

Children's University Scotland

Guidance for Schools

What is Children's University (CU)?

Children's University provides an accreditation framework for learning outside of normal school hours: before and after school and at lunchtimes, at weekends and in holiday periods. Credits are given for taking part in activities on school sites (such as after-school clubs, drama groups or sports teams) and in other places where learning takes place such as museums, parks and community organisations. Learning need not be purely academic; often it is about building practical skills.

Children's University aims to promote social mobility by supporting high quality, exciting and innovative learning activities and experiences to children aged 7 to 14 (and 5 and 6 year olds with their families) and engaging the wider communities as learning partners in this process. A fundamental principle is that participation is voluntary, enabling children to explore different learning environments, to become independent and confident learners. Our aim is to raise aspirations, boost achievement and encourage a love of learning. Above all it should be fun!

How does CU work?

Each child has a Passport to Learning where s/he collects the credits for learning for which they achieve certification at a range of levels. To achieve bronze level each child needs to do 30 hours of learning. Silver level is 65 hours in at least two different areas of learning. Gold level is 100 hours in at least two different areas of learning with the demonstration of leadership skills. There are higher levels than these too. Achievement is recognised and celebrated at graduation ceremonies, normally hosted at the sponsoring university.

What are learning destinations?

Learning destinations are places and organisations to which children can 'travel' with their Passport to Learning. They provide high quality learning activities and experiences with a 'wow' factor, validated through the Children's University's own quality assurance process (Planning for Learning). Learning destinations display the CU's Learning Destination logo, clearly visible to children who may want to use their Passport to Learning there. Learning destinations 'stamp' the child's Passport to Learning to reflect the time a child has been engaged in the validated learning activities within the learning destination, contributing to the child's record of achievements and CU certification. The whole process encourages learning that is self-initiated, self-directed and self-sustained.

There are three main types of learning destinations:

1. Restricted learning destinations

These are places which are not publicly accessible, such as schools and clubs which have restricted membership conditions.

2. Public learning destinations

Public learning destinations (PLDs) are open to all Passport to Learning holders and can stamp passports from any local Children's University. As well as art galleries, zoos, libraries and museums which adults and children visit for essentially educational purposes, there are many less obvious sites for learning, such as local radio stations, restaurants and hotels, shopping centres, newspaper offices, docks, airports, or train stations. PLDs also include regular community-run activities such as an athletics club or a dance school.

3. Distance Learning

In addition to what is on offer locally, the national Children's University is validating a growing number of distance learning opportunities with the goal of encouraging children to become more independent learners. Children who wish to participate in the learning offered by organisations such as HuntFun or the Woodland Trust may download an activity from their website, complete it in their own time and then submit it to their local CU centre for recognition in their Passport to Learning.

What is the e-Passport?

The e-Passport complements, but does not replace, the hard-copy Passport to Learning. It allows children to update their passport on-line, see how close they are to their next award and enables them to add text and photos to their experiences, as well as search for other activities both in their locality and further afield.

For administrators it can work alongside the school's existing management information system and enable reports of students' activities to be generated, as well as analysing the participation of different groups of students. It can supply much of the data required in the annual CU data collection. monitor

Information about all public and distance learning destinations is available on the national website for all children and their parents to access: www.childrensuniversityscotland.com

What is the impact?

External evaluation of the Children's University consistently reflects positive impact on participants' attendance, attainment, achievement and attitudes; see:

Evaluating provision, progress and quality of learning in the Children's University 2012, Professor John MacBeath, University of Cambridge ISBN: 978-0-9561319-8-0, also available on the website: www.childrensuniversity.co.uk

Perhaps the most powerful testimony is provided by the participants themselves:

"My favourite learning destinations are the museum and the library because I love the books and the Summer Reading Challenge and the different activities in the 'make and do' part, especially the egg search. The best CU lecture was Pyromania because I enjoyed it when he set fire to the biscuit and murdered the jelly baby! I have a bronze certificate and a silver one too. I will get my gold certificate at the next graduation ceremony. I feel great about that." (Alva, age 8)

How is CU organised locally?

Local partners determine the structure and organisation of Children's University within their area; the preferred model is for a local university to be involved, working in partnership with the local authorities, schools and other organisations. All partners benefit from such a collaborative approach:

- **Universities:** Support for CU can be incorporated in outcome agreements and outreach programmes; it demonstrates community engagement and can enhance student experience
- **Local authorities:** CU clearly aligns with the aims of Curriculum for Excellence to help children become successful and confident learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors
- **Corporate sponsors:** positive brand association, increased profile, community/employee engagement
- **Learning destinations:** Increases footfall, raises their profile, provides sponsorship opportunities
- **support**

What are the benefits for schools?

- CU aligns with the aims of Curriculum for Excellence to help children become successful and confident learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors
- Taking part in Children's University helps to raise pupils' aspirations and motivation, improve attendance, achievement and attitude and supports successful transition from primary to secondary school
- CU provides an overarching, coherent framework for all extra-curricular activity and wider achievement
- CU helps to engage more parents in their child's learning
- CU empowers children to experience the excitement, enjoyment and satisfaction of gaining new skills, exploring and taking part in activities in different environments; developing the understanding that learning can be 'a satellite navigation to better places in life...'
- CU Scotland is a named partner in the Scottish Government's Raising Attainment programme.

What is the process for school engagement?

- School registers interest or is approached by the local CU.
- Initial meeting with local CU management
- School identifies key contact/CU validator/data person to administer e-Passport (could be the same person or more than one individual)

- Opportunity to join CU promoted to pupils via brief talk at an assembly/presentation, through flyers or letters to parents, or via school website (to be agreed with school)
- Pupils register interest or complete a form in order to obtain a Passport to Learning
- Schools let local CU know how many passports issued and return passports that aren't active
- Initial validation of restricted learning destinations (existing extra-curricular activities such as sports teams, language or science clubs) undertaken by local CU management
- Schools to attend validation/e-Passport training
- Schools to validate all appropriate school clubs/activities and provide local CU management with a list of restricted learning destinations
- Existing public learning destinations promoted to schools and children; local CU management to follow up suggestions for additional PLDs
- Pupils start collecting stamps/recording and reflecting on achievement through the e-Passport
- Schools inform local CU of progress towards achievement of awards to plan for graduation

What quality assurance is in place?

All learning destinations that provide activities that can be credited in the Passport to Learning are validated to the national framework: Planning for Learning. Validators who have undergone training to a national standard ensure that learning destinations meet the following criteria:

- Activity is available to 5-14 year-olds, on a voluntary basis and outside of normal school hours
- The learning outcomes and benefits are clear for the children
- There is awareness of the needs of children and how they are stimulated to learn
- The learning destination provides opportunities for different styles of learning and for children to take on different roles and responsibilities
- Children engage in thinking, questioning, problem-solving and collaborative learning
- The activity makes full use of the local context as well as physical/human resources
- The learning broadens horizons and raises aspirations
- There are opportunities to celebrate achievement and boost confidence
- There is monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision
- Children are asked for feedback

What are the respective roles and responsibilities?

The local CU, together with CU Scotland, will provide the following to partner schools:

Membership	Membership of the national Children's University
School development support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance, support and resources to implement Children's University learning within the school and wider school community • Assembly presentation for children and parents/carers • Access to promotional materials for children and parents/carers • Support for validation of CU learning destinations within school and wider school community • Support with data collection and analysis • Opportunities to share ideas and good practice through local networks
National Children's University	Facilitate access to support from national Children's University through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local delivery of 'Planning for Learning' validation training • Representation at national and regional meetings • Monitoring and evaluation frameworks, standardised data and reporting requirements contributing to national evaluation
Graduation events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a graduation ceremony hosted by the local university (additional smaller-scale, local events may need to be organised to accommodate number of children achieving levels below gold) • Invitations to graduation for pupils and their families • Loan of graduation caps and gowns • National Children's University certificates
e-Passport to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate training for e-Passport

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local administration rights
Marketing and publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of CU logo in the approved format • Access to all marketing materials and resources developed for use by stakeholders including (but not limited to) information leaflets, presentations, graduation documents, national awards and competitions. • Recognition and promotion of school involvement on local CU website, including publication of case studies

The partner school agrees to the following:

Pupil engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote the scheme to pupils and parents • To encourage pupils to give feedback, suggest additional learning destinations to be validated and actively contribute to the development of CU within their school and beyond
Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all staff within the school are aware of the scheme • Highlight involvement in Children’s University through school website, newsletters, assemblies
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify a key contact within the school to liaise with the local CU on the implementation of the scheme • To issue Passports to Learning to interested pupils
e-Passport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify an individual within the school to introduce and implement the use of the e-Passport (could be the same person as key contact)
Learning destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify an individual within the school to undertake validator training (could be the same person as key contact) • To assess which extra-curricular activities organised within the school would qualify as restricted learning destinations • Validate activities as appropriate (with the support of local CU if necessary) • Publish validated activities on e-Passport site
Tracking, monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide local CU with pupil data in an agreed format for all Passports to Learning issued • Monitor and provide data on number of credits achieved to support preparation for graduation
Celebration of achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide details of pupils who qualify for graduation to local CU • Ensure appropriate parental permissions/photo consents have been collected • Nominate staff to attend the graduation ceremony

For further information or a preliminary discussion on how to get involved in Children’s University contact:

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Process Plan

This chart describes the step-by-step processes involved in setting up Children's University in your school.

