

Strategy

Higher Education Student Engagement

2015 - 18

Higher Education Directorate



Document approved by:					
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Background and Context

Background and National Context

The UK Quality Code sets out the expectations that all higher education (HE) providers are required to meet, the expectation in regards to Student Engagement is that:

“Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience”.

The National Union of Students (NUS) have recognised that there are different levels of engagement – Consultation, Involvement, Participation and Partnership. University Centre Weston (UCW) seeks to ensure that students and staff engagement is real and meaningful and therefore we seek to progress students through this continuum and encourage partnership.

It is recognised that not only can students have a positive impact on quality enhancement and quality assurance processes, but engaging with students can also have a positive impact on the motivation and achievement of students.

The HEA ‘What Works?’ research clearly articulates the impact that active student engagement has in developing a strong sense of belonging in HE for all students. This in turn has a positive impact in terms of student retention and success. Engagement and belonging is especially important at an early stage and should encompass both academic and social engagement.

This strategy was developed collaboratively involving students, staff and the Student Engagement Officer in the devising and writing of the document.

Purpose & Scope

UCW is committed to ensuring the high quality of its higher education provision and continuously enhancing the student experience. As a result the contribution of students is valued as it is recognised this can improve quality and satisfaction. To this end the University Centre engages with students in a real and meaningful way so this informs future developments, strategy and operational management. A crucial part is to receive student feedback, ensuring that it is dealt with in a comprehensive manner. This is done in a variety of ways.

This strategy sets out the University Centre’s commitment to engaging with students on HE programmes. The strategy applies to all programmes

regardless of the university partner they are linked to. The document outlines the opportunities for student engagement and the processes in place to respond to any issues raised.

Principles

The University Centre and its partner universities actively encourage students to fully participate in the outlined processes in order that they take some responsibility to enhance provision. Where students engage constructively with student engagement processes there is scope for improvement. This is for mutual benefit, leading to greater understanding between staff and students and the opportunity for problem solving along with assessing and shaping learning.

It is understood that students should not be penalised for voicing their opinions or making suggestions. It is acknowledged that student engagement can only be sustained if students know there are appropriate opportunities for them to raise their opinions, and feel these are being duly considered and action is being taken following their suggestions. However, it must be accepted that not every proposal can be implemented, but it is vital to make students aware of limitations or restrictions and provide full and reasoned feedback in response to all issues raised.

Working with students as partners underpins continuous improvement of HE provision and optimising the student experience. The University Centre is committed to:

- Empowering students to be partners in their learning as they are experts in the student experience;
- Making sure that the students are part of developing proposals as well as responding to them;
- Engaging students who are often unheard, including: mature students; part-time students and student parents;
- Helping students develop the skills and confidence to be actively involved in the organisation of their own learning and student experience, regardless of their mode of study, age, disability, race, gender, religion, sexuality or transgender status;
- Each programme is expected to engage with the strategy to enable all students to have the opportunity to participate and have their views represented.

Link to HE Strategy

Student engagement constitutes an explicit element of the HE Strategic Plan 2014-17. The following is an extract taken directly from the section related to student engagement:

In order to provide “an outstanding higher education experience, enabling success and inspiring ambition” the University Centre undertakes to engaging with and listening to all higher education students. Students and staff are ‘partners in learning’, based on mutual respect and drawing on the knowledge and experience of everyone, to continually enhance the student experience. Students will be involved in the development, delivery, and review of higher education provision at UCW. Student engagement is reflected following strategic aims;

- To engage with, and reflect the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in all aspects.
- To focus on the student experience and to ensure that it continues to be positive and varied. To enrich the student experience through acting on student feedback and increased student engagement.

The commitment: In order to achieve the above strategic aims, the University Centre will:

- Use a variety of means to engage with students and offer a range of opportunities for those who wish to represent the student body on key decision-making committees.
- Listen to the student voice.
- Respond to student opinions, and provide feedback on any actions taken via social media and through the student newsletter.
- To have a separate Student Engagement Strategy, this will encapsulate the University Centre’s commitment to effective student engagement, using the expectation and indicators of sound practice identified in chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code.

The effectiveness of student engagement will be assessed through two KPIs: “NSS Overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile for FECs by 2016-17” and “The NSS satisfaction for “The teaching on my course” to be in the top quartile of HECs by 2016-17”.

Student Voice

The University Centre has instituted three formal processes by which the student voice is captured these were commenced in 2009 and are now an embedded part of the quality process and the student experience. They are:

- Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) which enable two way communication between staff and students and focuses on academic, programme related matters;
- Student Representative Committees (SRCs) which encourage discussion around cross University Centre matters, including the development and review of policies and procedures, the overall student experience including social events and other non-academic issues;
- Evaluation forms (including module questionnaires, National Student Survey and induction questionnaires) which enable feedback on particular elements of the programme / student experience.

The University Centre also recognises there is an informal route for encouraging student voice and student engagement and actively promotes an "open door" approach within faculties and the directorate.

UCW undertakes to ensure that students are kept fully informed of the outcomes of their involvement, activity and feedback. This is done through a range of methods including the first agenda item on all SSLCs being an update on actions from previous meetings; Peer Press (Student Newsletter) produced termly; Student Voice pages within the UCW Student Zone on Moodle which include Student Representative meeting minutes and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

All students should have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them. Examples of where this should occur include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Annual Reviews / Annual Programme Monitoring Reports
- Programme Development
- Programme Team Meetings
- Peer Observation Feedback

- Representation at key committees including Higher Education Board of Studies and Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee
- Quality Focus Groups
- Periodic Reviews
- SSLCs
- Module Evaluations
- Student Representative Committees (SRCs)

The University Centre undertakes to recognise students who actively participate and support measures which improve and contribute to student engagement and involvement. Student Representatives Student Ambassadors, Freshers' Angels and Peer Mentors will have the opportunity to take part in a rewards scheme which leads to recognition of their contribution through a certificate.

Training

Students will be provided with appropriate training and support which will enable them to act as full partners in their learning. Student Representatives will receive additional training and support in how to conduct themselves effectively in that role. The Student Experience and Engagement Officer will ensure that the student body is made aware of student engagement opportunities and therefore involved in all aspects of higher education at UCW.

In addition staff training and awareness will take place to assure that HE staff fully understand the Student Engagement Strategy and actively support student involvement in all aspects of their programmes.

Review

The strategy will be reviewed every 3 years with the next formal review in 2018

Appendix 1 – SSLC Membership & Terms of Reference

The Role of Staff Student Liaison Committees

Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) fit within the wider Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. They primarily focus on academic, programme related matters and demonstrate the University Centre's commitment to receiving and acting upon the views of students studying on higher education programmes in order to continue to enhance and improve the provision itself and the student experience.

A. Membership

Course Coordinator

Student Experience and Engagement Officer

Y1 Student Representatives x 2

Y2 Student Representatives x2

Y3 (Part time) Student Representatives x 2 (as appropriate)

BA / BSc Student Representatives x 2 (as appropriate)

University Representative (as appropriate)

There should be a minimum of 4 student representatives invited to attend, 2 from each year group, these representatives should be elected by their peers on an annual basis. However, it could be decided to include additional students e.g. having specific part time student representatives for each year or even including the whole group where there are smaller cohorts.

The course coordinator must be present, along with a minute taker (normally from the faculty administration team). Additional staff - including support staff, module leaders, HE Partnership Manager or partner university representatives - could be in attendance if there are relevant agenda items, but ideally staff would not outnumber the students in attendance.

B. Terms of Reference

The remit of SSLC's will include:

- * To provide a two way channel of communication between staff and students and the partner HEI related to the student learning experience
- * To highlight best practice, along with constructively critiquing the programme
- * To review and evaluate the teaching methods, content, assessment and quality of individual programmes
- * To discuss External Examiner Reports / Module Evaluations / Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and make recommendations as appropriate
- * To consider National Student Survey data
- * To have a formal channel for raising and addressing issues or concerns.

C. Quorum

4 members as a minimum including the minuting secretary, course coordinator and at least one student per year group.

D. Meeting Cycle

There should be a minimum of three meetings per year to be held in October, February and May. One meeting should occur within the first 6 weeks of the academic year and others should occur prior to the Student Representative Committee meetings. Additional meetings could be arranged as necessary as requested by the student representative or HEI.

Dates and times of SSLC meetings should be published in advance via notice boards, email circulation, the Virtual Learning Environment etc.

E. Other Notes

A Chair should be elected from the group, this position could be undertaken by a student if one is willing to take on the responsibility. The Chair will prepare a draft Agenda (see samples below) but Student Representatives may request for items to be included in the Agenda prior to the meeting

Meetings could be run to enable each year group of students to present a formal report representing the views on their peers and their perceptions of the programme. As a means of focus they could be encouraged to consider elements of the programme / support which should continue, areas for development and new ideas they think should be implemented. Alternatively the meeting could simply ask representatives from each year group to comment on the agenda items. The Chair should ensure all students are given the opportunity to contribute and the meeting is not dominated by any individual student / year group. Essentially meetings should be student focused and led and the outcomes and responses to any issues raised should be widely circulated.

Minutes of meetings will be prepared (by the minute taker) and presented at the following meeting for formal approval of accuracy and monitoring actions. All agreed actions recorded in the minutes should be clearly assigned to named individuals responsible for the specific action. These will be forwarded to university contacts where appropriate and the Student Experience and Engagement Officer, who will collate any issues in the overall Student Voice Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) presented at Higher Education Board of Studies on a termly basis. Minutes should be made available to all students on the programme e.g. via a notice board / electronic notice board / Moodle. Feedback on actions will be included in the Student Newsletter.

Programme Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that a minimum of three meetings are arranged each year, dates are published in advance, appropriate students attend and minutes are taken then passed onto the Student Experience and Engagement Officer.



Staff Student Liaison Committee

Programme

Date – Oct / Nov

Time

Venue

1. Introduction & Apologies
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting / Matters Arising
3. Feedback on Actions Completed from Previous Meetings
4. External Examiners Report and Action Plan
5. Student Support (Tutorial Support, Academic Support, Central Support Services)
6. Overall Organisation & Management (Are timetables clear, accurate & working, are any changes communicated effectively, are handbooks clear / helpful)
7. Facilities and Resources (Library, Computer & Specialist Facilities & Resources)
8. Any other business
9. Date for next Meeting
10. SEEO to speak to students confidentially (omitted from the minutes)



Staff Student Liaison Committee

Programme

Date – Feb / March

Time

Venue

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting / Matters Arising
3. Feedback on Actions Completed from Previous Meetings
4. NSS (results and actions from previous year along with highlight importance of Y2 students participating)
5. Teaching, Assessment and Feedback (Is teaching interesting/ stimulating, is feedback prompt & helpful in providing guidance regarding improvements)
6. Discussion regarding any Minor / Major modifications planned for the course
7. Evaluation of units delivered to date
8. Any Other Business
9. Date Of Next Meeting
10. SEEO to speak to students confidentially (omitted from the minutes)



Staff Student Liaison Committee

Programme

Date – April / May

Time

Venue

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting / Matters Arising
3. Feedback on Actions Completed from Previous Meetings
4. Review of Guest Lectures / Lecturers offered throughout the year
5. Annual Programme Monitoring Report (Students to help to construct & comment on content for the academic year)
6. Personal Development (Has the Confidence, knowledge and communication skills of students increased during the academic year)
7. Any Other Business
8. Date Of Next Meeting
9. SEEO to speak to students confidentially (omitted from the minutes)

Appendix 3 – Student Representative Committee Terms of Reference

The Role of Student Representative Committee

Higher Education Student Representative Committee fit within the wider Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. The Student Representative Committees at Knightstone Campus and University Campus primarily focus on cross University Centre issues affecting all higher education students, and demonstrate the University Centre's commitment to receiving and acting upon the views of students studying on higher education programmes in order to enhance the overall student experience.

A. Membership

HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer (Chair)
Assistant Director HE: Academic Registry
HE Partnership Managers (as appropriate)
Y1 Student Representatives x2 from every course
Y2 Student Representatives x2 from every course
Y3 (Part time) Student Representatives where appropriate x 2 from every course
BA / BSc Student Representatives x 2 from every course

All student representatives (2 per year group from each course) should be invited to attend the Student Representative Committee on the campus they attend. These representatives should be elected by their peers on an annual basis at the start of term.

B. Terms of Reference

The remit of the Student Representative Committee will include:

- * To enable a two way channel of communication between staff and students related to the student experience
- * To review and evaluate cross University Centre events and activities including Induction & Enrolment, Fresher's Week, Social Activities etc
- * To monitor the University Centre's progress towards achieving the KPI's related to student engagement
- * To review the effectiveness of the Student Engagement Strategy and supporting processes
- * To provide the organisation with a group to consult regarding new proposals, strategies, policies and procedures effecting higher education students
- * To highlight best practice, along with constructively critiquing the University Centre's structures and procedures

* To discuss facilities and resources available and make recommendations for the future as appropriate

* To have a formal channel for raising and addressing issues or concerns that students consider were not adequately addressed through the Student and Staff Liaison Committees

C. Quorum

As a minimum we would expect half the members to attend to include either the HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer and a minute taker.

D. Meeting Cycle

There should be a minimum of three meetings per year to be held in October, February and May. For convenience for Student Representatives and recognising differing needs there will be a meeting at Knightstone Campus and one at University Campus each time. Students should attend the meeting at the campus on which they are based. Additional meetings could be arranged as necessary as requested by the Student Representatives, HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer, or other appropriate HE Directorate Staff.

Dates and times of meetings should be published in advance via email circulation, the Virtual Learning Environment etc.

E. Other notes

Meetings will be chaired by the HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer who will prepare a draft Agenda but Student Representatives may request for items to be included in the Agenda prior to the meeting.

Students who are unable to attend may provide written comment / feedback, either on agenda items or under any other business. This should be submitted in advance to the HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer to be brought to the meeting.

Minutes of meetings will be prepared (by the minute taker) and presented at the following meeting for formal approval of accuracy and monitoring actions. All agreed actions recorded in the minutes should be clearly assigned to named individuals responsible for the specific action. These will be forwarded to the Student Experience and Engagement Officer / Assistant Director HE; Academic Registry who will collate any issues in the overall Student Voice Quality Improvement Plan presented at Higher Education Board of Studies on a termly basis. Minutes should be made as widely available as possible to all e.g. via electronic notice board / VLE. Feedback on actions will be included in the Student Newsletter.

The HE Student Experience and Engagement Officer is responsible for ensuring that a minimum of three meetings are arranged each year, dates are published in advance,

the agenda is finalised, refreshments are organised, appropriate students attend and minutes are taken and then passed onto the relevant staff / students.

Appendix 4 – Evaluation Terms of Reference

The Role of Evaluations

The various evaluation opportunities adopted by the University Centre fit within the wider Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy. They enable anonymous student feedback on particular elements of the programme / student experience and demonstrate the University Centre's commitment to receiving and acting upon the views of students studying on higher education programmes in order to continue to enhance and improve the quality of provision.

A. Terms of Reference

The purpose of Evaluations is to enable all students to:

- * Provide feedback relating to individual modules studied within their programme
- * Constructively critique, review and evaluate the teaching methods, content, assessment and quality of individual programmes
- * Highlight best practice related to all aspects of HE Student Experience
- * Comment anonymously on a range of key issues
- * Feedback on particular elements of their student experience e.g. Induction / Fresher's week
- * Provide the University Centre with key data and information regarding student satisfaction and progression on completion, which can be used to inform change and can be highlighted within key documents and publicity materials.

B. Evaluation Cycle

The various evaluation forms must be completed by all programmes across the institution and ideally students should be given time to complete the forms. This can be facilitated by the Higher Education Directorate if appropriate. There are four main forms of evaluation carried out throughout the year:

- * Induction Questionnaires will be completed by students in October each year
- * Module Evaluations will be carried out by all students as each of their modules is completed. All students in all year groups are required to complete these evaluations
- * NSS will be facilitated during Feb / March with all graduating foundation degree students
- * Student Satisfaction Survey will be completed by all other students during Feb / March

C. Other Notes

Each programme is expected to engage with the listed evaluation methods in order to enable all students to have the opportunity to participate and have their views represented. It is essential that all students participate as it is an integral element of the Student Engagement Strategy, and is included within our responsibilities within the partnership agreements with our HEI partners.

The Assistant Director HE: Academic Registry will ensure all questionnaires are made available by the most appropriate means, monitor results and ensure feedback regarding significant issues is included in the Student Voice Quality Improvement Plan presented at Higher Education Board of Studies. These issues will, where necessary, also be highlighted to Heads of Faculty / Director of HE / Head of Quality. If evaluations have not been completed this will be communicated to Heads of Faculty / Programme Coordinators.

Programme coordinators should analyse results from module evaluations and consider feedback from the National Student Survey, ensuring these are discussed at SSLCs and all relevant information is included within their Annual Programme Monitoring Report. Where appropriate action plans should be created in conjunction with heads of faculty and a copy sent to the HE Directorate.

Module Questionnaire and National Student Survey results should also be discussed during Staff Student Liaison Committee / Programme Management Committee. This will enable clarification of issues, but also enables staff to provide feedback to students regarding changes implemented as a result of their comments which is an essential element.

Useful Documents

QAA Quality Code Higher Education Chapter B5: Student engagement

NUS Student Engagement Toolkit

What Works? Student Retention and Success

Bath Spa University Student Engagement Strategy

UWE Student Engagement Framework