



# **Supporting the future careers of students' association education officers**

**An Outduction Toolkit**

**April 2026**





## Introduction

This short toolkit is for those who closely support, or work with, students' association education officers. This may include students' association staff members such as the students' association director or representation co-ordinator, and institutional staff members who work closely with the officer.

The aim of this resource is to:

1. Contribute to education officers' reflections on skills and experiences as they approach the end of their term.
2. Help capture and celebrate the huge professional development opportunity that the education officer role presents.
3. Promote career and voluntary opportunities that might be of interest to officers who wish to stay within the field of representation, governance and education policy.

### Defining "education officer"

This resource defines education officers as those lead representatives within the students' association whose remit includes learning and teaching, quality and academic representation (among other responsibilities). Students' associations may have dedicated posts with a title such as "Vice President (Education)", or the responsibility might lie within a more general President or Vice President role. The education remit may also form an element of one or more campus- or faculty-based executive officers. As a convenient shorthand, this resource will define all such posts as "education officer".

This guide was originally developed by the College Development Network, Advance HE, NUS Charity and sparqs, as part of their wider programmes of development for education officers, student members of governing bodies and those who support student officers. It contains three short exercises for staff who support officers, plus an adaptable handout to share with outgoing officers themselves. The guide is now updated annually by sparqs.

## How to use this toolkit

The career and skill-based exercises in this toolkit are intended to inform and support a wider "outduction" process for outgoing education officers. Staff from the students' association and institution might find it useful to meet together to discuss the contents of this document and to identify opportunities to empower the outgoing officer to reflect upon their experiences, skills and personal development during their time in office. It may also be beneficial to include the outgoing education officer in these discussions, as they can provide personalised commentary about the support they would find useful as they finish their term of office. Exercises can be supported or facilitated by a students' association (and/or institutional) staff member.

It may be useful to map the ways in which the exercises suggested in this guide map to existing development and support for education officers related to their skills reflection. The students' association and/or institution may offer support to outgoing officers already, including **outduction activities** such as:

- Reflecting on content from officers' support and progress meetings, such as an appraisal or 360 review, over their term (this could be supported by students' association staff).
- Observations and reflections from any assigned mentor to the education officer.
- Any internal skills reflection processes used within the students' association for its elected representatives (for example, a pre- and post-skills assessment).
- Careers advice offered by the relevant support service within the institution.
- Exit surveys or interviews that may be in place for outgoing student officers or governors.



## Exercise 1: Skills and experiences checklist

Your education officer will hopefully complete their term of office with an impressive range of new or enhanced skills relating to decision making, strategic development, governance, quality, education policy and more. These are worth reflecting on and applying in their future career. Below are four areas in which your education officer will probably have operated, with some suggested examples of the activities they might have been involved in, or had successes in, and the skills and knowledge they will have gained in doing so. This list is not exhaustive and should be expanded upon based on the outgoing officer's experience.

For this exercise, you may wish to:

1. Adapt the table below to your terminology and context, feeling free to add to or delete the suggested content in the second and third columns. You may wish to leave some of the specific activities and skills blank for the education officer to reflect on and fill in themselves!
2. Work through the table with the outgoing education officer to help them reflect on the things they have achieved and the skills they have developed.
3. Support your officer to use what they have written in this table to develop a CV, mock interview presentation, or a list of aspirations or desired roles in their career.

Area of work	Example activities and impacts	Example skills and knowledge developed
<b>The students' association</b>	Chairing meetings. Representing diverse views. Creating digital spaces for student views.	Teamwork and building consensus. Leadership and trusteeship. Creating and implementing policy. Equality, diversity, and inclusion.
<b>The institution</b>	Quality/review activity. Enhancing the learning experience. Partnership on institutional committees. Involvement in strategic planning.	Self-evaluation and action planning. Building partnership. Negotiation and persuasion. Academic strategy and quality. Public speaking and presenting skills.
<b>The governing body</b>	Contributing to boards with organisational oversight. Building relationships. Raising the profile of the students' association. Reviewing financial and strategic documents.	Formal committee skills. Public sector governance and trusteeship. Accountability, networking. Strategic planning, finance and risk oversight.
<b>The national level</b>	Sharing practice and networking. Shaping sectoral decisions. National enhancement projects. Transforming institutional projects into national campaigns.	National education policy. Campaigning and lobbying. Generating and using evidence. Understanding of tertiary education system.



## Exercise 2: Using the STAR method to evidence skills

Hopefully your officer will learn a lot from **Exercise 1** and will want to talk about the experiences they have gained in future interviews or in reflective writing. One way they can articulate their skills and experience is to use the [STAR \(Situation, Task, Action, Result\) method](#).

If the education officer isn't already familiar, describe a bit more about the STAR method:

- **Situation** – what was the context or setup that the officer was working within?
- **Task** – what was the officer's specific role (as a lead, as a partner, as a reviewer, etc.)?
- **Action** – how did the officer approach the situation and their role? What actions did they take?
- **Result** – what happened because of the actions that the officer took (and what did they learn from that)?

To put the STAR method into practice, the education officer can take an example skill or activity from **Exercise 1** and put it through the following template:

<b>Skill/activity:</b>	
<b>Situation</b>	
<b>Task</b>	
<b>Action</b>	
<b>Result</b>	

This can help an outgoing officer to create a narrative around their experiences and projects during their time in the role. The officer can repeat this exercise for as many skills or activities as they wish. The STAR method can be used to write applications and to answer interview questions.

Below is an example of a completed template:

<b>Skill/activity:</b> Negotiation and persuasion	
<b>Situation</b>	Students at my institution expressed concerns about a proposed new artificial intelligence (AI) policy; the draft policy was scheduled to be reviewed by the learning and teaching committee.
<b>Task</b>	My role was both to represent student interests as an elected leader and to act as a responsible committee member to ensure that an effective AI policy was passed.
<b>Action</b>	Working with our course representative system, I sought out student perspectives on the policy and consolidated the major considerations into a cohesive list. I met with the policy officers as well as academic staff to discuss these perspectives ahead of the committee meeting and mediated their needs with students' needs.
<b>Result</b>	I found that both sets of meetings informed each other. By working in partnership with student and staff stakeholders, we were able to further enhance the policy draft. The paper passed learning and teaching committee and the collaborative approach we took has since been used to craft other policies in partnership between students and staff. From this experience, I learned the importance of partnership working and that effective listening skills are a crucial part of successful negotiation and compromise.



## Exercise 3: Future development

Looking back on their terms, officers may also find that there's more that they'd like to develop or progress toward in future. Identifying the skills, experiences and kinds of work that they would find meaningful will help them throughout their lives and careers. Below is a series of prompts to ask the outgoing officer to reflect on (either with staff or independently) that may help to set out their further ambitions and direction.

- What parts of your role did you most enjoy? How do these relate to, or influence, your plans for your future career, further study or your broader life?
- What parts of your role did you least enjoy? Are there ways you can address these in future roles, or strategies you can develop to approach things differently?
- What are three to five of your key strengths that you've identified as a result of your role? In addition, or alternatively, what are three to five of your proudest achievements?
- What are three to five areas where you feel you could improve or develop further? These can be skills, project areas, or knowledge bases.
  - How do you hope to develop these areas in your future roles, through educational opportunities, or through lived experiences?
- Where do you see yourself in:
  - One year?
  - Three years?
  - Five years?
- What experiences would you need to achieve your goals?

Where appropriate, follow these reflective questions up by sharing some constructive feedback with your officer. Talk to them about some of their strengths and areas for development and offer insights and encouragement that they can carry with them as they depart their role. This is a good space for supporting staff members and outgoing officers to collaborate and identify opportunities (such as professional development courses, conferences, or work experiences) that the outgoing officer can pursue to achieve their long-term goals.

## Reflections for staff

It can be rare for an officer to have the time to stand back from their role and reflect on their tremendous experiences and achievements. We hope these exercises help them to feel rightly proud of all they have done and gain a sense of their personal strengths or areas for development.

The outduction process also prompts a valuable opportunity for supporting staff members to learn and reflect. For instance, has supporting your officer through these exercises told you anything about the scope or impact of the role that you hadn't realised, or which isn't expressed in the job description? This is a good time to try to identify opportunities to enhance support for future officers. Based on your experience with outduction this year, you may consider, for instance:

- Amending the activities or skills in the education officer role description or election promotional material.
- Reviewing your induction, training and support plan for the education officer.
- Seeking out opportunities for external development (such as mentors or conference opportunities) to support future education officers.
- Building out time mid-year for officers to reflect on their progress so far.

Overleaf is a 2-page handout you can share with outgoing education officers and adapt if you wish. It contains several directories of jobs, voluntary roles and governance positions that might inspire them.



## Suggested opportunities for former students' association education officers

As you leave your education officer role, and sabbatical life more generally, what next? You may be forging a new career or returning to the world of work, taking on further studies, or taking a break to rest before moving on. No matter what your immediate next steps are, you may want to apply the incredible skills and experiences you've gained during your term as an education officer. You may even be seeking a similar role!

Many organisations are really keen for the skills and experiences you've developed, especially in recent graduates, and there is also a huge demand for more new leaders to be involved in public sector governance. You have much to offer on the job market, as well as to wider society, through governance opportunities, and through other voluntary positions.

### Continuing work in quality as a student reviewer

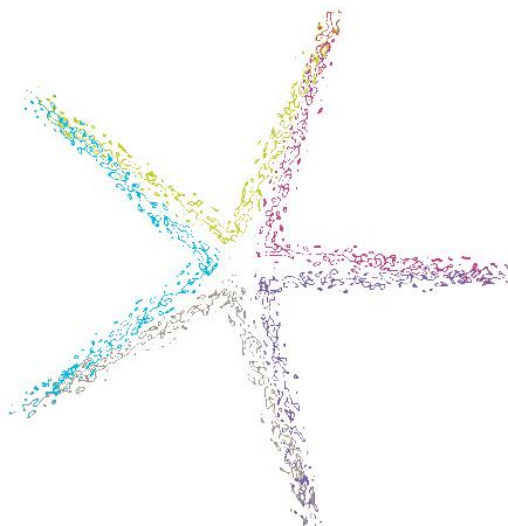
There are many roles in institutions and in sector agencies where you can continue to influence the quality of the student learning experience.

For instance, QAA Scotland recruit part-time student reviewers regularly – opportunities which are open to students for up to three years following graduation (or following a sabbatical year).

QAA student reviewers undertake reviews of education providers as part of a review team in order to reach findings on the academic standards and quality of provision. Student reviewers are equal members of the review teams and are trained and supported by QAA to undertake their roles.

By joining the pool of student reviewers, you will be offered the opportunity to participate in Tertiary Quality Enhancement Reviews (TQERs) undertaken at institutions across Scotland. You don't have to attend every review to stay in the pool, and you will be paid for your participation.

QAA periodically recruits new reviewers and student reviewers; you can find out more about the role on the [QAA website](#) and can look out for their [recruitment cycles](#) online.





If you've enjoyed working in education and students' associations, then the following development opportunities and portals for paid or voluntary roles might be worth exploring. In addition to the suggestions below, explore the job pages and social media accounts of [universities](#), [colleges](#), sector agencies, policy bodies and civil service, who will all have dedicated recruitment pages.

<p><b>Further study</b> – you may be eager to dive back into your education, perhaps at one of Scotland's <a href="#">colleges</a> or <a href="#">universities</a>, or further afield!</p>
<p><b>sparqs' Jobs Board</b> – student engagement opportunities, including full-time posts within institutions and students' associations and relevant governance and trustee posts.</p>
<p><b>Get into Governance</b> – an online course run by the College Development Network to help you consider applying for a college Board of Management.</p>
<p><b>Scottish Government Public Appointments</b> – you've probably sat on your College Board of Management or University Court, which are examples of the many governing bodies accountable to the Scottish Government for a range of public services and agencies.</p>
<p><b>CDN's college vacancies directory</b> – containing jobs from colleges in Scotland.</p>
<p><b>Committee of University Chairs' vacancies portal</b> – with positions in university governing bodies in Scotland and across the UK.</p>
<p><b>www.jobs.ac.uk</b> – a portal for jobs in colleges and universities across the UK.</p>
<p><b>su.careers</b> – a directory run by NUS with vacancies for staff and trustee roles at students' unions across the UK.</p>
<p><b>WONKHE jobs board</b> – a portal for leadership, policy, strategy, planning, comms, public affairs, research, management and other work in higher education.</p>
<p><b>Goodmoves</b> – a jobs directory for the third sector run by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). <a href="#">Third sector interfaces</a> (TSIs) may have jobs listed locally.</p>
<p><b>Local authorities</b> – your experience of working in a democratic organisation means you might be interested in jobs in a local council ...or you might even want to stand for election!</p>
<p><b>Changing the Chemistry</b> – a charity which aims to work with boards in all sectors to improve and promote diversity. They provide coaching and mentoring for prospective board members, run events and activities, and promote board vacancies.</p>
<p><b>Governor Competencies Map</b> – developed by Advance HE to help University Court members to reflect on their progress and development.</p>

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