



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR CREDIT

A REPORT FROM SENATE, FEBRUARY 2015

The aim of this Senate session was to explore the role of community engagement for credit and contributions to the community as assessed elements in the wider curriculum. This report outlines areas addressed in the presentation and actions.

This report was compiled by Johanna Holtan (IAD), Lesley McAra (Law), and Jon Turner (IAD). You can find the handout for the presentation here: <http://bit.ly/1HztYRt>. Meeting minutes and audio recording can be found here: <http://bit.ly/1JzR0sH>.

OVERVIEW

‘When community service is integrated into the curriculum, it can change the culture of the institution, impact admissions and retention, and help students feel like they’ve found their place.’ - Dr Agnieszka Nance, Tulane and a pioneer in community work for credit.

‘The task that awaits us is to help the University rise to the challenges it faces so that we can succeed in making the fullest use of our exceptional resources for the benefit of all of humankind.’ - Professor Bok, former President of Harvard

While community engagement can take many forms, building it into the wider curriculum is one of the most effective ways to realise three areas of the University strategic plan:

- To make a significant, sustainable and socially responsible contribution to Scotland, the UK and the world;
- To produce graduates fully equipped to achieve the highest personal and professional standards;
- To demonstrate our commitment to social justice

Community engagement provides students with the opportunity for skills development and personal growth that simply cannot be imitated in a classroom-setting. This can have a very positive impact on the quality of the student experience. It is also an opportunity to work with the community in a meaningful way through research-teaching links, knowledge exchange, interdisciplinarity, links to professions, and community exposure to University expertise, time and skills.

CASE STUDIES

There were three case studies presented. The IAD showcased their crowdsourced map of activity and case study wiki.

- Student-Selected Components in medical curriculum: <http://bit.ly/1ljvsB3>
- GeoSciences Outreach: <http://bit.ly/19XQxC5>
- Free Legal Advice Clinic: <http://bit.ly/1z3bKQm>
- Crowdsourced Map: <http://bit.ly/1JesVFU>
- IAD Case Study Wiki: <http://bit.ly/1LHbbFu>

DISCUSSION

The University is already undertaking inspiring community engagement activities within the curriculum, and it is clear that there is a desire for the University to undertake more activity in the community in a number of different capacities.

There was interest in collaborating across Schools, although timetabling constraints presented difficulties. The potential for the timetabling project to address these issues, and for collaborative activity to be undertaken during Innovative Learning Week was noted.

There would be value in editing the activity map to highlight community-initiated activity. The work of 'Living Labs' was discussed in this context.

Light-touch coordination and a central repository providing details of all activity would be helpful as this area developed, to prevent duplication in interactions with community partners.

Recognising the value of community engagement, the possibility of it becoming compulsory within the curriculum was discussed. In most cases, but not all, it was felt that an active opt-in to this type of curricular development would be indicative of a strong commitment to engagement, and likely to produce more positive experiences for all concerned, including the community.

There was also discussion regarding the value of staff engaging with community organisations, and of the potential for further recognising community engagement in staff promotion criteria.

There was a need to consider carefully both the level of support required to provide students with a safe environment and the capacity of the community to engage with this type of activity.



OUTCOMES

COURSES TO BE EXPANDED & DEVELOPED

Based on the successful GeoSciences model, two Schools will be piloting similar frameworks. To further inspire replication, a toolkit of the outreach model will be developed over the summer.

NEW RESOURCES IDENTIFIED

The Widening Participation Office and Community Education at Moray House both indicated a desire to collaborate and offer support to initiatives in the community which will be discussed further.

PARTICIPATORY EVENT PLANNED

The IAD will host a participatory event with key stakeholders in the community and the University to further explore the discussion points and opportunities in this area.

GROWING PORTFOLIO OF CASE STUDIES

Further case studies of best practice have been identified and are showcased on the map and IAD wiki.



STEPPING STONES

There are numerous opportunities that allow students and staff to experiment with community engagement activities before development new credit-bearing courses.

- Edinburgh Award
- Innovative Learning Week (ILW)
- Student-Led Individually Created Courses (SLICCs)
- Student Experience Project - Community Engagement strand
- EUSA & student-led activities such as societies and volunteering
- Widening Participation support in local schools
- Making the Most of Masters
- Launch.Ed & business and social enterprise start-up support