



The Case for Human Rights in Business Education– A Tool Kit

Dorothee Baumann-Pauly, Michael Posner, Dan LeClair

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1. Introduction

In today's globalized economy, companies face a range of human rights challenges that are growing in importance and attracting increasing attention. Human rights generate great student interest and complements teaching and research in many other areas of business education. Because so many of these issues are highly visible, business schools that incorporate human rights into their curricula will have the potential to enhance their public reputations, improve recruitment prospects for top students, strengthen their ratings, and generate new sources of funding. Incorporating human rights into the curriculum is also the right thing to do, because of the importance of these issues to society. As the current model for business education is being tested by rising costs and declining application numbers, schools that feature cutting-edge global issues like human rights in their teaching and research will be seen as leaders in shaping 21st century global business education.

Human rights issues manifest themselves differently in each business sector. Companies that rely on global manufacturing or agricultural supply chains grapple with labor issues that run the gamut from worker safety to child labor. Mining companies routinely operate in conflict zones, where security challenges are ever-present and exploitation of women and children is a subject of constant concern. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted growing economic inequalities that fuel populism and nationalism, threatening to undermine economic and political stability. Those who exploit social media to exacerbate political divisions and amplify hate test the current governance models of online platforms. Businesses now are expected to navigate this complex terrain while operating in a fishbowl—a world dominated by new technologies that amplify public attention to all of these issues, putting the brand reputation of even the largest and most profitable companies at risk.

Most business schools have devoted little or no attention to these issues, but this is now about to change. As global businesses increasingly deal with these challenges, business educators will be expected to provide the tools for current and future business leaders to grapple with these issues. Business schools offer the ideal venue to explore 21st century human rights challenges, both in teaching future business leaders and conducting cutting-edge research. Business school professors will have an opportunity to work with corporate leaders, helping them better understand these complex challenges and develop the tools to address them. Over time, business schools can and should play a leading role in this new field, developing effective industry standards and metrics, as well as organizational insights into how to apply these standards in practice. This guidance will help corporations address risks to their operations and to their reputations. Finally, business schools also can provide the empirical and conceptual framework to help corporate leaders and others build the business case for adopting long-term strategies to promote human rights.

A network of business schools to advance human rights

Just beginning to take shape, the field of business and human rights (BHR) promises to become an important element of teaching and research at leading business schools. As part of the effort to accelerate the evolution of this area, the Global Network of Business Schools for Human Rights was founded in 2017 by the Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University's Stern School of Business, the Alliance Manchester Business School at the University of Manchester, and the Geneva School of Economics and Management at the University of Geneva. This network now comprises over 50 business schools.

More information about the network's annual meeting and activities can be found here:

<https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/global-business-school-network>.

On a parallel track, the larger Global Business School Network (GBSN), which connects more than 100 leading business schools from 50 countries to improve access to quality and locally relevant management education for the developing world, is an essential partner in this effort. Many of the schools in the GBSN orbit are located in the global South, where many human rights issues are playing out in real time. Adding human rights to the business school curriculum provides an exciting opportunity for new forms of collaboration among these schools and their counterparts in Europe and North America. GBSN is well-positioned to serve as a resource and community for schools implementing recommendations in this toolkit.

About this tool kit

Representatives from a number of business schools, both professors and administrators, have worked jointly to assemble this tool kit. It includes information and resources explaining the increasing relevance of human rights in a business school context and provides resources that can be helpful to those in other business schools who wish to become involved.

Specifically, this document provides an overview of readily available teaching resources, research outlets, and various ways of institutionalizing human rights at business schools. It includes contributions from representatives of schools that are already including human rights in classes, public programs, and research. These testimonies highlight some of the key building blocks for successfully integrating human rights into the business curriculum. The appendix provides a list of contacts at key business schools that stand ready to offer you further advice on how to initiate a human rights program at your school.



1st Meeting of the Global Business School Network for Human Rights (2017)



Dan LeClair, Global Business School Network, CEO

2. Why Human Rights Should Be Included in the Business Curriculum

A. Human rights issues are growing in importance to business.

Three main areas are good examples of the intersection of human rights and business. In these and other industries, business schools have an important leadership role to play.

Labour practices in global supply chains

Multinational companies are outsourcing their production of goods and services to countries across the globe. While these relationships look very different in each industry, reliance on outsourced operations inevitably limits close oversight and significantly increases human rights risks. While there are strong economic reasons for outsourcing these essential business operations, a growing number of business leaders now understand the risks associated with global supply chains and are trying to build internal capacity to mitigate these risks.

Privacy and free expression issues in information technology

The human rights risks are very different for companies in the information and technology sector, which are leading the transformation to what the World Economic Forum calls the Fourth Industrial Revolution. To cite one example of these new challenges, social media companies are grappling with growing public concern about user privacy and the increasing level of hate speech, bullying, political disinformation, and other harmful content. The playbook is being written on these and many other human rights-related issues pertaining to these new technologies. Future business leaders working in these industries will need the tools to analyze the risks and to make smart business decisions that are mindful of the best interests of society.

Mapping the social component of ESG investing measures

In the investment sector, there is increasing demand for assessments of the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance of companies. In particular, there is a need to better define and measure the social component of these assessments, which include a range of human rights issues. This also is an important component of what 21st century business schools need to address, both in their research and teaching.

B. Human rights are highly relevant across core business and management functions.

When educating future business leaders, business educators must anticipate the kinds of new challenges their students will face for the rest of the 21st century. Issues relating to human rights fall squarely within this remit. In the best business schools, courses in management, supply chains, leadership, and information technology will need to include attention to human rights. Business finance courses will also need to integrate human rights into their curriculum, as these issues become more important to the financial sector.

Table 1 provides examples of topics related to human rights that are relevant to various business functions and that correspond to the types of courses regularly found in the core of general business and management programs.

Course or Function	Human rights issues (examples)
Accounting	Detecting human rights issues from tax evasion, theft, etc.
Finance	Risk assessment, Social investing, real estate issues, crisis management impact on vulnerable communities
Marketing	Reputation and branding, Value chain issues, privacy issues, misrepresentation to vulnerable populations
Leadership	Diversity and inclusion, shareholder and stakeholder relations
Operations management	Production, global supply chains, health and safety issues, lack of cultural and religious rights and awareness over production
Business Analytics	Bias issues, privacy issues, implications of measurement
Managerial economics	Incentive structures
Macroeconomics	Impact of austerity measures on various communities
Organizational behavior and Human Resources	Child labor, immigration/migration issues, health, bias against women, disabilities, bullying, pay equity
Strategy	ESG orientation, governance, unionization

Table 1: Human rights topics relevant to course types/business functions

C. Human rights are central to social responsibility and sustainability, which are increasingly important to students and employers.

Classes with such titles as 'Corporate Social Responsibility' and 'Business and Society' are already part of the course offerings¹ in most business schools. Students' interest in courses that discuss the broader societal impact of business keeps rising, and leading business schools are further increasing their course offerings.

These new classes all discuss in different ways the impact of business operations on the environment and human lives. Human rights, however, are often not explicitly mentioned or only mentioned in passing. Human rights language in the business school context is still alien to most instructors. If human rights are mentioned at all in management education, it is in the context of risk management, where the focus lies on avoiding human rights issues through corporate operations and public relations exercises.

This risk management perspective on human rights is too narrowly focused on avoiding harm for the company. All too often, it does not factor into its equation the potential harms to other rights holders. Risk management also overlooks business opportunities that companies can create when they understand and address human rights proactively. This affirmative business case for human rights requires companies to assess and refine their business models.² The normative framework of human rights offers a clear structure for clarifying what can be expected from companies when they

commit to responsible business conduct in different industry contexts. Human rights can therefore be a useful reference point for existing classes that deal with social impact. The human rights frame helps to develop standards and metrics to assess the human rights performance of companies across the same industry. This performance measurement focus distinguishes human rights approaches from other company actions that today are often skeptically regarded as window-dressing.³ As many have framed corporate commitments as based on profit, people and planet, adopting a performance-based human rights approach is relevant to strengthening corporate performance, as well as for enhancing business school teaching.

Recent social movements, including climate change marches, the #MeToo debate, and Black Lives Matter protests, further underscore the relevance of this agenda and for business schools to address these vital issues in the classroom.

With increasing frequency, forward-looking companies are adjusting recruitment practices to identify graduates with leadership potential on these cutting-edge issues. Paul Polman, former CEO of Unilever, believes additional skills and knowledge will be needed to become a good business person -

*"To be a good business person, you need to know as much in the future about sustainability as you know about sales. You need to know as much about climate change as you do about cash flow. You need to know as much about international development as you do about business development."*⁴

(Paul Polman)

D. Human rights contribute to the development of 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, cultural awareness, and learning agility.

Business education, in the opinion of its many critics, has done a poor job of helping students to understand and respect a broad range of values and to see beyond the narrow beliefs propagated by large corporations. That was a key argument in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching report published in 2011, which focused on undergraduate business education. There continues to be considerable concern in university settings over the instrumental or vocational nature of much undergraduate business education.

Meanwhile, MBA programs have been called out by business for being out of sync with their needs. According to Srikan Datar, David Garvin, and Patrick Cullen (2010) of Harvard Business School, there has been a “rising chorus of concerns” that business schools have not done a good job of developing critical thinking, which is about conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing information to guide decisions.

These criticisms challenge business schools to realign curricula to address the current needs of business and society. As shown in exhibit 1, critical thinking, for example, now tops most lists of the current and future skills needed in the rapidly changing world.

Top 10 skills in 2020

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgement and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum 2016

Exhibit 1: Top 10 skills in 2020

What this tool kit calls for—the infusion of human rights into the business curricula—can be viewed as an important step towards grounding the study of business within an understanding of a wider world. By providing another lens through which students can view business decisions, the human rights perspective opens up the mind to broader considerations, beyond simply efficiency and profitability. Human rights topics are often complex and involve ethical dimensions that require critical thinking. Similarly, this kind of thinking is supported by examining problems through multiple lenses, which is the recommended approach for business curricula. Taken together, the inclusion of human rights in business education can be viewed as a step towards improving business education in response to a broad range of criticisms, while maintaining its reputation for relevance to the business context.

3. Teaching Business and Human Rights

While the case for including human rights in business education is clear, it can be difficult to accomplish. A typical business school has a wide range of degree programs with varying objectives. And for any program, curriculum design involves an extraordinarily large number of choices about content and pedagogy, as well as the overall architecture holding those two things together. It also can be a highly politicized process, with professors vying to ensure their areas of focus are included. This part of the tool kit provides recommendations for teaching human rights in business. It is practical, focusing as much on what is feasible as on what's ideal.

The recommendations for teaching human rights in business are derived from the collective experience of several leading business schools, which have been paving the way for nearly a decade. As indicated above, their experiences have been shared through the Global Network of Business Schools since 2017.

A. Foundations

The underlying philosophy driving the teaching recommendations is that human rights and its principles provide a different, and important, lens through which business decisions can and should be viewed. There are many other lenses, of course, including profit and efficiency, and the idea is not to supplant them, but rather to introduce new perspectives when thinking about problems and their solutions. This approach is built on the assumption that business schools are not trade schools that focus only on mechanical skills. They must help learners to grapple with tough questions and understand the complexities and tensions involved with business challenges including a commitment to human rights.

When human rights are incorporated into the curriculum, it might lead to learning objectives such as being able to (a)

identify when human rights issues are present in business problems and solutions, (b) evaluate various aspects of a problem with respect to human rights, and (c) demonstrate appreciation for human rights in developing strategic and operational decisions in business.

To support this approach, all business students should be required to read, discuss and apply three documents:

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#)⁵
- [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights \(2011\)](#)⁶
- [Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact](#)⁷

The United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) refers to human rights explicitly in Principles 1 and 2, and implicitly in Principles 3 to 6, when referring to labour. The United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) were adopted by the UN in 2011 following the 2008 UN Framework on Business and Human Rights. Each has a strong academic legacy in social science research as well as a grounding in business practice and social expectations of business. They were developed through multi-stakeholder processes led by John Ruggie, a political scientist, former UN Assistant Secretary General and Harvard professor. His mandate came from then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

It is useful to categorize degree programs as follows: undergraduate (general and specialized); general business masters (MBA, MIM); specialized masters (such as Masters of Finance); and doctoral. These categories are consistent with frameworks used by accrediting bodies. The recommendations in this section are purposefully general to allow for application across a range of programs. Nonetheless, it is useful at the outset to explore where human rights might be more or less important.

In recent years, the number of specialized masters programs has grown rela-

tive to MBA programs.⁸ There are different types of specialized masters degrees. They can be defined by discipline (e.g., finance, marketing), sector (e.g., health care, manufacturing), or theme (e.g., sustainability, analytics). The extent to which human rights should be part of the curriculum varies based on the subject. For example, a masters degree in global supply chain management might have a heavier emphasis on human rights than one in statistics. Nevertheless, there is relevance in every area as illustrated in Table 1.

B. Integration vs. Insertion

It is important to acknowledge that the field of BHR is still young and, most importantly for this section, stretches across many disciplines. These facts alone can explain the lack of attention in business school curricula, since curriculum design has largely been the responsibility of business school scholars—and these scholars are typically organized into functional areas such as accounting, finance, marketing, and operations management.

In an ideal world, human rights would be anchored by a full course in the core business curriculum. That course would provide a foundation and reference point for the rest of the curriculum to build on. Unfortunately, the interdisciplinary nature of BHR suggests that it would be challenging to get a course on the subject included in the core curriculum at any level. There is not usually a human rights department or faculty member to stand up for a course in a curriculum debate. Experiences across schools in the Global Network for Business and Human Rights bear this out. Although some schools have offered elective courses on the subject, some of which are very popular, none of them offer a core course on the subject at any level.

Because of this challenge, business schools are encouraged to redesign cur-

ricula from the ground up, incorporating human rights as an essential component from the start. There is growing pressure for more interdisciplinary curricula, as companies remind schools that business problems are not usually presented within traditional functions. Additionally, market pressures to shrink program length are beginning to force more fundamental, rather than incremental, changes.

Even if it were possible to introduce a required core course, doing so could be counterproductive without a strong effort to infuse human rights throughout the curriculum. For example, the effect of adding a course in other areas, such as international business and ethics, has been to isolate the subjects in the curriculum. That is, professors teaching other core courses tended to feel less compelled to include topics in their own courses when there is an entire required course on it. This tendency is exacerbated when it comes to human rights because it is often confused with ethics and social responsibility. Curriculum committees incorrectly believe that human rights are already included with these subjects.

The recommended approach is therefore to make human rights a part of existing courses in order to infuse it throughout the curriculum.⁹ As discussed above, the idea is to treat human rights like any other issue that managers need to consider in decision making. When discussing cases, for example, it is important for students to recognize and bring up related human rights issues, and to consider the issues in decision making.

Infusing human rights throughout a business curriculum is not easy. The role that human rights plays in any discipline often is not obvious. Most professors feel more comfortable with their domain expertise and feel uncomfortable facilitating discussions about human rights, which can be complex and contentious and have a strong normative component. The next section looks at strategies to address these challenges.



Yves Flückiger, University of Geneva, Rector



Dorothee Baumann-Pauly, Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights, Director

Three strategies to support the infusion of human rights into business curricula

Educators discussing curricula spend most of their time and energy talking about content—the concepts, theories, and techniques classes will cover. The experiences of the leading schools in the Global Network of Business Schools instead point to three other strategies that are important when trying to infuse human rights in the curriculum.

a) Start with values and purpose.

Purpose refers to the broad goals of the school or program, while values refer to the principles that guide its related decisions and behaviors. Many business programs define goals in terms of preparedness (e.g. for jobs) and generally refer to a range of hard and soft skills. Some schools try to differentiate themselves by incorporating themes, such as globalization, across all or most of their programs. Despite its importance, the underlying purpose or values of a curriculum is often ignored or is simply a by-product of curriculum discussions. In the absence of purpose or defining principles, students and professors often default to shareholder wealth, profit maximization, and efficiency in discussions about business problems.

One school that has been deliberate about purpose and values is Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. This school went through a comprehensive and engaging process to develop four “culture defining principles,” which are (1) question the status quo; (2) confidence without attitude; (3) student always; and (4) beyond yourself. These principles permeate everything the school does. Despite the powerful forces impacting curriculum development, it is easy to see how the principles could legitimize alternative approaches to business decisions, such as an appreciation for human rights.

Another way to think about purpose is related to careers. Business schools are under pressure to focus on preparing students for their first jobs. This pressure comes from parents and students, but also from criteria used in rankings, which sometimes place a lot of weight on placement success. Schools respond to this pressure by focusing on technical skills that are needed for specific jobs at that time. This focus is understandable but shouldn't come at the expense of preparing students for careers, which increasingly require stronger critical thinking, problem framing, communication skills, and other similar skills. The point here is that while it may be easier to ignore questions about human rights in a program that is exclusively focused on technical skills, more advanced business programs emphasizing the development of soft skills should be more explicit about their emphasis on human rights.

Starting with purpose and values that explicitly recognize, for example, “respect for human rights in the context of business” as a goal will go a long way towards motivating professors to include the subject in their courses. Making such a statement at the school level can foster a consistent focus across programs and over time.

b) Build supporting or coordinating structures.

Ideally, the integration of human rights is supported by a course on the subject. That anchors efforts across the curriculum and provides a foundation upon which other courses can build. The course helps students and faculty understand how the pieces fit together and get the full benefit of all of those pieces. If a course in human rights is not possible, it will be useful to include a foundation course designed to provide students with stronger critical thinking skills, enabling them to apply multiple perspectives through which they view business prob-

lems. One example is Washington University's Critical Thinking for Leadership course. Another example is Harvard Business School's Leadership and Corporate Accountability course.

Many schools in the Global Network have created supporting structures, such as centers for business and human rights. These centers often provide resources and teaching support for professors as well as generate new knowledge. Centers often serve as conduits for professors to reach guest speakers with experience in specific areas related to human rights in business. Even loosely defined structures related to human rights, such as a faculty cluster, can provide enough coordination and support to maintain coverage over time.

c) Leverage cases, experiential learning and immersive pedagogies.

The human rights issues facing managers can't be separated from other ones—such as profitability and globalization—which is why they are quite complex. Therefore, one of the best ways to improve business education related to human rights is to incorporate more relevant cases, experiential learning activities and other immersive experiences into courses.

Teaching with cases and other discussion-based strategies (e.g., flipped classroom) enables students to challenge each other about critical human rights issues. This kind of peer-to-peer learning is often more effective than lecture formats and can challenge faculty to also explore the complex questions related to human rights in their teaching area.

Experiential learning includes a wide range of pedagogies, such as consulting, internships, and project-based learning. They are about learning through reflection on doing, as students are placed into real or realistic situations. Experiential learning can work well for human rights education but often leaves to chance the

opportunity for human rights to come up naturally. Or, as in the case of consulting, the pedagogy doesn't always turn learners into active decision makers who are accountable for their decisions.

For experiential learning to work effectively for human rights education, purposeful efforts are needed to unpack the learning in relevant ways. It is difficult to learn without reflection and considering what could be done differently, for example, when viewed through the human rights lens. There is an opportunity for professors to ask questions about the potential implications beyond efficiency of the choices made by learners in the experience.

Immersive pedagogies go further than most experiential learning by turning students into active decision makers in scenarios, ones that purposefully connect BHR components. Examples of immersive learning include role-plays and debates, scenario courses, and system-level field studies. An advantage of teaching with immersive pedagogies is that it allows for the inclusion of more contextual factors than teaching general concepts. The application of human rights principles can be affected by the context, whether that is history and culture, regulatory environment, or industry sector. Immersive teaching strategies allow students to experience the complexity of managing business and human rights challenges.¹⁰



Michael Posner, NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, Director



Ken McPhail, Alliance Manchester Business School, Deputy Head

Teaching resources for Business and Human Rights are readily available, and innovative teaching methods are being developed.

The Teaching Business and Human Rights Forum was founded in 2011 to promote and strengthen BHR education worldwide. The multidisciplinary Forum is a network of over 300 individuals teaching BHR in 40 countries at over 150 institutions, including business schools. The Forum publishes an online open-source handbook (BHRHandbook.org) with teaching notes on various BHR topics. The handbook currently comprises 13 chapters that outline entire teaching sessions with all necessary references for instructors. All the topics are listed as follows:

General

- Corporations “101”
- The “Business Case”
- Corporate Responsibility
- Introducing International Human Rights
- Introducing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

Business Practice

- Human Rights Due Diligence
- Human Rights Impact Assessment
- Grievance Mechanisms

Corporate Accountability

- Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence Legislation
- Mandatory Human Rights Reporting
- OECD National Contact Point Complaints
- Advocacy
- Investors
- Litigation–ATS Jurisprudence
- Litigation–Duty of Care
- Multistakeholder Initiatives
- National Action Plans
- Treaty

Detailed Subjects

- Human Rights and the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Human Rights and the Environment
- Banks and Human Rights
- International Labor Rights
- Land Rights
- Mega-Sporting Events and Human Rights
- “Shared Value” and Human Rights
- Access to Water
- “Big Data” and Human Rights
- Freedom of Expression and the Right to Privacy
- Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Trade Agreements and Human Rights

Members of the teaching network also administer a detailed syllabi database for BHR courses and an online discussion board. They convene regular workshops to discuss BHR themes relevant to teaching in this fast-developing field.

[Website: https://teachbhr.org](https://teachbhr.org)

The first textbook for Business and Human Rights, entitled “Business and Human Rights–From Principles to Practice” (Routledge), was published in 2016. The volume includes contributions from both interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners. The book reflects the emerging field of BHR, which is shaped by a multitude of stakeholders, each with their own perspective. Core chapters include case studies of multi-stakeholder initiatives that define and enforce human rights standards in different industry contexts. Other chapters address the regulatory framework that grounds the business and human rights debate, the question of the business case for human rights, and the role of civil society organizations.

The success of the first BHR textbook (Routledge)–almost 2’000 copies were sold since publication in 2016–and the growing membership of teachers in the Teaching Forum indicate that the number of BHR courses taught is on the rise. The increase of courses offered on the subject responds to students’ interest in learn-

ing about sustainability.¹¹ According to a survey in Switzerland among students at higher education institutions conducted by the WWF in 2018, almost 90% said that they are very interested in sustainability themes. However less than a third of the more than 300 respondents felt that these topics were taught in a way that is sufficiently practical.¹² Teaching BHR at business schools needs to presents human rights related business challenges as relevant for corporate objectives and teach students applied skills for how to manage these challenges in practice. Integrating BHR in the business school curriculum therefore responds to students’ interest in sustainability themes and their interest in gaining applied skills, both of which will likely enhance students’ satisfaction levels with their program.

As millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (born between 1996 and 2011) become more influential as consumers and employees, the demand for teaching sustainability is likely to increase further.¹³ Already today, studies show that students consider a company’s social and environmental commitments in deciding where to work, with a majority claiming that they would not accept a job unless the company has a strong sustainability program.¹⁴ At the same time, students are also increasingly skeptical of companies that simply pretend to engage in sustainability and they want to learn methods for how to distinguish between good and bad companies. The human rights framework offers a strong normative reference point that facilitates such assessments, and it can give students confidence to identify sustainable business models that integrate human rights right in core business processes rather than in fringe functions that are less relevant to the company’s value creation (e.g. CSR departments).

To teach students how companies deal with real world management challenges, the case method is common at business schools and there is also a growing body

of cases that capture the implementation challenges of human rights in the business context. Business school scholars around the world are developing case studies for teaching purposes that specifically highlight the human rights aspects of management challenges. Table 2 hereafter gives some examples of teaching case studies for human rights challenges in various industry sectors.

There is also a collection of real-world cases by the Business and Human Rights Research Center (BHRRC).¹⁵ The cases can be sorted by region, issue or sector.

Furthermore, BHR as an interdisciplinary field lends itself to collaborations between business schools, law schools, and public policy programs, as well as between academia and practice. Many BHR classes currently taught at business schools are open for cross-disciplinary registration for students from law school. At NYU Stern, for example, the class taught by Professor Michael Posner is open to both law and business students. The Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver offers a joint certificate with the Josef Korbel School of International Studies in Global Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility, with a focus on human rights themes. At the Institute for Business Ethics at the University of St Gallen, Professor Florian Wettstein teamed up with a corporate practitioner to teach a simulation class around managing human rights in the context of a mega sporting event.

Some universities have also successfully run BHR summer schools:

- [University of Zurich](#)¹⁶
- [Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna](#)¹⁷
- [Temple University of Rome](#)¹⁸



2nd Meeting of the Global Business School Network for Human Rights (2018)



Marcelo Olarreaga, Geneva School of Economics and Management, Dean - Ken McPhail - Michael Posner

Sector	Case studies
Supply chain management in the garment industry	<p>Baumann-Pauly, D., Massa, L., & Sheriff, N. (2020). Manufacturing in Ethiopia: Decathlon's Partnership Model.</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H., Toffel, M. W., & Hull, O. (2019). Global Sourcing at Nike. Harvard Business School Case 619-008.</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H., & Chaturvedi, S. (2017). The Ready-Made Garment Industry: A Bangladeshi Perspective (A). Harvard Business School Case 317-052.</p> <p>Land, A., & Zakaria, R. (2019). Rana plaza collapse, its aftermath, and future implications for sustainability. In SAGE Business Cases.</p> <p>Hoffman, S. (2014). H & M's Global Supply Chain Management Sustainability: Factories and Fast Fashion. Ann Arbor, MI: Erb Institute, William Davidson Institute, University of Michigan.</p> <p>Padmanabhan, V.M., Baumann-Pauly, D., & Labowitz, S. (2015). The Hidden Price of Low Cost: Subcontracting in Bangladesh's Garment Industry.</p>
Human rights challenges in the extractives sector	<p>Giamporcaro, S., & Putter, M. (2017). Lonmin Plc: Mining and responsible investment—dangerous liaisons?. In SAGE Business Cases.</p> <p>Hennchen, E., & Lozano, J. M. (2012). Mind the gap: Royal Dutch Shell's sustainability agenda in Nigeria.</p> <p>Hennchen, E. (2015). Royal Dutch Shell in Nigeria: Where Do Responsibilities End? Journal of Business Ethics, 129(1), 1-25. doi:10.1007/s10551-014-2142-7</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H. (2015). Putting the Guiding Principles into Action: Human Rights at Barrick Gold (A). Harvard Business School Case 315-108.</p> <p>Ghemawat, P., & Marciano, S. (2006). De Beers at the Millennium. Harvard Business School Case.</p>
Human rights challenges in the pharmaceutical industry	<p>Buhmann, K., & Pedini Rasmussen, L. (2015). Lundbeck's Pentobarbital Human-Rights Dilemma, or When Good Intentions Turn Lethal: Issue management in a CSR context. Copenhagen Business School.</p>
Human rights challenges in the tech and telecommunications industries	<p>Harris, B., Ogilvy, A., & O'Rourke, J. S. (2006). Google, Inc.: Entrance into the Chinese market and government censorship. The Eugene D. Fanning Center for Business Communication, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame.</p> <p>Hoffman, A. (2014). Taking a Bite Out of Apple: Labor Rights and the Role of Companies and Consumers in a Global Supply Chain. Ann Arbor, MI: Erb Institute, William Davidson Institute, University of Michigan.</p> <p>Hsieh, N. H., McGee, H., & McAra, S. (2016). Apple: Privacy vs. Safety? (A) and (B). Harvard Business School Case 316069.</p> <p>Mueller, U., & Shirish P. (2014). Vodafone in Egypt: National crises and their implications for multinational corporations. European School of Management and Technology.</p> <p>Posner, M. (2020). Role-play Exercise - Silverlake in China: Investor Responsibility for State Surveillance in Xinjiang.</p> <p>Quelch, J. A., & Jocz, K. E. (2010). Google in China (A). Harvard Business School Case 510 -071.</p> <p>Schrempf, J. (2011). Nokia Siemens networks: Just doing business—or supporting an oppressive regime? Journal of Business Ethics, 103(1), 95-110.</p>

Table 2: Teaching case studies in various industry sectors



NYU Stern Signature Project on Business and Human Rights (Kenya 2017)



NYU Stern Signature Project on Business and Human Rights (Kenya 2017)

4. Creating Knowledge about Business and Human Rights

A. Small but growing number of publications

Over the past decade, business and human rights has developed into a distinct research field and the interest in BHR research is growing steadily.¹⁹ A search on Scopus²⁰ abstracts for “Business and Human Rights” shows a steep upward trend, as shown in Figure 1 below.

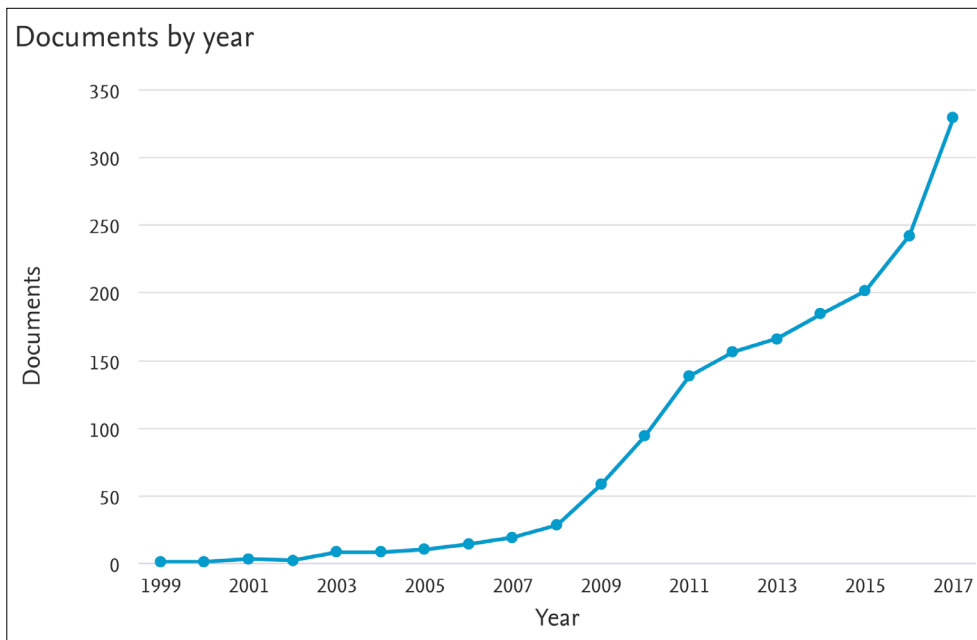


Figure 1: Number of documents retrieved from a search for “business and human rights” on Scopus (per year)

In 2015, the institutionalization of the field progressed with the creation of a specific academic journal for BHR research. The Business and Human Rights Journal (BHRJ) by Cambridge University Press has since grown in popularity, with an almost tripled number of full text views from 12'000 in 2016 to over 33'000 views in 2019.²¹

In 2017, the Global Business and Human Rights Scholars Association was launched, and it now comprises over 300 members from academic institutions worldwide.²² Its annual conference attracts over 100 scholars and its recent launch of regional chapters sets incentives for BHR scholarship from around the globe.

Business scholars are just beginning to understand the research potential but their perspective on corporate human rights challenges is increasingly

relevant.²³ Whether corporations have human rights responsibilities, the so-called “justification question” is considered resolved. Corporate practitioners overwhelmingly agree that human rights are relevant to Intelligence Unit survey.²⁴ The “implementation question”, however, referring to how companies can systematically integrate human rights in corporate practice, still needs to be addressed. For the latter, management studies can provide the most useful insights and a lively academic discourse on BHR can be expected.²⁵

B. Mainstream publishing –outlets and grants

Business and human rights research is already published in mainstream academic business journals. Appendix 1 lists a number of articles that were published in the Academy of Management Journal, the Journal of Management Studies, Organization, and the Academy of Management Discoveries.

Publishing in mainstream academic business journals needs to overcome several challenges inherent in the current academic publishing system. Academic publications require a strong engagement with previous theoretical insights, which is particularly difficult in an emerging field. This narrow academic focus on theoretical insights, so the FT in February 2020, can limit business schools’ contribution to society.²⁶

Many academic business journals also have a preference for quantitative research methods based on large data sets. As we are just beginning to see how human rights can be implemented in practice, large-n performance data is not yet available. Data sets that are available, are questionable in terms of their data quality. Research based on self-reported data from companies’ websites or CSR reports is highly biased towards the company’s preferred narrative. Verifying company data with the help of independent reports from third parties would be ideal but these verifications are not conducted systematically. Linked with these difficulties of accessing reliable data is the tendency of the academic BHR field to fall back on evaluating processes over outcomes. Data about company policies and procedures is easily accessible but data on actual human rights performance is not.

One way to circumvent the above publication challenges in academic journals is for BHR scholars to propose dedicated BHR special issues to business journals. BHR special issues were published in the context of the *Journal of Business Ethics* (2009), the *Business Ethics Quarterly* (2012), the *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal* (2016), and the *Journal of World Business* (2018). In 2019, *Business and Society* had a special issue entitled “Modern slavery in business: Interdisciplinary perspectives on the “shadow economy”²⁷ and a forthcoming special issue on “COVID-19 and Business and Society Scholarship” in 2020.²⁸

To motivate BHR scholars to highlight how companies can integrate human rights in organizational structures, procedures and internal hierarchies requires a reflection and revision of some of the premises of publishing in academia.

BHR research offers an opportunity for schools to break those boundaries of traditional scholarship and allow a broader range of rigorous research output published in different formats.

Broadening the understanding of the purpose of academic research is also in line with a growing number of funding organizations that ask for research with impact and societal relevance. As such, research proposals with a focus on human rights impacts can open up new opportunities for funding. Funding bodies such as the Future Earth initiative, Europe’s Horizon 2020 program, the Swiss National Research Programs (NRP), the International Council for Science (ISCU), and the International Science Council (ISSC) call explicitly for transdisciplinary approaches of knowledge co-production.²⁹ At the EU level, there is also an explicit Horizon 2020 program entitled “Science with and for Society” that encourages applications with research themes related to business and human rights.³⁰

C. New research approaches for generating knowledge on business and human rights

BHR research requires innovative research approaches that often cannot be conducted exclusively at a university desk.

To assess a company’s human rights performance and to develop practical recommendations for addressing human rights issues, research on BHR requires insights into company practices that are often not publicly available. It also requires access to workers and communities that are affected by business conduct. Both requirements call for a collaboration with business. Companies can facilitate access to company sites and relevant interview partners.

However, while some form of company collaboration may be indispensable for generating knowledge about actual BHR challenges, researchers need to be vigilant about their independence. A condition for maintaining a critical distance to the businesses studied is radical transparency over research funding sources.

In addition, researchers must be carefully balancing the company’s insights with perspectives from stakeholders external to the company. Broad stakeholder engagement with civil society, academia, and local business representatives is necessary to understand the full business impacts on human rights. It also helps to contextualize business practices, including legal frameworks and socio-economic conditions, aspects that are relevant for advising business on how to improve their human rights performance.

Research on human rights thus creates new opportunities for stronger, more positive collaborations with business and civil society to co-create knowledge that

is useful in practice and to policy. The field also provides opportunities for scholars to collaborate in different ways. For example, as business schools in emerging economies mature and increase their research emphasis, research projects that include them as part of the local team can provide mentoring opportunities. In general, the field lends itself to the development of international research consortia, such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.³¹

D. Resources for research in business and human rights

For an overview of the interdisciplinary academic BHR literature, the Oxford Bibliographies on business and human rights offers the most succinct summary (updated February 2020).³² For scholarship in management studies specifically, a meta-study on BHR literature published in January 2020 in the *Business and Human Rights Journal* highlights the main themes of the BHR field and suggests a forward-looking research agenda.³³

There are also applied research reports from academic institutions like the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights³⁴, organizations like The Knight Foundation³⁵, or civil society organizations like the Clean Clothes Campaign³⁶ that are relevant sources of information for evolving human rights themes. Unlike most academic literature to date, these sources contain actual empirical data from the field.

A resource for studying BHR challenges in practice is the Business and Human Rights Resource Center (BHRRC).³⁷ The BHRRC is a digital platform that pools news sources on emerging human rights stories of over 9’000 companies. With over 4 million visits per year, the platform also seeks to encourage corporate accountability for over 600 allegations of abuse each year.

5. Institutionalizing Business and Human Rights: Examples

Institutionalizing human rights in business education can take many forms. In 2013, NYU Stern was the first business school to create a center for business and human rights with a mission to challenge and empower future business leaders to make practical progress on human rights. In 2019, the Geneva School of Economics and Management at Geneva University launched the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights as the first fully institutionalized human rights Center at a business school in Europe. Other schools have added programs and courses to their business school curricula. Below are testimonies from business school leaders about their experience of integrating human rights at a business school.

Professor Michael Posner, Director of the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights

The NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights was created in March 2013. We benefitted from the enthusiastic support of Peter Henry, who served as the Dean of the Business School until December 2017. He supported our early integration into the business school, by promoting our work with faculty and students and by providing our Center with essential and generous early financial support. At the end of our first year, we began to build an advisory council for the Center, a group of about 20 people from the business world, academia, civil society, and philanthropy. They have advised us on key aspects of our work, and opened doors to policy makers, business leaders, and potential financial supporters. A third key element of our early efforts was making good on our commitment to combine teaching, research, and public engagement. By the end of

our first year, we had developed three separate courses, begun to undertake research focused on various industries, and published our first major report on factory safety issues in Bangladesh. That report and others that have followed have served as clear examples of our substantive expertise and the pro-business, high standards approach that we have adopted with respect to these issues.

[Website: https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/](https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/)

Professor Marcelo Olarreaga, Dean of the Geneva School of Economics and Management (GSEM) at the University of Geneva

The launch of the Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights is scheduled for 25 November 2019. Like its predecessor at NYU, it is hosted within the Business School of the University of Geneva (GSEM). It has three key missions: First, to train the next generation of business leaders to the rapidly changing landscape in the area of business and human rights; second, to conduct applied research in the area of business and human rights in sectors which are relevant for the Geneva ecosystem; finally, to provide a safe haven for exchange and advice to business in Geneva (and elsewhere) facing challenges or opportunities in the area of human rights. The rector of the University of Geneva, Professor Yves Flückiger, was an early and strong supporter of the creation of a Center for Business and Human Rights in the Business School of the University of Geneva. The strong demand by the University's students for curriculum development in this area, as well as the historic positioning of the city of Geneva as the capital of human rights

were strong arguments for its creation. The support of the Network of Business Schools to Advance Human Rights, and in particular the support and leadership of NYU's Center for Business and Human Rights have been critical in helping us understand how to best reform our existing management and economics curriculum to incorporate human rights issues. Last, but not least, the GSEM's Advisory Board has provided us with the necessary support and advice to make sure that the Center will make the most of its strategic location in the capital of human rights.

[Website: https://www.unige.ch/gsem/en/research/centers/gcbhr/](https://www.unige.ch/gsem/en/research/centers/gcbhr/)

Professor Nien-he Hsieh, Professor of Business Administration, Joseph L. Rice, III Faculty Fellow, Harvard Business School

Leadership and Corporate Accountability is a semester-long first-year required course for MBA students at Harvard Business School. The course aims to help MBAs develop a practical understanding of the responsibilities of business leaders and companies along with strategies for delivering on those responsibilities. Cases that explicitly raise questions about responsibilities for human rights include cases about working conditions in the footwear and apparel supply chain, encryption of user data across countries with different records of respect for human rights, implementation of the remediation process under the UN Guiding Principles, and freedom of speech in tech companies. Through these cases, students are challenged to determine and deliver on their responsibilities regarding human rights in the context of

grey-area decisions that involve multiple competing responsibilities and significant operational complexities. Additional cases on business and human rights are being written and planned, including cases on the future of work and how to foresee and mitigate the human rights impacts of emerging technologies in companies.

[Website: https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facid=24284](https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facid=24284)

Jesse Nishinaga and Faris Natour, UC Berkeley's Human Rights & Business Initiative

Launched in 2015, the Human Rights & Business Initiative (HRBI)'s mission is to equip current and future business leaders with the attitude and aptitude to advance business respect for human rights everywhere. Thanks to our early supporters, we have developed program content consisting of mutually reinforcing activities, including: undergraduate and MBA courses on business and human rights; experiential learning opportunities in the form of student consulting projects with real-world companies; grant-funded studies that advance the business and human rights field; and stakeholder events that aim to foster meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Over the past three years, we've hosted a flagship annual conference on business, technology, and human rights, which has drawn more than 150 participants from business, civil society, and academia to discuss topics ranging from the future of work to the social impact of artificial intelligence. Today, the HRBI serves as a joint initiative of the Center for Responsible Business (Haas-Berkeley) and the Human Rights Center (Berkeley Law). As a joint initiative, we are expanding our reach to

a wider audience and improving our ability to pursue business and human rights challenges using a more interdisciplinary lens, while maintaining our fundamental objective to help shape the future of business management education.

[Website: https://humanrights.berkeley.edu/programs-projects/business](https://humanrights.berkeley.edu/programs-projects/business)

Professor Elisa Giuliani, Director of the Responsible Management Research Center (REMARC) at the University of Pisa

REMARC was created in 2016 with the aim of conducting inter-disciplinary research on companies' responsible management practices and on sustainable development policies. Its research counts on the work of 15 scholars affiliated with the Department of Economics and Management of the University of Pisa and on a network of external collaborators from different disciplines and geographies. The center seeks also to have an impact on managers and policy makers at local, national and international levels. The aim is to encourage these actors to radically rethink the way they conduct business operations or plan the economic development of territories and nations, as to incorporate greater consideration of the environment and human rights. One of the key research pillars of the center is international business and human rights, where we seek to measure business-related human rights infringements and assess their causes, as well as their consequences on economic inequality. REMARC's research team is active in teaching business and human rights and other sustainability-related subjects both within and beyond the University of Pisa, where we currently have more than

ten undergraduate and Master-degree courses or modules on these subjects.

[Website: https://remarc.ec.unipi.it/](https://remarc.ec.unipi.it/)

Professor Stephan Park and Rachel Chambers, Business and Human Rights Initiative, University of Connecticut

The Business and Human Rights Initiative is a partnership founded by the Thomas J. Dodd Center, at the University of Connecticut School of Business and the Human Rights Institute. The Initiative collaborates with programs and units throughout UConn and:

- supports and disseminates research by UConn faculty such as "Tethered Fates: Companies, Communities, and Rights at Stake" by Shareen Hertel (2019);
- convenes events that bring together scholars and practitioners, for instance on September 20-21, 2018, the Business and Human Rights Initiative hosted a Symposium on Finding the Human Face of Finance. Amy Domini, Founder and Chair of Domini Impact Investments, delivered the keynote address, entitled "How Responsible Investors Have Enabled Business to be a Solution for Human Suffering";
- engages with policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders to advance respect for human rights e.g. participating stakeholder consultations on the Draft General Comment on State Obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Context of Business Activities (2017); and
- supports student learning and professional opportunities in business and human rights. Among current course offerings are: Corporate Social Impact

and Responsibility, Business Solutions to Societal Challenges, Assessment for Human Rights and Sustainability, and Politics and Human Rights in Global Supply Chains. We offer financial support for student internships e.g. with the Business and Human Rights Resource Center.

Website: <https://businessandhumanrights.uconn.edu>

Professor Karin Buhmann, Copenhagen Business School, Department of Management, Society and Communication

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) is one of few business schools globally that offer courses specifically within the field of Business and Human Rights (BHR). Since 2016, moreover, CBS has had a professor (Karin Buhmann) specifically charged with developing the field of BHR. CBS currently offers two courses specifically on BHR, one targeting students of international business and politics; another open to business students from all disciplines. Testifying to the broad relevance of the topic, the latter has been attended, for example, by students specializing in corporate communication, accounting, IT, philosophy and business ethics. In addition to this, classes on BHR form part of a series of other courses in the area of corporate sustainability, such as Introduction to Sustainable Business; CSR, Organization and Communication; and Scandinavian CSR and Sustainability. Several master theses are produced every year on BHR related topics. CBS has hosted several conferences and research seminars on BHR and currently hosts several research projects and grants related to BHR in a global perspective. Under the leadership of Professor Buh-

mann, CBS hosts 'The BHRights Initiative' (BHRights), an interdisciplinary network on BHR teaching and research. Initiated based on an exploratory workshop grant from the European Research Council, BHRights has more than 50 members from institutions around the world. Also under the leadership of Prof. Buhmann, CBS recently launched an interdisciplinary global network on Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement, a core practice for organizations to take account of the views and needs of affected stakeholders (potential or actual victims) in their assessments of their human rights impacts.

A stand-alone state university in Denmark's capital area, CBS is by national and international standards a strong institution with a distinctive 'business university' profile. Established in 1917, CBS is one of the largest business schools in Europe. CBS has been quoted as one of the most interesting business schools in the world today, attracting a large number of international staff. CBS has more than 600 full-time researchers, 600 administrative employees and well over 19,000 students, of which 2,900 are international students from all over the world. CBS has a strong commitment to sustainability and is a champion member of the Principles for Management Education (PRME). CBS has a strong international reputation and is often highly placed in external rankings. CBS has a very large annual output in terms of peer reviewed journal publications and an extensive cooperation with industry. We are one of the relatively small number of business schools world-wide with 'triple crown' accreditation (AMBA, EQUIS and AACSB).

Website: <https://www.cbs.dk/en/research/departments-and-centres/departments-of-management-society-and-communication/staff/kbumsc>

Professor Ken McPhail, The University of Manchester University, Alliance Manchester Business School

The Business and Human Rights (BHR) Catalyst was established at The Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) in 2016. It was funded through a generous donation from Lord David Alliance to support new frontier areas of research that will define the future of business thinking, practice and innovation. The initiative has received broad support from across the University of Manchester, from the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research to the Dean of AMBS and aligns with the Universities distinctive Social Responsibility goal. The BHR Catalyst was set up with three aims: to produce world-leading interdisciplinary research; to draw on that research to inform effective practice and policy recommendations that have a real impact on the rights of some of the most vulnerable people in society and to serve as a safe space for inter-disciplinary discussions between academics, policymakers and businesses on the role of the private sector in relation to fundamental rights.

Website: <https://www.alliancembs.manchester.ac.uk/research/funded-projects/alliance-projects/business-and-human-rights-catalyst/>



Lene Wendland, OHCHR, Chief of the Business and Human Rights Section



Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, OHCHR, Former High Commissioner

6. Selected Network Contacts

Institution	Name	Contact Details
American University in Cairo John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy, Civic Engagement and Responsible Business	Prof. Ali Awni <i>Director</i>	ahawni@aucegypt.edu
American University of Sharjah School of Business Administration	Prof. John Katsos	jkatsos@aus.edu
Cape Town University Graduate School of Business	Prof. Kosheek Sewchurran	kosheek.sewchurran@gsb.uct.ac.za
Copenhagen Business School	Prof. Karin Buhmann	kbu.msc@cbs.dk
EDHEC France	Prof. Bjoern Fasterling	bjorn.fasterling@edhec.edu
Harvard Business School	Prof. Nien-he Hsieh	nhsieh@hbs.edu
HEC Lausanne	Prof. Guido Palazzo	guido.palazzo@unil.ch
HEC Lausanne	Prof. Patrick Haack	patrick.haack@unil.ch
IMD Business School	Prof. Natalia Oly nec	natalia.oly nec@imd.org
Indian Institute of Management Bangalore	Prof. Vasanthi Srinivasan	vasanthi.srinivasan@iimb.ac.in
Manchester University Alliance Business School	Prof. Kenneth McPhail	kennethmcpfail@manchester.ac.uk
Michigan Ross Business School	Prof. David Hess	dwhess@umich.edu
Newcastle University Business School	Cristina Neesham	cristina.neesham@newcastle.ac.uk
Nottingham University Business School	Lara Bianchi	lara.bianchi@nottingham.ac.uk
NYU Stern School of Business Center for Business and Human Rights	Prof. Michael Posner <i>Director</i>	mposner@stern.nyu.edu
SKEMA Business School	Prof. Samentha Goethals	samentha.goethals@skema.edu
University of California, Berkeley Human Rights Center	Prof. Faris Natour <i>Director & Lecturer</i>	farisnatour@berkeley.edu
University of Connecticut	Prof. Stephan Park	stephen.park@uconn.edu
University of Connecticut	Prof. Rachel Chambers	rachel.2.chambers@uconn.edu
University of Denver Daniels College of Business and Korbel School of International Studies	Prof. Tricia Olsen	tricia.olsen@du.edu
University of Geneva Geneva School of Economics and Management	Prof. Marcelo Olarreaga <i>Dean</i>	marcelo.olarreaga@unige.ch
University of Geneva Geneva School of Economics and Management	Prof. Judith Schrempf-Stirling	judith.schrempf-stirling@unige.ch

Institution	Name	Contact Details
University of Geneva Geneva School of Economics and Management Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights <i>Director</i>	Prof. Dorothee Baumann-Pauly <i>Director</i>	dorothee.baumann-pauly@unige.ch
University of Glasgow Adam Smith Business School Glasgow Human Rights Network	Prof. John McKernan	john.mckernan@glasgow.ac.uk
University of Glasgow Adam Smith Business School Glasgow Human Rights Network	Prof. Yingru Li	yingru.li@glasgow.ac.uk
University of Pisa Department of Economics and Management Responsible Management Research Center	Prof. Elisa Giuliani	elisa.giuliani@unipi.it
University of St Andrews School of Management	Prof. John Ferguson	jf60@st-andrews.ac.uk
University of St. Gallen Institute for Business Ethics	Prof. Florian Wettstein <i>Director</i>	florian.wettstein@unisg.ch
Wharton School of Business Zicklin Center for Business Ethics Research	Prof. William Laufer <i>Director</i>	lauferw@wharton.upenn.edu

Appendix 1

Mainstream management journals have started publishing research on BHR, and other journals have published special issues on BHR. Some examples:

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Michael Posner - Dorothée Baumann-Pauly - Marcelo Olarreaga



3rd Meeting of the Global Business School Network for Human Rights (2019)

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Geneva Center for Business and Human Rights
Geneva School of Economics and Management
UniMail
Boulevard du Pont d'Arve 40
1211 Geneva 4
Switzerland
gsem-gcbhr@unige.ch
unige.ch/gsem/gcbhr

NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights
Leonard N. Stern School of Business
44 West 4th Street, Suite 800
New York, NY 10012
USA
bhr@stern.nyu.edu
bhr.stern.nyu.edu

Global Business School Network
1010 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 201
Washington D.C. 20005
USA
info@gbsn.org
gbsn.org

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