

EUROPE ENGAGE

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING
WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE



UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL REPORT



University of Brighton

EUROPE ENGAGE SURVEY
OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES

2016



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1. INTRODUCTION AND PROCESS

The University of Brighton undertook the survey through the Community University Partnership programme (Cupp) Network – a social networking space for those interested in community university partnerships www.cuppcopning.com. With nearly 1200 members it includes UK higher education institutions with an active interest in community-university partnerships and service learning/community engaged learning. It was felt that contacting universities that were already members of the Cupp network would be the most productive way of maximising the response rate.

After emailing 127 network members who work with students and live in the UK 7 institutions expressed an initial interest and were sent the survey form and a link to Survey Monkey. However, the take up was very small and we received feedback from several respondents that the survey was too time-consuming, given other pressures. Additional problems identified included:

- The survey required detail that would need involvement from several people both from faculties and professional services which would be difficult to coordinate
- Responses would vary widely within institutions
- Individual responses might not reflect the institutional view
- Concerns about confidentiality

To elicit further responses individuals known to Cupp were contacted by email and offered a telephone interview rather than completing the form themselves. However, this resulted in only one survey form being completed orally and a second respondent agreeing to complete the form electronically and then failing to do so.

This report is therefore based on the responses of two institutions: Queen's University Belfast and the University of Brighton.

2. SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The results are summarised by Section.

Section 1 . University culture & identity

The two respondents reported substantial formal acknowledgement of civic engagement. Both included civic engagement and service learning in the universities' overall mission or strategic plans. One example from a Strategic Plan was:

Engagement and impact

Our learning and research will be developed with partners and focussed on social and economic benefit

Key performance indicators: all undergraduate courses will offer, as part of the curriculum, the opportunity for forms of external engagement such as work placement, community engagement or equivalent (100 per cent by 2014)

Service learning was a requirement for some programmes and an option in others at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Both institutions reported substantial support by senior management. Efforts were made to make staff aware of service learning activities in a variety of ways, including: staff development events; campus based seminars and forums; information for post graduate and doctoral candidates.

One institution included civic engagement/service learning explicitly in its promotion policies, for example including community engagement with teaching and research in all job descriptions. One has a Staff Volunteering Programme offering staff the opportunity to volunteer for up to five days a year as part of their own professional development.

Both had a centrally funded dedicated structure to coordinate service learning activities across the university.

Section 2. Service-Learning activities

Both universities incorporated service learning into Bachelors and Masters curricular, although small numbers of student were engaged at Masters level. Masters level programmes ranged from Mechanical Engineering and Environment, to Inclusive Arts. Bachelor's programmes were extremely varied, including Geography, Agriculture, Social Sciences, Bio-medical sciences, Business, Environment, History, and Humanities.

In the academic year 2013-14 in one university over 200 undergraduates undertook tailored community placements with approximately 150 organisations. 18 students undertook the Post Graduate Certificate in Communities, Engagement and Enterprise. 20 academic staff regularly attend a symposium for staff involved in delivering service learning/community engaged learning.

The second university collaborated with 45 organisations and 270 students were directly engaged in completing 64 projects at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels. In addition 27 research postgraduates and 80 undergraduates from across the University were engaged in workshops to introduce them to engaged research and research impact and 20 academic staff and early career researchers attended public engagement training.

One respondent pointed out that the 'Research Impact' agenda - a new set of incentives and accountability measures for research funding, which explicitly incentivises research that delivers impact 'beyond academia' - has influenced the debate about service learning. Senior ma-

agement is interested in understanding the ways in which community engaged curricula can skill up students to develop research partnerships that go wider than business partnerships.

3. CONCLUSION

The poor response rate to the survey means that this report does not accurately reflect the national picture. There is a growing number of innovative, collaborative projects involving HE staff, students, and partner organisations across the arts, sciences, business, social sciences and humanities (NCCPE 2014 available at: http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/engaged_futures_summary_report_final.pdf)

It is disappointing that so few of our colleagues found time to do this or found it manageable and this may say something about the complexities and pressures experienced by UK academics and engagement practitioners currently. It certainly does not reflect the range of activity within the sector.

