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# SHiFT

*Support Systems for Sustainable  
Entrepreneurship and Transformation*

## *Good practice collection University support for sustainable entrepreneurship*

*University of Manchester  
England, UK*

MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester

# Good practice collection

SHIFT (“Support Systems for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Transformation”) is a unique research project and is funded through the EU programme ECO-INNOVERA: [www.eco-innova.eu](http://www.eco-innova.eu). SHIFT’s main goal is to enable universities, incubators, business development organizations, financial institutions and other relevant actors to support eco-innovation and sustainable entrepreneurship more effectively. On the basis of thorough empirical analysis of the status quo and the identification of good practices world-wide, concrete and realistic recommendations have been developed for policy makers and actors of the support systems: [www.shift-project.eu](http://www.shift-project.eu)

The University of Manchester is part of a selection of good practice examples the Borderstep Institute has collated in the context of the SHIFT project to highlight exemplary activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Finland, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the USA that have successfully integrated sustainability in their respective entrepreneurship support system.

## University of Manchester – England, UK

**Characterization:** *Comprehensive research university with a strong societal focus*



### Good practice highlights

**Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI):** an interdisciplinary research centre that explicitly explores the role of eco-innovation in more sustainable consumption and production.

**B.Sc. in “Management (Innovation, Sustainability and Entrepreneurship)”:** offers a specialization in Innovation, Sustainability and Entrepreneurship (ISE). The specialization explores the area of strategic innovation management and sustainable development through real company case study analysis; it includes modules on entrepreneurship and small business development.

**M.Sc. “Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship (IME)”:** allows students to study modules such as “Eco-Innovation Management” and “Water and Sanitation Planning and Policy in Developing Countries” and complete a dissertation on a topic of eco-innovation.

**Manchester Enterprise Centre:** offers a range of taught core and elective units for undergraduate students, some of which include sustainability content: Sustainable Development for Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Cases in Sustainable Development, Interdisciplinary Sustainable Development. The centre supports social enterprises.

Manchester has **two separate professorships on “Innovation and Sustainability” and “System Innovation and Sustainability”**. “Innovation and Sustainability” is defined as a research theme.



### Key data

**Location:** Manchester, England, United Kingdom

**Founded:** 1824

**Number of students (2014):** 38,400

**Profile:** The University of Manchester’s strategic plan for 2020 puts a strong focus on social responsibility (as a goal and key performance indicator) and environmental sustainability as an enabling strategy. The Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, one of the largest groupings of innovation researchers in the world, has defined “Innovation and Sustainability” as a research theme. Its research strategy talks about impact and notes that “our work must have an impact beyond academia and yield economic, social and cultural benefits whenever the opportunity arises”.

# Interview with Andrew McMeekin, Ph.D.

*Professor of Innovation, Management and Policy  
Research Director, Sustainable Consumption Institute  
Manchester Business School  
The University of Manchester*



## *Why did your university/business school start to support sustainable entrepreneurship and/or eco-innovation endeavours?*

I joined the university as a research assistant in the early 1990s. Back then I was involved in a Research Council-funded research project led by Professor Ken Green who was the initiator of research on innovation and sustainability in the business school. At that time, I believe, there wasn't any teaching at the business school on that topic. There may have been a few lectures in other courses but it wasn't very prominent in the teaching programme. So I think this was the business school's full research endeavour into the specific area of innovation and sustainability. In terms of the "why", this was a research-led, bottom-up initiative by Prof Green at the time, not necessarily a strategic move in the '90s to develop a set of broader activities in that area.

## *Who initiated your programmes, what were the milestones of their evolution?*

It was a gradual evolution over a 20- to 25-year period starting with the Research Council-funded research project. Since then we have passed through different phases where on the research side there have been a long sequence of externally funded projects mainly from UK-based research council and also some projects funded by the UK Government's Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which was the main policy funder. There were two research clusters at the time. They originated from two independent universities (UMIST – University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology and the Victoria University of Manchester) that subsequently merged to become The University of Manchester. In the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, we set up a specific theme on "Innovation and Sustainability" which I ran from around 2008. Together with colleagues from another school within the university, I developed a proposal

which was eventually funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, DEFRA and the Scottish government for a 3-year term, between 2010 and 2013. The research group, which we called Sustainable Practices Research Group, cut across several different universities and conducted research on the ways that new technologies get absorbed in everyday life and how that brings about changes in the environmental impacts of everyday social activities. In 2007, with the same combination of people – and this is when it becomes more strategic – the university entered a strategic partnership with TESCO to establish the Sustainable Consumption Institute. In summary, there has been a gradual creation of critical mass and more programmatic funding. Over time, more experts with domain expertise have been recruited to support corresponding activities.

## *What can other universities learn from it?*

It is a story of evolution and growing momentum. You start off with fairly small and modest activities often centred around a very small number of people. I am talking of one or two initially. You start creating momentum by building networks within the university and beyond. That involves building partnerships with other universities and with a whole range of other non-academic stakeholders. That's essentially what we have done over the last 20 to 25 years. The main story is to develop an intellectual identity that has relevance to stakeholders embedded in international networks and a network within the university itself.

## *What are your next steps/future plans?*

In terms of the Sustainable Consumption Institute, we plan to further develop our research programme and to find support for that through a more diverse range of funding streams. We are trying to push the development of our international academic networks. We are in

discussions with the Chinese Academy of Social Science in Beijing. Together with seven or eight European partners, we are involved in a research consortium funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 scheme. And on the agendas we are working on we have connections to networks in North America as well. This is important for us to feel we are embedded in the global academic interest in issues of not just innovation and sustainability, but also questions of dynamics of consumer behaviour of consumption practices. We are trying to develop more of an intellectual synergy in terms of our international networks and also developing our stakeholder networks with UK government organizations such as the Committee for Climate Change, the Waste and Resources Action Plan and a number of other stakeholders like that.

## *What has been the impact of your sustainable entrepreneurship support?*

As an anecdote, someone I supervised for his dissertation on the M.Sc. "Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship (IME)" programme had focused on "Carbon Reduction in Supply Chain Management" based on research at TESCO. As a result of his training at Manchester he was able to get a job as a sustainability analyst at PricewaterhouseCoopers. The Manchester Enterprise Centre has worked with firms developing green technologies and business ideas. At a Master's level, students work with companies in a kind of incubator environment. This experience has helped them develop business plans and some of those companies have gone on to prosper. Examples include students who have won a category of "Venture Further". A winner of the business category in 2013 officially launched her ethical fashion business Fair-T which produces Fairtrade cotton t-shirts. A winner of the social category 2015, Powercycle, produces energy from kinetic movement and stores it inside the attached power adaptor.



## Additional Information

University of Manchester:  
<http://www.manchester.ac.uk>

University Strategic Plan 2020:  
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=11953>

University Research Strategy:  
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=9823>

Manchester Institute of Innovation Research:  
<https://research.mbs.ac.uk/innovation/Research/Researchthemes/Innovationandsustainability.aspx>

Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI):  
<http://www.sci.manchester.ac.uk/research>

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