

University Specialist Recommendations

Based on Simon Holm's employment March-December 2022

TL;DR

I recommend that EAS has a person solely responsible for being in touch with (university) local groups under the name of University Specialist (US) or Community Manager (CM), if different than co-directors. The responsibilities of the US/CM could be as such:

- Be in regular contact with student/local groups (10%) and collaborate on
 - organising intro lectures (5%),
 - conducting outreach efforts (5%),
- Communicating and encouraging further engagement to individual members (5%),
- Organise intro fellowships and/or career courses (5-8% each);
- Organise bigger events, such as organiser retreats, student hackathons or smaller conferences (estimated 10-20%);
- Oversee community health and diversity (estimated 5%);
- Have introductory calls with new community members (estimated 5%).

If EA Sweden is to target students and universities on a continuous basis, they should, using a US/CM or others (in order of priority):

- Organise intro lectures at the start of academic years;
- Implement new routines for inducting new group organisers, including relevant community building resources and guidance for activity plans;
- Be in regular touch with university/local groups and ensure their continued existence (if deemed relevant and sustainable), e.g. by keeping an eye on annual meetings and ensuring good succession;
- Organise one "bigger" event for university students each year (e.g. Hackathon);
- Continuously disseminate engagement opportunities, in Sweden and globally, via (1) direct contact with local groups, including direct messages to relevant individuals, and (2) direct contact with other groups with a high concentration of previously showed interest in EA-related material;
- Organise in-person intro fellowships at least once a year (if unable to delegate it to local groups, e.g. via them going through the UGAP programme);
- Organise in-person career courses at least once a year;
- Be present, or make sure local groups are present, at university welcome fairs at the start of academic years;
- Defining what success looks like for local groups in the context of EAS' strategy, and developing relevant ways of evaluating local group support accordingly;
- Design a more intentional and systematic strategy for university marketing/outreach that can be iterated on and improved from data collection and analysis;
- Develop clearer learning criteria for evaluation for both courses and iterate on data collection using the reports from 2022 as a basis.

A suggestion on how some of this could be done in practice is outlined in this year plan:

 [University Groups Plan](#) . For more practical suggestions, see *Further Reading*.

Introduction

This document outlines recommendations for how EA Sweden is to best support university groups for a sustainable EA ecosystem in the Stockholm region and in Sweden. They are based primarily on the subjective judgement of Simon, aided by some sparse data collection.

Most of the efforts of the US were concentrated in the Stockholm region (local groups at KTH, SU, SSE, Uppsala and KI) - the recommendations may not apply as well to university or local groups outside of Stockholm due to larger organisational independence. More about the local groups here: [📖 221121 - Primer on university groups in Stockholm](#)

More about the basis of the recommendations can be read in the final reports on outreach, group and organiser support, and courses in *Further Reading*. Here you can also find more information about the role of the US.

The main strategy of the US during the fall 2022 has been a “3-step rocket” consisting of University Fairs, Introduction Lectures and Courses, as well as evaluating the US as its own role. This forms the basis of the recommendations. Some concrete tips are added, as well as suggestions for future experiments.

Value of a University Specialist

Value of a US

I think most of the value of the US lies in having a direct personal link between university groups and EAS (i.e. forming a relationship with university group organisers), which:

- increases the quality of group support and collaboration efforts (event organisation, outreach),
- makes dissemination of learnings and opportunities from EAS and the global community easier and more likely to be picked up,
- provides “local” knowledge into university cultures and know-how’s, which helps EAS optimising outreach and group support,

In this way, it makes sense if the US themselves is a recent graduate or a young professional.

The value of a US depends heavily on the amount of engagement in local groups, as I think the US is best suited to provide resources to groups, rather than directly participating in their efforts. However, engagement is something that the US could also help facilitate, for example via seeding new groups. Also, this is not to say that the US should work reactively only. Rather, I think proactive work - encouragement, support, promoting opportunities - is essential.

Could not the co-directors do all of this? Perhaps - but it depends on their profiles. If one of the co-directors has a clear community profile, it may make the most sense for that

co-director to absorb the responsibilities of the US. If responsibilities are split between co-directors, there may be a significant tradeoff against co-director coordination and relationship-building with organisers and individual members.

Does the US actually contribute to community quality and/or growth, proportional to the cost? I am 65% certain that the US has made a significant counterfactual contribution whatsoever - I am closer to clueless whether or not there are more cost-effective ways of achieving the same contribution. One important metric of community growth is the number of active members in each group:

Group	Member count* early 2022	Member count* late 2022
KTH	7	7
SU	2	4
Uppsala	3	6
SSE	3	3
KI	0	1
Linköping	0	1

**Active member of a (prospective) local group at the said university, “active” referring to being a regular participant at meetings/events that are being organised by the local group.*

For the “3-step rocket”, I estimate that the US counterfactually contributed with ~70% of the outcomes of the Union Days at KTH and SU and the intro fellowship¹, and for encouraging ~5 individuals to engage in local groups or go to EAGx conferences. I am confident that the member counts in Uppsala, at KI and at KTH are due to this, and that there are several individuals who have “moved down the funnel”, but which do not yet engage in local groups, or have taken other actions for their engagement. This makes me believe that the US has a positive counterfactual contribution.

However, if all re-started groups would have gone through UGAP, I think they would have become more resilient and independent from EAS. I think the main reason why this did not happen was due to a lack of time commitment capacity amongst the group organisers at KTH, SU and Uppsala. It will be interesting to look at the group in Gothenburg as a case study, who has gone through UGAP during the fall, and whom the US has been in minimal contact with, to get a better picture of the counterfactual.

Responsibilities of a US

I do think there is value in having one person on the EAS team that is responsible for most aspects of the direct community building aspects, i.e.:

- Be in regular contact with student/local groups (10%) and collaborate on
 - organising intro lectures (5%),
 - conducting outreach efforts (5%),
- Communicating and encouraging further engagement to individual members (5%),

¹ Given that the local groups themselves may not have organised them at all.

- Oversee community health and diversity (estimated 5%);
- Have introductory calls with new community members (estimated 5%).

These could also be distributed evenly between the co-directors. To synergise on these responsibilities, the US could also do more indirect aspects of community building work, i.e.:

- Conduct outreach efforts in university communities (10%);
- Organise intro lectures (5%);
- Organise intro fellowships and/or career courses (5-8% each);
- Organise bigger events, such as organiser retreats, student hackathons or smaller conferences (estimated 10-20%).

However, these responsibilities could be held by the co-directors and communications staff without having much impact on the US's contact with the community.

Ideally, I think EAS would want to let direct community building be left mostly to university groups, with EAS, being a national group, showing up occasionally at local events and organising bigger events. However, until local groups are stable enough on their own, the US should expect to take a more direct part in community building efforts, too.

Target audience of a US

In my head, if EAS has a US/CM, there are three reasonable divisions of audiences:

- The US/CM works mostly towards the Stockholm region, co-directors elsewhere,
- The US/CM works mostly towards university groups, co-directors other local groups,
- The US/CM works towards all local groups, university or not.

Since our only current groups outside of Stockholm, which is Gothenburg and Lund, include both students and professionals, I favour the third option. However, there may be good reasons for a "Stockholm bias", and this is essentially how the US has operated so far.

Focus audience at universities

Even at universities, the focus audience of the US can vary depending on how involved EAS wants to be directly with active members of local groups, in contrast to group organisers only. The former has the advantage of getting a more balanced picture of the community, promoting opportunities to more relevant people, and making it potentially more "decentralised".

Data collection and evaluation

EAS could use a more consistent in-flow of data regarding the different activities that are pursued by the US. Implementing good impact measurement routines as part of the new theory of change is relevant for future evaluations.

Recommendations

Below, the recommendations above are given within the areas of outreach, group and organiser support, and courses. For each area, some concrete tips are given, as well as suggestions for what EAS could experiment with in addition to iterating the

recommendations over time. For a suggestion on how the recommendations can be placed into the annual wheel of EAS' operational year, see: [📄 University Groups Plan](#).

1) Outreach

- Be present, or make sure local groups are present, at university welcome fairs at the start of academic years;
- Organise intro lectures at the start of academic years;
- Continuously disseminate engagement opportunities, in Sweden and globally, via (1) direct contact with local groups, including direct messages to relevant individuals (e.g. for 1-1 coaching and conferences), and (2) direct contact with other groups with a high concentration of previously showed interest in EA-related material;
- Design a more intentional and systematic strategy for marketing/outreach that can be iterated on and improved from data collection and analysis.

Concrete tips

- Keep including a clear list of next steps at in-person events and at the end of intro lectures, e.g. using QR codes, with the benefit of data collection;
- Ask people in intro lectures for a raise of hands how many heard about it from the Union Day/other main marketing method;
- Include "local groups" and/or "contact from EAS staff" as answer options for post-event surveys on outreach (e.g. for EAS annual meeting and hackathon);
- Provide marketing material to local groups to give them the opportunity to decide what marketing methods work best at their university;
- Don't use external firms to put up posters for smaller events;
- Don't focus on tabling as an outreach method for EAS.

What could be experimented with

- Exploring career fairs as a means of targeted outreach for EAS' career services;
- Building a network of relevant academics/institutions and businesses around the university as a method of outreach and community building;
- Facebook advertisements;
- Collaborating with Effective Thesis on campaigning their coaching services in time for thesis topic selection deadlines during the fall;
- When [deployment structures are] ready, start seeding campaigns at other universities/cities in Sweden, such as LU, SLU, Umeå/Luleå, Linnéaus University.

Read more about outreach efforts here: [📄 Final Report - University Outreach 2022](#)

2) Group & Organiser Support

- Be in regular touch with student/local groups and ensure their continued existence (if deemed relevant and sustainable) by keeping an eye on annual meetings and ensuring good succession;
- Implement new routines for inducting new group organisers, including relevant community building resources and guidance for activity plans.
- Defining what success looks like for local groups in the context of EAS' strategy, and developing relevant ways of evaluating local group support accordingly.

Concrete tips

- Schedule a call with the main group organiser every 1-2 months.
- Keep [UGAP](#) in mind when seeding new groups.
- Facilitate connection and collaboration between university groups and Effective Thesis by telling new group organisers about it, and providing contact details of the local group to ET.
- Don't put effort into coordination between groups - they seem to do it/ask for it organically when needed.

What could be experimented with

- Conducting shorter interviews with more group organisers.
- Investigating the value of subgroups (see e.g. AI Safety Stockholm) by including them in the support ecosystem and forming new ones.
- Organising retreats for group organisers.
- Provide mentoring/leadership training/career coaching for all organisers.
- Investigate formalising the position of being a group organiser, and if funding is available, consider financial compensation (0.1-0.2FTE), e.g. [through Open Phil](#).

Read more about group and organiser support here:

 [Final Report - Group & Organizer Support](#)

3) Courses

- Organise in-person intro fellowships at least once a year (if unable to delegate it to local groups, e.g. via UGAP),
- Organise in-person career courses at least once a year,
- Develop clearer learning criteria for evaluation for both courses and iterate on data collection using the reports from 2022 as a basis.

Concrete tips

More details and in the separate context for each course, see reports below.

- Follow the [organiser's checklist](#) for logistic organisation,
- Keep a low bar for accepting people that apply,
- Extend the courses to 5 weeks + a post-course social,
- Consider using EAS' offices for course sessions,
 - For IF, use one room per discussion group,
- Follow up directly with participants who miss a session,
- Aim for having 6 fellows + 1 facilitator per discussion group (max. 3 groups),
- Reduce the content in both courses to allow for more depth on fewer topics.
- (IF) Keep the focus on discussions, with small ice-breakers each session, and clear discussion norms.
- (IF) Bringing in more facilitators that can commit to all sessions and give them training (however brief). Please have facilitators of both genders.
- (HICC) Increase focus on discussions and make questions in slides more user-friendly.
- (HICC) Keep inviting guest lecturers to provide concrete examples of career planning in practice.

- (HICC) Address potential career planning constraints for internationals.
- (HICC) For the application process, keep a list of reserves as part of sending out acceptance emails, and redirect (rather than reject) applicants that don't get a spot to relevant resources and opportunities with EAS.
- (HICC) For communications, frame the course in such a way that participants don't expect to be able to answer all of the questions during the course.

Things to experiment with

- Sync better with local groups after courses end to facilitate continued engagement, for example by sharing details of participants to relevant group organiser,
- (IF) Investigate other ways of introducing effective altruism, whilst keeping the intro fellowship as a solid tool in the meantime,
- (HICC) Investigate the value of EA Sweden providing the career course for local groups outside of Stockholm and internationally.
- (HICC) Include 1-1s with the career coach as a compulsory part after the course sessions have ended (either straight after or a few months after to follow up).
- (HICC) Have a set time each week for a digital follow-up session for those who missed the week's regular session.

Read more about the courses and particular recommendations for them here:

- Intro Fellowship: [Final Report - Intro Fellowship 2022](#)
- Career Course: [Final Report - High Impact Career Course 2022](#)

Other recommendations

- Organise preparation workshops and coordination of conference participants before relevant EAG(x)'s.
 - Low cost for optimising conference experience and facilitating connection between members going from Sweden.
- Organise one "bigger" event for university students each year.
 - The Hackathon organised in the spring 2022 yielded at least 5 people that went on to take our intro fellowship, career course, or engage in community building. EA Sweden's annual meeting is another good example of the type of event that could be organised.
- Use EAGxNordics as a catalyst for seeding new groups for the academic year 2023/2024.
 - If we get participants from universities where we currently don't have local groups, this could be a great opportunity to follow up with interest in group organising.
 - I would even argue that efforts should be made *before* the conference to attract students from such universities, i.e. through an intro lecture tour.

Further reading

The following documents (some already featured above) contain more information on the role of the University Specialist, other general thoughts on strategy, as well as more detailed reports about outreach, courses and group support.

- Outreach & Encouragement: [Final Report - University Outreach 2022](#)
 - Intro Lectures Practical information:
 - [221117 Intro Lectures Practical Information](#)
- Group & Organiser Support: [Final Report - Group & Organizer Support](#)
- Intro Fellowship: [Final Report - Intro Fellowship 2022](#)
- Career Course: [Final Report - High Impact Career Course 2022](#)
- Initial project proposal for US:
 - [220228_Project Overview & Plan, University Specialist](#)
- Role description: [220309 - Role Description University Specialist](#)
- OKRs 2022: [EA Sverige OKRs 2022](#)
- See more thoughts here: [221201 - Simon's General Strategy Thoughts](#)
- Primer on university groups: [221121 - Primer on university groups in Stockholm](#)
- Yearly calendar: [University Groups Plan](#)
- A couple of relevant EA Forum posts [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Also [here](#), and [here](#).