

# Sustainable education

**Antonia Lütgens** describes how an education geared to sustainability is proving itself as sustainable

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# 730

The number of business school signatories of the UN PRME initiative

**M**any business schools are now numbered among the 730 global signatories of the United Nations' PRME initiative. PRME aims to raise the profile of sustainability - including equipping students around the globe with a deeper understanding and better developed skills to deliver "change tomorrow".

"Quality Education", Goal 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, has the target that by 2030 learners around the globe will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. This article will explore ways to reach these learners.

Not only do business schools show a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but they also respond to a key theme in EFMD standards – Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability. This theme makes up one of the overarching dimensions in the EQUIS framework.

According to the EQUIS Standards and Criteria, a school should have a clear understanding of its role as a "globally responsible organisation" and its contribution to ethics and sustainability. This includes the integration of the theme into the school's educational offerings and the commitment to encourage and promote the ethical and responsible behaviour of its students. It leads us to the question of best practice examples for teaching sustainability.

The EFMD Online Course Certification System (EOCCS) pursues the sharing of good practice in online management education and can draw on lessons learned in the first three years of EOCCS' operation. In answer to the question: "Is online learning a suitable format to teach sustainability?". The answer is a resounding yes! Is it sustainable? – well, that is a key question for EOCCS but the current evidence is that it certainly appears to be.



Online learning provides key advantages for both learners and business schools. Learner benefits include self-paced learning and high levels of flexibility regarding time and location of studying. Online learning can also accommodate the needs of different types of learners and a more inclusive and engaging approach with techniques such as peer-to-peer learning.

Business schools have the opportunity to innovate online and modernise the educational process. Schools that have adopted MOOCs demonstrate institutional learning and digital skills development among their faculty. Furthermore, MOOC and other online provisions can also widen access to management education and reach out to a larger, more diverse and potentially global audiences - a strategic objective for many schools.

Happily, this strategic objective mirrors the spirit of SDG Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Indeed, online business education can provide affordable education worldwide, expand the availability of training and support lifelong learning.

So not only is there evidence to suggest that online education is sustainable in itself, but EOCCS community members, GEM and ESADE, which are featured in this article, have shown that topics centred on global sustainability provide excellent content for online courses.

### **EOCCS CASE - Grenoble Ecole de Management (GEM)**

Grenoble Ecole de Management (GEM) is an EOCCS pioneer and was one of the first schools in France to specialise in intercultural management with a strong internationalisation of its programmes and a belief that managers must be equipped to view the world and business with an informed international perspective.

The school experimented with early MOOCs and developed a series of courses on subjects considered important for the development of individuals, companies and society in general. The creation of their geopolitics MOOC Penser Global is totally in line with this objective. Its content aims at examining the ways in which the world evolves and identifying different ways to achieve international harmony.

"Penser Global" was developed to offer high-quality and relevant subject matter not widely taught in some regions of the world (including francophone countries in parts of Africa - a key target audience for GEM).

With this first MOOC, and in alignment with the school's deeply rooted belief in the importance of intercultural awareness, GEM was also looking to reinforce the importance of geopolitics as it believes that a keen understanding of this dimension has become pertinent to decision making for managers and companies. The MOOC itself has evolved to a suite of three MOOCs, which now form a programme entitled: Global studies: international relations and world politics.



#### **About the Author**

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### **EOCCS CASE - ESADE Business School**

Another excellent EOCCS-certified MOOC that demonstrates this practice is *Geopolítica y gobernanza global: riesgos y oportunidades* from ESADE in Spain. ESADE Business and Law School's online learning strategy is guided by its "Student First" initiative, which creates innovative learning ecosystems that place students at the centre of the learning experience through accessibility, flexibility and personalisation.

The aim of the MOOC is to bring students from all over the globe closer to some core concepts of geopolitics and global governance, working from historical overviews and broad, overarching trends to very specific and applied examples from the past and present.

The MOOC's content draws on the expertise of the institution, specifically of the team involved in "ESADEgeo", the Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics and its President, former EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana.

According to ESADE, this online course adds value to students' learning experiences in several ways.

First, it is accessible, providing students all over the world with the possibility to access world-class content free of charge.

Second, the geographical and cultural diversity among the students enriches the learning experience, providing multiple perspectives on the issues being debated. In this sense, peer-to-peer interaction is encouraged consistently throughout the course.

This MOOC has reached over 25,000 learners, including more than 2,300 participants in a single intake, the learners coming almost equally from South America, Europe and North America.