

# Active Citizenship: The role of higher education



**GuildHE** is an official voice for UK higher education, especially for universities and colleges with a tradition of learning, research and innovation in the industries and professions.

Its 40 member institutions include:

- multi-faculty universities, offering a wide range of subject disciplines
- leading providers in professional subject areas including art and design, music and the performing arts, agriculture, education, healthcare and sports
- institutions with roots in Victorian philanthropy and a commitment to education and the crafts, including specialist institutions and those with church foundations
- high-quality private institutions from both not-for-profit and for-profit sectors
- further education colleges delivering higher education.

GuildHE members are autonomous institutions, each with a distinctive mission and priorities. Together, they provide a dynamic and diverse contribution to UK higher education, nurturing innovation and creativity and providing more choice for students and for graduate employers.

Many are global organisations engaged in significant partnerships and world-leading research, successfully attracting talented international students. Members are diverse but will often share a specialist mission.

**National Union of Students** is a voluntary membership organisation which makes a real difference to the lives of students and its member students' unions.

NUS is a confederation of 600 students' unions, amounting to more than 95 per cent of all higher and further education unions in the UK. Through the member students' unions, NUS represents the interests of more than seven million students.

NUS promotes, defends and extends the rights of students and develops and champions strong students' unions.

### Acknowledgements

First, this report is indebted to the staff and students who have submitted case studies from their institutions and students' unions.

Furthermore, this publication would not have been possible without the kind advice and guidance of colleagues from the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges who have reviewed and commented on the chapter on environmental sustainability.

Finally, acknowledgements go to Rhys Wait for writing the report and Alex Bols for his support and advice overseeing the project.

Distinction and Diversity  
in Higher Education



# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>GuildHE Charter for Active Citizenship</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Volunteering</b>	<b>08</b>
Leeds College of Art: Make Love Not Scars	10
University of Winchester: Give It A Go	12
<b>Democratic Engagement</b>	<b>14</b>
Ravensbourne: Active Citizens	16
The Anglo-European College of Chiropractic: Staff-led Student Awards	18
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b>	<b>19</b>
University of Worcester: Skills for Tomorrow	21
Royal Agricultural University: Sustainability through Entrepreneurship	23
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>24</b>
Leeds Trinity University and St Vincent's Support Centre: Community Engagement in the Curriculum	26
York St John University: Converge – Education for Recovery	28
<b>Global Citizenship</b>	<b>30</b>
Leeds Trinity University and Cricket Without Boundaries	32
Newman University: Gambia – Exploring Global Citizenship through overseas fieldwork	34
<b>Reflection and Development</b>	<b>35</b>
GSM London: The Horizon Award	38
Abertay University: Active Citizenship	40
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>41</b>

# FOREWORD

Graduates are more likely to vote, volunteer and become engaged in society, and their higher education experience can be formative in developing this sense of active citizenship.

GuildHE, working with NUS, has put together this report showcasing examples of active citizenship and to demonstrate that higher education introduces students to many experiences that go beyond their degree programme. Whether through engagement with volunteering opportunities, participating in the democratic process through the students' union or being exposed to social issues such as sustainability, students are challenged to develop in many areas beyond their academic discipline.

As champions for the benefit that higher education has for students and society, GuildHE and NUS believe that higher education has the potential to develop students as citizens. These are people who understand community issues, engage with the democratic process and work for the public good.

Through the report, GuildHE has developed a new Charter bringing together key areas of active citizenship: volunteering; democratic engagement; environmental sustainability; community engagement; global citizenship and reflection and development. We hope this will be a useful tool to help students and institutions to reflect on their activities.

Much of the higher education sector is doing excellent work in this area. In celebration of this, the report features twelve case studies from across the GuildHE membership. We aim to share good practice and initiate conversations about what more can be done at every institution to promote this important agenda.



**Prof Joy Carter, Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Winchester and Chair of GuildHE**



**Robbie Young, Vice President (Society and  
Citizenship), National Union of Students (NUS)**

# INTRODUCTION



Higher education enables people to be active, committed citizens and is vital to social mobility and economic growth, building the knowledge and skills of the population to succeed in a highly competitive world.

**Professor Madeleine Atkins CBE, CEO, HEFCE and Professor Les Ebdon CBE DL, Director of Fair Access to Higher Education, OFFA**

This report highlights how higher education can promote active citizenship.

The increasing marketisation of higher education means active citizenship and its benefits to individuals and society could be side-lined within higher education institutions.

This would be detrimental because promoting active citizenship benefits students, institutions and society.

- **Students** are empowered to contribute to their communities, get involved politically and consider a wider perspective. They gain valuable employability skills, enjoy enhanced mental health, have a better connection with communities and become agents of change.
- **Institutions** benefit because a culture of active citizenship contributes to the sense that an institution has a wider role to play in society whether locally, nationally or internationally.
- **Society** benefits from engaged and community-focused members of society who contribute to the public good.

Higher education in the UK is less focused on active citizenship than in other countries such as the US and Singapore, where activities and awareness are more likely to be embedded in institutional life.

There is work that can be done in this area. This report sets out a Charter of six pillars of active citizenship designed for higher education institutions and students' unions keen to take their own agenda forward.

It also highlights case studies and questions to stimulate discussion and share good practice.

# GuildHE CHARTER FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

## Who is the active citizen?

**The active citizen is a person who participates fully in community life.** Active citizens volunteer. They contribute to their local community in positive ways. They have involvement with community organisations such as libraries, hospitals, sports clubs, mutual interest groups and faith groups.

**The active citizen engages in civic life.** Active citizens turn up to vote. They have political literacy and campaign on issues they care about. They engage with politics on a local and national level and are effective in making change happen.

**The active citizen is globally aware.** They are tolerant, have intercultural awareness and respect diversity. They understand that some issues are too big for any one country to deal with and know that actions at home can have wider consequences around the world.

## Higher education and active citizenship

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that higher education instils the attributes of active citizenship within graduates. They are much more likely to vote than non-graduates<sup>1</sup>, they volunteer regularly and in high numbers, they are likely to be culturally

sensitive and tolerant, and their attitudes reflect concern for global social issues such as climate change<sup>2</sup>. However, there is more that universities and higher education providers can do.

GuildHE believes that engaging students in their learning and the wider student experience is key to students getting the most from their experience. Supporting students to become active citizens, and recognising the wider benefits of education, are central to our values related to the core aim of higher education.

## A Charter for Active Citizenship

As such, GuildHE is launching a Charter for Active Citizenship. The Charter will act as a signpost highlighting the active citizenship activity that is currently under way at institutions and in students' unions, and how it can be further supported. We have identified the following areas to enable you to reflect on the practices at your institution and to develop the students of today into the employees, employers, parents, carers, leaders and citizens of tomorrow.

The following six elements each form one part of the Charter for Active Citizenship:

1. Gottfried, Lodge & Birch (2013)

2. Brennan, Chanfreau, Finnegan, Griggs, Kiss & Park (2015)



Higher education institutions, through their core functions (research, teaching and service to the community) carried out in the context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, should increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote critical thinking and active citizenship. This would contribute to sustainable development, peace, well-being and the realization of human rights, including gender equity.

**World Conference on Higher Education, 2009**

## Volunteering

Active citizens contribute to the community through voluntary work. Charities, societies, clubs and public bodies all rely on volunteers, and taking an active role in these organisations fosters citizenship skills that will enable graduates to contribute to public life. Higher education should play a role in supporting volunteering, ensuring that all students have the option to get involved in these opportunities and develop core skills.

## Democratic Engagement

Active citizens have the skills and knowledge to participate in political life. Active citizens engage with democratic processes at a local and national level and seek to participate in ways that they think will improve society. As a formative experience, higher education has a large role to play, not only in fostering and encouraging democratic engagement, but also in appropriately questioning received wisdom and process.

## Environmental Sustainability

Active citizens of today understand that their actions affect the citizens of tomorrow. Higher education has a large role to play in developing citizens who understand the natural environment and are inclined to act sustainably. This will include supporting research designed to tackle key issues such as sustainable energy and food production, and in the cultivation of students as citizens who understand the sustainability challenges facing society.

## Community Engagement

Active citizens work with their local communities to collaborate and problem solve. They contribute to the communities in which they live and work. Developing ways for students to engage effectively with the community develops the skills of citizens to operate effectively in these areas, including an understanding of the local area's tensions, politics and needs.

## Global Citizenship

Active citizens understand that citizenship does not stop at home. They appreciate that actions that occur on a local level have international consequences, and they act accordingly. Higher education has a role to play in the development of students as global citizens who have the knowledge and understanding, relevant skills, and the values and attitudes to meet the demands of globalisation.

## Reflection and Development

Active citizens have the capacity to self-reflect and a commitment to personal development. Active citizens reflect on their experiences and examine the lessons learned, exploring their values, strengths and weaknesses in order to translate these personal attributes into tangible assets for themselves and society.

This report will explore each of these elements in turn in order to start the debate on the role higher education plays in fostering citizenship. Each chapter will offer grounded examples from GuildHE institutions and students' unions to make the case for developing support for students as citizens. Along the way, keep an eye out for 'skills zones' and questions to consider. These are designed to encourage you to reflect citizenship practices at your institution, and signal the benefits that fostering citizenship brings.

# VOLUNTEERING

Communications, event organising,  
time management

**76%**

of student  
volunteers  
take part  
in activities  
that benefit  
people in  
communities  
outside the  
university.





**Active citizens contribute to the community through voluntary work. Charities, societies, clubs and public bodies all rely on volunteers, and taking an active role in these organisations fosters citizenship skills that will enable graduates to contribute to public life. Higher education should play a role in supporting volunteering, ensuring that all students have the option to partake in these opportunities and develop core skills.**

Volunteering rates amongst students is high, with 28% of students using their time to volunteer at some point during their time as a student, and with many of these students volunteering for the first time whilst studying<sup>3</sup>.

Voluntary activity is diverse and includes work with children and young people, environmental and conservation work, mentoring and tutoring, working in charity shops, contributing website, software and graphic design, running campaigns and appeals, helping religious organisations, sports coaching, organising events and taking up charity trusteeship.

A significant amount of volunteering undertaken by students takes place within universities, for example, students offering their time and unpaid help to support societies and sports teams, work as students' union officers in non-sabbatical positions, mentoring and peer-assisted student success schemes, university events and open days. Some courses also offer volunteering opportunities. The case study from Leeds College of Art details one student's experience of setting up her own voluntary organisation.

### **Why is this important?**

The development of citizenship skills through volunteering is valuable to both the individual and society. By working with organisations that serve the community, from charities to public sector bodies, each volunteer is able to develop their understanding of a wide range of non-profit organisations.

Research suggests that student volunteering plays an 'important role in developing students' community awareness and integration into communities outside the university'. Furthermore, graduates who volunteered at university are more likely to volunteer later in life than their peers who did not volunteer during their studies<sup>4</sup>. Volunteering can boost self-esteem, make mental health conditions more manageable, improve family relationships and encourage a healthier lifestyle.

Volunteering helps graduate employability<sup>5</sup>. Volunteers gain exposure to the workings of a variety of different organisations, and can gain experience in areas such as financial management, event planning, volunteer management, organisation, time management, commitment and leadership.

3. Unite (2015)

4. Brewis, Russell & Holdsworth (2010)

5. Ellis Paine, McKay & Moro (2013)

## CASE STUDY 01:

# LEEDS COLLEGE OF ART: MAKE LOVE NOT SCARS

### Background

Make Love Not Scars is an organisation that aims to identify and support the rehabilitation of the growing number of women in India who are acid-attack survivors. It was founded by Ria Sharma in 2014 during the final year of her degree. Ria grew up in New Delhi and moved to the UK to pursue a BA (Hons) Fashion at Leeds College of Art. She studied Fashion Communication and in her final project focused on the relationship between women's empowerment and fashion.

As part of her research she spent some time at home in India and came into contact with the survivors of acid attacks. Ria began working towards making a film about the experiences of survivors.

Her project uncovered that this specific form of violence towards women was becoming increasingly common in India. Concerned by this and inspired by the stories of the women she met during her project, Ria founded Make Love Not Scars.

### Implementation

Ria and her team of volunteers support the survivors of acid attacks by funding treatment and providing legal support to secure compensation. Ria spends roughly three days a week with survivors. She is often the only direct link a survivor has to doctors, lawyers, education and employment. Since Make Love Not Scars works on full rehabilitation, she often follows up on the survivor's legal cases, setting up surgeries and looking for reliable local hospitals. Ria used the skills learned throughout her course to spread awareness of the issue of acid attacks and to plan fundraising campaigns through social media.



### Result

Make Love Not Scars has funded the education of many acid-attack survivors, even helping one individual to pursue her passion by sending her to study design in New York. Alongside rehabilitation, Ria aims to get justice for the women she supports. Through its work, Make Love Not Scars has created legal benchmarks for cases relating to acid attacks, which is helping other survivors attempting to seek justice. The organisation has recently spearheaded a campaign to end the sale of acid in India.



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## What support is available to enable and encourage students to volunteer?

Evidence suggests that 38% of students volunteers are signposted into volunteering by their institution and students' union<sup>6</sup>.

The volunteering accreditation system at the University of Winchester rewards and validates extra-curricular activities as part of the core university experience and encourages students to get involved with these activities. Some institutions also offer support to students who volunteer by assisting with expenses and providing references. Students' unions have a large role to play. The University of Worcester Students' Union hosts a Volunteering and Societies Awards event each year to recognise and award the achievements of students in this field.

### What barriers exist to volunteering?

Whilst the number of students volunteering is high, it is significantly lower than in some other countries. In the US, approximately 60% of students volunteer whilst at university<sup>7</sup>.

**39%** of students want greater links between volunteering and careers and courses.\*

This suggests there might be a number of barriers to student volunteering in the UK. Research has indicated that students who are most likely to volunteer are those already engaged in extra-curricular activities. Those who cannot afford the time, or who need to work part time, are unable to volunteer.

This trend is particularly worrying as it indicates that some groups of students in particular are excluded from the opportunities and benefits of volunteering. This affects many students from a number of groups, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, commuter students, part-time students and care-givers. Targeting support at these students is vital if the higher education experience is to offer equal opportunity for development.

**76%** of student volunteers take part in activities that benefit people in communities outside the university.\*

Students have also indicated that they would have been interested in undertaking a volunteering placement but were unsure how to go about it. Developing information provision and linking volunteering opportunities with the curriculum have the potential to encourage more students to volunteer. The University of Winchester, in partnership with Student Hubs, has developed initiatives designed to tackle this.



**Q: Do you monitor which students engage in volunteering opportunities?**

**Q: In what formal ways is volunteering recognised at your institution?**

**Q: How could information provision about voluntary positions be improved upon?**

6. Brewis, Russell & Holdsworth (2010)  
7. Brewis, Conn, Fernandez & O'Boyle (2014)

\*stats are from Brewis, Russell & Holdsworth (2010)

## CASE STUDY 02:

# UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER: WINCHESTER HUB: GIVE IT A GO



### Background

Give It A Go is a programme designed to encourage students who might not otherwise volunteer to get involved with social action. Students are sometimes put off volunteering due to concerns about time commitments, not knowing anyone else involved or simply not having volunteered before. Give It A Go aims to provide a gateway into social action by offering one-off, accessible opportunities to try out volunteering in the local community in projects that respond to a community need.

Give It A Go was launched at the University of Winchester by Winchester Hub in September 2014. Sixty-two volunteers took part in its pilot year and it now has almost 100 volunteers taking part in monthly events. Winchester Hub is a local branch of the national charity, Student Hubs, and was launched in 2013 in partnership with the University of Winchester to provide students with more opportunities for social action.

### Implementation

Give It A Go events are organised by Winchester Hub staff, who seek opportunities for one-off volunteers to help out in the local community.

Typical activities include painting or tidying up local community spaces, adding capacity at community events, and other ad-hoc tasks, such as organising donations at a food bank. Where possible, one-off activities are linked to regular volunteering opportunities, or with critical

engagement events that help connect volunteers with the issues behind their volunteering and provide them with a channel to further explore their engagement.

There are specific criteria for the opportunities: students should be able to make a tangible impact from their volunteering and it should suit the one-off nature of the project. Volunteers' efforts are also clearly recognised – community partners often provide refreshments, and Winchester Hub always follows up with volunteers, with a note of thanks and a quote from the community partner or beneficiary where possible.

The partnership with the University of Winchester means that the scheme can also target specific groups of students. For example, students undertaking a civic engagement module are encouraged to find ways to put their studies into action; Give It A Go provides the perfect opportunity to do this.

### Result

A number of students who have attended a Give It A Go opportunity have since gone on to engage with more long-term Winchester Hub activities, such as a social impact internship scheme or project coordinator roles.

### For more information, please contact:

**Catherine Mitchell** | Manager, Winchester Hub  
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[We] really enjoyed it, not just helping, but being able to meet and chat to those we're helping was really great. I thought it was also good how different groups came at different times, as it means that those who may not be able to spare a whole day due to other commitments could see that they will be welcomed at any point throughout the day to help, which I think should aid in encouraging more people to volunteer!

**Student volunteer, Give It A Go**

# DEMOCRATIC

# ENGAGEMENT

Political literacy,  
democratic participation,  
an understanding of power  
and how to effect change

74%



of graduates  
voted in the  
2015 General  
Election.

**Active citizens have the skills and knowledge to participate in political life. Active citizens engage with democratic processes at a local and national level and seek to participate in ways that they think will improve society. As a formative experience, higher education has a large role to play, not only in fostering and encouraging democratic engagement but also in appropriately questioning received wisdom and process.**

### **The story so far**

Active democratic engagement can mean many things. Formal engagement includes voting in local and national elections, standing for office, attending council meetings and signing petitions. Informal activity seeks to influence decision-making and includes anything from political campaigning and lobbying to social action and wider activism.

Historically, higher education institutions have been a focus for political activity both formal and informal. Higher education institutions are seen as places of debate and knowledge creation: places to challenge received wisdom, resist convention and question authority.

### **The role of institutions in supporting democratic engagement**

Students have become embedded within the decision-making processes of institutions through their representation systems, which can be the first time that many young people are able to vote or be elected to represent others. These systems allow students to identify how change is enacted and how decisions are made, enable them to hold the institution (and students' unions) to account, and provide a platform for canvassing students' views. Indeed, student reps and those involved in the committees of clubs and societies develop many different skills including those of negotiation,

understanding meeting processes, public speaking and diplomacy – valuable soft skills that are useful in many contexts after graduation.

Institutions can promote democratic engagement by encouraging voter registration and voter turnout. Whilst higher education graduates are slightly more likely to vote than the rest of the population – 74% compared with 68% of the general population in the 2015 General Election<sup>8</sup> – student voter turnout is an area of concern.

A number of reasons have been suggested for this, including confusion about voter registration and recent changes to the law that prevented the mass registration of people living in student halls. In particular, students, who are often registered at more than one address, may be uncertain about where they are registered to vote. To remedy this problem, some institutions have considered encouraging students to register to vote alongside course registration, while others focus on a frequent and regular communications campaign<sup>9</sup>.

Institutions can foster democratic engagement in a number of other ways, such as supporting community support groups, building networks and developing peer mentoring schemes. Ravensbourne and the Ravensbourne Students' Union took a novel approach to developing a culture of civic engagement through a string of different activities.



NUS are truly proud of our work we do with our 550 member Students' Unions to increase democratic engagement and help students become active citizens in wider society. We believe that all forms of tertiary education in ensuring students are equipped with the skills to participate in democracy, influence politics and make change in society, and that students' unions have a uniquely important role to play in this.

**Richard Brooks, Vice President (Union Development),  
National Union of Students**

8. YouthSight (2015)  
9. HEPI (2015)

## CASE STUDY 03: RAVENSBOURNE: ACTIVE CITIZENS



Being a part of the Active Citizen project and taking a lead on the Civil Action Society at Ravensbourne has motivated me to pursue a Master of Design in Social Innovation and to continue taking action on social justice issues.

**Tor-Arne Njamo, President, Ravensbourne Students' Union 2015-16**

### Background

As a small specialist design and communications higher education institution, it is essential that Ravensbourne has a rounded view of students in terms of their creative and civic strengths, their potential to generate ideas and their capacity as change makers. Its aim is to address the disconnect that is sometimes found in education between creativity, engagement, civic leadership and the role of the institution.

Ravensbourne has sought to do this by placing the student at the heart of both engagement within Ravensbourne and citizenship within the wider community. Through partnerships, projects, leadership programmes and mentoring, the institution has sought to create channels, platforms and recognition beyond what a conventional approach to student engagement looks like by putting the civic at the heart of the university. One such project is the Ravensbourne Active Citizen project.

### Implementation

The Ravensbourne Active Citizen project is run using a partnership model between students (through the Ravensbourne Students' Union), Citizens UK and Ravensbourne. This involved setting up a Civic Action Students' Society as well as holding quarterly steering group meetings made up of key student, institutional and community stakeholders. Although nominal, the budget for the programme comes from both the Students' Union and the institution.

The key challenge to overcome was for both students and the academic community to understand the value of civic engagement as intrinsic to both learning and student well-being. At first, the Ravensbourne Active Citizen project remained on the margins of the student and institutional experience, but with the prominence now of a Civil Action Society, regular leadership programmes, community volunteering programmes and a peer mentoring programme, the project has gained more visibility, and so student and institutional support.

### Result

The turnout at events is a very good indicator of the impact and effects of projects. The project's regular leadership training workshops often see up to 20 student participants and Ravensbourne has launched listening campaigns based in the local community and leading to participation in large-scale national events, such as its contribution to the housing campaign led by Citizens UK, culminating in a gathering of over 6,000 citizens to hold the two London mayoral candidates to account on 28 April 2016.

### For more information, please contact:

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Out in the communities that surround our universities, student community action groups are bringing real benefit to the lives of others. Students' unions are playing their part in their local communities: charitable fundraising; university governance; sports and fitness training; examination guidance; job centres; equality campaigning. I could go on ... To local schools, hospitals, charities, friendly societies, I would add student unions.

**Rt Hon David Willetts, Former Minister of State for Universities and Science**

## The role of students' unions

Students' unions are testament to the democratic participation of students. Each year, over 250,000 students exercise their right to vote in students' union elections<sup>10,11</sup>, ensuring independent representation for students. Students' unions themselves are an exercise in democracy with their own democratic procedures in place designed to empower each student as a member of the union to set the direction of the union and enact change.

Experience within these structures, whether that is voting, attending student forums, standing for election as a student representative or sabbatical officer, or as a union trustee board member, provides students with exposure to the democratic process, and helps to develop the skills of understanding decision-making and holding authority to account that will benefit the student after graduation.

Students' unions can make a real difference to the quality of life at a higher education institution. The case study from the AECC Students' Union offers an excellent example of long-term change brought about by students to foster student engagement and recognise and reward the students' contribution to their community.

## National Union of Students

National Union of Students is a confederation of over 600 students' unions that represents the interests of over 7 million students. Much of the work of NUS is a testament to the political power of students and their ability to enact meaningful change on the national stage, and one of the chief tenets of NUS is promoting democracy. Its core values statement reads: 'our policies and practices must be student-led and students' union focused through building open, transparent and accessible democratic structures that increase performance and strengthen accountability'.

**250,000** students  
vote each  
year in union elections.

Interaction with NUS gives students the opportunity to engage with politics at a national level. Students who are members of NUS have the right to elect officers, can become NUS delegates, and may voice their opinions on the direction they want the organisation to take when lobbying for issues on a national level, as well as providing a steer on the internal support NUS should prioritise and offer its members. NUS campaigns that have directly influenced national policy include setting up tenancy deposit schemes and the exemption of students from council tax.



**Q: What specific initiatives does your institution run to encourage students to register to vote?**

**Q: Is student representation at your institution providing students with a chance to enact change effectively?**

**Q: Do students know how to get involved in the democratic process at your institution and associated students' union?**

10. NUS (2016a)  
11. Willets (2007)

## CASE STUDY 04:

# THE ANGLO-EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF CHIROPRACTIC: STAFF-LED STUDENT AWARDS



### Background

In 2016, members of the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic (AECC) Students' Union attended several conferences on quality assurance and student engagement. The take-home message was that the best way to reward students for their contribution was through recognition.

As a result, the Students' Union approached the principal with the idea of staff-led student awards (SLSAs). This would be run in a way akin to the popular and successful student-led teaching awards (SLTAs) and would allow staff to recognise students for achievements in all areas of student life. The four categories for nomination were chosen to complement the SLTA categories and also reflect the nature of being a student at a healthcare institution.

### The categories are:

#### 1 Academic Engagement Award

- for the student who consistently participates in the academic process

#### 2 Practical Skill Development Award

- for the student who excels in their practical development at the college

#### 3 Professionalism Award

- for the student who demonstrates professionalism both inside and outside the classroom/clinic.

#### 4 AECC Community Award

- for a person who embodies the ethos of a healthcare institution, i.e. who promotes the college, is helpful to students, staff and visitors alike and who otherwise receives little to no commendation.

### Implementation

This scheme was instigated by the President and Manager of the AECC Students' Union but fronted by the College's principal. Staff were given an opportunity to nominate their chosen students across all the categories. One of the biggest barriers to student engagement is the lack of staff engagement, so the Students' Union really wanted to encourage staff to participate as a way of combating this issue.

Once all the nominations were received, a panel of academic and support staff reviewed the nominations and the rationale behind each one in order to choose a worthy winner. The winners were announced, alongside the list of nominees, by the principal in the internal newsletter. Certificates were given to all of the winners and an official award ceremony will take place.

### Result

Although in its infancy, the scheme has real potential to raise both staff and student engagement. Having their efforts publicly recognised, outside academic achievements, encourages students to engage and participate more in college life. The high number of nominations received this year, alongside the careful and considered rationale behind each one, is a positive indicator that this scheme could have a hugely beneficial impact on the student experience.

### For more information, please contact:

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of Chiropractic  
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# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental stewardship; social justice; sustainable literacy

80%



of students feel that sustainable development should be incorporated in and promoted by universities.

**Active citizens of today understand that their actions affect the citizens of tomorrow. Higher education has a large role to play in developing citizens who understand the natural environment and are inclined to act sustainably. This will include supporting research designed to tackle key issues such as sustainable energy and food production, and in the cultivation of students as citizens who understand the sustainability challenges facing society.**

Higher education and universities can play a key role in the development of graduates as environmentally conscious citizens. In its 2013/14 Grant Letter, the government asked the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to produce a sustainable development framework to support institutions in their work<sup>12</sup>, whilst the UK Sustainable Development Strategy clearly highlighted that sustainability literacy should be a core competency for graduates – an attribute that has also been shown to be valued highly by employers<sup>13</sup>.

There is a clear indication that sustainability is already an issue that students believe in. In a survey undertaken by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and NUS over a three-year period, 80% of students felt that sustainable development was something that should be incorporated and promoted by universities, and over 66% of respondents said that they would accept being paid £1,000 less to work for a company that boasted a positive social and environmental record<sup>14</sup>.

For some students, higher education represents the first set of adult and independent consumer choices the individual has to make. Starting from where to study and where to live, students will often be consciously deciding what food to purchase, what products to buy, and where to buy them. The power of individual choice is an important part of tackling some of the sustainability issues, and supporting students to make green consumer choices makes a great contribution to their capacity to engage in green issues in the future.

### **Across the whole institution**

There is good scope for students to become involved in the decisions taken about the institution's buildings and land. Sustainable development issues affect many different processes at an institution, from recycling procedures to reducing carbon emissions, and from protecting biodiversity to developing energy conservation measures. For all these issues, student input is valuable and should be appropriately canvassed and included.

12. BIS (2013)

13. HM Government (2005)

14. Drayson, Bone & Agombar (2014); NUS & HEA (2014)

## CASE STUDY 05:

# UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER: SKILLS FOR TOMORROW

### Background

Skills for Tomorrow, now in its fifth year, is a unique interface between higher education staff and students, businesses and schools which provides an interactive experience exploring the opportunities of a low-carbon, resilient future. Inspired by the University's mission to 'change today to protect tomorrow', the specially designed programme is delivered by a range of university and community volunteers. Held over two days, the event sees around 200 delegates, including school pupils, Rotarians, students and representatives from businesses with local, national and international links, come together to explore current and future issues around sustainability. Illustrating how every job has the potential to contribute to a sustainable future, the event provides a launch platform to inspire young people to consider developing the jobs, skills and qualifications necessary to support opportunities in the green economy.

### Implementation

Skills for Tomorrow is supported by schools from across the region, with some schools within walking distance of the venue and other delegates travelling for up to an hour to attend. The programme is arranged in a similar format to a school day, starting with an 'assembly' featuring a keynote address linked to sustainability issues and encouraging delegates to engage interactively with the workshops throughout the day. Pupils attending the event are supported by specially trained students drawn from the University's sustainability mentors programme.

The teachers accompanying pupils are able to attend workshops and exhibition areas too and they use the opportunity to book company representatives to attend future school careers events. In response to feedback, the University now includes professional development sessions for teachers in a separate teachers' drop-in area.

### Result

The University's strategic plan affirms its commitment to promoting sustainability and challenges it to make a positive impact on the community, and to provide an outstanding education to its students: this project meets all three objectives. Skills for Tomorrow is an extra-curricular opportunity for the students, who can continue the work on sustainability issues as part of their curricular studies when on placements, opening pathways to future employment. They gain interdisciplinary skills, apply creative, holistic and critical thinking, and begin to gain an understanding of the complexity of sustainability. Such extra-curricular learning opportunities provide practical experience and specific sustainability leadership skills that aid employability. The global dimensions of some of the businesses have facilitated students in becoming more reflexive in their world views. In 2016, the University celebrated the inclusion of the first business venture set up by a graduate who had herself volunteered as a sustainability mentor while studying at Worcester.

More information can be found here, including two short videos:

<http://susthingsout.com/index.php/skills-for-tomorrow-2016-sustainability-student-blog/>

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[Higher education] cannot afford to be disinterested, detached observers, but must bring their resources to bear on the search for sustainable development solutions; and that this can indeed be achieved by integrating learning and research with the principles and practices of conservation and sustainability.

**Stephen J. Toope, President, University of British Columbia**

## Environmental sustainability and engagement in the curriculum

Embedding the questions of sustainability and the environment into learning and teaching is an agenda that NUS has been driving for a number of years. It has been working to encourage education through sustainable development in programmes such as 'dissertations for good'. This programme partners students with organisations to collaborate on dissertations that explore social issues. The HEA has a toolkit designed to help institutions to embed sustainability into the curriculum<sup>15,16</sup>.

Institutions have a number of novel approaches to embedding the sustainability agenda into the curriculum:

- optional cross-course modules on sustainability topics
- schools of sustainability
- simulation activities designed to ground sustainable development within real-world contexts.

As its case study shows, the Royal Agricultural University takes an interesting approach to embedding the agenda of sustainability.

## Outside the classroom

Extra-curricular activities also provide students with the opportunity to develop key sustainability skills. These include:

- **Students' union societies:** Many different societies are involved in sustainable development work and can contribute to the development of students' sustainable development skills.
- **Sustainability projects:** Many institutions and students' unions provide opportunities for students to become involved in sustainability projects outside their taught courses.
- **'Think green' initiatives:** These include activities that challenge students to think about their consumption, such as the NUS Student Switch Off campaign.
- **Volunteering:** There are many environmental voluntary opportunities available to students, such as litter-picking, running a food co-operative and activism against the effects of climate change.
- **Green event organising:** This covers events such as Go Green Week organised by students at the University of Worcester (see case study).

**Q: Does your institution (and students' union?) have a sustainability policy?**

**Q: How strong is the support offered by your institution for projects to tackle sustainability issues?**

**Q: Are questions of sustainable development embedded into your course?**



15. NUS (2016b)

16. HEA (2015)

## CASE STUDY 06:

# ROYAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY: SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP



RAU has helped me grow my business and supported me through its funding networks and its wealth of contacts – there is always a helpful mentor to call and a wealth of experienced friendly contacts to gain knowledge and advice from.

**Lewis Steer, third-year student**

### Background

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) has a strong entrepreneurial focus and is committed to enhancing the entrepreneurship experience available for all of its students, as well as developing their skills for sustainability. At the heart of this support is the Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Programme (EEP), which encourages students to develop their business or social enterprise through the 'Think It, Try It, Launch It, Grow It' process.

### Implementation

Budding entrepreneurs gain support from the initial idea generation, through workshops and inspirational speakers, as part of the 'Think It' level. Next, they're encouraged to try out the concept through a variety of methods including First Steps, the University's proof of concept fund, as well as external business mentoring. At 'Launch It', the University supports students to make their idea happen by providing access to professional support such as legal and accountancy advice and a three-day start-up boot camp. Finally, during the 'Grow It' stage, the Entrepreneurs' Pavilion takes entrepreneurs on the road and provides start-ups with the opportunity to sell their products at events.

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important part of any business and can also offer unique opportunities for growth, so the School of Business and Entrepreneurship has worked with the University's sustainability team to integrate this. As well as including topics such as corporate sustainability reporting, supply chain management and ethical leadership in its business degrees,

the EEP offers a chance to put the theory into practice. This has included activities such as the Climate Week Challenge, where students were given an hour to come up with an innovative business idea to tackle climate change, whilst being financially viable. RAU also ensured that the Grand Idea, the programme's flagship business planning competition, included a sustainability criterion worth 5% of the overall marks.

### Result

The EEP has seen student uptake of start-up support substantially increase from 49 students in 2013/14 to 93 in 2014/15. Further to this, over 70 professional meetings (legal, accountancy or sector specific) were held, all of which were fully booked. Twenty students also worked with an external business mentor, and nine of these went on to start up their business. Most of these businesses incorporated an environmental or social sustainability aspect.

An example of an entrepreneur who was involved in the EEP is Lewis Steer, a third-year student at RAU. Lewis' business, Lily Warne Wool, produces ladies' and children's woollen accessories from his own flock of sheep. With the catchphrase 'From Farm to Yarn', Lewis ensures products are 100% British sourced, British made, sustainable and affordable.

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# COMMUNITY

# ENGAGEMENT

Community awareness,  
relationship management;  
social responsibility

## The NCCPE



suggests that the three main purposes of public engagement with research are informing, consulting and collaborating.



**Active citizens work with their local communities to collaborate and problem solve. They contribute to the communities in which they live and work. Developing ways for students to contribute to community engagement work develops the skills of citizens to operate effectively in these areas, including an understanding of the local area's tensions, politics and needs.**

Community engagement in higher education has a long and turbulent history. Some date this back to the riots of the medieval period that took place in Oxford between local townspeople and scholars, which, it has been suggested, resulted in the founding of Cambridge University, and gave rise to the 'town and gown' division that still resonates in some places.

The opening up of institutions has helped to alleviate this tension. Rising student numbers, greater links between institutions and businesses, and the role of the higher education institution as an anchor for local economic, social and cultural prosperity mean that institutions are no longer seen as so separate from their communities, and the notion of the 'ivory tower' is outdated. However, some tensions persist. The transient nature of the student population, the sudden influx of students at the start of term, the spread of student rented accommodation and anti-social behaviour can be disruptive to the communities already present within institutional neighbourhoods.

Students have a huge part to play in helping to alleviate and resolve these tensions, and many projects have been run in institutions, often facilitated by students' unions, to do that. These include:

- **'Students as good neighbours' programmes and societies:** These groups work in partnership with the local community to educate students on issues such as anti-social behaviour, noise, litter and crime prevention.
- **Community liaison groups:** These groups consist of representatives from different sections of local community, such as the institution, students' union, local council, local businesses and police service
- **Outreach and buddying schemes:** These schemes seek to bridge the gap between universities and the local community. One of the chief ways institutions and students have facilitated this is through sport<sup>17</sup>. Making sports teams and clubs accessible to the general public is mutually beneficially; residents gain access to high-quality sport facilities, whilst students meet a wider range of people and enjoy the benefits of improved community relations.
- **Community events and festivals:** Students, institutions and students' unions work with community partners to run events that are open to students and members of the public alike. This comes with a range of benefits, and brings the local community together.

Initiatives such as these are important to community cohesion, and those who have been involved are likely to have developed a better sense of social responsibility, and, crucially, an understanding of the needs of the local community.

## CASE STUDY 07:

# LEEDS TRINITY UNIVERSITY AND ST VINCENT'S SUPPORT CENTRE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Leeds Trinity is developing a Leeds-wide reputation for quality outreach in work through students engaging with voluntary groups and local communities. This is much more than occasional corporate 'clean-ups'; the partnership is a shining example of how two organisations can work together successfully. Not only does St Vincent's gain extra quality support with their crucial work of tackling poverty and social exclusion in some of our hardest hit communities, but the University is increasingly recognised as a force for reflection and change at basic levels.

**John Battle, Patron, St Vincent's Support Centre**

### Background

In 2015, Leeds Trinity University sponsored a Spring Ball hosted by St Vincent's Support Centre. This is the Leeds branch of the international charity, the St Vincent de Paul Society, which supports people living in poverty. Quickly recognising the organisations' synergy and shared Catholic ethos, Leeds Trinity formed a partnership with St Vincent's Support Centre.

For Leeds Trinity, it was hoped the partnership would support local community engagement whilst providing opportunities for staff and students to volunteer. St Vincent's was keen to utilise the expertise of Leeds Trinity to support the development of its volunteers and services, increase engagement with younger people and raise the profile of the charity.

### Implementation

In the 2015/16 academic year, a partnership action plan between Leeds Trinity University and St Vincent's Support Centre was developed. This included a six-month student graduate internship, which began in January 2016.

The graduate internship is being completed by Leeds Trinity graduate Laura Tomlinson (English, 2015). Laura works four days a week at St Vincent's and one day on campus within the partnerships and placements team at Leeds Trinity. At St Vincent's, Laura is involved with fundraising, marketing and front-line services. She has established social media channels for the charity, held awareness-raising events on campus and taken part in Leeds Trinity's International Volunteering Fair. Staff at Leeds Trinity support Laura during her day on campus by offering

guidance on how to approach different projects at St Vincent's and identifying any staff development or training that could enhance Laura's skills for the role.

### Result

Since Leeds Trinity and St Vincent's began their partnership last year, a graduate internship has been implemented and engagement with St Vincent's through social media has more than doubled. Leeds Trinity lecturers are providing expert advice and support to volunteer ESOL teachers, who also have access to the University's library, and more students than ever before are utilising volunteering opportunities with the charity.

For Leeds Trinity, the knowledge exchange between the two organisations has been incredible – not only has the University been able to support the development of staff and volunteers at the charity, but St Vincent's has also helped to improve the skills and employability of the students who volunteer.

For St Vincent's, having another member of staff through the internship has allowed it to do more to support the people of Leeds, and has started a dialogue with younger people across the city. Working with Leeds Trinity has provided St Vincent's with access to expert skills and support it may not otherwise had access to.

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## Community engagement and citizenship in the curriculum

Community engagement is not a novel concept, and many institutions are proud of their historic civic missions and commitment to their locality. Many have been developed to embed community engagement into the curriculum.

### Service learning

Pioneered and developed in the US, service learning is an approach to teaching and learning in which students are placed in real-life situations designed to use the skills and knowledge they are gaining on their courses to address community problems. Students who have taken part in service learning 'are more likely to take part in pro-social activities when they have graduated'<sup>18</sup>.

Service learning is co-designed with community partners in order to address community needs, apply academic knowledge in real-world settings and provide practical experience. See the diagram on the right for a common visual representation of service learning. Students are encouraged throughout the process to reflect on links between work in service and course content. The case study for the Converge partnership shows how this can work in practice to good effect.

### Research with the community

There is a lot of potential for research to engage the community. The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) offers many resources to help institutions and individual researchers develop how they engage the public with their research. The NCCPE suggests that the three main purposes of public engagement with research are informing, consulting and collaborating.



Informing consists of communicating research to the public. Consulting enables researchers to identify topics that are important to the community, whilst collaborating enables the public to become active participants in research, through initiatives such as communities of practice and data collection<sup>19</sup>.

### Community-building initiatives and course design

These initiatives involve the design of university courses that enhance community building and community capacity<sup>20</sup>. This would include work that leads to a positive change in the community and those that live in it in terms of quality of life, local infrastructure and community relationships, whilst developing citizenship skills in individuals for them to gain confidence in working with others and knowing how to make a positive change in their local community. Examples include student-led skills sessions for the local public, or embedding sports outreach programmes into the curriculum.



**Q: How is the relationship between your institution and local community developed and maintained?**

**Q: Have any particular initiatives been put into effect to foster community cohesion?**

**Q: In what ways is community engagement built into the curriculum on degree programmes at your institution?**

18. Millican & Bourner (2014)

19. NCCPE (undated)

20. Martin, Smith & Phillips (2005)

## CASE STUDY 08:

# YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY: CONVERGE – EDUCATION FOR RECOVERY



The Community Mental Health Teams have developed excellent partnership working with York St John University through the 'Converge' partnership.

**Care Quality Commission Report, January 2015**

### Background

Converge is a partnership between York St John University and the local NHS trust to provide educational opportunities to people who use mental health services. Students and staff teach the courses and support those who participate.

The aims of the project are to:

- offer high-quality educational opportunities to people who use mental health services in the York area
- challenge the dynamics of social exclusion that make it difficult for people who use mental health services to access good-quality educational and employment opportunities
- provide an opportunity for York St John University students to work alongside people who use mental health services, enhancing their employability and real-world experience.

Converge offers courses in sports and exercise, music, theatre, dance, fine art, creative writing, psychology and life coaching. There is also a choir with over 50 members and a theatre company, Out of Character.

What distinguishes Converge is that it offers a model of collaboration between a university and a mental health service provider that can make a real difference in the lives of users of mental health services, full-time students and the university community. Each can learn from and alongside the other. It matches the 'core business' of its key providers: the university educates its students; the health service has valuable provision for its clients; and full-time students complete their modules.

### Implementation

Converge began in 2008 with one course in theatre offered to local people who use mental health services. It has grown each year. The project is cost effective because of the 'convergence bonus' that derives from provision that benefits both York St John University and the NHS trust, which contributes a portion of the costs, while the University contributes staff and student time, rooms, utilities, and library and office provision.

### Result

Converge contributes significantly to mental health provision through opening the University and its resources to mental health service users and providing educational opportunities. It has also increased social inclusion; Converge students say that engaging in the project promotes a sense of belonging and increased social integration. Finally, Converge offers valuable opportunities to York St John University students. In the academic year 2014/15, 93 students were involved in Converge either helping to deliver courses or by supporting participants.

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Converge has been the best thing to support me. It has helped me to stay out of hospital by providing engaging activities which engage me as a whole person. It also gives me a community to be part of.

**Converge student**

# GLOBAL

# CITIZENSHIP

Respect, global literacy,  
intercultural awareness

# 81%



of students who  
study abroad felt  
this experience  
made them more  
globally aware.

**Active citizens understand that citizenship does not stop at home. They appreciate that actions that occur on a local level have international consequences, and they act accordingly. Higher education has a role to play in the development of students as global citizens who have the knowledge and understanding, relevant skills, and the values and attitudes to meet the demands of globalisation.**

In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of institutions emphasising global citizenship as one of their strategic priorities. This fits into a global trend of focusing on the theme since the launch of the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First initiative, which made global citizenship education one of its chief objectives.

Global citizenship is a concept that emphasises that people operate in an increasingly connected world and makes clear that individual choices and actions have repercussions on international and local communities.

Global citizens can have qualities in the following key areas:

- knowledge and understanding: social justice, global threats, knowledge of global issues
- skills: intercultural awareness, ethical literacy, critical thinking, conflict resolution
- values and attitudes: commitment to social justice, commitment to equality and diversity, empathy, respect<sup>21</sup>.



There is a growing interest in global citizenship education, signalling a shift in the role and purpose of education to that of forging more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies.

**Dr Qian Tang, Assistant Director- General for Education, Unesco**

### **In the curriculum**

Many institutions are now internationalising their curricula. This involves introducing different cultural and global perspectives into courses to provide students with a broader outlook. Internationalising the curriculum can help students develop the values and skills such as 'intercultural competence' to communicate and work effectively in a globally connected world. The HEA has developed useful guidance to help institutions develop their curricula in this way<sup>22</sup>.

21. Unesco (2014)  
22. HEA (2014)

## CASE STUDY 09:

# LEEDS TRINITY UNIVERSITY AND CRICKET WITHOUT BOUNDARIES



Volunteering in Rwanda was easily the best thing I have done in my life so far! It was a brilliant experience that has left with me with many memories I will hold with me for the rest of my life.

**Alex Hunt, Final-year Secondary Physical Education and Sports Coaching student**

### Background

In 2013, Leeds Trinity University became the first university to partner with Cricket Without Boundaries (CWB), a UK cricket development and HIV and Aids awareness charity. The partnership presented an opportunity for the University to engage in global citizenship by fundraising and volunteering in Africa while offering students the chance to deliver health-awareness messages through sport.

CWB's mission is to spread participation in cricket while incorporating awareness of HIV and Aids. The charity has delivered more than 50 projects in nine African countries, coaching more than 150,000 children and training over 3,000 coaches.

### Implementation

Leeds Trinity students are given the opportunity to undertake a two-week visit to one of five African countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Botswana and Cameroon. First-year students have the chance to take part in the project as part of the second professional work placement that all Leeds Trinity students complete as part of their degrees.

Leeds Trinity students are joined by other CWB volunteers to ensure a good mix of qualified coaches and non-coaches. The visits to Africa comprise two, week-long projects in two locations: one in a large town or city, and the other in a rural location. For each project, students train local PE teachers on integrating coaching with HIV and Aids awareness messages before delivering cricket sessions in various schools over the week. On the final day of each

project, all the schools come together for a festival before the project runs again one week later in a different location.

### Result

In the last three years, 12 students from Leeds Trinity University have taken part in four trips to Africa. Between them, they have supported the charity in coaching more than 8,000 children and training over 150 coaches.

Students have returned with an enormous sense of achievement. As well as boosting their confidence and enhancing life experiences, all students have a greater understanding of how sport can be used to highlight key health-awareness messages. As a result of their experiences, two students are now writing dissertations on the use of sport as a development tool abroad.

The partnership has benefited Leeds Trinity by internationalising its curriculum and providing amazing opportunities for students. There is an excellent exchange of knowledge between the student volunteers who support CWB and the children they coach, but also between the teachers they work with whilst in Africa, many of whom have years of teaching experience as well as cultural and life experiences to share with the volunteers.

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We're a generation that sees itself as global citizens.

**Beth Button, Executive Committee Member, European Students' Union**

## Global citizenship beyond the classroom

Institutions are fostering the skills of global citizenship in their students out of the classroom, in various ways, including through international fieldwork, exchanges, work placements and supporting a culturally diverse campus.

**81%** of students who study abroad felt this experience made them more globally aware.

### International fieldwork and exchanges

International fieldwork provides students with the chance to apply their academic practice in another country, with a programme designed with international partners to address community needs. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to experience a different culture, and make a positive difference as they apply their academic skills. The case study for Newman University illustrates this.

Many UK students study, research and work abroad, not just through the more well-known student exchange programmes such as Erasmus, but also through individual institutions' exchange programmes. These opportunities have increased in recent years, with increasing numbers of overseas institutions teaching English and students recognising the benefits of spending time abroad.

There are a number of benefits to outward mobility. It has been shown that students who

study abroad have higher levels of employability than their peers who have not done so. In addition to this, students develop intercultural awareness and sensitivity due to the time spent abroad, with 81% of participants stating that their experiences had made them more aware of global issues<sup>23</sup>.

### Work placements

Many institutions have developed partnerships with international business, public bodies and charities that offer internships to students. This provides a strong opportunity for students to develop intercultural skills, learn how various sectors work in different countries and experience living abroad for a short period. These schemes can be funded or just facilitated through the institution.

### Students' unions and international opportunities

Many students' unions support students with opportunities to go abroad. This might include international volunteering or exchange schemes, provision of international opportunity information, supporting student societies that run various events that consider multicultural themes, or supporting various charity campaigns that deliver important aid to those in need around the world.

### A culturally diverse campus

There are many ways that a campus can foster diversity and a multicultural environment. This can include inviting international speakers to attend on a variety of subjects and taking steps to foster integration of the international student population through events, workshops and buddy schemes.



**Q: What campaigns have been run at your institution to develop a more inclusive campus?**

**Q: Has the curriculum at your institution been broadened to include different cultural perspectives?**

**Q: What opportunities exist for students to spend time studying or volunteering overseas?**

## CASE STUDY 10:

# NEWMAN UNIVERSITY: GAMBIA – EXPLORING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP THROUGH OVERSEAS FIELDWORK

### Background

Fieldwork opportunities to Gambia have been providing undergraduate and postgraduate students with the experience of exploring global citizenship for over a decade at Newman University, Birmingham. During this time, over 500 students have taken part in study visits, which focus upon identifying and reflecting upon key themes such as citizenship and sustainable development. Such exploration is through a highly structured study visit in which students have opportunities to work with local communities in a wide range of educational settings from nursery schools to higher education institutions. These have provided a range of collaborative projects that have enabled initial teacher education (ITE) students to undertake extended school placements in Gambia, providing teaching experiences in a range of environments.

### Implementation

Overseas fieldwork is now embedded within ITE programmes at Newman University and facilitates students with an opportunity to travel to Gambia and other localities outside the UK. Annually, students who choose to travel to Gambia spend time exploring and reflecting upon the eight themes of a global dimension within education, these being global citizenship, interdependence, social justice, sustainable development, human rights, conflict resolution, diversity, and values and perceptions. Each theme is considered and in many cases observed first hand, which provides students with the opportunity to reflect and assimilate the complex nature of global citizenship.

### Result

International study visits are hugely successful for Newman University students and Newman University itself. Students develop knowledge and understanding of global citizenship through the experience, which increases personal understanding and engagement with global issues. The extent of the success can be measured when considering employability, as many students are following an ITE route and this provides a wealth of personal development and transferable skills that are vital for the classroom and highly regarded by headteachers. Cross-institution partnerships have seen a rise in collaborative research and 'students as academic partners' projects. Most recently, students planned and operationalised a solar power project in a rural school in Gambia.



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# REFLECTION

# AND

# DEVELOPMENT

## Active citizens



reflect on their experiences and  
examine the lessons learned.

**Active citizens have the capacity to self-reflect and a commitment to personal development. Active citizens reflect on their experiences and examine the lessons learned, exploring their values, strengths and weaknesses in order to translate these personal attributes into tangible assets for themselves and society.**

**The story so far**

The previous five chapters of this report have outlined the different components that comprise 'active citizenship'. Underpinning these components is the capacity to reflect and develop, because identifying the causes that matter the most to the individual, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, is key to goal-setting and following through on citizenship activity.

**Reflection and development**

Reflection and development is a process that enables the student to develop an understanding of themselves, their goals and their abilities, and identify how to develop going forward.

A useful model to consider this process can be found below. As the model demonstrates, reflection and development is a cyclical process that reinforces constant reflection in order to set new targets as the previous goals are met.

Students are developing many key skills whilst at university and this provides ample room for reflection in a variety of contexts. This could be academically ('What am I learning on my course?', 'How can I put the skills I am learning into effect in the real world?'), outside the curriculum ('What skills am I developing as treasurer of the jazz society?') or more generally ('What are my values?', 'What is my five-year plan?').



## A model for active citizenship

Reflection and development forms a core part of developing citizenship skills.

Taken separately, each aspect of citizenship, as outlined by the previous chapters of this report, contributes to the development of the student as citizen. A student does not need to engage with all five to be an 'active citizen', but can use reflection and goal-setting to engage with the areas that cohere with their values and priorities.

## Active citizenship



By setting realistic citizenship goals, developing an understanding of how to achieve them, carrying out action and finally reflecting on the skills developed and lessons learned, students can be empowered to fully develop as conscious, active citizens. Active citizenship can thereby be considered a process of continual reflection and development in these five areas, as displayed by the model above.

The case study for GSM London shows an approach that encourages students to undertake this sort of reflection through its Horizon Award.

## CASE STUDY 11:

# GSM LONDON: THE HORIZON AWARD



### Background

Communicating the key message of 'why employ me' is a challenge that any graduate jobseeker can identify with. However, not all students fit the familiar profile of leaving school at 18 with a clutch of GCSEs and A-levels, followed by a gap year. Many are older, come from less affluent backgrounds and perhaps have little to show from their time at school. When it comes to the job market, these students face a whole new set of obstacles to overcome.

At GSM London, many of its students find themselves in this situation. The Horizon Award was created to address this problem. As well as addressing gaps in employability skills, it seeks to identify and recognise the contributions that students have made to their community.

### Implementation

The award is designed to give GSM London students a real competitive edge. It was conceived by GSM London Provost Debi Hayes, and took around 18 months from inception stage to launch, drawing on the expertise and experience of both faculty and professional staff along the way.

Now fully up and running, the programme sees students accumulate points by taking part in activities across four categories: employability and enterprise; cultural and social awareness; supporting the GSM community; and personal skills development.

One major aspect of the programme is to support students to build their self-motivational skills, so those taking part are encouraged to identify the activities they will take part in for each category. The cultural and social awareness category in

particular offers an opportunity to grow as citizens in way that are unique to them. For instance, students taking part in the programme have managed societies that celebrate and promote their own cultural heritage, or worked with the college's outreach office on community events.

The programme also encourages participants to play more active roles as citizens of GSM's academic community, through, for example, working with the provost and senior members of faculty on curriculum revisions and graduation ceremony arrangements.

### Result

Tracking the progress of students as they take part in the programme is important, and GSM has developed My Future, an online platform for students to engage with the careers team throughout the semester. It captures individual involvement and contribution, which in turn enables the careers team to validate progress against the award criteria.

Perhaps of even greater importance is the need for students to reflect on their experiences and consider the ways in which the activity they have taken part in has helped them develop as citizens, and potential employees. To this end, students maintain a reflection log throughout their time on the Horizon Award programme, and submit a full reflection report at its culmination.

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Personal development planning is a structured and supported process undertaken by a learner to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

**Quality Assurance Agency**

### **Abertay will foster individuals to:**

- **Deploy their skills and learning to make a real contribution to society locally, nationally and internationally;**
- **Be inclusive, globally conscientious, socially respectful, and self-reflective;**
- **Maintain and continuously develop awareness of their civic, ethical and environmental responsibilities.**

**Abertay University Strategic Plan 2010–15**

## **Supporting reflection and development**

Institutions often offer support in this area through personal development planning. The QAA has set out guidance for offering institutional support in this area<sup>24</sup>.

This support can take many forms, including providing opportunities to reflect as part of the academic course, providing opportunities to feed back on various aspects of the university experience, and embedding reflection processes into meetings with course and personal tutors. Other methods listed by the QAA include personal profiling, personal and academic records, development plans, progress files, learning portfolios, e-portfolios, learning logs and diaries. Many of these terms emphasise that formal and informal records can help structure and support the process of learning, and are a means of evidencing attainment.

### **Graduate attributes**

Many institutions provide a framework for development by defining the attributes that they want the higher education experience they offer to instil within their students. These attributes identify academic and personal transferable skills that the higher education experience allows students to develop. These can be applied in many contexts, including within teaching, learning and research and in employment and work, as well as in relation to society and how students contribute to society and develop citizenship skills.

This is useful in a number of ways, but chiefly because first, it provides a clear measure of development and points of reflection for students; and second, it identifies the attributes that students have upon graduation that they can utilise in either reflection or the job market.

Abertay University has developed a unique approach to this with its 'Abertay Attributes'. These can be found in the box above and more detail is described in its case study on the next page.



**Q: Does your institution define the list of qualities that a graduate will have developed over the course of their studies?**

**Q: What support does your institution/students' union provide to students for reflection and development?**

**Q: Does your institution have a specific approach to monitoring impact and supporting reflection?**

## CASE STUDY 12:

# ABERTAY UNIVERSITY: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



[The Abertay Attributes] are widely recognised by students and staff, and provide a focus for promoting and supporting the development of students' skills and experience inside and outside of the curriculum.

**QAA Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (Spring 2016)**

Abertay was the first Scottish university to develop a set of graduate attributes in 2007, and in 2015 it undertook a fundamental review, in the light of Abertay's new Teaching and Learning Enhancement Strategy and the rapidly changing context in which it found itself. A cross-institutional working group was set up involving both staff and students. There was much internal debate, discussion and consultation; the University also reviewed other institutions' approaches and conducted some primary research, asking 528 current Abertay students what they felt was the value of an Abertay educational experience.

The working group also felt that the University's new graduate attributes should become 'Abertay attributes', as they ought to reflect the ethos of the whole institution, not just its graduates and, having gone back to first principles, the following four-dimensional conceptual framework was developed.

Each dimension has a series of qualitative descriptors. For 'Active Citizen', the Abertay Attributes state that Abertay will foster individuals to:

- deploy their skills and learning to make a real contribution to society locally, nationally and internationally
- be inclusive, globally conscientious, socially respectful and self-reflective
- maintain and continuously develop awareness of their civic, ethical and environmental responsibilities<sup>25</sup>.

### Implementation

In terms of active citizenship in the curriculum, many of the University's new electives provide excellent opportunities for students to broaden

their knowledge and skills outside their programme disciplines. For example, Games for Change aims to provide students with the knowledge, processes and techniques of game design as well as examples of serious games that have been developed to benefit society.

Abertay's flagship co-curriculum employability programme, The Principal's Award, has active citizenship firmly embedded within its aims and structure; it is a core requirement of successful completion to undertake a minimum of 25 hours' work experience, paid or voluntary. The number of students taking part in The Principal's Award has grown over the last few years, aided by its recognition as a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)-verifiable activity.

Abertay's Student Association is very proactive in supporting students' active citizenship. In March this year, it secured more than £43,000 from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund. ECoAbertay aims to reduce carbon emissions, and its activities include promoting greener travel options, a campaign to reduce consumption of single-use bottled water on campus, provision of an 'interview clothes library', and exchange events to stop unwanted homeware and clothes going to landfill.

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