



UniverCities Starterpack

THE ACADEMY
OF URBANISM



For more information about
UniverCities and The Academy of
Urbanism please contact:

The Academy of Urbanism
70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ

www.academyofurbanism.co.uk

Written by the
Urban Renaissance Institute

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Foreword

The Academy of Urbanism launched the UniverCities programme in 2007 as a way of encouraging locally focussed and place based collaboration and joint working between the many key players in a city, district or town. Since that time a number of programmes have got underway and a pilot study has been undertaken in the south east.

This starterpack is intended to help support the UniverCities programme and the involvement of new and existing partners. It is a key milestone in this process and brings together many of the things that have been learnt from the programme so far.



Sarah Chaplin
Director of
UniverCities South
East Pilot for the
Urban Renaissance
Institute



Janet Sutherland
Coordinator of
the UniverCities
Pilot Project for
The Academy of
Urbanism



'UniverCities are not an instant panacea which comes with the title. To be a UniverCity is an attitude of mind shared by a community, its institutions of learning and the associated practitioners through understanding place to continuously learn and improve.'

John Worthington
Director of Learning The Academy
of Urbanism

What is the UniverCities programme about?

UniverCities is a shared learning model, developed by The Academy of Urbanism (AoU), for deepening essential understanding of places and how to make them better. It is a dynamic and innovative initiative which is committed to precipitating and supporting organisational change and economic development in a given place. It offers the potential for significant added value at a low cost, by sharing resources, contexts and insights into new ways.

UniverCities enshrines 3 main aims:

1. To advocate and promote a long term strategic relationship between a city and its university that endures beyond individual projects, (as in Copenhagen, where clear feedback loops were formed between policy, delivery and evidence);
2. To embed the concept of a network of UniverCities, regionally, nationally and potentially internationally, drawing on strong business/practitioner engagement via the AoU membership; and
3. To establish cross-sector mutually advantageous place-based learning initiatives as opposed to supporting a range of individual/discrete projects.

Characterising the objectives of UniverCities:

It is about implementing a long term strategic learning relationship involving diverse partners, rather than a one-off project.

It is about using active and collaborative processes intended to facilitate, deepen, question and improve processes of change and bring out new insights.

It is about accessing and engaging a more integrated pool of knowledge, skills and expertise.

It is about making a commitment to joined-up thinking that crosses many practical, political and academic boundaries.

It is about establishing strategic partnerships of learning that can mutually augment the skillsets of participants.

It is about binding together a network of individuals who share a commitment to their place and want to work together to make it better

It is about creating a more proactive zone of co-operation between the city and its workers, be they practitioners, teachers, thinkers, designers or researchers.

It is about offering a new forum within which to develop and test a shared vision or story of change for a place.

It is about supporting and drawing on practice-led research and research-led practice to inform policy and high-level dialogue about places.

What does this Starterpack aim to do?

The Starterpack for UniverCities is intended as a useful and user-friendly toolkit for use by those involved in the process of setting up a UniverCity in their town or city.

By working through this Starterpack, you will be able to obtain guidance on how to:

1. Draw up the initial Expression of Interest.
2. Articulate the initiative and achieve buy-in of key players.
3. Agree thematic concerns that will drive the initiative.
4. Draw up a timeline of collaborative meetings and events.
5. Planning and running UniverCities meetings.
6. Make use of The Academy of Urbanism's UniverCities web site and the Academy network.
7. Manage specific projects and their partners.
8. Source and secure funding for the initiative.
9. Document and disseminate the outputs of the collaboration.
10. Move to a formalisation of the collaboration and plan the longer-term future of the UniverCity.
11. Understand the role of The Academy of Urbanism in supporting UniverCities.

The Academy of Urbanism has incorporated the experiences and feedback derived from UniverCities in their early stages across the UK and Ireland, and in particular from its year-long pilot project in the South East, which was funded by SEEDA, and came to an end in March 2010.

The Starterpack was launched in its 'beta' form at the Historic Towns Forum conference in Chichester in October 2009, and issued in its final form at the Annual Congress of The Academy of Urbanism in Manchester in May 2010.

'The most positive thing I have seen with UniverCities is that it allows people to see things from each other's perspectives.'

Steve Canadine
Giffords UK

Drawing up the initial Expression of Interest

At this stage a few key individuals will have made contact with one another and agreed to meet. Often they are already acquainted with one another socially or through work, but have not previously found the means or the motivation to meet and discuss a common issue, purpose or need.

The first meeting should aim to draw up a list of people to approach and involve, as well as a set of thematic concerns and interests which are likely to attract support for a collaborative venture.

We have found that when the Local Authority takes the lead in forming a UniverCity, it is likely to take root more quickly than in instances where another participating organisation assumes responsibility.

'With UniverCities, you first need to ask: 'who do we knock on the door of?''

John Thompson
Chair of The Academy of Urbanism

To express your intention to become a UniverCity to The Academy of Urbanism and thereby be added to the roster of places, an Expression of Interest (Eoi) form needs to be submitted to The Academy of Urbanism's Director of Learning, Professor John Worthington.

The Expression of Interest form may be downloaded from the UniverCities area of The Academy of Urbanism's website, or can be emailed to an instigator by the Academy.

The Eoi form aims to capture three core pieces of information:

1. The place that is being nominated as a new UniverCity. This is most likely to be the discrete urban location where the project partners are based/have a vested interest, eg Bristol or Medway. However, in the case of larger urban centres, the place could also be a defined area, eg Elephant and Castle. In some circumstances, the city region or sub-region may be the object of study most appropriate to the formation of the UniverCity, eg. Thames Gateway, Calder Valley, Newcastle Gateshead.

2. The names and contact details of a minimum of three proposers/ project partners of a new UniverCity, where the three participants are drawn from three different sectors, be they public or private, academic or practice-based, formal or informal organisations. Ideally, a UniverCity needs to involve both the city and its universities, and other learning providers as well. It also needs to bring in people from practice, from community groups, and other interested parties.
3. An indication of likely project themes or issues which the UniverCity is likely to want to engage with, for example urban food production, public realm, climate change. This might be a highly specific part of town, eg Northern Quarter, or a counter project to an existing proposal, eg an alternative public transport strategy. It might be concerned with measurement of existing conditions, or about making an intervention into a set of existing conditions to bring about a positive change.

Articulating the UniverCities initiative and achieving buy-in of key players

Articulating your UniverCity concept needs to emphasise the need to promote stronger interconnections between the city, academia, private practice and community groups.

Utilising students on key initiatives and fact-finding work stages enables course leaders to develop local links whereby their students are working on live projects with real clients.

Likewise, private sector organisations are keen to develop better links as employers, and community groups to widen their networks and opportunities to partner on projects in search of much-needed funding.

A strong and committed stakeholder base is most likely to emerge when these differing motivations are however set aside, and a sense of common purpose is derived from the need to solve a local problem or address a perennial issue of common concern collaboratively.

The model assumes, on the part of the local authority, high level 'buy-in' from Chief Executive and Leader. In the best case, this occurs at the outset, but it can also be worked towards given commitment to the concept from a department head. In this case the UniverCity concept 'wins over' the power structure.

Whilst no fewer than three stakeholders are required to initiate a new UniverCity, there is no maximum number. Where stakeholder groups are involved, it would be better to have a nominated representative to attend all the early meetings for the sake of continuity, who can feed back to their respective groups.

The key stakeholders are likely to be already known to one another through the activities and initiatives driven through by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). It is important to emphasise that a UniverCity does not replicate such structures, but rather is a means to strengthen and extend their effectiveness, especially in reaching tiers within organisations below the main players and chief executives. It also reaches to a wider network of other places through the Academy's national learning programmes and events, and in this way, best practice can be shared beyond the LSP community and benefit a wider audience.

The process of achieving buy-in can take many months, and a degree of patient commitment will be required with certain key players who may be interested but busy and unavailable.

Whilst it is important to engage the participants at the highest level, it is also important that a UniverCity has a breadth to its core membership too. Making use of existing events and meetings already in the calendar and requesting a moment in the schedule of such events to speak about the UniverCities initiative can be an effective way of broadening the participation.

'What's really exciting is that UniverCities is about making things happen in spite of constraints.'

Andy Karski

Principal, Tibbalds Urban Design Ltd

Agreeing thematic concerns that will drive your UniverCities initiative

There is no point in forming a UniverCity to conduct work which is not going to be useful and helpful in terms of bringing about processes of change in a place.

Equally, it will prove difficult to sustain a learning partnership if the partners do not agree on a particular focus for their shared learning.

As such, in the early stages a mapping exercise which looks at values and drivers for all participants can prove invaluable, and will serve to identify where it will be most effective to focus the energy of the UniverCity.

An effective UniverCity initiative is likely to be one where its thematic concerns are:

- Topical, flagship issues for the local authority;
- An important part of the core curriculum for the learning providers;
- Seen as integral to core business for the private sector participants; and
- Fundamental to community/faith/citizen groups.

In each of the pilots in the south-east, for example, sustainability, identity and urban food growing have come up as topical issues.

Once there is a clear sense of commitment to one or more concerns, other participants with specialist expertise or knowledge may need to be enlisted.

Projects will inevitably emerge from these concerns, and it is important to ensure that these remain closely linked to the thematic concerns, and do not become sidetracked.

The UniverCities model assumes, on the part of the university, the time and perspective needed for an 'action research' approach (learning by doing). Given that not every academic embraces this approach, and there are not many hours left after teaching and administration to devote to research and enterprise activities, the interests of academia and academic pedagogy need to be taken into consideration when selecting thematic concerns just as much as those of council and other participants.

'Focussing on their locality has been really positive for students and has increased their level of engagement with local practitioners'

Bob Jarvis
Urban Design Coordinator LSBU

Case Study Elephant & Castle

An emergent UniverCity of Elephant & Castle in south London has been seeking to consider broad ranging issues in an area undergoing significant change. Initial networks have been created between practice, South Bank university and Southwark Council. Initial projects have involved urban design students at LSBU focussing on projects around the Elephant and Castle area.



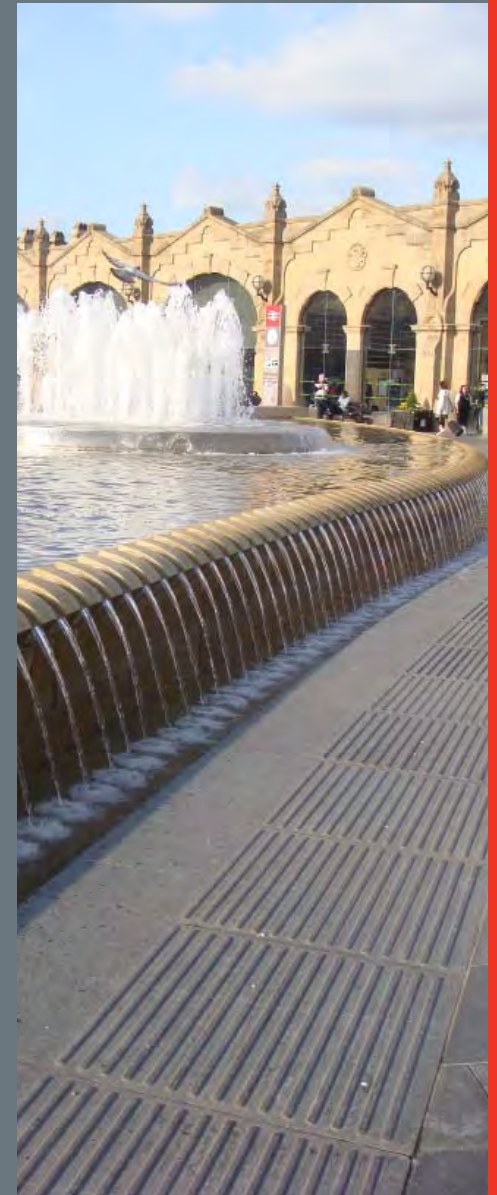
Case Study Sheffield

Sheffield Urban Think Tank (SUTT) seeks to fulfil the following vision:

To create a powerful and active resource for evidence-based learning on place-making, and to undertake, disseminate and mainstream best practice projects designed to create sustainable neighbourhoods.

In order to bring this about a partnership, involving Sheffield City Council, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, Creative Sheffield and Integreat Yorkshire (Yorkshire Forward's Regional Centre for Regeneration, Renaissance and place making skills), is seeking to coordinate and disseminate activities on the effectiveness of 'place-making' in Sheffield for the benefit of the city, the region and beyond. The initiative came directly out of the recognition of the city's growing national reputation in this field both in practice and research and a national congress organised by The Academy of Urbanism (Sheffield, May 2008) which launched the 'UniverCities' initiative.

The group which involves urbanists - planners, architects and urban designers - from the participating organisations has recently secured funding from Yorkshire Forward to establish the partnership and organise an initial programme of activities. The group is particularly interested in fostering longer term observations of successful examples of urban design, development and regeneration to test how different initiatives and policies work over time.



Drawing up a UniverCities timeline of collaborative meetings and events

A UniverCity may take up to three years to establish, but if it is sufficiently embedded into the strategic and operational decision-making for a place, it will create patterns of collaborative behaviour that last long into the future.

Specific projects with a short or medium time span should contribute to the build up of momentum and articulate a timeline. Projects need to be realistic, affordable and achievable, but most importantly, tackle something which all participants consider important and worthwhile.

Constructing an effective timeline with useful milestones and targets along the way, will depend to an extent on how the different participants' existing timescales can be made to usefully interact, and it is important to make use of existing synergies around regular local and regional events.

A programme should be set up during the first few meetings of the group, and should take into account any other events and critical timings that are relevant to the UniverCity's activities, and which might affect them.

This in itself can often give rise to new opportunities to capitalise on a pre-existing fixture, eg to use another event to help launch a new wave of activity which the UniverCity intends to precipitate. It is therefore worth mapping any other pertinent activity and to try wherever possible to integrate and incorporate them into the lifespan of the UniverCity.

The programme should respond to the expectations and commitments of the participants, and create a suitable structure for the slow and incremental exploration of the key ideas which the group agrees it will focus on.

Agreeing a nominal moment in time some months into the project by which time the group and their respective stakeholders would like to achieve a more substantive or formal arrangement, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding or even of Cooperation, can help to precipitate early milestones.

However, whilst milestones and targets are important for the success of any project, the UniverCities structure is not intended to be overly target-driven as this precludes the space for proper exploration of ideas and solutions.

'UniverCities are working to change an attitude of mind - a city that is continuing learning.'

Tim Stonor

Director of The Academy of Urbanism

'The studio is the place to see how to make the city more sustainable through productive landscapes.'

Andre Viljoen

Senior Lecturer at the University of Brighton

Planning and running UniverCities meetings

The type, attendance and frequency of meetings which a UniverCity chooses to hold in the first few months will be instrumental in defining the make-up and mood of the group, and also to a great extent, determine the likelihood of success of the overall collaboration.

It is therefore important to hold the meetings in such a way as to encourage rather than alienate, as wide a group of participants as possible from the earliest opportunity, and acknowledge the fact that some people will inevitably fall away over a period of time due to their general level of motivation for the initiative as well as other pressures they may be currently facing.

The meetings therefore need to be held in a location which encourages people to operate less territorially, and more openly. Neutral ground can be good for establishing this kind of rapport, or alternatively, to stage a series of meetings where each stakeholder group agrees to host one meeting on their turf, thereby enabling the other participants to access and experience the different working environments.

This can open up the possibility for meetings which also incorporate other kinds of activities, and can be scheduled to take advantage of such opportunities, eg to organise a walkabout around the city centre, to visit the end of year show at the local art college, to experience the community-run ecology centre, to picnic in a local park or public space which merits the group's attention.

The style of facilitation of the initial UniverCity meetings should aim to be informal but inclusive. Participants might agree roles at the start of each meeting, which can rotate, but as a minimum each meeting needs to have a note-taker and a facilitator.

In some cases it will be important also to establish some agreed protocols, eg Chatham House Rules, where matters are likely to be sensitive, and need a confidential forum to be discussed most effectively.

It will be important to bring any latent themes and sites to the first meetings of the UniverCity, and to allow these meetings to be conducted in such a way as to allow these to all be aired without undue bias among the participants.

A site-specific project or theme should then emerge and be taken on by the group because it is something which all can input into, and from which the community or place will derive some benefit, and from which learning will be gained.

In cases where a great many project ideas come up early in the process, certain evaluative criteria may need to be agreed upon and applied, and in some cases these will have to do with their relative degree of urgency or expediency.

'UniverCities is an attitude of mind. It is a PROGRAMME built of PROJECTS.'

John Worthington

Director of Learning for The Academy of Urbanism

Case Study Glasgow

The Glasgow Urban Laboratory (Urban Lab), led by the Mackintosh School of Architecture at The Glasgow School of Art, will create a community that aims to become a world-leader in the advanced practice and research in urban place-making.

The Urban Lab provides a forum and delivery mechanism for pooling the best minds across sectors and disciplines and plays a role in creating a 'knowledge ecology' of better city making. The Glasgow Economic Forum's 10-year strategy calls for wholehearted and strategic engagement with the city's education providers and the Urban Lab responds to that. It is establishing new creative relationships between the different place-making

communities of the city, creating a triangular relationship where the city offers urban issues and problems; where practice offers expertise and linkage to practitioner networks, and the academic community offers scoping of issues, creativity through projects, vision, research knowledge, and new ideas.

In return, the city gains new visions, possibilities and solutions and a resource for specialist staff training; practice gains intelligence and upstream influence, whilst the academic community gains new research opportunities and connectedness.

The Urban Lab will allow experts in various fields to come together to ensure that future development in the city serves the needs of Glasgow's citizens in terms of social

justice, health, education and all other aspects of civic government. It will give civic leaders new and creative ways of drawing on the expertise of a whole range of specialists when developing policies aimed at improving the lives of Glaswegians.



Making use of The Academy of Urbanism's UniverCities web site and the Academy network

The Academy of Urbanism has a website which covers all of its business, which may be found at www.academyofurbanism.org.uk

There is also a site devoted to the UniverCities project which can be found at www.univercities.ning.com.

The UniverCities site now has 180 members, of which 10% are international, with the majority of the UK and Irish members being associated with one of the emergent UniverCities which have been given their own area of this site.

The website is intended as an online networking tool for UniverCities participants to get to know each other, find out about relevant events that are coming up, and share information about their projects and partnerships.

The site includes scope for personal pages, blogs, forums, and for images, videos and documents to be uploaded. It is free to use, and its membership is administered by the Academy/URI.

Participants are encouraged to join the site, and to make use of it for their own UniverCity. A shell 'group' area can be set up on request, and other members can be invited by providing a list of email addresses.

There are Academicians associated with most cities in the UK, and the Academy can put each UniverCity in touch with its members who might be of use in developing the programme. Academicians are likely to be keen to engage with their local UniverCities, and may have a wealth of additional contacts which the partnership could access and make use of.

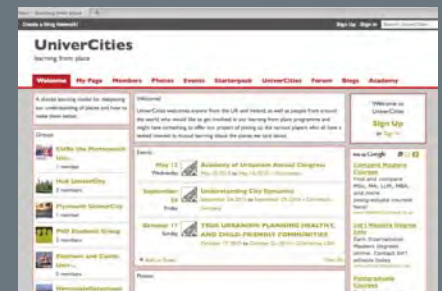
There are several meetings and events during the year which non-Academicians are welcome to attend, including the mid-year event in July and the Awards ceremony in November, at which they would have the opportunity to learn about and/or have input in to the Academy's plans for the future.

Those events dedicated to learning, such as the Annual Congress, usually feature a session on UniverCities, at which participants are given the opportunity to present work in progress and to share their insights with a wider, indeed increasingly international audience.

UniverCities.Ning

Visit the UniverCities website at www.univercities.ning.com

UniverCities welcomes anyone from the UK and Ireland, as well as people from around the world who would like to get involved in our Learning from Place programme and might have something to offer our project of joining up the various players who all have a vested interest in mutual learning about the places we care about.



Ning is the social platform for the world's interests and passions online. Millions of people every day are coming together across Ning to explore and express their interests, discover new passions, and meet new people around shared pursuits.



Managing specific UniverCities projects and their partners

Leadership: Among the stakeholders it is likely that one person will emerge as a natural leader of the UniverCity.

Regardless of which sector this person comes from, they need to be sufficiently engaged in the project to see that it develops usefully and offers something back to the community.

A suitable leader (or leaders) for a UniverCity project is someone who is already operating in more than one sphere or arena, and has seen the positive benefits of joining up agendas and actions. They would need to be aware of the educational context of any academic player, and of the economic context of the place itself and its development opportunities.

'It comes down to personalities in the end – and some people like to collaborate where others resist – UniverCities needs to take account of that.'

Michael Carley
Professor at Heriot Watt University

Intellectual Property: A UniverCity might during the course of its investigations develop some Intellectual Property (IP), or bring into play the IP of one of the participants, and in such cases this needs to be protected on the part of the owner to avoid inappropriate exploitation.

However, it is hoped that the spirit of the UniverCity is one of sharing knowledge, and that the proprietary route would only be taken where it is in everyone's interests.

Project management: projects may take the form of bilateral arrangements or have multiple participants. Bilateral should be mutually beneficial where possible, and involve good levels of reciprocation. Where there are multiple participants it will be important to manage different interests and expectations, and to ensure that everyone feels equally involved and consulted.

Project formats: the nature of UniverCities is likely to lead to work being conducted in multi-disciplinary teams. Formats such as charrettes, workshops, and hand-on planning might prove effective means of organising the collaborative activities.

Equally, where the focus is on opening up opportunities and mutual awareness raising, some work-shadowing could be a powerful tool. The important factor to maintain is a high degree of dialogue between partners.

Sourcing and securing funding for your UniverCities initiative

Once up and running as a clear initiative, a UniverCity constitutes a viable, tangible entity to seek sources of funding.

There are going to be two potential sources of funding for the longer-term of a UniverCity partnership: internal and external.

Internal funding might be obtained where each partner organisation contributes to the cost of operating the UniverCity, because all partners are deriving benefit and can allocate funding from a particular source.

External funding might be sought from a research council or other body to carry out an associated piece of research, and is likely to require the application of a series of research questions and methodologies to the thematic issues that the UniverCity is trying to address.

Other project-specific forms of external funding could be secured from a government scheme such as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership, or a Collaborative Doctoral Award.

European funding such as InterReg might be sought where a UniverCity in the UK constructs a project with one or more European partners, according to the parameters of one of the current funding schemes available.

There are also some international sources of funding where comparative or collaborative work between international partners is used to foster a network or test a concept.

Participants are encouraged to do their own background research into the funding for research and enterprise available to them, and to make use of the new collaborative

configurations which UniverCities affords, to apply as HEI and non-HEI project partners.

NB The Academy of Urbanism does not offer access to any form of funding for places to become active as UniverCities. It does however offer a clearly defined national brand with which to promote new forms of place-based learning.

Case Study Dublin

The CREATIVE DUBLIN ALLIANCE is a network of diverse leaders, a collaboration between the Dublin Local Authorities, Universities, State Agencies, Business and the Not-for-Profit sector. Our purpose is to help identify, discuss, recommend, distribute and implement solutions in response to the challenges that Dublin faces as an International Competitive City Region.

The CREATIVE DUBLIN ALLIANCE is an Action Group, which plans to develop creative solutions for the challenges we face by executing on and facilitating selected projects. These projects include:

Innovation Dublin: A week of public events showcasing innovation and

creativity in Dublin from October 14th to 20th 2009.

Economic Action Plan: An Economic Action Plan for the Dublin City Region.

Designing Dublin: A design-led initiative that engages individuals through collaboration and entrepreneurship to find solutions to Dublin's future challenges.

UniverCities: An initiative to align teaching and research programmes in universities to assist in managing and planning for the future of Dublin.

Our structure is distributed. We believe that by unifying resources, working on projects that solve our City Region challenges and delivering on these projects, that we can place Dublin as an creative and influential International City Region.

Documenting and disseminating the outputs and outcomes of your UniverCity

The outputs and outcomes of a UniverCity partnership may take many forms, from tangible physical end results, to a change of perception or behaviour.

Once a body of work/results has been generated, it will be important to make sense of what is emerging, and to characterise or narrativise it in a useful way.

Participants may wish to draft a PR and/or Press policy, and adopt the habit of informing and inviting the press to their events, to encourage coverage of their work by others.

'Our cultural strategy has taken 3 years to align everyone's thinking - I am sure the UniverCities project will be the same.'

Dianne Taylor

Pro Vice Chancellor,
University of the Creative Arts

'Who's asking the big questions in a place?'

Janet Sutherland

Director of JTP Cities

Assigning responsibility to a participant for gathering and maintaining a database of data, contacts and findings will be useful, and indeed will form a requirement of any initiative in receipt of public funding, to provide evidence of performance metrics.

UniverCities may find that recording and uploading podcasts of their events and even their meetings is an effective way of keeping all participants in the loop.

Other meetings can be recorded in the usual way with a brief aide memoir of the discussions.

Any material generated in relation to a UniverCity can be uploaded to the UniverCities website, but participants may also wish to host their own site, either as a standalone site or sub-site.

Since the intention is to pursue practice-led research or research-led practice as part and parcel of what UniverCities are about, it will be important to each UniverCity to identify one or more participants who will take responsibility for writing up the work of the group as a conference paper or academic article for a peer-reviewed journal.

Other forms of publication should also be considered, so that the reach of the UniverCity is kept broad – local talks and pieces in the local press will help maintain momentum and generate debate.

Regular internal review mechanisms will prove a good way to keep track of the projects as they develop under the banner of the UniverCity, and provide opportunities to reflect on, refine and improve new techniques and approaches.

Specific consulting opportunities could arise from the collaboration, particularly in the area of new policy development, and participants should be alert to these as a key means to embed the work of UniverCities at the highest level of government decision-making.

Moving to a formalisation of the collaboration and planning the longer-term future of the UniverCity

It is anticipated that each UniverCity will reach a point where there is something substantive that warrants a degree of formalisation between the participants.

This might take the form of a Joint Venture, which has shared ownership of some new products or services to offer.

It might lead to a Knowledge Transfer Partnership or KTP, which is part-funded by government. Any IP arising from this would also need to be carefully safeguarded.

In most cases, however, it is hoped that a UniverCity will produce a Memorandum of Understanding between its constituent parties.

Over time, this may lead to a more specific form of mutual commitment, with details captured in a Memorandum of Cooperation or a Service Level Agreement.

Some councils may be able to extend the opportunity for an academic entity to become part of a Framework Agreement, where they can be regularly called upon to offer their services to the council.

In a few cases, the UniverCity collaboration could lead to the formation of a new company, with its own legal status, trading independently but as a result of the earlier informal collaboration.

Case Study Portsmouth

Creative Urban Regeneration (CURE), was established in 2008 as part of the University of Portsmouth to carry out enterprise activities within the city itself. It is about uniting private, public and community sectors to support and promote excellence in urban regeneration.

CURE aims to function as 'an instrument for cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral working by leading collaborative teams' on a wide range of projects, thereby operating as an independent knowledge base that would bring together different skills for different tasks whilst enhancing the capacity of those it brings to new projects.

Under the directorship of Catherine Teeling, CURE has forged ahead with a number of different projects, including leading community

charrettes in Southsea, and fostering Urban Food Lots all over the city. CURE also organized a major international conference on UniverCities in July 2009, which brought together speakers from other cities and universities to discuss collaborative practices in relation to urban regeneration.

CURE has involved students in much of its early work in planning and executing a programme of projects, includes private practitioners on its core team, and has interfaced directly with Portsmouth City Council throughout 2009.

'Sometimes city councils are not ambitious enough in terms of what can be done and there is a need to engage with other audiences.'

Celia Clark
Chair of Portsmouth Society

Case Study Medway

Medway has four universities and a further education college, and has seen significant investment from the regional development agency to regenerate the local economy, particularly through higher education. The UniverCity was instigated by Medway Renaissance Partnership, who saw that collaborative work was already being commissioned by the Historic Dockyard in Chatham, and there were several projects ongoing with different groups of staff and students from the various colleges. It was felt these initiatives could be taken further; to help cement the relationship between the five towns that make up Medway, and their centres of learning.

Over the past year other local organisations have also been brought into play, notably the

Kent Architecture Centre, based in Medway, who have been working with local primary and secondary schools on the Journey to Learn project, which enables schoolchildren to reflect on their immediate environment, and capture aspects of their daily experience. This has brought together private practitioners such as a theatre designer and a photographer, and it is now tied in with work Medway Council are doing on Green Travel Plans, and lifelong learning.

Medway plans to continue to develop its UniverCity in the implementation stage of its new cultural strategy, and to assist with the formation of a new Centre of Excellence for higher education and further education in the town.

'Medway has been shaped by the military and the navy. Now the biggest changes are coming from the HE sector. UniverCities can help shape their relationship with the place.'

Wendy Mesher

Medway Renaissance Partnership

'The involvement of 2 Primary Schools and 2 Secondary Schools in Medway highlights UniverCities' value to education.'

Cllr David Royle

The Mayor of Medway



Understanding the role of The Academy of Urbanism in supporting UniverCities

UniverCities is a concept that is being developed by The Academy of Urbanism as part of its Learning Programme. Its development has been supported by the independent initiatives of its Academicians who live and work in cities across the UK and Ireland, and also in the form of regional pilot studies with the help of grant agreements from SEEDA and Yorkshire Forward.

The Academy of Urbanism is an autonomous, politically independent, cross-sector organisation formed in 2006 to expand urban discourse. It is an active, invitation-only membership organisation, funded by member subscriptions and external sponsorship.

As such, The Academy of Urbanism is not able to provide funding to individual UniverCities, however it offers support and guidance for towns and cities going through the early stages of establishing their UniverCity, and, once these are established, offers access to a growing national network of places, with many opportunities to share and disseminate results every year.

The Academy explored the concept of UniverCities initially with colleagues in Glasgow and Winchester during 2007/8, and held its inaugural UniverCities congress in May 2008. UniverCities has since been a key feature of all subsequent Academy events.

The Academy aims to advance the understanding and practice of urbanism by promoting a culture of scholarship through evidence-based inquiry, providing an inclusive forum for dialogue across all disciplines, sharing knowledge with the community and our peers and nurturing, recognising and rewarding excellence in achievement.

As an organisation, the Academy aims to achieve this by goal through:

- Its popular and innovative Awards schemes;
- Holding world class events, conferences and study tours;
- Producing high quality industry-leading publications; and
- Implementing integrated programmes of shared learning, eg UniverCities.

'You need to build in time to reflect on how things could have gone better – UniverCities provide the opportunity to do this.'

Cheryl Buggy

Design Champion for Portsmouth

'Universities and their cities are going to need each other more in future as resources get tighter and I really do believe there should be a strengthened partnership with the University.'

Kathy Wadsworth

Director of Strategic Resources,
Portsmouth City Council

Case Study

Brighton and Hove

Brighton and Hove are well known for their bottom up, community-led initiatives, and both Universities were already well connected to their local area on many fronts. Staff at the University of Brighton's Faculty of Arts and Architecture felt they wanted to do more. Their recent experience of being involved in SEEDA's Places from Spaces project, which had enabled a temporary intervention - several hundred trees - in the Valley Gardens site in front of the main Grand Parade campus, got them thinking about the potential that could come of planning other physical interventions with the local council and other interested parties. UniverCities offered an appropriate structure to develop their thinking, and brought together academics, council officers and local community groups.



A key project to emerge from their early deliberations was the rebuilding of a uniquely sustainable house that a local architect/tutor had designed for the Grand Designs exhibition in London the previous year. The house became the focus of the UniverCity's activity, which involved identifying a site, envisaging how it would be used as a shared and provocative resource, and how it might serve to challenge and change behaviours around recycling, energy efficiency, urban food production, material usage and so on.

The Sustainable Urban Studio, as it is now called, with provision for urban food production and campus recycling store alongside, has been submitted for planning and staff at the University hope to see it constructed on the Grand Parade campus using student and local help over summer 2010.



'To some extent UniverCities requires a certain 'informalisation' in the way people interact – they need to decide what to share, who you share it with, and how you share it.'

Catherine Harper
University of Brighton

'I think people need to think about what we might mean by 'proper partnership' – so that the Universities have real input into their towns and cities, after all a University is a very good place to have difficult conversations.'

Anne Boddington
University of Brighton

'The Council believes the university is a valuable resource which they haven't used to the fullest in the past.'

Roger Dowty
Brighton and Hove City Council

Executive summary

A UniverCity focuses the relationship on a few evolving key priorities, in order to exchange knowledge and develop the evidence base, which can in turn inform policy making in critical areas, creating feedback loops that trigger organisational innovation within partner organisations, particularly the local authority.

It is offered as a valuable resource to policy deliberation, and political dialogue within the local authority, and within the LSP. The reciprocal model of knowledge exchange is most clearly understood in the way learning providers work to understand the complexity of issues from local authority/LSP perspective, produce useful information in a user-friendly format, and benefit themselves from access to 'real life' decision making processes.

There are 3 stages a UniverCity needs to move through:

Stage 1 Inception to buy-in.

Stage 2 Buy-in to insight.

Stage 3 Insight to dissemination.

A quick overview of the processes and stages involved in setting up and running a UniverCity in your city:

1. Invite a wide range of potential participants from public and private sector who have a shared interest in learning from place.
2. Use open-ended techniques to help identify and prioritise shared values or concerns and/or characterise an ongoing story of change. Discuss the implications and means for addressing these.
3. Identify an exploratory action plan to take these forward in a collaborative way.
4. Draw up an indicative timeline from the outset with some key milestones.
5. Allow sub-groups to form as necessary to take forward specific projects, but maintain a central strategic focus.
6. Move towards formalizing the collaboration within a few months of developing a shared programme/initiative.
7. Take the initiative up to the highest levels of political influence and impact at the earliest opportunity to ensure it features in work plans, committee agendas and semester timetables.
8. Create opportunities for the emergent UniverCity to meet with other similar initiatives to share ideas at a regional and national level.
9. Make plans to present and promote the work of the UniverCity, whether ongoing or planned, at important events locally, eg Local Strategic Partnership conference, as well as taking advantage of the Academy's networks as well as those of individual participants.
10. Build into the initiative opportunities to review progress, effectiveness and impact.

'Actions speak louder than words – UniverCities do have to do things.'

Annette Hards
Kent Architecture Centre

'UniverCities are the sleeping giants of place-making.'

Robin Hambleton
Professor of Civic Leadership,
University of West of England



Medway, one of the developing UniverCities in the South East of England



Project coordinator

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