



Community engagement discussion notes

SRS Staff and Student Workshop, Wednesday 13th April 2016

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the main discussion points from the community engagement table which was part of the SRS Staff and Student Workshop.

Current activities/levels of awareness

- Pockets of best practice exist across the University but awareness of these initiatives are normally 'local'.
- Awareness and involvement in community engagement activities are dependent on what department you are based in.
- Normally hear about community engagement initiatives after they have been completed.
- Very little information on community engagement (i.e. university's objectives and opportunities for staff/students) in induction and ongoing training.
- Academic schools have many good links with local primary and high schools. These links are normally established on an ad hoc basis through parents etc.
- Lack of central communication information.
- Small and limited number of grants available (i.e. Innovation Grant).
- Currently no virtual or physical front door for community engagement.
- Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) have well established links with societies.
- All stakeholders are enthusiastic about taking community engagement and charitable efforts further.
- Not all students have opportunities to engage with the local community through the curriculum.
- Students in degree bubble.
- Limited support (i.e. SRS, ACE and those involved in community engagement projects).

Future opportunities

- Academic staff could support children of staff from lower socio-economic groups.
- Link with student-led and community social enterprises.
- Work-based placements and group work based on community projects could be more widely incorporated into academic degree programmes and courses. Needs to be in the curriculum.
- Better coordinated communications, with regular newsletters, information on the university website for staff/students/public/local community groups – a virtual or physical front door!
- Opportunity to promote what the University is doing through more public lectures – both hosted within the University and hosted in local communities.
- All staff and students are provided with information on community engagement through inductions, ongoing training, personal tutors, eusa and academic course organisers.
- More departments providing modern apprenticeships and work experience placements for high school students (i.e. Edinburgh Guarantee)
- Staff volunteering and placement secondments in local organisations and groups.
- More scope to maximum opportunity through the city festivals.
- EUSA and societies are the most accessible and publicised methods of community engagement – link with operational and degree programmes.

Resources required

- Statement from the University on its aims/objectives concerning community engagement (i.e. what are we hoping to achieve, more stories on the front page of the main website).
- Small grants to support projects with community element.
- Resources – need a dedicated team to coordinate and promote community engagement activities (i.e. go to department at the University). Information needs to be easily accessible.
- Incorporate this into job descriptions of colleagues in academic colleges and support groups to act as go to people within local departments (i.e. could be along the lines of energy coordinator).
- Process to manage community / industry links with academic degree programmes and courses. Senior management to push objective of every student being able to under a practical work based placements as part of their course.
- Better induction and training for staff – all staff should be able to understand the university's community engagement objectives, as well as signposting students/staff to further information.