

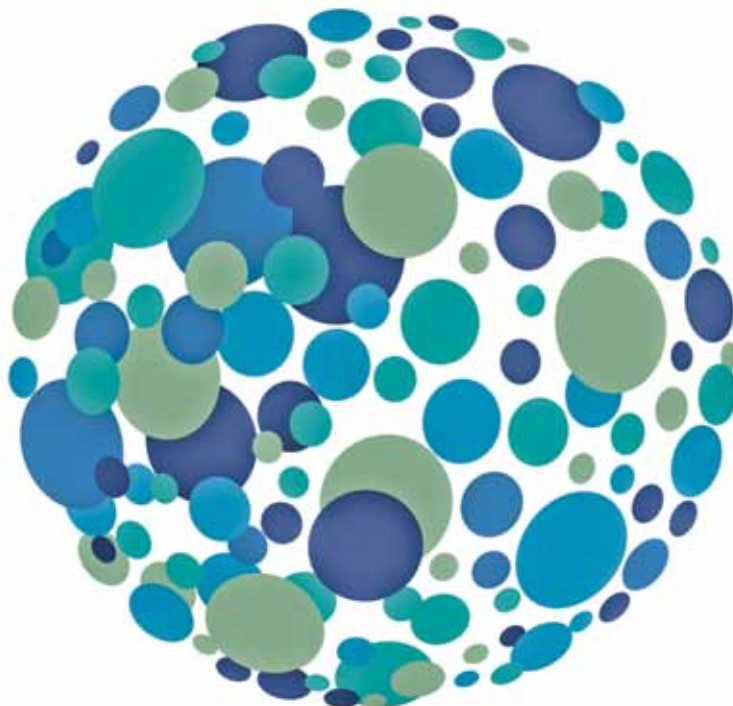


**QAA
Scotland**

Report of the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee
International Benchmarking Working Group

Study tour to Denmark and Sweden

June
2009



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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the report from the International Benchmarking: Supporting Student Success study visit to Denmark and Sweden held in June 2009.

This work forms part of a suite of outputs from the International Benchmarking project, which include the International Benchmarking report, in depth studies of practice in six aspects of student support, case studies collected from Scottish institutions and an exercise scoping international practice. The outcomes from all of these exercises are published on the Enhancement Theme website (www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk).

The Supporting Student Success project was commissioned by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) who assigned the work to a working group chaired by myself, then Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching at Glasgow Caledonian University. Membership of the group included experienced colleagues in student support from a variety of different areas from Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs). The working group was supported by officers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland and by a consultant, Jane Denholm from Critical Thinking.

The Group valued the opportunity to meet with colleagues in Denmark and Sweden and exploring HEIs' systems for supporting student success. The Group felt that the work Danish and Swedish HEIs did jointly with students to support other students was particularly interesting and worthy of further exploration in Scottish HEIs. Opportunities were also created to make links between Scottish and Danish & Swedish HEIs and this has been followed up by at least one study visit between HEIs from Scotland and Sweden.

There are many interesting messages that have emerged from the International Benchmarking work as a whole, not least that in many ways Scotland can be proud of the practice that has developed to support students, both before, and as a result of, this exercise. The work gave the sector an opportunity to look beyond its borders, look at practice elsewhere and form new and potentially exciting links with international colleagues from which much will be learnt in the future.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the study visit, including my fellow working group members, those colleagues in Denmark and Sweden who kindly offered us their hospitality and expertise, Jane Denholm, and my colleagues at QAA Scotland.

Professor Caroline MacDonald

Chair, International Benchmarking Working Group
University of Teesside

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The International Benchmarking Working Group wishes to thank a wide range of Danish and Swedish colleagues whose generosity with their hospitality, ideas and time made our trip so fascinating and productive. In particular, we'd like to acknowledge the help of the following people:

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December 2009

Executive summary

Introduction

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee's (SHEEC) International Benchmarking Working Group (IBWG) was established in April 2008 to consider and benchmark ways in which universities in Scotland and beyond are supporting student success. The overall aim of the work is to help support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with, and learning from, practice outwith Scotland. The project was charged with establishing a range of useful resources, contacts and links for use by institutions, students' associations and practitioners. There have been several outputs from the project available at www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk including the IBWG's main report to SHEEC: *Supporting student success: A forward-looking agenda* in April 2009. Following that report, with the agreement of SHEEC, the IBWG began a second phase of work focusing on a number of selected theme areas upon which it was due to report in Autumn 2009 (see page 5).

The study tour

The idea for the tour arose from the work of the IBWG in scoping other UK and international practice. The IBWG resolved to examine practice in a non-English-speaking system and agreed that the only way to do this was to visit the institutions and meet with relevant staff and students as part of a short study tour. Denmark and Sweden were chosen because they are small countries and close neighbours of Scotland. They form part of what has been called the 'Arc of Prosperity' in the North of Europe and the Nordic social and economic model is much admired. Although the unavailability of sufficiently detailed documentation in English hampered the research, there had been tantalising hints in the scoping work of examples of interesting practice in universities and colleges in Scandinavia. Logistical factors such as the proximity of the two countries to each other, excellent transport links and the fact that English is widely-spoken were also appealing. Visiting two countries would also allow the study tour participants to immerse themselves in two systems, comparing and contrasting these with each other as well as with Scotland.

A sub-group of six members of the IBWG visited Denmark and Sweden between 8 and 12 June 2009. They met a range of types of institutions in both countries:

- University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- Halmstad University, Sweden
- Lund University, Sweden
- Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden (KTH)
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)
- Uppsala University, Sweden
- Aarhus University, Denmark.

The group met the Nordic Council of Ministers for a general overview of systems and orientation, and the quality assurance agencies and bodies: ACE Denmark and the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) in Denmark and Högskoleverket (HSV) in Sweden.

Individual members also held side meetings (with the Danish and Swedish national students' unions, for example). In addition, Einar Lauritzen, Academic Registrar of Uppsala University, joined the group for dinner one evening. The tour timetable is at Annex B.

The main aim of the study tour was to start to make sense of two different systems of higher education and to investigate and record practice and activity which could be shared with the rest of the Scottish higher education sector in the form of a written report. The tour group also hoped to begin to make links within the Scandinavian higher education sector and institutions, with a view to building on these in future. The work would provide insights into two different national systems of higher education, identify practice and contacts for the Scottish sector to use as appropriate and provide a basis for SHEEC to consider recommendations and next steps for the sector.

Clearly, the tour could only provide a taster of higher education in Denmark and Sweden. For participants, it raised almost as many questions as it answered about the workings of the different systems. As a consequence, so might this report. Nonetheless, we believe we have established a basic understanding and one which can be built upon as the Scottish higher education sector consolidates the links we made in those countries.

The tour was sponsored by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

Key features of the Danish and Swedish higher education systems: observations and conclusions

The Danish and Swedish higher education systems differ markedly from the Scottish system in a number of key ways. They also differ from each other. The study tour group considered the implications of these differences in more depth, which has led it to the following general observations and conclusions:

- The most fundamental, and from the point of view of the IBWG most significant, difference is that Scandinavian universities have held to their tradition of having **'no responsibilities whatsoever for social services for students'**.¹ Consequently, there is a long tradition of key services for students being handled by students.
- The second fundamental distinction is that **government in both countries is highly involved in universities and university activity**. Government has much more power and intervenes far more than government in Scotland.
- Generally, where it does exist or has developed, **student support is organised in a very different way** to that in Scotland. Much of the generalist student support advice is the responsibility of the academic faculties rather than a central department or unit.
- Student representation, collaboration and responsibilities appear to be much greater than in Scotland. There is a **very strong focus placed in Denmark and Sweden both on formal student representation and on the use of students** - as mentors and counsellors (advisers) and in the work of students' unions. In addition, there is more of a tradition of **student sabbaticals undertaking roles** that staff in Scottish

¹ Lauritzen, E (2005) *From none to full responsibility*, Uppsala Universitet, p 1

students' unions would be more likely to fulfil. In Sweden and Denmark, students are adults and equals - there is no question of students being excluded from certain university committees.

- We say with confidence that **the level of student engagement is high**. Students expect to be involved in their higher education and in activities generally.
- **Student volunteering and service does not seem to be overtly connected to employability**. It is rarely formally recognised by institutions - for example, on academic transcripts - and PDP is not strong at all.
- **Funding** for learning and teaching in Denmark is almost wholly output-based, and in Sweden significantly so.
- **Internationalisation** was a recurring theme in our meetings and, particularly in Sweden, universities are taking steps to actively address challenges posed by international students, with integration of international students a particular theme.
- As well as free tuition for home students, both systems have more **generous student financial support** than in Scotland, with no expectation of a parental contribution.
- In Sweden and Denmark, universities **do not provide a block grant to students' unions** but may fund project work, for example union-run mentoring programmes.
- In Sweden, at the time of the visit, there was **compulsory membership of students' unions** - enrolling students must join and pay a fee directly to the students' union. However, the Swedish Government has decided to make membership of students' unions voluntary from July 2010.

Findings and next steps

The study tour to Denmark and Sweden has been immensely useful in its main task of identifying and observing practice and activity that can be shared with colleagues in Scotland. We now also have some good links within the Scandinavian higher education sector and institutions, upon which we can build in future. With only five days to spend in the two countries visited we have only been able to scratch the surface, but we believe we have uncovered enough that is interesting - at systemic level as well as institutional practice - to make those links worth developing.

The six themed areas in which the study tour group was particularly interested in investigating (some of which have evolved slightly as the work has been undertaken) were:

- Strategies and policies for student support
- Support for alumni
- Academic peer support and mentoring
- Students' associations/unions and other student-organised activity
- Extra-curriculum
- Staff training and development.

The group also found some other practice that was notable, and that it wished to share with the Scottish sector, during the study tour and it has noted this in an additional section:

- Other interesting practice.

The IBWG commends the following as potential next steps to SHEEC and all stakeholders in the Scottish higher education sector:

- Scottish higher education institutions might benefit from considering and implementing **more joint approaches** - with students - to activities which support student success
- although the IBWG has resolved that alumni relations are largely a matter for individual institutions, there are key areas - for example careers and social networking opportunities - where institutions can provide **ongoing support to alumni**. A relaxing of focus on fundraising may yield substantial other benefits to students and the institution
- **mentoring of students by students** is pervasive in Denmark and Sweden and used in a wide variety of situations - academic and pastoral. There are some schemes in Scotland and considerable interest amongst many of those who do not have anything in place. We commend the examples we found, and doubtless others that we did not, as examples for consideration by Scottish institutions
- although the culture of volunteering is arguable higher in Scandinavia than in Scotland, we know that many Scottish institutions are considering **widening the volunteering opportunities** they can make available to students. They might usefully consider the impressive array of volunteering opportunities open to students in Denmark and Sweden
- there is scope in Scotland for rethinking the role of **students in providing services and facilities for themselves**
- in particular, the use of **students as a key means of communicating with other students** is something that could be developed in Scotland
- Scottish institutions could consider ways in which **student input into staff development** can be facilitated in a way that is constructive and at the same time not threatening to staff
- there also appears to be a developing role (and potentially room for growth) for **student services centrally to work with academic staff** in helping them to help students
- work in Swedish universities to **improve the experience for international students** and be more inclusive, is impressive. Although the language issue is less pressing in Scotland, we might learn from the Swedish thinking and practice about how to serve international students better
- Scotland and Sweden share a reputation for **alcohol use/abuse** and some of the innovative Swedish practices, designed to reduce the role of alcohol in student life, could be usefully considered by Scottish universities

- related to this, more generally, the use of **students as good health ambassadors** - trained to pass information on to others - is worth considering. The general message that **important messages are best imparted to students by other students** could also have wider application
- rethinking **exchange students as ambassadors for their university and country**, by acknowledging that this is a role they will play and equipping them to act accordingly, is a simple, attractive and effective idea
- Danish and Swedish colleagues are interested in PDP-type activity and it is an area where we seem to have some expertise. **Inviting interested parties from Denmark and Sweden to attend sessions about PDP** would be a productive way to continue links
- **finding out more detail on specific aspects** of practice in Denmark and Sweden, for example non-university HE sector in Denmark
- in the light of significant differences between Denmark and Sweden, **finding out about policy and practice in other Scandinavian countries**
- **answering some of the questions** this paper raises, for example:
 - how real is student engagement?
 - where does the engagement start - in schools?
 - does it make a difference to Scandinavian graduates and are they different from ours?
 - to what extent are students genuinely co-creators of their own learning?
 - is the volunteering culture facilitated by the apparently generous system of student financial support?
 - to what extent are students working as well as studying?
 - how are Scandinavian higher education systems funded?
 - can we find comparable participation rates?

1 Introduction

Introduction

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee's (SHEEC) International Benchmarking Working Group (IBWG) was established in April 2008 to consider and benchmark ways in which universities in Scotland and beyond are supporting student success. The overall aim of the work is to help support the Scottish higher education sector in comparing with, and learning from, practice outwith Scotland. The project was charged with establishing a range of useful resources, contacts and links for use by institutions, students' associations and practitioners. There have been several outputs from the project available at www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk, including the IBWG's main report to SHEEC: *Supporting student success: A forward-looking agenda* in April 2009. Following that report, with the agreement of SHEEC, the IBWG began a second phase of work focussing on a number of selected theme areas upon which it was due to report in Autumn 2009. The six areas (some of which have evolved slightly as the work has been undertaken) are:

- Strategies and policies for student support
- Support for alumni
- Academic peer support and mentoring
- Students' associations/unions and other student-organised activity
- Extra-curriculum
- Staff training and development.

Background

The idea for the tour arose from the work of the IBWG in scoping other UK and international practice, which resulted in a report detailing around 70 examples of practice drawn from around 35 institutions in 12 countries. Accessing strategic information (as opposed to student-focused publicity material) at an appropriate level of depth is always a challenge in such exercises. Where the first language of the country and institutions being investigated is not English, this is even harder. Inevitably, the examples accessed and documented through the scoping work came predominantly from English-speaking countries, where the higher education systems also tend to be similar to those in Scotland. The IBWG resolved to examine practice in a non-English-speaking system and agreed that the only way to do this was to visit the institutions and meet with relevant staff and students as part of a short study tour.

Denmark and Sweden were chosen because they are small countries and close neighbours of Scotland. They form part of what has been called the 'Arc of Prosperity' in the North of Europe and the Nordic social and economic model is much admired. Although the unavailability of sufficiently detailed documentation in English hampered the research, there had been tantalising hints in the scoping work of examples of interesting practice in universities and colleges in Scandinavia. Logistical factors such as the proximity of the two countries to each other, excellent transport links and the fact that English is widely spoken were also appealing. Visiting two countries would also allow the study tour participants to immerse themselves in two systems, comparing and contrasting these with each other as well as with Scotland.

The study tour

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- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)
- Uppsala University, Sweden
- Aarhus University, Denmark.

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Clearly, the tour could only provide a taster of higher education in Denmark and Sweden. For participants, it raised almost as many questions as it answered about the workings of the different systems. As a consequence, so might this report. Nonetheless, we believe we have established a basic understanding and one which can be built upon as the Scottish higher education sector consolidates the links we made in those countries. We have aired some of the key questions to be pursued in section 4: Conclusions and next steps, page 36, of this report.

The tour was sponsored by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

2 Background

Denmark and Sweden

Facts

Country	Popula- tion	Land mass	Economy	Major industries	HE students
Denmark	5.5 million	43,561 km ²	In terms of the global economy, Denmark's economy seen as strong.	Agriculture, fishing, service sector (major exports: food, pharmaceuticals, chemical products)	195,000 ²
Sweden	9.2 million	450,295 km ²	'According to the OECD, Sweden dedicates more of its gross domestic product to investment in higher education than any other country in the world' ³	Agriculture, forestry, service sector (major exports: cars, wood, paper products, telecommunications equipment)	320,000 ⁴

Higher education in Denmark and Sweden

Organisations and agencies

A summary of the allocation of key functions carried out by organisations in the Scottish, Danish and Swedish higher education systems is below.

Comparators	Country		
	Scotland	Denmark	Sweden
Policy direction	Scottish Government	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Ministry of Education and Research
Funding allocation	Scottish Government	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Ministry of Education and Research
Policy development	Scottish Funding Council	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Ministry of Education and Research
Funding distribution	Scottish Funding Council	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Ministry of Education and Research
Property ownership and maintenance	Institutions	Danish University and Property Agency	Ministry of Education and Research

² Eurydice (2009a) *Organisation of the education system in Denmark 2008/09*, p 101

³ Top Grad School (2007) *Study in the European North: Destination Nordic countries*

⁴ Eurydice (2008c) *The Education System in Sweden 2007/08*, p 105

Comparators	Country		
Function	Scotland	Denmark	Sweden
Benchmarking and KPIs	Scottish Funding Council	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Institutions
Quality assurance	Institutions	Institutions	Institutions
Quality assessment/audit	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (Danish Evaluation Institute) (EVA)	Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (HSV)
Quality enhancement	Institutions collectively		Institutions collectively
Accreditation/validation	Institutions and PSRBs as appropriate	Akkrediteringsinstitutionen ACE Denmark	Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (HSV)
Admissions	UCAS	Standard priority form obtained centrally but each application made directly to institutions	Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (HSV)
Student financial support	Student Awards Agency Scotland and Student Loans Company	Statens Uddannelsestøtte (Danish Education Support Agency)	National Board of Student Aid (CSN)
Supporting student engagement	student participation in quality scotland	No equivalent	No equivalent
Student representation	National Union of Students Scotland	National Union of Students in Denmark (DSF)	Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)
Institutional representation	Universities Scotland	Universities Denmark (Danish Rectors' Conference)	Sveriges universitets- och högskoleförbund (Association of Swedish Higher Education) (SUHF)

History

The University of Copenhagen (Københavns Universitet) was established in 1479. It remained the only higher education institution in **Denmark** for almost 400 years. During the nineteenth century a number of specialised institutions were established and in the twentieth century new universities were added, including Aarhus University (Aarhus Universitet).⁵ Danish higher education underwent a series of government-inspired reforms in the 2000s, including a major sector reorganisation in 2006. The reforms were: managerial, educational, financial and structural.⁶ The Danish Government intended to strengthen research, education and innovation in Denmark. This resulted in a 'new map' of Danish universities and research institutions in 2007. From around 18 in 2003, there are now eight. The reorganisation deliberately created three major universities. In future, about two thirds of Denmark's university activity - including research - will take place in three institutions - the University of Copenhagen, Aarhus University and the Technical University of Denmark.

Sweden's first university was founded in Uppsala in 1477 and, as interest in studying medicine and the natural sciences increased, a second university was founded in Lund in 1668. Two further universities (Stockholm University and the University of Gothenburg) were established in the nineteenth century, both focused on the teaching of natural sciences. The twentieth century saw the establishment of specialised institutions (for teacher training, social work and journalism, and so on). Between 1940 and 1975 there was a focus on research, and new research organisations and research posts were established. In the latter part of the twentieth century, there was a major expansion of higher education and the student population grew enormously. Regional higher education institutions were founded throughout Sweden to enable access to higher education for everyone.⁷

Sectors

The reorganised **Danish higher education sector** comprises three types of institution:

- 10 academies of professional higher education offer two-year academy profession programmes in fields such as business, technology, and IT. They combine theoretical studies with a practically oriented approach and are usually completed with a project of three months' duration
- eight regional university colleges (professionshøjskole) offer three to four-year professional bachelor programmes in fields such as business, education, engineering and nursing. Theoretical studies, practical training through internships and a bachelor project are common parts of all programmes
- eight universities offer research-based, long-cycle higher education programmes. Some of these are multi-faculty institutions covering many disciplines, while others are specialised in specific fields, for example engineering, business and pharmaceutical sciences.⁸ As described earlier, since the 2006 reorganisation, there are now three major universities where approximately two thirds of all university activity is concentrated: the University of Copenhagen, University of Aarhus and The Danish Technical University. The remaining five universities are the University of Southern Denmark, Ålborg University, Roskilde University, Copenhagen Business School and the IT University of Copenhagen.⁹

⁵ Adapted from Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 72

⁶ Adapted from Jens Oddershede (2009) *Danish universities - a sector in change*, Universities Denmark, p 2

⁷ Adapted from the HSV website: www.hsv.se

⁸ Eurydice (2009b) *National summary sheets on education system in Europe and ongoing reforms: Denmark*

⁹ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 73

The Danish higher education system is binary, comprising two sectors for legal and funding purposes - the universities and the colleges/university colleges which offer vocational and professional higher education, for example teacher training programmes, programmes in social work, journalism, nursing, engineering, and so on.¹⁰ The tour focused on the universities, although if we had had longer it would have been interesting to visit, and therefore be able to contrast with, the professional institutes. We did, however, visit two of the three major universities.

The **Swedish higher education sector** comprises five types of institution:

- 16 universities (universitet) - including two private universities
- five university colleges (högskola med vetenskapsområde) - one is private
- 11 other colleges (övriga högskolor)
- nine art colleges (konstnärliga högskolor) - two are private.

(There are also 20 other higher education institutions 'mainly single subject institutions (mainly psychotherapy) and their size, in terms of enrolment is limited').¹¹

In essence, the state-funded sector comprises 14 universities and 22 higher education institutions - 36 in total. The system is unitary for legal and funding purposes. Again, had we had more time, it would have been interesting to visit some of the private institutions, but we did manage to visit the two ancient universities, the technological university, a specialised agricultural university and a university college.

Organisation

Following the University Act of 2003, all **Danish universities** are organised as self-governing institutions funded by the state.¹² According to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation 'the universities' primary function is to carry out research and education at the highest academic level and to promote innovation in the Danish industry. The universities offer research-based education at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels'.¹³ Since 2007, approval for university programmes at bachelor's and master's level transferred from the Ministry to ACE Denmark.

Until 2003, Danish vice-chancellors (rectors) were members of staff within the university, elected by academic staff. The main university governing body comprised employees of the university and students. These democratic principles applied also at faculty and departmental level. The 2003 legislation created governing boards comprising external interests also, and charged the boards with appointing the vice chancellor/rector - from outwith the university if desired. Deans and heads of department are now also appointed not elected. By law, two student representatives are entitled to sit on university governing boards.

There is a statutory requirement for 'study boards' designed 'to safeguard student influence on education and teaching'. These comprise 'an equal number of representatives of the academic staff and the students, selected by and from the academic staff and the students, respectively...The Study Board shall ensure the organisation, realisation and development of educational and teaching activities'.¹⁴

¹⁰ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 75

¹¹ CHEPS (2007) IHEM Country Report Sweden, p 14

¹² Eurydice (2009b) *National summary sheets on education system in Europe and ongoing reforms: Denmark*

¹³ Danish Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation website: <http://en.vtu.dk>

¹⁴ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 16

The **Swedish higher education sector** is, as mentioned earlier, a unitary one with different types of institution offering different programmes as befits their role. As the Diploma Supplement description for Sweden reads: 'Diplomas from all higher education institutions recognised by the Government have equal official value'. University title is awarded by the Government to higher education institutions that have fulfilled certain criteria. In addition, private higher education providers may have programmes recognised by the Government, obtain the right to award degrees and receive state subsidies. All recognised higher education is funded by the State.¹⁵

Universities and other higher education institutions in Sweden are described by the Ministry of Education and Research as 'autonomous agencies, directly responsible to the Government'.¹⁶ The Swedish Quality Assurance Agency (HSV) website considers that '[Higher education institutions] enjoy a great deal of freedom within the framework of the statutes, ordinances and regulations laid down by the Government'. All universities have a governing board which is responsible for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. The Swedish Government appoints the chair of the governing board for each institution and the vice-chancellor is 'nominated by the board and employed by Government decision for not more than six years'.¹⁷ Students have a statutory right to three representatives on institutional governing boards and to two representatives on faculty boards.¹⁸ Here, their role is similar to that of Danish students in contributing to programme development. In addition, in Sweden, there is a legal requirement for all university committees (including, for example, remuneration and staff discipline committees) to have student representation.

Property

In both **Denmark and Sweden**, normally, university property is bought and owned by the Government. The universities have to lease it back at market rates. Related to this, in both countries universities cannot own and operate student accommodation (except in limited and prescribed circumstances) so dedicated student accommodation is often organised and maintained by students' unions.

Student numbers

Undergraduate student numbers in higher education		
Denmark	Sweden	Scotland
195,000 ¹⁹	322,000 ²⁰	133,000 (degree courses) 39,900 (other higher education) ²¹

Eurydice reports that in 2006 there were over 59,000 students in medium-cycle university education (Bachelor's degrees) in **Denmark** and a further 69,000 in medium-cycle non-university education (largely professional degrees). See Degree structure, page 17.²² An additional 55,000 students were studying (long-cycle) master's degrees.

¹⁵ Adapted from the Diploma Supplement description for Sweden

¹⁶ Ministry website: www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2063

¹⁷ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges: Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 50

¹⁸ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges: Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 50

¹⁹ Eurydice (2009a) *Organisation of the education system in Denmark 2008/09*, p 101

²⁰ Eurydice (2008c) *The Education System in Sweden 2007/08*, p 105

²¹ Eurydice (2008a) *The education system in the United Kingdom - Scotland 2007/08*, p 120

²² Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 19

One of the objectives of the Danish Government is that by 2015 a minimum of 50 per cent of young people should complete a higher education programme. In July 2009, Carlsson et al commented that Denmark is 'still significantly short of its political goal of 50% young people participating in higher education'.²³ On the other hand, Eurydice reports in 2009 that 'approximately 45% of an age group' participates in higher education.²⁴ Completion rates in 2005 were: medium-cycle university education (bachelor, BSc) 68.2 per cent; and long-cycle university education (master/candidates), five years, 66.1 per cent.²⁵

Over the last 15 years the student population in **Sweden** has doubled, although this covers a decline between 2003 and 2006, with a slight increase since 2006. In 2007 322,000 students were enrolled on first and second level programmes.²⁶ According to CHEPS, in 2007, 'currently, around 30% of upper-secondary graduates are entering higher education before the age of 25. Competition for study places has increased such that the growing numbers of "mature" students enrolled in the system has come at the expense of younger applicants. As such, the government has set a target of increasing the number of upper-secondary graduates enrolling before 25 to 50%'.²⁷ The 20-year old cohort is expected to rise by almost 10 per cent over the two years to 2010, with a consequent expectation of an increase in demand for higher education.²⁸ Carlsson et al comment that 'of a cohort of young people, 44% have now begun to study at universities or university colleges at 25 years of age'.²⁹

Funding³⁰

Higher education budget		
Denmark	Sweden	Scotland
25.6 billion DKK (plus 12.3 billion DKK student financial support) ³¹	45.8 billion SEK (plus 10.5 billion SEK student financial support)	£1.01 billion (plus £539m SAAS)

In 2006, **Danish** public expenditure on higher education was 25.6 billion DKK (1.8 per cent of GDP).³² In Denmark, undergraduate level university funding comes directly from government and is wholly related to outputs. Degree study is 'financed 100% through a taximeter system. The universities receive funding for each student who passes his/her exams according to the ECTS [European Credit Transfer Scheme] value of this exam. Students who fail or do not enter the exam do not attract any funding'.³³ There are now, with the recent reforms, additional incentives to universities when students gain their degrees within a shorter timeframe. There are three different levels of funding depending on the subject being studied. Universities receive their grants as a lump sum and it is up to university management to allocate this funding internally.

²³ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 7

²⁴ Eurydice (2009a) *Organisation of the education system in Denmark 2008/09*, p 88

²⁵ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 90

²⁶ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities and University Colleges Annual Report (short version)*, p 14

²⁷ CHEPS (2007) *International Higher Education Monitor Country Report: Sweden*, p 18

²⁸ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges: Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 13

²⁹ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 20

³⁰ At the time of the visit the exchange rates were as follows: £1 = approx DKK 8/SEK 12.

³¹ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 78

³² Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 89

³³ Oddershede, J (2009) *Danish universities - a sector in change*, Universities Denmark, p 6

The Danish higher education sector is divided between three ministries - the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture. Since the reforms, universities are no longer exclusively financed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation but also by the other ministries (although only for specific types of courses). Jens Oddershede considers that 'this renders the universities a little freer when they prioritise and it makes them less dependent on the decisions of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation relating to the research budgets'.³⁴

The Danish Government is preparing to inject large resources into research in the near future. Most university funding comes from public sources. Less than 10 per cent comes from private or foreign sources, and the source of most of the latter is the EU. The proportion of private funding has increased in recent years.³⁵

The **Swedish higher education sector** is also funded directly by government - the Ministry of Education and Research - based on 'per capita amounts per FTE and full-time performance equivalent for the different disciplines'. Higher education institutions have freedom to manage this funding but, in practice, 'the per capita allocation levels play a significant role...in determining internal funding levels'.³⁶ This is because subjects compete with single discipline institutions, making it difficult for university managers to 'rob' them to subsidise other disciplines. For example, if Uppsala was to divert money from medicine to support arts, their medical faculty could be at a disadvantage compared to the Karolinska Institute, which is a single-discipline institution.

According to Eurydice: 'Costs of study support amounted in 2006 to 10.5 billion SEK and the costs of the central authorities were slightly more than 700 million SEK. Total costs in the higher education sector amounted to 2.0 per cent of GDP'.³⁷

	Costs in 2006 (billion SEK)
State universities and university colleges	45.8
National agencies etc	0.7
Student financial support	10.5
Total	57.0

Source: *Universitet & högskolor, Högskoleverkets årsrapport 2007* (Universities & University colleges, annual report by The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education 2007)³⁸

By 2007, higher education sector revenue (excluding expenditure on student finance and central agencies) amounted to approximately 47.4 billion SEK.³⁹ Just under 88 per cent of this comes from the public purse by various means (65 per cent is direct grant and the rest through allocations by the Swedish Research Council or financial undertakings by local authorities or county councils⁴⁰) and the proportion of private funding is around 11-12 per cent.

The proportion of direct government funding is much higher for institutions with a larger proportion of first and second level programmes (largely new universities) than for those with a high proportion of research (largely older universities).⁴¹

³⁴ Oddershede, J (2009) *Danish universities - a sector in change*, Universities Denmark, p 10

³⁵ Oddershede, J (2009) *Danish universities - a sector in change*, Universities Denmark, p 10

³⁶ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 30

³⁷ Eurydice (2008c) *The Education System in Sweden 2007/08*, p 38

³⁸ HSV (2007) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2007*

³⁹ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 28

⁴⁰ Nordic Council of Ministers (2005) *Rethinking Nordic Co-operation, Copenhagen*, p 129

⁴¹ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 29

Degree structures

Denmark has been described as an early adopter of Bologna. HEIs in Denmark offer short cycle (the academies), medium cycle (the university colleges) and long cycle (universities) programmes. Universities offer three-year bachelor programmes (BSc/BA), two-year candidates programmes (MSc/MA) and three-year PhD programmes. Generally speaking, students embarking on the university track will expect to undertake both bachelor's and master's degrees, whereas those in the non-university higher education sector will likely finish after a bachelor's degree and enter the labour market.

On 1 July 2007, the **Swedish higher education sector** adopted a new degree structure to conform with Bologna. Higher education is offered at three levels - first level (University Diploma and bachelor's degree), second level (one and two-year master's degree) and third level (Licentiate degree and PhD) and all qualifications are assigned to one of these levels. First and second levels are considered to be undergraduate programmes in Swedish terms.⁴² As with Denmark, university students usually expect to undertake both bachelor's and master's-level study.

Student funding

Students in **Danish** higher education do not have to pay tuition fees for bachelor's or master's degree study. Until 2006, this used to apply to foreign students too.

All students over the age of 18 are considered to be adults and therefore independent of their parents. They are entitled to receive financial support for living expenses from the State Educational Grant and Loan Scheme (SU) issued by the Danish Education Support Agency. Students can access both grants and loans under this system. 'Every student enrolled in a higher education course is entitled to a number of monthly grants corresponding to the prescribed duration of the chosen study, plus 12 months. Inside a maximum of 70 grants students can change from one course to another'.⁴³ In effect, students are funded for an extra year of study if they so desire. Those who have run out of grant can take out a 'completion loan'. Supplementary state loans are also available and around 50 per cent of students make use of these. 'Over 300,000 Danes benefit from these two types of educational support every year. The annual budget amounts to over 11 billion Danish Kroner, around 0.8 per cent of Gross National Product. The average after-tax annual income of students receiving support and earning an average private income - corresponding to roughly 10 hours paid work a week - is about 60% of that of typical industrial workers'.⁴⁴ Danish students can earn up to 70,000 DKK before their grant will be reduced.⁴⁵

In **Sweden** tuition for bachelor's and master's courses is also free, even at private universities. It is also free for international students although this is under discussion and likely to be changed in future.⁴⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, 'foreign students make up quite a large proportion of the total number of students in Sweden'.⁴⁷ There are 27,000 international students studying at first and second levels in Sweden, although the majority come from Europe.

⁴² HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 10

⁴³ Danish Education Support Agency website: www.su.dk/English/Sider/agency.aspx

⁴⁴ Danish Education Support Agency website: www.su.dk/English/Sider/agency.aspx

⁴⁵ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 8

⁴⁶ www.studyinsweden.se/Study-options/Basic-information/Fees-and-costs

⁴⁷ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 21

Student aid is administered by the National Board of Student Aid (CSN). Grant and loan packages are available to students. The maximum available to an individual student studying full-time is 74,900 SEK comprising 25,700 grant and 49,200 loan. This is paid for a maximum of 12 semesters/6 academic years.⁴⁸ Again, students are funded for an extra year of study, should they wish to take it. Certain students can also obtain supplementary loans and loans for additional costs, for example a child allowance. There are also some grants targeted at specific groups in the community. Student finance costs amounted to 10.3 billion SEK in 2007.⁴⁹ Similar to Denmark, Swedish students 'are allowed to earn 107,000 SEK a year and still keep the whole loan and grant.'⁵⁰

A Parliamentary Commission on Student Welfare Issues, largely focused on student financial support, reported in March 2009, although, unfortunately for the study tour group, most of the information pertaining to this is in Swedish. The Commission was established 'to investigate and propose changes in certain parts of the current system'. The Commission examined social security issues, the study support system, the administration of the study support system and how to increase student completion rates in Swedish higher education.⁵¹

According to the Nordic Council of Ministers, of all the Nordic countries, 'students in Denmark receive the most financial aid in the form of grants...two thirds of the total financial aid is generally given as grants. In...Sweden, the grant usually covers one third of the total financial aid. In Denmark, the student financial aid is typically granted for 12 months annually, while the other Nordic countries normally grant it for the 9 to 10 months of actual period of study. Grants are taxable income in Denmark...In Sweden they are tax-free'.⁵²

Supporting student success

Lauritzen comments that, traditionally, Scandinavian universities 'originally had no responsibilities whatsoever for social services for students'. Students were, and arguably largely still are, 'regarded as adults who could fully handle their own affairs and who visited the university with one purpose only: to imbibe learning from their professors'. At Uppsala University, for example, the student 'nations' (see page 19) 'run by students for students, were truly in the place of parents - not the university'.⁵³ This contrasts markedly with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of 'in loco parentis' and affects the structures and processes of universities to this day. The study tour group notes that, whereas this attitude once prevailed in Scotland too, during the twentieth century there has been a significant shift in Scottish higher education towards the in loco parentis approach.

Generally, and probably as a consequence of this philosophy, where it does exist or has developed, student support is organised in a very different way to that in Scotland. Student support is generally organised on a distributed mode with individual schools providing and organising their own provision. Much of the generalist student support advice is the responsibility of the academic faculties rather than a central department or unit. In addition, much use is made of students in providing services to other students.

⁴⁸ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities and University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 48

⁴⁹ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities and University Colleges Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 29

⁵⁰ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 21

⁵¹ Bologna Process (November 2008) *National Reports: Sweden 2009*

⁵² Nordic Council of Ministers (2008) *Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2008*, Copenhagen, p 77

⁵³ Lauritzen, E (2005) *From none to full responsibility*, Uppsala Universitet, p 1

Since 2005, student guidance and counselling is not an individual activity placed at department or faculty-level but a strategic activity at central level. All Danish universities have study-guidance and career-guidance strategies. Both students and professionals are employed at the universities as counsellors.

Student engagement

There are many opportunities, formal and informal, for students to be engaged in higher education in Denmark and Sweden from attending/contributing at committee level (see Organisation, page 13), to academic and pastoral mentoring to organising parties and running a temporary student 'pub'. There is a rich culture of involvement and volunteering and an expectation on the part of students that they will do things for themselves. It became clear to the study tour group that the IBWG's definition of student involvement in higher education largely being about student unions or associations was too narrow to encompass the range of activities and projects it encountered in Denmark and Sweden. Much of this is formally organised at union/association level, but significant activities are also run by societies and informal and/or ad hoc groupings of students.

In Denmark and Sweden, responsibility for providing certain services to students does not fall to the university. Some of these are activities that might be assumed in the UK as being the responsibility of the university. Healthcare and housing, for example, are primarily the individual student's responsibility 'as any other citizen' with assistance from the municipality where appropriate. In Scandinavia, students' organisations often step in and fulfil some of these roles.⁵⁴ Student housing (except occasionally, in the case of international students) is one such example. Also, in Denmark and Sweden, by law, students are represented in equal numbers with academic staff on university programme boards, and therefore make a direct contribution to programme development.

Student union membership in Denmark is voluntary. Student unions in Sweden are facing voluntary membership issues akin to those raised in the UK in the 1990s. The Swedish Government has agreed 'to abolish compulsory membership of student unions and student nations on 1 July 2010'.⁵⁵

Internationalisation

As Bergendorff observes, 'internationalisation of higher education has a very high priority in the Nordic countries'.⁵⁶ The tour group noted that institutions have the same issue as UK institutions in terms of the imbalance for exchange students - more inward than outward. Carlsson et al consider that 'the "export" dimension is lacking in Nordic higher education' because, apart from Denmark, the other Nordic countries 'cannot profit economically from attracting foreign students'.⁵⁷ In the case of Denmark, Carlsson et al observe that 'the introduction of...fees [in 2006] combined with the relatively high living expenses in Denmark have had a negative influence on the number of non-EU students studying in Danish higher education institutions'.⁵⁸ International students are divided

⁵⁴ In the two oldest Swedish universities - Uppsala University and Lund University - there is a series of student nations. Formerly based on the student's home location these have now evolved and now each tends to have a different focus (for example, more musical/sport orientated, and so on). Each student chooses one to join according to their interests and the activities of the nations. Students can also cross nations, attending events, and so on, from other nations. The nations are the student's 'second home' and are very much student-run and much of that is voluntary. Nations play a central role in student life.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Education and Research (March 2009) Factsheet U09.004

⁵⁶ Bergendorff, K D (undated) conference paper: *The changing face of Higher Education in Sweden and the Nordic countries following the Bologna process*

⁵⁷ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 6

⁵⁸ Carlsson et al (July 2009) *The Internationalisation of Higher Education: The Nordic Experience*, p 7

into two groups - the free movers and the exchange students. The two types present different challenges. In Sweden, particularly, they do not view international students as 'cash cows'. There is free tuition for international students in Sweden because it is a small country and wants to convey its culture to the world.

Quality assurance and accreditation

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) is an independent evaluation organisation under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Education, responsible for all sectors of education from early childhood, schools, and so on, to higher education and adult continuing education and training. Between 1999 and 2007, EVA was responsible for **quality assurance in Danish higher education** including the universities. EVA systematically assessed programmes within higher education and the EVA unit for higher education has been responsible for external quality assurance of short, medium and long-cycle programmes. Between 1999 and 2004, EVA conducted systematic programme evaluations of university programmes, and in 2004 EVA shifted from programme evaluation to institutional auditing of the universities. Four major universities were subject to institutional audits between 2004 and 2006 (including the University of Copenhagen).

Parallel to this, EVA carried out quality assurance relating to short and medium-cycle programmes, including the accreditation of 69 medium-cycle programmes, 17 institutional accreditations of university colleges, as well as various system-wide evaluations and studies.⁵⁹

In 2007, the Danish Accreditation of Higher Education Act introduced systematic accreditation of all higher education in Denmark (ex ante and ex post) as mandatory external quality assurance. In addition to this, the Act introduced a new accreditation agency for long-cycle programmes - ACE Denmark - responsible for accrediting university programmes, with EVA being responsible for accrediting short and medium-cycle programmes in other higher education institutions. As a consequence, since 2007, EVA's involvement with universities has lessened significantly. Previously, the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation approved new degrees, but the responsibility now lies with ACE Denmark. Jens Oddershede comments that 'the universities have been positive about becoming more independent of the - sometimes arbitrary - approvals by the Ministry. But, in spite of the positive reception, there is an increasing worry over the labour intensive character of accreditation for existing degrees.'⁶⁰

Institutions are entitled to use other agencies for the accreditation assessments. If they choose to do so, they must fund it themselves.

In **Sweden**, between 2001 and 2007, all higher education programmes and major subjects were subject to evaluation by the National Agency for Higher Education (HSV). In total 1,700 higher education programmes were assessed and the cycle has now ended. A new national quality assurance system was introduced in 2007. The new system 'places greater responsibility on the higher education institutions for quality assurance'⁶¹ allowing HSV to concentrate on fewer, in-depth programme appraisals in cases where standards are thought to be at risk.

⁵⁹ EVA (2008) *MEMORANDUM The Danish Evaluation Institute and the process of accreditation within the field of higher education 04 April 2008*

⁶⁰ Oddershede, J (2009) *Danish universities - a sector in change*, Universities Denmark, p 5

⁶¹ HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges: Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 33

The new system comprises five interlinked components:

- audits of quality assurance mechanisms in HEIs between 2008 and 2012
- six-year cycle of programme evaluations with information provided by the institutions and a national picture compiled, from this, by HSV. Selected in-depth appraisals carried out by visits and external assessors, as before
- appraisal of entitlement to award degrees
- thematic evaluations and studies, for example interaction of higher education with the wider community
- distinguishing centres of educational excellence - a new feature 'intended to stimulate quality development and provide inspiration for others'.⁶² Nominations are submitted and appraised by a panel of experts who also make site visits. Of the 26 applications received in the first round, five have been successful.

Universities are, in principle, free to set up any programme, if they have the resources. University colleges must have accreditation from HSV to set up a master's programme, 'although even here formalities have become fairly liberal'. A university college that wants to be upgraded to university status must go through an accreditation procedure, and the final decision in such a case will be taken by the Government. A university college can also apply for university status in one particular academic field (such as natural sciences), which means that it can award PhDs in this field but not in others. In such cases there is also an accreditation procedure.⁶³

Bologna stocktaking exercise

In 2005 'level of participation of students' was the only area for which Denmark did not receive dark green (the best result) in the Bologna Scorecard (it was light green, still a reasonable result). In 2007 it was dark green but the 'level of international participation' had slipped to light green.

Sweden scored well in the 2007 Bologna Stocktaking exercise being picked up only for its slow implementation of the two-cycle degree system. As with the 2005 exercise, it was 'light green' for 'level of international participation'. Dark green in both exercises for 'level of student participation'.⁶⁴

Key features of the Danish and Swedish higher education systems: observations and conclusions

As can be seen above, the Danish and Swedish higher education systems differ markedly from the Scottish system in a number of key ways. They also differ from each other. The study tour group considered their implications in more depth which has led it to the following general observations and conclusions:

- The most fundamental, and from the point of view of the IBWG most significant, difference is that Scandinavian universities have held to their tradition of having '**no responsibilities whatsoever for social services for students**'.⁶⁵ Consequently, there

⁶² HSV (2008) *Swedish Universities & University Colleges: Short Version of Annual Report 2008*, p 35

⁶³ Adapted from Ekholm, Lars, former Secretary General Association of Swedish Higher Education: *Some notes on Sweden and the Bologna process*, seminar in Riga on 4 December 2002, 'Bologna process in Latvia in the European Context'

⁶⁴ Bologna Process (2005) *Bologna Process Stocktaking* and Bologna Process (2007) *Bologna Process Stocktaking London 2007*

⁶⁵ Lauritzen, E (2005) *From none to full responsibility*, Uppsala Universitet, p 1

is a long tradition of services for students being handled by students.

This context provided an important backdrop to the visit because, as we observed, this philosophy infuses a wide range of aspects of the system and certainly informs the approach of universities to issues of student services. A university's default position is to 'not intervene'. In some cases, such as student accommodation, they are prohibited from doing so and here students' unions play a strong role.

- The second fundamental distinction is that **government in both countries is highly involved in universities and university activity**. Government has much more power and intervenes far more than government in Scotland. There appears to have been a recognition in both countries that there are benefits to universities being free to pursue their activities - but this is still prescribed by legislation. We were astounded to learn that the respective governments own almost all university property and the universities rent these at a market rate. Consequently, the Danish University and Property Agency, for example, seems to have influence beyond a strictly property remit.⁶⁶ However, the universities seem adept at managing this situation. One manager commented 'it just means you have to do everything indirectly'.
- Generally, where it does exist or has developed, **student support is organised in a very different way** to that in Scotland. Much of the generalist student support advice is the responsibility of the academic faculties rather than a central department or unit. It is therefore flexible and responsive to local needs but, at the same time, it is difficult to see the big picture and services are bound to be inconsistent, with implications for the collective student experience. We saw evidence and examples of interesting practice but this might not necessarily have been replicated institution-wide. In addition, extensive use is made of students in providing services to other students.
- Student representation, collaboration, and responsibilities appear to be much greater than in Scotland. There is a **very strong focus placed in Denmark and Sweden both on formal student representation and on the use of students** - as mentors and counsellors (advisers) and in the work of students' unions, for example, in ways we would recognise, such as organising social activities, and so on, but also in some major areas, such as induction week, and particularly in areas where the universities themselves are prohibited from activity, such as the provision of student accommodation. In addition there is more of a tradition of **student sabbaticals undertaking roles** that staff in Scottish students' unions would be more likely to fulfil. In Sweden and Denmark students are adults and equals - there is no question of students being excluded from certain university committees.
- Although our trip was short and we inevitably observed some of the best practices that the universities wanted to show us, we say with confidence that **the level of student engagement is high**. Students expect to be involved in their higher education and in activities generally. This level of engagement appears to start in school and students arrive in higher education expecting and preparing to be engaged with the system. They do this because they want to, sometimes for modest pay and often just for fringe benefits like a free lunch or attending parties, and so on. The study tour group noted some interesting consequences for student engagement of degree structures and study patterns in Denmark and Sweden.

⁶⁶ Danish University and Property Agency website: www.ubst.dk/en

University students in both countries generally expect to, and are funded to, study to master's level. This would usually take five years at the fastest pace, so one or two years longer than in the UK. In addition, students are enabled by the financial support system to study at a tempo that suits them, so it is common practice to take longer through taking a semester out, studying a half-semester or taking a gap year (often between bachelor's and master's-level study). In this way, students in Denmark and Sweden are 'in the system' longer than their counterparts in the UK. Added to the fact that students are generally older than UK students when they start their studies - they are likely to be at least 19 - the study tour group noted that the higher education cohort in general in Denmark and Sweden is likely to be more mature and more exposed to the university and consequently may be better equipped to engage with the system.

- **Student volunteering and service does not seem to be overtly connected to employability.** It is rarely formally recognised by institutions - for example, on academic transcripts - and PDP is not strong at all, although some institutions expressed interest in knowing more about how UK institutions go about this.
- **Funding** for learning and teaching in Denmark is almost wholly output-based and in Sweden, significantly so. There are now, with recent reforms, additional incentives to universities when students gain their degrees within a shorter timeframe. We thought this might have resulted naturally in more universities wanting to do more for students to ensure success - and therefore more services for students - but it does not seem to be the case. The belief that it is a student's responsibility to manage their own education seems to be stronger than the, to us obvious, role the university could play in helping this.
- **Internationalisation** was a recurring theme in our meetings and, particularly in Sweden, universities are taking steps to actively address challenges posed by international students with integration of international students a particular theme. Language is an additional barrier there and universities reported that encouraging Swedish and other students to mix is a challenge.
- As well as free tuition for home students, both systems have more **generous student financial support** than in Scotland, with no expectation of a parental contribution. This is another consequence of the general philosophy that students are adults.
- In Sweden and Denmark universities **do not provide a block grant to students' unions** but may fund project work, for example, union-run mentoring programmes.
- In Sweden, there is **currently compulsory membership of students' unions** - enrolling students must join and pay a fee directly to the students' union. These fees are payable every semester but seemed to us to be not a particularly significant sum (for example, at Halmstad 350 SEK per semester; at Lund 150-200 SEK per semester). Largely for reasons of human rights, the Swedish Government has decided to make membership of students' unions voluntary from July 2010 - indeed it passed the Act determining this while we were there on the visit. Given the range of services for which students' unions are responsible, anything that might make their organisation unviable might seem alarming. One vice-chancellor commented that jeopardising student union services was unwise and unhelpful as he considered 'they are essential to the quality of the experience that a university offers students'.

We found, however, that universities and students' union officers were largely sanguine about this, while accepting that they will need to market themselves more to ensure students continue to join, and adopting a 'wait and see' approach. We have concluded that this is both because the services that students' unions offer are so crucial, and that the principle of student representation is so deeply embedded in the culture of Swedish higher education, that it is not threatened.

3 Institutional processes and practice

Focus

The study tour group concentrated on the six theme areas upon which the IBWG was due to report in Autumn 2009. We provided host institutions in Denmark and Sweden with our current thinking on these and invited them to address all, any or some in the meetings. The six areas (slightly adapted to accommodate the findings of the study tour) are:

- Strategies and policies for student support
- Support for alumni
- Academic peer support and mentoring
- Students' associations/unions and other student-organised activity
- Extra-curriculum
- Staff training and development.

The group also found some other practice that was notable, and that it wished to share with the Scottish sector, during the study tour and it has noted this in an additional section:

- Other interesting practice.

The following sections provide the key findings of the study tour group, recorded under each of these theme headings.

Strategies and policies for student support

As described earlier, universities in Denmark and Sweden do not recognise a role for themselves in supporting students in the way that we would in Scotland and therefore strategies and policies which would impact on student support are not quite characterised in this way. Students are involved in the curriculum, as a matter of routine, at a strategic level in Denmark and Sweden. We noted four particularly interesting examples of practice.

A relatively new and young university, Halmstad University's educational profile is made up of three connected areas which it characterises as the development and study of organisations, and products and quality of life. These areas are then underpinned by three attributes: collaborative outreach, innovation, and **well-being**. The study tour group was particularly interested in the prominence given to this focus on well-being, which is firmly tied into institutional strategy and mission, and infuses much of what the university does. The university states that 'great emphasis is put on well-being in the form of preventative health, health care and working environment for staff and students'.⁶⁷

Uppsala University's **teaching and learning guidelines for educational activity and development**⁶⁸ were particularly interesting to the study tour group. The Guidelines comprise four overall objectives for educational activities, providing a framework in terms of content and structure. The objectives are:

⁶⁷ Halmstad University (2008) *For the development of organisations, products and quality of life*, p 11

- good conditions for students' learning
- professional development in teaching and learning
- development of education programmes
- the value of teaching qualifications.

The Guidelines were drafted jointly by staff and students at the University and separate columns show 'the University's role' and 'the students' role' for each listed activity. The Guidelines deliberately emphasise a shared view of the responsibilities in learning and teaching, and give equal prominence to students and teachers.

Aarhus University dedicates a **section of its Strategic Plan** to 'Effective Support and Service' which acknowledges that 'the needs of external and internal users and clients require from an attractive elite university a very high level of support and services. Support and services must be undertaken by a flexible, service-oriented organisation and comprise tasks ranging from external business partners and ministries to the maintenance of technical installations, service and guidance to students and staff, and the support of management decisions.'⁶⁹

More generally, the study tour group was fascinated to note the **statutory requirement for 'study boards'** in Denmark (and similar representation arrangements in Sweden) designed 'to safeguard student influence on education and teaching'.⁷⁰ Study boards must comprise 'an equal number of representatives of the academic staff and the students, selected by and from the academic staff and the students, respectively. The Study Board recommends the Director of Studies' appointment to the Dean. In co-operation with the Study Board, the Director of Studies shall undertake the practical organisation of teaching and assessments forming part of the exams. The Study Board shall ensure the organisation, realisation and development of educational and teaching activities, including aims to:

- assure and develop the quality of education and teaching, and follow-up on evaluations of education and teaching;
- produce proposals for curricula and changes thereof;
- approve the organisation of teaching and assessments forming part of the exams;
- handle applications concerning credit and exemptions;
- make statements on all matters of importance to education and teaching within its area; and
- discuss issues related to education and teaching as presented by the Rector or the person authorised by the Rector to do so.⁷¹

Conclusions

The IBWG noted the context that student engagement is high in general in Denmark and Sweden and that this, and the general absence of student services as we characterise them in Scotland, affects the ways in which strategies are conceived and described. Nonetheless, the Group was highly impressed with the joint approach, in general on study boards and specifically to the production of Guidelines at Uppsala University, and adopted more generally at other Danish and Swedish institutions.

⁶⁸ Uppsala University (2008) *Teaching and Learning at Uppsala University: Guidelines for Educational Activity and Development*

⁶⁹ Aarhus University (2008) *The University of Aarhus Strategy 2008-2012*

⁷⁰ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 16

⁷¹ Eurydice (2008b) *The education system in Denmark 2007/08*, p 16

Support for alumni

Nowhere we visited was involved in fundraising from alumni. The concept is not well developed, even alien. Danish and Swedish universities focus quite deliberately on 'friendraising not fundraising'. The emphasis is firmly on the other benefits of keeping in touch with alumni, for example seeing them as goodwill ambassadors for the institution as well as repositories of employment experience and expertise and contacts. For example, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences regards alumni as ambassadors rather than donors and sees this as particularly important given the specialised nature of the University's activities and need for good connections. In addition, alumni are often seen as a market for continuing education programmes and a pool of guest lecturers. Rather than seeking funding from alumni, Danish and Swedish universities seek time and experience - input to course/programme development, evaluation and/or delivery, and career advising or mentoring. Possibly for this reason, there is also a more explicit link in some institutions between alumni and careers as this is a key area where the institution can provide opportunities and services to alumni. Alumni also want reunions and social activities, networking opportunities, invitations to lectures and seminars, and news about the university.

Alumni mentoring takes place at Aarhus University, the University of Copenhagen and the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology. Alumni at Aarhus **mentor MSc/final-year students** who, in turn, mentor refugees with a view to widening participation and broadening global perspectives in their internationalisation agenda. Copenhagen alumni relations office is a very recent development (2007) and is **now focusing on current students rather than graduates**. The Kubulus' mentor programme provides **mentors for master's students** to discuss future career plans and transition to work. Mentors, in turn, are provided with the opportunity to participate in career fairs and gain publicity for their company (but they pay for this package). They use email/seminars/meetings, and so on, to liaise with mentees, although support is mainly face to face. The scheme is also open to international students who can be matched with a mentor from an international or Danish company. Alumni membership is not automatic and students have to apply - but are encouraged to do so.

The Swedish Royal Institute of Technology has also established an **extensive alumni mentoring scheme**. A contract is drawn up with an employer and that company gives alumni working time to be mentors, run courses, and so on. There are special programmes for disciplines, for example in chemistry and for female doctoral students. In autumn 2009, the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology aimed to extend the scheme to e-mentoring over the web. Eventually they plan for this mentoring scheme to be integrated with other mentor schemes established for academic study. While the University has engaged with alumni for some time (locally since 1985), a central service was only set up in 2002. The institution aims to have an **alumni mentor for all students in their final year** by 2012. In addition, the institution holds a web-based database of over 50,000 alumni with over 9,500 registered as active members. The alumni database is connected to the government census database - which makes this whole process easier - enabling alumni home addresses to be updated once a month automatically. Students were frequently 'signed up' as alumni while still studying at the University, rather than when they left, and receive an email account for life. The Swedish Royal Institute of Technology uses alumni to promote the institution. **'Life after KTH'** films of alumni are shown in schools to engage students with science and technology

and provide potential students with ideas about the careers they might go on and do. The films also help to counteract stereotypes by presenting a range of role models (for example, women scientists). The University's alumni network offers a **wide range of support to alumni** including reunions, special lectures, networks, career support, a 'female leadership' competition, and a 'Young Professionals' fair.

Aarhus University makes **use of Facebook** networks for its alumni, including non-Danish speaking alumni, to help them find work. As well as providing a dedicated member website, the University of Copenhagen's Kubulus Alumni association uses **Twitter, Flickr, Facebook** and **LinkedIn**.

Conclusions

The IBWG has concluded that developing alumni relations to the right level is another 'win-win' situation whereby everyone - alumni, students and the institution - benefits. The lack of focus on fundraising in Denmark and Sweden was refreshing and yet the other benefits to students and the institution are substantial. Careers and social networking opportunities are both key areas where institutions can provide ongoing support to alumni.

Academic peer support and mentoring

Universities make extensive use of students as academic 'counsellors' (meaning 'advisers') in Denmark and Sweden. Almost every institution we visited had a substantial programme in place. Although institution-wide, such arrangements are generally made and organised locally at school and department level. Student counsellors provide guidance to their peers on programme course decisions and choices as well as study skills support. Formal Supplemental Instruction (SI) schemes⁷² are in widespread use in both countries. As discussed earlier (at Student engagement, page 19) it is part of the prevailing culture that students generally seem to expect to participate in such schemes. Student counsellors are usually paid, usually at fairly modest rates. Academic credit, on the other hand, is not a well-developed practice, although Danish and Swedish colleagues showed considerable interest in this, and in PDP in the UK, generally. We could not discern a strong overt link to future employability.

At Aarhus University **student counsellors give academic/programme advice** to students. Counsellors are appointed at programme level and are trained and paid. There is an official Counselling Strategy, coordinated by the Central Student Office. Counsellors are drawn from student members of the Boards of Studies, and are therefore experienced and knowledgeable about the programmes upon which they are advising. There are approximately 200 counsellors (one per programme). These are the first point of contact for students with queries about their degree programme/regulations. More specialised queries are referred to academic staff.

Supplemental instruction is strongly promoted in Lund University, although it is up to faculties to decide whether or not to make use of it and some do more than others. The Faculty of Humanities and Technology makes most use of the programme with around 60-65 SI Leaders leading small groups of around 10 students each. The SI Leaders are emphatically mentors and facilitators, not assistant instructors or teachers. The underlying principle is collaborative learning and the students in the group are

⁷² A model developed at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, in 1973.

expected to structure the sessions and decide upon topics. Attendance is voluntary and the university estimates that around 35 per cent of all eligible students attend. Evaluation carried out by the University suggests improved retention rates and results with the high achievers doing better than they might have, and those who might have struggled, managing to get through. In common with many schemes in Denmark and Sweden, mentors are paid modestly (around 115 SEK per hour) and work around 3.5 hours per week. Some mentors do several years. Demand for mentoring positions exceeds available places.

Reflecting the nature of its student body, the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology has a significant programme of student mentors to **support students with Asperger's syndrome or ADHD**. Around 15 students per annum are given extensive training. The mentors are paid 129 SEK/hr and work about 3 hrs/week. Mentors meet each other regularly as a group to provide support for each other.

By contrast, and alone among the institutions we visited, the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology has moved away from the use of students as counsellors, in favour of **central, professional staff**. While counsellors had been used in the past and may have been retained by some departments, the institution as a whole had doubts about the reliability and consistency of support and information provided, along with the potential for personal bias, and/or experience, to influence academic advice - in particular that students may suggest/recommend certain courses because they considered them to be 'easier'. We did not get to the root of how the balance between central, university-led counselling/advising worked as opposed to student counsellors based in schools and departments. However, we were informed that there is an annual, national, Swedish staff counsellors meeting so clearly there is also a role for professionals in many institutions.

Conclusions

The IBWG was impressed by the extent of the use of students as advisers in a wide range of different roles in all the universities visited. The group concluded that the higher average age and longer engagement with the system, of Danish and Swedish students, as well as the statutory requirement for students to be represented on study boards, is likely to produce a cadre of well-informed student advisers. In addition, cultural expectations of service and engagement play a large part in encouraging students to participate - probably far more so than payment and other fringe benefits. In a Scottish context, the IBWG notes that academic peer helping is an activity from which everyone benefits, and furthermore, it lends itself to a range of models to suit individual institutional circumstances.

Students' associations/unions and other student-organised activity

Although they do have institutional and national students' unions, we did not fully grasp the nature of what is called a students' union in Danish and Swedish universities, as the term was used in various contexts, including when referring to small groups of students in relation to their department of study. In the UK, where the term has a more specific use, many students' associations and unions complement their social role with a range of other support and welfare activities. The IBWG was particularly interested in exploring examples of the role and activities of students' associations and unions in supporting academic-related student success beyond 'traditional' UK student association/union

domains such as welfare. As recorded earlier, the study tour group swiftly noted that there are some student services which UK universities would be involved in providing, which are simply not the responsibility of universities in Denmark and Sweden. In Scandinavia, students' organisations often step in and partly fulfil these roles. Although not strictly 'academic-related' we thought they were interesting to record.

In examining this topic, the Group realised that its definition of student organisation - as a union or association - was too narrow to encompass the range of activities and projects it encountered in Denmark and Sweden. Much of this is formally organised at union/association level (but student union organisation is also very different, often with multiple unions within an institution) and significant activities are also run by societies and informal and/or ad hoc groupings of students, so we have widened this theme to include 'student-organised activity'.

In the two older, traditional, Swedish universities - Uppsala University and Lund University - there is a series of **student nations**. Formerly based on the student's home location, these have evolved and now each tends to have a different theme or focus (for example, more musical or sport orientated, and so on). Each student chooses one to join according to their interests and the main activities of the nations. Students can also cross nations, attending events, and so on, from other nations. The nations are the student's 'second home' and are very much student-run and much of that is voluntary. Nations play a central role in student life providing the focus for social activities (organising lunches, pubs, parties, and so on), library and IT facilities (complementing those of the university), and cultural activities (such as choirs, orchestras, sports, and so on). A key function is **providing housing for students**. Between them, the nations own 35 per cent of student housing in Uppsala. There are 13 student nations in Uppsala - ranging in size from 400 to 7,500 members. Nations are funded on the basis of membership fees and income from housing. There are approximately 10 sabbatical officer posts conducting the business for each nation (dependent on size).

There are also 13 nations at Lund University. As well as joining a nation, students at Lund are required to join the students' union (these tend to be representative rather than social). The Lund website explains 'you cannot be excluded from an examination due to not having paid your student union fee. However, in order for a passing grade to be registered in the LADOK computerized student register, this fee must have been paid.'

Other universities in Sweden, as well as in Denmark, have students' unions rather than nations. Students' unions do not appear to own or have much of a commercial role in terms of running social and entertainment facilities for profit. The role of central students' unions appears to be strongly about representation and we found examples also of **students' unions coordinating mentoring programmes and contributing fully to induction weeks**. In Denmark and Sweden, the Group found, it is common for student organisations to be **almost completely responsible for the induction of new students** - not just in organising social events during Fresher's Week. The study tour group noted that there is a strong tradition of students 'doing it themselves'. There are far more student sabbatical posts and far fewer staff, as the sabbaticals undertake roles that staff in Scottish students' unions would be more likely to fulfil.

More generally we found that, as part of the culture in Danish and Swedish universities, groups of students naturally get together on a voluntary basis to organise social events and entertainment including temporary 'pubs'.

As has already been pointed out, in Denmark and Sweden, by law, students are represented in equal numbers with academic staff on university programme boards and therefore make a direct contribution to programme development. The study tour group was struck by how this model offers students a real opportunity to influence programme development and shape their studies. Representation on these boards is 50:50 staff and students. Training for such students might be organised via the students union, but selection and organisation of such activities is often at school level. In some institutions, for example, the University of Aarhus, only students who have been involved in programme boards can go on to become academic student advisers. The Swedish Royal Institute of Technology is increasingly involving its students' union in **working with staff developers** to help identify relevant areas for development. It also assists with delivery where relevant, for example attending to answer questions and input 'the student voice' to staff development sessions. Representatives of the students' union believe that their close involvement with students makes them ideally suited to identifying students' needs. The union is currently pressing for more formative assessment and different assessment formats, for example oral exams, exams split over several days, and so on.

We found several examples of students' union involvement in **supporting international students** through transition and integration (for example at Uppsala University, Halmstad University and the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology).

The Swedish Royal Institute of Technology's **mentoring system for new students** is run by the students' union, although the mentors are recruited by schools. The students' union trains the mentors with involvement from Central Services.

At Uppsala University the **students' union has initiated and runs a scheme of student mentors**. Recently, they had started to offer mentors (home or experienced international students) **for international students** for social, academic and cultural support. The scheme is being supported by the international office and student affairs. Mentors are paid.

At Uppsala University the **nations also offer career guidance to students**. The different nations organise events and careers fairs where employer organisations come into the University.

At Halmstad University the **students' union has a key role in induction** and coordinates the significant student involvement in this process - three students from each programme are responsible for the delivery of the next year's induction programme in each school - this typically involves a blend of tours, social activities, and so on.

Conclusions

The IBWG was struck by the wide range of models for student organisation that exist in Denmark and Sweden and has rethought its definition of student organisation in the light of this. From informal and ad hoc groups of students, to formal students' union structures, different vehicles are appropriate for different activities and services. In addition, there is evidence that student organisations can usefully carry out important strands of general university strategy and that traditional UK notions of what are (and are not) appropriate services for students to deliver might usefully be rethought in the light of this experience.

Extra-curriculum

Partly, we think, because there are expectations that students will do things 'for themselves' and therefore there are so many opportunities, student volunteering appears to be a strong part of the culture in higher education in Denmark and Sweden. (Academic peer support is covered on page 28). Students are also used extensively as personal mentors and generally as volunteers. Volunteers are often paid at modest rates but, despite this extensive activity, we did not find much evidence of it being turned into academic credit or appearing on transcripts. A letter of acknowledgement from the university is the most common way of recognising such activity. Nor is there much PDP-type practice although many of the representatives we met were interested in this, including students - the students' union at Uppsala University, in particular, was interested in developing this.

Uppsala University offers **significant volunteering opportunities for students** - through a range of roles in both unions and nations. Uppsala has a **widening access volunteering programme** where students go out into communities where people do not traditionally enter higher education and support people into university. Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology's intensive two-week induction programme and mentoring system for new students is run by the students' union, though recruited by schools. Around 200 mentors are appointed annually, resulting in one mentor for approximately 10 new entrants. These mentors play a central role in both academic and social induction. Mentors are allocated on a programme basis. This role is voluntary, but **students see this opportunity to participate in induction week as attractive** - in some areas there is competition to become a mentor. The students' union trains the mentors with involvement from Central Services.

At the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, students are paid to **work in the learning resource centre (trained to support study skills), IT support, the library, and as ambassadors in schools, providing optional supplemental instruction in departments and undertaking telemarketing.**

An important element in fulfilling its aspirations for student well-being (see Strategies and policies on page 25), Halmstad University works to develop **health promotion skills** among its students. They train a group of approximately 250 students in advance of the induction period in 'good habits', for example stress management, moderating use of alcohol, good diet, and so on. The trained students are then used to spread the word among new entrants. Tackling alcohol abuse featured as an issue in several of the meetings.

Conclusions

The IBWG was impressed by the wide range and extent of volunteering opportunities open to students in Denmark and Sweden, and with the alacrity with which students accept these roles. In particular, the use of students as a key means of communicating with other students is something that could be developed in Scotland.

Staff training and development

Much of the practice being explored by the IBWG has required institutions to make fundamental changes to services - in terms of structures and practice - and the Group has been interested in the steps institutions have taken to obtain staff buy-in to change and also in what ways they have ensured that staff are supported and equipped to provide those services. For example, we were interested that formal Supplemental Instruction (SI) schemes (see Academic peer support and mentoring, page 28), which can be controversial to introduce, are in widespread use in both Denmark and Sweden. Much of the staff training and development activity encountered was familiar to the Group and in our discussions we tended to find references were to general staff development. However, we did uncover some small pockets of notable practice.

In Sweden, Higher Education Ordinance 2002 states that new senior and assistant lecturers must have completed Compulsory Higher Education Teacher Training (CHETT) for permanent university employment. Subsequently, the Association of Swedish Higher Education recommended that member institutions accept a number of recommendations, including that CHETT should be equal to 10 weeks of full-time study. Within this substantial requirement we found that some institutions had developed some interesting themes. Uppsala University and the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, for example, both had substantial disability-related training for staff (and students in the case of Uppsala). Lund University explained how it has rooted its CHETT courses in academic culture - placing them in context and encouraging discussion of issues - to make sure they are attractive to academic staff. For example, academic staff receive training in the context of 'preventing student failure'.

The study tour group noted that it is not unusual for students to have input into staff development activities in Denmark and Sweden. At the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology the **students' union** is increasingly **involved in working with staff development to assist in the identification of relevant areas for development and assists with delivery where relevant**, attending to answer questions and input 'the student voice' to such sessions. Representatives of the students' union believe that their close involvement with students makes them ideally suited to identifying students' needs and where these are being met less adequately by staff. The union is currently pressing for more formative assessment and different assessment formats, for example oral exams, exams split over several days, and so on.

At the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, **the disability counsellor offers training twice a year on how to work better with disabled students** to the benefit, the institution believes, of all students. Such training is only compulsory for new staff.

Staff training at Uppsala University is delivered by two different offices - one for teachers/directors of studies and one for administrative staff/leadership - however, they frequently work jointly (whereas these are most often entirely independent units in Scotland). A specific **course** is run **for course administrators**, who are seen as front line office staff dealing with both staff and students. In particular, the course **addresses the issue of dealing with students and the challenges they present**, linking to the institution's widening participation agenda.

At Lund University, staff charged with 'supporting student success' hold **joint academic and administrative contracts** to avoid the 'them' and 'us' mentality and to integrate the two functions.

At the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences it is a **requirement for progression to senior lecturer** level to undertake an additional 10 weeks' pedagogic training, including four weeks' training with an emphasis on guidance.

Lund central student services provide training and continuing professional development for departmental advisers providing disciplinary career and study advice.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences has a mandatory training package for academic staff which focuses on teaching in a global environment - including **teaching students whose first language is not Swedish**.

Conclusions

The IBWG was impressed by a number of aspects of practice in staff development in universities in Denmark and Sweden. In particular, the Group has been struck by the fact that student input into staff development appears to be managed in a way that is constructive and at the same time not threatening to staff. In addition, there also appears to be a developing role (and potentially room for growth) for student services centrally to work with academic staff in helping them to help students.

Other interesting practice

The study tour group encountered other practices that did not fit under any of the six theme headings it was investigating, but which are too interesting to ignore.

Students as co-creators of their own learning

In both **Denmark and Sweden**, students are routinely **represented on programme study boards in equal numbers with academic staff**.

At Aarhus University, students are involved in **defining criteria for new degrees/modules and in creating these**. This provides a means whereby the university can pick up on things that could be problematic for students studying on these new programmes and resolve them before students start studying the degree/module.

At the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, the students' union has persuaded the University to implement **a new style of assessment**; more homework and small tests rather than just one end-of-session exam. As a technological university, the institution has a requirement for a high standard of maths among its student population and has introduced optional, regular, small tests in maths - by doing well in these students get 'bonus points' for their exams.

The student Supplemental Instruction (SI) mentors at **Lund University** were paid as part of their work to attend a lecture each week to **identify areas that mentees might find tricky**, to cover in their SI sessions.

Student advising

Aarhus University's School of Computing Science has appointed two student managers responsible for student support within the School. This seemed unusual practice in Scandinavia where students tend to provide this sort of advice to other students. The focus is on (i) information and guidance; (ii) education and learning environment; (iii) social environment; and (iv) physical environment. They described their **role as that**

of 'Mum and Dad' and seemed to involve more of a pastoral role, helping students to settle in and make friends, and helping with the social side of being a student rather than the academic side. Aarhus is a highly devolved university and we formed the impression that this was the only School taking this approach, possibly because it has a particularly high proportion of young, male students.

International students

Both Danish and Swedish institutions are working within the context of their countries, globalisation and internationalisation policies and strategies. Swedish universities, in particular, are addressing a **range of issues relating to international students**, including a perceived lack of integration with Swedish students and the fact that academic staff need much more information and training on the challenges that international students face, and also much more on cultural differences and how they can use these to their advantage. There is a general will to do more for non-Swedish students, especially if tuition fees will apply to international students in future.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences has developed a **buddy mentoring** system for international students. The University of Uppsala has also developed a **new mentoring programme** for international students, which includes much on cultural issues and support. Halmstad's Humanities department and International department are collaborating to develop and provide a **pilot mentoring support scheme** for international students.

Exchange students

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences has thought in depth about the role of exchange students. They see them as '**Ambassadors for SLU**' who will be asked about the University, and Sweden. Students are given material to aid them in this role (T-shirt, USB with film/presentation about SLU, factsheets about Sweden, and so on) and are trained in this role in advance of going abroad.

Alcohol policies and activities

For health reasons, and also to be more inclusive towards international students (or any other students) where drinking alcohol is not part of their culture, Swedish institutions are attempting to reduce the role of alcohol in student recreational activities. This issue was raised regularly in meetings in Sweden, and different institutions are trying different things to curb student drinking and make the student culture generally less alcohol-oriented, for example through making consumption special and occasional through holding weekly 'pubs' of a makeshift nature rather than running full bars.

4 Conclusions and next steps

The study tour to Denmark and Sweden has been immensely useful in its main task of identifying and observing practice and activity that can be shared with colleagues in Scotland. We now also have some good links within the Scandinavian higher education sector and institutions, upon which we can build in future. With only five days to spend, in the two countries visited, we have only been able to scratch the surface, but we believe we have uncovered enough that is interesting - at systemic level as well as institutional practice - to make those links worth developing.

We commend the following as potential next steps to SHEEC and all stakeholders in the Scottish higher education sector:

- Scottish higher education institutions might benefit from considering and implementing **more joint approaches** - with students - to activities which support student success
- although the IBWG has resolved that alumni relations are largely a matter for individual institutions, there are key areas - for example careers and social networking opportunities - where institutions can provide **ongoing support to alumni**. A relaxing of focus on fundraising may yield substantial other benefits to students and the institution
- **mentoring of students by students** is pervasive in Denmark and Sweden and used in a wide variety of situations - academic and pastoral. There are some schemes in Scotland and considerable interest among many of those who do not have anything in place. We commend the examples we found, and doubtless others that we did not, as examples for consideration by Scottish institutions
- although the culture of volunteering is arguable higher in Scandinavia than in Scotland, we know that many Scottish institutions are considering **widening the volunteering opportunities** they can make available to students. They might usefully consider the impressive array of volunteering opportunities open to students in Denmark and Sweden
- there is scope in Scotland for rethinking the role of **students in providing services and facilities for themselves**
- in particular, the use of **students as a key means of communicating with other students** is something that could be developed in Scotland
- Scottish institutions could consider ways in which **student input into staff development** can be facilitated in a way that is constructive and at the same time not threatening to staff
- there also appears to be a developing role (and potentially room for growth) for **student services centrally to work with academic staff** in helping them to help students
- work in Swedish universities to **improve the experience for international students** and be more inclusive, is impressive. Although the language issue is less pressing in Scotland, we might learn from the Swedish thinking and practice about how to serve international students better

- Scotland and Sweden share a reputation for **alcohol use/abuse** and some of the innovative Swedish practices, designed to reduce the role of alcohol in student life, could be usefully considered by Scottish universities
- related to this, more generally, the use of **students as good health ambassadors** - trained to pass information on to others - is worth considering. The general message that **important messages are best imparted to students by other students** could also have wider application
- rethinking **exchange students as ambassadors for their university and country**, by acknowledging that this is a role they will play and equipping them to act accordingly, is a simple, attractive and effective idea
- Danish and Swedish colleagues are interested in PDP-type activity and it is an area where we seem to have some expertise. **Inviting interested parties from Denmark and Sweden to attend sessions about PDP** would be a productive way to continue links
- **finding out more detail on specific aspects** of practice in Denmark and Sweden, for example non-university HE sector in Denmark
- in the light of significant differences between Denmark and Sweden, **finding out about policy and practice in other Scandinavian countries**
- **answering some of the questions** this paper raises, for example:
 - how real is student engagement?
 - where does the engagement start - in schools?
 - does it make a difference to Scandinavian graduates and are they different from ours?
 - to what extent are students genuinely co-creators of their own learning?
 - is the volunteering culture facilitated by the apparently generous system of student financial support?
 - to what extent are students working as well as studying?
 - how are Scandinavian higher education systems funded?
 - can we find comparable participation rates?

5 Annexes

Annex A: Study tour participants

Caroline MacDonald	Formerly Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning & Teaching, Glasgow Caledonian University, now Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Learning & Student Experience, Teesside University
Nik Heerens	Head, sparqs
Denise McCaig	Vice President, Support and Advice, Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association
Gillian Mackintosh	Academic Registrar, University of Aberdeen
Ginny Saich	Institutional Educational Development Coordinator, University of Stirling
Landé Wolsey	Head of Student Services, Queen Margaret University
Heather Gibson	Development Officer, QAA Scotland
Jane Denholm	Director, Critical Thinking

Annex B: Tour itinerary

Sunday 7 June	Monday 8 June	Tuesday 9 June	Wednesday 10 June	Thursday 11 June	Friday 12 June	Saturday 13 June
Travel to Copenhagen	Copenhagen	Halmstad and Copenhagen	Lund and Stockholm	Uppsala	Stockholm	Trip ends
	Group 1 Nordic Council of Ministers 10.00 - 13.00 Group 2 Aarhus University	Group 1 Halmstad University Group 2 University of Copenhagen EVA (Danish QAA)	Lund University	Uppsala University Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	Royal Institute of Technology HSV (Swedish QAA)	
				Dinner: 20.00 with Einar Lauritzen		
Overnight Copenhagen	Overnight Copenhagen	Overnight Copenhagen	Overnight Stockholm	Overnight Stockholm	Overnight Stockholm	

Annex C: Summary of Institutions and organisations visited

From Wikipedia and institutional websites

Denmark

Aarhus University
www.au.dk

Aarhus University was established in 1928. Aarhus University is the second-oldest and second-largest university in Denmark. Use of the name 'Aarhus University' began in 1933.

In 2006 the Institute of Business and Technology in Herning (HIH) became part of Aarhus University; and in 2007 the Aarhus School of Business, the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, the National Environmental Research Institute and the Danish University of Education did the same.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 17,850 full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Staff numbers: 7,800 employee FTEs

Annual budget c 5 billion DKK

The University is primarily located in its 250,000m² campus in the heart of Aarhus.

The University consists of nine main academic areas: Humanities, Health Sciences, Social Sciences, Theology, Science, Agricultural Sciences, Environmental Research Institute, School of Business, and School of Education. Combined, they cover the entire research spectrum - basic research, applied research, strategic research and research-based advice to the authorities. In all degree programmes, research and education are closely connected, and the research-based instruction - including teaching that spans the main academic areas - ensures the depth of the degree programmes.

The University is one of three identified in 2007 by the Danish Government as forming a hub of teaching and research activity as part of the new map of Danish higher education.

University of Copenhagen
www.ku.dk

The University of Copenhagen was established in 1479 after King Christian I was granted approval for its establishment by Pope Sixtus IV. Based on a German model, the university consisted of four faculties: Theology, Law, Medicine and Philosophy. The University of Copenhagen is the oldest university in Denmark and one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 20,600 FTEs over 37,000 headcounts

Undergraduate students: 22,885

Graduate students: 16,771

International students: 5,162

Staff numbers: 8,350 employee FTEs

Academic staff (FTE): 4,135

Technical and administrative staff (FTE): 4,128

Annual budget c 6.2 billion DKK

The university is located in central Copenhagen occupying a total of 745.000m² at various locations.

The University of Copenhagen is the largest institution of research and education in Denmark. Eight faculties offer over 200 programmes for study in health sciences, humanities, law, life sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, science, social sciences, and theology. The university comprises approximately 100 different institutes, departments, laboratories, centres and museums. On 1 January 2007, the University merged with The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University and The Danish University of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The two former universities are now faculties at the University of Copenhagen.

In 1997, the University linked up with the other institutions of higher education in the metropolitan area and in Scania, Sweden, to form the Øresund University, the purpose of which is to provide these institutions with a framework for increasingly integrated collaboration on research and education.

The University is one of three identified in 2007 by the Danish Government as forming a hub of teaching and research activity as part of the new map of Danish higher education.

The *Times Higher Education Supplement*, October 2008, ranked the University of Copenhagen at 48 worldwide, 12 in Europe and number one in Scandinavia. The University of Copenhagen has had eight Nobel Prize laureates.

Sweden

Halmstad University

www.hh.se

Halmstad is one of Sweden's youngest universities. In 2008 Halmstad University celebrated its 25th anniversary as an independent university college with its own vice-chancellor. The University's educational profile is made up of three interwoven areas of strength which can be summarised as the development and study of organisations, products and quality of life. To promote interaction, these areas of strength are permeated by three distinctive attributes: collaborative outreach, innovation and well-being.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 11,500 students, c 5,000 FTEs

Staff numbers: 560 employees, including some 40 professors

Annual budget: c 389.4 million SEK

The University offers some 50 degree courses and 500 single subject courses in numerous subject areas.

Lund University

www.lu.se

Lund University is one of Scandinavia's largest institutions for education and research, frequently ranked among the world's top 100 universities. The university was founded in 1666 and is the second oldest Swedish university.

Dimensions

Student numbers: First and second-cycle education: 39,000 students (25,500 FTE), third-cycle: 2,300 students

Annual budget: c 5.794 billion SEK

The University has additional campuses in the cities of Malmö and Helsingborg, with more than 50 different programmes and 800 separate courses. It belongs to the League of European Research Universities as well as the global Universitas 21 network.

University of Uppsala

www.uu.se

Uppsala University is a research university in Uppsala, Sweden. Founded as early as 1477, it is the oldest such institution in the Nordic countries and is frequently ranked among the world's top 100 universities.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 22,000 enrolments

Staff numbers: 6,000 of which 4,000 academic

Annual budget: 4.3 billion SEK

The university has nine faculties distributed over three disciplinary domains.

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

www.slu.se

SLU (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet - Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) is a university with a clearly defined role in society: to take responsibility for the development of learning and expertise in areas concerning biological resources and biological production. This responsibility stretches over the wide-ranging fields of agriculture, forestry and food industry to environmental questions, veterinary medicine and biotechnology. A comprehensive viewpoint, interdisciplinary approach and applicability are keywords in SLU's research and teaching and in the contacts with industry and society.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 3,300 undergraduate and 800 postgraduate enrolments

Staff numbers: 3,200 people are employed at the University

Annual budget: c 2.464 billion SEK

University activities are spread between several departments in four faculties: the Faculty of Landscape Planning, Horticulture and Agricultural Science, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agriculture Sciences, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, and the Faculty of Forest Sciences.

Royal Technological Institute (KTH)

www.kth.se

The Swedish Royal Technological Institute (KTH) was founded in 1827 and the main campus has been located in attractive, and now listed, buildings in central Stockholm since 1917.

Dimensions

Student numbers: 12,000 FTE undergraduate students, 1,400 postgraduate students

Staff numbers: 2,800 FTE employees

Annual budget: 294 million Euro

KTH accounts for one third of Sweden's technical research and engineering education capacity at university level. Education and research cover a broad spectrum - from natural sciences to all the branches of engineering as well as architecture, industrial engineering and management, urban planning, work science and environmental engineering. In addition to the research carried out by KTH's Schools, a large number of both national and local Competence Centres are located at KTH. Various research foundations also finance a number of research programmes.

Organisations

Nordic region

www.norden.org

The Nordic region has a population of 25 million. The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland, Åland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The Faroe Islands and Greenland are both autonomous parts of the kingdom of Denmark, and Åland is part of the republic of Finland. The parliaments in the Nordic countries and the autonomous territories vary in size from 30 members in the Parliament of Åland to 349 members in Sweden's Parliament.

Nordic Council of Ministers

Official Nordic cooperation is channelled through two organisations: the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. It is important to note that they are different organisations, although they share personnel, finance and service departments. Information activities are managed by a joint communications department.

The Nordic Council was formed in 1952 and is the forum for Nordic parliamentary cooperation. The Nordic Council of Ministers, formed in 1971, is the forum for Nordic governmental cooperation. Overall responsibility for the Nordic Council of Ministers lies with the respective Prime Ministers. In practice, responsibility is delegated to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation and to the Nordic Committee for Co-operation, which coordinates the day-to-day work of the official political Nordic cooperation. Despite its name, the Nordic Council of Ministers consists, in fact, of several individual councils of ministers. Most of the Nordic Ministers for specific policy areas meet in a council of ministers a couple of times a year.

The Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers, which is held for a period of one year, rotates between the five Nordic countries. Decisions made in the Council of Ministers are unanimous.

Issues are prepared and followed up by the various committees of senior officials, which consist of civil servants from the member countries.

The Nordic Prime Ministers meet regularly - such as before meetings of the European Council, in the circle of European heads of state and government. The Ministers for foreign affairs and defence hold their regular meetings outwith the formal framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Council of Ministers for education and research

Under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Ministers of education and research in the Nordic countries and autonomous areas share overall responsibility for education and research cooperation. Some 25 per cent of the Council of Ministers' budget has been earmarked for Nordic cooperation on education and research. Each main policy area has an advisory committee in charge of development initiatives and advising the Ministers. Each advisory committee has its own agenda and annual activity schemes.

EVA/ACE Denmark

www.eva.dk

www.acedenmark.dk

The Danish accreditation system is rooted in the Danish Act on the Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, and the responsibility of implementing the Act lies at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. A principle aim of the Act is to create a system which ensures and documents the quality and relevance of higher education in Danish higher education institutions. There is an accreditation council which ultimately decides about accreditation of all higher education study programmes. These decisions are made on the basis of accreditation reports prepared by accreditation operators - ACE Denmark and the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). These organisations head the accreditation process and prepare the accreditation reports, which form the basis of the Accreditation Council's decisions.

- For university study programmes under the Ministry of Science, ACE Denmark prepares the accreditation reports.
- For higher education study programmes within the fields covered by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, EVA prepares the accreditation reports.

HSV Sweden

www.hsv.se

Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (HSV) is the public authority that oversees higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sweden. HSV performs this task through a variety of mechanisms:

- reviewing the quality of higher education
- ensuring HEIs comply with relevant legislation and regulations
- monitoring trends and developments in higher education
- providing information about higher education
- recognising qualifications from abroad.

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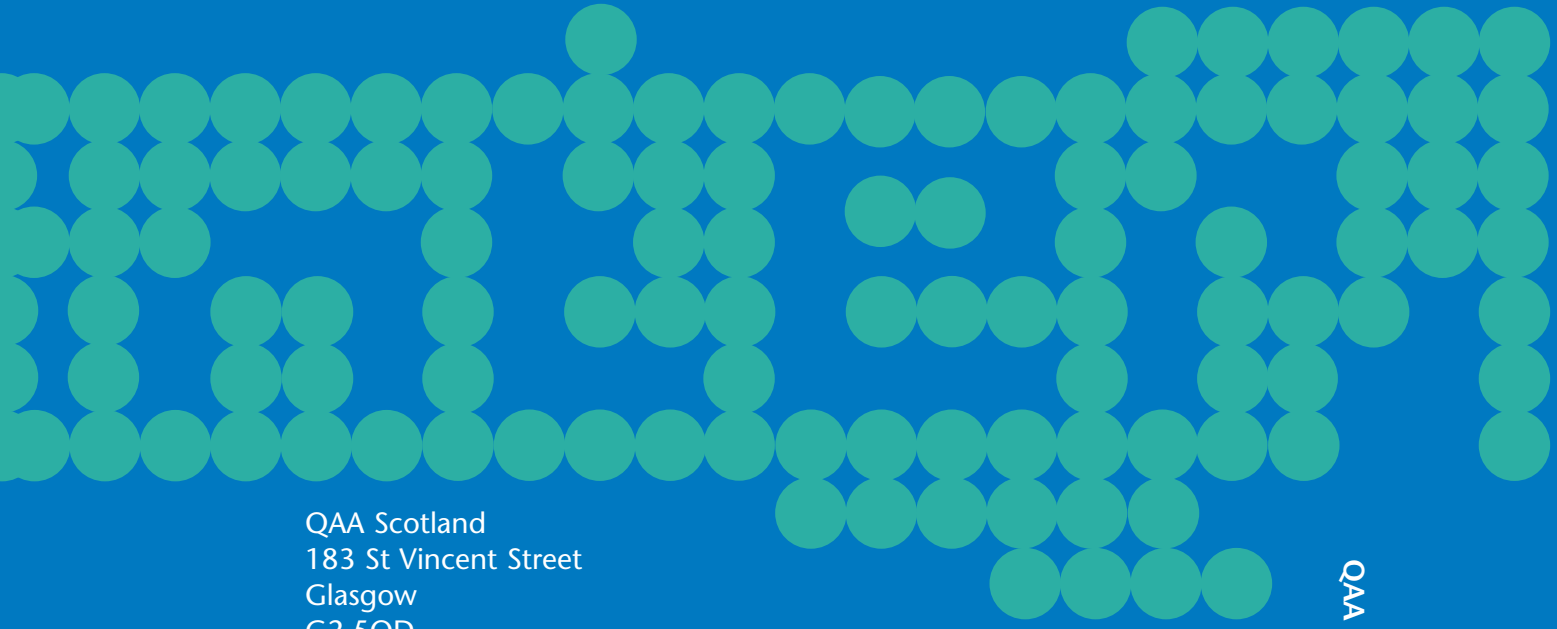
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