration with an emphasis on sustainability management, courses within this program will be inter-departmental accessible and we will link the students and their research projects closely to the PRME objectives. We are an active member of the PRME Nordic chapter, attending annual meetings and events, the vibrant Nordic chapter offers very interesting opportunities for benchmarking with.



United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

While devising the Strategic Intent 2030 the University decided to connect and focus our societal impact and aspirations to a select number of Sustainable Development Goals. Some universities have taken on the challenge to link their work to all 17 SDGs, Bifröst University, as a small rurally based University, decided to be more selective as we structure our work on an evidence-based model with measurable indicators, as such we limit ourselves to what is realistic for the University to achieve. Efforts into translating the ambition into practical projects is underway in 2022.

Streamline applicable United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into curricula and university operations



QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

As a rural university with a strong emphasis on digital education, Bifröst University aims to ensure equitable access to education, regardless of residence, to people of all walks of life who strive to attain a higher education.



GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Bifröst University will continue to be a leading school in Iceland in the field of leadership education for women via the Empowering Women programmes. As well, in the coming decade Bifröst University will explore and develop an action plan to increase men's access to higher education as gender equality is a major concern in this regard.



INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Enhance scientific research and foster innovation.

Bifröst University is an active member of the Icelandic research community. The University is envisioning an ambitious agenda in strengthening our research capacity and our participation in the international research community. The University places a significant emphasis on the advancement of research and seeks ways to enhance research in our departmental fields of study and related disciplines. Bifröst University is a founding member of the West Iceland Innovation Network. The network connects parties involved in innovation and entrepreneurship in the western region of Iceland with a special emphasis on collaboration with the business community and society.



CLIMATE ACTION

Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

We will further incorporate Climate action into our curricula. We will champion environmental awareness and practices across our campus and in the Reykjavik office. We aim to improve recycling rates, and reduce waste, buy ethically, and engage our community on sustainability issues. We will encourage all students and staff to consider healthy living and environmental awareness. We will lobby for increased public transport use by requesting improved public transport connections to the Campus.



PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

The Law Department at Bifröst University commits to supporting the fulfilment of the 16th SDG by ensuring high quality in the education provided and through participation in international partnership such as [Law Without Walls](#).



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