



Developing the future careers of students' association education officers

An Outduction Toolkit

January 2023





Introduction

This short toolkit is for those who closely support or work with students' association education officers, such as the students' association director or representation co-ordinator and the governance professional (clerk to college Board of Management or university Court).

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 role represents.
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.

We are defining education officers as those senior student representatives, often in a sabbatical role, who lead their students' association's work on learning and teaching, quality, and academic representation. Their role will typically involve activities around the student voice in learning; institutional and national education policy; representation and advocacy; the course rep system; institution-led enhancement and self-evaluation processes; and serving on a range of institutional academic and governance committees.

This guide has been 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.

When the education officer is approaching the end of their term in the role, those named at the start of this document might find it useful to meet together, perhaps with the outgoing incumbent education officer, to read through and discuss these exercises and the handout.

Exercise 1: Your existing processes

A useful first task could be to map the ways in which you already develop and support the education officer in their skills reflection. These might include:

- Officers' support and progress meetings with the students' association director or secretary to the governing body.
- Periodic discussion with any assigned mentor to the education officer.
- Any internal skills reflection processes used within the students' association for its elected representatives.
- Careers advice offered by the relevant support service within the institution.
- Routine exit surveys that may be in place for outgoing student officers or governors.



Exercise 2: 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, 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.

Adapt the table to your terminology and context, feeling free to delete our suggested content in the second and third columns. Then work through it with the outgoing education officer to help them reflect on the things they have achieved and the skills they have developed. Finally, you could support your officer to use what they have written in this table to develop a CV, mock interview presentation or list of aspirations or desired roles in their career.

Area of work	Activities and impacts	Skills and knowledge developed
The students' association	Chairing meetings. Representing diverse views. Creating digital spaces for student views.	Teamwork and building consensus. Leadership and trusteeship. Creating and implementing policy. Equality and diversity.
The institution	Quality/review activity. Enhancing the learning experience. Engaging through online platforms. Involvement in strategic planning.	Building partnership. Negotiation and persuasion. Familiarity with digital collaboration. Academic strategy and quality.
The governing body	Contributing to meetings. Building relationships. Raising the profile of the students' association.	Formal committee skills. Accountability. Public sector governance. Strategic planning and risk oversight.
The national level	Sharing practice. Shaping sectoral decisions. Teamwork.	National education policy. Campaigning and lobbying. Generating and using evidence.

Exercise 3: Defining the role in the future

Hopefully your officer will learn a lot from Exercise 2, because it is sometimes rare for them to have the time to stand back from their role and reflect on their tremendous experiences and achievements. They may be rightly proud of all they have done, and gain a sense of their personal strengths or areas for development.

But what can you as a supporting staff member learn from that? Does it tell you anything about the scope or impact of the role that you hadn't realised, or which isn't expressed in the job description? Try to identify things you could do for the future, for instance:

- Amending the reference to activities or skills in the education officer role description or election promotional material.
- Reviewing your induction, training and support plan for the education officer.

Overleaf is a handout you can share with outgoing education officers, and adapt if you wish. It contains a number of different 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? If your studies are complete, you might be forging a new career or returning to the world of work, but either way, you may want to apply the incredible skills and experiences you've gained during your term as an education officer and even stay within a related role.

You'll be departing your post having worked in many areas, such as learning and teaching development; education policy (institutionally and nationally); governance and trusteeship; leading volunteers; strategic planning; participation and community building; partnership; equality, diversity and inclusion; campaigning; welfare and rights; and much, much more.

Many organisations are really keen for these skills and experiences, especially in young graduates, and there is also a huge demand for more young people to be involved in public sector governance. That all means that education officers (at any age!) have so much to offer the job market, as well as to wider society, through governance and other voluntary positions.

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.

Roles in institutions and agencies – Keep an eye on the job pages and social media accounts of universities , colleges and sector agencies, policy bodies, consultancies or civil service, who will have dedicated recruitment pages.
sparqs' jobs board – Student engagement opportunities, including full-time posts within institutions and students' associations and relevant governance and trustee posts.
Get into Governance – An online course run by the College Development Network to help you consider applying for a college Board of Management.
Scottish Government Public Appointments – You've probably sat on your college Board of Management or university Court, and they are examples of the many governing bodies accountable to the Scottish Government for a range of public services and agencies.
CDN's college vacancies directory – Containing jobs from colleges in Scotland.
Committee of University Chairs' vacancies portal – With positions in university governing bodies in Scotland and across the UK.
www.jobs.ac.uk – A portal for jobs in colleges and universities across the UK.
su.careers – A directory run by NUS with vacancies for staff and trustee roles at students' unions across the UK.
Goodmoves – A jobs directory for the third sectors run by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). Third sector interfaces (TSIs) may have jobs listed locally.
Local authorities – 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!
Changing the Chemistry – 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.
For Good – A platform created by Students Organising for Sustainability to link students and graduates with research and placement opportunities in sustainable development.
Governor Competencies Map – Developed by Advance HE to help university Court members to reflect on their progress and development.

© 2023 sparqs is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation funded by the Scottish Funding Council. Registration number SC046172



Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 3.0 [licence](#).

You are free to copy, communicate and adapt the work, so long as you attribute the authoring organisations.