

# Green Gown Awards case study



## University of Exeter Business School Winner - Courses One Planet MBA



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### Summary

The One Planet MBA is a unique programme designed to develop a new generation of managers and leaders who will transform businesses and deliver more sustainable strategies. The One Planet MBA challenges the traditional approach to management education and includes a unique partnership with WWF and distinct approaches to teaching and learning.

### Project partners

Co-founded in partnership with WWF, the most far reaching and effective environmental organisation in the world. The One Planet MBA also works closely with Atos, Canon, Coca Cola, The Cooperative Group, IBM, Ikea, Lafarge, Lloyds Banking Group, Nokia, Sony, Syngenta and Thomson Reuters.

### The problem

There is an urgent need to reshape the way we do business. Environmental, financial and social changes are challenging traditional business models and the impacts of resource depletion, pollution, population growth and climate change needs to be better understood by commercial organisations. There is a need and an appetite for a new generation of managers and leaders who are capable of developing more sustainable business approaches.

### The approach

The One Planet MBA is designed to deliver the knowledge, understanding and skills required to run a successful and sustainable business in a rapidly changing natural, financial, social and global market environment. It develops individuals who have a deep understanding of the challenges we face. It is global in both outlook and student composition. It encourages its participants abilities to innovate, to think and act strategically and to lead others and organisations through change. We place an emphasis on tools, techniques and practical application.

Many MBA programmes offer modules in corporate responsibility and ethical management. Where the One Planet MBA differs is that the core values of responsible management and sustainable business run through the very heart of the programme, from the topics covered to the learning and teaching style.

### Our goals

1. Integrating environmental expertise. Working with the world's largest and most respected environmental organisation, the programme benefits from WWF's experience of engaging at the highest level with major companies around the world on sustainability issues.
2. Engagement with thought-leaders. The One Planet MBA includes a series of distinguished guest speakers who infuse new thinking into The One Planet MBA. Consultants and academics from around the UK and overseas have also contributed to exploring the implications of sustainability for business education.
3. The social perspective. The programme also engages with the public sector and social enterprise. In 2010/2011 it began working with the Environment Agency and a range of not-for-profit organisations such as Tree Aid, Action Aid and the Exeter Drugs Project (EDP) to further integrate their perspectives into our teaching.

### Profile

- Higher Education
- Undergraduate / Postgraduate/MBA.
- c.4,500 students fte
- 200 staff
- Campus location in Devon

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4. Community impact. Our programme and our students are having a direct impact on the local community, business and society. Our students are working on sustainability consultancy projects with local and regional companies in the SW of England and also major corporates.

## Obstacles and solutions

- Encouraging existing faculty to adapt their world view to engage with the One Planet message, to ensure that sustainability is an issue woven into all of our discipline areas rather than bolted on as an additional thought.
- Exploring a pedagogy that speaks to the core messages and philosophies within the programme, opening up space for exploration and discussion in a physical classroom structure which drives didactic teaching.
- Accommodating the increasing number of interested parties who want to teach or speak on the programme. How to make best use of a rich resource base in a packed teaching schedule.
- Running discussion groups and one to one support with existing faculty to explore how their materials explore the core sustainable issues so necessary to the programmes aims. Spend time to bring people along with the design as it unfolds.
- Challenging those responsible for space design and timetable allocations to broaden the types of rooms on offer. Taking the learning outside of the classroom.
- Creating learning communities and informal spaces where students can engage with additional ideas and materials.

## Performance and results

Our innovation cohort year has demonstrated early benefits of the One Planet MBA. The MBA intake for Exeter has increased. The student mix – 22 countries and an equal gender balance – has provided a remarkably different and stimulating cohort compared to previous intakes. The focus on sustainability has also attracted interest from major corporates. Alongside WWF we are now working with 12 companies who are supporting the programme – contributing to scholarships, offering guest speakers, case studies and student projects and placements. The success of the innovation cohort, applicant interest and corporate interest demonstrates clearly that the MBA can adapt to a changing world and can also be a leader of change. In due course, once the programme is fully established, there is significant potential for One Planet MBA networks.

## Lessons learned

The success of the innovation cohort, applicant interest and corporate interest demonstrates clearly that the MBA can adapt to a changing world and can also be a leader of change.

## Further information

Please contact Julie Hargreaves by emailing [mba@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:mba@exeter.ac.uk) or visit the website [www.oneplanetmba.org](http://www.oneplanetmba.org).



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