Introduction to SSS

Scottish Student Sport (SSS) is a dynamic network of students, staff and volunteers who work in partnership to provide high quality sport and physical activity opportunities within Scotland’s Universities and Colleges.

SSS champions and encourages physical activity, delivers a wide range of sports events, develops skills of volunteers and staff, promotes professional excellence and advocates the role of the sector within Scotland.

SSS is an unincorporated, not for profit organisation with a full-time staff of nine and an annual turnover of approximately £500k.

Background to this report

Submissions were invited from the primary contacts within SSS member institutions during May 2015. What follows is based upon the responses received and on existing knowledge of the sector, including but not limited to those aspects which are a direct function of SSS as an organisation.

Main themes

For the purposes of this report, three main areas of international work have been identified, as follows:

1. International networks (sporting and academic)
2. Sport for Development
3. International tours, fixtures and camps

Each of these is explained briefly below, with some current project examples used to illustrate the relevant theme.

1. International networks (sporting and academic)

Scottish tertiary education institutions are part of a British, European and Worldwide student sport network which provides opportunity for elite competition and academic collaboration.

   a. EUSA – European Universities Sports Association (link)

EUSA provides competition opportunities for national champion winning institutions via annual Games and Championships hosted across the continent.

A number of Scottish institutions have successfully taken part in EUSA competition, including the Stirling University Golfers who are reigning Men’s Team Champions and Women’s Team Silver Medallists.
b. **ENAS – European Network of Academic Sport Services** *(link)*

ENAS is the association of Sports Offices in Higher Education Institutions in Europe. It is a non-governmental, international alliance with a common interest in the promotion of higher education sport and physical activity.

The University of Strathclyde is an example of an institution that is involved in the ENAS network and representatives have both attended and presented at pan-European conferences and seminars on sport and physical activity related topics.

The current ENAS President, Michelle Tanner (Trinity College, Dublin) will be speaking at the SSS Conference on 9th June in Aberdeen as part of a panel session on the future of student sport.

c. **FISU – Federation Internationale du Sport Universitaire** *(link)*

FISU is the International body for student sport, covering over 170 countries including the UK. Its primary function is to oversee World University Games (Summer and Winter) and Championships across some 35 sports.

Students and staff from a number of Scottish institutions made up approximately 50% of the recent British Team for the Winter Universiade in Granada. The Men’s Curling team that won bronze medals included students from SRUC, Strathclyde and Glasgow Universities.

The biennial Summer Universiade is the second largest multi-sport event in the World after the Olympics, with this summer’s event in Gwangju, South Korea involving over 9000 student athletes.

Numerous students and staff from Scottish institutions will be included in the British team, which is coordinated by our partners BUCS - British Universities and Colleges Sport. *(link)*

The wider opportunities made possible by the existence FISU are difficult to quantify, but they certainly include making it easy for National Student Sport Federations to link to one-another. During the past three years SSS has hosted inward study visits of delegations from China, Jamaica, South Africa and Sweden – allowing for information exchange and mutual learning.

2. **Sport for Development**

A number of Colleges and Universities have their own projects and partnerships in place that use sport as a vehicle for international education and development.

As one example the University of St Andrews is engaged in the UK Sport IDEALS Project, which annually takes groups of students to Zambia to deliver sports coaching whilst supporting community work in underdeveloped areas. As well as promoting sport the sessions are used to put essential health messages across to the children on prevalent issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and sanitation.

SSS was recently able to make use of its partnership with Scottish Hockey to gift old kit via the link with the University of St Andrews. Approx. 1000 garments of kit will now be delivered to rural communities in Zambia during the summer of 2015.
3. **International tours, fixtures and camps**

As individual teams and clubs, Scottish institutions have a long and varied history in travel across the globe, with sport as the focal point.

Noted below are some examples of expeditions and trips that have been undertaken in the last twelve months:

- Elmwood College golf programme completed a two week industry and competition placement in Catalunya, Spain
- Edinburgh University Cycling Club arranged a tour to Reykjavik, Iceland to complete a period of mountain bike training on the snow and ice
- Glasgow University Boat Club organised a training camp in Lovere, Italy
- Aberdeen University Rugby Club are set to represent Great Britain at the Gallipoli Games, Italy - recently rescheduled for September 2015
- Stirling University arranged a warm-weather training camp in UAE before heading to the USA for College level competition early in 2015

In addition to club level activities, Scottish Student Sport runs representative squad activity in 12 sports and enjoys regular competition with (amongst others) our counterparts within Student Sport Ireland ([link](#)) both at home and away.

On the inward side, there is a strong thread of institutions hosting visiting teams and delegations for training around tournament or international fixture duties. It is quite commonplace for professional rugby and football sides to use University facilities when in Scotland, including the likes of the New Zealand All Blacks.

A number of Scottish Universities hosted delegation training camps in advance of London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 (e.g. Cameroon training at Robert Gordon and Aberdeen Universities) and a handful of facilities including Stepps Playing Fields (Strathclyde) were also used as training venues during these major Games.

**Impact and value of the work**

SSS is not aware of any existing review or assessment of the above international work having been carried out. It is likely that the extent of the activity is significantly wider than has been possible to reflect here. Further, this activity is likely to be of significant financial and cultural significance to Scotland’s Universities and Colleges. This area may lend itself well to more detailed research or review in future.

What was clear from the responses received by SSS is that the sports related staff and students value these activities most highly indeed. Individuals speak extremely favourably about the opportunity to work in an international context and cite the positive outcomes this can provide in terms of cultural education, professional development, learning and networking.

At an institutional level it is clear that the type of international activity listed above is helpful in terms of recruitment, alumni engagement, and fundraising.