

PRME Principles for Responsible
Management Education

an initiative by the  United Nations
Global Compact

Sharing information on progress (SIP) report 2015-2017



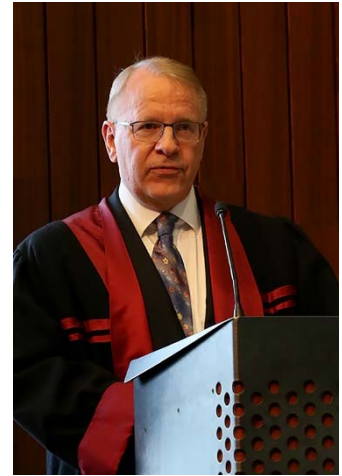
HÁSKÓLINN Á BIFRÖST
BIFRÖST UNIVERSITY

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From the Rector of Bifröst University, Dr. Vilhjálmur Egilsson

Bifröst University is a small business school in the Icelandic countryside. It is a unique institution in many ways. It was founded as a trade school “The Cooperative School” in 1918 and celebrates its 100 years anniversary in 2018. The school has upgraded itself responding to the need for upgrading of education in the Icelandic society. Bifröst University now offers Bachelors’ and Masters’ degrees in Business Administration, Law and Social Sciences.



Bifröst University has three fundamental values; initiative, cooperation and responsibility. The role of the school has been more or less unchanged for 100 years; to educate responsible leaders for business and society. The academic work at Bifröst University has foundations in the role and values of the school.

Bifröst University aims at graduating global citizens with roots in a local community. We emphasise open mindedness and tolerance along with small community values such as mutual trust and respect for other individuals. We expect our graduates to know the difference between ambition and greed and between pride and arrogance. We believe that true friendship is based on giving and accepting but not on insisting or coercing and taking.

Bifröst University is committed to PRME. We look at PRME as a welcome challenge and opportunity. By adhering to the PRME culture and principles we hope that our graduates become better leaders creating value for society in general.

Dr. Vilhjálmur Egilsson, rector

Introduction to Bifröst University

Bifröst University is a private, non-profit institution, set on a rural campus in West Iceland, 100 km from the capital city Reykjavík. Founded in 1918, Bifröst has a long history of training individuals for careers in business and politics and at the same time shaping future leaders. Bifröst offers undergraduate and graduate programmes in two faculties: Faculty of Business, and Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. In addition to degree programmes, there is a one-year foundation programme for students lacking full university entrance qualifications, as well as some life-long learning programmes for example Women's Power.



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. This entails that during the module students have a possibility to focus and work more intensely on each subject. However, each semester a few courses span 14 weeks to distribute evenly the 30 ECTS taken every semester.

Concurrently, Bifröst University introduced flipped teaching, where all lectures are recorded beforehand and available online, giving the students access to the lectures anytime they want wherever they are located. Students are to prepare before classes if there are classes on campus and before working weekends which are aimed at online students. The “classes” are to be used as active working for students.

The advantages of the modular system with flipped teaching are:

- Increased focus on the subjects taught at each time.
- Students' workload will be more manageable as co-ordination between subjects and instructors becomes easier.
- Increased time for students to master complicated parts of their studies as they will have access to all course material online.
- By delivering the lectures online, more time can be spent doing “hands on” work in class, under the teacher's guidance. This also increases the opportunity of dynamic discussions and interaction with the instructors in class.

In our curriculum for BA degree in PPE we refer to PRME in the following manner: *With a view to contributing towards society's progress in the direction of a better and richer environment, humane society and responsible participation, the University has signed up as a participant in the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative, headed by the United Nations. Concurrent to this, the University aims to promote awareness of sustainability both regarding study and research at the University and campus life in the University Village.*

In the curriculum for the Master's programme in Leadership and Management it is stated that the programme underscores and supports the role of Bifröst University in preparing people for leadership positions in the working world and in the community, guided by principles of sustainability and social responsibility.

From the PRME steering group at Bifröst University, activities relating to PRME in the years 2015-2017

A steering group was formed within Bifröst University in 2015 to pave the way for PRME related projects. In September 2015, the provost and a member of administration (Project Manager at Academic Services) attended a workshop on PRME at Copenhagen Business School. Subsequently, preparations for a workshop on PRME started in cooperation with Reykjavik University.

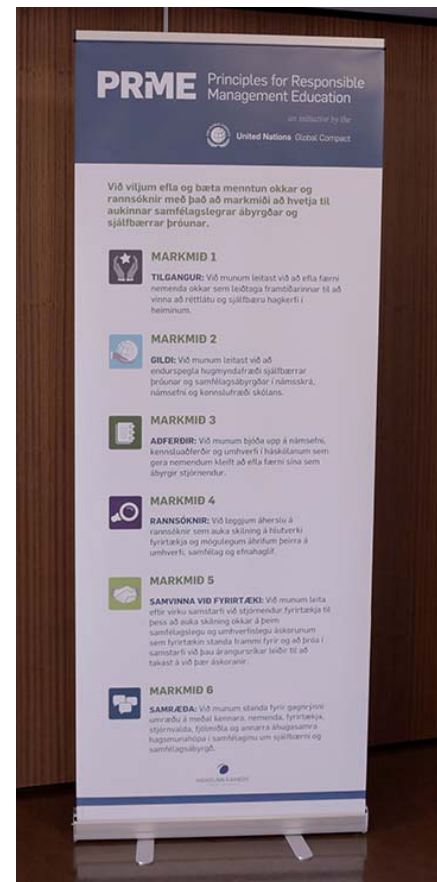
In 2015 the steering group consisted of six active members both from academic staff and from administration. The group introduced the ideology of PRME to teachers and encouraged them to intertwine PRME values into their teaching. Human resources were allocated to the topic, where a project manager at Academic Services was assigned to allocate a part of her time to work for PRME. The steering group met with the rector at the end of the year and informed him about the progress of the work during the year and the aims of the group as well as the working groups.

In the year 2015 two working groups were active at the university beside the steering group:

- Green Bifröst - emphasizing environmental issues on campus
- Healthier Bifröst - emphasizing public health on campus and among the staff

Green Bifröst's main effort was to improve the handling of waste and recycling at campus and in the university. There was a need to be more aware of what kind of products were used for cleaning and waste management at the university campus. Carpooling, both for students and other inhabitants, was among the things this group worked on. The staff has its own Facebook group for this which is well used. These issues were among those discussed and considered both with meetings inside the university, with the hotel and other inhabitants on campus. Among results were more possibilities to separate garbage for recycling.

In *Healthier Bifröst* group there was an active group of students offering various kinds of exercises and training on campus and aimed at putting up various offers for students and inhabitants of all ages. There was also a discussion about the menu at the hotel and if it was possible to have some healthy courses on the menu. Following this work a group of staff started regular walks, students were very active in the gym and the hotel tried to offer salad for students and staff for some time.



In April 2016, a seminar was held in cooperation with Reykjavik University under the heading: *“Responsible Management Education”*, where specialists from CBS in Denmark held lectures and introduced their way of working within PRME. The main speaker was Martiina Srkoc, director of the PRME Secretariat at CBS. 15 members of Bifröst’s academic staff attended the course and 3 members from administration.

In 2016 the steering group mapped a logical framework for PRME at Bifröst, to be able to have a better overview of current and potential activities that serve our objectives under PRME, both in the short and long term. There are many good ideas in the framework which need to be addressed. The framework was updated during the year 2016 and will be reviewed and revised yet again in 2018. Considering the limited resources allocated to PRME at the university, this strategic approach has helped the team to have a clearer vision of which steps we should take next. And it also ensures that completed tasks are appreciated and do not go unnoticed.

A poster was made to ensure the visibility of PRME in the buildings of the university at campus. Versions in Icelandic and English outline the six principles, and are given good exposure by the university’s main office and reception. Information about PRME on our website has also been reviewed and updated.

The steering group established contact with the PRME Nordic Chapter in 2015 and has since then participated (through Skype) in meetings within the chapter. In the long term, Bifröst University plans to accept the offer to become a Chapter signatory and contribute to the work of these Nordic Partner Universities. But as the appropriate resources had not been secured, we opted to participate only informally in 2015-2017.

In 2017, work within PRME was not very active due to changes of staff and various other reasons. There is a will to commit to the cause and continue work using the good foundation already in place within the university. There are ideas to enhance ideology of PRME by encouraging students to focus on sustainable values and social responsibility in their thesis and semester projects. The mission statement of Bifröst University already aligns well with the objectives of PRME, as it describes the role of Bifröst as “a university that educates socially responsible leaders”.

In the following chapters we outline the work done at Bifröst University in 2015-2017, relating to the 6 principles of PRME.



PRINCIPLE 1 – Purpose

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.*

Our mission is to educate socially responsible leaders, people who emphasise initiative and cooperation. With this mission and appropriate actions, we manage to graduate individuals who are entrepreneurial in spirit and who are capable of leading groups, organizations and societies with the aim of stimulating sustainable improvements.

We devote an effort to involve our mission and values into our curriculum to motivate our students to be innovative and focus on social responsibility. We emphasise creativity among our students and inspire them to consider the greater goods for societies rather than a narrow-minded benefit for a few. We apply the ideology of servant leadership within the school and want our students to be strong leaders who can serve their communities well.

While studying at Bifröst University all students must work on two semester projects that account for 8 ECTS each. Bifröst University places great emphasis on these research projects, where students are allocated a professional facilitator as well as concurrently attending a course in project management.



In these group projects students commonly select topics that are related to social issues. As an example of this a group of students studied in fall 2014 the potential social impact if the monopoly of alcohol, which currently lies with the government, would be abolished and common stores allowed to sell alcohol.

They wrote a comprehensive report on the subject, presented the results to their peers, teachers and staff at Bifröst University. Their results were discussed in the social media and taken up by multiple newspapers. Consequently, members of the Icelandic parliament, with a seat in a congressional committee with the task to review the matter, requested the students to come and meet them and present their results to the committee. The students were praised by the parliamentarian members who took their results into consideration in their decision-making process.

In 2015 students worked on several topics related to social issues:

- Environmental certifications for hotels and other accommodation: Their role in consumer choice and preferences

- Cultural racism in Iceland
- Nature Research Centre: Are there geographical differences in state funding of such research centres in Iceland?
- What is the opinion of residence in West of Iceland to the cultural life in the area?

In 2016 we can also mention several topics related to social issues:

- Environmentally friendly cars – pros, cons and prospects
- Is localization based on sustainability an efficient way to attract foreign tourists?
- Should distribution and selling of food containing insects be allowed in Iceland, and on what social grounds?
- What is the policy of the insurance companies Sjóvá and Vörður concerning social responsibility and how do they fulfil their policy
- Making of compost in the West of Iceland
- What is the extent of food waste in pre-schools in the West of Iceland?

PRINCIPLE 2 and 3 – Value and Method

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”

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

Values

Several projects were ongoing at Bifröst in 2015 and 2016 that aim to develop and strengthen our community and promote the values of social responsibility.

A lector from Bifröst University participated in the international Arctic V-Circle conference in Iceland, 2015 gave a lecture and facilitated two workshops

Some of these are best described as applied research projects while others entail broad based cooperation between businesses, regional governments and other institutions.

Methods

Bifröst offers degrees along three broad lines of study; business administration, social sciences and law. We are working to include elements of the PRME initiative into our courses and curricula. The courses offered do all, to a varying extent, incorporate elements of leadership and responsibility. Key courses in this respect, such as Servant Leadership and Management, are part of the curricula for all our bachelor level degrees while others are specific to one degree but offered as an elective course to students following other curriculums. The courses that touch upon the important values embedded within PRME are for instance the following:



Servant Leadership and Management

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon, and this course will deal with leadership based on various elements. Central concepts and theories of leadership studies will be examined, together with new trends such as ethical and authentic leadership. Students have an opportunity to examine and develop their own knowledge and understanding of leadership roles. Other key issues will be covered, such as leadership in teams, different leadership styles, international leadership, effective communication, gender differences and so on. Special emphasis will be placed on servant leadership, and the main points of this theory and its relevance will be addressed.

Sustainability and Social Responsibility

Sustainability and Social Responsibility is a course on CSR that among other things places an emphasis on environmental issues and sustainable development. Students are trained to use the tools that critical thinking offers, to tackle the ethical dilemmas that today's managers will face. Through work on class projects, students analyse the often-conflicting objectives of social and environmental responsibility of managers on one hand and on the other, pure profit maximization. This analysis is then followed by a discussion on how to form corporate strategy and on the role of the private sector in promoting sustainable development.



Ethics

The course provides basic training in the approaches of philosophical ethics. The focus will be on the fundamental theories of Western philosophy and on some of the most important thinkers of the Western world. Insight will be provided into how classical theories of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill relate to contemporary ethical issues today. The course will also examine some of the hot topics in contemporary ethics and how ethical theories can be applied to find solutions to pressing problems with which we are contending today.

Climate Change and International Politics

Climate change is increasingly being viewed as a threat to international security. Yet, leaders of the world have failed to reach an effective agreement on how to collectively address this challenge. This course will explore the complex political issues of climate change and how this topic is becoming one of the top priority issues on the international agenda. International negotiations as well as climate policies of selected states will be discussed. Emphasis will be placed on the complicated links between geopolitical concerns and challenges at the local level, the role non-state actors play in contributing to the problem and providing solutions, and how the issue of global climate change interacts with other international issues such as security, economic development and human rights.

Political Philosophy

Contemporary political debate has been largely shaped by American philosopher John Rawls's theory of justice, which can be said to have reinvigorated and given Western liberalism a new lease on life. The course deals with Rawls's theory, its origin, its influence and responses to

the theory. The course will also provide a general discussion of liberalism and libertarianism, utilitarianism, multiculturalism, participatory politics, discursive politics, feminism and other topics. Some of the pressing questions of today will be discussed, such as freedom of the individual, equality, identity, tolerance and disparity.

Environmental- and Resource Economics

The course covers the basics of environmental and resource economics. The interaction between the economy and the environment, the economic value of the environment and the main methods of measuring environmental quality will be discussed. The course will also address utilisation of natural resources, right of possession and classic



subjects relating to the ‘tragedy of the commons’. The concept of sustainable development will be introduced, and utilisation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and the ability of the market to ensure optimal use of natural resources will be discussed.

Development Economics

The goal of the course is to introduce the main issues of development economics. What affects economic growth, inequality, and poverty? Why do some countries achieve high levels of economic development and others do not? What are the policies governments can implement to change the growth path of their countries? The course uses economic analysis to examine issues such as education, health, population structure, labour force and localization policies, poverty alleviation, the role of women in development, the role of private sector in development, and the impact of natural resources production on development.

Sustainable Management

The course deals with various elements relating to sustainable management. Among the topics covered are the fundamentals of sustainable development, social responsibility and how this is connected to sustainable development. In addition, the course will touch on numerous other factors relating directly and indirectly to corporate sustainable development, such as ethics, codes of conduct, disclosure, financial markets, corporate governance, the environment and marketing. Finally, the course will address what is involved in servant leadership and how this methodology relates to sustainable development. – This course is at master’s level.

Summer School 2016 and 2017

Bifröst has run Summer School in 2016 and 2017 in the natural paradise of Bifröst right between a volcano and a glacier. Students are accommodated in comfortable single and double rooms at the program's beautiful campus on the shore of Lake Hreðavatn.



The summer school consists of a three-week programme (8 ECTS / 4 US Credits) with a high-level leadership study with an emphasis on sustainability.

The Summer School gives students leadership training and prepares them for the challenges that future leaders will face in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. The course explores emerging ideas about

leadership, The Nordic Leadership Model and Servant Leadership. Current issues are addressed, such as the diversity of manpower, sustainability, social responsibility and the integrity of modern firms.

The Summer School has been taught for two successive summers (2016 and 2017) with 20 participants in 2016 from 11 countries and 26 participants in 2017 from 14 countries. The students have come from all over the world as for example India, Brasilia, Singapore, Japan, Germany and Bulgaria. There is an international atmosphere on campus during these weeks and students have really appreciated the closeness to nature and pure water and air.

On campus

The great nature that Bifröst University is in has its influence on the campus life. Our students and staff members have great opportunities to enjoy the outdoors with walking, hiking, running, cycling, golfing etc. In the past we've had multiple choices of fitness training which varies between seasons and how innovative students and staff members are each time. As we have basic services such as a kindergarten, a store



and a café located on campus a car is not necessary and can be parked for days and even weeks at times. The campus life supports students in dedicating themselves to their studies and working towards their goals in a healthy lifestyle.

Bifröst University has a printing system that's both environmentally friendly and cost efficient. The estimated reduction in paper use is 30% from the former system. The students and staff are also encouraged to recycle and recycling bins are to be found throughout the university buildings and on campus.

Teachers are encouraged to use books which are available online and students have been buying such editions more and more over the past few years.

PRINCIPLE 4 - Research

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."

Within Bifröst University, its Research Institute manages and supports general development and research activities. Research centres have then been established around specific focal points or fields of study. Currently these are the Cultural Research Centre and the Centre for European studies. Several research projects, ongoing at Bifröst University, contain strong elements related to social responsibility. Below is a brief description of selected projects and how they align with the goals of PRME.

Advancing Migrant Women

Advancing Migrant Women is a training development project, run by five European project partners and funded by an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Grant. The project aims to develop high quality training material and support for migrant women, and to empower them by developing their entrepreneurial skills and employability. This is achieved through a holistic programme, based on training and mentoring which will increase their self-efficacy and confidence. This, in turn, should gradually improve the livelihood of these women and support their social inclusion and active citizenship. There are direct economic and social gains to be made by developing the skills of a minority such as migrant women. As active participants in society and the economy, individuals are better equipped to both increase their own wellbeing and to contribute to other's.

INTERFACE

Under an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project titled INTERFACE, our goal is to improve the situation of a selection of rural communities in the project consortium's partner countries. Partners of the consortium, from five European countries, collaborate with regions that have experienced a persistent demographic, economic and social decline over the past years. Generally, income is lower in more rural areas, they offer fewer jobs opportunities and economic and social activities are less diverse. The INTERFACE project is specifically addressing the needs of communities inhabiting such regions – so called "fragile communities". To alleviate the problem, we will write, test and implement a training course, where the curricula is based on the principles of coaching, thus establishing a team of community coaches. Supported by their network of peers, these coaches will work closely with businesses and entrepreneurs of their assigned region in promoting job growth, foster business startups and encourage inhabitants to become more active members of their communities. With more diverse economic activity and prosperous businesses, these otherwise fragile communities become sustainable in the long term.

ABCD

This project started in 2017 and draws from experience from a vocational program at Bifröst called Women Power, that has been running for close to 10 years now. In cooperation with Corvinus University from Budapest, and with funding from the EEA Grants in Hungary, the main goal of the ABCD initiative is to improve the employment opportunities of women, so as to reduce gender inequality in the labour market. The implementation of educational programs for women is one of the best ways to promote gender equality. The potential impact of these programs extends beyond the improved labour market situation of women, as their high employment rate has an overall positive economic effect for society as a whole.

Market segmentation analysis for the Icelandic Tourism Sector

In 2015, the Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation allocated funding to Bifröst University, the University of Akureyri and Promote Iceland, to conduct a market segmentation analysis for the tourism sector in Iceland. The project entailed targeting groups of potential visitors who fit certain pre-defined criteria, and then learning enough about their behaviour, preferences and media usage, so that the right marketing message could be delivered to the most feasible groups. The findings were published and disseminated widely among businesses and stakeholders within the tourism sector.

But what dictates the criteria for what constitutes a feasible group of visitors in the above-mentioned analysis? The overall aim of the project is in fact sustainability, to shape the booming sector of tourism in Iceland into a prosperous and sustainable industry in the long term. Preferred groups are those that bring stable economic value, are interested in local culture and lifestyles, while respecting the fragility of nature in a Nordic country.



With increased efficiency and profitability, tourism businesses can be run in a sustainable manner, without irreversible, adverse impacts on nature, on the community and society at large. The tourism sector has grown tremendously in Iceland for the past 10 years, and not without growing-pains. But with strategic planning and marketing, aided by research such as the segmentation analysis, the tourism sector can be steered onto a sustainable path for the long term.

PRINCIPLE 5 and 6 – Partnership and dialogue

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.”

Dialogue: “We will facilitate and support dialog 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.”

In our last report we discussed our aspirations to connect and work further with the closest society in the North-western region of Iceland. Bifröst University has already made efforts to realize this goal with success as can be witnessed by previously mentioned research projects.

Mobilizing entrepreneurial values and ideas across Europe

The project titled “MOVE-YE Mobilizing entrepreneurial values and ideas across Europe” intends to enhance entrepreneurial culture and networking between European entrepreneurs, offering to young and experienced entrepreneurs the opportunity to observe different business practices, knowing new markets, internationalize and innovate their business via a cross border mobility scheme. Following the specific scope of the European COSME work programme, the MOVE-YE Project attempts to contribute to the enhancement of both competitiveness and sustainability of European enterprises, to promote cooperation across sectors and sharing of entrepreneurial experience. Particularly SMEs and would be entrepreneurs from partners’ countries will be able to receive an integrated support, thus enhancing, enriching and advancing their “entrepreneurial know how, skills and attitudes and to improve their technological capacity and enterprise management”.

Conference on Servant Leadership and The Global Servant Leadership Research Roundtable

The discipline of servant leadership, that has been incorporated in the curricula at Bifröst for some year now, fits well with the 5th PRME principle on partnership, as it serves as a strong tool for organizational change and a focus on responsibility. As described by the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership’ website, “A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the “top of the pyramid,” servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.”

In September of 2015, Bifröst University hosted the 6th Conference on Servant Leadership in cooperation with The Greenleaf Centre – Iceland. The conference attracted a diverse group of participants from both the public and private sectors, many of whom hold positions such as human resource managers or general managers. Main speakers were Dr. Carolyn Crippen

from Victoria University, Canada and Dr. Kasper Edwalds from Denmark's Technical University in Copenhagen.

The conference was followed by the third edition of the Global Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, at Bifröst University in September 2016. The conference brought together a group of active servant leadership researchers in a setting that allowed for creativity, brainstorming and setting the agenda for the future of global servant leadership research.

Women Power

For 10 years now, Bifröst University has run a vocational management program called Women Power. The aim of the programme 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 Women Power was transferred to a much different setting in Africa, where it has been adjusted to the conditions of the underprivileged women in rural areas of North Tanzania. Women Power Africa was founded in March 2015 and it has been successfully running since then. Its purpose is 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.



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