



parkrun events at universities

Summary of feedback from event directors that run parkrun events on or near university campuses.

The following information was taken from the responses of 5 parkrun event directors that run parkrun events on or near university campuses. The parkrun events that have been snapshotted vary in size from 100-500 runners each week.



Demographic of participants

The estimated student attendance was low in comparison to other demographic groups. On average, during term time up to 5% of runners were students. However, university staff members tend to participate more frequently.

An example was given where one university used the university licensed venue for other parkrun related events, such as an annual quiz night and a varsity between another local university.



Location and set up

Most parkrun's with university links take place in, around or very nearby campus or university buildings (e.g. sports centres). Some exclusively use university owned land, others use the university facility as a start/end point.

The set ups of parkrun events at universities have varied. In some instances it has been a university member of staff or a local community member with a keen interest in volunteering who has a link to the university. It was advised that any parkrun needs to be set up by the community it will serve, so it's important for there to be leadership and ownership by someone who will be prepared to be the event director, run director and serve on the core team – they also have to commit to raise the necessary start-up funds needed.



Facilities and University Support

Facility and practical support varies between each relationship. In the most part this includes the use of university owned land, kit storage, car parking, changing and toilet facilities and use of café space (where this facility exists). Most importantly, in many cases universities will loan their AED (Automated External Defibrillator) equipment on a Saturday morning to fulfil parkrun's pledge for there to be a fully functioning AED at every 5km parkrun.

The link between each current parkrun event director and their given university appears to now be 'second generation'. Initial contact was made in many cases by a previous member of university staff or event director and the relationship has continued since with new personnel. The event directors do not tend to have a direct link to the university but do have contact, usually with the university facilities manager.



Advertisement

Advertising of parkrun specifically to the student population appeared to be minimal. In most cases, parkrun features on the university intranet system and is occasionally highlighted on university social media channels. One parkrun attempted advertising at Freshers' Fair to recruit students to the area, but did not find it to be a valuable investment of time. Only one parkrun is advertised in the university activities timetable.



Student Volunteer Workforce

Only one parkrun event director mentioned the current active involvement of student volunteers (usually for volunteering credits linked to Sport Event Management Degrees) although a second expressed a great interest in accommodating more student volunteers. With the number of student participants at the level it is, it is not surprising that there is a small student volunteer workforce at parkrun events.



Challenges

The only challenge reported was the closure of university facilities during what are considered key events for parkrun, for example the 'New Year's Day Double' (one occasion per year when parkrunners can run in two parkrun events on the same day).

Overall Experience

Whilst there is an initial cost to set up a parkrun, universities have seen positive publicity and engagement as a result. Those universities where the course is situated near a café have found significant use by parkrunners at times that would otherwise be quiet.

On the whole, parkrun and university partnerships are positive, symbiotic relationships that should continue to be encouraged and developed. The facilitation of a parkrun is often of little time and financial cost to a university and could well have a positive impact on the physical activity of staff and students as a free and frequent event. Furthermore, an involvement in parkrun could strengthen the links between a university and its community.

Do you run a parkrun at your university or interested in setting one up? Contact [Amy Seaman](#) for further information.