

Active Students

The attached paper represents a proposal which was submitted to the Scottish Government as a working draft earlier this week.

The paper has been produced following consultation with Francesca Osowska of the Sports Policy Unit (FO) and in line with previous discussion at the SUS Conference and SUS Executive Council.

It has been submitted without any further internal consultation (which was originally planned) primarily so that it could be received by FO before she is re-deployed as Principal Private Secretary to the First Minister. Her last day in her current position is Friday 2nd Nov.

It is not known at this stage who will replace FO as head of the Sports Policy Unit but it was deemed important to submit the first draft before her departure, given her favourable view of SUS as an organisation and in light of the fact that SUS had pledged to submit the proposal during this term.

The document goes into a certain level of detail about the proposed scheme but stops short of committing to exact details, as it is recognised that such detail may differ according to each institution's needs and current resources. Any institutional deviance from the outlined proposal should be taken into account during the next phase of planning, prior to submission of a finalised business case or second draft of the paper.

It is felt that the scheme represents a genuine opportunity for the HE Sector to attract major funding direct from the Scottish Government and it is hoped that the SUS Exec will lend its support to the proposal.

SUS Executive is invited to:

Item
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer comment on the attached paper

ACTIVE STUDENTS

Introduction

This paper outlines innovative, productive and cost effective proposals for improving the health, activity patterns and recreational sporting involvements amongst Scotland's student population. The initiative is presented under the working title *Active Students*, and will deliver tangible gains across all of Scotland's nineteen Universities and their local communities. An initial commitment of £1m p/a over four years is sought.

Why invest in this area?

The massive potential of the sector in terms of physical activity and health has traditionally been largely overlooked by national agencies in Scotland. Today, the sector is ever more outward facing and professional in its approach to sport and physical activity. Scottish HE is ready, willing and able to contribute to nationwide priorities.

With this in mind there is now an unprecedented opportunity to build upon the good practice which currently exists in the sector and make a focused drive towards developing non-competitive sport and physical activity opportunities across the country.

Higher Education is particularly well placed to meet shared goals due to a number of factors:

- Good geographical spread of member institutions ~ located in the heart of our major population conurbations
- Home to over 50% of school leavers - set to rise to 60% by 2010
- Host to excellent, accessible and well managed facilities
- Broadly equal gender split across the student community
- Generating thousands of skilled volunteers every year
- Supporting over 60,000 gym visits a week in University facilities
- Increasingly engaged with local communities
- Home to a professional network of dedicated staff and student officers (SUS)

Introducing Scottish Universities Sport (SUS)

SUS is a professional, inclusive, democratically constituted organisation which provides a clear and strategic voice for the nineteen Universities of Scotland.

SUS was set up in June 2005 with the aim of fostering and promoting Sport and Physical Activity. Much progress has already been made by the organisation during its short life. SUS now oversees a programme of activities that includes 100 events a year across 35 sports involving over 500 sports clubs and accounts for over 2 million gym visits a year.

SUS is truly representative of the HE sector and has been acknowledged as a key partner in the delivery of the aims of Reaching Higher. SUS is also well placed to positively influence work in a number of policy areas – particularly those of healthy lifestyles, social inclusion and equality & diversity.

Why the *Active Students* scheme?

As research findings continue to suggest, there is a great deal of positive intervention and collaboration needed if Scotland is to lose its 'sick boy of Europe' tag and enjoy a far healthier, more active and productive image. The *Active Students* scheme can and will make quick and sustainable inroads against this problem.

- *Protecting the Health of the Nation*

Figures from the recent Foresight Programme report (UK Government) indicate that within 25 years 50% of adults in the UK will be clinically obese. By 2050 obesity could be costing Scotland an extra £5 billion per year in terms of healthcare.

By more comprehensively supporting University activities, we stand a good chance of influencing a huge percentage of the Scottish population at a critical stage in their lives – at a time when life-long involvement in physical activity can be strongly influenced. A relatively small investment now may help limit the massive projected cost in the future.

- *Ability to make a difference*

The Universities in Scotland stand ready to make an ever more purposeful, meaningful contribution to national activity objectives. Furthermore, the sport and physical activity structures within and across the universities now provide a tailor made vehicle to influence a required cultural shift. A small injection of physical resource and an emphasis on local community partnership will serve to positively affect activity levels and guarantee access to healthy lifestyle opportunities for students.

- *Setting new expectations*

The transition to University from School is one of the key stages in life and a definite crossroads in terms of setting lifestyle choices that will become embedded well into adulthood. The ever increasing student population in Scotland (currently 206,000) consists largely of a captive audience of malleable, responsive young people.

The Active Students scheme would allow universities to reach a greater part of this population and provide a diverse range of programmes in order to ensure that more students are more active more often.

- *Providing a degree of certainty*

Recent years have seen an investment of £12 million p/a into developing activities for Primary and Secondary age children, with the aim of changing the culture for the good. Failure to guarantee the extension of this culture into Tertiary education is tantamount to throwing much of that investment to one side. SUS is ideally placed to continue with the provision of these opportunities for school leavers and to provide strong entry and exit points to universities' surrounding communities.

- *Helping to satisfy excess demand*

Currently many SUS member institutions are unable to meet the demand from the student body for recreational and non-competitive sports related activities, due to limited staff resources and poor engagement with local facility partners. Many activities suffer from the enviable problem of having too much interest from the student body.

The SUS Active scheme would address this situation swiftly and allow for the Universities to better serve the 'captive audience' of enthusiastic students on their doorsteps.

What difference could 'Active Students' make?

Aligning new resources to the existing footprint within each Scottish University would provide:

- An immediate growth in regular playing numbers in sport
- A curtailment in the current post-school activity drop off rate
- An opportunity to provide bespoke volunteer training to bright, intelligent and dedicated individuals – for the good of Scottish sport
- More reliable entry and exit points to help sustain activity habits between school and working life
- Stronger links between Universities and Local Authorities, Sports Councils and other key partners
- Improved capacity within Universities to deal with excess demand for sport and physical activity services

Active Students – a closer look

The following is an outline of the functions, aims and main tasks of the proposed SUS Active Coordinator role and a suggested management and finance framework for the scheme's deployment.

Remit¹

It is expected that the exact nature of the work undertaken in different locations across the country will differ – in order to complement the existing structures and activity footprints in a range of University settings.

The scheme will be aimed towards the national objectives but implemented through locally tailored solutions. It is accepted that the initial focus of the Active Students scheme may differ between well-developed institutions and those with a nascent programme of activities.

That being said, the main tasks of the Active Students personnel would fall out of the following headings:

Delivery

- Creating, developing and administering Intra-Mural activities for students, staff and community use
- Providing support to sports unions and university departments on matters relating to participation, open access, inclusion, equality & diversity

Advocacy

- Promoting physical activity, recreation and healthy lifestyles to all members of the local (university) community

Pathways

- Building sustainable and manageable frameworks for the organisation of sport and physical activity within universities and colleges
- Working with other agencies to help stem drop-off in activity levels post-school
- Developing meaningful partnerships with other agencies in the area, including local authorities, sports councils, schools and sports clubs

¹ A detailed draft job description for the Active Students Coordinator role is included as an appendix to this paper.

Finance

The majority of the real costs for the SUS Active scheme would be met by distinct funding directly from the Scottish Executive in respect of salary commitments and basic operating and programme costs:

It is expected that each University would provide in-kind office accommodation and local support.

- *Outline figures*

National Active Students Manager	£30k basic salary + on costs	£40k
	Programme costs	<u>£25k</u>
		£65k
National Active Students Administrator	£18k basic salary + on costs	<u>£25k</u>
		£25k
Active Students Co-ordinator	£26k basic salary + on costs	£32k
	Programme costs	£13k
		<u>£45k</u>
	19 appointments	£855k
	Year 1 total ²	<u>£945</u>

Deployment

All staff would be housed in University office accommodation, to be provided in line with agreed specifications and criteria. Staff would be deployed as soon as the local partners had shown readiness for the appointment, with the following in place:

- Office space identified
- In house line management support available
- Institutional sign-up at Vice-Chancellor level
- Local Authority sign-up/ partnership agreement completed

SUS proposes that one co-ordinator be placed in each of the 19 Higher Education Institutions in Scotland under the first phase of the scheme. A further network of co-ordinators would be placed in regional locations across the country to roll-out services to FE colleges under phase two of *Active Students* during late 2009/early 2010.

Management

It is intended that the network of staff would be employed under the banner of SUS. The SUS network would oversee the work of these staff and would house a manager to perform this function from the central office base. The national manager would oversee the work of the locally deployed co-ordinators and manage the strategic aspects of their work. Local line-management would be provided by existing University departments for aspects such as housekeeping, IT support etc.

Conclusion

Active Students is presented as a revolutionary, expedient and affordable means of improving the health and activity levels of Scotland's student community. This paper seeks only to introduce the broad concept, describe how such a programme might work, and the likely cost implications. Further and more detailed discussion and consultation will follow, but it is hoped the outline presented here will excite and unite partner groups, and lay the foundations for some much needed investment in the health and well-being of Scotland's crucially important 17-24 year olds.

² This figure is expected to rise by approximately 3.5% per annum in light of cost of living increases. Due to the timing of the programme roll-out, the year 1 investment may be split over two financial years. The figure above reflects the initial 12 month costs.

Job Description Template

1. Job Details

Job title:	SUS 'Active Students' Programme Co-ordinator
Host Location:	Local University Sports Department/Athletic Union
Line manager:	SUS National 'Active Students' Programme Manager
Status:	Full-time
Salary:	£24,284 - £30,763 (projected 2008 salary scale)

2. Job Purpose

To plan, promote and help deliver the 'active students' programme to increase levels of physical activity and sporting involvement amongst 17-24 years olds in local University communities.

3. Main Responsibilities

**Approx.
% time**

- Advocacy/Promotion/Innovation* ~ Work with local agencies to promote and celebrate the worth of healthy lifestyles, recreational sport and physical activity amongst 17-24 year olds. Be responsible for researching, evaluating and proposing new approaches to improve the breadth, quality, profile, efficiency and effectiveness of the 'active students' programme, and lobby key partners to ensure their full engagement. Support equivalent exchanges at National level to help ensure the maximum reach and impact of the 'active students' mandate across the Scottish HE network. 20%
- Active Student Programmes* ~ Define, develop, implement and drive, in association with in-house staff, elected officials and local agencies, a range of quality assured, structured, appealing, safe, and regular physical activity and/or recreational sporting opportunities (encompassing intra-mural sport; health for life programmes; starter fitness schemes). Plans should be tailored to local environs and designed to extend and add value to existing provision, with due attention to maximising participation and adherence rates, inclusiveness, volunteer training and cost effectiveness. 50%
- Creating Pathways* ~ Take responsibility for creating/upholding/promoting entry routes for prospective students into the host Institution (and endorsing the physical activity opportunities that exist therein), and forging productive exit routes with local clubs/organisations to encourage students to maintain their activity patterns beyond graduation. 20%
- Administration* ~ Share responsibility with the Department and/or Athletic Union Staff/Officials for developing and upholding administrative/financial procedures to underpin the smooth, efficient and secure operation of the 'active student' offer, and in accordance with agreed targets, financial controls, policies and procedures. Maintain monitoring information to support annual review. Recommend and implement new and/or revised regulations as required. 10%

4. Planning and Organising

- Prepare, in association with others, a comprehensive, quality assured, relevant and achievable plan (actions, targets, responsibilities; resources) up to 18 months ahead, which will increase participation levels (physical activity and recreational sport) amongst 17-24 years in your University. This will include the promotion and delivery of 'active students' events (including Volunteer Training (Club officials), Coach/Officials education, Intra-Mural

competitions, wide ranging 'come and try' sessions), and all underpinned by a commitment to equal and open access.

- Develop, alongside local partners, clear routes into, and exit routes from, (at least 6 months ahead) 'active students' programmes to maximise interest, uptake and adherence.
- Produce reports and analysis on all aspects of the 'active students' programme to inform management/policy functions and to support progress reporting (weekly, monthly, annually and longitudinally).

5. Problem Solving

- Handling day-to-day problems that arise within the local 'active students' programme and solve using professional judgement (what is needed and/or would work in the circumstances) and/or applying set policies/procedures.
- Proposing new policies, procedures and approaches (partners, personnel, event formats, physical activity opportunities) to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and reach of the 'active students' programme, locally and nationally.
- Deciding how best to engage with local partners (with diverse personalities, structures, operational priorities) to achieve the greatest impact for the 'active students' programme.

6. Decision Making

- Determining, in conjunction with colleagues and local partners, actions/operational priorities to achieve the best impact for the local 'active students' programme and whether to introduce new initiatives/activities/approaches to enhance matters yet further.
- Planning own work schedule (daily, weekly, monthly) to ensure primary responsibilities are carried out to the agreed standard, timescale and budget ~ refer significant business difficulties/conflicts to line manager.
- Setting annual income and expenditure allocations, and performance targets, for the local 'active students' programme, in reference to internal and external dimensions/opportunities.

7. Key Contacts/Relationships

During the course of his/her work, the post holder will be expected to interface with 'sports related' (Athletic Union and Department), and other support staff in the host University (academics, health service, international office, disability office, PR etc); student sports clubs/elected officials; Intra-mural teams; Local authority (sport and education); Local Schools/Colleges/Universities; Local Sports Councils; Scottish Universities Sport (staff and partners, including other 'active students' personnel); **sportscotland**; national governing bodies of sport; Volunteering Groups; Sports Development Co-ordinators; sports coaches/officials.

8. Knowledge, Skills and Experience Needed for the Job

- Educated to degree level with 2 years vocational experience in the sport or leisure industry.
- Ability to lead small project teams and prioritise workload of self and others, meet tight deadlines and cope with complex issues; aptitude for diplomacy and problem solving.
- Proven communication (verbal and written, including report writing), presentational and inter-personal skills.
- Demonstrable experience of devising, monitoring and reviewing sport/physical activity plans.
- Preparedness to work independently and respond to unforeseen situations.
- Possess an outward-facing approach and willingness to network.
- Understand organisation/structure of Scottish sport and HE sector.
- Empathy with students; team player; good IT skills (excel, word, email, web-based software); flexible, approachable, passion for sport/exercise, independent thinker.

9. Dimensions

No direct staff management responsibility, though post holder will have close contact with University colleagues and staff in local agencies; role will influence the training/development of others; budget responsibility is c £5k; local circumstances will influence/shape working dimensions and programme priorities; role involves significant independent working and networking & mix of policy and practice.