

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS
Future of Business Education
Business School Association of Canada
November 5, 2020

The Business School Association of Canada (BSAC) invites proposals for research, which examines the future of business education and informs leaders responsible for the strategic direction of business schools in Canada. The research study (or report) must be conducted within the context of the changing business environment, Canada’s global position as a leader in study abroad, and the changing expectations expressed by the varying stakeholders. The role and impact of business schools within Canada, their impact on our society and how they should be positioned for the future needs in a post-pandemic economy are research avenues that could be explored.

There is growing recognition that businesses need to take a broader view of their role than simply profit maximization¹. This view is coming from businesses themselves, from critics of the role of business in society and from the Business School academy. It is resonating more strongly in the context of post-pandemic recovery from COVID-19 and the articulation of a need to “rebuild better”.

In terms of businesses themselves, the Business Roundtable in the US, for example, recently redefined “the Purpose of a Corporation to Promote ‘An Economy That Serves All Americans’.”² Similarly, the Chairman of Blackrock argued in his most recent letter to CEOs that “a company cannot achieve long-term profits without embracing purpose and considering the needs of a broad range of stakeholders.”³ Further, investment decisions are increasingly being asked to consider ESG criteria (environment, social and governance).

At a broader societal level, business, and by extension a shareholder model of capitalism, has been criticized for contributing to any number of societal ills, ranging from increasing inequality to climate change and the erosion of our social fabric. There are also calls for business to play a larger role in combating racism and discrimination and to foster more inclusive and diverse

¹ Hoffman, Andrew (2020), “Business education as if people and the planet really matter,” *Strategic Organization*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/eprint/EGXW33WAACTKWKMJNHHI/full>

² <https://www.businessroundtable.org/business-roundtable-redefines-the-purpose-of-a-corporation-to-promote-an-economy-that-serves-all-americans>

³ <https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/larry-fink-ceo-letter>

workplaces, and to help achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals more generally.

Critics, of course, neglect to mention the positive contributions of business to society in, for example, alleviating global poverty, stimulating innovation or boosting welfare, and the value of clear incentives that drive behavior. Notwithstanding, an examination of what a business education comprises and how it is delivered are critical exercises to undertake today as a failure to do so will further open the door to new entrants and partnerships, which challenge the future value of study in business at Canadian business schools. Canadian business schools should position program development and delivery to prepare entering students for the challenges they will face upon graduation. With this in mind, we need to position programs for an environment 5-10 years in the future.

As an example, among the programming where business education may be positive and impactful, is corporate social responsibility and sustainability, since a legitimate area of concern has taken root, as witnessed by the establishment of research centers and the proliferation of research activity. Such activity is being driven both by the values of individual faculty members and in response to increasing demand from students and other stakeholders. Business schools and MBA programs are now being ranked according to their contributions to achieving a broader purpose (e.g., Corporate Knights' Business for a Better World ranking), and some schools have developed sustainability focused degree programs (e.g., the Sustainable Innovation MBA at the University of Vermont). Accreditation bodies have also included such criteria in their evaluation processes, e.g., the focus on ethics, sustainability and governance for EQUIS accreditation. AACSB's vision is that "business and business schools are a force for good, contributing to the world's economy and to society"⁴.

At the same time, however, it is unclear how deeply the importance of social responsibility has taken root in business schools more generally, and whether they are well-reflected in both curricula and operations. To put it bluntly, are business schools simply playing lip service to the concepts (educational greenwashing) or are they embracing them, or is this the result of being tethered to the culture and traditionally lengthy program revision processes within academia?

While we know that business decision-making is complemented and supported by business education, or at least we hope that this is the case, there are issues that need to be better understood. How is a broader stakeholder view of capitalism being embedded in business schools? How do business schools integrate the importance of social responsibility within their curricula and research activities? To the extent that changes are being made, are they timely

⁴ <https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/ed22020%20aacsb%20business%20accreditation%20standards%20%20final%20%20pdf%20for%20release%20%2002032020.ashx?la=en&hash=62E26CF8B3D1836BE46BB08F51C1AD57A748E54E>

and having an impact on corporate behavior? Are they contributing to the competitiveness and well-being of Canadian society? Should this be a foundation for all Canadian business schools or is a diversity of approaches and perspectives more fitting? What are the best practices in integrating social responsibility and sustainability, both in Canada and globally? What are the challenges in implementing such a purpose-driven approach? What are the consequences of sustaining the status quo?

The proposed research should seek to improve our understanding of the interplay between social responsibility and sustainability towards long-term relevant programming in business education. Perspectives from different disciplines are welcome. We also encourage evidence-based reports that have recommendations towards this objective.

Submission Guidelines:

This call is part of the Business School Association of Canada (BSAC) initiative to evaluate the role of business education in promoting a more purpose-driven economy.

You are invited to submit a research proposal including on any of the above or related topics. The proposal should clearly indicate the topic of interest and the interface between sustainability and business education. We welcome any and all disciplines, methodologies and frameworks.

Important Deadlines:

Research study proposal	January 31, 2021
Award of grant	March 1, 2021
Report submission deadline	September 30, 2021

Grant value:

BSAC will provide a financial award of \$10,000 to the successful proposal, \$5,000 upon award, and \$5,000 following receipt of the full report, subject to terms and conditions as outlined in the agreement with successful candidate.

For any queries please contact Tim Daus, Executive Director of BSAC at daus@bsac-aegc.ca

Guidelines for proposals for research proposals

Please refer to “Future of Business Education, Business School Association of Canada (BSAC), November 5, 2020” for specific details on project subject.

Proposals should be 3 to 5 pages maximum, exclusive of appendices, and should be organized in the order described below.

Proposal Abstract

Resume (approximately 50-80 words) of research focus, objectives, methodology, and primary deliverables.

Proposal Summary

Primary researcher’s name, contact information, and credentials.

Proposal title.

Explain how, in your view, this research will support the BSAC overall mission to expand the organization’s knowledge and understanding of the issue.

How could the report be used to further our knowledge and understanding of the problem in a way can be of value to BSAC, its members and important stakeholders in the Canadian management education sector?

Research Description

There are a number of issues addressed in the call for proposals document. Please describe the particular approach you would choose for this research. What would be the focus of the research? What is your understanding of the key issues? Why is this topic important?

Methodology

Describe your proposed methodology and explain how it will answer or lead to a better understanding of the research problem.

Expected Results / Deliverable Description

What do you see in terms of length of final document?

What information would be included and how does this coincide with the proposed methodology?

Timeline for completion

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee in February 2021, with an intended award decision to be made by March, 2021.

Deadline for final report is September 30, 2021. Information on expected progress reports and other details are to be negotiated with selected candidate before final award is granted.

Appendices

Curriculum vitae of researcher

Submit proposals to:

daus@bsac-aegc.ca

For more information contact:

Timothy Daus,
Executive Director, BSAC
514 340 7116
daus@bsac-aegc.ca