

# Supporting University Social Responsibility through Experiential Learning

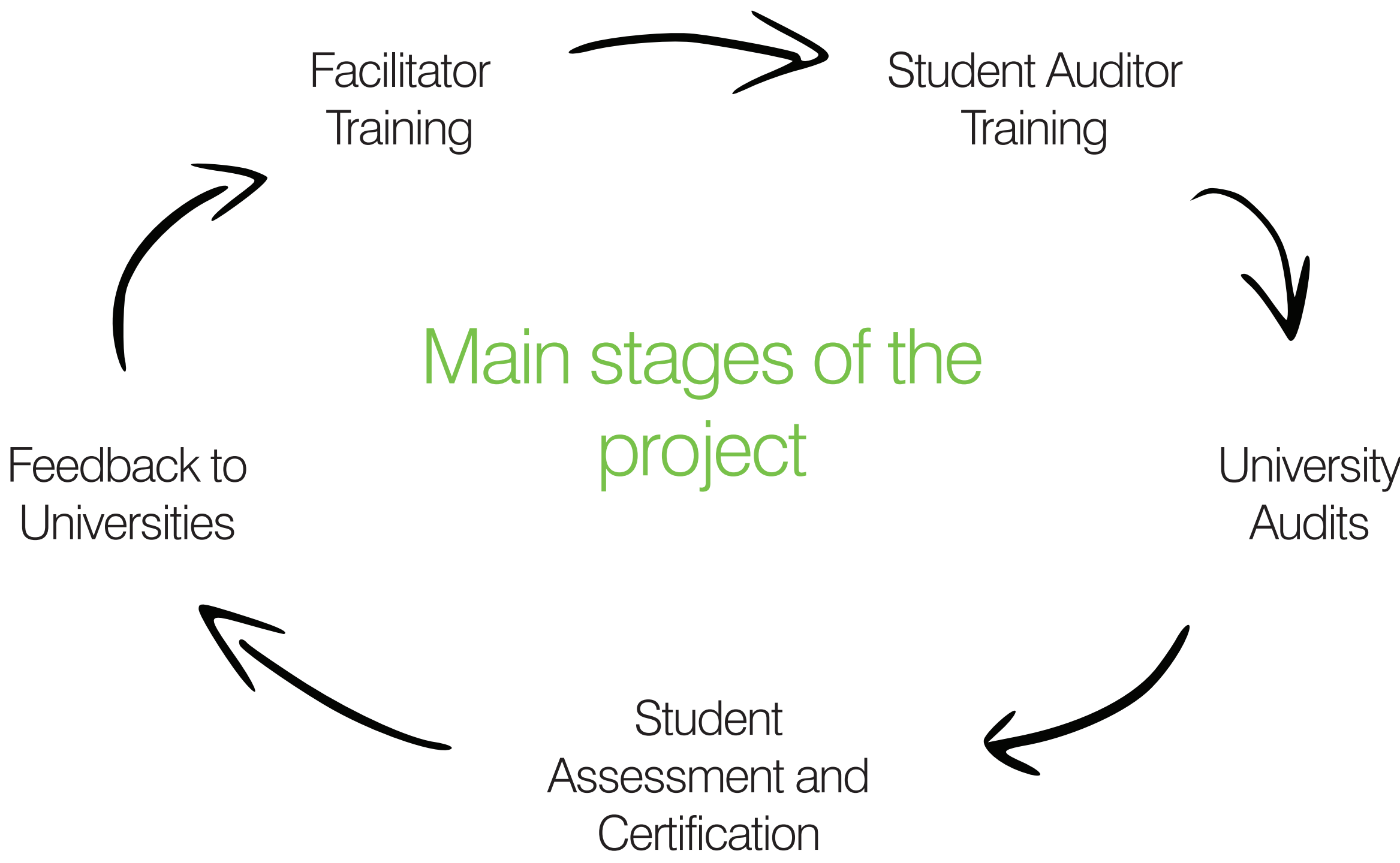
## European Students Sustainability Auditing Project

www.essaproject.eu / #essa\_usr



A three year European Erasmus+ project running from 2017-2019 that aimed to improve the understanding of University Social Responsibility through student-centred learning. Researchers, practitioners and students from four different European Universities helped deliver institutional audits and a range of open educational resources.

The University of Edinburgh was responsible for delivering the assessment and certification, enabling student participants to gain additional academic credit through a Student-Led, Individually-Created Course.



Porto audit participants

### Main Elements

- 60 students from three participating universities were trained as Social Responsibility Auditors.
- International teams of students have completed audits of universities in Edinburgh, Kaunas, King's College London and Porto.
- Students were awarded a Level 6 EQF Certificate in Social Responsibility Auditing.
- Open Education Resources to be launched in Autumn 2019.
- UK's National Union of Students, supported by the European Students Union, working with the University of Edinburgh, the University of Porto, Kaunas University of Technology and the respected Students' Associations.



Edinburgh audit participants

### Outcomes

- Improve social responsibility and sustainability policies and practices in participating universities.
- Provide students with real world practical training in cross-cultural environments.
- 92% of student participants said their involvement exceeded their expectations.
- 92% of student participants feel that their university could learn from the approach taken in the project to student learning.
- 78% of student participants feel very or fairly confident to act as a social responsibility auditor.

Incredibly valuable experience for developing skills in communication across different backgrounds, cultures and contexts

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This project was an excellent opportunity, not only for improving my knowledge about university social responsibility, but for promoting the exchange of experiences and practices between students

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The experience has provided me with an insight into how to promote social responsibility at my home university

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## Benchmark standards for University Social Responsibility across the European Higher Education Area, 2015

Originally developed for the EU-USR Project by Brian Martin

<p>1. Research, Teaching, Support for Learning and Public Engagement</p> <p><b>The institution's core academic activities are underpinned by the values and principles of social responsibility. In order to ensure this, the institution</b></p> <p>1.1 Guarantees academic freedom for its staff and students.</p> <p>1.2 Widens and diversifies access to education within a commitment to lifelong learning.</p> <p>1.3 Manages student admissions in a transparent and equitable way, using explicit criteria to inform selection decisions, providing formative feedback to unsuccessful candidates.</p> <p>1.4 Ensures that public funds provided to support teaching and student fees are used for the purpose for which they are provided.</p> <p>1.5 Requires that its curricula are informed by socially responsible, ethical research and that its graduate attributes incorporate evidence-based thinking and decision-making, active citizenship and employability.</p> <p>1.6 Adopts a learner-centred approach to teaching and student support, ensuring assessment and feedback is used to promote learning.</p> <p>1.7 Facilitates collaborative and independent learning that goes beyond the classroom and into the community.</p> <p>1.8 Enables international collaboration and supports student and staff cross-national mobility.</p> <p>1.9 Enforces ethical protocols for research, teaching and related activities.</p> <p>1.10 Facilitates dialogue between the research community, the public and policy makers to link research to 'real world' issues.</p> <p>1.11 Improves its contribution to society through open access to research outcomes and in its public engagement activities.</p>	<p>3. Environmental and Societal Sustainability</p> <p><b>The institution is committed to environmental sustainability and biodiversity in all aspects of its operations, including in its use of goods, services and works and in its evaluation of decisions. It takes appropriate action to ensure that its commitments are realised and</b></p> <p>3.1 Ensures its policies and practices minimise any negative impact on the environment caused by its activities or supply chain.</p> <p>3.2 Promotes sustainable development.</p> <p>3.3 Delivers a continuous improvement programme that works towards cleaner, sustainable, eco efficient, resource efficient, zero waste and ethical operations including procurement.</p> <p>3.4 Publishes regular environmental sustainability reports, incorporating risk and action assessments covering environmental, societal and supply chain risks.</p> <p>3.5 Encourages the use of environmentally friendly technologies, and of energy efficient, reusable and biodegradable materials.</p> <p>3.6 Practices socially responsible and sustainable procurement, publishes a code of ethical behaviour for procurement decision making that includes workers' rights and fair trade principles and promotes social responsibility and sustainability wherever it has influence over the supply chain.</p> <p>3.7 Ensures respect for and compliance with internationally proclaimed human rights, the rule of law and national and international anti corruption requirements.</p> <p>3.8 Ensures that all its international activities promote human and societal development and, where possible, help address the issues of poverty, quality of life, advance peace and promote conflict resolution.</p>
<p>2. Governance</p> <p><b>The principles of social responsibility are respected throughout institutional policy, strategy, procedures and processes. They permeate all levels, as an integral element of management accountability and stakeholder engagement. The institution</b></p> <p>2.1 Encourages a culture of social responsibility with high ethical and professional standards and clear protocols to avoid conflict of interest.</p> <p>2.2 Formally recognises staff and student unions and involves them as partners in governance and decision-making, providing for their representation on the Board (or equivalent) and on its advisory committees.</p> <p>2.3 Ensures that social responsibility is treated as a core commitment by the Board and senior management and that the institution's social responsibility performance is the focus for annual evaluative reporting.</p> <p>2.4 Exercises due diligence by assessing the risk and impact of all activities, ensuring compliance with the law, relevant standards and norms.</p> <p>2.5 Conducts ethical and socially responsible investment and procurement, with comprehensive public reporting of criteria and decisions.</p> <p>2.6 Is a responsible neighbour, facilitating dialogue and working in partnership with and investing in the local community.</p> <p>2.7 Recognises its staff and student social responsibility initiatives through an internal reward scheme.</p> <p>2.8 Actively participates in relevant social responsibility networks.</p> <p>2.9 Reports on its progress towards clear and independently verified social responsibility and sustainability goals.</p> <p>2.10 Publishes the outcomes of internal and external reviews, complaints, academic appeals and the source and use of all funding.</p>	<p>4. Fair Practices</p> <p><b>The institution ensures equality and fairness for its staff, students, and others as appropriate and its policies and procedures are intended to avoid discrimination or inequity. The institution</b></p> <p>4.1 Promotes and celebrates pluralism and diversity, and ensures equality regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.</p> <p>4.2 Practices open, transparent, fair and equitable recruitment and promotion of staff, using affirmative action where appropriate, providing comprehensive staff development that incorporates social responsibility.</p> <p>4.3 Establishes through negotiation with staff unions comprehensive employee communication, consultation and negotiation protocols and implements these.</p> <p>4.4 Promotes the health, safety, physical social and mental well being of staff and students beyond minimum legal requirements.</p> <p>4.5 Promotes equality of opportunity, guarantees equal, fair and just pay and equitable conditions, and pro actively works to avoid inequality through flexible working and career development and progression opportunities.</p> <p>4.6 Ensures that working conditions at least comply with relevant national laws, collective agreements and applicable International Labour Organisation standards and makes every effort to avoid casualisation of the workforce.</p> <p>4.7 Guarantees freedom of association and respects collective bargaining.</p> <p>4.8 Has transparent, fair and equitable complaints and disciplinary procedures and ensures that complaints and disciplinary matters are addressed swiftly and fairly.</p> <p>4.9 Publishes the possible sanctions for a proven breach of ethical or related requirements and protects whistleblowers.</p> <p>4.10 Provides professional support services to meet specific additional needs of students and staff as arising from a disability, for example.</p> <p>4.11 Communicates with suppliers about its procurement policy and uses research to inform its procurement decisions.</p>

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