HEALTHY UNIVERSITY

UCLan established a Healthy University (HU) initiative in 1995, and has become a national and international leader in this field. This newsletter provides information on the initiative for internal and external partners. The HU focuses on a range of issues relevant to students and staff, such as mental health, drugs, relationships, sexual health, transport, food and exercise. HU activities include policy development, training, campaigns, service developments, research and curriculum links.

“UCLan was one of the first universities with the vision to establish a HU initiative and is now internationally regarded as a leader in the field,” said Dr Mark Dooris, Director of UCLan’s Healthy Settings Development Unit, based within the School of Public Health and Clinical Sciences. “Its success has led to the creation of our Unit which has further strengthened the University’s role in public health at regional, national and international levels.”

The HU has a steering group and Sharon Doherty is the HU Co-ordinator, providing public health expertise and the initiative contributes to policy, planning, partnership development and networking through convening working groups and participating in relevant committees. In this way, the HU uses a ‘whole university approach’ in identifying issues that affect health, action planning, monitoring and evaluating progress against agreed targets.

A University-wide initiative which impacts upon UCLan’s mainstream activities. It involves staff and students from across the University and brings benefits to the whole campus and its close neighbours. It compliments and works alongside a number of strategic priorities that address health and well-being – such as UCLan Sport, the Travel Plan, Sustainable Development and Student Experience.

“UCLan continues to pioneer developments through its Healthy University. The initiative's achievements both within UCLan and in the wider world have been remarkable - I believe it has made a real difference to the health and quality of life of both students and staff.”

Malcolm McVicar, Vice Chancellor.

Growing the Healthy University Concept

“The Healthy University approach aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health, well-being and sustainability of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.” www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk
Healthy Universities is one example of the healthy settings approach, which has also been applied through programmes such as Healthy Cities, Healthy Schools and Health Promoting Hospitals (for more information, see www.uclan.ac.uk/hsdu).

The approach is underpinned by an understanding that the promotion and improvement of health requires action on its wider social, environmental and economic determinants, as well as preventive and therapeutic interventions. Barton and Grant’s Health Map illustrates the range of determinants of health from individual lifestyle choices to built and natural environments.

“The healthy settings approach is not just about delivering interventions in a range of contexts, it adopts a whole system perspective and is concerned to make the actual places and social systems in which people spend their time supportive to health,” said Dr Mark Dooris. “Preston is now one of the UK’s thirteen designated cities participating in Phase V of the World Health Organisation’s Healthy Cities programme – and UCLan is an active member of the Governance Group, ensuring links to the Healthy University and other settings initiatives.”

In 1998, the World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe published a working document on Health Promoting Universities. This set out a framework aimed at integrating health into the culture, structures and processes of higher education institutions – thereby promoting the health and well-being of students, staff and the wider community. Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier, the Government’s 2004 Public Health White Paper, suggested that a health promoting university implements this whole university approach through:

- creating healthy working, learning and living environments
- increasing the profile of health in teaching and research
- developing healthy alliances in the community

UCLan’s Healthy Settings Development Unit was awarded funding by the Higher Education Academy’s Health Sciences and Practice Subject Centre and the Department of Health to lead a national research and development project on Healthy Universities. The research with higher education institutions and national stakeholder organisations concluded that there is a demand for a National Healthy Universities Programme.

Following this, the Healthy Settings Development Unit was awarded two years’ funding from HEFCE for the Developing Leadership and Governance for Healthy Universities project. This is jointly led by UCLan and Manchester Metropolitan University, working in partnership with Leeds Trinity University College, Nottingham Trent University, Teeside University, the University of the West of England, the Royal Society for Public Health and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. The project aims to generate and disseminate web-based guidance tools and case studies, support further national developments, and strengthen and expand the English National Healthy Universities Network, which UCLan established in 2006. The network now has over 50 higher education institutions and has established a national website to promote the HU concept and support networking www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk.
Since 2007, the HU has had a working group on Healthy and Sustainable Food. This brings together colleagues from across UCLan, the Students’ Union and external partners to build on existing good practice such as Fair Trade status and work collaboratively on a range of objectives that include procurement, affordable and healthier food, promotion of healthy eating and food safety.

With regard to procurement, work has taken place to ensure that when external catering supply contracts are due for tender, suppliers are required to provide information relating to environmental sustainability – with the aims of reducing food miles and overall carbon footprint, supporting local food production, minimising packaging and increasing recycling. UCLan Retail and Catering Services has reviewed its cooking methods to reduce the use of fat. In order to help consumers make informed decisions about their food purchases, information has been reviewed and improved – in relation to nutritional standards, local sourcing and free range production.

The group has been active in promoting information about healthy eating to students, who can be away from home for the first time with little experience of budgeting, planning and cooking. The Students’ Union has co-ordinated campaigns that bring together budgeting and cooking skills for students within their ‘Give It A Go’ events in October and February. The key messages promoted to students are to plan ahead for meals and to share costs where possible by cooking meals with friends. Cooking demonstrations and food tasting events have proved popular with students. The Students’ Union is also signed up to the BBC Grub Club scheme which allows students to order their own free goodie packs with cooking tips, recipes and chefs hats, and encourages them to host home-cooked meals.

Healthy and Sustainable Food

On average 50% of students spend between £20- £30 per week on food = £4 a day
The Rethinking Student Mental Well-being project has been a major focus for the HU over the past three years, 2007-2010. Rethink North West has funded a project worker to work with UCLan to develop a range of resources, campaigns and services to support student well-being, retention and the student experience. This project has been part of the national Time to Change programme, www.time-to-change.org.uk. Time to Change is a portfolio of 35 national projects being led by Rethink and Mind with funding from the National Lottery and Comic Relief.

A steering group chaired by Ian McMillan, Director of Student Support Service and a stakeholder group were established to promote networking and partnership development across the university and externally. The project has focused on reducing the stigma attached to student mental health, encouraging students to access services as early as possible and enhancing and developing services.

Early discussions with the stakeholder group identified work with staff as a priority, in order to facilitate appropriate responses. Student Mental Health Procedural Guidelines were developed in consultation with staff. These provide guidance to staff, such as academic tutors, to support them in dealing with a student who may be experiencing mental health issues. These procedures have been disseminated and are supported with a range of staff training opportunities.

There have been four anti-stigma campaigns, using materials and ideas from students. Raising awareness of UCLan and Students’ Union services to students was important and a navigational webpage was created called Headroom, www.uclansu.co.uk/headroom, located on the Students’ Union Advice and Support pages.
Alongside existing services such as Student Counselling, the Health Centre and the Students’ Union Advice Centre, a range of other services have been developed during the project. M and M Mentoring has a new strand of student mentors called Well-being Buddies, who support students to feel more comfortable with social situations and academic and personal relationships, and encourage them to seek appropriate support when necessary. A new student-led Students’ Union society called Mind Matters was supported by this project during its first year. Mind Matters has gone on to organise a number of creative events, including a multi-cultural Family Easter, a Bollywood Evening and a Release to Relaxation picnic in Avenham park.

For a number of years, Human Resources has facilitated a Staff Well-being working group. The working group identifies areas for development, with the Staff Satisfaction Survey being a key process to highlight priority issues for action. UCLan has developed a number of policies and procedures to support staff health, such as a Smoking Policy, Drugs and Alcohol Policy and Stress Management Policy. The Human Resources website has a health and well-being section that brings together a range of information and services available for staff. During UCLan induction, staff are provided with information about Staff Counselling, Occupational Health and the Healthy University initiative. The Quick Referral Guide is a resource developed for staff to support student health referrals both internally and externally. Human Resources also offer a range of training and personal development opportunities related to health such as Stress Management for Managers, Stress Awareness, and Supporting Students with Eating Disorders.
Walking and cycling offer the opportunity to build moderate exercise into people’s daily routines. They can also reduce stress, promote well-being and reduce carbon emissions – and are viable modes of transport for commuting to work or study. Because of these joint agendas the HU Co-ordinator and the Travel Plan Co-ordinator work together to promote walking and cycling to staff and students.

Four walking routes starting from the UCLan campus have recently been developed. UCLan worked in partnership with Preston City Council’s Measured Mile initiative. In addition, a final year student on the BSc (Hons) Exercise, Nutrition and Health course, conducted research with staff and developed ideas for the walking routes:

“A great way to get a bit of exercise, spend time catching up with colleagues outside of the office.” UCLan Staff

The walking routes are on the UCLan Sustainable Travel pages of the Sustainable Development website, www.uclan.ac.uk/walking

UCLan has a well-established Bicycle User Group (BUG), with over 100 members, www.uclan.ac.uk/bug. This is an independent group that UCLan staff and students can join. The group shares cycling information as well as working to raise the profile of cycling to work and the need to improve facilities and cycle routes. BUG liaises with Preston and County level groups to influence improvements on cycle routes. BUG, linking with the HU and Travel Co-ordinators, has promoted the tax-free Cycle to Work scheme for staff, run Bike to Work events, promoted security and safety, and is a partner in the planning of secure cycle facilities for the UCLan campus.
Relationships and Sexual Health

A number of sexual health campaigns are developed and promoted each year by the Students’ Union, the HU and a number of partners such as C-Wize, the local chlamydia screening programme. Campaigns have highlighted local services, prevention of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. Campaigns recognise the links between excessive alcohol use and sexual behaviours. Information is also provided to students on safety issues related to nights out, such as drink spiking, safer routes home and the SU Safety Bus.

The Touch project, established as part of the HU in 1998, is now co-ordinated by the International School for Communities, Rights and Inclusion. Students can take part in this project either by choosing an elective module on Peer Education, part of the BA (Hons) Community Leadership, or by volunteering. Students are trained to be outreach workers to disseminate health information focussing on sexual health, alcohol and drugs. The students lead the development of the work and provide outreach sessions in a variety of settings, such as the Students’ Union, pubs, clubs and halls of residence. The Touch project provides on-going health campaigning as well as offering the volunteer students an opportunity to develop a range of skills for future careers. Touch is popular with students, with the volunteers talking to thousands of students each year. The HU initiative continues to provide support through training and as a member of the Touch steering group.

Alcohol, Smoking and Drugs

In 1999, UCLan was one of the first universities to develop procedures related to alcohol and drugs – and these were commended by the Home Office as an example of good practice. Since then, UCLan and the Students’ Union have continued to develop and embed systems to tackle issues around alcohol and drugs.

The HU has an Alcohol and Drugs Issues working group with UCLan, Students’ Union and Police representatives. These meetings provide regular networking opportunities to review the current Alcohol and Drugs Procedural Guidelines and enable UCLan to react to any emerging issues in a co-ordinated way. Recently the group addressed issues around ‘legal highs’ resulting in UCLan and Students’ Union procedures being updated and information being disseminated to students. The Students’ Union has also achieved the Best Bar None award and took part in the Know Your Limits alcohol campaign run by the Home Office.

When the smoking ban in enclosed public spaces became law in England in 2007, UCLan was already compliant with no smoking in all its buildings. In addition to this, signs have been introduced to discourage smokers from smoking directly in front of entrances to buildings and the HU has piloted stop smoking services on campus for staff and students.
Developing Curriculum Links

The HU supports UCLan’s Learning and Teaching Strategy, which includes the objective “To educate students for global citizenship by integrating sustainable development, health and well-being into curricula across the University.” In taking this work forward, the HU seeks to involve the UCLan community wherever possible. Student involvement has a number of positive benefits – from learning more about health to improving employability by taking part in volunteering or work experience.

Recently the Rethinking Student Mental Well-being Project commissioned eight final year BSc Video and TV Production students to produce four short videos on mental health to be part of the Students’ Union website. For three months they worked closely with the HU and Rethink to develop videos on, ‘Supporting a Friend’, ‘In Crisis’, ‘Living with a Condition’ and ‘Encouraging Disclosure’.

Research Informed Work

There are opportunities for students to link their dissertations with the HU initiative. Students from the BSc Exercise, Nutrition and Health course have matched their own personal interests with research that has then been used to inform HU planning. Working with the HU, one student conducted research with 100 students on a range of aspects related to healthy eating – including cooking skills, budgeting, shopping habits and understandings of healthy eating messages. This information has informed healthy eating campaigns for students. Another student researched and developed a number of walking routes for UCLan staff. This student worked with the Travel Plan Co-ordinator and the HU Co-ordinator. A group of staff were surveyed during this process and provided valuable feedback on the routes before they were finalised. Most recently an MSc Applied Public Health student is planning to research the health needs of international students, working in partnership with the HU and the International Office.

In 2006 and 2008, the HU commissioned internal research on student mental health, involving 600 students. Sue Hacking, from the School of Nursing and Caring Sciences, conducted this research which has had strong links with the Rethinking Student Mental Well-being project. It has provided UCLan with insights into the types of mental health issues students have and access to services, resulting in a range of recommendations and actions.