



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

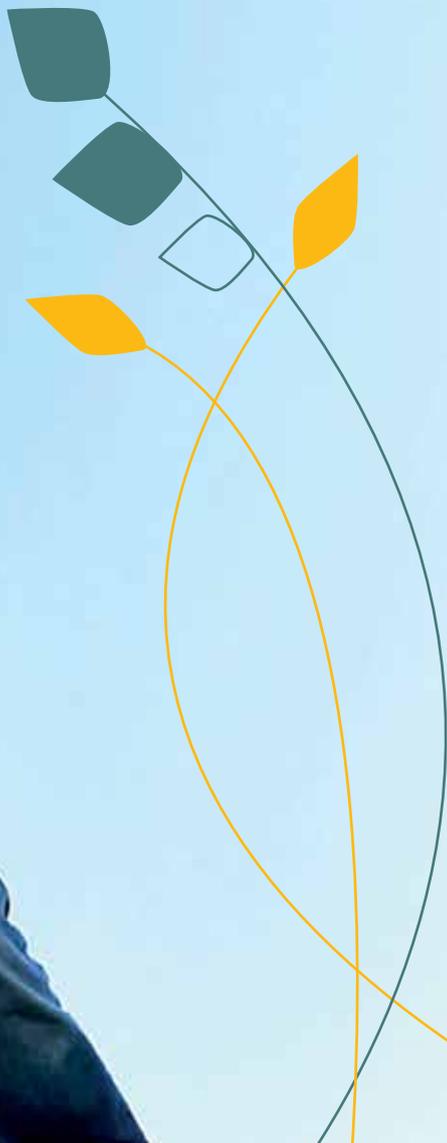
# Student Experience Project

## Interim report





We aim to ensure that all of our students have an exceptional and distinctive experience while at the University



# Contents

Page 5	Impact of the Student Experience Project
Page 6	Forewords: Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching Dr Sue Rigby and EUSA President Briana Pegado
Page 8	The first 18 months of the Student Experience Project. Mark Wilkinson, Student Experience Project Manager
Page 10	The SEP Staff Survey

---

## Improving the student experience: Student Experience Project strands

Page 12	The Applicant Experience
Page 14	Emergency Response
Page 15	Healthy University
Page 17	Online Innovation in Student Services
Page 19	Peer Support
Page 22	Pre-Arrival and Induction
Page 24	Programme and Course Information Management
Page 26	School Councils
Page 28	Student Communications
Page 30	Student Community Engagement
Page 32	Student Information Points
Page 35	Student Surveys Unit

---

Page 37	University Website Programme
Page 38	What next for the Student Experience Project?
Back cover	Contacts

FSC

**Published by:**

Communications and Marketing  
The University of Edinburgh

**Designed by:**

Hamlin Daniels

**Printed by:**

J Thomson Colour Printers

**Photography by:**

Chris Close, Paul Dodds,  
Maverick Photo Agency,  
McBeth Photography,  
White Dog Photography.

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.

Icons on pages 12-35 reflect the maturity of project strands.



Developing



Emerging



Maturing



Mature

# Impact

83%

of respondents said information provided by the Student Survey Unit helped inform them about factors affecting the experience of students  
(Staff Survey 2014)

Student satisfaction

A rise in satisfaction with all areas of student support services  
(ESES 2013/2014)

Every School

Peer Support is available to undergraduates in all 22 Schools

89%

of undergraduate and postgraduate students 'satisfied with experience of the University so far'  
(October 2013 New Student Induction Survey)

30,514

unique page views of Student News items on the University website in the first year of the student newsletter

Peer Support project has

500 student leaders

NSS response rate up **3.3%** and PTES response rate up **2.9%** on last year

# Sue Rigby, Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching

The University of Edinburgh has invested heavily in improvements to the student experience, through incremental enhancement to existing support services and through the Student Experience Project.

This initiative came from a review of existing services and an assessment of what would be needed to create a world-class support network for students over the next decade. It consists of a set of related strands, establishing new service provision, joining up existing but disparate support, and offering a space for planning and thinking. The scope and ambition of the project, and the support it has received, make it highly unusual in the sector and give Edinburgh a head start in this area. Half-way through the project, it is clear that much has been accomplished. The coordination of separate areas of activity is yielding synergies that are unexpected and rich, while the wide engagement of staff from across the University means that the project has significant reach.

As it moves through the second half of its lifespan, it is critical that this reach turns into culture change and a greater awareness of the focus on students and the many ways in which we support them. By the end of the project, with many elements of activity embedded in our mainstream support practices, we will have generated the foundations for an excellent student experience and developed the tools to be responsive and agile in future as our student body evolves and develops.



“... we will have generated the foundations for an excellent student experience ...”

# Briana Pegado, President of Edinburgh University Students' Association



“The project has been unafraid to try bold and experimental approaches ...”

In an age where changes to the structure of UK higher education make students feel increasingly unsettled we are gratified that the University of Edinburgh has prioritised the student experience through the SEP. It demonstrates an understanding that there are numerous elements beyond the purely academic that contribute to a positive experience for students at this university.

As the demographics of our student body continue to change over the coming decades, this project will provide structures to support students from a diversity of backgrounds, especially distance learners, international students, postgraduate students and mature students. To date the SEP has embraced the different systems, styles and structures in place in each of the 22 Schools and sought to celebrate success and best practice across the board while seeking also to identify and adapt techniques that are successful elsewhere. The SEP will continue to support a staff culture which aims to provide the best experience for our students and a genuine partnership in learning.

From EUSA's point of view, the project has been characterised by partnership working with the University with the shared goal of securing a positive and seamless experience for students as they navigate their way through their time here. The project has been unafraid to try bold and experimental approaches, and has entrusted EUSA as a full partner with resources to deliver new and exciting projects and events.

As it moves into its final stage, we need to secure a lasting legacy for those aspects of the project which deliver most to students.

# The first 18 months of the Student Experience Project



Among the drivers of the Student Experience Project, the one that resonates with staff and students most strongly is the University's ambition to deliver an 'outstanding student experience'.

In the Strategic Plan 2012-2016 this theme encompasses the objectives of teaching excellence; revitalised academic and pastoral support; a sense of belonging to a community of learners; taking a cohesive, inclusive and individualised approach to the student experience that encompasses all subjects, modes of learning, students services and all parts of the estate; promoting student health, wellbeing and safety; and equipping our students with the skills and attributes they will need to go on to achieve their potential.

These objectives have been woven into many of the activities of the SEP, and this report aims to highlight our plans as we enter the final year of project funding, to provide a detailed summary of our achievements to date and to outline the impact made on staff and students.

The SEP was initially a strand of activity within the Enhancing Student Support project. We have since developed into a significant project in our own right and over the past two years we have progressed from an initial seven strands of work to the present 12 discussed in this report.

All of our work is around three key aims. These are to:

- develop better understanding of the student experience;
- pilot and implement developments to services and activities;
- enrich the experience of all students of the University.

This report demonstrates that the SEP's activities are making a significant impact across the University. As work streams continue to develop and mature, this impact will grow. We are developing and delivering new services and new approaches to supporting and working with students in an increasingly diverse environment; enhancing University practices in relation to the applicant experience, transition and orientation, to student communication, and to course and programme information delivery and use; delivering student surveys and providing data that is leading to a better understanding of the student experience; leading on the development of the University's role in promoting a healthy living and study environment for students; and working to improve the University's engagement with students, including through student volunteering with the local community and the development of School Councils.

On behalf of the SEP's staff I offer sincere thanks to the many staff and students who have in some way contributed to our work. More than 100 colleagues have supported the project to date through advising, shaping and guiding our work; through their participation in task groups; and through providing oversight as members of the Student Experience Project Board. Many more colleagues have taken hands-on roles, working in partnership with us or in co-delivering new activities and services. The progress we have made to date is their success as much as ours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Wilkinson', written over a horizontal line.

**Mark Wilkinson**  
Student Experience Project Manager

# Enhancing the student experience through collaboration

'The research involved interviews with teaching staff, which explored how widening participation policy interacts with subject or departmental practice in teaching, learning and student support; and colleagues' experiences of supporting WP students.'

'The report will identify the factors that contribute to successful outcomes and provide the basis for the development of strategies to address any issues.'

'The top-up funds from SEP were vital in allowing us to widen the scope of our research and to include two more subject areas.'

**Kathleen Hood, Head of Widening Participation**

'The funding supported a pilot project on service blueprinting and the student experience in the College of Humanities & Social Science. The project was invaluable in helping staff realise the links between academic and professional staff in the student experience process and in highlighting how different this process looks when you put the student at the centre of it rather than at the end of it.'

'This has subsequently been used in the Business School to fuel a "changing behaviour" project that recognises the nature of education as a service process rather than a commodity.'

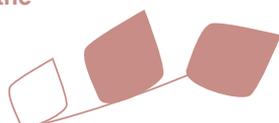
**Stephen Osborne, Deputy Dean of the Business School**

'The funding we received from the Student Experience Project for "Eusay" gave us a rare opportunity to entrust a group of students with the financial resource to bring to fruition an exceptional idea, capable of impacting positively upon the experience of many more students. Eusay is a web application that allows students to raise and discuss issues relevant to them, and to prioritise those of particular significance by voting on them.'

'Eusay was the brainchild of two undergraduate students and was a winning entry in the Hackathon event held in the School of Informatics in Innovative Learning Week 2014.'

'Funding from the Student Experience Project enabled us to pay Eusay's creators to develop it, ready for use in the 2014/15 academic year. Since gaining this funding, Eusay and its creators have been selected as winners in the JSIC Summer of Student Innovation competition, which has provided a further £5,000 of funding for the project, as well as wider recognition.'

**Dr Adam Bunni, Acting Representation and Student Support Manager**



# The SEP Staff Survey

In April 2014 the SEP launched its first staff survey designed to help us to understand:

- the impact of our activities on staff;
- how well we had communicated our aims;
- if we were helping colleagues to understand better how to develop an outstanding student experience.

We targeted staff that had been involved in some way with the SEP over the previous 18 months and asked them to complete a survey and to provide comments. The feedback will be used to demonstrate aspects of the impact the SEP has made to date and to help SEP staff to plan for the final phase of our activities.

## Who completed the survey?

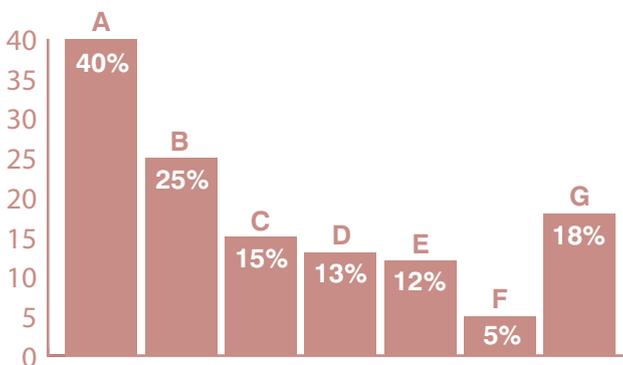
**228** staff took part in the survey.

**24%** of respondents were academic staff.

Of the other **76%**, half were based in Schools or Colleges and half in Support Services.

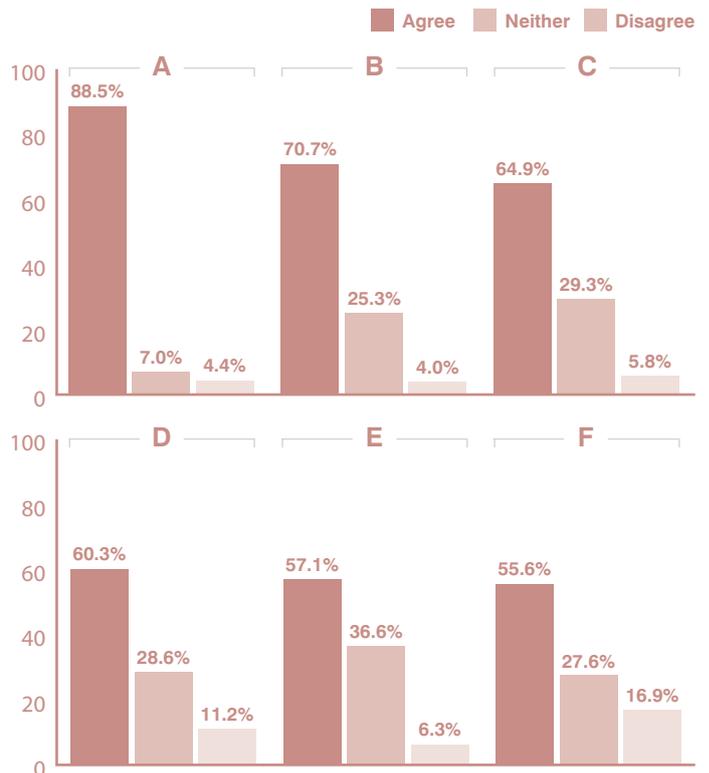
**Every School** was represented.

## How have you worked with the SEP?



- A Occasionally work with the SEP
- B Part of project strand or advisory group
- C Regular partners
- D Rarely work with the SEP
- E Embedded in department
- F Board member
- G I do not work with the SEP at all

## How is the SEP perceived?



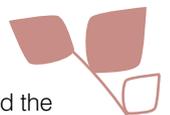
- A I understand the aims of the SEP
- B The SEP is improving the student experience
- C The SEP has improved information provision to students
- D The service I deliver has benefited from working with the SEP
- E The SEP has improved communication with students
- F The SEP has enhanced my understanding of an outstanding student experience

## Staff comments

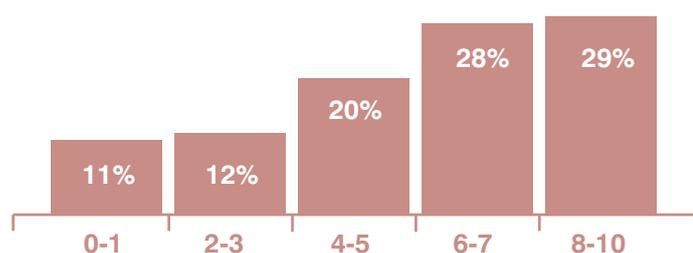
'I feel there is a much greater unity between EUSA and the university now that more partnerships have been created and a wider pool of staff at EUSA have had an opportunity to make these connections. I feel much more aware of the work the University is doing now and also feel that those I work with in the University have a greater understanding and appreciation of EUSA and its role in the "student experience."

'I can talk to prospective students with more pride and certainty about the experience we provide for students and how it is constantly being improved.'

'Better insight and knowledge regarding student issues, a trusted source of information and advice, a sense that the University is attempting to have centralised pools of expertise, information and practice.'



How impactful has your interaction with the SEP been in supporting you to improve the student experience?



### Emerging themes from the survey

- We are getting the basics right. Staff know who we are and what our aims are, and the feedback on awareness of the project is very positive.
- Support staff have a clear and positive understanding of what the SEP is and there is evidence that it is having a positive impact on their role and the student experience.
- There is strong evidence from staff that the SEP has led to increased partnership working and improved and streamlined services and use of resources.
- We need to bring more focus on communication and engagement among academic and other School-based staff to improve their perceptions and understanding of SEP – qualitative feedback points us towards more partnership work with Schools.
- It appears that we are reaching senior academic staff disproportionately and the project needs to widen understanding to all staff.
- Impact rates of individual SEP strands are generally very positive, even with those aspects that have had less time to mature.

These key points and the feedback received on individual strands will be used to inform our work over the current academic year, help us to refine our communication plan, refine the targets and objectives we have set, and develop our approaches to working collaboratively with colleagues, particularly at College and School levels.



# The Applicant Experience



## Our aims and activities

The Applicant Experience is concerned with the first stage of the student experience. This project seeks to:

- develop and implement policies to support the University’s commitment to fair, transparent and consistent admissions;
- streamline admissions processes and promote equality, diversity, and widening participation;
- enable greater self-selection by prospective undergraduate and postgraduate applicants, before they apply;
- select students best equipped to benefit from the Edinburgh experience, from a wide range of backgrounds.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

### Pilot projects

Initial research and thorough evaluation of the findings have informed the direction and tasks of this part of the project. Research conducted in 2013 used qualitative and quantitative data methods to analyse the pre-application and application experience as part of the overall student experience. The research findings have demonstrated what is important to prospective students, and continue to inform the development of pilot projects across the University. The word cloud provides an overview of the significance of specific factors.

## Why students apply to University of Edinburgh



Prominence of words reflects proportion of students citing that reason for choosing Edinburgh.

### Policy development

Evaluation and review have been built into the timeline for each new or revised policy. Baseline statistical data on the profile of applicants, offer-holders and entrants allows comparisons and trends to be measured over time. Additional qualitative evidence is being measured through staff surveys and focus groups.

- admissions feedback, appeals and complaints policy;
- care leavers’ policy;
- policy and procedure for disabled applicants;
- adult returners’ policy;
- equality impact framework for pre-application and application stages of the admissions process;
- research completed and disseminated on the ways prospective students choose which university to apply to;
- template presentation toolkit was developed for use at Open Days and other events;
- video interviews with students and staff about the student experience.

## What have we achieved in the first 18 months?

The Applicant Experience team has completed a range of projects and implemented policies, and continues to develop new pilots. Completed policies and projects include:



'I am delighted at the active and positive approach you are taking and I share your ambition that [the care leavers' policy] will encourage more of our young people to follow their dreams. I hope other institutions follow your example.'

**Head of Childcare and Criminal Justice at a Scottish Local Authority**

## How have we impacted on the Student Experience?

The Applicant Experience project has:

- increased fairness, transparency, compliance and consistency in admissions;
- streamlined processes for requesting feedback, making an appeal or submitting a complaint;
- improved awareness of equality and diversity issues in admissions practices at all levels;
- removed barriers for applicants from under-represented groups, making the University more accessible;
- developed pilot projects to enable prospective students to make better informed decisions when choosing to apply to the University.

## Case Study

### Feedback, Appeals and Complaints policy

A new policy and procedure for dealing with feedback, appeals and complaints was introduced in July 2013. It simplifies the process for applicants, clarifies the grounds for making an appeal and introduces clear timescales for dealing with feedback requests and appeals. A review has shown that these changes have been welcomed by staff and by applicants. Responses show:

- It is popular with staff: 'I think it's been an excellent development and much welcomed.'  
(policy review staff survey)
- It is trusted by applicants: 'I'm disappointed with the outcome, but I'm satisfied that full consideration has been given to my application.'  
(unsuccessful appellant)
- It has reduced time spent dealing with appeals: 36% of admissions staff who responded said they now had to spend less time dealing with unsuccessful applicants  
(policy review staff survey)
- It is easier to use: 'This new system is so much clearer in defining the process.'  
(policy review staff survey)

## What next?

### Pilot projects

Pilot projects will continue to be developed based on research and evaluation. These pilots will focus on:

- making better use of the authentic student voice to articulate the nature of the Edinburgh experience and our degree programmes;
- enhancing applicants' understanding of the nature of the Edinburgh student experience, making applicants more aware of what we have to offer;
- expanding information provided on the non-traditional student experience;
- providing more information and tool kits to students' advisors and parents, using a range of media.

### Policy development

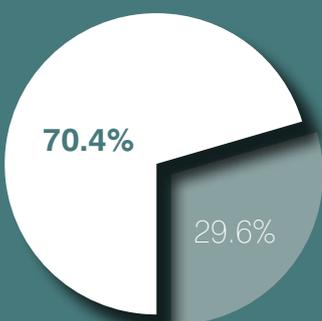
Policy development continues to focus on increasing transparency and consistency in admissions. The next stage of our work will include:

- enhancing postgraduate admissions policy;
- developing admissions policy to recognise prior learning;
- developing policy for student criminal convictions;
- developing online training to support policy implementation;
- ongoing review and evaluation of the impact of new and revised policies.

'I found the [Open Day presentation templates] worked very well. The slides were great and really enhanced the professionalism of my presentation. A great initiative, so thank you!'

**Member of academic staff**

## How impactful has the Applicant Experience project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



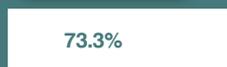
Impactful Not impactful



I am aware of new developments in policy



New policy has improved my role/service's capacity to enhance the applicant experience



New policy is likely to improve my role/service's capacity to enhance the applicant experience

# Emergency Response



## Our aims and activities

This strand of the SEP was asked to reflect and report on the University's provision of emergency and crisis support for students. This project is unique within the SEP as it has completed its remit. The group reported in April 2014 and many of its recommendations are now being considered or implemented through the University's Student Experience Services and by the SEP.

## Evaluation

The Emergency Response Task Group, including University staff and EUSA representatives, undertook to evaluate the current emergency and crisis provision for students within the University, including:

- support within Schools via Personal Tutors and Student Support Officers;
- support within the University's accommodation;
- support within the security services;
- student support services including the Chaplaincy, International Office and Student Counselling Service.

In addition, benchmarking was conducted by surveying comparator institutions.

Emergency Response presented its report in April 2014 to the SEP Board and the key findings are being taken forward by the Deputy Secretary Student Experience and by the SEP.

## Emergency Response recommendations

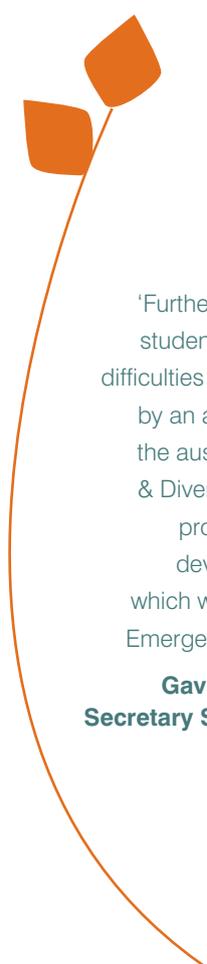
The final report noted that much of the University's provision is excellent and is comparable to that of peer institutions. However, the report also identified some challenges that may act as barriers to further improvement:

- The structure of the University's student support services means that leadership comes together primarily at University Secretary level, with some provision within Corporate Services. This issue is now being addressed by the recently appointed Deputy Secretary Student Experience.
- Funding limitations. Further work on this is likely to emerge through the annual planning round within Student Experience Services.

The report also recommended consideration of:

- an 'on-call' system for dealing with emergencies;
- emergency contacts for Personal Tutors;
- further reflection of the support available for students who are away from Edinburgh as a result of their studies;
- the needs of students who require on-going and sustained support.

The Emergency Response task group was also involved in discussions about piloting the use of the Big White Wall, a 24-hour moderated web-based support service (see page 18).



'Further work on supporting students with mental health difficulties will be taken forward by an advisory group under the auspices of the Equality & Diversity Committee. This project will consider the development of policies which were discussed in the Emergency Response work.'

**Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience**

# Healthy University

## Our aims and activities

There is clear evidence of a relationship between health and the ability to learn. The Healthy University project, hosted by the Centre for Sport and Exercise, aims to actively promote and deliver tangible health and wellbeing benefits for the university community through increasing the engagement of staff and students in health and wellbeing across the University. Our objectives are to:

- engage with a diverse range of students and staff to identify key issues affecting students' health;
- benchmark the University of Edinburgh against three other UK universities that are leading 'healthy universities';
- communicate and promote what a healthy university means in practice across the University;
- map existing practice to highlight assets and gaps across all aspects of the healthy university model;
- Develop good practice through the initiation of one pilot project.

## How do we plan to deliver the objectives?

We plan to:

- use the HU Task Force (a representative group of staff and students drawn from across the University) to help deliver our objectives;
- establish monthly goals, and monitor, measure and evaluate impact;

- develop a communications and marketing strategy to raise the profile of the HU project and its activities;
- maximise the resources available for greatest possible impact.

## Evaluation

The HU project sets objectives and identifies desirable and deliverable outcomes. Throughout the process the team uses impact indicators and scrutinises baseline data and new feedback, integrating this evaluation into planning.

## What impact will we have on staff and the student experience?

The HU project will encourage students to take responsibility for their health. As a result of the HU project students will be:

- motivated to make their experience at University outstanding;
- better informed/prepared and supported to reach their full potential;
- informed about how to access support during their time at University for personal, social and academic life;
- increasingly satisfied with their experience of student support delivery;
- actively encouraged to voice their opinions.

## What has the Healthy University project achieved so far?

With two part-time staff appointed in May 2014, current practice, services and policies that promote health have been mapped; a task force meeting with staff and students has taken place to agree our aims and objectives; and creative methods have been used with students to increase understanding of students' issues. We have worked in partnership with student societies to raise the profile of health; increased communication with students about health and services through social media; delivered training to Residence Life assistants; and worked in partnership with EUSA, EUSU and NHS Lothian to begin to deliver harm-reduction approaches.

'It was great to see a collaboration of different departments working together towards the same aim – that of creating a healthier and more sustainable university. I found the work you're doing exciting and crucial to our community.'

**Student at task force workshop, June 2014**





# Online Innovation in Student Services



## Our aims and activities

The Online Innovation in Student Services (OISS) project aims to create a backbone of online support, generate innovation within support services, and extend the reach of existing online resources and service delivery to encompass critical areas of student support, including study support, employability, support in difficult times, support in areas of co-curricular activity and support in living in Edinburgh.

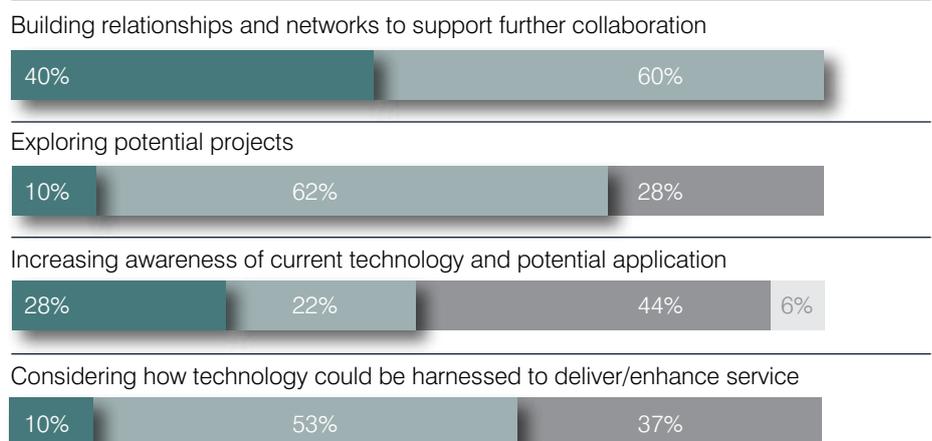
## Evaluation strategy and findings

Evaluation focused on the impact on staff capacity to innovate service delivery and the impact on students of individual activities and enhancements. Baseline evaluation work was conducted to gather the views of staff from across services as part of an initial audit and mapping exercise. Individual activities continue to be evaluated through participant or user feedback. Secondary data, such as that from ESES, ISB and services' own evaluation and quality measures, provides a useful proxy for the ongoing impact of this area of development and innovation. For many activities it is too early to conduct evaluations as they are still in development or have yet to be experienced for a full academic cycle.

An example of evaluation work undertaken was the capacity-building workshop that sought to bring technical specialists and service leaders together. This was a successful activity and established relationships and networks which will be essential for sustained enhancement.

### Capacity building workshop feedback (32 responses)

I feel the workshop met its aims of:



'There has been some good work over the last few months in bringing colleagues together. The lack of coherence in the online student experience is an issue that can only be dealt with through effective governance and strategic development for systems. I think the project can play a role in helping to detect the problems.'

**Staff Survey 2014**

## What has been the impact so far on the student experience?

There has been continuous innovation in service delivery, whether physical or virtual, over the course of the project, details of which can be seen on the SEP website. OISS has acted as a catalyst for greater articulation, collaboration and integration of the virtual student experience. It has illuminated the need for enhanced collaboration and planning between key areas of the University. If this approach is sustained in the longer term it is likely to have a significant impact on the student experience.

The introduction of the Big White Wall (BWW) has been of particular value in offering support to students during evenings and weekends, and offering support to students not otherwise engaging with University student support services.

Evaluation conducted mid-year found that:

- **86%** of student users found BWW helpful;
- **76%** reported that their wellbeing had improved in at least one aspect as a result of using the service;
- **92%** reported BWW's anonymity was the leading reason for feeling able to share their concerns on this site;
- **81%** used it outside of the hours that student support services currently operate;
- **24%** had not previously used student support services in that academic year.

- Talking Heads: accessing disabled student support.
- Virtuous Circle: video self-help resources for online learning from IS Learning Services.
- Online mindfulness resources from the Chaplaincy.

## How has Online Innovation in Student Services impacted on staff?

Results from the staff survey are encouraging and reveal signs that the online offer to students is improving.

## What next?

The following web-based projects have been developed and are now live. They will be evaluated during 2014/15:

- Career Explorer: self-diagnostic signposting on the Careers Service website.
- Review of mobile apps for mental wellbeing.



'Big White Wall is a significant innovation and enhancement'  
**Staff Survey 2014**

## Case Study - The Big White Wall

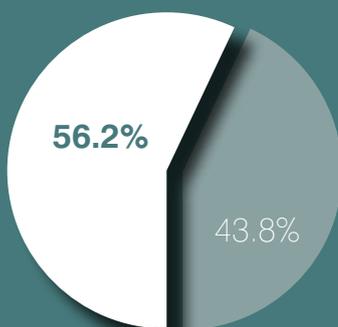
Use by the University of the Big White Wall (BWW), an online early intervention service for people in psychological distress, was trialled for a year, offering free access for 150 students from September 2013. The BWW was an interesting pilot, intended to respond to known challenges for supporting students with emotional or psychological distress, particularly access outside normal working hours and anonymity, while tapping into students' interest in peer support and social media.

BWW is monitored 24/7 by trained counsellors (with on-call psychiatric back-up), giving both students and staff reassurance on users' safety.

The OISS team agreed a strategy of wide initial publicity, based on the experience of other universities. Take-up exceeded the 150 places originally agreed by mid-November and this was extended incrementally to provide 300 places in total.

As a result of the high level of demand from our students, BWW ran a number of guided six-week programmes on a range of topics, such as anxiety management, time management and depression. BWW prioritised topics that were of particular relevance to our students.

## How impactful has the project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



■ Impactful  
■ Not impactful

**55.6%**

I feel better able to influence/contribute to the development of our students' online experience

**66.7%**

I feel more aware of current activity to support students' online experience

**56.3%**

The online offer to our students has been enhanced

# Peer Support

## Our aims and activities

The Peer Support project aims to foster a sense of belonging within the student body and support students to develop strong inter-personal, communication and professional skills. It provides an opportunity for Schools and individual academics to receive real-time feedback from students on multiple aspects of their student experience and engages students as active and autonomous learners with a vested interest in their University experience. The project endeavours to encourage the forming of an intellectual community of learners where students can exchange and discuss academic theories and ideas, and to encourage integration between diverse student communities. It seeks to create a safe, social space for constructive interaction and allows senior students to grow in confidence and maturity as they facilitate the learning and positive experience of more junior students.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

Continuous evaluation is an integral part of the Peer Support project. The team has sought extensive feedback through the Peer Support Survey, Edinburgh Student Experience Survey, case studies, Peer Support Network, Peer Support activity observation and course-level feedback from Autonomous Learning Groups.

## What has Peer Support achieved in the first 18 months?

- Peer Support is available to undergraduates in all 22 Schools: through continued motivation, support, supervision and training by EUSA in partnership with the Schools and support services there are now 60 Peer Support projects running across the University. There are 500 student leaders and around 90 staff engaged with Peer Support.
- Peer Support's success has been based on strong partnership working, consultation, strategic marketing, strong data management and the introduction of recognition and reward systems.
- Peer Support Toolkit: based on powerful partnerships with colleagues across the University, the team has created a Peer Support Toolkit and a menu of all the research, resources, training, policies, guidelines and evaluation documentation needed to establish a successful Peer Support project. The Toolkit enables Schools to identify models that best suit the needs of their students and provides practical guidance on how to take these forward.
- External recognition has been a significant feature of Peer Support. It received a distinction from the National Union of Students (NUS), as an excellent example of partnership

between a students' association and a University. The project presented on its work at the International Enhancement Themes Conference and contributed to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Students as Partners Summit. The Peer Support Project was recognised as a best practice case study in a UK HEA Report on Mapping Peer-led Student to Student Learning. The Edinburgh Buddies and Peer Proofreading projects won the NUS Award for Excellence in International Student Support at the UK Council for International Student Affairs Integration Summit, and the project presented at the 8th International Conference on Supplemental Instruction hosted by the University of Missouri-Kansas City in May 2014.

The project is also leading in the Scottish higher education sector and has set up the first Scottish Peer Support Network, bringing together colleagues from institutions across the country to share practice.

Universities in Europe, the Middle East, the US and Canada have sought advice from the Peer Support project as a beacon of excellent practice.

## Case Study

### Peer support at the Dick Vet

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies chose the 'house' system as a peer support model based on a review of current best practice. Ten houses have been created, each comprising 80-90 undergraduate students, five or six Personal Tutors and a Senior House Tutor, while the Student Experience Officer monitors and evaluates the progress of the system. The primary objective is to implement an improved and more consistent quality of academic and pastoral support for students.

As part of the house system, academic guidance is provided to assist students in improving their academic skills and performance. Pastoral advice and guidance are also provided to help them with any difficulties affecting their studies. It is hoped that the house system will also help with issues of isolation, which have arisen due to the location of the School and the demanding nature of the curriculum. Each house has its own Student Committee. The Committees are responsible for organising social events for their house.

To date, the School feels that the house system has been a great success. The students have engaged with the structure of the new system and have been proactive in making their houses their own, creating house crests and organising a number of social activities and fundraising events. There has been a positive response to the house system from staff also.

'The School will continue to develop its Peer Support systems and embed them into the existing house system. It is also hoped that we will continue to work closely with the support services and EUSA to respond to the needs of our students.'

**Geoff Pearson,**  
**Senior Tutor, Dick Vet**

## What has been the Impact so far on the student experience?

### Peer Support and the Edinburgh Award

Peer Support fits well with the Edinburgh Award, providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate a commitment to their own personal development and that of those around them. It provides the opportunity to review, reflect and augment their practice, ensuring they are always striving for excellence. Currently around 15 Peer-Assisted Learning Schemes are attached to the Award and we hope to grow this over future academic years. In the academic year 2013-2014, 120 volunteers undertook the PALS Edinburgh Award, up from 29 the previous year.

## How has the Peer Support project impacted on staff?

The Staff Survey 2014 revealed that Peer Support has helped to bring together and connect provision. Staff reported that the central team's support helped them decrease their workload in this area and respondents recognised the value of the project as a partnership between EUSA and the University.

## What next for Peer Support?

- The Peer Support team will continue to work to establish its reputation nationally and internationally as a leader in the field.
- The team will continue to provide high quality support to Peer Support projects across the University.
- Peer Support will be available to online distance learning and postgraduate taught students 2014/15.
- The team will implement its new bespoke data management system, which will allow student leaders to manage attendance and events and link to the student record. This will provide more accurate evaluation and engagement data.
- Peer Support aims to meet the needs of our students in high-contact-hour programmes and at outlying campuses by improving the provision of flexible working around those needs.

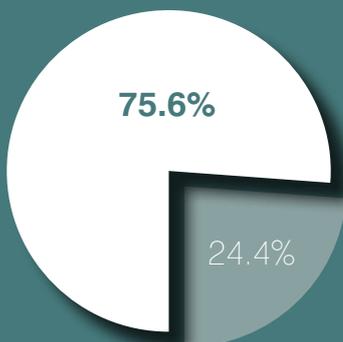


'It is a great chance to meet new friends from different years in uni. I feel I not only helped others but improved myself'

**BizPALS student**



### How impactful has the Peer Support project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



■ Impactful    ■ Not impactful

- 62.5%** I am pleased with the quality of Peer Support in my School or service area this year
- 60.4%** I am pleased with the overall success of Peer Support in my School or service area this year
- 63.0%** Peer Support has had a positive impact on the students I work with
- 60.0%** The central Peer Support team have supported, guided and communicated with me effectively

# Pre-Arrival and Induction



## Our aims and activities

The Pre-Arrival and Induction (PAI) project aims to lead, innovate and collaborate with EUSA, support services and Schools and Colleges to develop enhanced pre-arrival and induction support, enabling our diverse student population to successfully transition to university life and study.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

Evaluation of progress has been firmly embedded into all induction and pre-arrival activities. The PAI team gathered feedback on September 2013 induction events to inform planning and enable the team to consider how the project is impacting on the student experience. This evaluation included data from both the undergraduate and postgraduate New Student Surveys in October, the undergraduate New Student survey in January, and a longitudinal qualitative study of early undergraduate experiences titled 'Through Your Eyes'. An induction-related question is now integrated into the 2014 ESES and staff views have been gathered on the impact of the PAI project.

## What has the Pre-Arrival and Induction project achieved in the first 18 months?

The PAI team has facilitated dialogue, enhanced partnerships, raised the status of induction and transition, and designed enhancements based on student and staff feedback through activities such as:

- an annual Gearing Up for Induction Event (resources and videos from the 2014 event are available on the Enhancing the Student Experience website and wiki);
- annual Induction Briefings for staff before September induction;
- coordinating an enhanced central University Postgraduate Welcome event in September 2014;
- hosting 'Making the Most of your first weeks at Uni' online sessions during Student Recruitment and Admissions' Postgraduate Virtual Open Days in 2013 and 2014. Colleagues in SRA highlighted this session as an example of best practice for online sessions;
- trialling new ways of promoting induction event information on the New Student web pages;
- developing the UK's first university-branded 'guidebook' app – 'UoE Events' – which has hosted guides for SRA Open Days and a guide for Welcome Week. The 'Welcome to Edinburgh' guide had been

downloaded nearly 8,000 times by mid-September 2014;

- Developing students' ability to engage with optional course choice before arrival, via multiple channels;
- enhancing the Academic Fair to allow students to benefit from a better understanding of the subjects they are considering;
- Successfully piloted red 'Welcome - Can I help?' badges during Welcome Week 2014.

## How has the Pre-arrival and Induction project impacted on the student experience?

The New Students Induction Surveys revealed highly encouraging developments in the induction experience.

- **89%** of PG and UG respondents stated they were satisfied with their experience of the University so far;
- **75%** of the UG and PG respondents said they felt they 'belonged to the University of Edinburgh' after their Induction Week;
- **92%** of the respondents to the January New Student Survey indicated that they would like a longer induction period. The PAI team has worked with colleagues in Accommodation Services, the Visiting Student Offices, EUSA, the International Office, and outside partners to make this a reality for January 2015.



'Wearing your red badge this week has really worked well. I have had lots of positive pavement and corridor chats with new students. A great idea that has really improved the feel of the week.'

**Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea,  
Principal**

## How has the Pre-arrival and Induction Project impacted on staff?

The 2014 SEP staff survey revealed that the PAI team has positively impacted on staff and services. Staff feedback reflected how the induction team had enhanced their role and the induction service for students, particularly with regard to coordination, clarity of roles, sharing of excellent practice, networking and information gathering.

## What next?

The Pre-arrival and Induction team aims to partner with more Schools on academic induction and transition enhancements. We are collaborating with the Institute for Academic Development and the Researcher Experience Committee to enhance induction for postgraduate research students who arrive at times other than September.

We will work to provide staff with a clear overview of current pre-arrival communications across the institution and continue to receive and act upon student and staff feedback on aspects of induction.

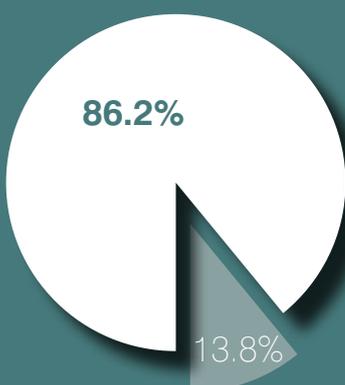
Through these actions the team aims to improve on the 85% of respondents in the 2014 staff survey who said that there is a coordinated and consistent approach to pre-arrival and induction.

## Case Study

### 'Through Your Eyes'

'Through Your Eyes' was a qualitative longitudinal study that the Academic Induction Coordinator carried out in partnership with the Institute for Academic Development. The aim was to understand first year students' transitions to University in more depth. The sample consisted of first year students and teaching staff from all three Colleges and the study spanned September 2013 to March 2014. Students participated in two semi-structured interviews and completed a mid-term catch-up, which they posted to Wuala, a secure data cloud.

## How impactful has the Pre-Arrival and Induction project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



Impactful
  Not impactful



A coordinated and consistent institutional approach to pre-arrival and induction



Opportunities to reflect upon, share and improve the quality of current induction practice



Support to review and improve pre-arrival and induction activities and events

# Programme and Course Information Management



## Our aims and activities

This project aims to improve the programme and course information used by students, focusing on the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study and programme and course handbooks. It will clarify and enhance programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure processes, procedures and supporting systems for staff, and ensure that external requirements are met. It will also make programme and course information held in student systems accessible to staff for multiple uses, supporting the concept of a single source of definitive programme and course information.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

The scoping phase of the project took place between March and September 2013. A range of activities were undertaken including staff and student consultation, process mapping, evidence gathering and benchmarking to research an evidence-based approach to project planning. The information gathered in the scoping phase forms the baseline data for the project. Evaluation is embedded into project management to inform planning and measure the impact of changes introduced and progress against agreed project deliverables is continually monitored.

## Findings from the scoping exercise

Students said they wanted more detailed information about programmes and courses, including on assessment and workload. They said terminology should be better explained and the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study should be more usable.

Staff said programme and course information, and supporting business processes and systems, were in need of enhancement. There was broad support for the concept of a single source of programme and course information that can be used for multiple purposes. Staff said careful consideration should be given to the timing of and approach to implementation.

## What has PCIM achieved in the first 18 months?

Among the project's achievements, we have:

- developed draft University level principles for programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure;
- developed headings for the enhanced course descriptors;
- commissioned a student to produce 'A Student's Guide to the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study', in response to student feedback in a focus group.

## How has PCIM impacted on staff?

Although the PCIM project is at an early stage, results from the SEP Staff Survey 2014 showed an encouraging 63% approval rate on how the PCIM project had impacted on staff roles or services in this development phase. A high proportion of staff felt informed and that they had the opportunity to contribute towards the development of the project. There has been excellent staff engagement: 91 members of staff from Colleges, Schools and support services attended brainstorming sessions. The project team of staff from Academic Services and Student Systems was seen as having created and supported a consultative environment around the project.

## What impact do we aim to have on the student experience?

Improved satisfaction with programme and course information.

## What next?

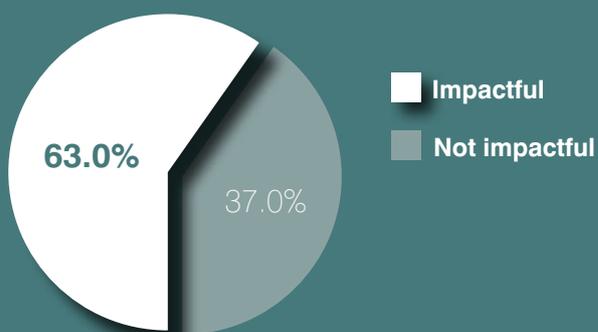
The PCIM project will:

- continue its work on programme and course design, development, approval, changes and closure processes and supporting resources;
- create enhanced course descriptors;
- develop policy and guidance on programme and course handbooks; explore how support services information will be gathered and made available.

Academic Services and Student Systems are working on project deliverables for 2014/15. It will be critically important to the project to ensure that stakeholders feel informed and that they have the opportunity to contribute to its development.



### How impactful has the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



'I like what is being done with PCIM – admin and academic staff have the opportunity to get involved and see the developments as they are happening.'

**Staff comment at brainstorming session, spring 2014**

91.1%

I feel more informed about the PCIM project

86.7%

I feel I have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the PCIM project

# School Councils



## Our aims and activities

The work of School Councils (SCs) contributes to the University's 'outstanding student experience' strategic theme through the enhancement of 'academic community' and improved communication. School Councils aim to improve connectivity between Schools and their students, add value to groups such as Student-Staff Liaison Committees and contribute to other projects such as Peer Support.

This project aimed to establish six SCs by the end of the 2013/14 academic year; have a positive impact on the learning and teaching environment through improving and diversifying representation and increasing the sense of an academic community; and create self-sustaining SCs that can generate and achieve objectives through campaigns and projects that have a positive impact on learning and teaching.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

The SCs project has developed an evaluation strategy that is embedded into project planning and focuses on engagement and impact. Google Analytics is used to measure web traffic to web pages and attendance at meetings is charted. SCs will be completing case studies and focus groups with students involved in the project, in addition to

interviews with participating staff. Data on the extent to which students feel able to influence their learning environment, along with how staff perceive the benefits of working in partnership with the Councils is gathered to inform planning and analysis of impact.

## What have School Councils achieved in the first 12 months?

- More than 300 students have attended our nine SCs.
- Two of our SCs have established Facebook groups, with more than 130 students following their activity.
- Google Analytics has shown spikes in activity on the EUSA website in the lead-up to SC meetings.
- SCs are progressing discussions to establish more Councils, with the aim of having 14 in place by the end of 2014/15.
- The 'Informatics Conversations' event attracted 50 participants including staff. Four workshops were held exploring ways to improve the School. The majority of those surveyed wanted to see more events like it, and the SC team will hold further themed events in 2014/15.

## How have Schools Councils impacted on the student experience?

The SCs project has impacted on the student experience in several ways. In Schools that house a diverse group of subject areas, such as Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences, the School Council has acted to bring representatives from each of these areas together for the first time, enabling them to find common ground. Within the School of Social & Political Science, School Conveners noted that the Council had brought together students from different year groups in a way that hadn't happened before. This is vital to create sustainable academic communities.

The Biomedical School Council noted that staff appreciated the role of the Council in bringing projects forward in a more coherent manner than was previously possible. This partnership has definitely empowered the students involved and given them more ownership over their student experience.

'The best thing about the School Council is that it has brought together students from three very diverse subject areas and given them a voice as a part of a wider community.'

**Abie Alfrey, PPLS School Convener**





## Case Study

### PPLS School Council

The School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences' first School Council meeting was attended by 14 Class Representatives from different courses in PPLS, and set out activity for the rest of the year. The following two Council meetings, held in the middle of Semesters 1 and 2 and focusing on issues such as feedback and academic community, were then advertised as widely as possible. Attendance increased at every meeting, eventually peaking at 35 undergraduate students and four postgraduate students, along with staff members. Having their own event to discuss issues affecting the School gave PPLS students space and time to reflect and propose creative solutions.

The PPLS Director of Professional Services said the Council provided a reliable form of feedback that was 'more collective rather than being from one or two individuals' and observed that academics were seeing the Council as an extremely useful channel of communication to students. One of the elected School Conveners said: 'The best thing about the School Council is that it has brought together students from three very diverse subject areas and given them a voice as a part of a wider community.'

The School Council has contributed to the development of the three attributes identified in the Graduate Attributes Framework, 'Enquiry and Lifelong Learning', 'Aspiration and Personal Development' and 'Outlook and Engagement'.

The Council is currently aiming to foster more of an open-door policy in the School, in order that, for example, undergraduate

students can have more discussion time with their lecturers and PhD students to discuss their current research – contributing to the development of the attributes of enquiry and life-long learning.

There has been strong interest in participating in the co-design of the first-year undergraduate induction programme, which will encourage engagement between undergraduates in different years of study. This will also help to create a stronger academic community by allowing students themselves to facilitate the induction of their peers.

Finally, fostering personal development, the Council is working with the School to create a standardised feedback model in order for students to receive better individual feedback for research and assignments. This allows students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and let them chart out the necessary steps to improve their individual work.

# Student Communications



## Our aims and activities

The Student Communications (SC) team works with colleagues across the institution and EUSA to co-ordinate communications, and ensure they are relevant to the University's diverse student population. This strand of the SEP is vital in ensuring students are aware of the support and opportunities available to them, as well as in supporting a general sense of community.

The SC team's work with students has focused on initiatives such as the 'On the same page as you' internal communications campaign (see Case Study) on conducting focus groups with students to understand what they want to receive communications on and through which channels, and the first University-wide student email newsletter.

Work with staff has focused on consultation and support, including events such as a Student Communications Symposium, and on developing comprehensive resources for University-wide campaigns.

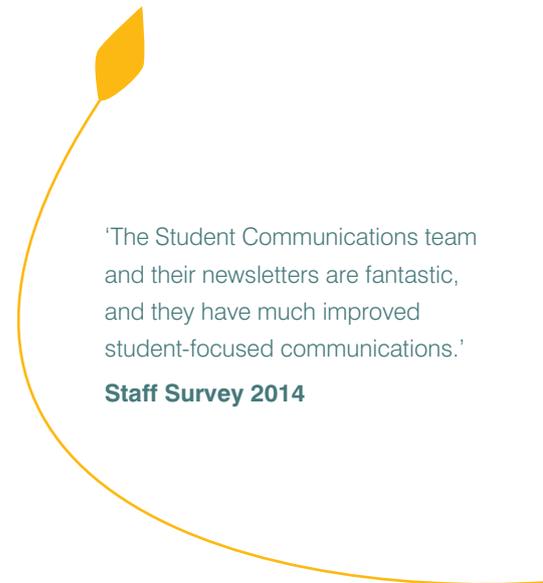
## How have we evaluated our progress?

Continuous evaluation is embedded into all aspects of SC's work. The team has sought extensive feedback through focus groups with more than 130 students, staff and student surveys, and regular monitoring of web analytics.

## What base did we start from?

At the outset of the SEP, staff told us they wanted clear guidance, improved resources and support for effective communications with students.

Students wanted the University and EUSA to reduce information overload, deliver more relevant and tailored communications and improve signposting and promotion of initiatives and events. Students also wanted information on how the University uses their feedback.



'The Student Communications team and their newsletters are fantastic, and they have much improved student-focused communications.'

**Staff Survey 2014**

## Case Study

### Award-winning student communications campaign

The highly successful 'On the same page as you' internal communications campaign, launched in September 2013, was devised to start a conversation between the University and students, as well as invite feedback. The campaign was delivered across all campuses, through multiple channels, and relied on the support of colleagues from across the University.

The team piloted new platforms such as Google Hangouts with success and connected with partners such as alumni when running social media events, such as competitions, aiming to create a sense of lifelong community at the University. The team achieved 28% student awareness (8% above target), and there was direct participation by 582 students (182 over target), through competition entries, the Google Hangout, social media or taking part in campus events, for example. ESES results show that 17% of students took some action in response to the campaign, with visiting web pages the most common. Responses to the campaign demonstrate that current students do want to engage and are appreciative of the efforts the University is making to listen, as well as its commitment to enhance the student experience at Edinburgh.

The SC team won Bronze in the Best Internal Communication Campaign category of the 2014 HEIST Awards, for the campaign.



'The Student Communications project has allowed me to assess and develop new communications methods and messages with our students.'

Although we are at an early stage, there is already a streamlined form of communications and students are now getting involved with the communications which is great to see.'

**Staff Survey 2014**

## What has been the impact so far on the student experience?

### Edinburgh Student Experience Survey (ESES) 2014 findings

**76%** of students felt well informed about what's happening at the University. However, only **41%** felt that the University listened to and valued their views. This has been identified as a priority to be addressed through the rest of the project.

### Newsletter

Analytics from our student newsletter show that our average open and click-through rates are well above those of other universities. For example, since its launch in September 2013, there have been 30,514 unique page views of the Student News section.

### Innovative Learning Week campaign

For Innovative Learning Week (ILW) 2014, there was **97%** awareness of ILW among

students; **77%** of students felt they had a good understanding of what ILW aimed to achieve; and **59%** of students attended or organised an ILW event. Of students that received the ILW brochure, produced by Student Communications, **98%** found it useful and there was an excellent response to the email campaign, with **6,851** unique clicks over a series of mailings.

Overall, focus group findings from spring 2014 show that students welcome new centrally co-ordinated communications such as the email newsletter, and reveal a positive response to new student communication campaign materials. This is an improvement on focus groups findings from Spring 2013 where students felt it was 'pot luck' what opportunities and events they heard about. Campaign analytics show that large numbers of students are engaging with campaign materials. This suggests more students are using new student support enhancements and existing services because of the SC team's activity.

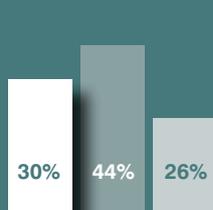
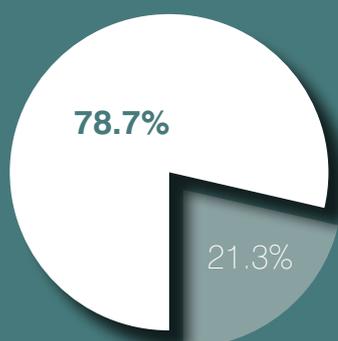
## How has Student Communications impacted on staff?

The 2014 SEP staff survey revealed that Student Communications had impacted very positively on services throughout the University to improve the student experience.

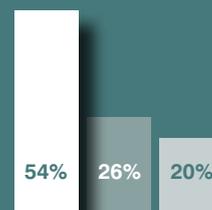
## What next?

The Student Communications team will continue to build relationships with more colleagues across Schools and service teams, to support them in delivering effective communications and to encourage even greater collaboration on centrally run campaigns. The team plans to improve on the **54%** of respondents in the 2014 staff survey who said new student communications approaches had impacted positively on the services they provide.

## How impactful has the Student Communications project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



My service has adopted new communications practices as a result of support and advice from the student communications team



New approaches to student communication e.g. newsletter and campaign planning, have impacted positively on the service I provide

Impactful Not impactful

Yes No We are planning to do so in the future

# Student Community Engagement



## 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. 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 curricular 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 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 become active citizens and will develop a deeper understanding of local communities and the wider city and region.

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 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. 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.



# Student Information Points



## Our aims and activities

The aims of the Student Information Points (SIPs) are to provide:

- a single point for all students to obtain information and advice on any aspect of their time as a student at the University of Edinburgh;
- clear, up-to-date and relevant information for all students. We aim to answer 80% of our queries and signpost the remaining 20% to the correct specialists;
- points for students to easily access the service offered by Student Administration;
- a visible, consistent and professional one-stop-shop for students via both a physical presence and a virtual presence.

The SIP team aims to work in partnership with key services to encourage a more integrated approach to our frontline interactions with students. The larger aim is to establish a Student Information Point model that can form the basis for a fully integrated frontline service across all student services.

## What has been achieved since January 2014?

### Mainstreaming and integration

Initially piloted from within the SEP, the SIPs team and its functions have been

successfully combined with the roles and responsibilities of an existing team within Student Administration Services. All Student Administration services are now available via the SIPs.

### Increased visibility and student usage

Monthly visits to the Main Library and King's Buildings points have increased by 110% since SIPs' integration. The Old College Student Centre has been rebranded as an SIP therefore increasing the number of points on campus from two to three: Main Library; King's Buildings and Old College. The King's Buildings point was relocated to JCMB to provide more visibility and enable it to facilitate drop-in sessions from other services.

The 'i-SIP' through which all SIP services will also be available online, has been built on the foundations of work begun by Student Administration Services, such as online student self-service retrieval of documentation and online matriculation. The cornerstone of the i-SIP service is the delivery of student-related documentation via the student/alumni portal.

### Quality improvement

The SIPs' customer focus has influenced existing Student Administration services and there has been a rise in standards of customer care to match the high expectations for SIPs.

Fast-tracking of some services via the SIPs has been achieved, for example document production.

Progress has been made in the use of social media such as Twitter. The Twitter account is no longer simply a channel for other services' news but now a key publicity vehicle for Student Administration Services and SIPs' activities.

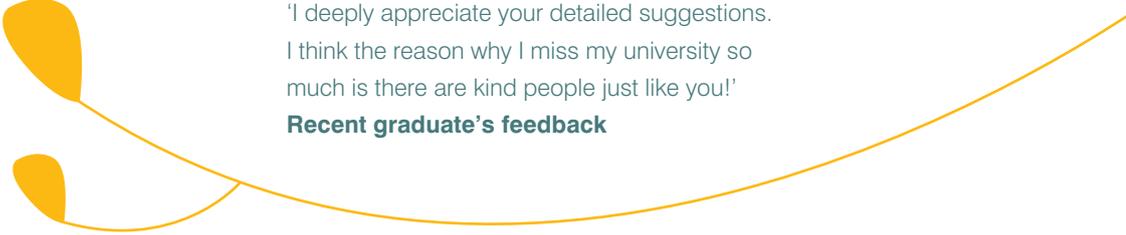
Partnerships have been established with a view of providing key information and drop-in sessions with Finance, Security, Fees, Scholarships, the International Office and Accommodation Services.

The SIPs team proactively engages with all King's Buildings School Offices to raise awareness of SIPs at King's Buildings and what they can offer.

## How have we evaluated our progress?

Continuous evaluation of the performance and impact of the SIPs has been under way since their inception via:

- Edinburgh Student Experience Survey;
- a five star rating and feedback at SIPs or via the website;
- visitor numbers;
- Key Performance Indicators e.g. document delivery times;
- benchmarking against other universities.



'I deeply appreciate your detailed suggestions. I think the reason why I miss my university so much is there are kind people just like you!'

**Recent graduate's feedback**

## Findings from evaluations

- **74%** of students are satisfied with the service provided by the SIPs. This is an increase of 8% since 2013;
- **81%** of students are satisfied with the service provided by student administration as a whole, an increase of 2% since 2013. Evaluation indicates that the frontline service provided by the SIPs has contributed significantly to this overall increase;
- **92%** of students visiting an SIP have rated the service as five star. The remaining 8% have rated the service as 4 star;
- Student visits to the Main Library and Kings' Buildings SIPs have increased by **110%** since 2013;
- Turn-around times of Academic transcripts (Higher Education Achievement Records) have been reduced. Students can now receive transcripts on demand at SIPs.

## What has been the impact on the student experience?

Our aim is that each user of the SIP service, either in person or online, will feel they have received an excellent experience. The SIPs have impacted on the student experience by:

- ensuring that students have a visible point where they can direct any query or issue;
- ensuring each student is treated as an individual, with a 'case management' philosophy in which an individual member of staff is assigned to each query and sees it through to its conclusion, including if it is redirected;
- ensuring that all queries are answered quickly and professionally;
- continually enhancing the range of services available via SIPs;
- working in partnership with other services to enhance our combined interaction with students;
- developing online facilities to deliver key services directly to students;
- developing a model that can be used by other student-facing services.

## i-SIP and online delivery of documents

Feedback has shown that the top priority for students requesting documents is that they receive them as quickly as possible.

A fast-track process has been introduced whereby students can receive documents on demand at any of the three SIPs.

i-SIP seeks to replicate online the services provided at physical SIPs. Services available on the web include the provision of student documents such as transcripts (Higher Education Achievement Records), proof of matriculation, and council tax

exemption certificates. A new facility allows students and graduates to view and send documents securely online.

All students and graduates were previously charged for document production, but the paper service and online service are both now free.

## What next?

SIPs have proved an effective method of providing a frontline service and it is a model that can be replicated across key support services. Our vision is that all frontline services are integrated and delivered via the SIP model. SIPs would handle general queries but also ensure that those queries requiring specialist help are correctly and consistently directed. The SIPs would also provide day-to-day student-facing services for Schools and support services.



**92%**  
of students visiting an SIP  
have rated the service as  
five star

## Case Study

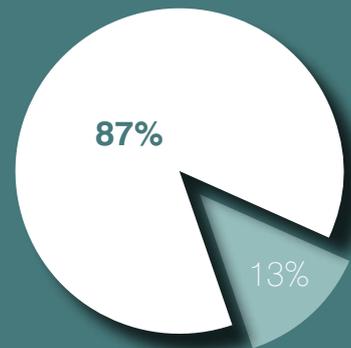
### Improving student information and service provision at King's Buildings

An SIP presence was located on the King's Buildings campus to provide the same level of service and access to information that is available to students in the Central Area. The use of the SIP by students at King's Buildings has been greatly increased in the past six months in response to a refocusing of the SIP activities.

The SIP has moved to a larger location within the James Clerk Maxwell Building, which is a more inviting setting that also allows us to facilitate drop-in sessions with other key services for students.

An approach that relied on 'passing trade' has been replaced with a continuous publicity campaign across King's Building to increase the profile of the SIP.

### The Student Information Points have improved access to information for students



Yes

No

# Student Surveys Unit



## Our aims and activities

The Student Surveys Unit (SSU) aims to provide a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to surveying the student experience and develop our understanding of it.

Our objectives are:

- to provide a central hub for surveys of the student experience;
- to coordinate the analysis of all external surveys (National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES));
- to develop and refine the administration of the Edinburgh Student Experience Survey (ESES);
- to develop a standardised approach to course evaluation surveys.

## What has the Student Surveys Unit achieved in the first 18 months?

The SSU has achieved substantial impact in improving the co-ordination, development and the understanding of surveys in the first 18 months of the project.

### Streamlining the survey experience for staff and students

- All major survey updates are communicated to University staff through the SSU website, wiki pages and direct correspondence, and to students through the website, social media and direct correspondence.
- The student surveys website and wiki pages have been developed to include information and materials for staff to use to promote and report on all the major surveys.
- Administration of NSS, PTES, PRES and ESES by the SSU means a coordinated and consistent approach to all major surveys, from promotion in conjunction with the Student Communications team through to analysis and reporting.
- Co-ordinating a centralised course evaluation pilot using EvaSys software which has led to the establishment of a consistent approach to course evaluation across the University.

### You Said, We Listened campaign

Students noted in survey responses that they were often requested to provide feedback on their experiences but did not always hear about changes implemented. From autumn 2013, Schools were requested to provide examples of the actions taken in response to student feedback.

These responses are now available for students to view on the Student Survey web pages and are being highlighted to students in the promotional activity for subsequent surveys.

### Asking the right questions

- In consultation with other project strands, the SSU reviewed questions in all the major surveys to identify areas that enable SEP strands to measure their impact. The SSU has also provided advice, guidance and support to many colleagues across the University in the creation and review of a growing range of surveys, supporting and enabling staff to undertake further evaluation work in their area.

## What has been the Impact so far on the student experience?

Our main impacts have been to ensure that:

- data is managed and disseminated appropriately for further action;
- the timing of surveys is controlled and coordinated;
- all key actions taken within the University as a result of survey findings are publicised effectively.

'By providing enhanced survey reporting it helps to inform postgraduate policy development. By taking over the administration of the postgraduate experience surveys, Student Surveys has enabled me to focus on and enhance provision of core activity in relation to postgraduate research policy, regulation and guidance development.'

**Staff Survey 2014**



## How has the Student Surveys Unit impacted on staff?

The 2014 staff survey demonstrated that the SSU has had a considerable impact on equipping staff to improve the design, management and analysis of surveys:

- **92%** of respondents now know who to contact with queries about survey data demonstrating that SSU has a high profile within the University. This can also be seen in the number of ad-hoc requests the unit receives for further analysis of survey results;
- **79%** of respondents say it is now easier to access information on student survey results, demonstrating the benefit of a 'one-stop-shop' to manage and respond to survey-related enquiries;
- **83%** of respondents agreed that survey results provided by the SSU have helped them become more informed about factors affecting the experience of students;

- **80%** of respondents say the SSU project has been impactful in terms of enhancing their role/service;
- **68%** of respondents say the information from student surveys results has helped identify potential areas for action or enhancement in their school/department. This demonstrates that the SSU and the SEP overall is fulfilling its aim to develop the University's understanding of and capacity to enhance the student experience.

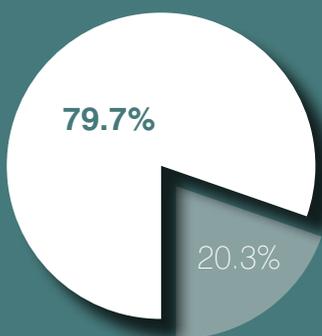
## What next?

The SSU aims to build on its impact by:

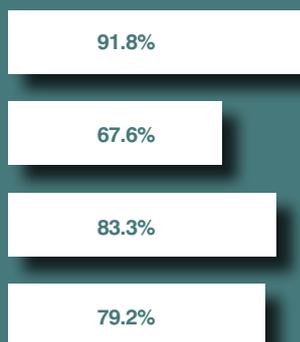
- increasing promotion of the SSU to partners;
- continuing the coordination, administration and analysis of the major student surveys;
- identifying and implementing any areas for enhancement in processes or outputs;
- further developing work with Schools to encourage higher response rates;

- continuing to work in partnership with Schools to develop the course evaluation pilot (EvaSys);
- establishing a Student Panel to allow SEP strands and other colleagues the opportunity to quickly gather and understand student views;
- taking charge of co-ordinating the University's involvement with the International Student Barometer in conjunction with IGraduate;
- improving students' capacity to be effective at completing surveys to really benefit themselves and the next cohort of students;
- working with Schools and Student Communications to ensure that good news is promoted (including through the 'You Said, We Listened' campaign);
- working with Schools to ensure that students do not suffer from survey fatigue;
- working with the University Website Programme's editorial staff to maintain and improve the Student Survey web pages.

## How impactful has the Student Surveys project been in terms of positively enhancing your role/service?



■ Impactful    ■ Not impactful



I know who to contact with queries about student surveys data

The student surveys results have helped me to identify areas for action or enhancement

The Student Surveys Unit has helped me become more informed about the experience of students

It is easier to access information on student surveys results

# The University Website Programme

Working in partnership with the SEP

## Overview and context

The University Website Programme (UWP) brings a specialised expertise to the Student Experience Project by offering skills and knowledge in content management, user experience, accessibility and legal compliance, as well as experience in collaborative working and cultivating relationships across departmental and School boundaries. The UWP gained funding from the SEP and started working with the SEP team in May 2013.

## User-centred approach

We have taken a collaborative, user-centred approach to identify the specific online requirements for the Student Experience Project.

We worked in partnership with the SEP and staff from Student Recruitment and Admissions, Student Administration, the International Office and EUSA, in 2013, to develop tools and approaches for web publishers to objectively appraise and develop the online experience for undergraduate and visiting undergraduate students.

## What were the benefits?

We have embedded our user-centred approach into all projects the UWP undertakes to support strands of the SEP, including an on-going collaborative project with the Student Communication team to make student support content more user-friendly and customer-focused.

This has involved:

- appraising content from a user's perspective, and achieving consensus among service stakeholders through persona-driven research;
- understanding students' approaches to seeking solutions online to their common questions and tasks, through card-sorting exercises;
- ratifying the proposed improvements to site structure through navigation research with students before implementation.

## Impact on the student experience

The Students section of the University website has been restructured based on the results of the user research. We will continue to monitor the usage of the content and make iterative improvements.

We have developed, and are piloting, a model for sustainable, collaborative working between stakeholders for the next stage of enhancement in which we will focus on redesigning content to more closely align it with user needs, drawn from research and data.

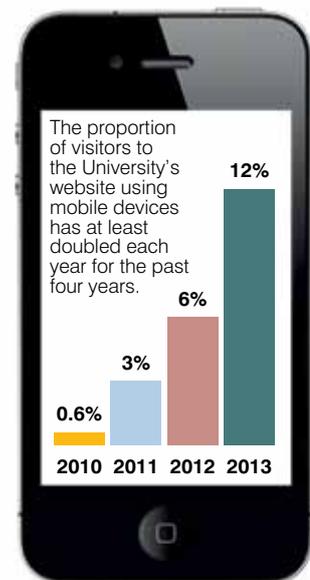
The clear focus on user needs means that for other SEP projects we have:

- streamlined and refocused Student Surveys content, since which there has been a 24% increase in visitors (early 2014 compared with the same period a year earlier);

- optimised website search results to ensure that the most relevant pages are prioritised for the most commonly used search terms;
- established the 'Enhancing the student experience' website to provide information to University staff. It had almost 23,000 unique page views in its first 11 months.

All these projects are underpinned by the wider UWP work to improve the student experience online across the University website.

## Delivering content for mobile devices



We're leading a major project to create a new website to deliver our content responsively: giving the user the best possible experience regardless of what device they use.

# What next for the Student Experience Project?

The 2014 staff survey, together with the ongoing support and advice from task group and SEP Board members, has identified the following as priorities for the future.

## Staff engagement

The SEP has provided a forum for sharing ideas, best practice and a developing common understanding of the student experience. This, however, has been limited in reach and the SEP will seek to engage with more staff from across the University, particularly those based in Schools, in order to share the benefits and resources developed as widely as possible. We will also seek to build and support a growing 'community of practice' to enhance the student experience and to deliver more staff development opportunities.

## Impact evaluation

We will continue to use an impact evaluation approach in our work. This will enable us to review and refine our actions in order to derive maximum value for the University's investment.

## Working collaboratively

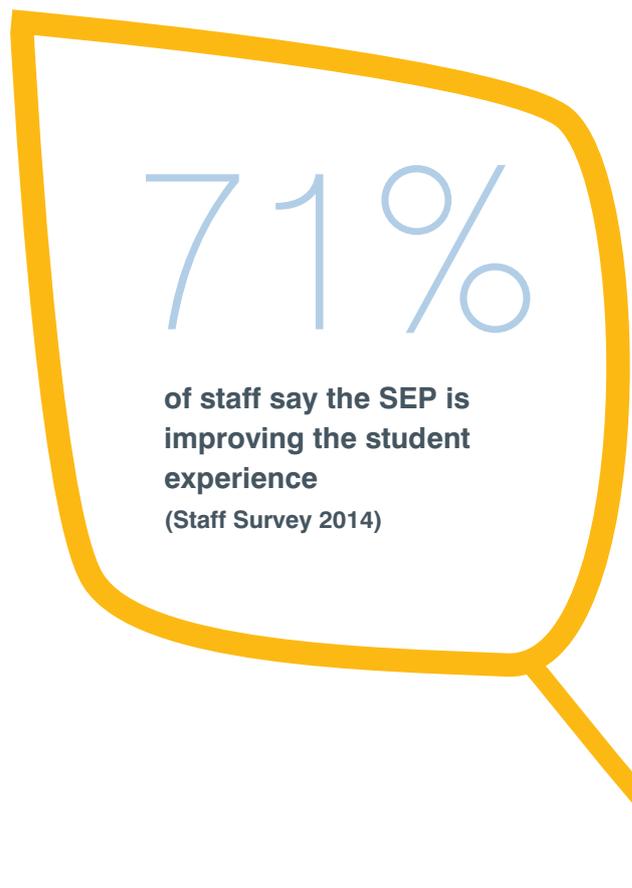
We have provided a structure within which staff across the University have worked in partnership with us to streamline their use of resources and to develop and pilot new approaches to service delivery. We will seek to continue to develop this collaborative approach and to share toolkits and resources with colleagues to ensure their sustainability.

## Communication

We have developed contacts in all Schools and Colleges and across most support services. However, feedback tells us that we need to do more to ensure that we reach and consult with more colleagues, particularly those working in Schools, in order to refine our goals and actions, and share what we have learned.

## Embedding and mainstreaming

The SEP Board is being asked to consider the SEP's impact and to support the University's senior staff to decide what aspects of our work should be embedded and mainstreamed.





# Contacts

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROJECT

### Mark Wilkinson

Student Experience Project Manager

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5579

Email: sepmanager@ed.ac.uk

### Michelle Moncur

Student Experience Project

Senior Administrator

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5578

Email: michelle.moncur@ed.ac.uk

### Pam Crawford

Impact and Evaluation Project Officer

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5580

Email: pam.crawford@ed.ac.uk

### Chris Sim

Student Experience Project

Administrator

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5521

Email: christopher.sim@ed.ac.uk

### Gavin Douglas

Deputy Secretary Student Experience

SEP Board chair

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 2142

Email: gavin.douglas@ed.ac.uk

## THE APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

### Gillian Simmons

Senior Policy and Project Officer

Student Recruitment and Admissions

gillian.simmons@ed.ac.uk

### Alyssa Newman

Admissions Project Officer

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5538

Email: alyssa.newman@ed.ac.uk

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

### Mark Wilkinson

Student Experience Project Manager

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5579

Email: sepmanager@ed.ac.uk

## HEALTHY UNIVERSITY

### Helen Ryall

Project Coordinator

Email: helen.ryall@ed.ac.uk

### Louise Gourmelen

Communications/Administration Support

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 2583

Email: louise.gourmelen@ed.ac.uk

## ONLINE INNOVATION IN STUDENT SERVICES

### Shelagh Green

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 1548

Email: shelagh.green@ed.ac.uk

## PEER SUPPORT

### Katie Scott

Peer Support Project Coordinator

EUSA

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 4573

Email: katie.scott@eusa.ed.ac.uk

## PRE-ARRIVAL AND INDUCTION SUPPORT

### Induction Team

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5576

Email: induction@ed.ac.uk

### Abby Shovlin

Academic Induction Coordinator

**Liz Dobson-McKittrick / Kristin Hunger /**

**Jenni Murray**

Student Induction Coordinators

## PROGRAMME AND COURSE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (PCIM)

### Nichola Kett

Head of Enhancement Team,

Academic Services

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 9264

Email: nichola.kett@ed.ac.uk

### Brian Connolly

Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 4481

Email: b.connolly@ed.ac.uk

## SCHOOLS COUNCILS

### Philip McGuinness

School Councils Coordinator

EUSA

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 9389

Email: philip.mcguinness@eusa.ed.ac.uk

## STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS

### Lucy Lamb

Student Communications Officer

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 2876

Email: lucy.lamb@ed.ac.uk

### Kate Glencross

Student Communications Officer

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5766

Email: kate.glencross@ed.ac.uk

## STUDENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Dawn Smith

Community Engagement Developer

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5126

Email: dawn.smith@ed.ac.uk

## STUDENT INFORMATION POINTS (SIPS)

### Craig Shearer

Head of Student

Administration Services

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 2214

Email: craig.shearer@ed.ac.uk

## STUDENT SURVEYS UNIT

### Student Surveys Unit

Tel: +44 (0)131 651 5557

Email: student.surveys@ed.ac.uk

**Sarah-Jane Brown / Lisa Scattergood  
(maternity leave)**

Student Surveys Coordinator

### Joshua Stapp

Student Surveys Officer

