

# Responsible Business Policy

## May 2018

UNITE  
STUDENTS

### ABOUT UNITE STUDENTS

Unite Students is the UK's largest and most established manager and developer of purpose-built student accommodation. We provide a home for around 50,000 students, in more than 140 properties, across 28 leading university cities in England and Scotland. We work in partnership with more than 60 Higher Education institutions, as well as letting rooms directly to students. Our guiding purpose is to create a *Home for Success* – providing the best accommodation for students, where they can live, grow and succeed both at university and beyond.

### DOING BUSINESS RESPONSIBLY

We want Unite Students to be a trusted brand, and *Up to uS* is our plan for doing business in a responsible and sustainable way. While our business purpose of *Home for Success* defines why we do what we do, and our business plan of providing *Great Service*, with *Great People* in *Great Properties* directs activity, *Up to uS* sets out how we go about this responsibly.



Up to uS is our commitment to act responsibly and sustainably as a business, while providing our students with a strong foundation for academic and personal success. We are committed to looking after the interests of customers, investors and partners, reducing our environmental impact, creating an inclusive and positive workplace and contributing positively to the communities in which we work. Up to uS is not a standalone project or programme; it is not 'owned' by any one individual or function within Unite Students; instead, like our purpose and values, it is a key element of our brand and defines our approach acting responsibly in everything we do.

### OUR Up to uS OBJECTIVES

Up to uS helps all Unite Students employees, suppliers and customers understand what they can do to help, focusing on four overarching objectives set out below. More details of our approach in these areas are set out in various supporting policy documents such as our Health and Safety Policy, Code of Ethics, Environmental Policy and suite of HR Policies.

**Looking after the interests of our customers, partners and investors.** We aim to provide a great service to our customers while balancing the needs of other key stakeholders; delivering a sustainable return to investors, while meeting the needs and expectations of our customers and university partners is just as important as reducing our environmental impact or delivering positive social impact:

- We will ensure we are legally compliant, maintain **transparency and integrity**, and meet customer, partner and investor expectations.
- We will track and manage **risks and opportunities**, including those with a responsible business aspect such as climate change and social impacts.

**Reducing our environmental impact.** We recognise that our operations impact the environment, and that we have a responsibility to manage and reduce this impact. We also have a duty to help our students develop lasting responsible living habits. We focus on reducing our three most materially significant environmental impacts – Energy & Carbon, Water, and Resource Use & Waste – across our existing estate and new developments:

- We will continue to improving the environmental performance of our **buildings**, both existing properties and new developments, reducing environmental impacts (especially energy and water efficiency), reducing waste, and creating and supporting responsible living habits.
- We will continue to enable and encourage **responsible behaviour** in our students and employees, promoting lasting responsible living and working habits that stay with people after they move on from Untie Students.
- We will **manage our energy and water use**, making use of renewable and low carbon energy sources, and managing our energy use intelligently to reduce demand at peak times.

**Creating a diverse and engaged team.** We want to continue to be a great place for people to work, harnessing the diversity of our engaged and inclusive team to deliver consistently high service and standards:

- We are committed to creating a truly **diverse and inclusive** workplace, and believe this is key to our continued success as a business.
- We believe in **career enrichment**, providing our employees a rewarding, fulfilling yet balanced working life, with the chance to develop in role and pursue new opportunities.
- We are committed to supporting the **wellbeing** of our students and employees, providing as safe and secure home and workplace.

**Delivering positive social impacts for young people and communities we work**

**in.** We aim to deliver positive impacts that help young people succeed in higher education:

- We will continue to support the **Unite Foundation**, providing scholarships for free accommodation to young people in the UK from care or estranged backgrounds.
- We will continue to work closely with selected **charities** who either support young people or help us to engage our students with sustainable living practice, supporting them with a range of activity including fund raising, donations, and benefit in kind.
- We will continue promoting meaningful student and employee **volunteering**, supporting organisations and initiatives in the communities we operate in.
- Engage in community initiatives where this provides opportunities for us to better integrate with the local community, or engage young people with the business.

**OUR Up to uS GOALS**

We have set ambitious goals to help drive progress towards these objectives. These include:

- **Creating a diverse and engaged team**
  - 50/50 gender split in senior management by 2019
  - Accreditation to Level 3 of the Disability Confident scheme
  - Ongoing improvement of our Stonewall Workplace Equality Index rating.
  - Maintain Living Wage accreditation
- **Delivering positive social impacts for young people and the communities we work in**
  - Help over 90% of Unite Foundation scholars successfully complete their degree by 2021

- Further enhance our interaction with local communities and charity through continuation of strategic growth in partnerships and specific projects
- Achieve a 35% participation rate in our employee-volunteering scheme by 2020, supported by a comprehensive offer of student volunteering opportunities
- Achieve BITC Community Mark accreditation by 2021
- **Reducing our environmental impact.**
  - 50% cut in carbon emissions per bed by 2025, compared to 2014
  - 20% reduction in energy use per bed by 2025, compared to 2014
  - Zero waste to landfill by 2025
- **Looking after the interests of our customers, partners and investors**
  - Disclose our performance openly in line with the requirements of GRI Standards, and respond to GRESB and CDP
  - Strive to meet targets set out in our Health and Safety policy
  - Deliver a stable and sustainable return to investors
  - Provide a safe and secure home for our students
  - Disclose in line with GRI Standards and maintain our FTSE4Good listing

Further more detailed goals relating to each objective are also set out in the relevant supporting policies.

## GOVERNANCE

Our Responsible Business Committee is responsible for implementing this Responsible Business Policy. Headed by our Chief Financial Officer, the Committee meets quarterly and is accountable to the Board for monitoring responsible business risks, opportunities and issues, and coordinating our approach across the business. We are also committed to transparency and disclosure, and will make sure we regularly and publically report on our approach and progress in this area in line with the requirements of GRI Standards while also disclosing to CDP and GRESB annually.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Responsible Business Committee and communicated to appropriate stakeholders. All Unite Students employees and contractors are expected to comply with this Responsible Business Policy and support its implementation.

**Richard Smith, Chief Executive Officer**

**May 2018**