



*Case Study Report
University of Essex*

May 2015

The Values Project

Background

The first decades of the 21st century are seeing a shift in the way that international business is expected to conduct its affairs. Globalization and economic growth have been challenged on two significant fronts: 1) an increasing awareness that a wide range of large corporations have put profits before values (e.g., the British Petroleum disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and the Apple supply chain issues in China) and 2) large financial institutions have either collapsed (e.g., Lehman Brothers), have been found to have mis-sold products to customers (e.g., UK bank sales of payment protection insurance), or actively colluded in manipulating the financial markets (e.g., the LIBOR scandal).

These events have led to a significant advance in how corporations approach business ethics and corporate social responsibility, driven by a rising demand for greater accountability with respect to human rights through such developments as the UN Global Compact and the 'Ruggie Principles', which address the human rights implications of business.

When considering corporate misconduct the Higher Education sector may not be the first to come to mind. Universities and colleges however have just as much social responsibility as any other type of organisation, if not more in their role as educators of the next generation, of whom many will be the business leaders of the future. A number of cases in recent years have brought to light just how important it is for higher education institutions to have and live by strong ethical codes of conduct and values.

In 2013 for example, a lecturer at Curtin University in Western Australia pleaded guilty to taking bribes to raise student grades. In 2011 the 'Tri-Valley University scandal' in the USA caught the attention of the media and authorities for their role in trafficking illegal immigrants using student visas. Further, since 2011 a number of social psychology academics in the Netherlands have been found to have manipulated and fabricated data to generate 'attractive' findings.

While such cases are damaging to the reputation of the universities concerned and place a spotlight on conduct in the higher education sector in general, they do often result in positive change and the introduction of new legislation that helps prevent similar incidences from occurring in the future. In the UK for example, the case linking the London School of Economics with the Gaddafi regime in 2011 led to a number of changes to codes of conduct, guidance and policies around the acceptance of donations, admission of postgraduate students and the amount of outside assistance received by students in their studies.

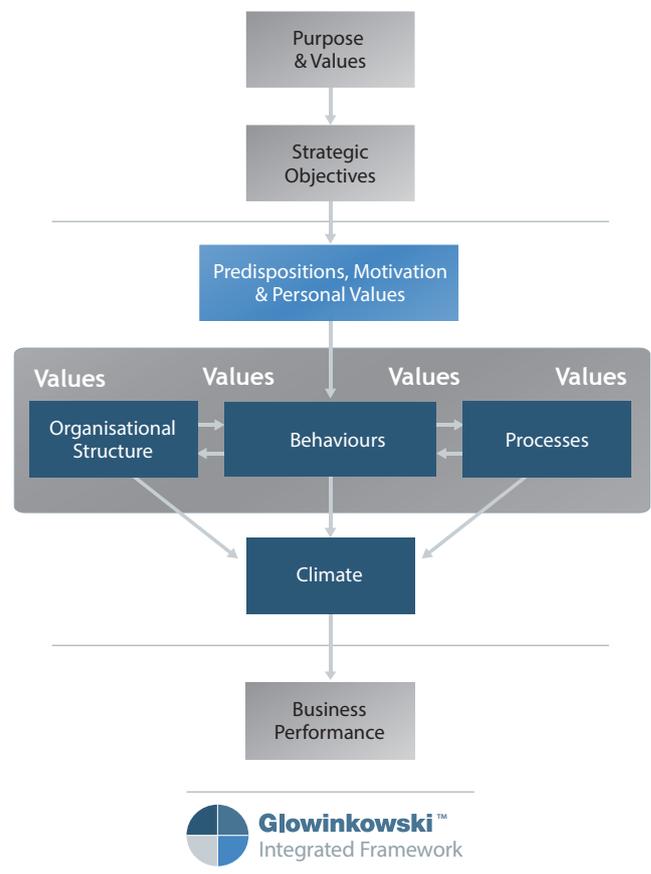
The shift in the source of university funding from government grants to student fees in the UK also means that universities

have greater accountability to their students. Now seen more as 'consumers', students have increasingly high expectations of their university in terms of the education, services and 'student experience' they receive.

Living by a set of core company values is not just a necessity for large for-profit organisations but is crucial too to organisations in the education sector. Indeed many universities do endorse a set of values and principles that represent what they stand for and guide how they act. Typically the values described by universities are largely similar to those publicised in other sectors. However, there is one value that often appears in a university's values set that we don't see in other contexts, that of 'academic freedom'.

Academic freedom is absolutely fundamental to academia, and in the UK is the legal right of academics to "freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions" (Education Reform Act, 1988).

This value has been at the forefront of a current and ongoing debate on the governments proposed counter-terrorism and security bill, known colloquially as the 'snooper's charter'.



Case Study Organisation

This proposal would require organisations by law, including universities, to report on students or staff suspected of participating in 'extreme' dialogue and to ban events where such discussions may occur. A number of senior academics, including those at the University of Essex - a leading university in human rights - have signed a letter, published in The Times, expressing their concern with this bill, stressing how such a law would pose a risk to academic freedom, freedom of speech, and inhibit legitimate academic debate.

The act of these universities in signing this letter demonstrates a commitment to their values and highlights how important it is to question procedures, processes and behaviours that violate core values and principles. Unfortunately however, as illustrated in the cases described above, we know that organisations do not always stand or live by these codes. The inauthenticity of these organisations, that is saying one thing and doing another, has led to a great deal of scepticism around the concept of 'corporate values' which has become somewhat of an oxymoron in the eyes of many.

It is crucial therefore to engage with values in the workplace fully and wholeheartedly. Importantly there can be tremendous benefits for an organisation that is truly values driven. The Glowinkowski Integrated Framework, depicted on the previous page, illustrates that values have a role to play in determining how an organisation is structured, how leaders behave and what processes are put in place. These three components can be referred to as change levers which have a direct impact on organisational climate, a crucial driver of outstanding business performance. "Climate" is defined as how it feels to work "here", how committed to and engaged with their work employees are. A positive

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climate creates an environment where people are prepared to use all of their skills and expertise to drive and raise performance. For an organisation looking to increase its performance, it is fundamental to consider the underlying values guiding how it operates.

At Glowinkowski International Limited (GIL) we have developed a tool to assess values in the workplace, the Global Values Indicator (GVI). The GVI gathers from the perspective of employees, data regarding the extent to which their organisation is demonstrating values in practice. This tool has been developed as part of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between GIL and the University of Essex. This project has received support from Innovate UK, a public body sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, who provide support to innovative small and medium size enterprises in the United Kingdom.

Drawing upon both academic and corporate literature, we have developed a framework for values in the workplace that portrays the most frequently endorsed values across a review of FTSE100 and FT100 companies, and philosophy and psychology. In a number of case studies we have gathered evidence to support both the statistical and practical validity of the GVI. In this report we present findings from our trial of the tool at the University of Essex.

University of Essex

The University of Essex is a research university in the United Kingdom, with three campuses across the county of Essex. The first students to the university were admitted in 1964, just 77 men and 45 women. Today, the university is 'home' to nearly 12000 students (2013-2014), 40% of which are international students. Currently celebrating its 50th anniversary, in the most recent National Student Survey (2014), it was ranked 6th in England for student satisfaction. In addition, the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF), a national assessment of research quality and impact at universities, placed Essex in the top 20 for UK research excellence.

All of this is great for the students and for the reputation and prestige of the university, but what about the experience of staff? The university employs over 2200 administrative and academic staff altogether. GIL is now an active partner in the delivery of the university's strategic leaders program

which supports and develops staff at all levels who have aspirations to lead the institution in to the future. Through this program the GPI™ (Global Predispositions Indicator) and ESI (Engagement Styles Indicator) have been completed and both group and one-to-one feedback sessions delivered.

Administering the GVI at the University of Essex as a further GIL intervention, gives us a window in to how well the university is demonstrating values in practise. These findings will allow us to identify what aspects of the university's conduct may require review and improvement.



Study Method

GVI Framework

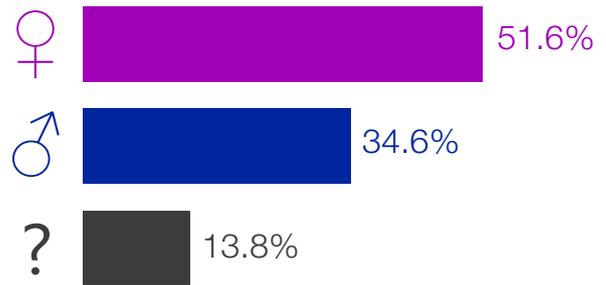
The GVI framework describes 6 core values that we understand to be relevant and crucial to any organisation, in any sector. While broad in scope, each value is defined by three sub-values. The benefit of such a widely applicable framework like this is that, as we build up our data bank we can benchmark and compare different organisations and sectors with one another in a fair and equal way.

INNOVATION demonstrates a commitment to the use of specialist knowledge and technology to be an organisation that is creative and novel, and that can adapt to changing needs and demands	Knowledge Novelty Adaptability*
COLLABORATION demonstrates a commitment to valuing the contribution of people as individuals and as a team and fosters positive relationships in the workplace	Teamwork Inclusion Relationships
EXCELLENCE demonstrates a commitment to working to the best possible standard, seeking continual improvement and recognising those who perform well	Performance Improvement Recognition
ACCOUNTABILITY demonstrates a commitment to thinking carefully before acting, communicating and sharing information openly, and accepting ownership of their actions and associated consequences	Thought Transparency Responsibility
INTEGRITY demonstrates a commitment to doing and standing by what is right and being an honest and trusted organisation that keeps its promises	Ethics Trust Authenticity
RESPECT demonstrates a commitment to being respectful, considerate and caring in their work, to the environment, community and people they work with	Environment Community People

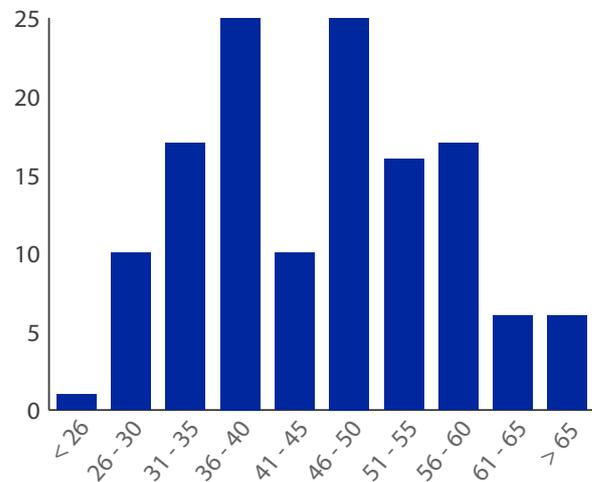
*Adaptability was not present in the earlier version of the framework assessed in this study.

Participants and Procedure

University of Essex employees were invited to complete the GVI in electronic format via a staff information mailing list. In total 254 individuals responded, of which 144 completed the survey in full and 110 partially completed, stopping part way through or not completing the demographics questions at the end.



The age of respondents ranged from 16 to 74, with an average age of 43.99 years and standard deviation of 12.29. The number of employees in each age group is shown below.



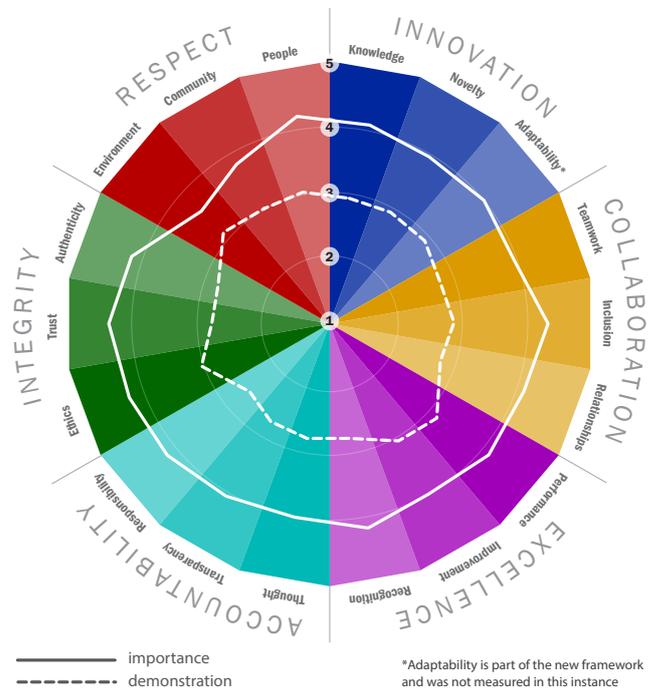
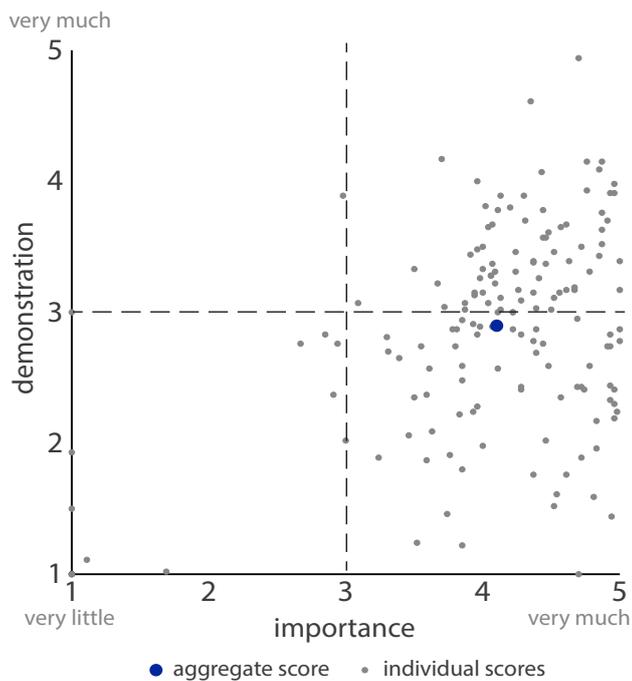
The Value-Behaviour Gap

The core function of the GVI is to establish where an organisation stands along two dimensions. In this case, first, how much on a scale from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much), employees at the University of Essex perceive the university to be demonstrating values in practice. Second, how important it is to these employees that the university does that (using the same 1 to 5 scale). Comparing responses to these two distinct but related questions allows us to examine the gap between values *demonstration* and values *importance* within the specific organisational context.

The Results

To start with we examined individuals overall scores across the GVI values set to get a broad sense of how the university is perceived to be demonstrating values and how important these are to employees. The graph below plots each individual respondent's aggregate score on perceived values *demonstration* against their aggregate score on values *importance*. The larger blue dot shows the aggregated score across all respondents.

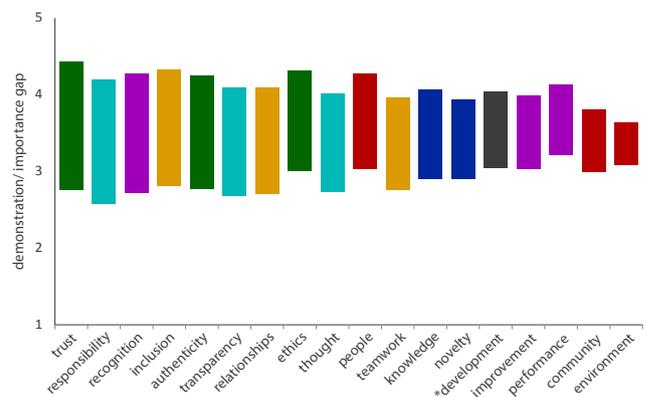
The pattern of results shows that the majority of participants rated the importance of values highly, above the midpoint of the scale (3 = moderately important), while perceptions of values demonstration were more varied. Around half of employees sampled reported that values are only being demonstrated 'very little' to 'moderately' in practice. This is problematic as this shows that while values are important to employees, they are not being consistently observed in the behaviour demonstrated at the university.



and its practical demonstration. For example it is clear from this figure that there are concerns around the integrity, collaboration and accountability values in particular, as these are the areas that show greatest deviations.

Target Areas

In the graph below we look at the demonstration-importance gap in a different way. For each value a bar is plotted. The bottom of each bar represents the level at which the value is perceived to be demonstrated (on a 5-point scale). The top of each bar is the level at which each value is seen to be important. These bars have been ordered on the chart according to the size of the gap between the demonstration and importance levels. Here we can see that the values



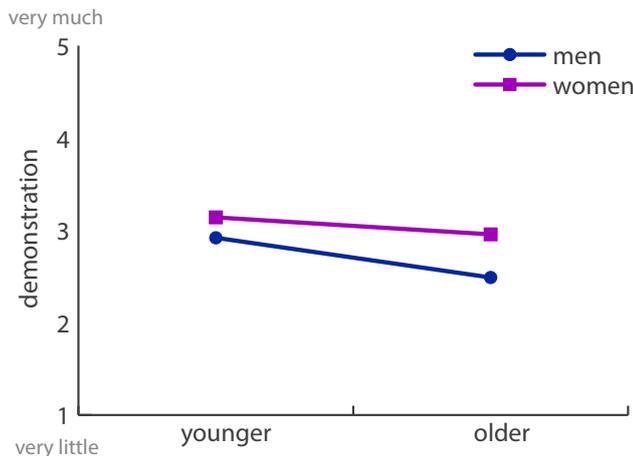
*development is no longer part of the current framework

The Results

of trust, responsibility and recognition have the largest reported discrepancies. Less problematic areas, that is the values with smaller gaps, are the respect values of community and environment and the excellence values of improvement and performance.

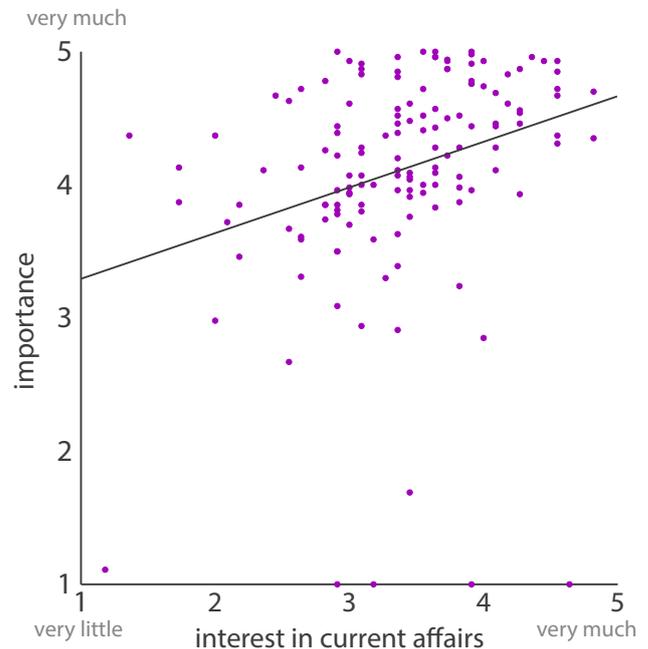
Values and Demographics

We know through research and experience that how the workplace is perceived can vary as a function of individual differences in gender, cultural background and personality to name a few. We were curious to explore therefore whether the demographic characteristics of respondents could account for differences in how they rated values at the University of Essex. Overall, male employees and older employees (independent of gender) were found to rate values as being demonstrated less on average than did female employees and younger employees as visualised in the figure below.



Employees were also asked whether they self-identified as religious, non-religious and/or spiritual. While identifying as religious or not was not associated with either perceptions of values demonstration or importance, identifying as spiritual was found to have an association with the importance placed on the respect, collaboration and integrity values. That is, individuals identifying as spiritual assigned higher levels of importance to these values.

Given that values have a key role to play in all aspects of life and are at the centre of many crises around the world, we tested a theory that individuals with a greater tendency to look 'outward', that is to be interested in events around the world, would differ in their values perceptions from those lower on this tendency. The scatter plot to the right depicts the association between respondents level of interest in current affairs and the importance they placed on the GVI values. A significant and positive relationship was found



between these two variables, with those reporting a greater interest in current affairs being more likely to also place greater importance on values in general.

University of Essex Values

In addition to the GVI values, employees were also asked to report on their perceptions of the nine university values. These values (shown below) are described as underpinning all activities, behaviours and decision making at the university.

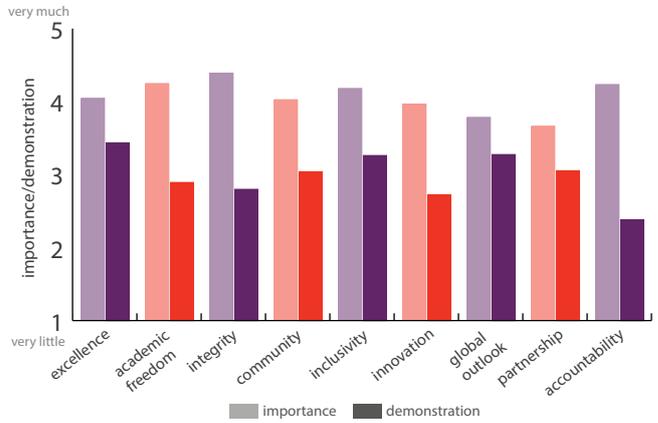
- excellence
- academic freedom
- integrity
- community
- inclusivity
- innovation
- global outlook
- partnership
- accountability

The Results

In the bar graph to the right, aggregate employee ratings of the university's values *demonstration* (darker shade) and *importance* (lighter shade) are plotted. Academic freedom, integrity and accountability were on average rated as the top three most important values in the set, while excellence, inclusivity and global outlook were rated as the most highly demonstrated on average.

The discrepancy between values demonstration and values importance, the gap between the two bars, is clear in each instance, however it is particularly marked for the accountability and integrity values. This reflects the GVI results that showed trust (integrity) and responsibility (accountability) to be the two values with the greatest importance-demonstration discrepancies. The smallest discrepancies were found for global outlook, partnership and excellence, again in line with the GVI results which found

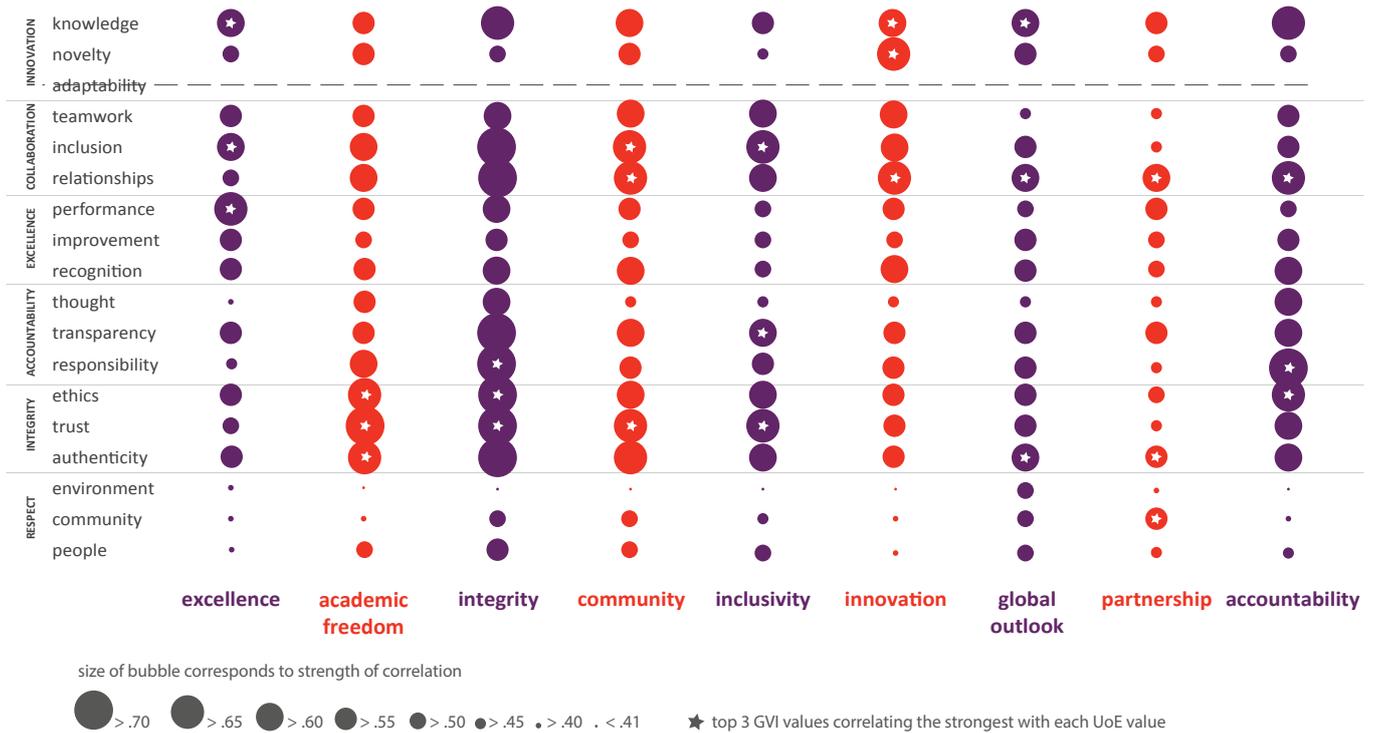
performance (excellence), community and environment to have the smallest value discrepancies.



Mapping University of Essex Values to the GVI

Lastly we examined how employees ratings of the university's nine values related to the 18 values of the GVI. The reason for doing this is that it provides us with a broader picture of the concepts that each of the university's values are drawing upon. We know that values are interrelated in general, for example, we would expect that the more someone values or demonstrates integrity, the more likely they are to also

value and demonstrate accountability. The value mapping shown below illustrates how each of the nine university values relates to each of the GVI values. The size of the bubbles represent the strength of each association, with larger bubbles representing stronger relationships (see key). Stars have been placed on the associations showing the three GVI values that correlate most strongly with each university value. For



Final remarks

example, for the university's excellence value, performance, inclusion and knowledge are its strongest links among the GVI concepts. This suggests that by promoting inclusion and taking advantage of specialist knowledge and expertise, the university could expect to see an increase in perceived demonstration of the university's excellence value.

The GVI value of relationships is in the top three strongest associations with five of the nine university values which highlights this as a potential key lever for enhancing overall values demonstration. The fact that the GVI value of thought (accountability) and the three respect values show relatively weaker links with the university values suggests that these dimensions may be underrepresented or missing from the university's own values concepts. These are just a few of the observations that can be made from this mapping diagram.

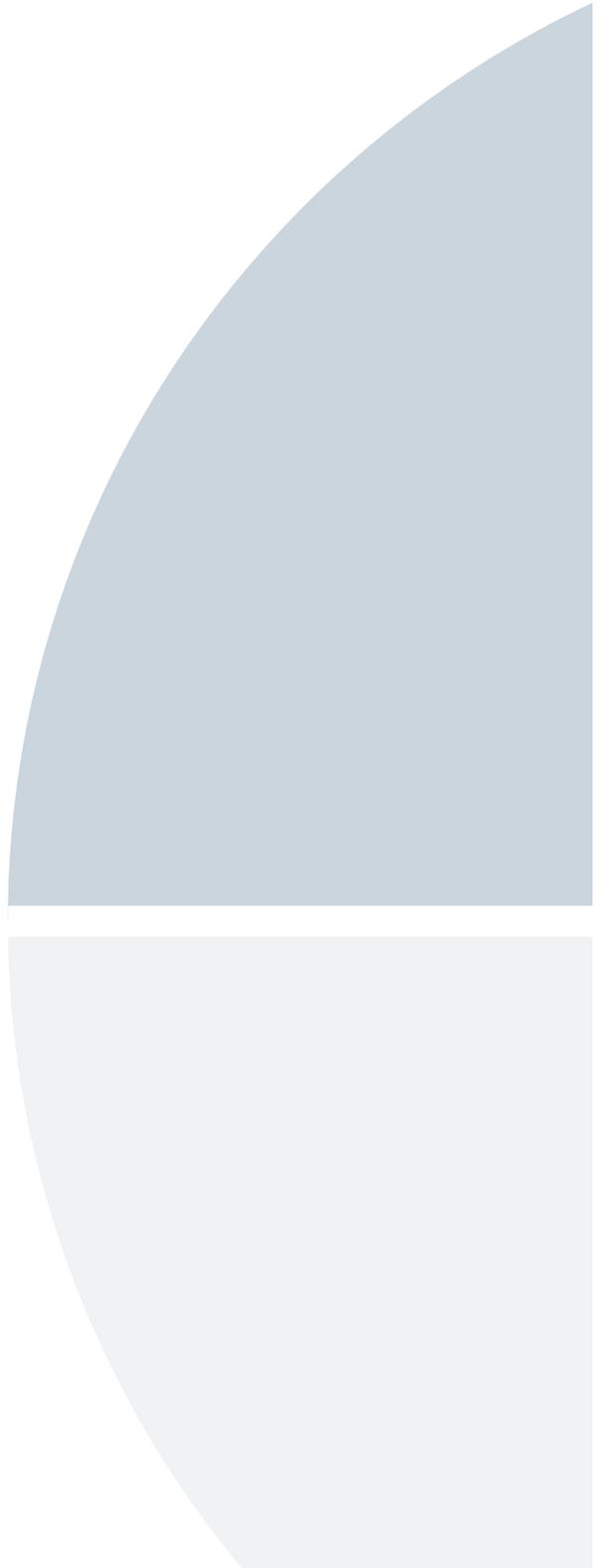
Conclusion

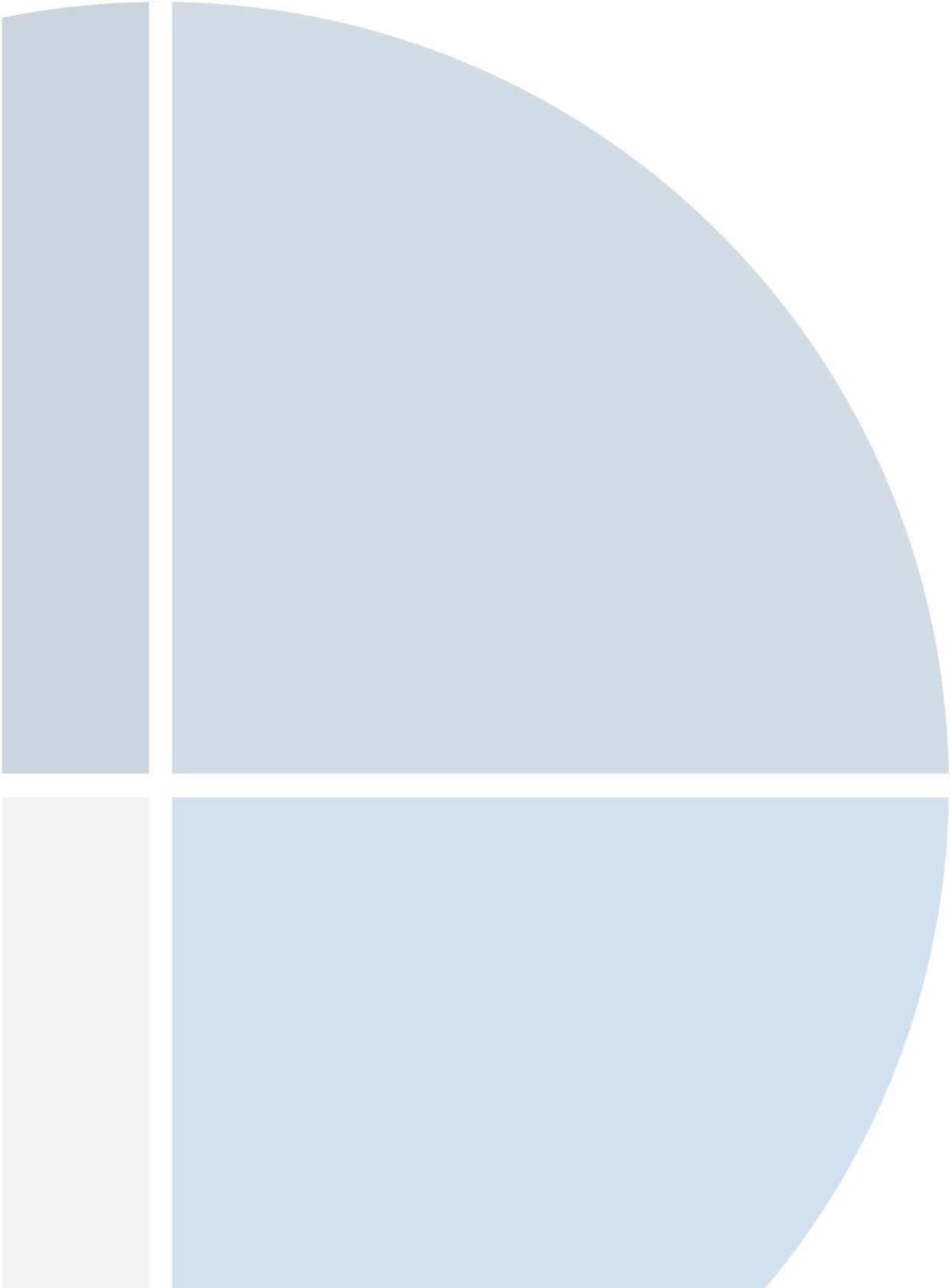
In this report we have presented the results of an investigation into values at the University of Essex, specifically the extent to which the university's employees perceive values to be demonstrated in practise and how important that demonstration is to them. Overall there seems to be a general consensus among the employee body around value importance, that is the majority of employees reported that it was highly important to them that the university demonstrates values in practise.

In terms of values demonstration however, reactions were more varied, with around a half of respondents reporting that values are only being demonstrated in practise to 'a little' degree. The values that appear to require particular attention and development are those around integrity and accountability, with employees reporting relatively lower levels of trust and responsibility being demonstrated at the university.

The senior management team, human resources and the Vice Chancellor of the university have all examined these results and are looking in to ways in which they can improve procedures around accountability and trust at the university such as by involving department heads in steering group meetings with the senior leaders.

The result of our work has also fed directly into ongoing work at the university on governance, structures, leadership styles and broader concerns over staff well-being and issues involving diversity and equality. The Vice Chancellor and the senior leadership team as well as members of staff continue to reflect on the importance of values in the context of a sector experiencing momentous change.







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