Student Community Engagement Strategy

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2014 – 2016
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**Scope**

This document sets out the strategy for the Student Experience Project’s Student Community Engagement work stream.

The document is used for:
- Communication, consultation and refinement of our vision and plans
- Driving our annual planning activity and work prioritisation
- Securing resources and partnerships

**Mission**

The Student Community Engagement project aims to audit current activity, explore mainstreaming this and to showcase excellent examples of work across the University. To fulfil the aims of this project, working collaboratively with colleagues across the Schools, Colleges and Central Support Services and also with community stakeholders will be essential.

**Vision for 2016+**

As a result of the work that is being undertaken by the Student Community Engagement project the following groups of key stakeholders:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Are better informed about the breadth of extra/ co-curricular opportunities available to them.</td>
<td>• Work in partnership with the student community engagement project: sharing good practice, developing new activity and networks across the community</td>
<td>• Are able to consider the future resource implications of increasing and mainstreaming Community Engagement activity based on evidence.</td>
<td>• Understand what opportunities are available by working in partnership with the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are able to identify how to take part in community engagement</td>
<td>• Identify key points of contact and collaborate through a partnership approach to develop and deliver a University wide framework for community engagement</td>
<td>• Can benchmark student community engagement activity against UK and international HEIs</td>
<td>• Are able to easily identify key points of contact across the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognise and harness the value of being involved in community engagement</td>
<td>• Share and learn within a network of community practitioners</td>
<td>• Promote good practice and innovation in student community engagement to colleagues across the institution</td>
<td>• Share and learn within a network of community practitioners from the University and externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborate actively as partners in the work of the community engagement project</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Understand how a cohesive community engagement structure can help to foster and build more positive relationships with the local and global community</td>
<td>• Benefit from collaboration with students, bringing social change to a wide range of projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are satisfied with the quality of support and direction provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide the opportunity for community stakeholders to play a role in the education of students, increasing students’ perspective and better equipping them for work and the enhancement of lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Achieving the vision

As outlined in the activity plan, the focus will be on activities within six key areas. Each of which have strong alignment with themes in the University Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Themes**

The Strategic Plan has a number of elements which are aligned with the Student Community Engagement plan, including equipping our graduates with the expertise and graduate attributes they need to achieve their full potential within the global community.

1. Raise students' awareness and take-up of curricular and co-curricular opportunities (through community engagement) and expanding provision of these opportunities
2. Promoting and recognising students' participation in co- and extra-curricular activities which can contribute towards achievement of the Edinburgh Award (including through community engagement).
3. Creating lifelong links with alumni, and between the University and the wider Edinburgh community, which are mutually beneficial and which bring richness to our student experience
4. Support Schools to develop and pilot initiatives that improve the level of engagement with the community
5. Foster in our students a sense of belonging in the local community
6. Provide a framework within which students can identify, understand, choose and create opportunities for community engagement

The Strategic Plan sets out expectations that we will position ourselves at the forefront of understanding of trends in regions with the greatest pace of economic and social change, and use this knowledge to mitigate the risks and maximise the opportunities of working internationally.

1. Benchmark community engagement activity internationally and explore how this can inform future development within the University.

The Strategic Plan includes building on our Enlightenment principles to enhance public engagement with our work, influence policy-makers, and bring about change; make our resources and expertise widely available; be a responsible and influential neighbour, employer and adviser; build an informed, engaged and international community of alumni and associate friends, through a lifetime of contact.

1. Welcome local residents and members of our wider community to participate in lectures, conferences, and wide-ranging festival, cultural and sporting events, to enjoy our galleries, collections and other facilities, and to take up lifelong learning opportunities
2. Engaging positively with local councils and other key partners over a range of issues through community engagement
1. Maximise our contribution to society
2. Balance our community’s desire for around-the-clock access to responsive infrastructure against the impact on our costs and carbon footprint
3. Embedding our commitment to social responsibility and sustainability in our curricula, policies, strategies and procedures
4. Motivating all members of the University community to become effective advocates who actively support best practice, innovation and leadership with regard to social responsibility and sustainability
5. Offering every student opportunities to study the broader aspects of current global challenges, social responsibility and sustainability, and to explore in depth how their chosen subjects relate to them.
6. Demonstrating and reporting our main social, environmental and economic impacts

3. Encouraging individuals and teams of staff and students to participate in sporting events and competitions and to undertake volunteering activities
4. Recognising the contribution of our former students, and increasing the extent and depth of the community engagement of our alumni and associate friends in the current and future life of the University

1. Deriving maximum benefit from external expertise and participation in national and international networks
2. Exploring opportunities to collaborate and share activities, services, systems and facilities internally, across institutional boundaries, and with commercial partners, where mutual benefits can be realised
3. Creating and supporting partnerships within and beyond the University community, between students, staff and community stakeholders

1. Embed equality, inclusion and diversity as fundamental principles throughout our community
2. Enable students from under-represented groups to fully embrace their University experience, successfully complete their programme of study and expand their ambitious and employment opportunities
3. Raising engagement and aspirations in individuals from under-represented groups, broadening the base of our applicant pool
Opportunities and challenges

Key strategic initiatives

The following University initiatives influence the Student Community Engagement strand:

- Learning and Teaching strategy (and also Emerging Vision for Learning and Teaching)
- Widening Participation strategy
- Public Engagement strategy (Beltane)
- Community Engagement strategy (CAM – current and new)
- Employability
- EUSA Volunteering strategy

Environmental Setting

There has been a sector-wide move towards increasing activity in student community engagement. As public engagement has become more present within the research agenda, this is now being mirrored within learning and teaching within the sector. External organisations, such as the Talloires network (http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/), which bring together HEIs with a commitment to civic engagement now have a global presence and service learning is well established in North America.

Internally, there is a move to develop a University’s Learning and Teaching vision and to consider how degree programmes should be constructed. The following parameters (which are still for consultation purposes and not finalised) could provide a structure to increase the use of community engagement within the curriculum:

- A portfolio approach for a complicated and unpredictable future
- Giving students agency to create their own learning
- Extend learning beyond the traditional knowledge-centred course
- Every student a researcher/practitioner
- Course design for 21st century learners
- Focus on multiple learning styles and learning for life

Strategic and Policy Context

- University of Edinburgh Strategic Plan 2012-16
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes
- Curriculum for Excellence influencing expectations and shaping previous educational experiences
- NCCPE (National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement)
- Talloires Network (http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/)

Current Challenges:

There are a number of challenges which have been encountered to date:

- Lack of University strategy for community engagement
- Lack of resources (academic and support staff are largely involved in this area because they are interested, not because there is professional recognition)
- Confusion for internal and external stakeholders about key contacts
- Duplication of roles (both internally and externally)
- Sustainability (this project is funded until February 2016)
- Parity across a large, devolved institution

Progress 2014

The Student Community Engagement strand started in February 2014 with the appointment of a Community Engagement Developer. In 2014 the following progress has been made:

- Internal audit of existing activity
- Benchmarking of community engagement in UK and international HEIs
- HEA secondment to The Melting Pot (April – May 2014), establishing a better understanding of the third sector in Edinburgh
- Embedding of community engagement within the curriculum in a new undergraduate degree programme
- Pro Science pilot
- Relationships with external community groups for pilot projects
- Establishment of Community Engagement Reference Group
- Appointment of Community Engagement Project Officer (intern)
- MOOC pilots in development for delivery with community partners (Midlothian Council and Edinburgh College) in early 2015
- Consultancy to Scottish Government about student community engagement
- Collaboration with Careers Service and delivery of workshop
- Close collaboration with Employability Consultancy and Beltane through informal secondments

**Evaluation**

The Student Community Engagement project will evaluate its impact on the student and staff experience by collecting case studies, showcasing internal activity and examples of good practice in other institutions. The project audited and recorded existing activity at the outset, and data will be collected at later stages to monitor the levels of engagement across student cohorts. More detailed information about the evaluation strategy can be found in Appendix 2 (page 10).

**Stakeholders**

Students, staff and community members are central to this strategy. Amongst a network of key stakeholders, the Student Community Engagement project considers its Reference Group – a working group of practitioners from across the University – to be key.

Other internal central stakeholders include Beltane, Employability Consultancy, EUSA, Information Services, the Institute for Academic Development, Widening Participation, and colleagues in Schools and Colleges which are either already engaged or looking to engage in this area.

Externally, this project works closely with community groups in the local area including the City of Edinburgh Council, schools and colleges, third sector organisations and other community members looking to work in partnership with students.

**Outline Activity Plan**

**Work Packages:**

- Deliver an evidence-based report including mapping of how students are engaging in this activity and a taxonomy of models
- Develop case studies (including talking heads) from staff, students and community groups
- Create a new website
- Recommend changes to the University’s website
- Explore the use of MOOCs within student community engagement
- Support the development, delivery and evaluation of new pilots

**Resources**

**Staffing**

The Student Community Engagement project is currently staffed by one FTE Community Engagement Developer, in post from February 2014 to February 2016. This is supported by a PhD student intern for five hours each week for a period of six months from August 2014 to February 2016. The project is based at 15 Buccleuch Place and is managed by the Student Experience Project Manager. The Community Engagement Reference Group will meet on a regular basis and is chaired by Sarah Purves (EUSA), benefitting from the experience of staff from across the University with an interest in community engagement (See Appendix 1 for current membership).

**Budget**

Proposed budget of £8,000 for 2014/15, it is expected that this will cover: salary for intern, event for practitioners, benchmarking research, pilot activity.
### Appendix 1 – Community Engagement Reference Group (CERG) Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School/ department</th>
<th>Community engagement relevance</th>
<th>Web link (if appropriate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy Cross</td>
<td>Geosciences/ IAD</td>
<td>Research outreach courses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://geoscienceoutreach.wordpress.com/">http://geoscienceoutreach.wordpress.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Hood</td>
<td>Widening Participation</td>
<td>Contact with schools/ local authorities/ students before application</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-recruitment/widening-participation">http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-recruitment/widening-participation</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meher Kalenderian</td>
<td>EUSA</td>
<td>Coordinating student volunteering</td>
<td><a href="https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/getinvolved/volunteering/">https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/getinvolved/volunteering/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavin McCabe</td>
<td>Employability Consultancy</td>
<td>Employability and Edinburgh Award</td>
<td><a href="http://www.employability.ed.ac.uk/Student/EdinburghAward/">http://www.employability.ed.ac.uk/Student/EdinburghAward/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briana Pegado</td>
<td>EUSA</td>
<td>EUSA President</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/staff/enhancing-student-experience/initiatives/sep/student-community-engagement/whos-involved?language=pl%3Fid%3D3033">http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/staff/enhancing-student-experience/initiatives/sep/student-community-engagement/whos-involved?language=pl%3Fid%3D3033</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Purves</td>
<td>EUSA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Convenor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue Rigby</td>
<td>VP Learning and Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn Smith</td>
<td>Student Experience Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alison Treacy</td>
<td>IAD</td>
<td>Innovative Learning Week co-ordinator and outreach course in Law</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/innovative-learning">www.ed.ac.uk/innovative-learning</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Wilkinson</td>
<td>Student Experience Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Woodgate</td>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Coordinating MOOC activity</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/online-learning/moocs/moocs">http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/online-learning/moocs/moocs</a></td>
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</table>
Appendix 2 – Student Community Engagement Impact and Evaluation Plan

Strand: Student Community Engagement

Evidence base revealing a need for improvement

Strategic targets: how does the project strand align with strategic targets

The University’s strategic plan has six themes: outstanding student experience, global impact, lifelong community, social responsibility, partnerships, equality and widening participation. Student community engagement plays an important role in each of these areas. Most relevant are the strategic themes of outstanding student experience and lifelong community and interestingly the KPI of ‘physical and virtual footfall’ (who does this, and how?)

***

This strand will enable students to engage with the external community through the curriculum and co/extra-curricular activity supported by the University. Students will acquire graduate attributes which will enhance their employability through community engagement.

All students (undergraduate and postgraduate, home and international) will be encouraged to engage with this strand. Opportunities will be explored to include students who are not located in Edinburgh.

While there may be considerable interest from staff in engaging with the community, this strand will only cover student activity.

Project strand: Objectives and Impact

Objectives

Help the University to understand what student community engagement already exists
Showcase excellent examples of existing student community engagement across the University
Recommend a communications strategy
Development of collaboration between the University and external community through MOOCS
Explore pilot activity/ identify gaps

Evaluation and impact: Student Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Outputs (deliverables)</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact indicators</th>
<th>Data and evidence sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help the University to</td>
<td>Deliver an evidence-based</td>
<td>Enable informed decision-</td>
<td>Usage: Making colleagues aware</td>
<td>Feedback from information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand what student community engagement already exists</td>
<td>Report including mapping of how students are engaging in this activity and taxonomy of models.</td>
<td>Making and planning.</td>
<td>Of the evidence which is collected and disseminating information to management. This will be done initially through the Community Engagement Reference Group and the Student Experience Project Board.</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Satisfaction:</strong> collect any evidence from case studies on student satisfaction with community engagement opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong> Decisions based on evidence provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showcasing excellent examples of existing student community engagement across the University</td>
<td>Develop case studies (talking heads) from staff, students and community groups.</td>
<td>A more streamlined approach</td>
<td>Usage: Web analytics, attendance at events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a toolkit to facilitate future development.</td>
<td>Increased internal networks</td>
<td><strong>Satisfaction:</strong> Feedback from events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better use of contacts with external organisations</td>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong> determine if resources encourage more staff to develop community engagement opportunities for students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish examples of good practice</td>
<td>How do examples of good practice influence further activity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Student Experience Project Staff Survey will also be used to indicated what further resources would benefit student community engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommending a communications strategy</td>
<td>Create website</td>
<td>Signposting of activity across the University</td>
<td>Usage: analytics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommend changes to University website</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Satisfaction:</strong> Surveys of website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong> Actions arising from information provided</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In the long-term, student surveys may be used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOOCs</td>
<td>Explore the use of MOOCs within student community engagement</td>
<td>Engage with community through MOOCs, using relationships with strategic community partners (pilots with Midlothian Council and Edinburgh College in 2015)</td>
<td>Use data collected by MOOCs team showing the participants and feedback from MOOC community user groups</td>
<td>MOOCs Usage: Number (and background) of MOOC users  Satisfaction: of students and community partners  Impact: graduate attributes developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support the development, delivery and evaluation of new pilots</td>
<td>Embedded into degree programmes at UG and PG level.  Central to new Learning and Teaching Strategy</td>
<td>Feedback from pilot courses  Focus group with students  Focus group with community groups  Impact evaluation of Pro Science pilot in spring 2015  Impact evaluation of UG/ PGT courses in summer 2015 (including student focus groups/survey)</td>
<td>Usage: How many pilots? Sustain and embed pilot activity.  Satisfaction: Encourage students to see the importance and relevance of community engagement.  Impact: Increase in the number of students engaging in this area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Student Community Engagement Review, August 2014

Our aims and activities
The Student Community Engagement (SCE) project aims to explore student community engagement activity across the University and consider how it should be recorded and stored. SCE aims to evaluate the costs and benefits of student community engagement and consider the outreach potential offered by MOOCs and other open educational resources. Additionally, this project intends to report on the potential for future up-scaling of this activity to become a mainstay of student activity in both curriculum and extra-curricular areas and benchmark against current best practice in the UK and internationally.

What is our evaluation strategy?
SCE will evaluate its impact on the student and staff experience by collecting case studies. The project audited and recorded existing activity at the outset, and data will be collected at later stages to monitor the levels of engagement by staff and across student cohorts.

What impact do we aim to have on the student experience?
Developing and increasing the profile of community engagement activity across the University will enable more students to become involved. Through community engagement, students will develop as active citizens and students may participate in and view the local Edinburgh community differently. By placing community engagement in the curriculum, students will be able to reflect through experiential learning and to articulate their new skills in line with both the University’s employability strategy and with the broader learning and teaching strategy.

How do we plan to deliver the objectives?
SCE plans to improve the student experience through the following activities:

- developing a taxonomy of existing activity;
- exploring and establishing a toolkit for staff;
- establishing a network of practitioners across UK and international higher education institutions to benchmark and share good practice;
- working collaboratively with colleagues across the University to share ideas and to establish a strong internal network;
- exploring avenues of community engagement that already exist, particularly within the curriculum, to identify processes that can be mirrored in other areas;
- identifying key stakeholders in the community and considering where future activity can be carried out.

What has the Student Community Engagement project achieved so far?
SCE is carrying out an internal review of existing activity. There is already a broad range of activity and there is an appetite to develop this further and for community engagement to feature more centrally within learning and teaching across the University. Students already have the opportunity to engage with the community through long-standing degree programmes and there are new initiatives launching in 2014/15 and 2015/16. Several pilots are being developed including consolidation of the Pro Science programme (in which undergraduate science students work with secondary school children across Edinburgh) and plans to facilitate interaction between students and other sectors of the local community. In August 2014 a PhD intern was appointed to support the SCE strand. A Community Engagement Reference Group has been established that brings together academic and support staff from across the University to reflect on and review student activity in the community.