

# Applying University Strategic Objectives at School Level

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**University Teachers at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies are working together on the Teaching, Learning and Participation Project. This project encompasses three strands: widening participation, student experience, and innovative learning and teaching; all key aspects of the University's strategic objectives.**

**Introduction**

The widening participation strand has focused primarily on partnership with local schools. This includes Campus Days whereby pupils who have the ability, but perhaps not the confidence, to enter higher education come to the University's two campuses and experience a day as a student. Additionally this strand is seeking to conduct a comparative study of assessment and feedback processes in secondary and higher education.

The student experience strand has concentrated on employability and internationalisation. Examples include working with the local education authority to extend student learning and provide staff CPD opportunities via the establishment of an annual education lecture, and developing opportunities for internships overseas.

Finally, the innovative learning and teaching strand has sought to review current teaching practices within the School, and to identify and trial innovative methodologies in an effort to engage learners more fully and thereby to enhance both the student and staff learning experiences.

**Widening Participation**

**Campus Days**

The School of Interdisciplinary Studies organised two Campus Days for Year 5/6 secondary pupils from two local schools. They were identified by their school as having the ability to attend higher education but perhaps not the confidence or background.

The first day was held in March 2013 in Dumfries; the second in Gilmorehill in October 2013 (with support from the Widening Participation team). The same pupils attended both days. Each day included a bespoke lecture, lunch and a tour of the campus. The Dumfries day also included attendance at a lecture with current students on a specific course (Earth System Science; Spanish; Social Policy and Practice) as well as discussion forums on the differences between secondary and higher education. Secondary school staff provided feedback from the pupils on both days:

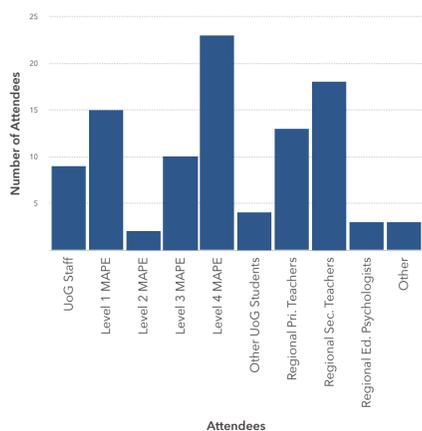
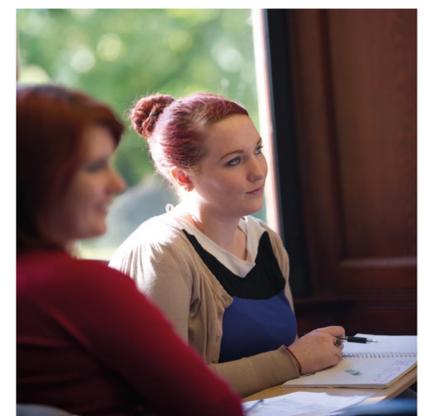
- I'm more relaxed about going to University;
- I'm inspired to get the grades to go to University.

**Dumfries Campus Day**

- Environment very relaxed and less frightening than I thought;
- Easy-going, respectful relationships apparent;
- Provided a good representation of university life;
- The role of the student ambassadors is invaluable—sharing experience/advice;
- Getting shown around the campus grounds by actual students was good as they gave us their view on the university;

**Glasgow Campus Day**

- The day provided me with an insight into university life;
- I found the tour of the Glasgow library was good. I was amazed at the size of the place and facilities;
- The experience of attending a lecture to see what it was like was helpful.



**Annual Education Lecture**

The proposal for the annual education lecture was initially for a 3-year project featuring three high-profile education speakers who would come to the Dumfries Campus and offer the 'Annual Education Lecture and Workshop'. The lecture was widely advertised around the region. The first highly-interactive programme was delivered by leading educational psychologist Alan McLean (author of *The Motivated School* and *Motivating Every Learner*). Head of the College of Social Sciences Professor Anne Anderson provided the opening address, praising the underlying ethos.

The project was devised in collaboration with two local pilot schools and University staff working on widening participation within the Dumfries and Galloway region. The project aimed to address some of the recommendations of the report *Teaching Scotland's Future 2020* whereby not only good practice can be shared between schools and Universities but links between primary, secondary and higher educational establishments can be strengthened.

The inaugural lecture took place in September 2013 and was well-attended for so early in the academic year (see graph for information on categories of attendee). The attendees were not only students on the MA Primary Education degree in Dumfries but also from other degree programmes. Teachers in the local primary schools made up a good percentage of the audience, reflecting not only senior management, but also newly-qualified teachers from our own University.

This reflects the partnership which exists between the region and the University. There were many opportunities for all attendees to reflect and discuss their feelings about the topics raised by Alan McLean.

Funding was sought from the Chancellor's Fund and plans are underway for the second lecture in September 2014. As with all projects of this sort, an evaluation helped the team to reflect on the timing of this lecture for next time and it is hoped to schedule the event for the early part of Semester 1, in order for it to be integrated as a compulsory aspect for all students on the MA (Hons) Primary Education programme.

**International School Experience**

From 2013-14 an overseas school placement is now available to Year 3/4 MA (Hons) Primary Education students. While optional, it has been approved through Senate as an additional item to be added to the 'Employability' section of qualified students' Higher Education Achievement Reports.

A first school partnership has been established with the International School for Primary Education in Bucharest, Romania; a second link with a school in Berlin is currently being finalised. Further school partnerships are planned.

**Aims**

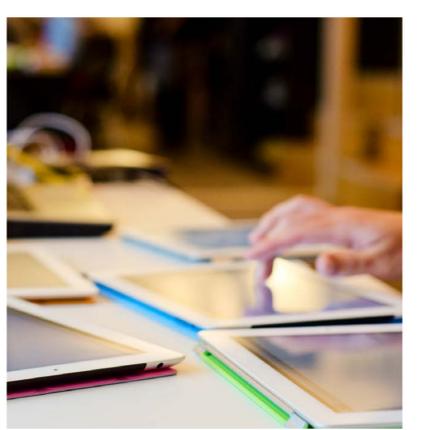
- Raise student awareness of professional and academic practice in pre-5/primary education in a wider context
- Afford students the opportunity to gain experience in learning and teaching in the context of an educational system outside of the UK and Ireland
- Allow students the opportunity to participate in the wider life and culture of a country outside of the UK and Ireland.

**Links to University Strategy**

This highly-rewarding and enriched learning opportunity overseas simultaneously enacts a number of the University's strategic objectives in three main areas:

- Student Experience**- providing students with an 'experience that prepares them for lifelong learning and gives them the means to contribute as global citizens'
- Internationalisation**- offering students 'unique international study opportunities'
- Knowledge Exchange**- building mutually beneficial relationships with external partners; promoting cultural exchange between communities; creating career development opportunities for students/academics.

As the former Senior V-P highlighted in *Glasgow 2020*, 'What we are trying to do is make sure that when they leave here, our graduates are prepared for tremendous careers anywhere in the world' (p.21).



**Innovative Learning and Teaching**

**Flip Teaching**

Year Two MA (Hons) Primary Education students had their Child Development classes 'flipped'—the traditional lecture viewed at home and work usually completed during personal study time done during class. Early results indicate increased engagement and confidence about the subject.

**Twitter**

All students on the MA Primary Education Programme were encouraged to tweet during classes in order to demonstrate their understanding, ask (and answer) questions and to demonstrate wider understanding by linking to personal research. Early indications are encouraging.

**Lectures Online—Live**

Alongside using the LCD projector, presentation slides were broadcast live to students' devices (laptops, phones, tablets) using Join.Me™. This was particularly helpful for those with visual impairments and when the projected screen could not be seen (e.g., sunlight). Students found this to be more engaging and personal.

**Beaming Work to Class**

Students used their own devices to record group work. The audio files, videos and photos which showcased their learning were streamed to the lecturer's device for the whole class to view. This was helpful for peer-assessment and outdoor learning. Students found this to be very engaging and liked being able to showcase their group work to everyone else.

**Live Lecture Streaming**

Students watched a live lecture in a place of their choosing but were active (rather than passive) learners by simultaneously tweeting, interacting with the lecturer and other learners. The lecturer used Twitter during the lecture to gauge learning. Students found it engaging, saying the 'live' responses from the tutor made it effective.