

HEFCE corporate social responsibility policy 2011-2015

Introduction

1. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) for HEFCE means that we take account of the impacts of our activities on the environment, society and the economy. Our stakeholders include Government and the universities and colleges we fund, as well as our employees, suppliers, communities and society as a whole.
2. We published our first CSR policy in January 2006. This, our third policy, sets out our overall aims, key activities and targets to continue our efforts in relation to CSR to 2016. It covers operations at our main office in Bristol and our small central London office, plus the influence we have on the higher education sector through our policies and services. HEFCE aims to embed CSR into everything it does and to be a responsible public body.

Aims

3. This policy is structured around six aims:
 - a. To maintain strong business ethics.
 - b. To manage our environmental impacts.
 - c. To promote sustainable development through our procurement practices.
 - d. To encourage our staff to be active citizens, committed to high performance and continuous improvement.
 - e. To support the local community.
 - f. To work in partnership to influence the higher education sector.

Aim 1: To maintain strong business ethics

We want to continue to be an organisation that provides the highest levels of public service by embodying high ethical standards and engendering mutual trust and respect among our stakeholders.

4. We will achieve this through:
 - meeting, and where possible, exceeding all relevant legal requirements
 - behaving with honesty and integrity in all our activities and relationships with others
 - acting ethically and fairly at all times in our dealings with our stakeholders
 - maintaining internal controls that are adequate to ensure standards are met.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

5. In 2008 an Ethics Review undertaken on HEFCE's ethical culture by academics at the University of Leeds concluded that there was 'an overridingly positive impression of a strong ethical culture'. We will continue to undertake periodic reviews to assess our success in this area. For example, in 2011 we have initiated an internal review of our ethical policies and

guidance for staff which is drawing on the work of the 2008 review as well as current developments in ethical standards.

Aim 2: To manage our environmental impacts

We want to continue to be an organisation that improves its environmental performance continually, prevents pollution, and complies with, and where possible exceeds, applicable environmental legislation.

6. We will do this through:

- maintaining our certification to ISO 14001 (an international environmental management system standard)
- making the most efficient and effective use of all resources, encouraging all staff to develop a sustainable approach to their work
- minimising carbon emissions from business travel by avoiding unnecessary travel and travelling by public transport unless there are reasons why this is not practicable or if there are circumstances where travel by public transport would impede efficiency or effectiveness
- promoting sustainable modes of transport for commuting to work
- identifying and implementing cost-effective measures to reduce energy and water consumption
- reducing the amount of waste generated and disposed to landfill through a waste minimisation and recycling programme
- managing our grounds in an environmentally and biodiversity-sensitive manner.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

7. As a non-departmental public body we have a role in contributing to the Government's commitments for reducing its environmental impact. Therefore, we have our targets that are aligned with those set out in 'Greening Government commitments: operations and procurement'¹, which are to:

Carbon reduction

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy use on the whole estate and business-related transport by 25 per cent by 2015-16 from a 2009-10 baseline.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from domestic business travel flights by 20 per cent by 2015-16 from a 2009-10 baseline.

Waste

- Reduce the amount of waste we generate by 25 per cent by 2015-16 from a 2009-10 baseline.
- Cut our paper use by 10 per cent in 2011-12.

¹ These commitments were published by Defra in February 2011, and can be viewed at <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/gov/green-government/commitments/>.

- Ensure that redundant ICT equipment is re-used (within Government, the public sector or wider society) or responsibly recycled.

Water

- By 2015-16 reduce water consumption from a 2009-10 baseline.
- Report on office water use against best practice benchmarks.

Aim 3: To promote sustainable development through our procurement practices

We want to continue be an organisation where our procurement practices deliver value for money from non-pay spend and improvements in areas such as human rights, greenhouse gas emissions, community relations and product recycling.

8. We will do this through:

- implementing our sustainable and socially responsible procurement policy that includes consideration of CSR in all evaluations of tenders, within the constraints on public expenditure laid down by Government
- working with our suppliers, Government, and shared services purchasing groups to help us achieve our sustainable and socially responsible procurement policy aspirations in the delivery of our products and services
- supporting the principles of fair trade, and aim to purchase only fair trade products for meetings through our catering provider where possible
- using the Sustainable Procurement Action Plan Flexible Framework² annually to evaluate procurement practice.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

9. Our target is to achieve level two or above across all five themes of the Sustainable Procurement Action Plan Flexible Framework by 2014. We will also work towards the Government's commitments for procurement, which are to:

- embed the Government Buying Standards in departmental and centralised procurement contracts, within the context of the Government's overarching priorities of value for money and streamlining procurement processes
- improve and publish data on our supply chain impacts, initially focusing on carbon but also water and waste – setting detailed baselines for reducing these impacts.

² The Flexible Framework identifies five key themes: people; policy, strategy and communications; procurement process; engaging suppliers; and measurement and results. These are in effect the key behavioural and operational change programmes that need to be delivered in each public sector organisation to deliver sustainable procurement. Further information is available at <http://sd.defra.gov.uk/progress/soge/performance-data-2010/target-areas/flexible-framework/>.

Aim 4: To encourage our staff to be active citizens, committed to high performance and continuous improvement

As a knowledge-based organisation, our continued success depends on the expertise, talent, interpersonal skills and proactivity of our people. To be regarded as effective we need to be responsive to, and trusted by, our stakeholders. We aspire to empower and appreciate each other and operate with the principles of fairness and integrity at all times.

10. We will seek to achieve this aim through implementing our People Strategy³, which articulates our overarching principles in relation to people management. It identifies the following aims:

- promote an organisational culture that embodies the public service ethos and values
- have an approach to human resource management that supports the delivery of HEFCE's strategy within a continually evolving environment and is based on the organisation's overarching principles
- attract and retain high calibre people
- enable people to achieve their full potential in delivering HEFCE's success, and encourage creativity and innovation in appropriate circumstances
- provide people with a healthy, safe working environment in which individuals are treated with respect.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

11. We report annually to our Board, and subsequently on our web-site, on the progress towards the aims of our People Strategy. This includes our data on staff equality and diversity.

Aim 5: To support the local community

As a public body, HEFCE is working for the public good. Our mission includes a role to promote and fund high-quality, cost-effective teaching and research, meeting the diverse needs of students, the economy and society. We also want to be an organisation that continues to undertake initiatives aimed at helping local communities, the communities in which our staff belong.

12. We will do this through:

- a volunteering policy that enables staff who wish to undertake voluntary activities to do so

³ Further information on our People Strategy and associated reports to the Board are available at www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/people/.

- enabling our staff to continue to support charitable organisations every year through payroll giving, voluntary fundraising activities and giving them the time and opportunity to participate in charitable events.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

13. Our annual CSR report includes information on the amount of money raised for local and national charities and examples of voluntary activity by staff.

Aim 6: To work in partnership to influence the higher education sector

We want to continue to be an organisation where CSR is about more than what we do in our own operations. Our vision is that: ‘Within the next 10 years, the higher education sector in this country will be recognised as a major contributor to society’s efforts to achieve sustainability, through the skills and knowledge that its graduates learn and put into practice; its research and exchange of knowledge through business, community and public policy engagement; and through its own strategies and operations.’

14. We will do this through:

- making sustainable development a central part of our strategy for the future development of the higher education sector. Our sustainable development strategy sets out our approach to supporting the sustainable development agenda⁴
- promoting equality and diversity within staff and student organisations in higher education. HEFCE’s Equality Scheme⁵ sets out our views of the challenges facing HEFCE and the higher education sector with regard to equality and diversity, our aims and objectives, and our approach to meeting these
- as part of our policy-making process, identifying possible impacts on sustainable development and on equality and diversity. Where possible, take action to enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative ones.

How will we demonstrate our progress?

15. We will report annually on our web-site against the objectives in our Equality Scheme. We publish our sector impact assessments to demonstrate how we have considered the impacts of our policies on equality and diversity and sustainable development⁶.

Implementation

16. Within HEFCE CSR is overseen by a steering group that reports directly to the HEFCE Executive. The steering group is supported by the CSR implementation group, which has the

⁴ For information on HEFCE’s approach to sustainable development see www.hefce.ac.uk/lgm/sustain/.

⁵ Information on HEFCE’s Equality Scheme is available at www.hefce.ac.uk/lgm/divers/scheme/.

⁶ Our sector impact assessments are published at www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/sia/.

remit for implementing initiatives to improve our performance and meeting the commitments in this policy.

17. This policy and its implementation has the support of our recognised trades union, the Public and Commercial Services Union.

18. 'HEFCE corporate social responsibility action plan 2010-12' sets out the actions we plan to undertake by March 2012 to work towards achieving the targets set out in this policy.

Monitoring and review

19. We regularly benchmark and evaluate what we do in order to improve our CSR performance. Progress is reported three times a year to the HEFCE Executive and Board through the monitoring of our operating plan, and the information is published on our web-site. A sustainability report is included in our annual accounts, and we also publish a more detailed annual CSR report⁷. Progress towards and the appropriateness of our targets will be reviewed annually and any changes reported in our annual CSR report. We will revise our targets in 2015 or earlier if we exceed expectations.

Assurance

20. We seek assurance that the ways we measure our CSR performance are robust through periodic independent review of the methods used to calculate our environmental performance indicators and progress against targets. Reviews took place in 2002-03, 2005-06 and 2008-09. As a government-funded body, HEFCE is required to have a formal internal audit service that operates to Treasury standards. CSR is included within HEFCE's internal audit strategy. The need for an internal audit is on the basis of risk, with high-risk areas being audited more frequently. The first internal audit of CSR took place in 2010.

December 2011

⁷ Available at www.hefce.ac.uk under About us/Corporate Social Responsibility.