



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Enhancement-led Institutional Review: Case Studies



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Contents

1.	Case Study 1: Enhancing Student Support	5
1.1.	Introduction	5
1.2.	Overview and context	6
1.3.	The development of a new Personal Tutor system	8
1.4.	Online tools and resources to support the Personal Tutor system	9
1.5.	Peer support	10
1.6.	Review of central services	12
1.7.	Training and resources	13
1.8.	Communication	14
1.9.	Phases two and three of the Enhancing Student Support project	16
1.10.	Monitoring and evaluation of impact of the Personal Tutor system	17
1.11.	Future development of the role of the Personal Tutor	20
1.12.	Conclusion and reflective summary	21
2.	Case Study 2: The Edinburgh Award	24
2.1.	Introduction	24
2.2.	What were we seeking to achieve?	24
2.3.	What is the Edinburgh Award?	27
2.4.	Growing the Edinburgh Award	31
2.5.	Impacting the curriculum and core student experience	35
2.6.	Conclusion	36
	Appendix 1: Current versions of the Edinburgh Award and participant quotes	38

1. Case Study 1: Enhancing Student Support

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. This case study describes a major strategic change project that was initiated to improve the student experience primarily around academic guidance and support. The evidence and drivers for change were clearly identified in feedback from students regarding the need for these types of improvements across the University. Student surveys, such as the National Student Survey, our internal quality assurance processes, Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) and the 2011 ELIR Report highlighted the following issues:
- The variable levels of student satisfaction with the existing Director of Studies system and specifically issues surrounding the quality of academic guidance and support.
 - For some, the student experience felt a little anonymous and lacked a personal touch.
 - The effective oversight of the programme experience for each student was variable.
 - The provision of more general personal support for students was fragmented across schools and central departments.
 - Students continued to express concerns and frustrations in general around issues related to assessment and feedback.
- 1.1.2. The Enhancing Student Support project¹ and the development of a new Personal Tutor system was selected for inclusion as a case study to illustrate how we have responded to the concerns raised above and to the 2011 ELIR Report (paragraph 31) in which we were “strongly encouraged to prioritise the implementation of the revised [Personal Tutor] arrangements and to maintain strategic oversight of this area to ensure there are significant improvements for students.”
- 1.1.3. The case study also illustrates our developing approach to leading, managing and implementing a University-wide change initiative and, through a critical reflections commentary in each section, how the iterative and developing experience of the relatively large numbers of staff and students involved in the Enhancing Student Support project have informed and continue to inform our approach to subsequent enhancement and change initiatives.
- 1.1.4. At the commencement of the Enhancing Student Support project, Principal's Strategy Group supported and approved several key strands of activity that were to be pursued in a phased approach over three years:
- The development of a new Personal Tutor system (to replace the previous Director of Studies system).
 - The development of a completely new suite of online tools and resources to support the new Personal Tutor system.
 - The development of resources and training to support implementation.

1 Enhancing Student Support website:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/projects/enhancing-student-support/overview

- Peer-support to be developed across the University and accessible to all students.
- A review of central services.

- 1.1.5. The recommendations from the review of central services indicated the need for a separate, multi-faceted project to run in parallel with the Enhancing Student Support project, and the Student Experience Project^{2, 3} was initiated. Subsequently the Peer-support strand of activity moved across to the Student Experience Project enabling the Enhancing Student Support project's Student Support Implementation Group⁴ to focus exclusively on the development, implementation and evaluation of the Personal Tutor system, supporting resources and infrastructure.
- 1.1.6. The Student Experience Project provided an opportunity to look holistically at student support across the University, including support provided via central services and academic departments. It also provided an opportunity to look thematically at some key support needs (such as 'emergency response') and key points in the student journey (such as induction support). This case study focuses primarily on the development and evaluation of the Personal Tutor system⁵ (as a key part of the Enhancing Student Support project), but reference to other strands of activity and initiatives from the Student Experience Project will be made where relevant.

1.2. Overview and context

- 1.2.1. The goal of enhancing student support and of student experience initiatives over the next decade is to give our students a framework of guidance, support and resources that builds on the best of current practices, meets contemporary needs, and is of a quality and consistency appropriate to a university of high global standing.
- 1.2.2. This framework is designed to provide a more consistent quality of provision, help students systematically monitor their own progress and performance, and relate these to their long-term aspirations. It seeks to blend a clear set of University-wide requirements, well-understood by students and staff, with scope for colleges and schools to tailor and contextualise provision to programme structures, subject needs and professional accreditation requirements.
- 1.2.3. The Enhancing Student Support project is a major University project representing approximately £4.3 million of investment, in addition to the significant and ongoing contribution of staff.
- 1.2.4. At the outset of the project the Student Support Implementation Group was established to implement an agreed set of potential solutions to issues frequently raised by students, primarily and broadly-based around opportunities for academic guidance and support and a feeling that (for some) their University experience can feel a little impersonal. The building of academic and social learning communities was identified as a key objective

2 Student Experience Project website: www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/staff/enhancing-student-experience/initiatives/sep

3 Student Experience Project wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SEPROJ/Home

4 Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG) wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Student+Support+Implementation+Group

5 Personal Tutor system: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/personal-tutor

and underpins our thinking around the introduction of more opportunities for small-group teaching/tutorials and peer-support.

- 1.2.5. The speed with which the project was introduced and expected to deliver change, and subsequent positive results was widely felt to add an additional challenge to the work of the Student Support Implementation Group and was understandably and initially met with some resistance from staff.
- 1.2.6. It is a measure of the success of the project that the approach adopted enabled highly-effective networks of academic and professional support staff to be formed across the University, which then collectively took ownership of the production and establishment of a devolved model of Personal Tutoring in each school within a University-wide framework of agreed principles.
- 1.2.7. Within a six-month period, a number of measures needed to be put into place to ensure that every on-campus undergraduate student was allocated a Personal Tutor at the beginning of academic session 2012/13, circa 22,000 students:
- The appointment of a Dean of Students in each college.
 - The appointment of at least one Senior Tutor in each school.
 - The creation of Student Support Teams in each school.
 - The development of descriptors for each of these roles along with the descriptor for a Personal Tutor and a descriptor for student responsibilities in their role as a Tutee.
 - The creation of the Senior Tutors' Network⁶ and the Student Support Teams' Network.⁷
 - An agreed number of scheduled 'one-to-one' and small-group meetings took place for each student.
 - A new suite of online tools to support recording and scheduling meetings was created.⁸
 - An online facility for students to formally request a meeting with their tutor was created.⁹
 - The establishment of School Personal Tutoring statements¹⁰ to make explicit to students the model of Personal Tutoring adopted in their school.
 - A set of resources and training made available to all schools to support the development and implementation of Personal Tutors.¹¹
- 1.2.8. By the time of the ELIR review in autumn 2015, the Personal Tutor system will be entering its fourth year for undergraduate students and is already undergoing refinements to enhance and improve the student experience in response to the differing needs of students at each level of study.
- 1.2.9. Significant learning points have emerged throughout this major change project and are highlighted in the reflective summary at the end of the case study.

6 Senior Tutor Network: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Senior+Tutor+Network

7 Student Support Team Network: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Student+Support+Team+Network

8 Personal Tutor IT Tools (Staff): www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/staff/User_Guides/Personal_Tutors/Index.htm

9 Personal Tutor IT Tools (Students): www.studentsystems.ed.ac.uk/student/personal_tutors.htm

10 School Personal Tutoring Statements: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/personal-tutor/school-pt-statements

11 Staff training and resources: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/personal-tutor/training-resources

1.3. The development of a new Personal Tutor system

- 1.3.1. Personal Tutors were introduced to replace the previous Director of Studies system. The key difference is an expectation of scheduled individual and small-group meetings for all students, with a primary focus on providing academic advice and support, facilitating self-critical reflection on progress and feedback, supporting the development of personal and professional attributes and developing self-efficacy. This is intended to be proactive and not reactive – i.e. it is not just for students facing particular issues but for all students and has an expectation of raising their aspirations through providing advice, guidance and support on academic matters as well as continuing to help address particular concerns or personal issues when or if they arise.
- 1.3.2. Changing the nature of this relationship and embedding it as an expected component of each student's learning will take time for both tutor and tutee and will require continuous investment in staff development, support and training and appropriate induction and training for students. Research-based pilot studies such as the UNFOLD¹² project are designed to explore how best to support tutors and their tutees to develop models for effectively supporting reflective learning.

Deans of Students, Senior Tutors and Student Support Teams

- 1.3.3. In order to develop and implement the Personal Tutor system, a number of new roles¹³ were created and established. Each college now has a Dean of Students, each school has at least one Senior Tutor and all schools have a number of staff who fulfil the role of Student Support Officers as part of a Student Support Team. Two cross-University networks have been established, namely the Senior Tutor Network¹⁴ and Student Support Team Network.¹⁵ These networks have been extremely effective in providing a conduit for communication, sharing of practice and, importantly, identifying any major issues, barriers or frustrations with any aspects of developing and implementing the Personal Tutor system.

Reflections on approach

- 1.3.4. The planning for phase one could only commence fully with all stakeholder representation and engagement once these key staff were in post.
- 1.3.5. There was some considerable delay during the first planning phase in establishing the networks while schools and colleges advertised and subsequently appointed staff to these new and critical roles. The only way this could have been avoided would have been to delay the implementation of the Personal Tutor system by a full academic cycle: this highlights the need for implementation groups to have complete control over the planning, phasing and timing of the key stage deliverables.
- 1.3.6. Early in the project planning it became evident that it was neither achievable nor sensible to deliver Personal Tutors for all students across all levels and modes of study at the

12 UNFOLD. Biomedical Teaching Organisation: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/biomedical-sciences/bmto/resources-for-staff/case-studies-and-initiatives/unfold-plus

13 Personal Tutor System Staff Roles: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/personal-tutor/school-college-support

14 Senior Tutor Network wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Senior+Tutor+Network

15 Student Support Team Network wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Student+Support+Team+Network

same time. It was decided to introduce Personal Tutors for on-campus undergraduate students first followed by taught postgraduate students in phase two, with the review of the framework for research postgraduate student support to follow in phase three.

Personal Tutors for undergraduate students

- 1.3.7. The starting point for the development of the new Personal Tutor system was to establish the baseline principles that would operate University-wide.¹⁶ It was agreed that each student should have a minimum of two individual meetings and one small-group meeting per year of study. These meetings were to be scheduled by the school and students were required to attend these. In addition it was confirmed at the outset that students should be able to formally request and arrange a meeting with their Personal Tutor at any time, in addition to the scheduled meetings or the informal contact that would routinely occur throughout their studies. For the majority of students, the first meeting of the year in the previous system with their Director of Studies was to discuss course selection and this would still be an important part of the new Personal Tutor role.

1.4. Online tools and resources to support the Personal Tutor system

- 1.4.1. The concept behind the development of the online tools was to provide a personal online space for each student to receive, respond to and record information in relation to discussions and interactions with their tutors and staff supporting their studies. They provide the facility to create text and attach files to a discussion 'thread' with one or more staff. As an example, a Personal Tutor can contact their tutee and ask them to complete an attached pro-forma to prepare for a forthcoming tutorial. After the meeting the Personal Tutor can add their written feedback and recommended actions to their tutee's personal record and the tutee can be requested to write up their own notes and reflect on what actions they may wish to pursue. Students can also formally request a meeting via the system which then alerts both tutor and student support team to respond.
- 1.4.2. The development of online tools was set in the previous context of a difficult transition to and implementation of a new student record system (EUCLID project), and was met with some concern regarding our ability to successfully deliver a new set of software tools with the usability and functionalities required within an extremely constrained timescale. The initial set of functions was developed and implemented on schedule, but problems were encountered at a critical stage during the first 'roll-out' during freshers' week 2012/13 as a consequence of the inter-dependencies and reliance on other systems for everything to function as it should.
- 1.4.3. As a direct result of exposing these issues, different approaches have now been established for inter-departmental working and a new Student Systems Partnership has been established between Student Administration and Information Services to manage projects that involve developing software applications which are dependent upon and integrate with the central student record system.

- 1.4.4. Since the initial development, Student Systems have continued to develop the functionality to enable Personal Tutors to view 'snapshots' of academic progress, mark/grade profiles and records of attendance via the Personal Tutor view in the system. Students access the tools via MyEd which is the formal online communication portal for students to receive their assessment results, progression and award decisions.
- 1.4.5. We now have a secure, dynamic and interactive online infrastructure which can be further developed to hold information on learning profiles and adjustments, evidence for special circumstances, attendance and engagement monitoring and the use of learning analytics. There is a general view that the suite of tools are well designed, easy to use, are proving to be successful and are already valued where they are being more extensively used.
- 1.4.6. A continuing challenge is encouraging and establishing a consistency of use of the IT Tools by staff and students University-wide. For some staff there remains concern around issues of confidentiality regarding 'who can see what' within the system and as a result they have chosen to limit the nature and level of detail contained within the feedback notes and comments entered about their tutees.

Reflections on approach

- 1.4.7. Extensive user involvement and digital prototyping is recommended as a more appropriate design approach and should be more fully explored in subsequent phases of IT development.
- 1.4.8. Understanding the critical importance of user-interface design to ensure ease of use and effective adoption by all key user groups.
- 1.4.9. Reduction of 'risk' through incremental 'in-year' rollout of new functionalities has now been adopted for subsequent software applications rollout and development as a more appropriate approach.

1.5. Peer support

- 1.5.1. The Peer Support¹⁷ strand of the Enhancing Student Support project was led by EUSA and supported by the University. In discussions with the Peer Support Development Officer, students consistently confirmed that their preference is to 'own' and manage Peer Support, with the University facilitating this through providing a supportive framework.
- 1.5.2. Early in the project it was agreed that, given the time constraints, the implementation of Peer Support should move into the second phase of the Personal Tutor project. Many schools in the University (such as the Law School's LawPals,¹⁸ the Vet School's House system¹⁹ and the School of Education's Academic Families²⁰) already had well-established Peer Support schemes and several schools initiated pilots during 2012/13. The aim was for all schools to have a form of peer support in operation for academic year 2013/14 for all campus-based undergraduate students and, for those schools who were

17 Peer Support EUSA website: www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/getinvolved/peer-support/

18 LawPals website: www.lawpals.law.ed.ac.uk/

introducing peer-support for the first time, a pilot scheme for a least one year-group of students, normally first year undergraduate.

- 1.5.3. Despite the extended timeframe from the original proposal, there remained some resistance to the cross-University introduction of Peer Support. Anecdotally some staff believed that it was not necessary or that students did not want or need Peer Support. However, evidence gathered by EUSA consistently indicated that students want to be involved in Peer Support and mentoring schemes and valued this as part of their own learning. Also, there is no shortage of students wishing to become peer mentors and to provide Peer Support to their fellow students. Moreover, students who engage in providing Peer Support can use this towards gaining their Edinburgh Award (see Case Study 2).
- 1.5.4. In academic session 2012/13 there were around 70 student leaders for Peer Support and in 2013/14 this number had risen to over 500 with our international buddies system rising from 300 in 2010/11 to over 1,200 by January in 2013/14, indicating a clear demand and willingness to contribute by our student community.
- 1.5.5. Significant progress has now been made in the development and implementation of Peer Support. We believe we are the first in the UK to have Peer Support available University-wide across all schools and subjects. Such is the success of the Peer Support strand of the Enhancing Student Support project that the Edinburgh approach has been cited and adopted by other universities as a model of good practice and the Peer Support Development Officer has been invited to contribute to speak at conferences on the topic both here in the UK and internationally.
- 1.5.6. In October 2014 the University hosted the annual international conference for peer support leaders. This was attended by 110 students representing 28 universities across three continents over three days and explored the developing nature of peer support in an international context.
- 1.5.7. To support implementation, a comprehensive ‘toolkit’²¹ of resources has been prepared to ease the initial setting-up of the framework to facilitate Peer Support. The ‘toolkit’ provides guidance on various models of Peer Support and evidence indicates that, once established, most Peer Support models are self-sustaining and do not require a high-level of staff resource.

Reflections on approach

- 1.5.8. The key challenge is acceptance by the whole academic community that University-wide ‘Peer Support’ is desirable and is likely only to be successful once this acceptance has been achieved.

19 Vet School House System: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/vet/studying/bachelor-vet-medicine/student-support/personal-tutor

20 Academic Families: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/academic-pastoral/toolkit/options/families

21 Peer Support Tool Kit: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/academic-pastoral/toolkit

1.6. Review of central services

- 1.6.1. A key strand of work in phase one of the Enhancing Student Support project was the review of ‘student-facing’ centrally provided support and in key areas of college/school activity such as student induction. Broadly, the outcome of the review indicated that students found the quality of provision to be very high across all services but found it difficult to know who to contact or speak to, or even if the service existed at all. Similarly, for areas of key activity such as student induction there was no guarantee of consistency of experience across the University; previously, for example, there was little central oversight of induction and pre-arrival and this has now become a key strand of activity.
- 1.6.2. The recommendations from this review have since been substantially resourced to develop solutions under a newly formed Student Experience Project²² with a number of key work strands to enable greater coherence and cross-departmental working across all student-facing services to ensure ease of access to relevant information and to the service provision itself.

Reflections on approach

- 1.6.3. The scale of this development required a substantial rethink to the governance and management of the strategic projects overall. It was clear that the Student Experience Project strand needed to become a major change project in its own right and required an effective governance model to manage the various work streams. Critical in setting up the governance of this second major project was to ensure that both projects and their respective work streams remained completely coherent and integrated to ensure effectiveness and minimise any duplication of effort or wasted use of resource. It also became clear through the Enhancing Student Support internal audit that the Student Support Implementation Group was expected to take responsibility and be accountable for both implementation and overall project governance which in itself was not ideal and also required to change.
- 1.6.4. As a result of the project expansion and working with the then new Major Project Management and Assessment Framework it became clear that a different approach to governance was needed. The new model proposed programme level governance to provide oversight of the various enhancement projects and their respective work-strands to ensure that a holistic overview is maintained given the essential requirement to ensure effective cross-linking, relationships and inter-dependencies between these types of projects and to minimise or remove duplication of effort.
- 1.6.5. The external consultancy VALUTA, who developed the original governance and assessment framework for the University, was re-engaged to assist with revising and expanding the current ‘soft’ (change project) project management methodology to accommodate the issues that arise when dealing with major change projects which are largely dealing with people, process and cultures. An iterative approach to devising,

22 Student Experience Project website: [/www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/staff/enhancing-student-experience/initiatives/sep](http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/staff/enhancing-student-experience/initiatives/sep)

establishing and refining the project deliverables and measures of impact and success needs to be accepted as a legitimate methodology for these types of ‘people-centred’, ‘culture-change’ initiatives.

- 1.6.6. The Programme and Course Information Management²³ project subsequently developed and implemented an adapted approach for managing ‘soft’ projects and has been highly successful in gaining staff and student input and ‘buy-in’ to collectively developing new processes and in supporting change. Subsequently there has been significant interest in our developing approach to managing ‘soft’ projects both internally and externally and this work has already been presented to other institutions. Internally, a ‘soft-projects’ managers’ network has been established to share and develop practice.

1.7. Training and resources

- 1.7.1. Based upon discussions with key stakeholders and the Student Support Implementation Group, the priority in developing central (University/college) level staff development provision and resources for phase one (in the lead up to September 2012 and first semester 2012/13) was to provide basic support for core elements of the new Personal Tutor system. This included support for staff in their new roles and for some with new responsibilities, training in the use of the new suite of online tools, advice on individual and group meetings, and information on broader student support arrangements at a local and University level.²⁴ Key elements of this provision included presentation material for use in college and school briefing events, and web-based information and resources. Frequently Asked Questions²⁵ on the new arrangements for students and staff, a benchmarking event²⁶ to build awareness and engagement with Enhancing Student Support based upon existing practice nationally and in Edinburgh, and the establishment of practice and leadership networks for Senior Tutors and Student Support Teams were other important elements of support developed.

Reflections on approach

- 1.7.2. The reaction to the approach adopted for staff and resources development was very positive. Feedback from Senior Tutors was that the presentation material for use in school/college briefing events was particularly useful; and there is evidence that web-based resources (e.g. simple suggestions for individual and group personal tutor meetings) have been adapted and used locally. Benchmarking events were very well attended and had a significant and positive impact on the development of an Edinburgh approach to academic and pastoral support. Both the Student Support Team Network and the Senior Tutor Network were proving to be key fora for sharing and developing practice and for helping steer the project overall.

23 Programme and Course Information Management project wiki:
www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?title=Home&spaceKey=PCIM

24 Training and Resources wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Training+and+Resources

25 Frequently Asked Questions:
www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/institute-academic-development/undergraduate/apsupport/faq/overview

26 Benchmarking Event wiki:
www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Benchmarking+Event+-+Enhancing+Student+Support+-+13+March+2012

- 1.7.3. Demand for most University or college level staff development events and workshops during Semester 1 (and for training in the use of the suite of online tools in August/September) was low. This may have reflected workload pressures and the need to focus on the practicalities of embedding a new system during Semester 1. Whilst we had information on the number of visits to resource websites, we did not know how extensively these resources were being used, and we had very little feedback on current and future priorities for developing new or additional resources.
- 1.7.4. Subsequent to the earlier findings, the phase one evaluation confirmed that the preference was to develop resources and online guidance for schools so that they can provide their own contextualised induction and training sessions. In addition, the self-study videos on using the suite of online tools were well received, indicating potential future approaches.

1.8. Communication

- 1.8.1. As part of the Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project communications, the Student Support Implementation Group approved the development of an ESS Project Communication Strategy²⁷ and an ESS Communication Timetable for Phase One.²⁸ The ESS Communication Strategy key aim for phase one was that:

“All students and all staff involved in student support will be aware of the University’s Enhancing Student Support project and their role in delivering it.”

- 1.8.2. There is a separate report on the phase one communication strand,²⁹ which outlines all the materials and deliverables produced, comments on what was produced, and reflects on the future approach. All of the intended deliverables in the strategy were met and/or produced, except for publicity materials. The need for these was explored and a decision was made to adopt a ‘soft’ launch approach – making students and staff aware of the initiative and the new Personal Tutor system but not to produce significant amounts of publicity material. It was agreed with Communications and Marketing that later in the academic year this decision would be reviewed.
- 1.8.3. The phase one Enhancing Student Support (ESS) Communication deliverables were:
- A Communication Strategy for phase one;
 - A Communication Timetable;
 - Personal Tutoring Statements for each school;
 - Resource materials about the project, e.g. Roles and Responsibilities; Personal Tutor system; material available via the Institute for Academic Development website, e.g. student FAQs, staff FAQs;

27 ESS Project Communication Strategy (PDF): www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/download/attachments/145822558/ESS-CommStrat-Phase1.pdf?version=2&modificationDate=1355222882000&api=v2

28 ESS Communication Timetable for Phase One wiki: www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Communication+Timetable+of+activity

29 ESS Communication Report for Phase One (PDF): www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/download/attachments/145822558/ESS-CommsPhase1Report.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1364492457000&api=v2

- Key networks for communication, e.g. contacts in schools, services and colleges, Senior Tutor Network, Student Support Team Network;
- A project wiki;
- A benchmarking event;
- Information events in schools and colleges;
- Powerpoint presentations that provide general information about ESS and the Personal Tutor system and on the IT tools which schools can use for local delivery;
- Workshops and briefing events, e.g. “Personal Tutor IT Tools: Train the trainer”, “Personal Tutors: running lively and useful group meetings”;
- Monthly e-updates;
- Bulk emails and MyEd announcements when appropriate;
- Video interviews for broadcast online explaining the new initiative;
- Articles in appropriate locations of the website;
- A final report on phase one.

Reflections on approach

- 1.8.4. Feedback from the Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG), the Senior Tutor Network and Student Support Team Network endorsed the approach taken in the Enhancing Student Support (ESS) communications timetable and welcomed the regular ESS updates. Effective communication across the University however still remained a challenge and despite a comprehensive range of communication channels being used, SSIG still received emails directly from staff indicating that they were unaware of various developments and/or decisions made related to ESS and the implementation of Personal Tutors. Effective communication across such a large and diverse institution is a general ongoing challenge.
- 1.8.5. It also became clear early in the project that the University needed to develop a coherent strategy and mechanisms for more effectively co-ordinating and communicating to specific student groups *en masse*. Prior to the Enhancing Student Support project, Communications and Marketing (CAM) had no specific responsibility for internal communications with our students. Student Communications has now become part of the CAM remit and a new team has been established to develop and manage our approach to internal student communication.³⁰ However, there is still room for development in internal communication to students and staff.
- 1.8.6. Developing a shared understanding of the importance of effective, clear and explicit communication with students and staff has also influenced the approach to revising and developing key documents. For example, the School Personal Tutoring Statements³¹ were initially unique to each school in content and style but are now in a template

30 Student Communications: www.ed.ac.uk/communications-marketing/student-communications

31 School personal tutoring statements: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/personal-tutor/school-pt-statements

form to provide structural and content consistency but still with the capacity for local contextualisation. This would have been difficult to achieve at the outset of the project but these changes are now being driven by staff who recognise the benefits of standardisation where appropriate.

1.9. Phases two and three of the Enhancing Student Support project

- 1.9.1. Building and developing upon the approaches and experience developed in phase one, phase two focussed on the development and roll-out of Personal Tutors for postgraduate taught students and also evaluated the needs of students while temporarily studying off-campus (such as those on a year abroad or industrial placement) as well as the needs of students studying entirely at a distance online. Short-life task groups were set-up to explore these individual work strands with subsequent recommendations reported to the Student Support Implementation Group.
- 1.9.2. For most of our postgraduate taught programmes, where the scale was manageable, it was recommended that the Programme Director formally became the Personal Tutor. For larger programmes where student numbers mitigated against this approach, additional Personal Tutors were assigned similar to the undergraduate model. The rollout to postgraduate taught students was implemented successfully and all postgraduate taught students were allocated a Personal Tutor at the beginning of academic session 2013/14.
- 1.9.3. It was also established that students studying off-campus (e.g. on placement or study abroad) should also be supported and should also be expected to participate in virtual meetings with their Personal Tutor facilitated online using appropriate tools (e.g. Skype or Collaborate, emails, etc.).
- 1.9.4. Our evidence indicates that distance students studying online are already very satisfied with the levels of academic support and personalised access to their academic tutors. Many of our distance programmes are aimed at clinical and other professionals who require a particular type of support, mainly around access to materials rather than pastoral support; work continues to identify what additional value might be added via Personal Tutors for this category of student.

Postgraduate Research Students

- 1.9.5. Phase three of the original Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project focussed on the supervisory and support framework for postgraduate research students. The support needs of postgraduate research students was scoped and it was agreed that a Personal Tutor in the form developed for taught students was not the exact 'fit' needed for research students. It was recognised however that an additional and importantly 'neutral' layer of support was required beyond the normal academic supervisory arrangements. It was also recognised that additional time would be required to fully redevelop the postgraduate research support framework (far beyond what was envisaged for the original three-year

duration of the ESS project). Consequently, it was recommended that phase three of the project, focusing on postgraduate research students, became a new strand to be overseen by the Senate Researcher Experience Committee.

Reflections on approach

- 1.9.6. A characteristic of the Enhancing Student Support project and subsequent enhancement initiatives is the recognition that there are many unknowns at the project outset and there is a need to adapt both expectations and deliverables against viable timelines; importantly, a realistic implementation timeline can only become more firm with a greater understanding of likely resistance or commitment to both the pace of change and to the type of change expected.
- 1.9.7. The approach taken has also highlighted the need for implementation groups such as the Student Support Implementation Group, along with their respective Senate Committee(s), to advise, adapt and make recommendations regarding the initial scope, intended aims and realistic deliverables of any defined project to ensure wholly successful outcomes in a realistic timeframe once the issues and challenges are more fully understood.
- 1.9.8. This creative, adaptive, highly-consultative and iterative approach embedded within a conventionally defined but adapted project framework is beginning to demonstrate greater ownership and 'buy-in' within our organisational context and is much more likely to deliver successful outcomes as a consequence.

1.10. Monitoring and evaluation of impact of the Personal Tutor system

- 1.10.1. Throughout session 2013/14 a full evaluation of the first phase of the Personal Tutor system for undergraduate students took place.³² This comprised developing a bespoke online student survey, running semi-structured focus groups with students and collating and analysing the data gathered from the online tools. Later in the session it was also decided that a staff survey should be devised to gather staff views to gain a different perspective on the challenges and issues of implementing the new personal tutoring system.
- 1.10.2. The Senior Tutor and Student Support Team networks were central to the success of the evaluation and, importantly, in taking ownership for the ongoing enhancement of the Personal Tutor system. It was decided that a Senior Tutor accompanied by two Student Support Officers would run the semi-structured student focus groups outwith their own school. This proved to be an effective approach and enabled a level of objectivity and subsequent gaining and sharing of practice across the University. This became evident during the annual updating of the School Personal Tutoring Statements which have steadily become more unified and consistent in content and format across the University.
- 1.10.3. The key themes emerging from the evaluation were presented³³ and initially discussed by the Student Support Implementation Group, followed by two joint sessions of the Senior

32 ESS Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement wiki:
www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Monitoring%2C+Evaluation+and+Enhancement

33 PT System Evaluation – Student Survey & Focus Group Key Themes (PowerPoint):
www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/download/attachments/145822480/PT%20System%20Evaluation%20-%20Key%20Findings.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1406302460000&api=v2

Tutor and Student Support Team Networks in July 2014 and November 2014 along with key support staff. The second meeting was in the form of a symposium and provided the opportunity to benchmark externally and compare our evaluation findings with the University of Aberdeen who had introduced a similar model of personal tutoring during session 2013/14, one year later than we did.

- 1.10.4. The student survey and focus group data enabled us to evidence and confirm the essential characteristics and attributes needed to ensure that students find the Personal Tutor system to be effective and also those characteristics and traits which have the opposite effect. The student data indicates that the significant majority of students find the new Personal Tutor system and Student Support Teams to be effective and to be either helpful or very helpful (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). There remains however a significant minority of students who are not being supported as effectively as was desired and this became a priority and focus of activity for the Student Support Implementation Group during session 2014/15 to establish how greater consistency and quality could be achieved within the Personal Tutor system.
- 1.10.5. In response to the evaluation findings, the Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG) discussed and agreed four key enhancements which were subsequently presented to and endorsed by the University's Central Management Group. SSIG, the Senior Tutor and Student Support Team networks were then responsible for preparing to implement these enhancements and changes for the beginning of session 2015/16.
- 1.10.6. Phase two evaluation of postgraduate taught on-campus students is now underway and the approach for mainstreaming the annual monitoring and enhancement of the Personal Tutor system is currently in development.

Box 1.1: Student Survey Comments

'My Personal Tutor has been fantastic this past year and I feel really comfortable going to him for advice. We get along really well and he was crucial in helping me when I wanted to change my degree programme.'

'My Personal Tutor was brilliant and helped with so much!'

'I had an excellent Personal Tutor. Every time we spoke everything got sorted quickly. The system worked very well for me'

On the question one thing you would change:

'Can't think of one – the current system just now is pretty good in all honesty :-)'

- 1.10.7. The staff survey³⁴ also proved to be successful, was very much welcomed and highlighted strengths and good practice, as well as frustrations and challenges associated with the implementation of a successful Personal Tutor system. Importantly there was a high degree of correlation between the student and staff views of their

34 PT System Evaluation - Staff Survey Key Themes (PowerPoint): www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/download/attachments/145822480/PT%20System%20Evaluation%20-%20Staff%20Survey.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1406300812000&api=v2

Figure 1.1: Meetings with Personal Tutors

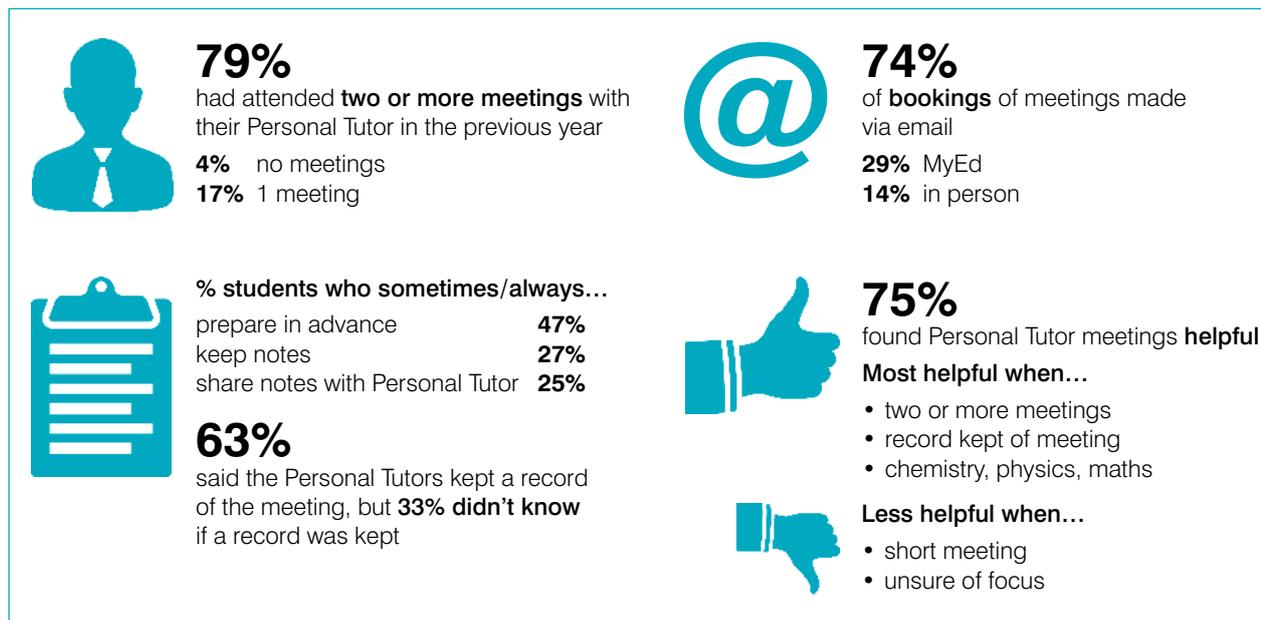


Figure 1.2: Meetings with Student Support Teams



respective experiences (see Boxes 1.1 and 1.2) and of what could be improved (see Box 1.3) and this directly informed the work of the Student Support Implementation Group, the Senior Tutor and the Student Support Team networks in 2014/15.

Box 1.2: Staff Survey Comments

'I, for one, think it's working ok!'

'I am new to the system this year, I think it is very positive for the students and I am happy with the current arrangements.'

'I think it is working well. It would be useful for my own annual appraisal to have feedback from the students in my group that I could submit with appraisal documentation – e.g. a survey.'

'Actually I think that the personal tutor system in our School works very well.'

Box 1.3: Student Survey Comments

'Make PT meetings compulsory – with a pre-planned agenda composed by the PT.'

'Make personal tutors have a checklist on what they need to ask their students on their studies and personal / non-academic achievements.'

'I think it should be clearly stated what the personal tutor and student support system are for in advance so students know what issues they can discuss and who to go to.'

1.11. Future development of the role of the Personal Tutor

- 1.11.1. From the outset of developing the Personal Tutor system the aspiration was to ensure that students could access timely, high-quality academic guidance and support and that this would be most effective where a more personalised, 'in-partnership' working relationship developed between tutor and tutee. When the role descriptors were developed for Personal Tutors a role descriptor was also developed for Tutees, recognising that both had responsibilities to develop this effective and professional working relationship.
- 1.11.2. During session 2013/14 a number of schools participated in the UNFOLD project to explore the development of the tutor/tutee relationship further and to develop resources to support reflective learning. From the Personal Tutor student survey data it was also clear that students preferred to have more structure and focus to their meetings with their tutors and, where possible, to be aware of and prepare for this in advance. The UNFOLD project developed a series of online reflective templates in PebblePad (an online reflective learning environment) for students to prepare in advance of discussions with their tutors. Facilitated workshops were also held to give students the opportunity to experience and learn more about how to be constructively self-critically reflective.
- 1.11.3. This more structured and self-reflective approach has proven to be successful with students and aligns closely to free text comments in the student survey on Personal

Tutoring where students indicate their preference for the tutorials to have a clear focus, structure and to have the opportunity to prepare in advance of their meeting.

- 1.11.4. At the end of session 2013/14 the University developed draft principles in an emerging vision for the future development of the undergraduate curriculum and identified the need to provide more opportunities for students (and to encourage them) to lead and self-direct aspects of their own learning. It is potentially in this capacity as academic mentor (rather than director or advisor) that the role of Personal Tutor begins to fully develop and becomes central to the aspiration and design of the future curriculum where students actively lead a greater percentage of their own learning.

Sharing of Practice

- 1.11.5. As highlighted throughout the case study, the incremental, iterative and reflective approach undertaken by Enhancing Student Support in the development of a system for Personal Tutoring has influenced subsequent approaches to managing enhancement projects within the University and the explicit sharing of experiences and practice internally has become more commonplace and routinely expected.
- 1.11.6. In addition staff are frequently asked to contribute to external events at peer institutions and sector events and have formally presented in various fora in the UK and internationally on our approach to leading and managing enhancement initiatives. Many of our online resources are openly shared and evidence indicates that these are welcomed and used throughout the sector to inform institutional developments. We regularly receive requests to host visits from other Universities seeking to develop their own enhancement-led approach to managing change.

1.12. Conclusion and reflective summary

- 1.12.1. Enhancing Student Support was a large and complex initiative with numerous interlinked and inter-dependent work streams. Managing the process in the form of a project has been beneficial but has also highlighted the limitations of conventional project management approaches. The success of a number of aspects of the project are entirely dependent upon the commitment of individual colleagues who initially have to be convinced of the 'direction of travel' and that the recommended solutions would improve upon previous approaches.
- 1.12.2. An issue that was raised continuously from the outset of the project was the need to formally recognise and value staff contribution to activities focused on learning and teaching and that the importance of the esteem attached to these activities regarding career progression was an important measure.
- 1.12.3. This key issue highlighted and stimulated significant discussion and the University is now actively addressing these concerns. Through the auspices of the Institute for

Academic Development the University has developed a coherent overarching Continuing Professional Development framework for learning and teaching, mapped against the UK Professional Standards Framework where staff can gain the various levels of Higher Education Academy recognition. Structured working towards the levels of recognition is facilitated through the Edinburgh Teaching Award which began in March 2014. In addition, the University has developed indicators and exemplars of teaching excellence to support the annual promotions round to assist colleagues in recognising and making more explicit their achievements in learning, teaching and scholarship in the field.

- 1.12.4. Work continues in this area and we are currently benchmarking with comparator universities around the world and within our international networks to explore various approaches to support, incentivise and recognise achievement and quality in the enhancement of learning and teaching.
- 1.12.5. As we entered the third and final phase of the original Enhancing Student Support project, we held a Personal Tutors Symposium for the members of the Student Support Implementation Group, the two key networks of Senior Tutors and Student Support Teams and key support staff to finalise our thinking around the outcomes of the impact evaluations conducted to date and to develop our approach for securing the further enhancement and ongoing evaluation of the Personal Tutor system beyond the life of the project.
- 1.12.6. In addition to successfully achieving the key deliverables, the real success of the Enhancing Student Support project has been in iteratively exploring and establishing new ways of leading and managing major cross-University change that aligns with, recognises and supports the cultural diversity of the academic disciplines within a highly-autonomous organisational structure. The experience derived and lessons learned from this project have informed our subsequent approach to leading major strategic enhancement initiatives and has enabled relatively large numbers of academic and professional support staff to develop the experience, skills and confidence necessary to lead change in the future.
- 1.12.7. There is now a much greater understanding across the University of the need to regularly evaluate existing approaches and processes in the context of future enhancement and of the benefits in developing and adopting solutions that can be applied consistently across the University when there is no clear academic or administrative rationale for being different.

Reflections on approach

- 1.12.8. Following are four key lessons that have now informed subsequent major change initiatives and/or enhancement projects.
 - Solutions should not be devised and approved by one group and the responsibility for their successful implementation given to another. The issue, challenge or problem should be 'owned' by the group who is then responsible for analysing the problem,

building the evidence-base, conducting consultation, devising and implementing the agreed solutions and subsequently evaluating their impact. 'Buy-in' and ownership from all the stakeholder communities is key at all stages.

- Where potentially significant barriers to the success of a project are identified, these need to be formally recognised within the risk assessment at the outset and explicitly communicated to the relevant University committees and senior officers, given that they are outwith the direct control of an implementation group or governance board. Subsequently these potential barriers need to be accounted for within the measures of effectiveness, success and impact of any given project.
- If new funds/resources are provided to deliver and implement the recommended and agreed solution(s), the implementation group need to be directly accountable and responsible for the management and allocation of this resource.
- Where the success of a major project requires collective 'buy-in', ownership and change to existing local cultures and practices, a rigid project methodology cannot be applied. Conventional approaches to project management are not best suited to leading and managing major culture change projects within a 'highly-autonomous' academic environment where it is widely acknowledged that 'command and control' approaches are simply ineffective.

2 Case Study 2: The Edinburgh Award

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 A key aim of the University's Strategic Plan 2012-2016³⁵ is "to create the opportunities for our students to have an exceptional and distinctive experience which prepares them for life beyond their studies and which is the beginning of a positive lifelong relationship with the University." Learning beyond the formal credit-bearing curriculum is a key part of this learning experience at the University of Edinburgh. This includes instilling in students a life-wide and lifelong approach to learning that is flexible and enables them to draw lessons from one situation and apply them to something new. The Edinburgh Award has been designed to support this learning, adding structure and impact to a range of co- and extra-curricular activities, and, in the process, reinforcing and scaffolding a range of other key University priorities and projects, notably key elements of the Student Experience Project.
- 2.1.2 In this case study we reflect on the successful development, piloting and embedding of the Edinburgh Award, its role in enhancing the experience, employability and learning of our current students as well as providing a valuable route to test and pilot new elements of the curriculum and student experience. We begin by exploring what we were seeking to achieve in developing the Edinburgh Award, before introducing our management approach for this strategic enhancement project, and then describing the associated student experience, our evaluation approach, its growth, plans and opportunities for the future.

'I have gained valuable skills and, perhaps more importantly, I feel proud to have been involved in [the Edinburgh Award], I feel part of the University community.'

'It really helped me to organise my reflective thoughts and take account of what I have done during my time at University and even apply these skills to considering my career before university. I just used those skills to prep for a recent interview. I was much more organised and well presented to the employer. I was able to sell myself better than I have been able to do in the past.'

Edinburgh Award participant

2.2 What were we seeking to achieve?

- 2.2.1 The beginning of our work on the Edinburgh Award was prompted in part by the development of Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEAR). We wanted to engage proactively with the HEAR and use it to benefit student learning from co- and extra-curricular activity. A purely mechanistic implementation of the HEAR lacks value and impact; we wished to take a careful and critical look at how best to develop it for our context.
- 2.2.2 Combining this with our work on student employability and graduate attributes, was also essential; both important strands of our work prior to and following the QAA Employability

and Graduates for the 21st Century Enhancement Themes. The HEAR presented a valuable opportunity and we wanted our response to further support our students in building the strongest set of graduate attributes, drawing on all parts of their lives and strengthening their long-term employability.

- 2.2.3 In early discussions about these opportunities and aspirations we agreed that students' ability to reflect effectively and to translate learning from one setting to another was a vital component. We wanted, for example, to enable a student treasurer of a sports club to translate their organisation and communication skills gained as treasurer to their academic study or employment; at the same time we wanted them to speak authentically and analytically about their experiences and how these relate to a job they are applying for.
- 2.2.4 This led us to explore the potential of introducing some form of 'additional award'. Experience elsewhere in the sector highlighted potential limitations and challenges; in particular regarding scalability, resource requirements and engaging a diverse range of students. We used a review of sector experience and practice, and our aspirations regarding the HEAR, employability and graduate attributes, to establish a set of key design objectives (see Box 2.1) for our initial exploration and piloting, including a focus on how to make our award scalable and have high impact with limited resource. We sought to offer a student experience that would create meaningful change for participants, benefitting them and those they work with now and in the future. We also wanted to ensure that the Edinburgh Award would be accessible to more than a select few, pulling in as wide a range of interests as possible and moving beyond those already fully utilising University support for their development. Through our development work we built the Edinburgh Award as an educational process that adds value to and allows validation of student engagement in co- and extra-curricular activities, feeding into a fuller record of activities for students that spans the breadth and length of their University experience.
- 2.2.5 Four principles guided our approach to developing an additional award.
- **Collaborative** – Creating and deepening links is vital within any large and diverse institution. We used a secondment from the Employability Consultancy to the Institute for Academic Development to design and pilot the Edinburgh Award, capitalising on existing expertise and strengthening links. We then built collaboration into our design of the Edinburgh Award itself, ensuring it did not operate in a silo but rather using the Edinburgh Award to support links with and between other parts of the University and institutional initiatives, such as: graduate attributes, employability, reflective practice, the HEAR, EUSA, the Student Experience Project, the Enhancing Student Support project, Careers Service, Information Services, Widening Participation, academic schools, community engagement, volunteering, Sports Union and Accommodation Services.
 - **Consultative** – We wanted the Edinburgh Award to be successful across the full diversity of our institution and to support wider agendas. A genuinely consultative

Box 2.1: Design objectives

The Edinburgh Award should:

- be distinctive to the University;
- impact on all students (regardless of whether or not they take the Edinburgh Award);
- help participants to be better off than if they had not taken part;
- build students' confidence;
- encourage "a lifestyle not a diet", i.e. a material difference in participants' thinking;
- enable participants to develop a proactive and positive outlook on tasks and challenges – disaggregating tasks into their component parts and identifying the parts they can do;
- create an environment where it is OK to:
 - make mistakes and learn from failures,
 - be successful, and
 - learn;
- for those with relevant roles, become an integral part of what academic and support staff do;
- genuinely only be part of work on employability and graduate attributes – it must support and not detract from these, including curriculum enhancement and developments enabling students to reflect on their graduate attributes;
- target the right people, in particular:
 - those who do not recognise they need it,
 - those who do not recognise and value the strengths and experience they already have;
- be scalable to everyone who wants to take it; and only require significant resource at set-up, thereafter only needing routine development and support.

approach was therefore essential and used throughout the piloting: from agreeing the initial criteria and constraints on the Edinburgh Award, through drafting the design to the final evaluation activities. The Employability Strategy Group and other key stakeholders (students, teaching and support staff, and priorities gathered from employer contacts) were engaged throughout to help shape our approach and reflections.

- **Critically analytical and reflective** – Institutional 'fit' is essential and so, rather than simply adapt another institution's approach, we felt that real success would only come from analysis and reflections that were genuinely critical, exploring not only existing practice externally, but also identifying success factors in previous internal student development and employability work. For example, tailoring employability support to students' individual experiences and activities and integrating learning across the breadth of students' University lives.
- **Carefully phased, managed and evaluated** – Our approach was systematic, thoughtful, rigorous, and based on soft rather than rigid project management techniques, with cognisance of both the long-term and wider University agendas. We wanted this to be a genuine pilot, openly exploring whether or not an additional award

was the right solution for our context and challenges. We therefore ensured that at each stage of piloting we would assess the work against clear criteria and know why we were continuing or stopping the work, and that, if stopping, there would still be value and benefit gained from the work done so far. We have continued this approach beyond piloting, ensuring that we do not assume the Edinburgh Award necessarily continues to be the right answer for us, nor the only answer.

2.3 What is the Edinburgh Award?

- 2.3.1 Through early discussions with key stakeholder groups during the research phase, we set demanding and SMART targets for what we wanted the Edinburgh Award to be, including: transformational, scalable within controlled resource, flexible, linked to and enhancing existing activities, with substantive educational benefits. These consultations also established a key design principle for the Edinburgh Award: that it should be a supported developmental and reflective process of learning to excel, delivered through accredited and locally tailored versions of the Edinburgh Award.
- 2.3.2 At its core the Edinburgh Award supports students in how they approach:
- their wider learning while at the University and integrating this into a more cohesive whole;
 - their own development and taking control of this, confidently articulating the progress they achieve through drawing on their curricular, co- and extra-curricular activities; and
 - engaging with and positively impacting on those around them, through the activities they are involved in while on the Edinburgh Award and beyond.
- 2.3.3 These align with the three overarching attributes of our Graduate Attributes Framework: Enquiry and Lifelong Learning, Aspiration and Personal Development, and Outlook and Engagement.³⁶
- 2.3.4 The Edinburgh Award has been designed to be intrinsically flexible so that it can be tailored to many different types of co- or extra-curricular activity and the requirements of individual students. Structurally, it uses a centralised set of principles and guidelines (the Edinburgh Award Framework) interpreted locally to produce tailored versions of the Edinburgh Award into which students can opt and at the end of which their Edinburgh Award is recorded on their HEAR (see Figure 2.1). A list of the current versions is provided in Appendix 1.
- 2.3.5 Each version is run by a member of staff associated with that activity (the Award leader) and is designed to require marginal additional activity from these staff, instead focussing on reframing existing practice wherever possible and enhancing the existing provision and student engagement. This approach means that the Edinburgh Award has grown from four piloted versions in 2011/12 to 18 in 2012/13, and then to 32 in 2013/14. Over the same periods, the number of students completing the Edinburgh Award has risen from 127 to 411 to 588 in 2013/14 (see Table 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Core principles of the Edinburgh Award and example implementations

Edinburgh Award (Sports Union Club Management)

Through the Sports Union (SU) the University has 64 Sports Clubs catering for all ability levels. These clubs are entirely run and managed by students who lead and take on a wide variety of responsibilities.

Staff and student leaders from the Sports Union worked in collaboration with the Edinburgh Award Coordinator to develop plans and pass these through accreditation.

All students in an elected position in a Sports Club are automatically eligible to participate in the Edinburgh Award and attend the first session as part of their induction and professional development. Continued involvement is optional.

Integrated into an induction and training session for all elected positions, SU staff use 'mini-communities' to build energy in the first group session. Competition is used to get students creatively thinking about the skills required for excellence in their Sports Club positions. Led by relevant SU Executives, role-specific groups are created to discuss relevant issues and identify personal development and impact priorities and plans.

Built into professional development provision by the Sports Union, a group session is used for students to share and discuss in small groups their progress and challenges – in their skills development and impact, building links with other parts of their lives and studies. Supplemented by panel sessions used to explore 'selling' experience to an employer and the graduate labour market. Input from a Careers Consultant on CVs.

Edinburgh Award (Media)

Many students use their creativity and insight to contribute actively to media whether that is newspapers, magazines, radio, journals or TV. The roles are many and varied, including broadcasting, producing, writing, editing, and photo-journalism.

Instigated by students from the student newspaper and radio station, the Edinburgh Award Coordinator worked with them to develop plans and build links with the Careers Service prior to accreditation.

Award leader from the Careers Service works in collaboration with key student media avenues to attract participants, including through web, flyers, radio and student newspapers.

An initial group session, using community-building activities set around media extracts, e.g. headlines, photographs. Students discuss, explore and then agree the key attributes required for excellence in their media roles. External speaker discusses the importance of maximising their impact within their organisation. Students review their current skills and abilities, and develop individual development and impact action plans.

External speakers from media organisations talk to students about presenting themselves in the media, good practice in editing and what makes media submissions stand out. Discussion on giving and receiving constructive feedback (media-related and beyond). Students draft reflections on one aspect of their development, learning and impact, and receive peer feedback. Students review their growth and learning, links with other parts of their lives, and revise action plans.

Defining the context

The specific type of co- or extra-curricular activity is identified around which an Edinburgh Award will be created.

Accreditation

Plans for the tailored version of the Edinburgh Award are accredited and links to the University's Graduate Attributes defined. Accreditation is overseen and supported centrally.

Student recruitment

Criteria for student eligibility are defined and the version of the Edinburgh Award is promoted to relevant students.

At the start: 'Aspiring'

This first stage of the Edinburgh Award focuses on students identifying and understanding what it means to excel in this co- or extra-curricular activity, what that means for them personally, what their own development priorities are during the Edinburgh Award and planning for these.

Midway through: 'Developing'

This stage surfaces students' progress and development, how this has been achieved, alternative approaches that could be used for challenges faced and revised action plans for their own development and impact on others.

**Edinburgh Award
(Sports Union Club Management)**

Facilitated by SU staff and Student Executive, plenary and smaller-group discussions are held on students' journeys throughout the Edinburgh Award. Individual reflections by students on their learning, development and impact, and then paired discussion and 'critical friend' feedback. Complemented by a mock interview session run by a Careers Consultant. Talk from an external sporting leader.

At the end: 'Owning'
This stage focuses on students recognising, selling and using the ways in which they have benefited and developed during the Edinburgh Award, including their impact on others. This stage seeks to capture, solidify and look to the future.



Role-specific support and guidance available to participants from SU staff and relevant Student Executive.

In between stages/sessions
Where appropriate, contact with local staff running the Edinburgh Award and supporting resources are available.



Within a week of the final group session, students submit reflections on their growth, learning and impact. Reflections include key actions taken and benefits for the associated Sports Club which feed into a learning repository for the Club's next committee members.

Validation
Students' final submissions capture their overall development, learning and impact – this reflects the focus of the Edinburgh Award. These are reviewed by staff and using peer assessment.



Students are invited to attend a reception with all of the Edinburgh Award recipients.

Reception
Local communities are vital to the Edinburgh Award, but so is the wider Edinburgh Award community. This celebration brings all successful participants together with University and employer representatives.

**Edinburgh Award
(Media)**

Students review their original expectations, review their skills development over the Edinburgh Award and discuss their impact in the media in small groups. An external media organisation speaker explores with students the importance of networking and of 'selling' their experiences. Students articulate how one of their skills has developed through giving an 'elevator pitch' and receive peer feedback. Students finish by reviewing their progress and noting down two things they plan to start doing as a result of the Edinburgh Award and one to stop.

Facebook page for online discussion (student and staff), and for Award Leader to post relevant opportunities and events, e.g. the Creative Cultural Careers Fair.

Within a week of the final group session, students submit reflections on their growth, learning and impact, and a portfolio of related media work from throughout their involvement in the Edinburgh Award.

Students are invited to attend a reception with all of the Edinburgh Award recipients.

'In contrast to those who usually engage with our student development activities, the spread of students across year group, discipline and, perhaps most importantly gender, was very encouraging, suggesting a programme which appeals to all. This encompassed a wider range of students than we normally manage to engage with.'

Edinburgh Award leader

Table 2.1: Growth of the Edinburgh Award

Academic year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Central Award staffing	0.5 FTE	0.5 FTE	1.25 FTE
Award versions	4	18	32
Award recipients	127	411	588
Award recipients, as % of graduating population	1.3%	4.0%	6.2%
% of survey respondents* who would recommend participating in the Edinburgh Award to a friend	98.5%	98.9%	96.1%
% of survey respondents* who felt better off for having participated in the Edinburgh Award	96.8%	97.2%	94.7%

*Evaluation survey completed by 52% in 2011/12, 44% in 2012/13 and 37% in 2013/14

Student development and motivations

2.3.6 Many students opt into the Edinburgh Award because of perceived CV benefits, the additional recognition, and the self-development opportunity. However, by the end of the Edinburgh Award students emphasise the value of the journey they experienced on the Edinburgh Award: growth in their confidence, attributes, self-awareness and recruitment preparedness; translating learning between their academic and non-academic contexts; and improved learning communities and social benefits. This shift in focus from the additional recognition to valuing the process is a key success marker for us and contributes to the high satisfaction rating the Edinburgh Award receives. For example, 96% of students surveyed in 2013/14 said they would recommend participating in the Edinburgh Award to a friend and 95% felt they were better off for having participated in the Edinburgh Award (see Table 2.1). The value students give to the process is also why each year some students re-engage with the Edinburgh Award, either through the same or a different version.

2.3.7 In each evaluation we have undertaken during and since piloting, students have consistently reported that the Edinburgh Award significantly improved their: self-confidence, self-awareness, ability to capitalise on their strengths, ability to identify the attributes required to excel in a role or activity, ability to purposefully work on enhancing these attributes, confidence in tackling new challenges, ability to confidently sell and provide evidence of their development, and ability to maximise their positive impact.

'In the end, the actual Award certificate mattered little in comparison to the Award journey. The entire self-reflective process helped me learn more about myself as a person, something which is quite hard to get done!'

'I learned a lot about my strengths and weaknesses, and really improved in some target areas. I feel I now have many more skills, and the ability to explain these to other people.'

Edinburgh Award participants

Reach

- 2.3.8 We are aware of the immense diversity of activities our students engage in outside their studies. Some of these are by choice, while others may be driven by necessity, such as part-time work. Conscious of this, we designed the Edinburgh Award to fit in with students' interests and other commitments, whatever they may be. We use this to support accessibility and participation and to reinforce the importance of all parts of their life to students' overall development. Part-time work does not rule students out from participating – quite the contrary, we have designed versions specifically for this, for example 'Work Experience', 'Resident Assistants', 'Development and Alumni Student Callers' and 'EUSA Student Staff'. This is a dimension of our approach we are keen to develop further, for example through exploring the need and potential for versions tailored to those students with substantial caring responsibilities.
- 2.3.9 By design, the impact of the Edinburgh Award spreads beyond just the direct participants. Firstly, many Award leaders have used their thinking and work on the Edinburgh Award to enhance their underlying provision for all students, not only those opting into the Edinburgh Award: for example, self-assessment and reflective exercises in the Business School's Career Development Programme and Accommodation Services' work with Resident Assistants. Secondly, most activities recognised by the Edinburgh Award are those where students work with or support others, such as peer support or volunteering, and Award participants are expected to increase the positive impact they have on others. The impact of the deepened learning and development achieved by Award participants during the Edinburgh Award therefore filters out to those with whom they interact. Award leaders estimate that Award recipients impacted 36.5% of the student population in 2013/14 (21.0% in 2012/13 and 5.4% in the 2011/12 pilot).

2.4 Growing the Edinburgh Award

- 2.4.1 At the heart of our approach to growing the Edinburgh Award has been careful piloting followed by appropriate governance of the subsequent growth. Evaluation has been an inherent feature throughout each stage of development.

'The Edinburgh Award allowed us to engage with students in a way that was truly relevant to them. It had tangible outcomes for both the students and us.'

'Even if the Award did not carry on, the changes we have put in place as a result of the Award have been so useful that we would now continue to use them.'

Edinburgh Award leaders

Piloting

2.4.2 The pilot project was structured around four distinct phases:

- **research** (summer 2011) – exploring current practice across the sector, benchmarking and identifying external reference points; cross-institutional discussions clarifying expectations and approaches; identification of preferred pedagogies underpinning the Edinburgh Award; and evaluation approaches;
- **design** (September to November 2011) – development of the initial design, revision and testing; selection of initial pilots (combining both academic and non-academic settings);
- **implementation** (December 2011 to May 2012) – initial and ongoing training and support for pilot staff; ongoing evaluation and adaptation of individual pilots; and
- **review** (summer 2012) – composite evaluation across all pilots; discussions with key groups; concluding outcomes and recommendations.

2.4.3 We established a project steering group comprising the Vice Principal Learning and Teaching, Careers Service Director, Institute for Academic Development Director and Employability Consultant, to oversee the timetable and progress of design, implementation and evaluation, reporting to the Employability Strategy Group. These groups have overseen the Edinburgh Award's successful move from piloting to becoming a significant addition to our mainstreamed provision, with work to ensure that the growth and reach of the Edinburgh Award is purposeful and substantial whilst resource requirements are controlled (as demonstrated in Table 2.1).

2.4.4 While the Edinburgh Award engages all student levels, undergraduates have been the main audience due to volumes and types of activity involved to date. In 2013/14 the equivalent of 13% of the undergraduate graduating population received an Edinburgh Award. As we move forward, we hope to replicate the successes seen at the undergraduate level at the postgraduate level. Comparing the demographics of the University undergraduate population with those undergraduates receiving the Edinburgh Award, we find:

- **College** – the distribution across colleges reflects the University undergraduate population;
- **Year of study** – undergraduates from years two to four are over-represented on the Edinburgh Award (typically linked to increased self-awareness, interest in reflection and development, and to some co-curricular activities not being open to year one students);

- **Gender** – proportionately more female than male undergraduates take the Edinburgh Award (70 per cent in contrast to 60 per cent in the corresponding University population); and
- **Domicile** – engagement levels are similar across all domicile groups.

Governance and accreditation

- 2.4.5 The use of a robust and clear framework and a consistent approach enables staff from across the institution flexibly to produce tailored versions of the Edinburgh Award and has been fundamental to the growth and reach of the Edinburgh Award. It allows the creation of multiple versions of the Edinburgh Award, each bespoke to their own setting and requirements, while maintaining the core Edinburgh Award learning outcomes and benefits. This approach of safe flexibility allows the accessibility of the Edinburgh Award to constantly increase by establishing new versions to accommodate the diversity of student interests and activities.
- 2.4.6 The Edinburgh Award is overseen by the Edinburgh Award Advisory Group (EAAG), which reports to the Employability Strategy Group. Working through the Edinburgh Award Manager and the Edinburgh Award Coordinator with issues escalated as necessary, EAAG oversees the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of the Edinburgh Award, working to ensure commonality across local versions of the Edinburgh Award and consistency with the Edinburgh Award Framework, accrediting all local academic or non-academic units that deliver a version of the Edinburgh Award.
- 2.4.7 The Edinburgh Award Manager and the Edinburgh Award Coordinator provide consultancy to those wishing to set-up a local version of the Edinburgh Award – helping staff identify how the Edinburgh Award Framework might best be interpreted locally, seeking a solution that minimises additional work but maximises the benefit to both students and staff, at the same time as supporting overall consistency across versions.
- 2.4.8 Such is the growth of the Edinburgh Award's reputation and the extent of staff commitment to supporting students, to date there has been no need to actively recruit new Award leaders beyond the initial pilots. Staff keen to run versions of the Edinburgh Award come forward naturally and have been convinced by the impact and benefits of involvement. The Edinburgh Award is felt to be both distinctive and culturally appropriate to the University, capitalising on a deep well of innovation and commitment to students across the institution, with a focus on learning, excellence and local determinism in delivery. The profile of the Edinburgh Award is growing, however only a relatively small proportion of the University's overall staff and student population is directly involved. As it matures, we will continue to extend the awareness and understanding of the Edinburgh Award and of the impact that reflective practice has on student learning and performance.

Evaluation and impact

- 2.4.9 Evaluation has been core to the development of the Edinburgh Award at each stage of development. To test the Edinburgh Award's applicability to different settings, we initially piloted four versions evenly split over activities from academic and non-academic domains (Career Development Planning in the Business School, PhysicsPALS peer support in Physics, Resident Assistants and Volunteering). We used a detailed evaluation with students and staff to explore the extent to which the original parameters and expectations of the Edinburgh Award had been addressed. This included: surveying all Award participants; student focus groups conducted by individual Award leaders; individual in-depth face-to-face interviews with all Award leaders and separately with their line managers; a roundtable discussion with all Award leaders jointly; and review discussions with the Employability Strategy Group and senior management involved in establishing the pilot and setting the original parameters.
- 2.4.10 Although creating potential exit points at each stage of piloting had been key to our management approach, our evaluation findings from the pilots were exceptionally positive, reaffirming the principles, structure and approach of the Edinburgh Award. As a result, the University mainstreamed the Edinburgh Award within its provision from academic year 2012/13, and a target of 500 students completing the Edinburgh Award per year by 2015/16 was built into the Strategic Plan 2012-2016, instigating a new expansion phase of the Edinburgh Award. This target was exceeded in 2013/14, two years ahead of schedule.
- 2.4.11 Through its standardised framework and validation approach, the Edinburgh Award has provided a robust and consistent mechanism for both supporting and recognising students' learning and development through co- and extra-curricular activities. We have moved the HEAR beyond those activities for which we can directly monitor engagement to encompass as wide a spread as possible of activities students are involved in beyond the formal curriculum while at University.
- 2.4.12 We adapted our original evaluation approach into our ongoing accreditation and implementation processes, using annual student surveys and staff review discussions, supplemented by focus groups and discussions with associated management where necessary. It is essential for us that our evaluation approach assures us of the Edinburgh Award's quality and supports its ongoing enhancement. As a result, the ongoing evaluation continues to address multiple aspects of the Edinburgh Award, including its structure, the student experience, and the Edinburgh Award's impact on participants and on the underlying provision and activity.
- 2.4.13 Since piloting, evaluation has consistently shown that through the Edinburgh Award students feel their skills and confidence increase and feel better prepared for future recruitment. Staff highlight the benefit in building and strengthening local communities,

in fostering students' skills, and in enhancing the underlying provision offered to their students. Evaluation also surfaces areas we then seek to address, including limiting staff workload (assessment and administration) as student numbers increase and introducing template resources that can be tailored by local versions.

- 2.4.14 Along with supporting and stimulating enhancement and innovation internally, as the Edinburgh Award matures its external reputation means we are increasingly invited to share our experiences and practice to support enhancement elsewhere in the sector. Since piloting the Edinburgh Award, it has been presented at six national conferences through workshops, poster and panel invites, and we have been approached to support 14 external organisations in developing and/or benchmarking their own additional award, both nationally and internationally.

2.5 Impacting the curriculum and core student experience

- 2.5.1 As the Edinburgh Award has matured, its wider impact on University strategies, projects and organisations has proved increasingly valuable, in particular by taking the lessons learnt through the Edinburgh Award and bringing these into the curriculum. Examples of these wider impacts include:

- **Curriculum innovation and wider enhancement** – alongside other tools and approaches, we have used the Edinburgh Award to support staff in developing approaches to learning and teaching that are new, unfamiliar or perceived as riskier. For example, the Edinburgh Award has been used to pilot and build staff awareness of and expertise in student reflection and peer-based assessment methods, including the use of online systems like PebblePad and techniques such as Adaptive Comparative Judgement (see Box 2.2) where we are the first in the sector to apply this method to a co- or extra-curricular award. The Edinburgh Award has also been used to enhance and add value to a wide range of new and existing University projects and activities; for example: peer support, volunteering, student representation, 'Employ.ed' internships, widening participation and outreach activities.
- **Locus for thinking, discussion and collaboration** – we have also used the Edinburgh Award as a locus for thinking, discussion and collaboration. For example, it has provided a focal point for University thinking and discussion around the recognition and enhancement of the holistic student educational experience. Equally it has provided a locus for thinking and collaboration with EUSA on deep student engagement, emphasising the commitment of the University to a very broad and encompassing view of University learning. Student participants and Award leaders have also highlighted the contribution that the Edinburgh Award has made to helping students to feel part of a broader University community.

2.6 Conclusion

- 2.6.1 The success of the Edinburgh Award and its alignment with institutional strategies mean that it has quickly become a significant and established part of the University's provision. While this success is not taken for granted, it is proving to have the desired impact on our students and wider benefits for the institution and our approach to strategic enhancement projects.
- 2.6.2 The Edinburgh Award has swiftly exceeded our expectations, achieving student satisfaction, growth, reach and wider impact significantly beyond what we originally imagined likely, meeting its Strategic Plan target of 500 students per year two years ahead of schedule. The Edinburgh Award has also proved itself to be a valuable enhancement mechanism, for example its use as a method to structure training for peer support leaders and Sports Union Club Management.
- 2.6.3 The Edinburgh Award has been managed from a carefully planned and designed pilot to a wide roll-out linked to a specific University Strategic Plan target. This approach has allowed us to rapidly embed a robust enhancement to our provision that:
- directly supports our work on student employability and graduate attributes;
 - is used by schools, services and groups across the institution to add value and support for different activities and learning opportunities; and
 - has stimulated significant student and staff engagement and enthusiasm.
- 2.6.4 With its focus on reflection, on translating learning between contexts and on purposefully developing participants' skills and impact, the Edinburgh Award supports students to develop and apply tools that achieve a life-wide approach to their learning and development; these are tools that can be flexibly applied time and again, in a variety of contexts.
- 2.6.5 Evaluation data shows that the Edinburgh Award is enabling students to integrate their learning across the contexts of their lives and helping them learn to excel, increase their impact and stand out from the crowd in whatever circumstance or role they find themselves, now and in the future.
- 2.6.6 As the scale of the Edinburgh Award increases, maintaining the quality of the student experience on the Edinburgh Award is paramount. To ensure this, we are undertaking enhancement work in response to stakeholder evaluations that includes:
- expanding the supporting resources for Award leaders;
 - refining validation procedures;
 - expanding opportunities for peer-to-peer feedback;
 - piloting peer assessment;
 - increasing student and staff publicity; and
 - providing example templates.

Box 2.2: Adaptive Comparative Judgment and the Edinburgh Award

Louis Thurston's work (circa 1927) developing the 'Law of Comparative Judgment' demonstrated that people are very good at making accurate relative-value judgments between two choices but less reliable when assigning absolute values within a scale of measurement. Adaptive Comparative Judgment (ACJ) is the 21st century version and is now fully facilitated online, making the process logistically feasible at scale. It demonstrates much greater reliability in large-volume assessment when using a distributed team of assessors and also enables high numbers of students to efficiently receive valuable feedback from several assessors, whether used for staff assessing students or student peer assessment.

The University has been exploring the potential in the use of computer software and online tools as part of our technology-enhanced learning to help our students develop an understanding of how to use assessment as a powerful aid to learning. Students currently undertaking the Edinburgh Award use ACJ to formatively and summatively peer-assess each other anonymously, whilst also providing key learning points in their feedback to each other.

"As part of the Edinburgh Award I took earlier this year I had the opportunity to use ACJ. I was really impressed. I used ACJ twice during the Edinburgh Award, first for us to see and comment on other students' work and for others to provide me with feedback on ways that I could improve my work, and then again at the end of the Edinburgh Award, where ACJ allowed me and my fellow students to peer assess our final work."

"ACJ is really impressive at supporting the learning process as it gives you, as a student, insight and perspective on your work that you wouldn't normally get if it was just your tutor providing you with the feedback. You get to see the different ways that other students have tackled the same problems, different perspectives within the same context, not just from within your group, but right across the cohort, which is really helpful. It really helps you develop your skills, both in your work and your general analytic skills, which will prove really useful after University in the workplace."

"ACJ is like a crowd-sourced/social media style feedback and assessment tool, which is really innovative and very powerful. I can honestly say that it has been one of the greatest learning experiences for me during my academic studies at the University."

Edinburgh Award participant (final year student 2013/14) and 2014/15 EUSA President

The success of these early trials has encouraged the University to run further pilots on several large mainstream courses across the University to evaluate the impact this may have on students in developing a deeper understanding of how to effectively use assessment and feedback in their learning.

The software developer 'TAG Assessment', who has been working closely with the University on these assessment and feedback pilots, has since received an award in the 'Best use of social and collaborative technologies for learning' category of the 'eLearning Awards 2014' for the innovative use of ACJ within the Edinburgh Award.

- 2.6.7 Moving forward, we now have to adjust our expectations upwards to ensure we capitalise on the opportunities the Edinburgh Award itself presents. This includes both the benefits of expanding the reach of the Edinburgh Award for our current students and the potential for using it to test and pilot new approaches to the curriculum linked to our Emerging Vision for Learning and Teaching.

Appendix 1: Current versions of the Edinburgh Award and participant quotes

Peer Assisted Learning versions:

BioPALS, BizPALS, ChemPALS, EcoPALS, EconPALS, EdPALS, EngPALS, GeoPALS, InfPALS, LawPALS, LitPALS, MathPALS, PhysicsPALS, PirPALS, PsychPALS, VetPALS

Peer Assisted Learning Schemes (PALs) are student delivered programmes at the University. Senior students volunteer to use their academic experiences to facilitate discussions and sessions that enable first year students to think more deeply about their learning. This provides junior students with another route to seek academic help and advice.

'I already felt confident with talking to students and was comfortable with presenting material. However I had previously not considered in such detail, how the act of discussion with students is such an informative tool in gauging a person's abilities. The process of achieving the University of Edinburgh Award has made some of the skills that I already possessed stronger and more explicit.'

'In the past I may have used skills without realising that I was doing so; now I feel that I can use these skills openly and in being able to realise that I am doing so, use them with a greater ability. I feel that I can now actively use these skills particularly in my goal of becoming a teacher.'

Advice Place

The Advice Place is a walk in, independent, confidential advisory and information service for students at the University of Edinburgh. With over 17,000 student queries each year, student volunteers at the Advice Place provide a significant contribution to the University community, giving their time to act as the first point of contact for enquiries and provide practical advice and information.

'It was a great opportunity to realise the weight and value of the involved activities and experiences, and to learn more through a more active reflective process, which would have probably not happened without the Edinburgh Award.'

'The Edinburgh Award allowed me to think more about my development in my volunteering which meant I was more aware of how I was doing which I think meant that I could then become more effective.'

Business School: Career Management

After a course in Career Development Planning, second year Business School students are supported in planning their approach to life after university, starting to research career options and develop their self-marketing materials. A key emphasis of the course is reflection and personal development – this is continued and expanded in the Edinburgh Award.

'I feel I now have been able to make new contacts and build my career networks. This has helped me gain insight into the various areas of business and given me a better understanding of which area I would like to enter.'

'Before this I was very limited in the way I approached my future. I've now started to expand my vision and experiences in order to make myself a good candidate for any employer.'

Employ.ed on Campus Interns

The Employ.ed on Campus scheme seeks to promote and support valuable internships for students across the University's campuses. Interns are hired over the summer by various departments to support vital work in delivering their services. Internships are structured to not only benefit the specific department but to offer a valuable learning and development opportunity for the students.

'In the end I can say that this has been one of the most valuable things I have done in my life as I have learned a lot about myself. I can now confidently talk about what I got out of the internship whereas it was quite difficult for me with previous work experiences as I never reflected on myself so much.'

'Doing the Award allowed me to look back at the internship I was doing this summer and identify specific examples of how I managed to succeed in doing something or learn from my mistakes. The blog I kept while doing the Award serves as a great reminder of all the things that I have done during my internship.'

EUSA Student Staff

EUSA draws on the power and potential of our students in order to deliver a wide range of services for the entire student body of more than 30,000. Students are employed by EUSA as staff in a wide variety of roles committing to the values of excellence, endeavour and enhancement.

'The Edinburgh Award was a really good experience, and the benefits were much greater than I initially thought they would be. I realised my strengths and weaknesses, how to overcome these weaknesses and play on my strong assets. I am a much more reflective employee than I was previously.'

'[The Edinburgh Award] was such a great way to speak to others about their own experiences and hear about their challenges, strengths and weaknesses. We found common points and similar ways we could work towards goals, as well as give advice and encouragement in areas that we differed in. I was able to not only find ways to improve myself, but as a person who naturally downplays my strengths, I found myself working harder to apply myself in these areas and allow these strengths to really shine!'

Global Citizenship

With students from over 140 countries, speaking 70 languages, the University's student community is truly global. The sense of global citizenship is supported by many student volunteers who play an active role in empowering others to feel a part of and understand their place in a community of global citizens. These students volunteer for and organise initiatives supporting international students, facilitating discussion around global challenges and helping shape our community of global citizens.

'The Edinburgh Award as a whole gave me a good bird's-eye perspective of my entire academic and social interaction at university. This was one of the greatest things I have learnt from this programme.'

'I have learnt a large variety of things throughout this the Edinburgh Award, but what I value most is the myriad of experiences that have been shared which ultimately shape my way of thinking and that of my community.'

Summer Work Experience and Volunteering (UK and International)

Students on this Award either work or volunteer in the UK or internationally in a wide variety of roles. As well as proactively seeking their work or volunteering opportunity these students have shown a commitment to their personal and professional development through their involvement in the Edinburgh Award.

'I actually learnt a lot more than I anticipated. Having to do the small targets of skills and reflections helped me a lot to learn what I'm good at and what I need to improve on. In addition having a blog allowed me to grow deeper into learning how proceed with different styles of writing and reflect on the things I was learning during my internship.'

'I felt I gained a lot, mainly in terms of networking. It was fantastic to have a forum where like-minded, aspirational students could talk about their experiences at home and abroad – the Edinburgh Award provided that forum.'

Legal Placements

Legal Placements are key to the personal and professional development of the Law School's students, regardless of whether or not they choose to enter the legal profession. Placements can be in a wide variety of settings from voluntary organisations to professional legal firms providing students with opportunities to put their legal education and skills into practice.

'Completing the Edinburgh Award alongside my legal placement has helped me feel much more focused and confident in my own abilities, and in my thinking about future career choices. It has helped me both in terms of future employment and other parts of my life.'

'My legal placement gave me some really valuable experience of dealing with various people, such as practicing solicitors and real clients. I was taken aback by the level of responsibility I was permitted, but this really allowed a fantastic amount of professional development.'

Library and University Collection Volunteers

Library and University Collections is responsible for the University's digital and physical collections. Throughout the year, student volunteers provide invaluable support across this busy department, and within a wide variety of roles. Along with helping bring the collections to the University community and wider public, these students develop a wealth of knowledge and ability in a specialist area.

'Volunteering has been a wonderful experience, which has provided me with hands-on work experience for the museum and archives sector. And taking part in the Edinburgh Award has been incredibly useful in that it made me more aware of the skills I was developing, and equipped me with the vocabulary to discuss them within a job market environment.'

'I feel I have contributed to an interesting and exciting new project within the University archives, which when completed will be an amazing achievement for the archiving staff. I would like to think that the project I was involved in would educate others and the rest of the community in the history of our University.'

Media

Lots of students use their creativity and insight to contribute actively to broadcast and print media whether that be newspapers, magazines, radio, journals or TV. The roles are many and varied, including broadcasting, producing, writing, editing, and photo-journalism. While providing excellent experience, these roles also demand strong skills which students can use in their academic life and other activities, and which will help set them apart.

'I have gotten to know people who are involved in different aspects of the paper, such as the editors-in-chief, former editors, and people involved in the technical and organisational part. It has been a great experience, and never would I have thought at the beginning of this academic year that I would be so closely involved in producing the newspaper.'

'[Through the Edinburgh Award,] this combination of extra practice and increased research has improved my writing as I am now more confident in producing articles which I feel communicate my views to the audience in an effective way.'

Physics and Astronomy: Maths Buddies

Maths Buddies is a scheme created with the primary aim to help and support the teaching and learning of Mathematics to Physics students. The scheme relies on excellent volunteers from the year above who, after initial instruction, run the scheme as a student-led activity. Support sessions are run on a weekly basis, allowing students to explore challenges they are finding with Mathematics.

'An awesomely good idea [the Edinburgh Award] that has been an invaluable help. Very well organised and run. Very good job all around!'

'The scheme has not only been enjoyable but I feel it provides a stepping stone in the right direction for me to attain my goals of becoming involved in teaching. In my outlook, the three development priorities I chose to work on are vital skills to enhance for teaching. The preparation for each meeting and attending the weekly student sessions has definitely highlighted the responsibility required.'

Pro Science

Students volunteering with Pro Science go into secondary schools' science classes to enhance pupils' understanding of, enthusiasm for, and achievement in, their specialist science subject. Volunteers improve their effectiveness in the classroom and develop invaluable knowledge and skills that will stand in great stead for the world of work and, more generally, life.

'I found [the Edinburgh Award] really interesting. It gave me a different perspective on the advantages of doing the volunteer work and all the ways I could use it to grow as a person overall.'

'[The Edinburgh Award] is a great experience and it really makes you think about why you do the things that you do (including your degree).'

R(D)SVS Peer Support

For many students, discussing personal issues, big or small, to faculty members or other support staff within the University can be intimidating or sometimes seem inappropriate. Trained volunteers for the Peer Support Programme in the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies enhance the student experience by providing invaluable, direct support to their peers and by developing mechanisms and opportunities for increased peer support within the School community.

'This scheme has made me think about the importance of working within a supportive environment and I know that in the future I would want to establish support systems where they are lacking and convey these skills which I have begun to learn.'

'I have developed my skills in order to help people much more effectively, and also to recognise more easily when people may be in need of help, whether just by listening to them, or by referring them to someone who can help them more effectively.'

Representing Students

Students in representation roles build a link between students and various levels of the institution, ensuring that the University is continually listening and engaging with students to improve teaching, learning, assessment, and academic services. Students involved in representation activities need to use a wide range of skills and can have a pivotal role in enhancing the University.

'The development I've achieved while representing students and working towards the Edinburgh Award are crucial in my future career. The skills I gained or improved during this are really important to employers I'm interested in – things like managing peoples' emotions,

cultural awareness, communicating clearly with others, being goal focussed and managing time. Working as a rep has brought so many unexpected but valuable and enjoyable experiences.'

'My time as a School rep and working towards the Award was like a fast-paced training to become a leader. It is a fantastic preparation for work after university. The structured reflection and discussions as part of the Edinburgh Award increase awareness of what one learns during this time. A great experience, really fulfilling and equipping me well for the future.'

Resident Assistants

The transition from home life to University life can be both exciting and challenging. Resident Assistants help the Residence Life office in providing advice and support for students with regard to the process of independent living, hosting community building events and assisting with student welfare concerns.

'The experience of being a Resident Assistant has truly been a road of self-discovery and improvement. Over the past year, I have been able to polish skills that I have always had trouble with, including leadership, assertiveness and self-organisation.'

'...the Resident Assistant post has let me influence the quality of life of the others while giving me the opportunity to improve my personality and boost my confidence. I can compare myself to what I was one year ago, and I see a person who has changed in a positive way, by improving my skills and becoming better aware of them through the Edinburgh Award.'

School of Law: Student Leaders

Community is central to the School of Law and our students sit at the heart of this. As such many of our students take on a wide variety of leadership roles across the School from committees, societies, councils to student groups each adding to the student experience offered to our students.

'Reflecting upon my leadership experiences over the last year, how much I've enjoyed my role and the success of our efforts has genuinely pushed me towards trying to identify a future career which will allow me to use the skills I've developed, and which will hopefully give me an equal amount of satisfaction, success, and enjoyment.'

'Leadership has required a range of skills: teamwork, organisational skills, people management, diplomacy and negotiating skills. But it has also necessitated real vision and drive in order to gain and maintain people's commitment to enhancing what we offer students.'

Sports Union Club Management

As one of the UK's leading sports universities we are not only renowned for our academic excellence, but also take great pride in our athletic achievements. Through the Sports Union the University has 64 sports clubs catering for all levels of ability. These clubs are entirely run and managed through the dedication and commitment of our students. Students elected to lead these clubs take on a wide variety of responsibilities demanding their time, skill and energy.

'Running a club has been a challenge but also a great learning curve. I've learnt that creating real change takes time and effort to see results. But the effort is worth it; we've had significant achievements this year including establishing a University-wide tournament that donates its proceeds to charity.'

'I treated my club management role as an occupation, focussing on ensuring things ran smoothly and efficiently for the entire club. The improvement in student members' and the Sports Union staff's opinion and relationship with the club has been a testament to the dedication of the committee – there has been a real sense of trust and respect between us all, working towards the same aims.'

SRA: Student Ambassadors

Often our students can be the best and most successful ambassadors of the University, adding a real life perspective. Student Ambassadors represent the University at various events both on and off campus leading tours, answering questions and even giving talks. Ambassadors also attend Higher Education conventions around the country speaking to prospective students and raising the profile of the University.

'Working as a Student Ambassador has really helped me to develop strong communication and problem solving skills as well as the ability to work both independently and as part of team.'

'Through my time as a Student Ambassador and the Edinburgh Award I've learned about employability and graduate attributes and realising what I hoped to gain from my university experience; I have felt better prepared to go out and seek new opportunities. I only wish that more students at the University accessed the information and skills that the Edinburgh Award promotes!'

TEDxUoE

TEDx is a program of local, self-organised events which focus on an interdisciplinary transfer of knowledge. Led by an innovative student committee, TEDxUoE provides TEDx with a University of Edinburgh feel. Committee members volunteer their time to organise the University's TEDx conference as well a series of salon events all of which bring students and staff together from across the University to share ideas, prompt deep discussion and build connections.

'For the first time in my life, I knew that what I was doing was relevant for the 2000 people who liked our Facebook page, or the around 80 different people who looked at our website every day. I felt a great responsibility, but at the same time an incredible opportunity to positively influence others.'

'As usual, you do what you do (in the society/volunteer work etc.). Then the Edinburgh Award comes along and reminds you that there is so much more significance and impact from the work that you're doing. I feel a lot more motivated to keep up the good work!'

Volunteering

Volunteering is an important component of active student life; students are supported to take on a wide variety of volunteering roles both within and out-with the University. These volunteers support projects that have a real tangible benefit to the University and the wider community giving their energy, enthusiasm and dedication.

'I have learned that volunteering is extremely valuable in a number of different ways, benefiting a wide range of people in the community – including myself; from self-satisfaction and a sense of community spirit, to developing new skills and confidence.'

'Through my volunteering I have learned that a little time helping others can make a big difference. I have learned that getting out of my comfort zone is a beneficial and useful thing to do. I have learned that a smile goes a long way, and that simple tasks can make a big impact on others. Overall, I have learned the importance of volunteering within the community, and how helping others and interacting in the community is an important part of living and studying at university.'

Work Experience

Many students juggle the competing demands of study and extra-curricular activities with part-time work. Students on this Award work in a wide variety of roles, all of which call for them to demonstrate the qualities of an effective employee. Through their work experience, students develop essential skills which they can use in their academic life and other activities, and which will benefit them in their future career.

'Overall the Edinburgh Award has been an absolutely amazing process. It opened my eyes to many things that went unnoticed before. By working on them I've been able to improve myself a lot over the past few months, to which I am really grateful. Being a part of the process has been absolutely priceless.'

'Once you start asking yourself a few questions – what did I do, did I do it well, should I do it differently next time you start to see things, which previously slipped through. After doing it regularly for a few months I noticed that I have improved both at University and at work. I've made both things more interactive, more engaging and most importantly - more enjoyable.'

Widening Participation Peer Mentoring

The oldest and longest running peer support programme at Edinburgh, students give up their time to assist Widening Participation students in the transition to their new University environment. The mentoring process helps students to integrate intellectually and socially by providing that social and /or cultural capital they may lack. A trained senior student mentor is paired with a new first year student from a similar subject background.

'Through peer mentoring I have become more organised, responsible and feel more motivated about my coursework. University work can become very consuming, and can bring people

down, but peer mentoring made me feel more worthwhile, and helped to remind me why university is so important, and how much I actually love my degree and Edinburgh.'

'Throughout the Edinburgh Award, I focused in particular on my leadership skills, specifically my ability to serve as a role model, to make the peer mentoring meetings more intentional and meaningful. As a result, the mentee was more encouraged and inspired by our meetings, reflected in the personal and academic challenges he since set for himself.'

Widening Participation Language Ambassadors

Students volunteering as language ambassadors deliver language classes in Widening Participation partner primary schools. Without this intervention, these schools would not be able to provide such language provision. The role model language students deliver 15 hour-long interactive classes that focus on speaking and listening over reading and writing.

'During my time teaching in a local school, I have strived to improve both my own skills set, and the educational experience of the pupils...I soon realised that a lot of the pupils have as strong a need for positive role models as they do for academic knowledge this point in their lives. Therefore, I tried to offer them both by covering new course materials in classes with them and also encouraging and motivating them to try new things.'

'Over the years I've experienced some utterly fantastic teachers and wanted to give the same to the school children... I wanted to have a cheerful and fun impact on the children. For me, it's important that the children want to answer questions and always try – my attitude and the atmosphere have a big difference in making them feel more at ease and confident.'

New for 2014/15

- **Business School MSc Professional Development** – students taking ownership for and driving their own professional development and their positive impact on their colleagues and peers.
- **Charity Fundraising** – students taking responsibility for enhancing their fundraising activities and own development while supporting the growth and profile of the charities they are associated with.
- **Development and Alumni Student Callers** – students contributing significantly to the University community by engaging with alumni and raising money for priority areas.
- **Educated Pass** – students taking widening participation messages to 13-16 year old males in Edinburgh and the Lothians through football links.
- **EUSA Society and Volunteering Group Office Bearers** – students committed to their society or volunteering group, enhancing the experience of their members and their own development.
- **Gaelic Outreach** – students working to raise the profile of Gaelic and creating opportunities for its use at the University and in Edinburgh.
- **LEAPS Volunteering** – students volunteering with the Lothian Equal Access Programmes for Schools (LEAPS) aiming to grow the aspirations of local pupils from low participating neighbourhoods.
- **Maths Outreach** – students volunteering throughout the year to communicate mathematics to a public (non-university or non-mathematics) audience through involvement in a variety of activities.
- **Social Innovation** – students who play an active role in building student communities to design, develop, deliver, and integrate new concepts and practices that put the social good first.

