Sport playing its part within the student experience

This fact sheet examines the responses of 65 HEI’s surveyed in the 2012 Audit in relation to the sport that universities offer to their students. It summarises the key findings, areas where universities wish to develop their offer in individual sports and future considerations for Sport England, BUCS and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Introduction

Sport England’s work in higher education aims to raise the percentage of 14 to 25 year olds playing sport once a week and reduce drop off by providing three quarters of University students aged 18 to 24 with the chance to take up a new sport or continue playing a sport they used to play at University or College. Therefore Sport England is keen to interpret the current provision and work with the HE sector to develop this further and to meet student need. The information collected around different sports will also be useful data to share with national governing bodies who wish to work with specific HEIs, in order to match demand.

Sport for students has a wide interpretation from formal regional and national competition structures to informal opportunities to play sport on a play and pay basis and many opportunities in between. HEIs face a challenge to offer sport in such a varied way that it is attractive and inclusive as possible across its diverse student population. Whilst BUCS competition leagues and points are currently the only tool for HEIs to openly benchmark against, it does not demonstrate the diversity of sport offered that has been captured by 2012 HE Sport Audit.

Student Sports Clubs and participation opportunities contribute towards the overall student University experience. The range of opportunities available to students may possibly influence their overall University choice.

From the 65 HEIs who responded to the 2012 audit; 83% HEI’s have a sports strategy or plan within their university.

The audit also demonstrated that there are many participatory opportunities available across a range of sports within the 65 HEIs who responded. The number of sports offered to students in the last 12 months ranged between 1 and 80 sports across institutions. The most common being between 31-40 sports.
There were areas identified where there may be opportunities and aspirations to improve the current offer and for sport to play a greater role within the student experience.

As part of the audit, HEIs were asked generic questions about their sports provision such as the management of sport and as well as detailed information on specific sports. This is an amalgamation of these results.

For the sport specific element, HEI’s were asked to complete a total of fourteen statements for all 46 sports that Sport England fund for a Whole Sport Plan. Some of these sports were divided resulting in a total of 53 sports. For example, athletics was split into ‘Track and Field’ and ‘running/jogging’

In order to ascertain current provision, areas for development and possible future developments HEI’s were asked to respond with either ‘yes – currently have’ ‘yes – develop’, or ‘possibly – develop’ to the statements. This was to understand the current provision that universities offer with or without NGB assistance, as well as understand how universities may want to develop their sport specific offers, so that this could be matched to NGB 2013-17 Whole Sport Plans.

Key findings

The findings from the 2012 audit not only demonstrated that there are a significant number of sports being played within individual universities but the type of provision was varied as well.

Across the 53 sports outlined in the audit the current provision demonstrates that:

- 98% of sports have some form of social, informal or recreational offer within HEI’s
- 94% of sports have a community club link
- 92% of sports have University clubs
- 82% of sports have intra mural competitions, leagues or ladders
- 75% of sports are a priority sport for participation/development within HEI’s
- 72% of sports are a priority sport for elite/performance within HEI’s

It is interesting to note that HEIs reported that 86% of these sports have participation and/or competitive opportunities for disabled students.
For further information on the individual sport responses please refer to current sport provision and aspirations fact sheet.

**Sports Clubs**

University clubs play an important role in offering sport participation opportunities, with 72% of University sports clubs being positioned within the Student Union. The quality of experience is important to universities and their respective student unions, with 91% of HEI’s having minimum criteria in place for establishing new sports clubs. The minimum criteria for establishing a new sports club ranged across HEI responses. Strong themes which were evident within individual HEI responses included:

1. Minimum number of students/ evidence of student demand
2. Approval from AU
3. Self sufficient
4. Committee members in place

Also mentioned as key parts of criteria included NGB recognised sports, safety policy and having risk assessments in place.

Whilst a significant proportion of sports clubs may be positioned within the student union, the role responsible for clubs varied significantly across the HEIs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which role is responsible for university sports clubs?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manger role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB: There was a range of identified officers, groups, individuals raised in these questions. For the purpose of this question we have grouped responses together.*
Identified officer(s) responsible within each University for organising informal, intra mural, competitive sessions and competitive teams all show cased similar responses to the clubs above. Managers/ activators and coordinators all scored highly in each area, followed by the university department or student union.

**Developing sport opportunities to further enhance the student experience**

- In the next 12 months HEI’s expressed they were planning on offering between 1 and 80 sports. The most common number of sports being between 31 and 40.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sports</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>41-50</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>51-60</td>
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<td>61-70</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>71-80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- 38 institutions are planning on introducing new sports to their programme in the next 12 months. The most common number of new sports planned on being offered was two.

As well as HEIs wishing to add sports to their already expansive list of sport, HEIs expressed a desire to develop their current sports as well. For each of the 53 sports contained in the audit, universities identified what if anything they would like to develop for that sport to be played in their university. Of the 65 HEI’s that responded, the participation priority areas for development across all sports have been identified as:
Key Considerations

- There is not a one size fits all for how sport is delivered and managed within HEIs, highlighting that opportunities to develop sport in universities need to be flexible enough to accommodate many different models of sport management.

- There is a significant range of sport available to a student that is contributing to the student experience, which needs further highlighting to the wider senior HE sector stakeholders.

- The information demonstrates that there are plenty of opportunities for NGBs to work with HEIs to develop individual sports to result in an increase in participation, but the offer and opportunity needs to meet the aspirations of the HEI as well as the NGB. More detailed information from this audit is being shared with relevant NGBs to assist them with their delivery within HE. Further
information summarising individual sports can be found in current sport provision and aspirations headline report.

- The development of participation opportunities seems to be a higher priority for HEIs, indicating that HEIs are keen to expand their offer to be more inclusive and appealing for all students.

- Nearly all universities have criteria for setting up student clubs, and a significant number wish to develop more informal / recreational opportunities. This may be linked with demonstrating student need for a particular sport club. This should be a key consideration for community sport partners working with HEIs (including NGBs) and links to other sports participation programmes may assist with getting sport started within the university.