

Conclusions and Next Steps

Barry Coates, Sustainability Programme lead

This Dialogue is providing a key input to the development of the Sustainability Programme at the Business School. In preparation for the Dialogue, we prepared a simple survey about drivers of sustainability, challenges ahead and the role of universities. The survey was sent to a contact person in 135 of the larger companies that are active in sustainability. We have received preliminary results from the analysis of 23 responses.

We have sent the survey to one person in each target company; so if you have received one, please complete it. Or contact me at b.coates@auckland.ac.nz and I can let you know who in your company was sent the survey.

The sample size is still small, so please treat these results as preliminary.

Drivers of sustainable business initiatives

The major driver was identified as CEO or board leadership, followed by future market opportunities and opportunities for cost reduction. It is interesting that these drivers are at the core of business operations and not an optional add-on to the financial returns. The lowest four factor (of nine) were staff incentives/demand for action, stakeholder pressure, regulatory change and investor pressure.

We want to understand how these drivers of sustainability are changing. Over time, we would expect:

- increased pressure from investors (the annual impact report on responsible investment in New Zealand from the Responsible Investment Association of Aotearoa (RIAA) has identified strong growth in activity)
- Renewed pressure from regulation if there was a change in government
- Increased pressure from staff and stakeholders, as has been evident in other countries

We will do a cross-country comparison from available data in other countries.

How universities can contribute

The findings from the survey are very helpful for the development of the Sustainability Programme at the Business School. It is especially helpful that

the findings are consistent with the direction of the Programme! The highest rankings were:

- Raising public awareness about the business case for sustainability: events like Sustainability Week held in April have helped to make the case for sustainability through inspiring and engaging events, with the involvement of students, alumni, members of the public, as well as the media
- Ensuring all graduates have a basic understanding of sustainability: this is the initial objective for full integration of sustainability through the Business School curriculum.
- Student internships, projects and case studies: the high ratings for this contribution will help strengthen these programmes
- Research partnerships – this Dialogue and a previous Symposium in November have focused on building sustainability around the Business School's research strengths

We would welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Business School strengths

There are many other strengths than the six areas that were the subject of presentations at the Dialogue. The presentation slides outline some of the other areas of strength.

Start of a Dialogue

Thanks for coming and for your enthusiastic engagement in the roundtable discussions. Particular thanks to Abbie Reynolds and Roseline Klein for their presentations and to Deputy Dean of the Business School, Prof. Jilnaught Wong for his welcome.

We would welcome your ideas for engagement and collaboration in the development of our Sustainability Programme.

Barry Coates
Sustainability Programme lead
b.coates@auckland.ac.nz