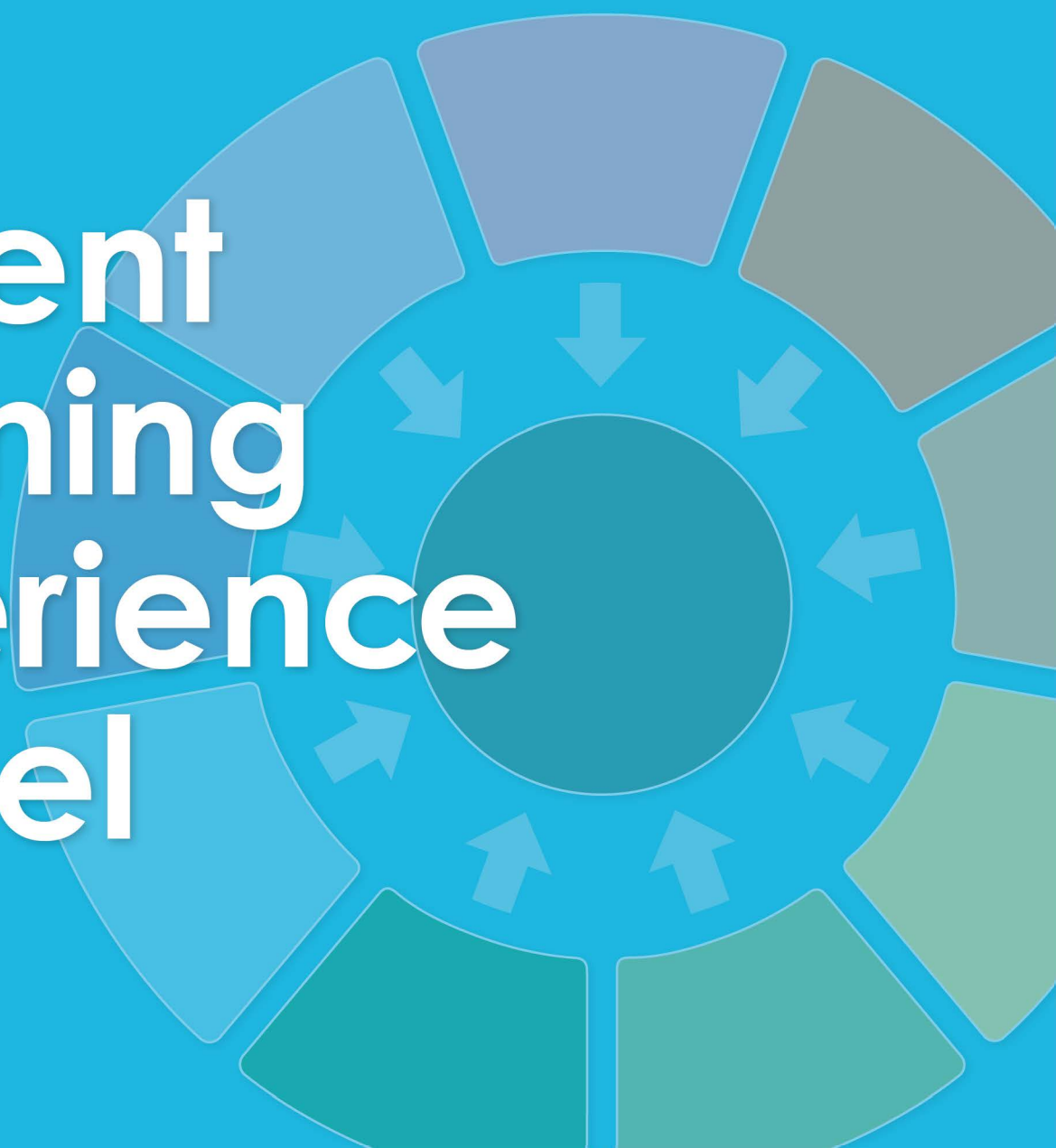


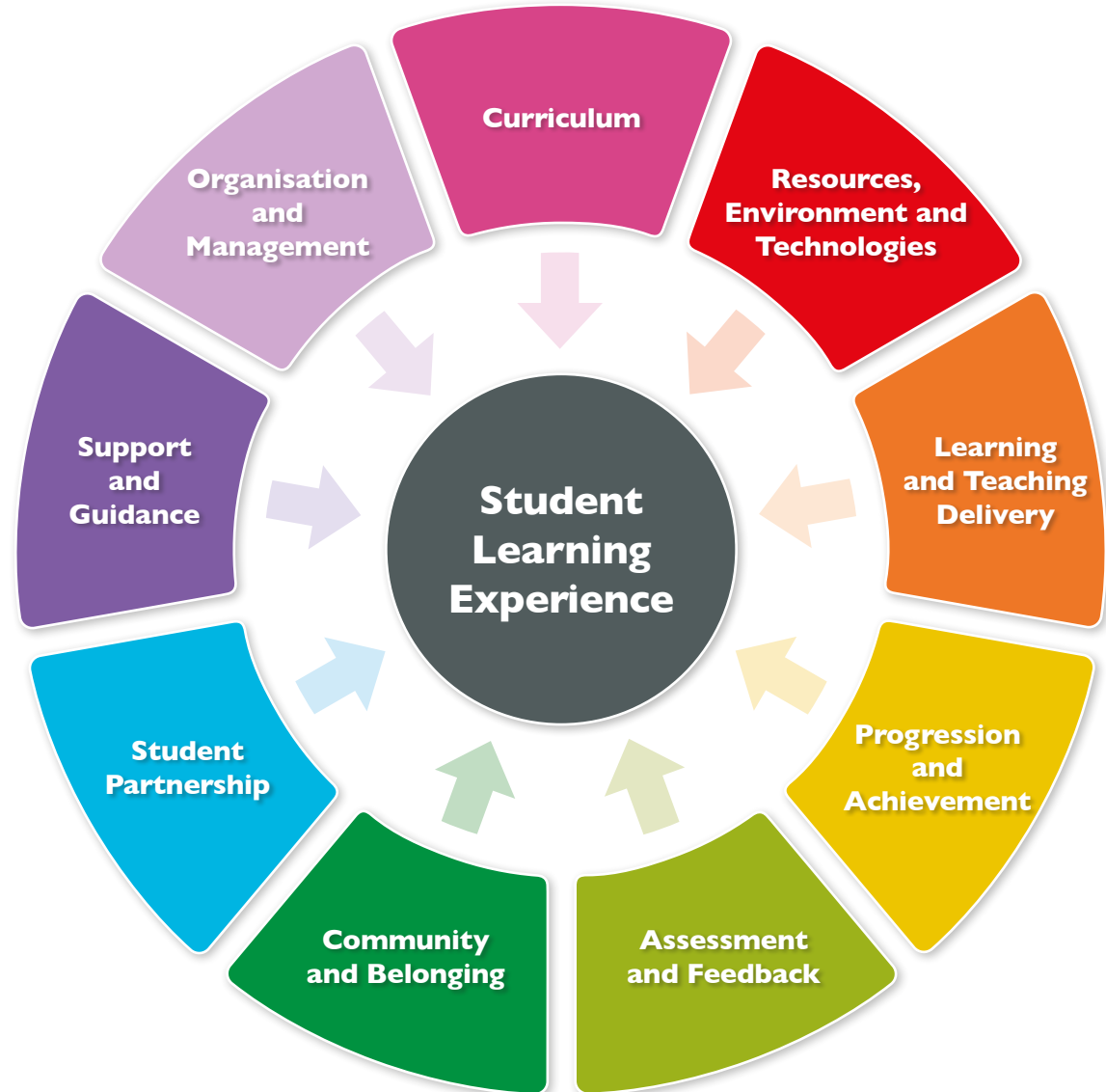
Student Learning Experience model



Student Learning Experience (SLE) model

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The Student Learning Experience in Scotland

Student engagement has been a fundamental feature of the way Scotland's colleges and universities assure and enhance the quality of the student experience for over 20 years. Central to this approach is the strong belief that working in partnership with students, understanding their experience of learning, and working with them in enhancement activity is key to providing a high-quality learning experience for all. Built on the views of students in Scotland, the SLE model provides an opportunity to harness the expertise of students and further cement it into our approaches.

Commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council, sparqs has worked with students and staff to redevelop the model to provide a sector reference point where students' interests are front and centre. The SLE model is designed to sit at the heart of conversations with students, enabling students and staff to work together to identify priorities to enhance the quality of learning. It plays a key role in Scotland's quality arrangements and will continue to evolve alongside the tertiary approach to quality.

Scope of the model

The usability of the SLE model across diverse learner journeys is an important feature, supporting the provision of a high-quality learning experience to **all** students, however and wherever they learn. It is designed for use by students in colleges and universities studying at any level of taught study (including apprentices and postgraduate taught students), as well as for students with a diverse range of needs and lived experiences. To ensure that this diversity was reflected in the design stage of the model, students from a wide variety of experiences and backgrounds were involved in the development workshops.

The SLE model **does not** cover the postgraduate research student experience. A separate model using similar approaches has been developed for this group of students and is available on the sparqs website.

You can use the SLE model in many ways, including:

- As a basis for **recruitment, training, and support activities** for student reps. sparqs uses the SLE model as a core element of its training for course representatives and student officers.
- As a basis for **discussions between students and staff**, e.g. at student-staff liaison meetings, to prompt conversations on what is working well and what could be improved within the student experience.
- To support **student reps** to gather **meaningful feedback** from the students they represent, at both course level and at institutional level. sparqs can explore ways to **support students' associations to bring together evidence** from across the institution and nationally.
- To collate **evidence** on the SLE at a course, institutional and national level, to support institutions in **self-evaluative activity** and **enhancement planning**.
- As a reference point for review teams in **internal and external review**, to provide a shared understanding of the student learning experience.

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Elements of the model

Building Blocks

The SLE model is comprised of 9 building blocks. These are the key elements that make up the learning experience. They support students to begin to consider the distinct aspects of their experience which come together to provide a high-quality student learning experience.

Lenses

The SLE model is underpinned by 3 lenses. These are areas of focus that can be applied across all 9 of the building blocks. This digital resource will be updated during the 2023-24 academic year, to allow institutions and students to apply the lenses to the model in order to highlight aspects across the learning experience that relate to these 3 areas.

SLE Reflective Questions

Each building block has an accompanying set of 10 reflective questions. The questions support dialogue between students and staff on various aspects of the building blocks. They will help develop an understanding between students and staff of strengths within the student experience, as well as areas for development.

Development of the model

A distinct aspect of the SLE model is that the building blocks, lenses and reflective questions are founded upon the views of students across Scotland on what makes an excellent quality learning experience.

The development of the model had 4 key stages:

- **Sector benchmarking** - investigating a range of existing sector reference points and research that explore the SLE and set out principles that contribute to excellence in the student experience.
- **A series of national workshops** – ensuring the foundations of the model were defined and developed by Scotland's students. Over 300 student reps and students from diverse groups contributed to the workshops, with representation from 15 universities, 19 colleges and 2 tertiary institutions.
- **Establishment of a student and staff advisory group** - developing the final wording of the model and its accompanying questions. This group was comprised of students, students' association staff and institutional staff from Scotland's tertiary sector.
- **Sector committee dialogue** - the model and questions were consulted upon and discussed at several national committees and events to ensure that there was consensus at a sector-level on the model.

Further details on the development process can be found on the sparqs website.

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Student Learning Experience Building Blocks

Curriculum

Course content; course design and development; optional and compulsory modules; learning outcomes; placements; study abroad opportunities; inclusive curriculum; sustainability in the curriculum.

Resources, Environment and Technologies

Library; IT; Virtual Learning Environment (VLE); learning spaces; course resources; digital technologies such as equipment and software; external learning environments; study spaces.

Learning and Teaching Delivery

Teaching methods; mode of study; independent and group work; contact time; class sizes; staff development; inclusive learning and teaching practices; peer learning.

Progression and Achievement

Induction; support between levels of study; individual academic progress; personal and professional development; employability; transitions to further study; articulation; recognition of achievement.

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment methods; frequency of assessments; marking criteria; consistency of marking; formative assessment and feedback; authentic assessment; quality and timeliness of feedback; assessment and feedback support.

Community and Belonging

Learning community; social opportunities; peer support; sense of belonging; community spaces; inclusive communities; student-led communities; local community engagement.

Student Partnership

Student representation system; student partnership in decision making; students' association; course evaluations; student surveys; student voice policies; student engagement in quality processes; hearing diverse student voices; student-led projects and initiatives.

Support and Guidance

Academic support; personal support; disability services; mental health and wellbeing services; support for diverse student groups; financial support; support for students with additional needs for learning.

Organisation and Management

Admissions processes; communication; timetabling; student administration; governance; transport; accommodation; complaints and concerns; equality, diversity and inclusion processes and policies; equality monitoring.

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SLE Reflective Questions

Curriculum

- A.** To what extent does the **course design** involve **student input** and in what ways do students have the opportunity to work in partnership with staff to amend and enhance the curriculum?
- B.** Do students understand **why** they are learning content and does the curriculum clearly link to the **assessment** of the module?
- C.** Is the course as a whole **structured cohesively and logically**, with clear links between modules and stages of learning?
- D.** Are students given clear guidance on the content of **optional modules** and their respective **pathways** through the course as a whole?
- E.** In what ways do all subject areas aim for an **inclusive curriculum** which reflects the diversity of communities and equips students to contribute to a diverse world? Does the curriculum allow for and encourage engagement from students from all backgrounds and demographic areas?
- F.** To what extent is there co-operation and co-ordination between the institution and **external partners** to allow for work-related experience and learning to run as smoothly as possible?
- G.** In what ways are opportunities for personal and professional **skills development** embedded within the curriculum? In which ways can students develop attributes as part of their course of study which are relevant to their wider life outside of the education sphere?
- H.** Is course content **reviewed regularly** to ensure it remains up to date and accurate?
- I.** How does the content and delivery of the curriculum embed **sustainable development**, addressing social, environmental, and economic concerns throughout the course?
- J.** Is the course content **evidence-informed** through the use of current professional learning, scholarship, and research?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Resources, Environment and Technologies

- A.** Are course materials **accessible** to all and provided in a **variety of formats** appropriate to the mode of study? Are **costs** associated with the course and wider student life communicated in advance to prospective students, such as the cost of field trips, materials, placements, and textbooks?
- B.** To what extent are learning and teaching resources, both physical and digital, kept **up to date**, relevant, and of industry/discipline standard?
- C.** How does the strategic development of learning and teaching resources take into account the **devices** students have available and prefer to use to access the course?
- D.** Do students have equity of access to **library** resources (both physical and digital), including sufficient subject-specific provision, within all levels of study and subject areas?
- E.** How are students and staff **supported and trained** to use learning resources and technologies effectively? To what extent is this support visible, regularly signposted, and provided consistently across all subject areas and levels of study?
- F.** To what degree are **spaces for learning** fit for purpose, adaptable, accessible, and designed with and for students?
- G.** In what ways is consideration given to the suitability of **external learning environments**, such as placement, field trip and work-related learning locations, and do students feel safe and able to participate in off-campus settings?
- H.** Do students have access to **individual and group study spaces** and are spaces provided that promote community learning, both online and in person?
- I.** Do students have access to **subject-specific spaces and equipment**, such as labs, studios, theatres, and computing rooms, both during and outwith class time?
- J.** In what ways is the **virtual learning environment** effective and accessible for all? Is the layout and structure of the VLE consistent across courses and services so that online resources are simple to find?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Learning and Teaching Delivery

- A.** Do staff use a variety of different **methods of teaching** and explain to students the benefits of each for their learning?
- B.** To what extent is consideration given to the **mode of study** of the module (e.g. in-person, online, hybrid), including what level of flexibility can be given to the student to engage?
- C.** In what ways are approaches to learning and teaching **accessible and inclusive**? Are teaching methods suited to the diverse learning strategies of students and adapted to a wide range of learning profiles and preferences?
- D.** Are students supported to undertake **self-directed learning** and what opportunities are there to learn independently outside the classroom?
- E.** What opportunities do students have to take part in **group work** during their course, with clear learning outcomes and assessment methods communicated to students? Does the course include opportunities for **peer learning**?
- F.** In what ways is teaching delivery designed to be **engaging**, with opportunities for **interactive learning**?
- G.** What opportunities do courses contain to undertake learning in **realistic contexts**, such as through placements, fieldwork, lab-based work, and working on industry projects within the classroom?
- H.** Do students have sufficient **contact time** with staff to support effective learning? Do staff consider suitable methods of teaching to make the most productive use of contact time?
- I.** How are staff supported to enhance their teaching practice and support for the student learning experience through participation in continuous **professional development**?
- J.** In what ways do staff facilitate a **respectful, constructive and compassionate learning environment** and are they mindful of the **wider context** of students' lives, experiences and identities?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Progression And Achievement

- A.** How is the **prior learning** of students recognised by the institution and does it allow the student to enter the institution at the level which best reflects this prior learning? This learning may have been gained through formal qualifications, through a workplace, or through life experiences.
- B.** Are all students provided with a comprehensive and supportive **induction** to the institution and the course, including students joining the institution at a later stage in the course?
- C.** How are students supported in the **transition** between different levels of study, such as from school to college/university, HNC to HND, further education to higher education, pre-honours to honours, and undergraduate to postgraduate study?
- D.** In what ways does the institution support students to identify, develop and achieve their **personal academic and developmental goals**?
- E.** Does the institution have in place processes and procedures to inform students of their **individual progress** and to identify and support students who require **additional support**?
- F.** Does the institution monitor **progression and attainment** rates by course and demographic area and put in place strategies to support student success?
- G.** In what ways are students provided with advice and guidance on the decisions they can take regarding **pathways** through learning, including support on navigating processes to change courses or institutions?
- H.** Are students encouraged to engage with the **careers services** from the start of their course and are resources provided throughout the duration of the course to help guide their next steps on to a career or future study?
- I.** Are there a variety of **roles and responsibilities** available through the institution and students' association where students can enhance their personal and professional development, such as student rep roles, opportunities to sit on committees, society leadership positions, and student internships?
- J.** What systems are in place to **recognise and reward** students' achievements gained both within and outside of the course? How are students supported to reflect on the skills and attributes they have gained and are equipped to use and discuss them with employers and the wider community?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Assessment And Feedback

- A.** Is the format and timing of assessments **strategically planned** across the course and does this process consider a range of factors including student wellbeing, avoiding clustering of assessments, and external requirements?
- B.** Is the format and timescale of assessments clearly **communicated** at the beginning of the module?
- C.** Are a **range of assessment methods** offered across the course which accommodate the diverse needs of the student body? Do assessments allow **accommodations** for those with additional needs for learning?
- D.** To what extent do assessments map to the **learning outcomes** of the course and capture the **knowledge and skills** covered in the curriculum?
- E.** How do courses provide an opportunity for students to receive **formative feedback** in advance of a summative assessment, such as through class activities, receiving feedback on a draft assignment, or through the use of ungraded assessment?
- F.** How do students know how to access **support** if they are having challenges completing assessments? Are students aware of the associated **processes** they can access, such as applying for extensions, and are these processes simple and accessible to navigate?
- G.** To what extent are assessment criteria **clear, fair**, and applied **consistently**? Is there an agreed **marking framework** which is shared with the student at the start of the module so that they have clear **expectations** of their assessment?
- H.** Is feedback given in a **timely** manner and provided in sufficient time for it to be used on the next assessment?
- I.** Is feedback **specific, in-depth, constructive**, and **actionable**, with clear suggestions for how the student can improve?
- J.** Does the institution have an **appeals process** which students know about and understand how to access? How are students who undertake an appeal kept informed throughout the process and do they understand why the final decision has been made?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Community And Belonging

- A.** In what ways do all students have the opportunity to participate in social and academic communities, and to feel **included** and that they **belong**?
- B.** What opportunities do students and staff have to collaborate as part of a **learning community** within their course and subject area?
- C.** What **social opportunities** are there for students to get to know other students outside of class, including students on other courses?
- D.** To what extent are community spaces **accessible** to all students, with principles of universal design employed when planning events or projects?
- E.** How are students studying **at a distance** included in institutional and students' association communities? Are dedicated **online spaces** established to build community and belonging, such as forums, online chat platforms, and video conferencing spaces?
- F.** How are students and staff supported to feel **safe** and **welcome** in their learning spaces? Is there an effective and accessible process for reporting bullying, harassment, and discrimination?
- G.** Are students and staff mindful of their responsibilities to one another and foster a **positive, respectful, kind, and inclusive** environment?
- H.** Are students informed and respectful of the **diverse community** of their student and staff body? In what ways does the institution **value** and **celebrate** the unique experiences and ideas that each individual can bring to the community?
- I.** What opportunities do students have to engage with **local communities** within the curriculum and outside it? Do students, staff, and community groups work in partnership on shared goals?
- J.** In what ways does the institution and students' association enable the creation and support of **student-led communities**?

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SLE Reflective Questions

Student Partnership

- A.** In what ways do students work in **partnership** with staff to make changes to the student experience. How do students and staff engage in genuine **dialogue** to explore challenges and develop solutions together and do students and staff value the **expertise** each brings to the discussion?
- B.** How do staff work with students to design, deliver, and analyse a **variety of methods** for understanding the student learning experience? Are there **multiple opportunities** for students to share their views and ideas throughout the course?
- C.** How can students identify **actions** that have been taken as a result of their feedback? How can they be confident that their views are taken seriously and result in change at a local and strategic level?
- D.** Is there a well-functioning **student rep system** which enables students to communicate their experiences to the institution and the students' association and to make change? Are student reps **trained** and **supported** to successfully undertake their roles and to represent their student body most effectively?
- E.** How does the institution and students' association ensure that the voices of **all students** are heard, however and wherever they learn? Are mechanisms in place to engage with students who may face **additional barriers** in accessing education or who are traditionally **underrepresented** in further and higher education?
- F.** Does the institution have a **systematic approach** to capturing the student voice and are individual staff, course teams, and professional services teams supported to use it effectively? Are systems **joined up** and can issues be **escalated** through the institution's processes and committees?
- G.** To what extent are student views integral to **strategic decision making**? Do students play a key role in identifying themes and priorities at all levels of the institution and in enacting changes?
- H.** Do students and staff have access to **data and evidence** about the student experience at a course, department, and institution level? In what ways are students supported to analyse and interpret this information alongside staff in order to identify priority areas for change?
- I.** Is there a strong, autonomous, and sustainable **students' association** that works in partnership with the institution to improve the student experience? To what degree are they a key partner in quality and institutional decision making, including through self-evaluation processes and enhancement planning?
- J.** How are students **recognised** and **rewarded** for the role they have played in student partnership and for the **impact** they have made on current and future students.

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Support And Guidance

- A.** To what extent are **support services**, including disability services and services to support students' mental health and wellbeing, **available, visible, and joined up**? Are services accessible to all learners, including online and for those with a wide range of access requirements?
- B.** Are there **sufficient** support services available proportionate to the needs of the student body and can services be accessed in a **timely** manner?
- C.** How are students made **aware** of the variety of support services available to them and how do they know how and when they can access them? Is academic, pastoral, and financial support **signposted to students** during induction and consistently throughout the course of study?
- D.** Do all students, at all levels of study, have a key contact within the institution who they can go to for initial support and to ask for advice? Do staff have **dedicated time** set aside in their schedule to provide academic and/or pastoral support to students?
- E.** Are all staff **trained** to accurately and sensitively signpost students to the right support?
- F.** Are students who require **additional support** for learning and student life provided with a range of support based on individual needs? Is support for students with additional needs **monitored regularly** and re-evaluated to adapt to any **changing needs** of the student?
- G.** What access do students have to **academic skills** resources and support across a range of topics, such as referencing, time management, critical thinking, statistical techniques, study skills, and good academic practice and avoiding academic misconduct?
- H.** What **systems** are in place to identify and support **individual students who are at risk**, as well as to identify **trends** across the student body and plan developments to strategically improve the student experience cross-institution?
- I.** Is the institution and the students' association aware of potential **financial barriers** to accessing course opportunities or extracurricular roles and in what ways do they consider how to remove these barriers?
- J.** Are students signposted to **services external to the institution**, such as local and national organisations offering mental health support and financial advice?

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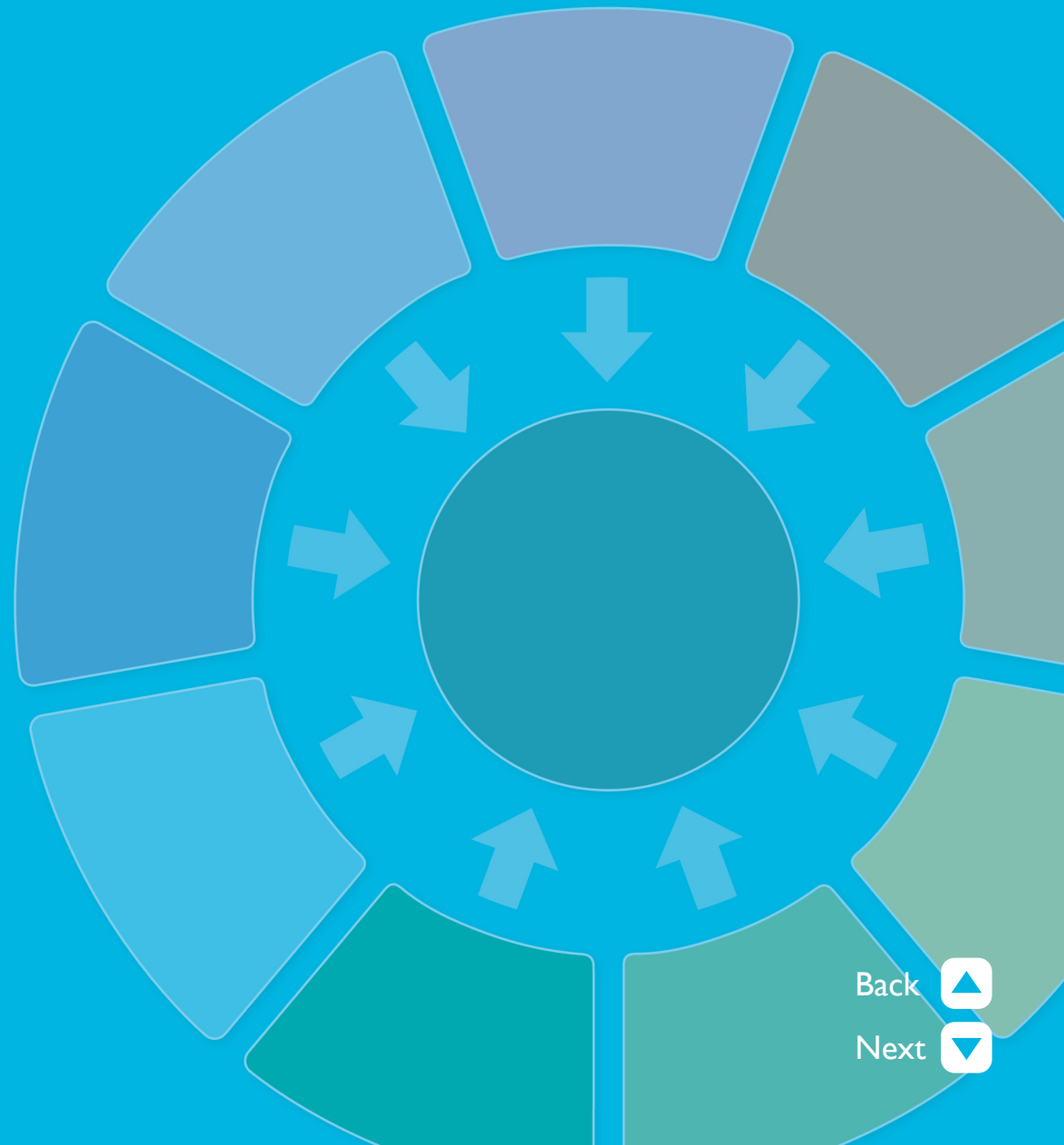
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SLE Reflective Questions

Organisation and Management

- A. To what extent are **admissions processes** informative, responsive, easily accessible, and fair? Can students follow the progress of their application?
- B. Are organisational structures and systems **transparent** and **well-signposted** to allow for easy navigation by students?
- C. Are course and exam **timetables** set and communicated to students in a timely manner, with any changes clearly communicated to students with advance notice?
- D. In what ways does the institution have a strategic approach to **student communications**, which allows for relevant, accurate and timely information-sharing?
- E. What systems and procedures are in place to provide alternative access to learning and teaching during **emergency circumstances**.
- F. Does the institution have fair and consistent **policies and procedures**, and are these regularly measured and reviewed to ensure improvements are being made to the experiences and outcomes of all students? Is new and updated policy and practice equality impact assessed to consider the **impact of changes** across all student groups and demographics?
- G. Does the institution have an **equality, diversity and inclusion** strategy and uphold inclusive practices throughout the creation and delivery of its processes and procedures? To what degree is support for equality, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing effectively **resourced** at the individual, departmental, and institutional level?
- H. Does the institution have an effective **complaints** procedure, which is well-advertised, simple to navigate, transparent, and sets clear expectations for all individuals involved?
- I. When planning teaching and learning, how does the institution take into account **logistical considerations** such as transport options, time to travel between classes, and students' needs and circumstances?
- J. Does the institution have a strategic approach to the development of their **size and shape**, considering related factors such as availability of accommodation, sufficient access to services and resources, and impact on class sizes?



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This resource will continue to be developed on an ongoing basis throughout the 2023-24 academic year.

info@sparqs.ac.uk
www.sparqs.ac.uk



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