

The University of Manchester Social Responsibility and International Winner School Governor Initiative (UMSGI)

Section 1 About the project

Summary

One of our University's three core strategic goals is Social Responsibility, where we have set out to make a positive contribution to the social and economic success of our local, national and international communities. As a key element of this, we established The University of Manchester School Governor Initiative (UMSGI) – an initiative to significantly increase the number of staff supporting the strategic development of state schools in our local communities by volunteering as school governors. This initiative is pioneering in UK higher education for its aims, partnership work and impact.

Project partners

We have achieved much of our success by forming a strategic partnership with the national charity SGOSS, who work across England to recruit and match staff to School Governor vacancies. SGOSS was set up by the Department for Education in 1999 to ensure every state school in England has access to high quality governors. The University of Manchester is the first university to formally partner with SGOSS and adopt a strategic approach to the recruitment of School Governors from amongst its staff.

Section 2 The results

The problem

Volunteer School Governors play a critical role in raising educational standards, setting strategic direction and monitoring school progress. However, many state schools in our local community cannot recruit sufficient Governors with appropriate skills and experiences.

The approach

Working with SGOSS, we are able to match staff to schools who would usually find it challenging to identify governors with appropriate skills and experiences. The initiative is funded through our statutory Access Agreement with the [Office for Fair Access](#) (OFFA).

Firstly we conducted a survey to establish a baseline of staff already volunteering as school governors. In September 2011 we launched our first campaign to inform staff of the School Governor Initiative and encourage more staff to volunteer through e-communication and drop-in sessions. We continue to run these campaigns twice a year. We have also established an internal network of staff who meet once a term and we hold an



Profile

- HEI
- 39,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 11500 staff
- Urban

Winner's case study

annual Conference. The network is supported by online communication through a LinkedIn group and regular updates.

Our goals

Through UMSGI we ensure talented staff with academic and professional skills are recruited and matched to support schools. We set a simple and ambitious KPI: to double the number of current staff *supporting schools as Governors over five years*. UMSGI has two simple aims:

- i) to recruit and match University staff to governing vacancies through a unique partnership with SGOSS;
- ii) to provide an internal network for University staff working as governors to become more effective, share best practice and support each other in acting as positive ambassadors for the University's work in local schools.

Obstacles and solutions

1. Obstacle: Staff require time off work to attend governor duties

Solution: We worked with HR to ensure our policy around leave arrangements enabled staff to have reasonable amounts of paid time off work during normal working hours (in addition to annual leave) to undertake core governor duties where necessary.

2. Obstacle: meeting the demand for governor places

Solution: In addition to working with SGOSS to identify vacancies, we have also raised awareness schools across Greater Manchester participating in our widening participation programmes.

Performance and results

From a baseline of 52 governors in September 2011, we achieved our five-year goal to double the number of volunteer School Governors by the end of 2012 and currently have 125 staff undertaking volunteering as School Governors at the end of the 2012/13 academic year. Based on SGOSS data, we are currently one of the top recruiters for School Governors in the country. Feedback from schools has shown that they welcome the range of skills and experiences University staff bring to the School Governor Body and at the same time, our staff volunteers are able to develop and enhance their skills.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Due to the success of the School Governor Initiative, we aim to become not only the leading HEI for school governor recruitment, but the leading employer in the UK overall. We aim to achieve this by harnessing our huge database of alumni as well as staff.

Sharing your project

We have disseminated our initiative through conferences, communication with other HEI and as a case study in our [Widening Participation Annual Report](#). We are working with the Department for Education's School Governance Policy Unit to disseminate this work further.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

As an institution we are delighted to have won the Green Gown Award for Social Responsibility and the International Green Gown Award. It has helped to highlight the initiative both within the institution and externally.

Further information

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