

Food and Health at UWE

Summary

Food is an issue that clearly highlights the interconnectedness of health and sustainable development agendas. UWE have developed a whole-system approach ensuring that they focus on multi-pronged aspects of food and health including procurement, catering, retail, education and research. This case study highlights what has been achieved, what is still to do and the challenges a comprehensive food and health strategy presents for universities.

Aims/Objectives

UWE is committed to actively supporting access to healthy and sustainable food for students, staff and the wider community. The UWE approach is multi-pronged and focuses on procurement, catering, retail, education and research. The aim of the Food and Health @UWE initiative is to:

- continue to integrate this approach across the university and to increase the percentage of local, seasonal and organic food procurement
- commit engagement in the Workplace Wellbeing Charter
- further engage staff and students around food and health using creative and new ways of communication
- further develop education at the point of sale with regard to the sourcing, cooking and nutritional value of ingredients
- support students (particularly First Year undergraduates) to prepare more fresh food from basic ingredients
- ensure that food sourcing, procurement and educational information is accessible to wider communities when visiting UWE
- Commitment to Food For Life standard in main refectory, with further roll out across campuses

What did you do?

Evidence based nutritional principles are adhered to by encouraging people to eat less saturated fat, eat more fibre rich carbohydrates, eat less sugar and eat less salt aligned with the Food Standards Agency 'Eatwell Plate' initiative.

The catering department also aims to ensure:

- a minimum 70% of all main menu items are prepared by the UWE team of chefs.
- All fresh pork, beef and lamb are locally sourced within the South West to Red Tractor standard.
- All shell and liquid eggs are free range.
- Low fat individual spread alternatives are provided. Butter and cream in recipes has been replaced with a lower fat substitute.

- Flavoured 'olive oils' are introduced to accompany main meal choices e.g. chilli, garlic.
- The salad bar consists of fresh raw vegetables and three low fat compound salads. In house produced salad boxes with nutritional information on the label.
- Salad dressings are all low fat with a major emphasis on flavoured olive oils and vinegars.
- Lo-salt sachets are provided as an alternative to salt.
- Where possible, salt, sugar and saturated fat content of recipes is reduced. Butter and cream in recipes has been replaced with a lower fat substitute. Salt has been brought in line with government guidelines.
- Chips are sourced from McCains, and provide the healthiest chip on the market. The potato absorbs the least oil during the frying process.
- Only semi-skimmed milk is used in all catering outlets. All our milk is organic.
- Provide a range of fresh fruit for sale daily
- Use a wide range of fresh seasonal local vegetables, local supplier has been engaged for prepared vegetables.
- All vegetables are cooked 'al dente' and not overcooked to ensure all nutrients are retained in the vegetables. Steamers employed to reduce salt content and water use.
- Cook less more often cooking practices in place and maximum holding times for all food products
- Provide carbohydrate enhanced dishes and products for sale
- Menus contain traffic light system as well as good eating tips e.g. 'mushrooms are a good source of selenium and helps fight prostate cancer'.
- Cooking methods changed to emphasise 'healthier eating'. e.g. breakfast items oven baked, mushrooms poached in veg stock etc.

What was the context / background?

Access to fresh fruit and vegetables is enhanced by the market stalls on campus every day at some sites. UWE has a number of newly refurbished catering outlets hence improving the food outlets and environments to encourage staff and students to take proper breaks from work and study with continually improving access to a wider choice of healthy food and drinks.

UWE is a Fairtrade university and its catering Services provide Fairtrade tea and coffee in all our outlets. Catering Services will at times e-mail out to all staff special menus and promotions that will be available throughout the year which adheres to its active communication strategy around healthy and sustainable food including education at the point of sale.

Staff can order locally sourced menus. Support for students to improve their cooking skills is available through UWE run cookery demonstrations and taster sessions. Reducing disposable cup usage campus wide by campaigning to encourage staff to 'use their mug for the environment' rewarded by a reduced tariff. UWE filtered still and sparkling bottled water has reduced the use of plastic water bottles for all meetings and conferences.

The University works closely with the Soil Association to ensure that their procurement is achieved as locally and sustainably as possible. The University's research agenda in the area of food and health is strong and includes externally funded multidisciplinary research projects involving public health, environmental health, built environment, psychology. The integration of different perspectives of this work within multiple curricula can enhance student learning.

How was it organised and who was involved?

We are currently working with the Soil Association towards Bronze accreditation for our main refectory; this will be a stepping stone to the Silver which is our main goal.

We currently are MSC accredited and hold a Good Egg award.

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter: we have earned commitment level and are working towards the next stage, this is evaluated twice a year.

The Healthy University Group works on initiatives that promote a healthier lifestyle. It encompasses all levels of commitment and encourages all to take part in some form of activity to improve health and wellbeing.

What resources did you need?

A strong commitment from the staff associated with food procurement and production is essential to not only achieving these standards but maintaining them. There is a long audit trail which has to be monitored and corrected as the food market changes. This has involved restructuring the department as well as training for the staff concerned.

Financial commitment takes two forms,

1. support for staff and training
2. lowering of margins to make healthy options affordable and in some cases cheaper than the unhealthy options

Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?

It is possible to monitor retail figures for all catered food produced at UWE in response to particular promotions, information at the point of sale, food traffic light system, presentation of food (e.g. salad dressings served separately). Recent staff usage in the 'use your own cup' campaign has increased steadily from 2008 when the initiative was introduced.

An increase in production and sales of in house products across all campuses. Recent student and staff surveys show that improved food standards have been recognised and there is a demand for more across all areas of the university.

How did it draw on or contribute to a Healthy University Whole System Approach?

Staff and students are generally interested in food. UWE is taking advantage of this interest by using a range of activities and approaches that ultimately can enhance health and wellbeing. Encouraging staff and students to eat more healthily and to enjoy an enhanced food culture at all UWE catered outlets is likely to impact on work and learning productivity. Newly refurbished catering outlets and dining areas enhances both the staff and student experience.

Future Plans

Achieving Silver standard in all refectories on all campuses

Development of community produce growing and purchasing from within Bristol

Nutritional information for all main course dishes at point of sale

Development of Fruit and Veg stalls on other campuses

Commitment of new vending sites to include free drinking water fountains

Expansion of in house prepared foods

Key Learning Points

Universities are large organisations serving many different needs when it comes to food across students, staff and visitors. The scale of this endeavour is huge and involves the complexity of nutritional information on all UWE catered food, the accessibility of a range of food, healthy methods of preparation and cooking needing to be understood by purchasers, sustainable procurement achieved in terms of local, organic and seasonal food. Non-catered food on retail sale needs again to be healthy and sustainable wherever possible. Support given to students in particular to enjoy healthy and sustainable food and to cook creatively is important. Success can be achieved through the dedicated and creative hospitality team with a committed Senior Management. The strong links between the UWE Healthy University Group, the Sustainability Board and hospitality have resulted in a well-coordinated a focus on healthy and sustainable food and food procurement.

Thematic Categories (tick any that apply to your case study)

Method		Topic		Population Group	
Campaign / Event	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol /Substance Misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	Built Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food / Healthy Eating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wider Community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policy / Procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whole System Approach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Physical Activity / Active Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Health	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Sustainable Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
		Tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>		
		Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

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