

Realising Engagement through Active Culture Transformation (REACT)

Institution Student Engagement Case Study

Institution case study:

The University of Winchester and Winchester Student Union

Name of scheme/initiative:

The Winchester Student Fellows Scheme (SFS)

Key contact(s):

Dr Stuart Sims, Research Fellow- Stuart.Sims@winchester.ac.uk

Blake Hutchings, Vice President Education- Blake.Hutchings@winchester.ac.uk

Paid / voluntary / bursary?

£600 bursary across four instalments

How many students are involved per academic year?

60

What is its purpose?

The purpose of the SFS is to recruit, train and empower 60 students to work alongside academics and professional staff on targeted educational development projects. These projects address a diverse range of topics which vary in scope and size but must be relevant to enhancing the student learning experience. The SFS both increases the level of student engagement with teaching and learning at The University of Winchester and empowers students to address varied issues, problems or barriers to a satisfying teaching, learning and social experience on mass.

How does it operate?

The role of the Student Fellow predominantly consists of engaging in social scientific research with their student peers, evaluating new initiatives or developing interventions relating to their university experience. These projects are carried out in partnership with a staff partner and the successful completion of projects draws upon their different expertise and access.

What is the background?

The SFS has developed from the pioneering work done in its 'proof of concept' stage in 2012/13. This involved a much smaller scheme as part of the Jisc funded FASTECH project. The success of this initial stage allowed it to secure funding through negotiations between the Student Union (SU), Learning and Teaching Development (LTD) and Senior Managers by demonstrating the benefit that such a programme could have to the students involved and the whole institution. There was a clear case for something to fill

the gap between issues raised by students about their courses and how these issues could be addressed. The majority of funding for the SFS is used for a £600 bursary provided to each Student Fellow to support their activities and time commitment. We also support students with any additional costs that they incur throughout their projects.

How are students recruited?

The SFS has a rigorous application, interview and induction process to ensure that students are properly equipped to carry out this work and that they are participating for 'the right reasons'. The SFS is advertised extensively across the institution, in particular through our intranet and social media. The experience and expertise of the SU in engaging with students is invaluable at this stage. Prospective Student Fellows are asked to submit a CV and a supporting statement outlining both their suitability and their areas of research interest. The applications are reviewed by the co-directors of SFS and those of a suitable standard are then invited to a panel interview. The panels are always made up of a mixture of staff from the SU and LTD to reflect the partnership which supports and maintains the SFS. The interviews cover various topics but are specifically focused towards ensuring a high level of commitment to the issues they would like to address.

How are staff recruited?

Staff recruitment takes place in two key ways:

1. An open call is made for people who are interested in pursuing educational development projects that could benefit from a student involvement
2. Recruited Student Fellows are asked to identify staff members that they would like to work with and that have relevant knowledge or experience for their desired project

How is the scheme managed?

One of the ways that we believe the SFS works so well is that it is managed in partnership between the LTD & SU. In particular, Research Fellow Dr Stuart Sims (LTD) and Blake Hutchings (Vice-President of Education, SU) jointly manage the running of the scheme in consultation with various other colleagues. This allows us to draw on our varied and complimentary expertise; specifically the SU provides access to communication networks of the student body and a strong mandate for supporting student engagement, whilst the LTD bring experience and expertise in teaching and learning.

What projects have taken place?

Student Fellow Projects explore a wide-range of educational development subject areas including:

- Assessment and Feedback
- Innovative use of technology
- Addressing NSS feedback
- Increasing Student Engagement
- Employability
- Addressing module evaluation feedback
- Innovative forms of learning and teaching

A few examples of projects include the following:

- Improvement of resources and conditions for commuter students on campus
- Creating physical learning resources in Law

- Co-designing and validating a module in Modern Liberal Arts
- Evaluation of the use of lecture time in Sociology

Sustainability

The Student Fellows Scheme has seen success across the University of Winchester, as a genuine model of Student Engagement and staff-student partnership to enhance the student experience. Winchester has seen two institution wide cohorts of the SFS (2013-14 & 2014-15); developing into a scheme which prioritises internal dissemination of practice so a Student Fellow's work can have impact beyond their programme. This has been done through a Student Fellows Conference, intranet sharing pages of resources/reports and presentations to relevant committees. Further external dissemination has seen the SFS team and Student Fellows provide consultation and presentations at conferences such as Change Agent Network (CAN), Researching, Advancing & Inspiring Student Engagement (RAISE) and Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). The SFS has also been shortlisted for the HEA and NUS Students' Union and Institution Partnership Award (Highly Commended) in 2014 and the Student Experience Initiative Award in the Guardian University Awards. Also for the participating Student Fellows themselves, the experience and employability benefit of being part of the scheme has been quoted to be 'invaluable'. Due to the above, the University of Winchester and Winchester Student Union have shown support to continue and further develop the SFS in the foreseeable future.

More information

Email: studentfellows@winchester.ac.uk

Twitter: @Student_Fellows

Website: www.winchester.ac.uk/studentfellows