Survey Report

Integrating Human Rights into Accounting and Finance Teaching

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Executive Summary

Since their endorsement in 2011, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) have served as the reference point for a raft of governance initiatives and legislative developments. A central feature of the UNGPs relates to the responsibilities of corporations to undertake human rights due diligence (HRDD) to identify, prevent, mitigate and **account** for human rights impacts (OHCHR, 2011). The HRDD criteria outlined in the UNGPs have become "the dominant frame in which to conceptualize and operationalize" (Landau, 2023, p. 4) the regulation of global value chains, underpinning a number of mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence laws (mHRDD) – including the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD).

Accounting technologies, including audit, reporting and management information systems, are essential to the operationalization of HRRD (Ferguson 2026). In this respect, HRDD has engendered a "shift [to] the organizational and institutional context within which accounting operates" (McPhail and Ferguson, 2016, p.527). In order for the accounting curriculum to remain relevant to emerging practice, it is imperative that accounting and finance educators recognise these significant developments and incorporate human rights into their teaching.

In order to better understand how, and the extent to which, human rights is being incorporated into the accounting and finance curriculum, an online survey was developed and administered to accounting and finance educators who are members of the Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research (**CSEAR**) and the Accounting and Finance Cluster of the GBSN BHR Impact Community (**GBSN**)[1]. This report presents findings from this online survey, which was undertaken from July to September 2025.

The survey was designed to:

- Provide insights into the provision and delivery of BHR in accounting and finance education
- Understand barriers and facilitators to incorporating BHR into accounting and finance teaching
- Provide the basis for developing a supportive network of accounting and finance educators to develop, share and co-create resources that support the integration of BHR into the curriculum.

[1] CSEAR is an international membership-based network that aims to mobilise accounting scholarship to enable a more sustainable society. The Global Business School Network for Business and Human Rights Impact Community (GBSN) is a collective of business schools and scholars who are committed to integrating human rights into management education.

This report, and associated survey, is informed by CSEAR's "Building Carbon Literacy" project (Russell et al., 2021), which was funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) and served as the foundation for CSEAR's Education Community of Practice (ECoP) initiative.

Summary of results

- Survey results suggest that respondents believe human rights should be included on the accounting and finance curriculum.
- However, less than half of respondents indicated that human rights were being incorporated into the curriculum at their own institution.
- The inclusion of human rights on the curriculum tends to be at more advanced levels of an undergraduate degree, on a taught Masters programme or part of a specialized module on Business Ethics or CSR.
- Barriers to including human rights on the curriculum included human rights not being perceived as a necessary part of the accounting curriculum, faculty not feeling knowledgeable about human rights, and the technical/professional orientation of accounting degree programmes.

Suggested Actions

The following actions were identified as having the potential to further embed business and human rights into accounting and finance education.

- The need for more effective communication regarding the relevance of HRDD to accounting and finance practice.
- The need for professional accounting associations to develop guidance on the role of accounting practitioners in supporting HRDD processes.
- The need for further academic research on BHR and HRDD through special issues and associated conferences and workshops.
- Dialogue with students to establish their demand for coverage of issues they see as very relevant to their professional development.
- The development of a community of practice for an authoritative source of expertise to enhance the capacity for accounting and finance academics to integrate BHR into their teaching.
- The inclusion of BHR/HRDD as an accreditation requirement by professional accounting bodies.
- Development of standardised teaching resources (e.g. textbooks or case studies) accompanied by a portfolio of customisable teaching resources.

The widespread integration of human rights into accounting and finance education will require collaboration between individual scholars, networks and institutions. We would encourage members across CSEAR and GBSN, along with colleagues in other networks and initiatives, to support each other in the development of courses, teaching materials, case studies and assessment that support the integration of human rights into the accounting and finance curriculum. To that end, we would encourage you get in touch with us to share ideas, suggestions or teaching materials.

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Why Accounting and Human Rights?

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) calls on "every organ of society" to promote respect for the rights and freedoms outlined in the declaration through "teaching and education". However, as McPhail (2013) observes, few business schools incorporate human rights in their curricula – especially on accounting and finance programmes. Given the human rights challenges faced by business – from working conditions and child labour in supply chains, discrimination against indigenous people, religious groups and women, to violations of the right to freedom of association - it is incumbent on accounting and finance educators prepare future business leaders to identify, prevent and address human rights risks.

As Li (2025) recently points out, the link between human rights and the practice of accounting and finance may not be immediately obvious – both to colleagues in accounting and finance and to those outside of these disciplines. Therefore, in this introductory section, we will address the question: "what does accounting have to do with human rights" (Li, 2025, p. 401). In doing so, we will provide a brief sketch of policy and regulatory developments that bring human rights and accounting and finance together. This will be followed by a discussion of the impact of these policy and regulatory developments on specific areas of accounting and finance – including corporate reporting and materiality, audit and assurance, management accounting and management information systems, and investment. Section 2 discusses the results of a survey of accounting and finance educators, providing insights into existing teaching practice and the barriers that accounting and finance educators face when introducing human rights into the curriculum. Drawing on these insights, Section 2 also offers a set of recommendations, while Section 3 provides a summary of some useful resources that can help support the incorporation of human rights into the accounting and finance curriculum.

Background

The United Nations formally endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) in June 2011. Since then, they have become the "global reference point for businesses to demonstrate their respect for human rights" (Kemp & Vanclay, 2013, p. 83), underpinning the development of a wide range of governance initiatives – including National Actional Plans, (O'Brien et al., 2022) , international guidelines (Ferguson, 2026) and legislation (Bueno et al., 2024; Krajewski et al, 2021). Of particular significance to accounting and finance professionals, Pillar II of the UNGPs outlines the expectation that corporations should undertake human rights due diligence (HRDD) in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and **account** for human rights impacts (OHCHR, 2011). According to

the UNGPs, accounting for human rights impacts requires that business enterprises collect, manage, and disclose "appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators" (OHCHR, 2011, p.22) in order to "both know and show that they respect human rights in practice." (OHCHR, 2011, p.16). Under the UNGPs, HRDD comprises four steps:

1. Assess actual and potential impacts of business activities on human rights (i.e. undertake a "human rights risk and impact assessment");
2. Act on the findings of this assessment by integrating appropriate measures to address the impacts of existing practices;
3. Track how effective the measures the company has taken are in preventing or mitigating adverse human rights impacts; and
4. Communicating publicly about the due diligence process and its results.

Each of these four steps, along with the concept of materiality that underpins HRDD, have considerable implications for the practice of accounting and finance. That is, these steps require the implementation of core accounting technologies – including management accounting, management information systems, financial accounting, auditing and assurance, and corporate reporting (Ferguson, 2026). Further, the overall of governance of human rights issues in the supply chain has implications for finance and investment practice (PRI, 2024).

The accounting and reporting requirements that underpin HRDD have been incorporated into a number of mandatory due diligence laws. For example, in 2017, the French Duty of Vigilance law requires companies to identify risks and prevent human rights violations both in their own operations and in their business relationships. Similarly, the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act requires large German companies to implement risk management and assessment processes, and take preventive measures, in relation to human rights including: child labor, forced labor, modern slavery, health and safety, freedom of association, etc. (McPhail and Ferguson, 2025).

Perhaps the most significant development, with implications for accounting and finance professionals, is the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) (European Commission, 2025). While the CSDDD establishes an obligation for corporations above a certain size to undertake due diligence and identify, assess and account for how they address adverse impacts, the CSRD requires corporations to report on the impact of their activities on people and the environment. Under the CSRD corporations must report in accordance with European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) developed by the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG). The ESRS reporting framework includes a

range of reporting "data points" related to human rights issues, including social standards S1 (own workforce), S2 (workers in the value chain), S3 (affected communities), and S4 (consumers and end users) (EFRAG, 2025).

Another significant development related to accounting and finance includes the emergence of the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), which was formed in 2021 under the auspices of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation. While ISSB standards do not yet address human rights explicitly, they have nevertheless committed to developing disclosure standards related to "human capital" – i.e. "the people who make up a company's own workforce and the workers in its value chain."

Human Rights and Accounting and Finance Practice

Corporate Reporting and Materiality

The fundamental accounting concept of "materiality" forms a central part of most guidelines and legislative developments in BHR. For example, the UNGPs state that: "Financial reporting requirements should clarify that human rights impacts in some instances may be "material" or "significant" to the economic performance of the business enterprise" (UN Human Rights Council, 2011, p. 9). In a guide to human rights for investors, the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI, 2024, p.6) note that human rights might have a financial materiality dimension because "companies can face higher operational and legal costs due to community conflicts, and they can receive considerable legal penalties if they do not appropriately manage private data". Relatedly, under International Accounting Standards (IAS 37), reporting entities are required to disclose potential liabilities related to a legal action – which could include potential liabilities related to accusations of forced labour in the supply chain.

However, it is important to recognise that HRDD broadens the concept of materiality, moving beyond a traditional financial conception, to one that includes the consideration of risks to rightsholders as well as risks to the company and its providers of capital. In this respect, HRDD is underpinned by what is often referred to as a "double materiality" approach (see Adams et al, 2021). As a result, the double materiality approach that underpins HRDD significantly expands the information requirements of the reporting entity, requiring the identification and assessment of human rights risks even when such risks might not be financially material (Ruggie et al., 2021). In short, the double materiality approach that underpins HRDD demands a much wider informational scope - including the collection of data from other entities that form part of the corporation's value chain and involving wider consultation with relevant rightsholders and communities. As a result, HRDD requires the development of sophisticated management information systems to support the collation, processing and reporting of

the relevant human rights related data and information – thus placing accounting and accounting technologies at the heart of BHR.

Audit and assurance

While HRDD processes demand the provision of wide-ranging information, relevant users and rightsholders also "need ways to *assure* themselves that these processes are having the intended effects" (Ruggie, 2017, *emphasis* added). That is, corporations need to provide "assurance to investors and other stakeholders that... information fairly reflects their practices" (Ruggie, 2017, added). In response to this need, Shift - the non-profit centre on business and human rights, in collaboration with the accounting firm - Forvis Mazars, developed the Human Rights Reporting and Assurance Frameworks Initiative (RAFI) (Shift, 2015). The Assurance Guidance (Shift, 2017), developed as part of this initiative, provides a "comprehensive set of indicators" related to a company's BHR processes, as well as guidance on the data management processes that company's need to develop to meet assurance requirements (Shift, 2017).

These policy developments are also reflected in practice. In particular, 'Big 4' accountancy firms have markedly expanded their advisory services to include BHR – both in relation to audit and assurance, as well as client support for HRDD implementation (Ferguson et al., 2025). Accounting and finance professionals and educators will be familiar with the expansion of audit and assurance services to non-financial aspects of business operations, which mirror similar developments in sustainability audit and assurance practice (Canning et al., 2019).

Such developments have not gone without criticism, with a number of commentators highlighting the limitations to 'social audit' practices (Birchall, 2021; Ford and Nolan, 2020), including concerns regarding the lack of engagement with rightsholders during audit processes and the lack of regulatory oversight of this practice (de Lacey, 2021; Ferguson et al., 2025). Traditional audit and assurance providers can offer relevant expertise in relation to audit methodologies, sampling procedures and data analytics. However, as mandatory HRDD legislation increasingly comes into force, BHR assurance providers will also need to possess relevant expertise in relation to international human rights standards, global value chains and operating contexts, and engaging with vulnerable stakeholders and indigenous communities (Shift, 2017, p.19).

Management Accounting and Management Information Systems

Given the information demands of HRDD, such processes have implications for both management accounting and management information systems. For example, the data required for HRDD will most likely be incorporated into strategic performance

measurement systems, such as the balanced scorecard (BSC). Given that the BSC was developed specifically to include non-financial measures of performance, human rights related information (for example, employee accidents, reports of harassment, supplier violations, the uptake of human rights training and awareness courses, etc) might be appropriately incorporated into such systems.

HRDD also impacts on management information systems – especially systems that have a supply chain management dimension. For example, for systems related to demand planning, or those designed to support a just-in-time strategy, HRDD demands that consideration is given to the pressures such systems might place on suppliers and their workers and the possible human rights implications associated with their use.

It has been widely reported that the purchasing practices of 'fast fashion' brands impact on the human rights of workers in supply chains in this way. As Shabrokh and Rodriguez (2023, p.199-200) explain, "demand for low prices and short lead times can negatively impact workers within supply chains, often resulting in workers experiencing forced labour or underpayment of wages" (see also, Anner, 2018). For example, in a report concerning the purchasing practices of the fashion brand Zara, Campos et al. (2015, p.16) highlight how incidents of excessive working hours and restrictions on freedom of movement were linked to Zara's short "design-to-retail cycle".

Global Value Chains

Global value chains (GVCs) complicate conventional understandings of organisational responsibility because economic activity is increasingly organised across networks of legally separate firms rather than contained within the boundaries of a single corporation. Production may be dispersed across suppliers, subcontractors and intermediaries located in different jurisdictions, while considerable strategic and economic power remains concentrated in lead firms. This dispersion and outsourcing of production can create a separation between the organisational actors that formally employ workers and those that influence the economic conditions under which their work is undertaken. Lead firms may not directly employ workers in supplier factories, farms or mines, yet their purchasing decisions can profoundly shape suppliers' capacity to provide safe conditions, pay adequate wages or respect working-time and freedom-of-association requirements. HRDD seeks partly to address this disjunction by extending corporate responsibility beyond the conventional legal boundary of the firm towards adverse impacts arising through business relationships (McCorquodale et al., 2017).

Recent studies have moved beyond the examination of corporate disclosure concerning human rights within global production, particularly through supply chains (Islam and Deegan, 2008; Islam and McPhail, 2011); rather, such studies further conceptualise accounting as part of the infrastructure through with responsibility is constituted and

distributed across the value chain. Accounting determines organisational boundaries for reporting; translates risks and impacts into categories and indicators; informs supplier selection and evaluation; structures procurement budgets and purchasing targets; establishes acceptable costs and margins; and provides information upon which contractual performance, remediation and termination decisions are based. Burritt and Schaltegger (2014) respond more broadly to this problem by arguing for an accounting for sustainability that extends across production and supply chains rather than remaining confined within individual organisations. Similarly, Antonini et al. (2020) make this boundary problem particularly explicit in relation to working conditions and human rights. Examining Inditex and its garment supply chain, they show that sustainability reporting boundaries do not simply reveal pre-existing social risks. Boundary-setting participates in producing and framing those risks, determining which workers, suppliers and conditions become incorporated within an organisational account and which remain distant or invisible.

Investment

HRDD also has implications for investment practice, given that investors may be connected to human rights impacts through the companies they invest in (Shift, 2022). As a result, investors also "need to *know* the risks to people connected with their investment activities and *show* how they take action to manage those risks" (Investor Alliance for Human Rights, 2020, p.6, *emphasis* added). For investors to 'know and show' their responsibility for human rights, they require data. As Ferguson (2026 p.158) points out:

> "This may include information about investee companies' previous association with human rights related issues, the exposure of investee companies to such issues, sector and regional risks, as well as the governance practices of companies related to human rights risks, etc."

It is possible that the HRDD process may bring to light issues that could potentially impact on the future cash flow of an investment - such as poor labour conditions, health and safety issues, etc. Where this is the case, investors may consider factoring these issues into their company valuation models – for example, by adjusting the discount rate as part of a discounted cash flow calculations (see KPMG, 2021; PRI, 2017).

In relation to internal corporate capital investment decisions, HRDD is relevant to investments that have the potential to have a human rights impact – for example, the development of an overseas manufacturing plant that may impact upon an indigenous community. Therefore, traditional investment appraisal techniques, such as discounted cash flow or net present value (NPV), may require supplementing with qualitative information or alternative decision-making criteria.

Summary

This section of the report highlights the relevance of human rights, and HRDD in particular, to accounting and finance practice. In short, it is clear from the discussion above that HRDD involves a myriad of practices traditionally associated with accounting and finance - including corporate reporting and materiality, audit and assurance, management accounting and management information systems, and investment. It is therefore imperative that accounting and finance educators are aware of these developments and take measures to incorporate human rights into the curriculum.

The following section discusses the results of a survey of accounting and finance educators, which was designed and administered in order to better understand how, and the extent to which, human rights are being incorporated into the accounting and finance curriculum. The results of the survey provide insights into existing teaching practice and the barriers that accounting and finance educators face when introducing human rights into the curriculum.

Results

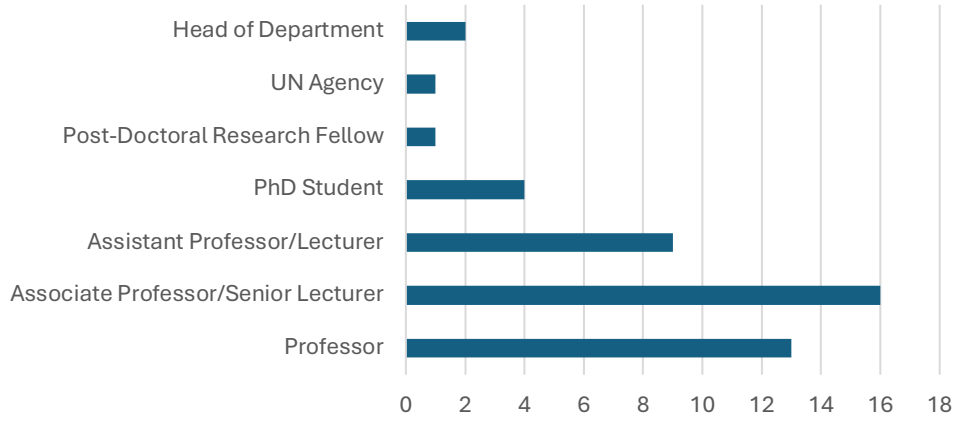
In order to better understand how, and the extent to which, human rights is being incorporated into the accounting and finance curriculum of higher education institutions (HEIs), an online survey was developed and administered to accounting and finance educators who are members of the Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research (**CSEAR**) and the Accounting and Finance Cluster of the GBSN BHR Impact Community (**GBSN**). The survey was emailed to circa 460 members, with 46 responses to the survey received – representing a response rate of around 10%

Who responded?

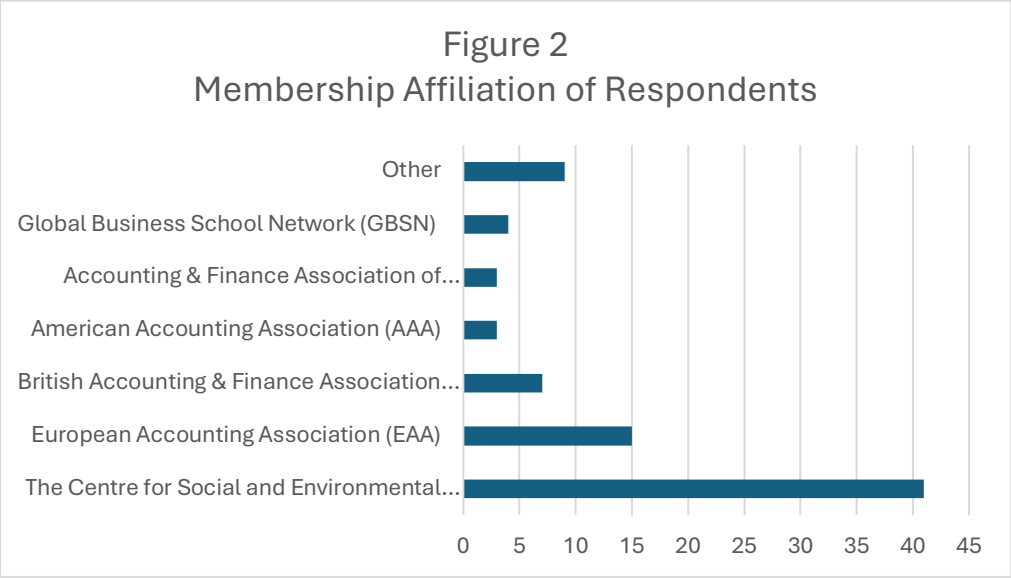
We received 46 responses from 39 institutions worldwide, including 19 responses from European institutions, 10 from the UK, 3 from Latin America (Brazil and Colombia), 3 from Africa (Nigeria and Lesotho), 3 from North America (Canada), 6 from Australia, and 1 from an international organisation.

Respondents represented a range of career stages, from PhD student to professor – with the majority of respondents occupying more senior academic roles (associate professor/senior lecture and professor).

Figure 1
Position of Respondents

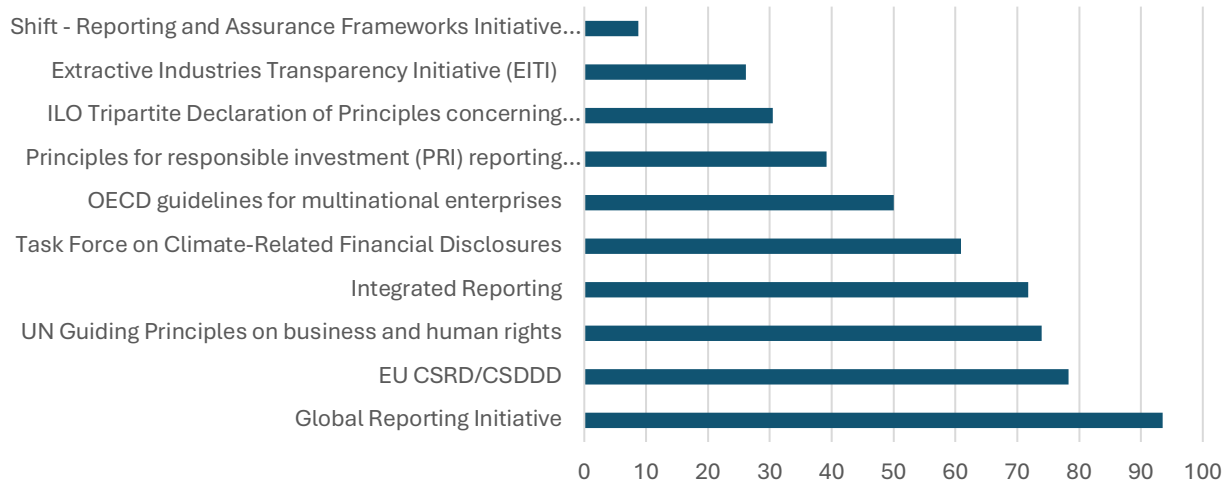


By disciplinary background, the majority of respondents were in accounting (83%), with 10% in management and 7% in finance. The majority of respondents were members of CSEAR (98%), with many holding membership of other academic accounting organisations as well as GBSN (see Figure 2 below).



Awareness of international regulations, standards and guidelines was mixed amongst our respondents. Knowledge of the UNGPs (74%) and the EU Directive (72%) were broadly comparable. Other significant guidelines were less well recognised, with only 50% of respondents familiar with the OECD Guidelines and only 30% were familiar with the ILO Tripartite Declaration. In terms of reporting frameworks that include a human rights dimension, the most widely recognised were the GRI, CSRD/CSRDD, and Integrated Reporting. The Shift RAFI initiative had the lowest visibility, with only four respondents indicating an awareness of these guidelines. Importantly, all respondents recognised at least one reporting framework (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
% of Respondents Aware of Regulation and Guidelines

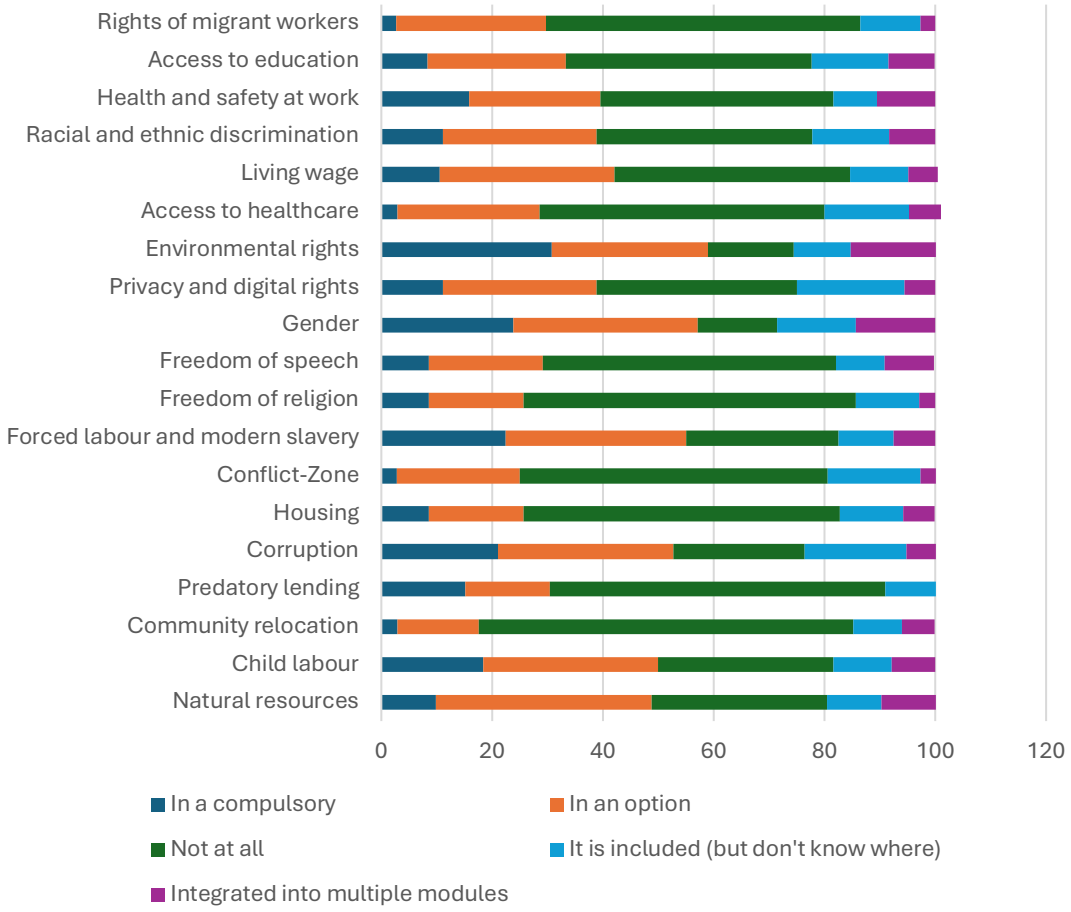


Human rights in the accounting and finance curriculum

Overall, the vast majority of respondents recognised the need to include human rights in the accounting and finance curriculum (93%) with no respondents rejecting the idea outright; 7% of respondents indicated they were not sure.

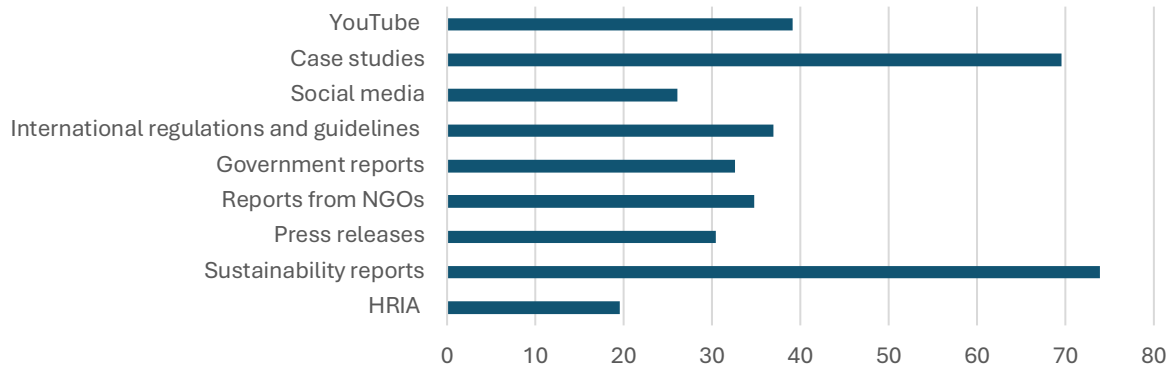
On curriculum integration, 49% of respondents confirmed that human rights are included in their accounting or finance curriculum, 24% said their curriculum had no human rights coverage, and 27% of respondents were unsure. Topics such as child labour, forced labour, corruption, gender equality, environmental rights, and workplace health and safety were more likely to appear in mandatory accounting and finance courses, while issues such as community relocation, conflict zones, healthcare, housing, migrant rights, and privacy tended to feature, if at all, in optional/elective courses (see Figure 4). In their narrative responses, a number of respondents indicated that coverage of human rights was not covered on accounting and finance modules directly but may be covered as part of a course on business ethics. For example, as one respondent stated: “the curriculum does cover human rights topics but not in accounting studies. Rather, the topics are covered in… Business Ethics”.

Figure 4
Coverage of Human Rights Issues



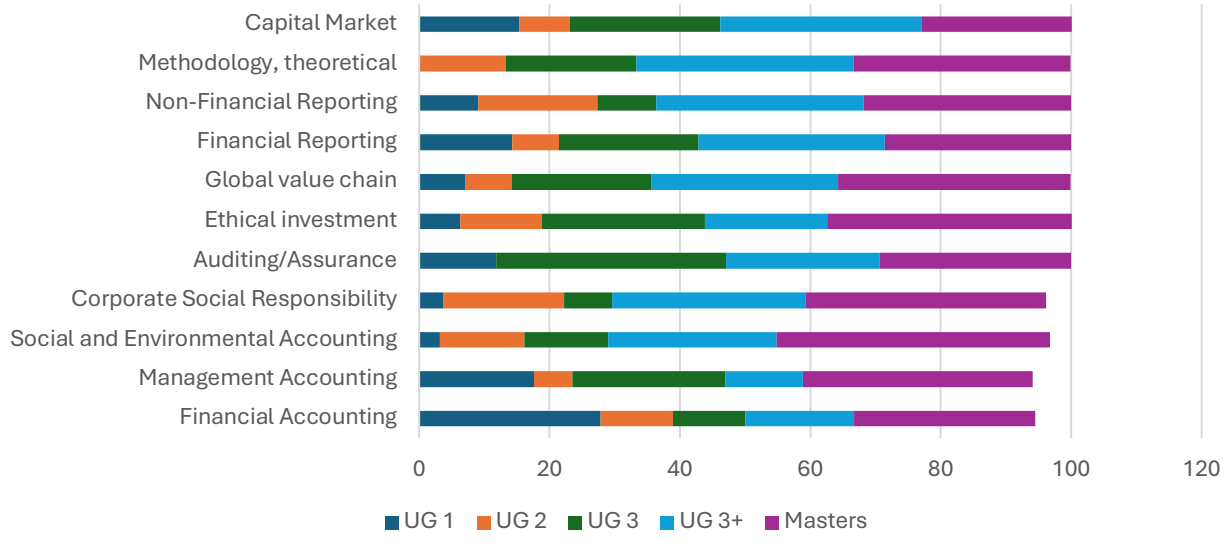
In terms of the teaching resources employed by survey respondents when covering human rights in the accounting and finance curriculum, the majority of respondents indicated they had used corporate sustainability reports (74%) and case studies (70%). Other popular teaching resources included videos from YouTube (39%), international regulations and guidelines (37%) and government reports and guidelines (33%). Figure 5 provides an overview of the teaching resources employed by respondents when introducing human rights into the accounting and finance curriculum.

Figure 5
Teaching Resources Employed by Responents (%)



In terms of where human rights are covered on the accounting and finance curriculum, Figure 6 indicates that this is predominantly on advanced level courses – in either the final year of an undergraduate programme or as part of a Masters degree. Nevertheless, responses to the survey would suggest that an introductory level course on Financial Accounting provides an opportunity to include human rights at an early stage in students' learning, with around 28% of respondents indicating they include human rights in the first year of an undergraduate degree.

Figure 6
Course Coverage

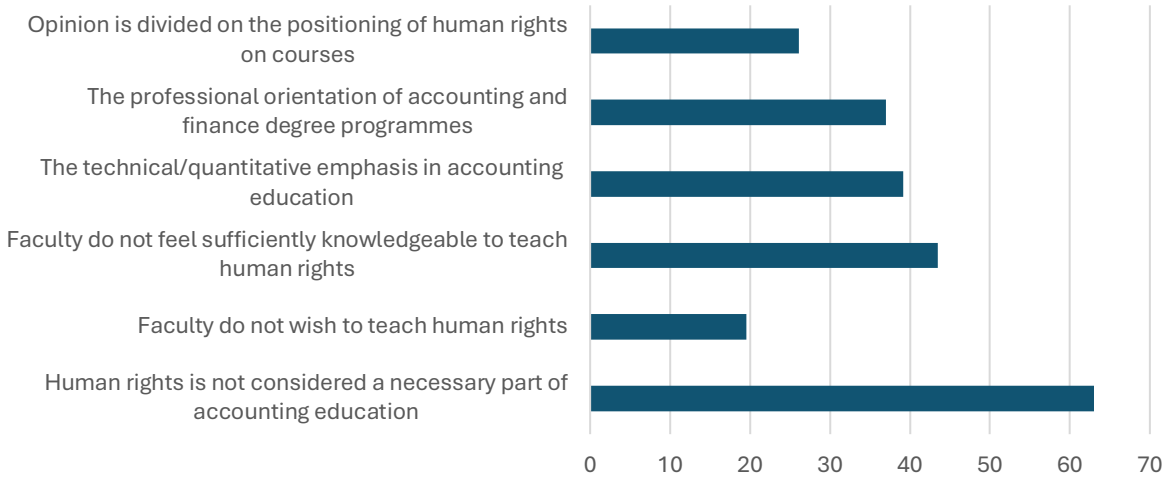


In their narrative responses, some respondents indicated that human rights were covered on non-accounting and finance courses that formed part of the degree programme – such as a "dedicated business ethics" course or a course on CSR. However, one respondent did note that "modern slavery legislation is discussed in Advanced Financial Accounting".

Barriers

In terms of the barriers to introducing human rights into the accounting and finance curriculum, respondents highlighted that fellow colleagues' perceptions that human rights were "not [considered] a necessary part of accounting education" (63%) as the most significant barrier. Other barriers identified by respondents included faculty not feeling sufficiently knowledgeable about human rights (43%), and that the technical/quantitative emphasis (39%) and professional orientation (37%) of accounting and finance education was not aligned with the subject of human rights (see Figure 6).

Figure 6
Barriers to Implementing Human Rights (%)



Conclusions and Recommendations

Responses to the survey would suggest that members of CSEAR and GBSN believe that human rights should be included on the accounting and finance curriculum. Nevertheless, just less than half of respondents indicated that human rights were being

incorporated into the curriculum at their own institution. When human rights were included as part of the curriculum, it tended to be at more advanced levels of an undergraduate degree, on a taught Masters programme or part of a specialized module on Business Ethics or CSR. While it is encouraging to see human rights being included as part of accounting and finance degree programmes, responses to the survey would suggest that we the topic of human rights has not yet become a mainstream part of the curriculum.

The barriers to including human rights on the curriculum that were identified by respondents are familiar, reflecting the well-documented barriers faced by accounting educators with regard to the inclusion of social, environmental and sustainability related topics. In particular, accounting and finance degrees tend to be professionally accredited, requiring the inclusion of specific topics, ultimately leading to a "a lack of… space in the curriculum" for topics that are not perceived to be core by professional accounting bodies (Stevenson, 2002, p.343; Hazelton and Haigh, 2010; Russell et al., 2021). In this respect, the inclusion of human rights as part of professional accreditation requirements would serve as a significant driver.

As outlined in Section 1 of this report, there have been significant developments in the regulatory and governance landscape that would warrant the inclusion of human rights as part of professional training and education. Notwithstanding the widespread influence of the UNGPs, there have been significant developments in mandatory human rights due diligence legislation (such as EU CSDDD), mandatory disclosure requirements (such as UK Modern Slavery Act and EU CSRD) and market-based mechanisms (such as EU Forced Labour Regulation) in multiple jurisdictions. Concomitantly, there have been significant developments in corporate sustainability reporting standards, both in Europe and the US, include human rights.

We have noticed some increasing recognition of human rights as relevant to accounting and finance practice from professional bodies, whilst formal accreditation requirements still tend to frame this through sustainability, ethics and society impact. ICAEW in its ACA Business Law syllabus explicitly requires students to understand the European Convention on Human Rights and Human Rights Act 1998, and to identify employer responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. AICPA and CIMA has stated CIMA being a signatory to the UN Global Compact and thus commits to its principles in human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. IFAC published some professional comments on arguing for the role and competencies of accountant in addressing human rights in supply chains[2] and on modern slavery auditing[3]. ACCA also have published a series of technical resources and articles linking auditors to implementation of the

[2] https://www.ifac.org/knowledge-gateway/discussion/new-and-important-role-professional-accountants-assessing-human-rights-risk

[3] https://www.ifac.org/knowledge-gateway/discussion/tackling-modern-slavery-what-role-can-accountants-play

Modern Slavery Act [4] and supply-chain due diligence. There seems a recognition-curriculum gap: normative recognition of human rights is already emerging; what is missing is its translation into educatory expectations, learning outcomes and assessments.

Based on our survey findings, we would offer the following recommendations.

The following actions were identified as having the potential to further embed business and human rights into accounting and finance education.

- The need for more effective communication regarding the relevance of HRDD to accounting and finance practice
- The need for professional accounting associations to develop guidance on the role of accounting practitioners in supporting HRDD processes
- The need for further academic research on BHR and HRDD through special issues and associated conferences and workshops
- Dialogue with students to establish their demand for coverage of issues they see as very relevant to their professional development
- The development of a community of practice for an authoritative source of expertise to enhance the capacity for accounting and finance academics to integrate BHR into their teaching; and develop "curriculum insertion points", ready-to-use teaching units, for educators
- The inclusion of BHR/HRDD as an accreditation requirement, rather than an optional ethical topic, by professional accounting bodies; or to identify BHR/HRDD competence within accreditation requirements
- Development of standardised teaching resources (e.g. textbooks or case studies) accompanied by a portfolio of customisable teaching resources

[4] https://www.accaglobal.com/gb/en/member/sectors/internal-audit/our-publications/bridging-the-gap-between-human-rights-and-business.html

Resources

Policy, Guidelines and Initiatives

- The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (**UNGPs**) provide foundational guidance on the responsibilities of business corporations in relation to human rights. Pillar II of the UNGPs delineate guidelines related to human rights due diligence (HRDD), providing a basis for accounting and reporting mechanisms as part of this process. The "**Interpretive Guide**" further develops these guidelines, with a particular focus on HRDD and the responsibilities of business.

- The Human Rights Reporting and Assurance Framework Initiative (**RAFI**), co-developed by Shift and the accounting firm Forvis Mazars, provides guidance for companies related to human rights disclosure. The first phase of the RAFI project, the *Reporting Framework*, provides a range of indicators and reporting criteria that companies should consider when reporting on business and human rights issues. In this respect, the *Reporting Framework* is a useful resource to introduce students to the type of accounting related information associated with HRDD.

- The second phase of the RAFI project developed UNGP **Assurance Guidance** that outlines the expected competencies of human rights assurance providers along with a comprehensive set of indicators for assurance providers to consider. Again, these indicators are a useful resource for teaching purposes, in terms of introducing students to the extensive data management processes that business enterprises need to develop in order to meet assurance requirements

- Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (**CHRB**), operates under the auspices of the World Benchmarking Alliance. While the CHRB is an external mechanism for assessing corporate disclosure practice, its assessment methodology consists of specific human rights indicators across six measurement themes, which are grounded in the UNGPs and other international human rights standards. The CHRB indicators and measurements can serve as a useful reference point for introducing students to accounting related information on human rights.

Teaching Resources

- **Teaching Business and Human Rights**, edited by Anthony Ewing, provides a comprehensive guidance on integrating a range of business and human rights topics on to the business curriculum. Each chapter provides guidance on integrating human rights into the curriculum, along with examples of teaching practice and useful resources. Chapter 27 of this text (by John Ferguson) is devoted specifically to teaching and human rights in accounting. The chapter provides examples of where human rights might be covered in the curriculum along with a case study exercise.

- **Pathways to Teaching Sustainable Finance**, edited by Rachelle Belinga, Jean-Pascal Gond, Mette Morsing, provides a collection of chapters written by experienced educators on how business curriculums can be redesigned to incorporate sustainable finance education. Chapter 10 of this text (by John Ferguson), provides insights into the relevance of HRDD to accounting and finance practice along with examples of how to introduce HRDD into the accounting and finance curriculum.

- The **GBSN for Business and Human Rights Impact Community** is a network of business schools and scholars who are committed to integrating human rights into management education. GBSN is host to a "**Toolkit for Integrating Human Rights in Business Education**" as well as a range of further **teaching resources**. GBSN for BHR also offers several thematic research clusters that serve as working groups and knowledge hubs – including an accounting, finance and investment cluster led by John Ferguson and Yingru Li.

- The **Global Business and Human Rights Scholars Association** is a community of researchers, educators, and practitioners dedicated to advancing critical scholarship in the field of business and human rights. Members come from a range of disciplines, and the *Association* runs an annual conference along with other shared research initiatives.

- The **Teaching Business and Human Rights Forum** is an international initiative for collaboration among scholars involved in teaching business and human rights. The *Forum* seeks to promote and strengthen business and human rights education by fostering collaboration among teachers. The Forum maintains a discussion board and hosts an extensive digital library of teaching resources.

- The **Business and Human Rights Centre** is a global organisation that collects evidence on the human rights performance, practice and policy of corporations worldwide. While not a teaching resource *per se*, it is an incredibly useful reference point for evidence on business and human rights abuses, commentary and regulatory developments. Also, the initiative **KnowTheChain** provides benchmarks as well as resources on tracking and monitoring how major companies in apparel and footwear, food and beverage, and ICT address forced labour in global supply chains. In particular, the Centre is a useful resource for developing case-based material or to provide a counter account to corporate reporting.

- The **Responsible Contracting Project** (RCP) was launched in 2022 and introduced Model Contract Clauses (MCCs) 2.0, which integrates human right due diligence principles into every stage of the buyer-supplier relationships, in line with UNGPs and OECD due-diligence principles. It moves away from the traditional model whereby the buyers' contract with suppliers requires that suppliers guarantee, or "represent and warrant", that there are no human rights issues in the supply chain. Instead, the model contract clause emphasises shared responsibility between buyers and suppliers, including in relation to remediation. This shift helps avoid the traditional buyer response to the emergence of human rights issues with a supplier – i.e. the termination of contract. Instead, the RCP approach requires a cooperative approach to the mitigation of risk – with implications for accounting and the consideration of risk.

- The **Chocolate Scorecard** is an accountability initiative that grades chocolate companies on a range of human rights and sustainability criteria. In a research case study on the implantation of the scorecard, Perkiss et al (2025, p.1845) explain that a key aspect of this accounting-based accountability system is the dialogical nature of the initiative. That is, in addition to accounting metrics and measurement, the scorecard process is underpinned by dialogue with participating companies.

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