

## Edinburgh First at The University of Edinburgh



### Summary

Edinburgh First is responsible for maximising commercial utilisation of University assets and generating significant profits, all used to reinvest in core university services. In a competitive environment of significant change and commercial challenge, we have consistently innovated, improved service delivery and increased revenues and margins.

While our key role remains the accommodation and residential welfare of over 10,000 students each year, an essential ingredient in our success is the ability to effectively integrate many of our 800+ people across our hugely varied commercial activities. Edinburgh First operates a full range of hotel, event and catering products and services across over 200 venues and spaces across the University estate, including ...

- c200 year-round hotel and serviced apartment beds across 4 discreet properties
- over 5,000 student rooms each summer vacation, including a single 2,000 room catered campus which for 3 months of year becomes the largest hotel in Scotland
- a year-round conference facility of c400 plenary capacity plus 20+ breakout spaces
- 22 cafes with an innovative new food truck service
- Brand new nursery concept 'Arcadia' launched in 2015
- Major enabler for the world famous Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Edinburgh International Festival and International Science Festival.
- In 2017, we organised 1,633 events for almost 100k delegates, with revenues in excess of £3.25m; and accommodated over 44k commercial guests, including over 400 groups, and delivering 204k bed nights revenues in excess of £7.5m.
- In the last 4-5 years ... an overall 10% increase in overall accommodation and event revenues; with year-round hotels generating +23% income and +26% ARR.

According to our latest Hospitality Assured assessment ...

**'Edinburgh First truly exhibits world class excellence throughout its facilities and operations'**

## Community and culture

- Major events ... the 'go to service' for many of Edinburgh's major cultural and sporting events; Pollock Halls is regularly used as a 'games village', including in recent years for world touch rugby and lacrosse championships.
- Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo ... accommodating 700+ of the Tattoo cast from around the world in August, delivering significant benefits in (reduced) marketing costs, savings in delivering the specific housekeeping options required and maximised use of our onsite catering facilities.
- The first university in Scotland to split coffee grounds out from food waste and have these recycled into bio-oils, biofuel and bio-fertiliser. With Coffee Conscience, we have funded the planting of c850 apple trees in community orchards.

## Achievements and awards

- Catering awards include ...
  - TUCO ... 4 awards achieved in 2017 competitions
  - Retained 'Food for the Brain' accreditation achieving 94%
  - Retained 'Food for Life' bronze accreditation as awarded by The Soil Association
  - 'Taste Our Best' Award 2016
- IIP ... recently assessed under the more challenging 6th generation framework, achieving Silver accreditation; most encouraging was how close we were to achieving Gold given we were assessed as being at Gold level in 5 out of the 9 indicators (7 out of 9 being the required level). Areas where we excelled included 'Managing Performance', 'Building Capability' and 'Delivering Continuous Improvement'.

## Service & quality

- Hospitality Assured ... consistently improved ratings year on year in every category with particularly strong performances (over 15%) improvements in Customer Research, the Customer Service Promise, Operational Planning and Standards of Performance.
- UpayChilli ... with over 10k registered users and c£1.6m annual revenues, our cashless catering for staff and students is delivered across 20 cafes and café bars.
- New website design ... better reflecting the brand concept and incorporating major changes to on-line booking and enquiry functionality; with direct connectivity to special products and rates for the key markets; currently 133,000 unique visits in 2017 helping to deliver a 145% increase in accommodation revenues via this channel in the past 4 years.
- Delivered Catering ... a 'drop and go' service across the entire University estate, developed from a zero base c8 years ago. Current year's turnover will be in excess of £1m, representing growth of between 10% - 23% each year.

**'It is without question, success is due to a combination of a strategic approach and the 'can do', positive professional attitude demonstrated by all; this ethos permeates the whole organisation and there is a sense of ownership and pride in working for Edinburgh First!'**

## Innovation

- After consistent revenue and profit growth across the estate (over 50% and 100% respectively), the development in 2016 of 'Levels' and 'Brücks' represented major innovative change from the style of previous product; 'Levels' won the Scottish Design 2016 Award for interior design.
- The launch of two mobile 'Tuk Truks' offering a wide range of world street food with the flexibility to move around the entire University estate.
- Significant development of year-round hotel estate including conversion of once student accommodation in KM Central and Masson House Hotel & Bistro
- UpayShop launches Spring 2018 ... an addition to UpayChilli cashless catering, allowing staff and student to order food online for collection at specific cafes and café bars.
- Event management ... embedding delegate management services into our mainstream conference products means a 'one stop shop' for customers and increased revenues; since its launch in 2015, we have sold the service to over 10,500 delegates across 43 conferences.
- Channel management ... a critical success given its importance has been increased sales volumes for Booking.com; up by 10% in a year plus significant reductions in timeconsuming duplication double entry errors and a 25% reduction in staff costs.
- McEwan Hall ... following a £33m refurbishment, Edinburgh First has taken the lead in developing the appropriate processes and managing this iconic venue for conferences, cultural, community and major University events.

