



# Sustainable Food Systems, Accounting, & the UN SDGs: A Live One-day Learning Event

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Held on 30th May 2024, the Queen's Business School (QBS) MSc End-of-term One Day Event represented a comprehensive and engaging learning experience emphasising the journey "from farm to fork". This event, which attracted 18 postgraduate students from various MSc programmes, was structured to provide practical exposure and theoretical insights to the critical aspects of sustainable food systems, accounting, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The day began with a visit to the College of Agriculture, Food, & Rural Enterprise's (CAFRE) Greenmount Campus, followed by a sustainable lunch at Riddell Hall and insightful guest speaker presentations, and concluded with a student group activity ('QBS Sustainable Food Systems Student Video Challenge'). The diverse activities provided a holistic learning experience that combined academic knowledge with practical, real-world applications.

The visit to the CAFRE's Greenmount Campus provided students with an immersive learning experience regarding sustainable agricultural practices through engagement with experts who demonstrated cutting-edge techniques in agriculture, horticulture, and food production within real-world settings. The students learned about the importance of combining sustainable stewardship with agricultural productivity, which aimed to reduce environmental impact and maintain high-level efficiency and quality outputs simultaneously. The visit further highlighted the role of organisations as well as individuals (as customers, [potential] employees, and citizens) in contributing to the transition toward more sustainable food systems. Moreover, the guest speaker presentations generated valuable insights into the complexities and challenges of implementing sustainability within the food retail industry. Brian Horgan, Head of Campus Food and Drink at Queen's University Belfast, and Joe McDonald, Head of Corporate Affairs at ASDA (pictured overleaf), shared their experiences in addressing sustainability concerns within their respective organisations.



*Pictured above: participants of the Sustainable Food Systems, Accounting, & the UN SDGs event with staff from CAFRE.*

Students learned about the strategic approaches these leaders are taking to reduce environmental impact, such as sourcing sustainable ingredients, implementing efficient practices, reducing food waste, and measuring and reporting environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance. The in-depth discussions further indicated that achieving sustainability in the food retail industry and beyond requires innovative practices, strong leadership, and a commitment to long term value creation. The Student Video Challenge proved to be an effective pedagogical tool which fostered student engagement and encouraged creativity. The competition format motivated students to synthesise learning outcomes and share insights and thoughts in a way that was joyful, meaningful, and interactive.

The event was designed to align with [the Seven PRME Principles](#) and the [PRME Impactful 5 \(i5\) Characteristics](#) (e.g., joyful, meaningful, actively engaging, and socially interactive), which reflected QBS's commitment to foster responsible management education. The event conveyed the values of responsibility and accountability to various stakeholders (other than shareholders), society, and our planet, which should be embedded into both business practices and individual behaviours (Principle 2: Values). It advanced the purpose of responsible management education by focusing on the interrelation and interaction among sustainable food systems, accounting, and the SDGs, an interdisciplinary theme that effectively links behaviours and practices at the individual and organisational levels to ecosystems and sustainable development (Principle 1: Purpose). Particularly, the discussions highlighted the importance of leadership, encouraging students to consider how future business leaders—that is, themselves—can contribute to the SDGs through incremental changes to small things like personal food habit or big decisions such as business strategies.



## The Seven Principles of PRME



### 1. PURPOSE

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.

### 2. VALUES

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.

### 3. TEACH

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.

### 4. RESEARCH

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.

### 5. PARTNER

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.

### 6. PRACTICE

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.

### 7. SHARE

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

By engaging stakeholders from academia, business, and wider community, the event exemplified how partnerships could effectively advance responsible management education and practice (Principle 5: Partner and Principle 6: Practice). It also transformed the teaching and learning environment and provided a distinct experience beyond traditional classroom settings (Principle 3: Teach). The Student Video Challenge facilitated collective learning through creative video content, which was later disseminated via social media channels. Further efforts to share this event to wider teaching and learning communities through transferable learning resources (e.g., a case study in [Higher Education and SDG2](#) and [blog article](#)) and presentations at academic conferences amplified its impact beyond the immediate participants (Principle 7: Share). The transferable learning resources can serve as a basis for future (pedagogical) research on, for example, SDG2, sustainable food systems, and sustainability (accounting) education (Principle 4: Research).

Overall, the QBS MSc End-of-term One Day Event offered a holistic learning experience effectively integrating the PRME principles. From the students' perspective, they have gained an in-depth understanding of sustainable food systems, responsible management and leadership, accounting and the SDGs in the practical setting, which they are likely to carry forward into their daily lives and future career development. The success of this event reflects QBS's commitment to adopt innovative teaching and learning approaches, embed real-world applications into the curriculum and extra-curriculum activities, and foster students' employability skills and sustainability mindset. It has demonstrated the effectiveness of using creative, student-centred activities to deliver complex, important topics. The transferable learning resources generated could influence other institutions to adopt similar pedagogical approaches, thus leading to positive changes in higher education.





## Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank [the PRME UK and Ireland Chapter Innovative Pedagogy Seed Funding Competition](#) and [the QBS Business Engagement Directorate](#) for their generous support in funding this event. The funding was instrumental in enhancing the scope and impact of the event, enabling the organisers to arrange a comprehensive programme that included transportation for the off-campus visit, provision of a sustainable lunch, facilitation of guest speakers, and prizes for students. Also, the author is grateful to the attendees at the 10th and 11th PRME UK and Ireland Chapter Annual Conferences (at Aston University and the University of Exeter, respectively) for their inspiring feedback on the design of this pedagogical project. The author would like to express her special gratitude to Dr Laura Steele, Director of [Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability at QBS](#) for her unwavering support in organising the event.