

The LEAPS Schools Programme

The LEAPS Schools Programme represents all the activities we deliver that aim to raise awareness and increase understanding of higher education. Our events for younger pupils (S2-S4) encourage them to view university as desirable and accessible. This is done through campus visits, events delivered by current university students and workshops that cover themes such as 'routes into higher education'. When working with older pupils (in S5 and S6) the emphasis switches to helping pupils prepare for the 'student experience'. Once again, this is achieved through a mixture of events that includes campus activities and sessions delivered by undergraduate students that address issues such as 'getting by on a budget' and 'making a smooth transition into university'.

S2 'UNIVERSITY WORKSHOP'

This is one of two 'early intervention' activities that makes pupils aware of higher education within their community and gives a first taste of the exciting opportunities on offer at university. Schools are invited to bring their pupils onto one of the LEAPS partner university campuses to take part in a subject-based, hands-on workshop delivered by academic staff. Previous events have included designing jewellery at ECA, robotics at Heriot-Watt and multimedia at Napier University.

S3 'STUDENT FOR A DAY'

Building on the 'first taste' of university provided in S2, the same pupils visit a different university and, armed with a Polaroid Camera and accompanied by one or more university students, explore the campus. Each group has to answer a set of university-related questions ('How many squash courts are there?', 'How many floors does the library have?') and take photos of what they see, the results of which form a day-planner poster that is presented by the group.

S4 'COURSES, QUALIFICATION AND CAREERS'

This is a school-based, quiz-style workshop comprising 5 exercises that aim to make pupils aware of the routes into higher education as well as the variety of courses on offer at college and university. Working with a university student, each group of pupils undertakes exercises including 'Courses at College and University', 'University Courses – True or False' and 'Spot the Student'.

S5 'STUDENT LIFE EXPERIENCE'

Having decided to stay on at school, pupils considering higher education are invited to spend a half day at one of the LEAPS partner universities and colleges. Pupils 'become students' attending a lecture, touring the campus and visiting the student union, all in the company of their university counterparts. Student Life Experience will next take place in February 2009.

S5 'THE TYPICAL STUDENT WEEK'

Another school-based workshop, in this exercise pupils 'interview' a university student in order to piece together a typical week at university. As a team of student volunteers delivers each event the pupils are able to see how the 'student experience' varies between individuals based upon what they study, where they live, their interests etc.

S6 'GETTING BY ON A STUDENT BUDGET'

This is our third school-based workshop and offers a practical guide to student finance. Working in small groups with a current university student, pupils work through one or more 'student case studies' estimating the where students spend and earn money (as well as how much). The case studies were prepared by a range of current students based upon their personal circumstances, providing pupils with a realistic and up-to-date idea of how to get by on a budget.

S6 'UNIVERSITY ENTERPRISE'

We created this our most recent activity because we wanted pupils to spend more time considering what they wanted to gain from a degree course and university. The events are delivered at the start of S6 and ties in with the early stages of the choosing and applying process, as well as LEAPS Pre-Application Interviews.

Working in 'consultancy team' pupils compete to win a contract to build a new university in central Scotland. In order to do this each team has to discuss the characteristics that would make their 'ideal' place of study, including subject range, nature of study, academic, facilities, style of campus, location, social opportunities, student support... Teams are provided with a budget and resource pack that includes prospectuses and other materials. After two hours of deliberation each consultancy team delivers a 'pitch' to the rest of the class. All pupils then participate in a voting exercise (described as a 'public consultancy) to determine which university will be built.

S6 'LEAPS STUDENT CONFERENCE'

The title of this reflects the fact that is delivered by current students for the benefit of future undergraduates. The Conference comprises a range of workshops ('Preparing for a University Interview', 'Getting by on a Student Budget') and presentations ('Making the most of Freshers Week and your Students Association') and culminates in a 'student panel' where a team of undergraduates from a range of universities answer questions posed by the audience of visiting pupils. This event will next take place in December 2008.

Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools

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