

STUDENT AMBASSADORS/ A THEORY OF CHANGE MODEL

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Student Ambassadors: A Theory of Change Model

- The Student Ambassador Scheme at the University of Kent
- Creating a Theory of Change
- Designing data collection methods
- Adapting to online outreach activities
- Discussion

Student Ambassadors: A Theory of Change Model

Please think about:

1) The role of ambassadors at your HEI

- What kind of work do your ambassadors do?
- Do you have subject specific ambassadors?
- What training do you provide?

2) What impact do you hope your scheme has on the ambassadors?

3) What evaluation do you have in place, or planned, with ambassadors?

The Student Ambassador Scheme at the University of Kent

- ≈ 300 Student Ambassadors each year
 - 100 Outreach & Recruitment ambassadors
 - 65 Outreach ambassadors
 - 50 Stipend ambassadors
- Support & deliver the outreach programme
- Additional Roles
 - Outreach Tutors
 - Lead Ambassadors
 - Debating Tutors
 - Evaluation Ambassadors
 - Residential Team
 - Summer Core Team
 - PG Ambassadors
 - Adult Learning Mentors

Creating a Theory of Change

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Situation

The University of Kent have been running their Student Ambassador Scheme for a number of years. The ambassadors provide invaluable support at outreach activities, but it is also offered as a way for them to develop work-ready skills.

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Aims

Ambassadors: an **increased sense of belonging** within the academic community (on campus and with staff), leading to **increased retention and better degree outcomes** than their counterparts. Ambassador work will also allow them to **develop personal and professional skills**, which will lead to **improved employment prospects**.

Outreach participants: a **greater sense of belonging** in an HE environment by interacting and engaging with ambassadors that they identify with, more so than with members of staff. This will lead to **increased HE participation rates**.

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Outcomes

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Impact

Impact

- Ambassadors feel 'part of a community of staff and students' at a higher rate than others on their course
- Improved aspiration and attainment of ambassadors
- Ambassadors have developed transferrable skills which are valued in the post-graduation workplace

- Increased retention, better degree outcomes and improved employment prospects for ambassadors

- Outreach participants have an increased sense of belonging in an HE environment

- Increased HE participation rates of outreach participants from under-represented groups

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Activities

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Outputs

Process

- Induction & Selection Days
- Training & personal development sessions
- Ambassadors are involved in all outreach activities
- Opportunity to take on additional roles (e.g. Debating Tutor, Evaluation Ambassador, Lead Ambassador)
- Sharing of knowledge/experience between ambassadors (e.g. ambassador café, newsletter, lead meetings)
- Ambassadors are given the opportunity to add their voice to outreach activities - through feedback and as part of the activity itself
- **Stipends only** - meetings with mentors

- Ambassadors have an understanding of WP and its importance
- Practice and development of personal skills (e.g. leadership, public speaking) within training sessions and activities themselves
- Student voice within outreach activities
- Good relationships between staff/mentors and ambassadors
- Outreach participants have a better understanding of what being a university student entails

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Inputs

Process

- Outreach participants
- Staff members involved in training and feedback
- **Stipends only** - mentors
- Budget for hourly paid ambassadors
- **Stipends only** - budget for scholarship payments
- Budget for social activities and initiatives (e.g. ambassador café, T-shirts)
- Relationships with schools

Creating a Theory of Change

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Rationale & Assumptions

Rationale - If ambassadors feel part of a community of staff and students, through having their voices and opinions valued and building good relationships with HE staff (within the PDO), they will feel more comfortable speaking to other members of staff, such as academic tutors, and seeking out support. Therefore, their retention and attainment will be higher.

Assumption - That this is a cause and effect model in that the ambassador work and relationships lead to better attainment and retention, rather than vice versa (i.e. the more engaged students become ambassadors)

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Rationale & Assumptions

Rationale - Outreach participants will identify with the ambassadors, and therefore think that going to HE is achievable for them and something that they would like to do

Assumption - That ambassadors are representative of both the University of Kent student population and our outreach participants. That participants will identify with ambassadors more so than members of staff. That participants trust the information that is provided by ambassadors

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Rationale & Assumptions

Rationale - The scheme allows ambassadors to develop skills which are valued in their chosen career path, leading to good employment prospects

Assumption - Ambassadors are able to articulate the skills that they have developed through the ambassador scheme in their CVs and interviews. Also that these skills were developed as a result of the ambassador scheme rather than elsewhere (such as other part-time jobs or through their academic studies)

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Rationale & Assumptions

Rationale - As stipends receive additional inputs above mainscheme ambassadors (i.e. extra support in the way of mentors, and stipend-lead meetings), the impact of the scheme for them will be higher

Assumption - PDO will continue to run outreach activities, provide training for ambassadors and support the stipend scheme. Our existing relationships with schools will continue

Assumption - that we can measure the ambassador experience as a whole, rather than on an individual basis when ambassadors have a varied experience and take on different roles and opportunities to develop

Designing data collection methods

- Comparisons to non-student ambassadors
 - NSS Q.21: “I feel part of a community of staff and students.”
 - Internal data on retention, success and progression
- Additional roles: baseline and follow-up
- Graduating ambassadors: survey and interview
- Feedback from staff, participants and teachers

Adapting to online outreach

- Additional roles
 - Ambassador Scheme Support Intern
 - Debating Programme Support Intern
- How can ambassadors be involved?
 - Content creation
 - Delivery
 - Testing and feedback

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