

Developing College

Students' Associations

Methodology for Strategic Conversations

May 2022



Introduction

NUS and sparqs are working together to successfully deliver the [Developing College Students' Associations project](#). sparqs has been tasked with some specific aspects of the project, such as measuring metrics to assess students' associations (SAs) development and supporting SAs and institutions in having strategic conversations.

Colleges and SAs work towards the same aim: ensuring students have a successful learning experience. However, despite this common aim, at times an institution's strategy and an SA's one may differ, for example they may have different priorities. It is also possible that an institution and their SA are not fully aware of their counterpart's current strategic aims, losing opportunities to work in partnership.

In order to capitalise on each party's strengths and resources, sparqs has designed the following **methodology to encourage institutions and SAs to carry out a structured, strategic conversation**, which will enable both stakeholders to get to know the current goals and strategic aims. The strategic conversation should take place after SAs have carried out their strategic planning workshops with NUS Development Consultants, aimed at designing their strategic plan. The methodology then aims to equip the SA with the information and tools to proceed with the final draft of their plan.

<p>What it is:</p>	<p>A structured 1.5 to 2-hour meeting. It can take place either online (Teams or Zoom platform) or in-person at a location of the institution/SA's choosing. SAs can either choose to run the strategic conversation themselves, or sparqs can facilitate it.</p> <p>During the meeting, a GoogleDoc template is shared with participants, to enable them to input their individual, anonymous responses. The collective responses in the shared GoogleDoc are then analysed and discussed. The proposed structure for the meeting is outlined on the following page.</p> <p>If an SA decides to run the strategic conversation themselves, they will need to set up their own GoogleDoc (or other tool which allows collaborative working) using the template provided on pages 4-8.</p>
<p>Who is involved:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College senior managers, such as Vice Principal Curriculum, Quality Manager, Support Services Manager. ● Students' association staff and officers. ● sparqs' Development Consultant (optional, upon request of the SA).
<p>Materials:</p>	<p>Tablet/mobile phone so that participants can input individually into the anonymised GoogleDoc during the meeting.</p>

Structure for the discussion	Timeline
<p>During the meeting, the consultant from sparqs, or the meeting facilitator, will share the link to the GoogleDoc (or other collaborative working tool) and participants will be invited to access it and answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are your current strategic priorities? 2. What do you think are the key priorities for the college this year? 3. What do you think are the key priorities for the SA this year? 4. Is there anything that you think the college should focus on more? 5. Is there anything that you think the SA should focus on more? <p><u>All answers are anonymous.</u></p> <p><u>All participants need to answer all questions</u> (i.e. SA members will answer questions related to college strategy and vice versa).</p>	15 minutes
Members of the SA will assess whether the answers to questions 3 and 5 reflect their current priorities/strategic views and what they are working on.	15 minutes
Members of the college senior management team will assess whether answers to questions 2 and 4 reflect their current priorities/strategic views and what they are working on.	15 minutes
The SA will then go over the results of their strategic planning work carried out previously with NUS, highlighting their values and mission and going over the draft of their strategic plan.	15 minutes
Joint discussion identifying parallels with college strategy and joint priorities.	15 minutes
Joint discussion identifying possible ways to work in partnership in such areas.	15 minutes
Conclusion and action plan. Following the meeting, the SA will draft the final strategic plan and circulate it to senior management team for awareness.	5 minutes

sparqs' support to facilitate your strategic conversation

If you wish to invite a member of the sparqs' team to facilitate the discussion and/or help set up the GoogleDoc, please get in touch with Gloria Laurini, Development Consultant - gloria.laurini@sparqs.ac.uk.

If you have any queries around this strategic conversation methodology, please get in touch with Gloria, or your own sparqs' institutional contact.

Template for GoogleDoc (if SA is running the strategic conversation themselves)**Why are we doing this?**

You are invited to reflect, individually, on your institution's priorities and your institution's Students' Association priorities. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge, this is not a test, rather a starting point to explore how much each counterpart knows about the other's strategic views and aims.

Question 1:

What are your current strategic priorities?

Question 2:

What do you think are the key priorities for the college this year?

Question 3:

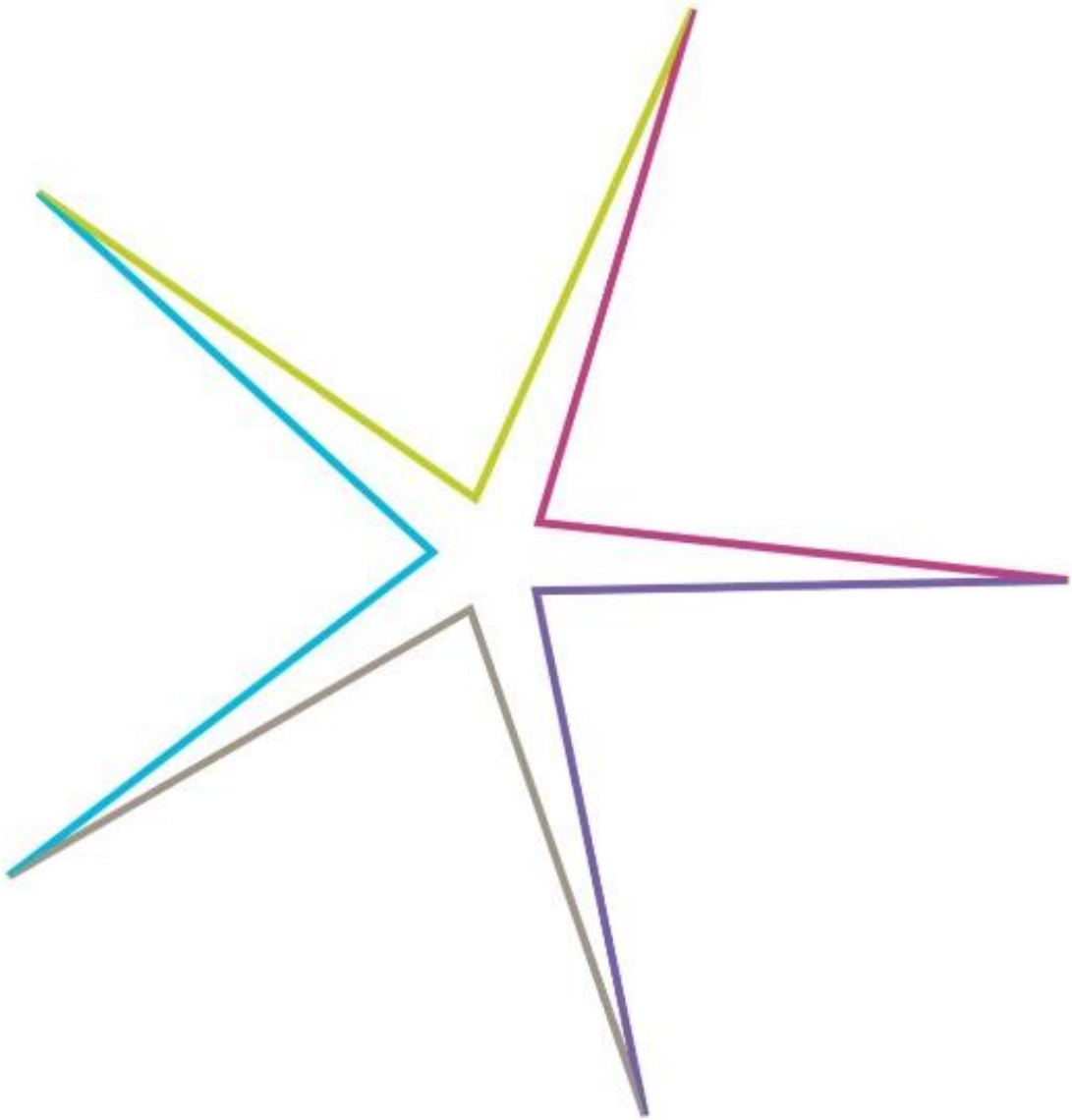
What do you think are the key priorities for the Students' Association this year?

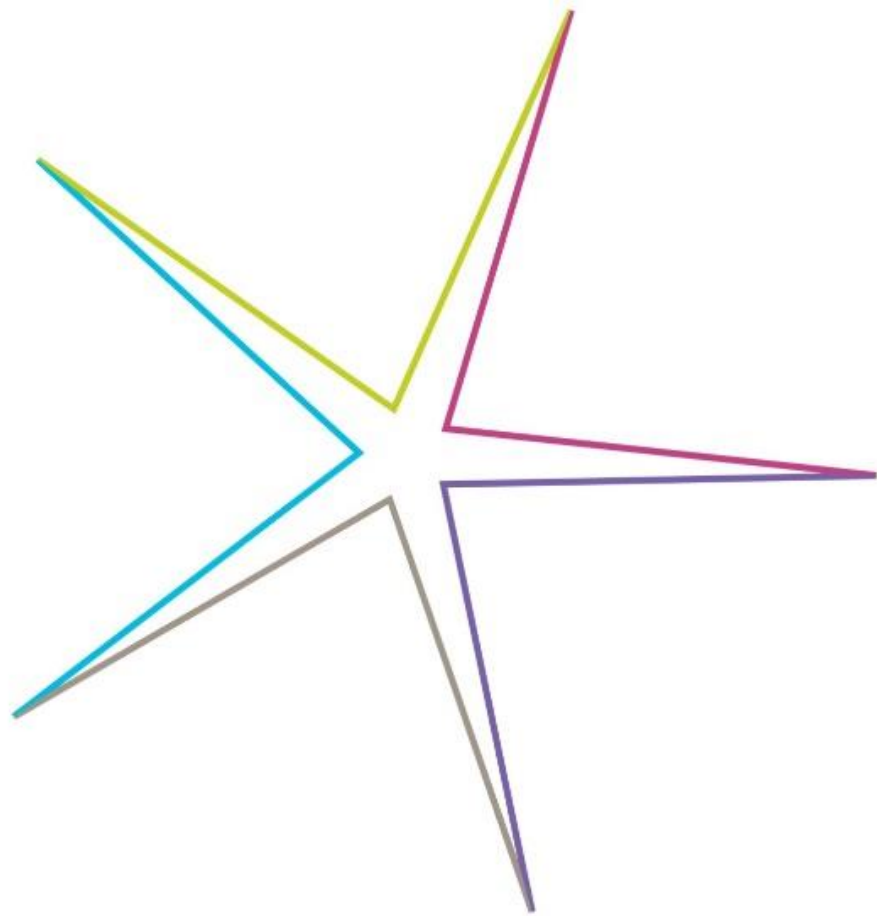
Question 4:

Is there anything that you think the college should focus on more?

Question 5:

Is there anything that you think the Students' Association should focus on more?





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