

June 2020

Sustainable and Responsible Investment (SRI) Equity Approach

Aberdeen Standard Investments' Sustainable and Responsible Investment (SRI) equity strategies seek to generate strong long-term performance by allocating capital to companies which demonstrate that they are sustainable leaders and improvers versus their peers, through their management of environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks and opportunities.

Summary

Our SRI equity portfolios contain high-quality companies that have been identified through our bottom-up equity research process which takes into consideration the sustainability of the business in its broadest sense and the company's ESG performance. Within our equity investment process, every company that we invest in is given a proprietary overall **Quality rating** and a component of this is the **ESG Quality rating** which enables portfolio managers to identify sustainable leaders and improvers and to build well-diversified, risk-adjusted portfolios.

To complement our bottom-up research, portfolio managers also use our proprietary **ESG House Score** to identify and exclude those companies exposed to the highest ESG risks within high and medium risk sectors. Finally for this range of products, binary exclusions are applied to exclude the particular areas of investment detailed below.

Integrated ESG analysis

There are three core principles which underpin our integrated ESG approach and the time we dedicate to ESG analysis as part of our overall equity research process:



ESG factors are financially material, and impact corporate performance



Understanding ESG risks and opportunities alongside other financial metrics allows us to make better investment decisions



Informed and constructive engagement helps foster better companies, enhancing the value of our clients' investments



As part of their company research, our stock analysts evaluate the ownership structures, governance and management quality of the companies they cover. They also assess potential environmental and social risks that the companies may face. These insights are captured in our company research notes.



Our stock analysts work closely with dedicated ESG specialists who sit within each regional investment team and provide industry-leading expertise and insight at the company level. These specialists also mediate the insights developed by our central ESG Investment team to the stock analysts, as well as interpret and contextualise sector and company insights.



Our central ESG investment team provides thought leadership, thematic and global sector insights, as well as event-driven research. The team is also heavily involved in the stewardship of our investments and supports company engagement meetings where appropriate.

Assessment criteria

Identifying sustainable leaders and improvers

We use our proprietary research framework to identify companies which we believe to be sustainable leaders or improvers.

We analyse the foundations of each business to ensure proper context for our investments. This includes the durability of its business model, the attractiveness of its industry, the strength of its financials and the sustainability of its economic moat. We also consider the quality of its management team and analyse the environmental, social and governance (ESG) opportunities and risks impacting the business and appraise how well these are managed. We assign a proprietary score (1 indicates leaders and 5 indicates laggards) to articulate the quality attributes of each company.

Companies eligible for inclusion in our SRI equity range must be rated 3 or better on both overall **Quality** and **ESG Quality**.

ESG House Score

Our SRI equity strategies use our proprietary ESG House Score, developed by our central ESG investment team, to identify companies with potentially high or poorly managed ESG risks. The score is calculated by combining a variety of data inputs within a proprietary framework in which different ESG factors are weighted according to how material they are for each sector. This allows us to see how companies rank in a global context. Our SRI equity strategies exclude companies with the highest ESG risks, as identified by the ESG House Score, in sectors identified as medium or high risk by our central ESG investment team.

Negative screening

The focus of each SRI equity portfolio is to identify sustainable leaders and improvers through bottom up fundamental research. In addition, binary and norms-based exclusions are applied.

We will not invest in companies which:

- have failed to uphold one or more principles of the UN Global Compact
- appear on the Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM) exclusion list¹
- are involved in controversial weapons covering; cluster munitions, anti-personnel landmines, nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons, depleted uranium ammunition and blinding lasers

- have a revenue contribution of 10% or more from the manufacture or sale of conventional weapons or weapons support systems
- have a revenue contribution of 10% or more from tobacco or are tobacco manufacturers
- have a revenue contribution of 10% or more from gambling
- have any revenue contribution from thermal coal extraction
- have a revenue contribution of 10% or more from unconventional oil and gas extraction or are investing in new unconventional extraction capacity in their own operations
- are primarily involved in conventional oil and gas extraction and do not have a significant revenue contribution from natural gas or renewable alternatives
- are directly involved in electricity generation which has a carbon emission intensity inconsistent with the Paris Agreement 2 degrees scenario
- are directly investing in new thermal coal or nuclear electricity generation capacity in their own operations
- are state-owned enterprises in countries subject to international sanctions or that materially violate universal basic principles.

Engagement

Engagement with company management teams is a key and standard part of our equity investment process and ongoing stewardship programme. It provides us with a more holistic view of a company, including current and future ESG risks that the firm needs to manage and opportunities from which it may benefit. It also provides the opportunity for us to discuss any areas of concern, share best practice and drive positive change. Priorities for engagement are established by:

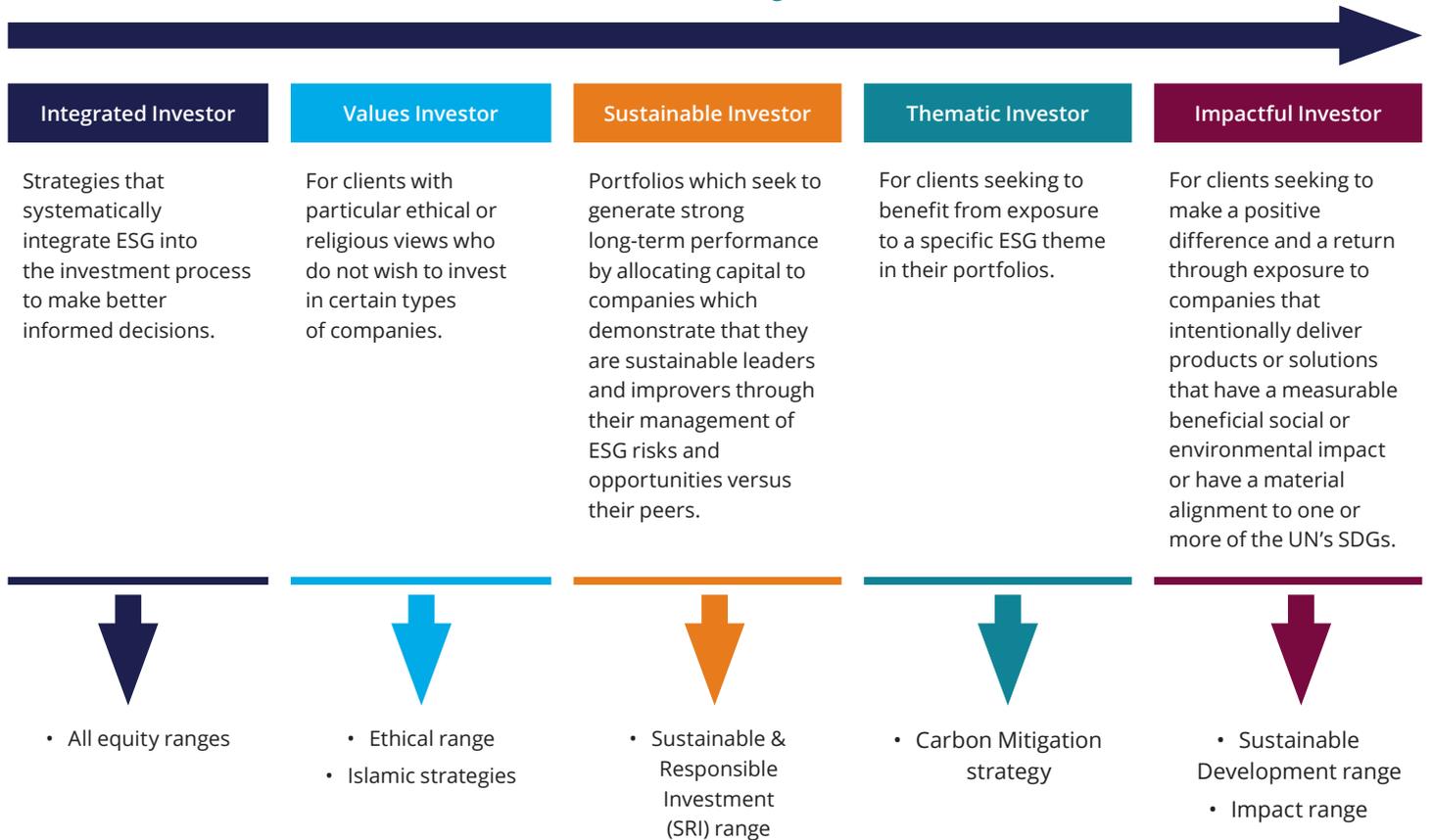
- (1) the use of the ESG House Score, in combination with
- (2) bottom-up research insights from investment teams across asset classes, and
- (3) areas of thematic focus from our company-level stewardship activities.

¹ Emerging markets SRI strategies only.

Sustainable Investment Solutions

Our SRI strategies are part of the broad spectrum of responsible equity investment strategies we offer to meet investors' varying objectives.

Sustainable Investment Approach ASI Product Categories



Important Information

Past performance is not a guide to future results. The value of investments, and the income from them, can go down as well as up and clients may get back less than the amount invested.

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