



UK HEALTHY UNIVERSITIES NETWORK – NEWS

Network Meeting and Healthy and Sustainable Food Workshop, City University London

A successful Network meeting was held at City University London on 14 November 2013, attended by around 25 people from 14 universities and two national agencies (the Royal Society for Public Health and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education). The morning was devoted to networking and peer support, and a themed workshop on 'Healthy and Sustainable Food' was held in the afternoon – with keynote presentations from Pam Warhurst (Incredible Edible, Todmorden) and Professor Tim Lang (City University London) that succeeded in inspiring, challenging and motivating those present! A **report of the meeting and workshop** is available online, including links to presentations and relevant reports.

If anyone is either progressing food-growing initiatives that link to the **Incredible Edible** concept, or interested in developments in this area, please let us know:

Contact: Mark Dooris, Professor in Health and Sustainability, UCLan mtdooris@uclan.ac.uk

Steering Group – UK Remit Strengthened

Following the decision to expand the remit of the Network from England to the whole of the UK, we have been in discussion with representatives from public health bodies/agencies within England, Northern Ireland and Scotland with a view to extending the membership of the Steering Group (which until now has consisted of representatives from seven universities alongside the Welsh Government). This interest is to be welcomed and offers the opportunity to explore how the Healthy Universities approach can help to deliver against national priorities. It has also been agreed that the Steering Group will seek representation from relevant higher education bodies.

Scottish Update

Gil Barton from the Robert Gordon University (RGU) in Aberdeen and Linda Orr from the University of Dundee (UoD) are continuing to work together to develop an informal Scottish Healthy Universities network. This work has been on-going since January 2011 and although slow, other universities are beginning to show some interest in networking.

Following presentation of findings of the RGU Staff Physical Activity and Wellbeing survey, which were presented at the Faculty of Public Health conference in November 2013, a meeting took place in early December to explore the possibility of Edinburgh University, University of Dundee and Robert Gordon University working together to develop a research and monitoring tool that could be utilised by all universities to establish physical activity levels in the University community. The result of this meeting is that the three institutions, led by Robert Gordon University, are going to put together a research grant bid to seek funding to take this work forward.

Gil Barton has been approached by the Scottish Government following an enquiry, made by a constituent to an MSP, as to why Scottish universities were not part of the UK Healthy University network. This has led to clarification and discussions – and Gil is following this up at the end of January with the Scottish Government.

Linda Orr continues to canvas support for taking the Healthy University initiative forward at the University of Dundee, which has for some time been working with 'Healthy Working Lives' (co-ordinated by Human Resources and Safety Services) and a 'Health and Wellbeing Programme' (Student Services). A meeting is arranged for early February to bring key stakeholders within UoD together to organize a scoping exercise of current activities using the HUs tool.

Gil and Linda have also been approached by representatives from the University of Abertay (President of Student Union) and the University of Glasgow (Director of Health and Wellbeing) – both of whom were seeking more information about how to move forward with becoming health universities. Linda and Gil will maintain contact with both and encourage them to become part of the informal Scottish Healthy University network.

Contact: Gil Barton, Senior Lecturer, Robert Gordon University g.barton1@rgu.ac.uk



Welsh Update

Building on work in schools and pre-schools, a task and finish group was established in 2012 to develop a Healthy and Sustainable FE and HE Programme/Framework. Good progress has been made and an online tool is nearing completion, taking the form of a matrix comprising topics/issues (Mental and emotional health and wellbeing; Physical activity; Healthy and sustainable food; Substance use and misuse; Personal and sexual health and relationships; and Sustainable environment) and themes/focus areas (Governance, leadership and management; Facilities, environment and service provision; Community and communication; Academic, personal, social and professional development).

Importantly, the development supports a continuum approach across the education system, although the terminology used varies to meet the needs of the different sectors of the education system as outlined below.

Aspects of setting life:

Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school	Healthy School	Healthy Further & Higher Education
Leadership and communication	Leadership and communication	Governance, leadership and management
Planning and Delivery	Curriculum	Academic, personal, social and professional development
Ethos and environment	Ethos and environment	Facilities, environment, and service provision
Family and community involvement	Family and community involvement	Community and communication

Health topics:

Healthy & Sustainable Pre-school	Healthy School	Healthy Further & Higher Education
Preliminary phase		
Nutrition and oral health	Food and fitness	Healthy and sustainable food
Physical activity/active play		Physical activity
Mental and emotional health, well-being and relationships	Mental and emotional health and well-being (including workplace health)	Mental and emotional health and well-being
	Personal development and relationships	Personal and sexual health and relationships
Safety, including substances	Substance use and misuse	Substance use and misuse
	Safety	
Environment	Environment (with link to Eco-schools)	Sustainable environment
Hygiene	Hygiene	
Workplace health and well-being		Refer to Corporate Health Standard



REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Food Growing/Edible Campus

If anyone is either progressing food-growing initiatives that link to the **Incredible Edible** concept, or interested in developments in this area, please let us know:

Contact: Mark Dooris, Professor in Health and Sustainability, UCLan mtdooris@uclan.ac.uk

Co-ordinator Job Descriptions

The Network Co-ordination Team is keen to gather job descriptions from HEIs that have established co-ordinator posts for their Healthy University or related initiatives.

Contact: Please email to Sandra Brookes, Healthy Settings Unit sbrookes2@uclan.ac.uk

WEBSITE AND ONLINE TOOLKIT

As many Network members will know, the HEFCE-funded project **Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities** enabled the Network to be strengthened and for the **Healthy Universities Website** and the **Healthy Universities Toolkit** (comprising a **Self Review Tool**, **Guidance Packages** and **Case Studies**) to be developed.

New case studies can be submitted, using the **template** form, which is currently being simplified in response to feedback from Network members.

Since it was set up in 2010, **10,218 unique visitors** from **129 different countries** have made **17,653 visits** to the website. The statistics indicates that interest and engagement has continued to increase over time, as shown in the table below:

Time Period	Number of Visits	Number of Unique Visitors	% New Visits
July-December 2010	1490	778	48.52%
July-December 2011	1596	954	55.01%
July-December 2012	2448	1574	60.38%
July-December 2013	3357	2263	63.99%

UPDATES FROM NETWORK MEMBERS

Manchester Metropolitan University: Research Project

Manchester Metropolitan University has obtained a small amount of internal funding to undertake a project, which will explore what students believe, is a healthy university. The project aims to support the work already done by the UK Healthy Universities network. Twelve universities have expressed an interest to participate in the project across England, Scotland and Wales. The project will involve two phases of data collection. Phase 1, which has already begun, involves student surveys (approx. 50 in each university). Phase 2, which will be carried out in February and March involves focus groups (possibly 2) in a selection of the participating universities. The findings will be disseminated to the Healthy Universities network and across the universities who took part.

Contact: Maxine Holt, m.holt@mmu.ac.uk



University of Edinburgh: Consultation Workshop on Healthy University Concept

A unique Healthy University event, preceded by a student survey, was hosted by the Centre for Sport and Exercise and the Student Experience Project at the University of Edinburgh on 19 November 2013. It involved an eclectic mix of staff and students (32 in total) from across the University's academic and service communities. It was led by an independent facilitator and generated a wealth of ideas and constructive suggestions around themes such as food, access to activity and a pleasing environment. The workshop achieved important "buy-in" from the institution, not an easy task when there are 30,000 students and nearly 8,000 staff to consider. It will be important to maintain that momentum, with regular updates and exchanges. The consensus from the workshop was that:

- Healthy University is a concept worth pursuing and could benefit the student and staff population
- A strategic group should be established of key members to take steps forward
- Reference should be made to groups such as Healthy Working Lives, where we have already gained accreditation
- A staff resource should be looked at to deliver/lead on the Healthy University concept.

The University has allocated funding for 1-year only but will recruit a Healthy University Co-ordinator with expertise in Health Promotion and a Communications / Web / IT post – in summary, one post to manage the project content and a second post to communicate the information across a vast institution. It is anticipated that both posts will be part-time. If any University has a job description which you are happy to share for one or both posts, please could you get in touch ASAP?

Contact: Louise Campbell, louise.campbell@ed.ac.uk

Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen: Fit for the Future

The establishment of Robert Gordon University (RGU) as a healthy university was formally approved by the Strategic Planning and Resource Group (SPARG) of the University in July 2012. A formal 'Fit for the Future' committee was established with representatives from across the University as a whole. This committee is chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Health and Social Care. The remit of the committee is broad and it reports into the formal strategic planning framework of the University. Dr Steve Boorman is an external advisor to the committee.



Fit for the Future is designed to improve the health of staff and students at RGU by providing opportunities for physical activity in the workplace as well as a wide range of interventions to promote health improvement such as smoking cessation, alcohol awareness, sexual health awareness and stress & anxiety reduction. It therefore has the potential to have a direct positive effect on the health outcomes of staff and students. As the programme was only launched last year, there has not yet been a formal evaluation; however, informal feedback has been very positive to date. A monthly online magazine 'New You' was launched in September 2013 aimed at both staff and students. The magazine has monthly themes with September being 'physical activity' month which provided a range of activities and information on the importance of physical activity. In house specialists feed in each month with a case study highlighted monthly on a member of staff or a student who has a story to tell relating to health and wellbeing. The initiative takes a health promotion and prevention approach encouraging self-management and awareness.

The first major piece of work was carried out in March 2013 to look at Staff Physical Activity and Wellbeing and an online survey and focus groups were conducted with staff from across the University. The findings were presented at the Faculty of Public Health Conference in November 2013. This work is informing the development of staff initiatives aimed at increasing physical activity and improving overall wellbeing. A student Physical Activity and Wellbeing Survey is being carried out in spring 2014, in order to inform strategies aimed at promoting physical activity and wellbeing across the student population.

Contact: Gil Barton g.barton1@rgu.ac.uk; <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/healthy-university>



Nottingham University: Work, Health and Wellbeing

The School of Health Sciences at the University of Nottingham has set up a dedicated Work, Health and Wellbeing Programme and Committee to support the welfare of its 291 staff based at sites across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire. This pioneering programme is the first of its kind at the university, and is led by Dr Holly Blake (Committee Chair), who has recently received a Vice-Chancellor's Achievement Award for her commitment to promoting and supporting health and wellbeing for university and NHS staff. The programme, which is supported by a cross-school committee, has been running for over a year. Work has involved setting up a dedicated health and wellbeing website with resources and signposting to local services, data collection through staff health needs surveys, and delivery of a range of initiatives to support physical health of staff including physical activity challenges (e.g. pedometer, stair-climbing), weight loss challenges (e.g. 'the biggest loser', 'waist-watchers'), structured exercise classes (tai chi, yoga, circuit training), sporting events, general health checks (wall-squat test, body mass index, resting heart rate, blood pressure, waist-to-hip ratio) and smoking cessation advice. The programme includes social activities and community events, development of supportive materials for staff, and a range of initiatives to support staff in managing stress and coping with change at work (e.g. bespoke training on positive thinking in the workplace, emotional resilience and coping with change, toolkits for identifying and managing stress within teams, individual and group coaching sessions) and relaxation sessions (e.g. mindfulness meditation, progressive relaxation, and therapeutic massage).

Contact: Dr Holly Blake, School of Health Sciences, University of Nottingham. Holly.Blake@nottingham.ac.uk

Sheffield Hallam University: Student Wellness and Hallam Health Champions

The Student Wellness project is co-ordinated by Anna Myers, a Hallam graduate. It is a student-led healthy lifestyle programme delivered by fully trained 2nd and 3rd year Physical Activity, Health and Exercise Science and Sport and Exercise students called Hallam Health Champions. This is the 3rd year that the project has been delivered.

The overall aim of Student Wellness is to develop a sustainable framework to engage with students in line with Sheffield Hallam University key drivers and the Healthy Universities 'whole system approach' to student health.

The specific aims of the Hallam Health Champions Programme are to:

1. Impact the **employability** of students who delivered the lifestyle intervention by providing students with experience and transferable skills to gain employment in the physical activity and health industry.
2. Impact the **health and wellbeing** of students who participate in the lifestyle intervention by empowering them to make positive changes to their lifestyle through education and self-monitoring.

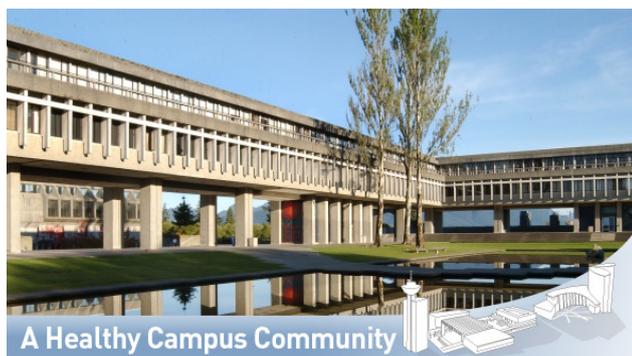
The project addresses strategic university and departmental objectives as well as addressing wider public health issues such as physical inactivity – and the healthy lifestyle intervention consists of individualised one-to-one consultations, healthy lifestyle advice, a health MOT (height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, waist-to-hip ratio, body composition and aerobic capacity), on-going peer mentoring, progress assessment and signposting to other services.

Contact: Anna Myers, StudentWellnessProject@shu.ac.uk or visit <http://hallamunion.org/student-life/student-wellness>





Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada



Simon Fraser University's (SFU) Health Promotion Unit has adopted a systemic approach to health promotion which is modelled after the framework set out in the 1998 **WHO Health Promoting Universities** publication. Through this work, theoretical understandings of systemic health promotion have been moved into action through the Healthy Campus Community Initiative. This initiative builds upon literature and best practice drawn from workplace, and elementary and secondary educational settings to impact wellbeing and student success systemically within higher education.

A national launch event for the **Healthy Campus Community Initiative Video** was held on 15 August, with Professor Mark Dooris from UCLan and the UK Network participating in a Question and Answer Session via live online link.

An article **Building healthy campus communities: The adaptation of a workplace tool to understand better student wellbeing within higher education settings** has recently been published in Education and Health.

Contact: Alisa Stanton, alisa_stanton@sfu.ca, www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity.html

Teesside University: Work, Study and Health

At Teesside University we have been developing a project called Work, Study and Health at Teesside University in partnership with Middlesbrough Council's Public Health team. It forms part of their Middlesbrough wide Healthy Settings work which also involves the local college and James Cook Hospital. There are three main strands to the project which include:

- Carrying out a health needs assessment questionnaire and focus groups with students and staff
- A collection and analysis of all existing data regarding student and staff health and well-being
- An asset mapping exercise to identify current practice ongoing across the University which is supportive of student and staff health and well-being.

After a lot of preparation we are now ready to launch the project on 27 January 2014. We are hopeful that we will obtain a good response rate and we are looking forward to finding out the results. But the hard work doesn't stop there. Once we have the final report we will be working with the Public Health team to develop an action plan with the aim of implementing new services or activities where needed. Some of these services may possibly be shared across the settings in Middlesbrough as part of the wider Healthy Settings project being developed by Middlesbrough Council.

This is a very exciting project for us which we will be working very hard on over the coming months. I look forward to being able to update you further as the project progresses.

Contact: Hazel Wright, Well-being Services Coordinator, Teesside University H.Wright@tees.ac.uk



University College Cork, Ireland: Health Matters – Tackling Alcohol Related Harm

University College Cork (UCC) has developed its university-wide action plan with the aim to officially becoming an accredited Health Promoting University. The name we have chosen for the initiative is UCC Health Matters and for the past few months we have been working on increasing the visibility and awareness of this initiative on campus.

Efforts made in UCC to tackle the complex issues around alcohol related harm have been recognised at the recent very prestigious Irish Healthcare Awards, the ‘Oscars of Irish Healthcare’. UCC Health Matters had double success, winning the Best Public Health Initiative and even more impressively, winning An Duais Mhór (the overall award) ahead of 116 other entries, for its entry, University College Cork – Tackling Alcohol Related Harm. You can read and ‘like and share’ the winning submission and see photos of the presentation of the awards either **online** or on the **UCC Health Matters Facebook Page**.

We are all aware that the issue of alcohol related harm is complex and challenging. The award is in recognition of the efforts being made, and although it is gratifying to be acknowledged for efforts it is of course a reality that there continue to be real difficulties in the area. The Alcohol Action Network Group of UCC Health Matters is happy to receive constructive comments as to how we can build on the existing work in this area so if you have any ideas or suggestions, please get in touch!

Contact: Deirdre Griffin, Health Promotion Project Worker, hppw@ucc.ie; Tel: (00353) 214902311;

Web: <http://www.ucc.ie/en/studenthealth/>; Facebook: [UCCStudentHealth](#); Twitter: [@uccstudnthealth](#);

Youtube: [UCCSTUDENTHEALTH](#)

University of Central Lancashire: Health Champions and Liaison with UCLan Sport

The Health Champion student volunteering project has had a really positive start. We became an accredited Royal Society of Public Health training centre in summer 2013 in order to deliver the training course associated with Health Champion work. We set a target to recruit 20 student volunteers by September and had over 30 students sign-up for the project, drawn from a range of courses (e.g. Health Studies, Pharmacy, Built Environment and Nutrition and Exercise Sciences). The students have been meeting weekly and enjoyed taking the training course. In November we created three groups to lead on different health topics and tasks linked into the existing Healthy University Action Plan. The Health Champions have been supported in developing their own project objectives and evaluation plans, and the following projects are working across UCLan and the Students’ Union:

- Promotion of Headroom – the student mental wellbeing website
- Involvement in Green Week – focusing on healthy eating and reduction of food waste
- Involvement in OurUCLan Student Engagement Week – promoting sport and social opportunities

The Healthy University and the UCLan Sport initiatives have been proactive in working more closely together over the last year. This has resulted in increased joint working and making links across physical activity and mental health. For example, the HU initiative has supported the Sport4U project in reviewing and developing processes to capture information related to wellbeing linked to taking part in the Sport4U activities. For future funding and development opportunities, it will be useful to highlight mental wellbeing as well as physical outcomes of such a project. Also, the Healthy University is involved in planning an event with **State of Mind** in February. This is being led by the School of Sport, Tourism and the Outdoors and aims to raise issues related to mental wellbeing within sport (from elite sport involvement through to sports fans) and to discuss with students how the curriculum could be developed to include these issues.

Contact: Sharon Doherty, Healthy University Co-ordinator, UCLan shdoherty@uclan.ac.uk



University of Sydney, Australia: A Whole-of-University Approach to Health and Wellbeing

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY PLACES, HEALTHY POLICIES

OUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2013

- **Travel and physical activity behaviour survey:** 3700 of our staff and students reported on how they get to, from and around our campuses
- **Evaluation of team walking challenge:** more than 500 staff took part in the Global Corporate Challenge, reporting improvements in their physical activity, energy and wellbeing
- **Mental wellbeing working group** launched on World Mental Health Day
- **Eat better working group** ready to pilot a healthy-eating initiative with the University of Sydney Union (USU) in 2014
- **Healthy Sydney University** initiative briefed to and keenly supported by the Senior Executive Group.

A HEALTHY LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

OUR PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2014

- work with Campus Infrastructure and Services (CIS) to implement and evaluate a **bicycle-loan scheme**
- pilot **menu kilojoule labelling** in USU food outlets on campus
- collaborate with CIS to **embed health** into the University's Building Design Standards
- work with the Institute of Teaching and Learning and faculties to **incorporate health** into our graduate attributes
- pilot a project to **encourage incidental physical activity** on campus
- endorse O-Week activities that **represent health** – look for the flag on campus that signifies Healthy Sydney University.

Get involved in 2014. Find out more on our website. sydney.edu.au/healthy-sydney-university

On any given day, more than 65,000 students and staff come to the University of Sydney to learn, work, live and play; the majority at our Camperdown campus in inner city Sydney, with many others across our network of campuses in the Sydney metropolitan area and beyond. A large and diverse community of students, staff and visitors, the University of Sydney is in many ways akin to a small town of its own.

In June 2012, the University's Senior Executive Group endorsed the **Healthy Sydney University** implementation plan; a whole-of-university commitment to apply the expertise of our research and professional staff and students to support and promote the health and wellbeing of our very own population. Recognising the breadth of existing projects, services and policies across the university

that promote or support health (either as a primary objective or incidental outcome), a fundamental goal of our implementation plan includes the development of an integrated and coordinated strategy *without* the establishment of any additional structures. In this regard, the Healthy Sydney University approach is very much guided by our intention to make existing health-promoting activities and structures more visible; to seek opportunities to connect or expand these; to promote and facilitate new collaborative opportunities across the university; and to promote the implementation of lessons learned. Since sign-off of our implementation plan 18 months ago, the appetite across the University to achieve a healthy environment for all has become very apparent. Governance arrangements designed to embed the concept and principles of a Healthy University in all facets of the university's business are operational, and Healthy Sydney University Champions now exist across the university at all levels. Building a diverse network of academic and professional staff and student champions has been a critical factor in achieving the whole-of-university approach we hope will sustain Healthy Sydney University over time.

A rolling platform of evidence-informed and evidence-generating projects conducted under the banner of Healthy Sydney University are now operational. All projects are coordinated by one of four theme-focused working groups (Eat Better; Move More, Sit Less; Mental Wellbeing; Embedding) Chaired by a subject area expert, with group membership comprising a diverse mix of professional and academic staff, students and representatives from across the university's faculties and professional services units. All projects align with recognised key performance indicators on health and wellbeing being and are focussed across our three key action areas: *healthy people, healthy places and healthy policies*. Working Groups are supported by a full-time Healthy Sydney University Senior Project Officer who oversees all HSU activities under guidance of the HSU Chairperson. A limited number of small seed funding grants (generally upper limit of AUD\$5000) are available annually to seed working group projects with the expectation that seed funding will be used to assist the funding of consumables or non-consumables needed for measuring the impact of interventions or strategies with university-based outcomes.

Contact: Tessa Piper, tessa.piper@sydney.edu.au; www.sydney.edu.au/healthy-sydney-university

“What warms the heart about this initiative is not just that it involves professional and academic staff and also students and organisations that cut a slice right across the University; but also that we begin to live what it is that we’re learning, and we learn too from the way that we live... This isn’t just a whole lot of theory...this is actually beginning to affect the way that we live, and therefore the way our community lives more generally.”

Dr Michael Spence, Vice Chancellor



FEATURE: 'SPIRITUAL' HEALTH

Are we ignoring the 'spiritual' as a component part of being 'healthy' (and being part of the healthy university setting)?

Years of considering models of health and wellbeing expose the reader to a wealth of theories and complex interactions. Many of these are measurable and lend themselves to metrics; sickness/absence is an obvious one, student retention and assessment performance would be another. We continue to explore the links between physical and mental health and (thankfully) recognise that there are associated issues of stigma and disclosure which are very current topics for discussion in UK universities. This feature is an invitation to begin a debate (and possible workstream) about the role of the 'spiritual' within a healthy university.

In an increasingly secular society mention of 'spiritual' seems to conjure for some the rites and ceremonies of religious belief, while for other arch-rationalists (such as Richard Dawkins) the 'spirit' remains a fey and elusive piece of effemera that cannot be measured and quantified (and is therefore 'unworthy' of study):

"I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world." **Richard Dawkins**

However, this writer would suggest that to ignore the role of the spirit, and the spirital, within a healthy university is to make a fundamental error, and blinds institutions to a serious component in health and wellbeing.

If anyone is interested in exploring the area of the 'spiritual' within the Healthy University context, please get in touch, with a view to drawing together a group that might take this discussion forward and explore the potential for collaborative work.

Contact: Ian Kenvyn, i.kenvyn@leedstrinity.ac.uk

OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

Beating Eating Disorders: Raising Awareness at Universities

Eating disorders affect 1.6million people in the UK, that's around 1 in 39 people. That's thousands of students studying at university who will be affected by eating disorders. Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses. They have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness and one in five of the most seriously affected will die prematurely. However they are treatable conditions and full recovery is possible.

Although eating disorders can affect anyone of any age at any time, we know those most at risk of developing an eating disorder are girls and young women aged 12-20. The University environment presents a number of risk factors to those who may be pre-disposed to developing an eating disorder including academic pressures, financial concerns, making new friends, moving away from home and living independently. The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011), in a section on eating disorders in their landmark report entitled **Mental Health of Students in Higher Education**, said: "There is a relatively high prevalence of eating disorders in student populations...Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are widely recognised in the student population."

That's why Beating Eating Disorders (BEAT) is raising awareness of eating disorders with students and universities.

Further Information: <http://www.b-eat.co.uk/support-us/get-involved/campaigning/university-campaign/>



People and Planet: Green League

The Green League is the only comprehensive and independent league table of UK universities ranked by environmental and ethical performance. It is compiled annually by the UK's largest student campaigning network, People & Planet.

The 2013 results show Manchester Metropolitan University in 1st place – with eight out of the top ten institutions being members of the UK Healthy Universities Network.

Healthy and Sustainable Food: Food for Life Catering Mark

What does the Food for Life Catering Mark mean to you?



Since its launch in 2009 the Food for Life Catering Mark has become the catering industry's highest-regarded award for healthy and sustainable menus. The Catering Mark was established by the Soil Association, which is the UK's leading charity campaigning for sustainable food and farming, and the UK's largest certifier of organic produce.

In the Soil Association's experience of working with university caterers, they have found that the university sector often leads in innovation and best practice. This has materialised with over a quarter of the universities in the UK having achieved a Catering Mark, or in the awards process. This shows that there is motivation within the sector to recognise catering best practice in terms of health and sustainability.

A key reason for the abundance of Catering Mark awards within the university sector (the Catering Mark can be awarded to caterers in any sector) is that precedence is showing that it's good for business. Research (**Organic Market Report 2013**) shows that generation Y is a key consumer group of organic and ethically and sustainably produced food, and this higher awareness of food is driving universities to offer on-campus catering which reflects this.

Where a university has achieved a Catering Mark, the student reaction has been overwhelmingly positive, and the award can help to add value to the good catering service a university offers. If you'd like to find out more about which universities already have a Catering Mark click [here](#), and for case studies click [here](#).

The quality of the Catering Mark as a tangible tool for benchmarking is also evident in the inclusion of the Catering Mark as an indicator in People & Planet's annual Green League. The Catering Mark plays a key role in the "sustainable food" category, with universities scoring points if they have a Catering Mark. Most of the top 10 universities in the 2013 Green League had a Catering Mark, and the percentage of top ranking universities with the Catering Mark is expected to rise in 2014.

Further Information: If you'd like to know more about applying for the Catering Mark click [here](#), or contact Suzi Gammon at the Soil Association on sgammon@soilassociation.org or 0117 914 2434.