UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Socially Responsible Investment Policy: **Consultation Report**

Finance Division

Executive Summary

This report documents the consultation process undertaken to review and update the University of Sussex's Socially Responsible Investment Policy (SRIP). The original policy, established in 2016-17, was reviewed to ensure alignment with current institutional values and to maintain the University's sector-leading position on socially responsible investment.

Background

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sasha Roseneil recommended updating the University's Socially Responsible Investment Policy to reflect evolving values and maintain best practice standards. A dedicated review group, chaired by Council Deputy Chair Tony Bullman, was established to oversee the policy update. The group comprised Council Members and staff experts, supported by additional staff in an advisory capacity.

Consultation framework

Guiding principles

The consultation process was designed around several core principles to ensure meaningful engagement and transparency:

Audience-led messaging: Communications were tailored to address specific community sensitivities and concerns, including financial implications and ethical priorities.

Two-way communication: Multiple forums for feedback were provided to ensure all stakeholders felt heard and could contribute meaningfully to the process.

Strategic communication: Information was shared at key milestones throughout the review process, maintaining transparency while avoiding information overload.

Demonstrating action: The review group committed to showing how stakeholder feedback influenced decisions and to outlining clear next steps for implementation.

Leadership involvement: Senior figures actively endorsed and participated in the consultation to reinforce credibility and demonstrate institutional commitment.

Proactive concern management: Potential areas of resistance, such as financial trade-offs and differing perspectives on socially responsible investments, were anticipated and addressed throughout the process.

Consultation objectives

The consultation aimed to:

- clearly communicate the review process, including timelines, key milestones, and regular updates
- provide transparency regarding proposed policy content and rationale
- facilitate meaningful engagement by clearly articulating how community members could participate and what input was needed
- balance informing stakeholders with active listening
- ensure stakeholders felt heard, valued, and had a sense of ownership in the outcome
- learn from best practice of other policies from across the sector, and from investment managers specialising in delivering socially responsible investment portfolios.

Desired outcomes

The consultation process sought to ensure that stakeholders would:

- **feel:** Engaged, informed, and included
- **think:** The policy represented positive change for the University
- **do:** Access information about SRIP and share it positively within their networks.

Consultation activities

Communication channels

Staff and students were invited to participate through various communication channels, ensuring wide accessibility and awareness of the consultation opportunity.

Face-to-face consultation meetings

Two principal consultation meetings were held:

- **initial consultation:** Focused on the principles underpinning the policy review
- **draft policy consultation:** Provided opportunity for feedback on the proposed policy document.

Written submissions

Staff and students were offered the opportunity to provide written feedback on the principles informing the policy review. Numerous individuals and groups participated in this process, submitting detailed responses.

Detailed consultation sessions

Several in-depth consultation meetings were convened with:

- academic staff with particular expertise in relevant areas
- student group representatives
- union representatives.

These sessions enabled detailed discussions about the principles and emerging policy, allowing participants to provide comprehensive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Ongoing communication

Throughout the consultation period, the review group maintained continual communication with consultees, informing individuals of how their contributions had influenced the policy development and keeping the wider community updated on progress.

Stakeholder feedback

Feedback from participants indicated strong satisfaction with the consultation approach:

Tony Bullman, Deputy Chair of Council, and chair of the review group said: “It was a pleasure to work on this endeavour. It represented the best of Sussex, encapsulating constructive challenge and debate, diverse interests and opinions, and collaboration for the common good. I think we all gained much from participating and contributing. A huge thank you to all those involved.”

Professor Peter Newell, Professor of International Relations, stated: “For me, the process towards curating this social investment policy was transparent and impressively inclusive and respectful of diverse student and staff views.”

Lewis Wilson, Education and Employability Officer for the University of Sussex Students’ Union, commented: “Developing the Socially Responsible Investment Policy was a challenging process, but it was worth every step. Seeing students’ voices genuinely influence policy that has such massive implications, especially the commitment not to invest in companies complicit in human rights abuses, showed that our community can live up to its values and deliver when called upon. The work continues but this is a definite step in the right direction and I feel really proud to say that the University actually listened to students and staff on what was best for the Sussex community.”

Outcome

The consultation process resulted in an updated Socially Responsible Investment Policy that reflects the diverse perspectives and values of the University community. The policy represents the outcome of genuine engagement with staff and students incorporating feedback to create a comprehensive and values-aligned framework for socially responsible investment.

Conclusion

The review of the Socially Responsible Investment Policy demonstrated the University’s commitment to a transparent, inclusive decision-making process. Through structured consultation activities, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and responsive policy development, the University has updated its SRIP to align with the principles of ethical investment to deliver a sector-leading investment policy.

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