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Edinburgh Sustainability Awards

2011/12 Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

The second year of the Edinburgh Sustainability Awards has built on the solid foundations of 2010/11. The awards scheme, which acknowledges the work of staff that take action on social responsibility and sustainability, has seen a substantial increase in the numbers of teams, staff and students being actively involved.

21 teams from across three of the University's main campuses took part in the scheme, with three teams achieving Gold awards, and a further eight teams achieving Silver, six teams reaching Bronze and one team Working towards Accreditation. Three further departments were recognised for their efforts in sustainability practices in Laboratories. Four Special Awards were also presented.

The first year of the Student Ambassador Programme saw 21 students volunteer in the awards, with students gaining skills through promoting the awards scheme and auditing teams.

Background

The Edinburgh Sustainability Awards recognises the efforts of groups of staff that take action on the University's Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) Strategy. The scheme is run in partnership between the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) and the Sustainability Office of the University.

In broad terms the awards scheme aims to translate the SRS Strategy of the University into simple, meaningful actions that staff can work towards and to enable volunteering opportunities for students.

The awards scheme has recently completed its second year of a three year pilot. The scheme uses the workbook model provided by NUS Services' Green Impact Universities which has been adopted by 46 universities nationally.

The aims for the awards scheme in 2011/12 were:

- Increase the number of participant teams to 20
- Improve the opportunities for students to volunteer

Timeline

The Edinburgh Sustainability Awards for this past year were launched during November 2011 at the EUSA Potterrow Dome in front of an invited audience. The workbook deadline was originally placed for early March but was instead moved to the 6th April. The auditing process took place throughout 2 April, between November and May student volunteers promoted the awards scheme and also audited participant teams. The awards ceremony took place on the 10th May.

Outcomes

2011/12 experienced an increase in the amount of teams, staff and students actively participating in the awards scheme with;

- 21 teams taking part in the awards scheme, a 50% increase from last year
- 152 staff directly involved in the awards, an additionally 50 staff from the previous year
- 22 Special Awards submissions, a substantial improvement from six entries in 2010/11
- 21 student volunteers, up from seven that took part last year.

A breakdown of the 21 teams highlights that three teams achieving Gold awards, and a further eight teams achieving Silver, six teams reaching Bronze and one team Working towards Accreditation. An additional three teams were recognised for their efforts in sustainability practices in Laboratories.

A full breakdown of the results is available on the Sustainability Office's website via the link below.

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability/about/programmes/awards/previous-winners/2012-13>

There were also four Special Awards presented at the awards ceremony which comprised of two ideas competitions, including the Best Energy Saving Idea, won by Edinburgh Research and Innovation and the Best Idea for Cutting Carbon Footprints, won by the Freeshop. The Office Depot Innovation Award recognised the efforts of staff at the John McIntyre Conference Centre for reducing their environmental impact of their operations. The Outstanding Personal Contribution Award was presented to Francesco Benvenuti for the student category and to Roy Dawkes for the staff category.

The awards scheme this year also saw the introduction of staff from the Little France campus participating, adding to teams from Kings' Buildings and the Central Area. Furthermore, there was an improvement in outreaching to colleges and schools, with substantially more departments taking part.

The awards ceremony took place on the 10th May, with an audience of over 100 staff and students being in attendance. Speakers included Vice Principal Professor Stephen Hillier, Director of Corporate Services Nigel Paul and Director of Estates and Buildings Angus Currie. The attendance and support of senior management was a significant achievement of this year's awards, with staff and students clearly seeing a commitment by the University to support the awards scheme.

Please see the recognition that Estates and Buildings Director Angus Currie gave to his staff below.

http://www.ed.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.89691!/fileManager/June%20Newsletter.pdf

Feedback

During the audit process and post awards ceremony, feedback has been gained from some of the participant teams from last year and the student volunteers who were involved. This was done through a survey delivered through Survey Monkey, a workshop for student volunteers and general feedback from participant teams. The feedback included both positive and negative elements.

Positives	Negatives
Encourages staff	Timeframe is too short
Recognition	NUS workbook website
Availability of contact	Some criteria are not relevant
Volunteering opportunity	Student volunteering training
Partnership building (EUSA-UoE)	Poor awareness of awards scheme
Awards better organised	Lack of support from senior school management
Awards ceremony	Auditing training

Recommendations

Overall, this year's awards scheme has been successful, clearly improving on the awards in 2010/11, however there is always room for improvement. The feedback provided by the participant teams and student volunteers highlights the need to improve the awards in certain areas. Based on these there are a number of recommendations that could be implemented next year to improve the awards. These include the following:

- Extend the timeframe of the awards scheme by launching earlier in semester one, allowing teams more time to complete the workbook
- Improve access to the online workbook, making it easier to use for participant teams
- Recruit student volunteers earlier in semester one, allowing volunteers more time to promote and recruit teams
- Map the time frame for volunteering opportunities for students to match the academic calendar, reducing the likelihood of any clashes with exam periods
- Enhance the training on offer to student volunteers, giving them better skills for their future careers
- Refresh and update the workbook, moving away from the document based tick box criteria to more active criteria (also linking into other University departments' aims)
- Open up the Special Awards to allow better student involvement, including those of student societies
- Improve promotion of the awards across all schools and campus areas to achieve improved awareness levels
- Organise regular meetings with stakeholders to update them on progress throughout the year

Looking Ahead

Implementing the recommendations will be the first step to ensuring next year's awards scheme is a success, and takes on board the lessons learnt from this year. However, it is also important to note 4 that 2012/13 will be the final year of the three year pilot we currently have with NUS. It is important to reflect and also decide by the end of 2012 whether or not we continue with this scheme or do something in house.

The brand of the awards is growing in awareness and there is clearly a desire among staff and senior management for the awards to continue and be one of the main drivers in promoting the SRS Strategy of the University and EUSA's environmental policy.