

Student Engagement Vision and Strategy



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1. Executive Summary

The university partnership is together committed to our student community. The University of the Highlands and Islands Strategic Vision and Plan puts students at the centre of our vision for the university. Throughout this document where the university is mentioned it includes each of the academic partners and where students are mentioned it refers to FE students as well as HE students.

This document sets out the university's approach to student engagement. We believe that it is vital for students to not only be the reason for all that we do, but to be actively involved as partners in developing our university, for the benefit of our students, our community and our region.

Student engagement activity at the university is delivered by working together to enhance the student experience and involve students as genuine partners. Vital to this work is the close partnership working between Executive Office (EO), our academic partners (the nine assigned colleges and the four specialist institutions that are part of the university partnership) and the students' association, HISA. We also work closely with sparqs, and other relevant external experts to develop our work in this area.

The range of student engagement work is diverse. The interventions are designed to fully work with our students in partnership to deliver our student engagement aims. This strategy outlines the work and how we work together to deliver these interventions.

2. Mission and vision

Our **vision** for student engagement at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is for students to be partners in their own learning, and in shaping change to bring improvements in their own and others' learning experience with us.

To make this vision a reality, our **mission** is to enable partnership between students and staff which contributes towards the university's strategic vision, mission and goals for the university partnership and our region.

3. Values

The University Strategic Vision and Plan lists our values as: collaboration, openness, respect and excellence, and the individual academic partners strategic visions have similar values. The student engagement vision and strategy therefore embrace these values.

- Collaboration – working together, with strong internal and external relationships, in a spirit of genuine partnership.
- Openness – being open in our methods of working and planning.
- Respect – for everyone within the university partnership, our external stakeholders and the community.
- Excellence – striving towards excellence in all our work.

4. Factors affecting our mission

Student engagement is affected and influenced by a number of external and internal factors. Many, if not all, of these will change over time; therefore there is a continual need to ensure that student engagement is aligned with these factors. The factors affecting our mission include:

- Internal stakeholders; our academic partners.
- Senior management team.
- Our student community.
- Staff of the university partnership.
- The students' association.
- Survey results; primarily the results of the NSS, PTES, ESES and SSES surveys.
- Other measures of student satisfaction, including focus groups, informal feedback, complaints, and the red button.
- Our Student Partnership Agreement; with annual priority areas for partnership working.
- External organisations such as Education Scotland, Colleges Scotland, QAA, SFC, CDN.

Our mission is also affected by sector and government standards and objectives:

- Sparqs Engagement Framework; and other good practice guides from the organisation.
- The Advance HE Framework for Student Engagement through Partnership
- QAA quality standards
- SFC Outcome Agreement
- Colleges Scotland advice and guidance, primarily through Sparqs.

5. Objectives

This student engagement vision and strategy for the university aims to:

- Contribute to the delivery of the University Strategic Vision and Plan
- Engage our students as partners in the delivery of their education, their experience of university and in the enhancement of the learning experience.
- Provide students with the opportunity to engage with the university in a way that is most relevant to them.
- Provide the university with evidence-based data to lead enhancement work from survey results and other student feedback.
- Enhance the student experience through extra-curricular activities.

6. Key areas of work

6.1 Permanent student engagement work is listed in this section. The university partnership also conducts many other short – term projects and engagement work

6.2 Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). The SPA is the key document that details how the university and the student community will work together to enhance the student experience. It also details a number of areas that will be the focus of special attention throughout the year. The Agreement is available for students to read on the university website. Some academic partners also have a local SPA with work – themes specific to the partner.

- 6.3 Student Engagement Group (SEG). SEG is the primary forum for student engagement staff and students, from across the partnership, to share good practice and work together to develop student engagement. Some academic partners hold their own Student Engagement Groups to support the work of the university SEG.
- 6.4 EO – delivered student engagement work. Student Services deliver a range of engagement work directly to students and also support staff at partner colleges to do so. This includes focus groups, articulation agreements, subject review preparation, the red button, development work, and project support (e.g. Brightspace introduction) etc. We also provide operational liaison with the students' association on behalf of the university partnership.
- 6.5 Academic partner supported student engagement work. Our academic partners provide face to face student engagement support. This includes the training and support of class reps, class rep personal development through the Learner Representation and Engagement Award, local promotion of surveys, engagement with course and college committees, working with local HISA officers and staff, and delivery of engagement projects locally.
- 6.6 Class Representative Group (CRG). Student representation is primarily coordinated and supported through CRG. We also support students through inductions to committees and other targeted interventions.
- 6.7 Student Surveys. Student Services provide organisational and administrative support to the NSS and also run the PTES survey. The results from these surveys are disseminated to provide evidence for enhancement. The Early Experience Survey and Student Engagement and Satisfaction Survey are delivered by academic partners and coordinated by Quality Forum.
- 6.8 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Our region benefits through RPL, which is supported through staff training, guidance and support to applicants provided by Student Services to the partnership as a whole.
- 6.9 Student Sport. Student life and wellbeing is enhanced through sport. The Sport Development Group brings together interested staff, partners, HISA and students to develop sport across the university.
- 6.10 Teaching Awards. Every year all students are given the opportunity to express their appreciation to individual staff through the teaching awards, run in partnership with HISA. Doing so encourages students to consider the many advantages of study with UHI as well as providing encouragement to teaching and support staff.

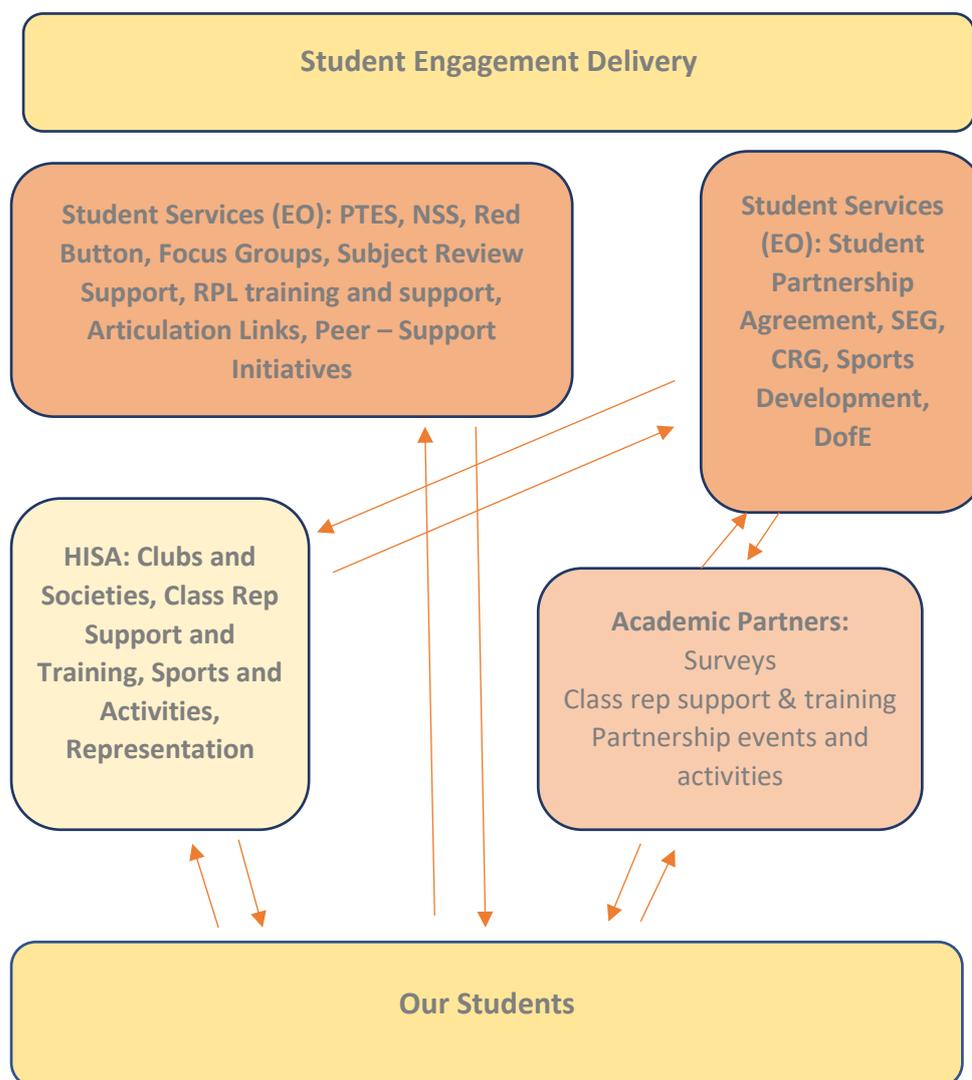
6. Mapping Student Engagement work to the UHI Strategic Plan

Student engagement work links to the UHI Strategic Vision and Plan as outlined in the following mapping:

<i>Reference to UHI Strategic Plan</i>	<i>Corresponding area of Student Engagement area of work (with reference to detailed work information in section 6)</i>
<p>Strategic Theme: Our students</p> <p>Establish a culture of student engagement by working in partnership with students to ensure their voices drive improvement and change.</p> <p>Ensure all students have appropriate opportunities to network with other students and staff to ensure they feel connected to the university.</p>	<p>Student Sport (6.8) Student Partnership Agreement (6.1)</p> <p>Student Engagement Group (6.2) Student Engagement Work (6.3, 6.4) Student Representation and Class Rep Group (6.5)</p> <p>Student Engagement work (6.3, 6.4) Student Representation and Class Rep Group (6.5)</p>
<p>Strategic Theme: The university for all of our region</p>	<p>Student Engagement work (6.3, 6.4) Student Representation and Class Rep Group (6.5) Recondition of Prior Learning (6.7)</p>
<p>Enabling Strategy: Financial Sustainability</p>	<p>Student Surveys - NSS and PTES (6.6) Recognition of Prior Learning (6.7)</p>

7. Mapping delivery of student engagement

The mapping of student engagement delivery at the university may be visualised by the following diagram:



8. Monitoring student engagement activity

Student engagement activity is overseen by SEG, which in turn reports to QAEC. A framework for student engagement in Scotland has been developed by sparqs, and this is used by the university to monitor work throughout the year. Our completed framework is presented to members of SEG at each meeting, and members are also encouraged to include their own work.

9. Further information

The student engagement team may be contacted at studentengagement@uhi.ac.uk to discuss any aspect of engagement with you. Students may also contact local student engagement staff at their academic partner, and review academic partner specific student engagement strategies.

10. Glossary of terms

- I. Academic Partners – the colleges and institutions which deliver most teaching within the university.
- II. CDN – College Development Network. Professional development, innovation and sharing of best practice for colleges.
- III. ESES - Early Student Experience Survey.
- IV. Executive Office (EO) – The support and administrative functions of the university.
- V. Further Education (FE) – courses below level 7 on the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework.
- VI. Higher Education (HE) – courses of level 7 and above on the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework.
- VII. HISA – the Students’ Association which is called the Highlands and Islands Students’ Association.
- VIII. NSS – National Student Survey.
- IX. PTES - Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.
- X. QAA – The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The UK quality body for higher education.
- XI. QAEC – Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, a formal university committee that oversees learning and teaching.
- XII. Quality Forum – University committee overseeing quality assurance of student experience, implementation and output data from student surveys.
- XIII. SFC – The Scottish Funding Council. The public body charged with funding further and higher education institutions in Scotland.
- XIV. Sparqs – Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland, an external support body assisting with best practice in relation to engagement and quality.
- XV. SSES – Student Satisfaction and Experience Survey
- XVI. Student Engagement Group – a university committee focused on student engagement which is made up of engagement staff and student representatives from across the university.