



University of Brighton



Establishing the University of Brighton as a Health Promoting University: Executive Summary

Professor John Kenneth Davies and Caroline Hall

International Health Development Research Centre (IHDRC)

**Developing the University of
Brighton as a Health Promoting
University: a pilot project final
report**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Professor John Kenneth Davies and
Caroline Hall**

**International Health Development
Research Centre (IHDR)**

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Particular thanks to Joanne Newton, Carlos Costa and Jo Ramm for their work on the HPU Project whilst attached to IHDRG.

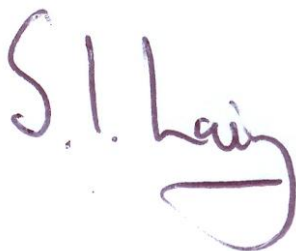
Thanks are also extended to Fiona Sutton and Amanda Jeffrey for administrative support, to MA International Health Promotion student Ana Hall, and to Chris Harkies, visiting TEP student from the University of Victoria, Canada, as well as to the wider university staff, students and others who contributed to the research, provided examples of existing good practice and progressed the development of HPU-funded projects.

FOREWORD

The ambition to become a Health Promoting University presents a significant challenge, especially in the political and financial climate of 2011. But it is one which is fundamental to the purposes of this university. It proposes a unity of ends and means. It suggests that it is ultimately more worthwhile and productive to take the extra time and discussion to create a work and study environment which is enjoyable and fulfilling than to fall back on apparently easier authoritarian behaviours.

It requires the exercise of respect, tolerance and wisdom and a belief in the value of communal actions. It asks for and will foster positive thinking and optimism, even in the face of very testing circumstances.

This report speaks of the nature of that challenge, of how this university is currently placed and of how we can make further progress. I look forward to hearing your views on its analysis and proposals over the next few months.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "S. I. Laing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Professor Stuart Laing

Deputy Vice-Chancellor

University of Brighton

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Developing the Health Promoting University (HPU) means using a 'whole organisation' approach to embed health, wellbeing and sustainable development into the ethos, culture, policies and daily processes of the university.

In 2009 the University of Brighton funded a two-year developmental project to determine the feasibility of establishing the university as an HPU. This work was overseen by a dedicated HPU project steering group (PSG) which included representatives of the university's Senior Management Team; Students' Union; and Departments of Sport and Recreation, Student Services, Occupational Health, Health and Safety, Marketing and Communications, together with the International Health Development Research Centre (IHDRC). The IHDRC team was commissioned to carry out the research underpinning the pilot project, the coordination of the project and its monitoring and evaluation.

The main project objectives were:

- to create a healthy and sustainable working, learning and living environment for all students, staff and visitors

- to increase the profile of health and sustainable development in teaching, research and knowledge exchange
- to contribute to the health and sustainability of the wider community
- to monitor and evaluate progress and build evidence of effectiveness.

The project had research and practical delivery elements. The research element consisted primarily of comprehensive scoping and monitoring exercises engaging stakeholders across the university. The practical delivery element consisted of the production of marketing and dissemination strategies and work plan, including a dedicated project website (see www.brighton.ac.uk/hpu), testing out a series of high profile interventions and production of a support infrastructure to deliver the HPU approach.

This executive summary highlights the main findings from the two-year project and puts forward a series of recommendations to the university's Senior Management Team (SMT) on how to further develop the HPU approach.

A series of findings from Phase One (the research element of the project), together with a set of interim recommendations, were made to the PSG early in 2010 (Davies & Newton 2010). These findings directly informed the development of a series of high profile interventions in Phase Two of the project.

The two-year pilot was monitored and evaluated and the findings and recommendations summarised below.

MAIN FINDINGS

Key themes

Underpinning principles and values

- Creating the University of Brighton as a Health Promoting University with HPU status was overwhelmingly perceived as being good for business due to increased recruitment, retention, productivity and morale, and reduced sickness and absenteeism.
- HPU values should encompass everyone at the university and be embedded in its everyday life. Alongside this should be provision of, and easy access to, healthy,

affordable food choices, fresh water and sport and physical activity as examples.

- The university was positively perceived in terms of being well led and well managed, having a caring and supportive culture which valued staff and students and supported their health and wellbeing.
- The status of becoming an HPU was seen as positive and a useful tool for linking up, embedding and adding extra value to existing good practice within the university.
- The HPU project was perceived as being equitable, with opportunities for engagement with staff and students made available at different points of the project. Further uptake of HPU concepts was expected with increased understanding about the HPU.
- The sustainability of HPU was perceived as being dependent upon its inclusion in a formal university strategy, which could for example, stem from inclusion in the corporate plan as well as other related strategies/plans.
- The key to embedding the project into university policies and practices was 'buy-in' from key stakeholders as well as inclusion in relevant policies and practices.

- Sustainability was a prevalent cross-cutting theme throughout the HPU project. Key strengths were recognised in elaborating upon, and making efforts to link, the health and sustainability agendas, made possible through existing university structures (eg Environmental Action Networks (EANs), the Sustainable Development Policy Management Group (SDPMG) and tangible ways to further health and sustainability links were realised during the HPU project.
- External links were identified to contribute to the sustainability of the HPU including community partners, national, European and International HPU networks.
- Funding and/or human resources were also recognised as key factors to ensuring the sustainability of the HPU.

Building healthy public policy

- Policies and practices already in existence at the university were largely viewed positively and as being sympathetic to health and wellbeing.
- Although the university was generally seen as supportive in this regard, variability and lack of coordination due to the nature of its

multisite campus were found to be a challenge.

- The HPU was perceived as being able to make a contribution to the development of a healthy university policy, through increased awareness of its potential to improve health and wellbeing of staff and therefore further motivation to formalise HPU concepts into university-related policy development.
- Good practice examples of healthy university policy should be used as guides for future policy development within the university.

Creating supportive environments

- Campuses were generally perceived as welcoming, open and accessible, and safe and secure, but with some variability between sites, with some campuses feeling isolated and unwelcoming.
- With regard to the social environment and recreation, there was a perceived lack of communal space where staff could relax or socialise.
- HPU was perceived as holding great potential for increasing the focus on how different types of spaces are used for staff and students, with a strong recommendation

to engage more fully with Estates and Facilities Management in planning future building design and use.

Strengthening community action

- Opportunities for involvement, consultation and participation in decision making at the university were perceived as being a positive way in which to strengthen community action. Success was considered achievable through meaningful involvement and participation and through improved communication channels.
- The HPU project was perceived as having contributed to strengthening community action by encouraging participation, for example as part of the HPU-funded interventions.
- A more detailed HPU communication plan could improve efforts to raise awareness of HPU activities and to engage more broadly with the staff and student community.
- Communication mechanisms were seen as crucial during times of uncertainty, as is currently the case in higher education. Transparency of messages and engagement with staff were key elements for

consideration in the future development of the HPU.

- The project was perceived as having been empowering to those involved on the PSG, with potential for concepts of empowerment resulting from the HPU-funded projects. Further exploration of the term 'empowerment' was seen as being required in order that it can become a widely understood concept of the HPU.
- Time and resources available to the HPU project were limited, which in turn limited the opportunities for participation. Awareness of the HPU grew during the project, particularly in the latter stages with increased requests for opportunities to participate.
- Student participation was not great during the project, mainly due to restructuring of the Students' Union. Some opportunities existed through the HPU-funded projects.
- The potential for the HPU to stimulate community-focused projects and action was recognised by the PSG.

Engaging with the wider community

- The university was perceived as being committed to engaging with its wider

community, supported by relevant policies and practices (eg the Widening Participation Strategy, Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP), On Our Doorsteps and Active Student initiatives).

- A suggestion for more time and resources to be formally allocated was recommended in this regard.
- Wider community engagement was considered, although not explored to its full potential due to time and resource limitations of the HPU project. Future opportunities were perceived as existing with strong community links already having been established, for example, the CUPP programme.
- A balance between pursuing the university's core business of teaching and learning and fully embedding community partnerships was recognised as being important.

Public health drivers

- Overall, there was a perceived provision of and access to healthy food and physical activity as well as an awareness of the support and services available for mental health and smoking cessation (as

examples), with variability between different campuses.

- Lack of social space and communal areas were perceived as having a detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing.
- More user-friendly and easily available information about health-related issues was requested to be made available.
- Better coordination and communication of health-promoting initiatives was sought. As such, the HPU was perceived as being a vehicle for public health drivers, with the potential of playing an 'activator' role to disseminate information and to organise activities, linking in with national campaigns for example, and delivered through departments most closely aligned with the topic. Ideally, resources would include funding 'pots' to enable relevant promotions and interventions, as well as building on existing resources.

Core business priorities

- A Health Promoting University was regarded as important for improving the core business of the university.

- Students who attended an HPU were perceived as feeling safe, with a more rounded education, achieving better results and being more employable.
- The HPU strategy was seen as one way of embedding health and wellbeing into the curriculum.
- HPU status was perceived as becoming a tool for making the university distinguishable and thus be good for student and staff recruitment and retention.
- There was uncertainty as to whether HPU had actually improved core business priorities, perhaps due to the lack of awareness from the outset about HPU. The potential for using HPU to improve core business priorities was recognised, with the corporate plan suggested as a key starting point to facilitate this process.
- The growing importance was recognised of being able to demonstrate both internally and externally that the health of the staff and student body is valued, especially with impending fee increases.

Main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the HPU

- **Strengths:** Open exchange of ideas leading to improved increased interlinking of specialist skills; providing a framework and raising awareness of current policy and practice at the university; celebrating successes; tangible project development; demonstration of staff strengths; creating the building blocks and catalyst to take the HPU forward; some success in measuring effectiveness and collation of evidence that the HPU approach made a difference.
- **Weaknesses:** Lack of input from some key stakeholders, including some central departments and academic schools; perceived vagueness around longer term goals of the project at its outset; reliance on individuals to take the HPU agenda forward; inter-departmental (mis)perceptions of competing agendas; lack of an HPU brand for HPU-related marketing and communication; limited project funding.
- **Main opportunities:** the HPU could become part of the overall ethos for the university;

the HPU could contribute to the wider positive student experience; the HPU could positively support changes underway in higher education; the project can be used as a catalyst to move this area forward; wide interest expressed to contribute to future HPU developments; opportunities identified for interdepartmental working; to continue to embed HPU concepts into the university's policies and practices.

- **Main threats:** HPU could either detract from core business or be lost amongst other priorities; lack of recognition and/or interest and therefore understanding of beneficial aspects of the HPU to staff and students; misperception that the HPU could add another layer of bureaucracy to everyday practice; undefined roles and responsibilities in progressing the HPU and lack of ongoing coordination coupled with competing workload pressures; finite resources during a difficult economic period; demotivation and lack of resilience to current changes/financial and other cuts; the multisite/split-site nature of the university was perceived as being a major challenge in terms of variability and lack of consistency.

HPU structures, processes and outcomes

Structures

- Progress was made in developing and maintaining HPU **structures**, in particular the Project Steering Group and HPU website. Indeed, 877 new 'hits' were recorded on the HPU site which aimed to communicate key HPU messages. The PSG acted as the main 'vehicle' to progress the HPU project. Ongoing plans for project management and administration will need to be decided on following completion of the HPU project. Both of the noted structures were perceived as important in moving on from the project phase, with senior management engagement essential in this process.

Processes

- Progress was made in the **processes** enabling the university to become an HPU, in particular the HPU project would act as a catalyst to move forward broader HPU-related issues. Internal developments and engagement with key stakeholders were perceived as the most effective way to establish the university as an HPU.

- Project dissemination took place throughout the pilot project period and helped to raise its profile internally as well as externally. Opportunities exist for the continuation of dissemination of project activities at local, national and international levels. The final report and key outcomes of the project will be disseminated widely during autumn 2011.

Outcomes

- HPU outcomes were varied and included eight HPU-funded interventions. Three of these were aimed at staff, two at students and the remainder at both staff and students. All of the projects contributed to the HPU approach and had the overall aim to improve the health and wellbeing of staff and students.
- Whilst **outcomes** were perceived as being easier to evaluate, time constraints meant that the interventions were evaluated as work in progress. The importance of maintaining contact with national, European and international networks was reinforced.
- The HPU monitoring exercise outlined examples of good practice underway at the university on a broad range of health topics,

with 68 examples collated during the monitored period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To move from project to mainstream by developing the university as a Health Promoting University (HPU) as a mindset/culture underpinned by appropriate principles and values

The university should maintain impetus by continuing to develop as a Health Promoting University as HPU status would be good for business due to increased recruitment, retention, productivity and morale, and reduced sickness and absenteeism. When considering the downturn in the economy, the HPU approach points to the value and cost-effectiveness of long-term investment in the human resources of the university. This applies in terms of both staff and students; for the internal benefit of the university as an institution and its external value to society in terms of social and economic engagement.

There exists a strong business case for the HPU. The HPU approach should be considered as a key part of the university's corporate identity and the image it projects externally to the outside world and in particular distinguishes Brighton from other

universities. Key factors in adopting an 'HPU mindset' were identified as being about culture and communication in order to elicit positive behaviour change amongst staff and students. A way of encouraging this process would be to ensure that the HPU perspective is incorporated into the next corporate plan. Both schools and central departments would provide evidence to support action on achieving relevant elements of the corporate plan thereby integrating HPU into the daily work of the university. The HPU pilot project has put a number of key health-related issues on the table, acting as a catalyst for discussion and development. It should now progress to maintaining an over-arching concept to provide extra added value to related cross-cutting themes (eg sustainability, social and community engagement, external positioning, and corporate identity).

2. To adopt a dedicated organisational infrastructure to facilitate the university HPU strategy

An HPU steering committee should be established as a formally constituted body ie part of the university formal committee structure with direct responsibility to the Vice-Chancellor and chaired by a member of the university Senior Management Team (SMT). This will ensure that the initiative

does not become lost amongst other priorities and receives a high level of strategic importance. Stakeholders at all levels of seniority from across the university (and including representatives of deans, heads of schools, departments, Board of Governors and the Students' Union, for example) should sit on the HPU Steering Committee. The committee should develop a work plan (see Recommendation 3). Its overall remit would be to continue to work towards embedding core HPU principles into policy and practices within the university.

In addition to the steering committee, consideration should be given to building a site-based infrastructure. This would ensure strong support and action from, and jointly shared ownership by, all stakeholders across the university. One way to achieve this would be to widen the scope and remit of the current Environmental Action Networks (EANs) to include the HPU perspective, and also that their membership be expanded to include, for example, a Student Services representative. EANs would feed back to their appropriate dean, the Sustainable Development Coordination Unit and the HPU steering committee.

3. HPU work plan.

An HPU work plan should be developed for at least the next two years with specific objectives, targets and deliverables. Part of this plan would be an incremental review of specified university policies and practices related to health and wellbeing in light of the HPU strategy in preparation for the awaited national healthy universities award scheme.

4. Coordination and resources

Consideration should be given to the financial and personnel resources required to facilitate the HPU approach in the current and future economic climate and in the absence of new funding.

This can be achieved either by part-time secondment/s, in kind support or top-slicing from within existing stakeholder faculties, schools and departments. It is advised that an HPU activator be appointed to support the work of the steering committee.

Appropriate coordination through the steering committee will ensure the HPU complements and supports other cross-cutting agendas in a time of economic uncertainty. The committee should identify committed HPU champions and coordinators in different areas in relation to health

and wellbeing. The work of the committee would need to be reported on and reviewed and it would need a home in the existing committee structure.

As well as relating to national healthy university developments, attention should be given to building potentially beneficial links to the growing European network of HPUs in order to learn good practice from international partners involved and apply in due course for potential European funding.

5. Comprehensive HPU communication and branding

To improve communication within the university and ensure high visibility for all HPU-related issues, a dedicated comprehensive internal HPU communication strategy should be developed. This process was started during the HPU pilot project (eg HPU website, dissemination outputs etc) and should be built upon in a systematic way involving key stakeholders from across the university. In order for students/staff to engage more fully with the HPU concept a separate branding strategy/logo should be considered along with a simple message of explanation. Branding itself, within a university with social and community responsibility amongst other values, can only be a benefit and should be celebrated as such and used within the university

promotional materials. The Marketing and Communications department should be fully engaged with this process. Having a brand that people could identify separately with should make it easier to embed HPU concepts into the university culture and policy.

6. HPU should be appropriately marketed across the university and its relevant communities

Linked to the above communication strategy, HPU needs to be further embedded into the culture of the university. The process cannot be imported and HPU needs to be championed by key stakeholders across the university including at departmental level and through managers' meetings with the potential for incorporating HPU onto their regular agendas include Senior Management Team (SMT), Deans' Group, faculty management groups, and school management teams, for example. Committed 'product' champions are needed as part of a social marketing strategy. Senior management must be engaged in this process in order that it is successful. It should be included as a required element in the development of any school or department plan or in the development of any policy/strategy, or in the annual reporting phase

that all heads complete as part of the academic health review process. A core of stakeholders, such as key central departments, as well as academic schools and the Students' Union should be concerned with facilitating this interconnectedness, which is important to maintain.

A dedicated education and training strategy is recommended to be developed to ensure all staff, students and other members of the university community are aware of, fully understand and are actively engaged in the HPU approach. This strategy could be rolled out incrementally across the university; initially it could focus on specific target groups, such as senior managers, or inclusion of a health remit could be fed into the university training and staff development processes, for example, using the new staff development review (SDR), for example.

There are numerous examples from across the university where HPU concepts are already embedded into the curriculum, these should be built upon.

The current HPU pilot website should be expanded and streamlined to act as a one-stop shop and interactive conduit to provide a focal point for this communication strategy. It should be linked to other

existing information sources. The reach needs to be extended especially beyond those involved in delivering HPU-related areas or actively engaged in the project. This could be improved perhaps through the specific HPU communication/promotion plan, more workshops and an annual HPU conference.

7. Student recruitment and retention

The Students' Union should be more actively engaged in the HPU steering committee. Wellbeing should be part of the student charter, thereby part of the wider student experience. The university should be clear about what resides in its wider student experience agenda and what is being offered outside the academic curriculum. (See revised the Career Planning Agreement for example, which includes wellbeing as an area being recommended as important to be covered within the curriculum.)

Student recruitment and retention is very important. The HPU perspective should build upon the positive reasons why students already come to Brighton.

8. Staff wellbeing

Two HPU-funded interventions have highlighted the importance of good communication, sense of belonging and social support to staff wellbeing. The faculty-based pilot communication intervention should be rolled out to other faculties. Its recommendations are being discussed by the relevant Dean's Faculty Group with a possibility of feeding these ideas into the Personnel department to influence its management training programme.

The momentum gained in the second intervention, the staff consultation exercise, should be maintained and brought to fruition.

9. Community links

HPU has provided an opportunity to highlight contemporary issues around sustainability, social purpose and engagement, for example, linked to the green interests within the Brighton and Hove City Council. Existing resources such as CUPP have great potential to promote the HPU perspective.

It is a good time to talk about HPU-type issues and to engage actively with students. Committed 'product' champions are needed to ensure

community links are developed and maintained and are underpinned by principles of health promotion in all the university sites.

10. HPU monitoring and evaluation

It is recommended that the HPU steering committee takes responsibility with appropriate resources, for the assessment, quality audit and evaluation of the impact, processes and outcomes of the HPU approach over time. As part of this work, a data set of HPU indicators should be developed and implemented in order to establish a strong evidence base for the HPU initiative.



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