



17th April 2014

CUC Consultation on the Higher Education Code of Governance

ABOUT US: The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges is the sustainability body for tertiary education in the UK. The EAUC seeks to work with Members and partners to drive sustainability to the heart of further and higher education.

The EAUC Vision is a university, college and learning and skills sector where the principles and values of environmental, economic and social sustainability are embedded.

Our Mission is that we will lead, inspire and equip Members and stakeholders with a shared vision, knowledge and the tools they need to embed sustainability within curriculum and operations.

Our membership is made up of 240 member institutions comprising some 3100 professionals.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE:

The EAUC welcomes this significant opportunity for its Members to speak and seek to ensure the principals and values of social, economic and environmental sustainability are at the heart of institutional governance.

It is this Code of Practice which reflects accepted good practice so this is a critical opportunity to ensure UK universities are fit for purpose in protecting and improving quality of life through our teaching, research, students and sustainable campuses. No other type of organisation has such an opportunity to contribute so much and with that comes a responsibility to do so.

Although the EAUC view is that the new format of the Code reads well and the translation into numbered paragraphs is good, our concern is that it reflects a rather outdated approach particularly focussed on financial governance. As stated in the introduction, governance and societies expectations of corporate accountability is in a period of substantial change, and the Code should better reflect this.

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Our students are entering a world characterised by rapid change, uncertainty and risk in socio-economic and environmental conditions which will affect them throughout their professional and personal lives; as Higher Education Institutions, we hold a unique position in society and have an important and influential role to play. What we also have is an opportunity, as a sector with a social conscience, to lead change in addressing the many challenges and opportunities that sustainability presents.

The student population now expects to see a modern approach to responsibility and accountability and will not be attracted to institutions that are out of touch. They will feel this way either intrinsically as young visionaries or as people who know that to present themselves as good material for employment they must be seen to be across modern thinking and practices.

Sustainability is about assuring the future through developing resilience and adaptability in staff and students, through building coherence and synergies across all university operations, and ensuring our sector's impact is beneficial at all levels from local to global. Many universities already play a significant role through their governance, research, teaching and learning, campus management and use, business and investment, and their impact on staff, students and community. We commend to CUC the powerful sector-led LiFE Index which helps institutions build a responsible and accountable approach across all aspects of the institution to improve engagement and performance. Please contact me if you would like to know more about this as we prepare to relaunch it in a free format.

The EAUC is fully supportive of CUC and would be happy to work alongside CUC to support university governance better embrace students and the wider public increasing demands for economic, social and environmental responsibility and accountability. The EAUC is currently drafting a guide for university governors and we would be delighted to do this in partnership with CUC.



Iain Patton, CEO
Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges

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Comments on sections:

1.11

Annual Report: We would like to see the Corporate Governance Statement being wider in scope and subject matter i.e. institutional economic, social and environmental responsibility accountability

3.3

There is a limited focus on 'institutional sustainability'. What should be included is the impact of the university on local and wider society, be it the local impact of the campus on neighbours or the global positive impact of low carbon research

3.7

This paragraph is vague and comes across as something of a sop towards any elements it has missed.

3.8

There needs to be some mention of effectiveness and actual outcomes. The Code is merely asking for procedures to be put in place rather than for oversight that ensures that the procedures produce the desired outcome and impact.

4.9

This is too restricted in scope. Mention should be made about inculcating and monitoring proper attitudes and behaviour in respect of for example:

- Community engagement
- Environmental sustainability
- Ethical investment

Appendix: There is a lot of good material here which should not be optional but be transferred into the Introductory Letter and embedded throughout the Code.

