

## **STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2019-2020**

### **Working together to enhance the student experience**

#### **Introduction**

##### **What is a Student Partnership Agreement?**

Student Partnership Agreements were first outlined in the Scottish Government's 2011 paper, Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education, which, amongst many other things, proposed the development of a document setting out how students and their institutions interact.

Sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) subsequently published guidance in 2013 for the development of student partnership agreements for universities. A number of Scottish HEIs have since developed Student Partnership Agreements or are working towards their development.

A Student Partnership Agreement is essentially an explicit statement of the ways in which the institution and the student body are working in partnership. It should be a living document that is reviewed annually and, over time, will enable progress on activities to be documented and communicated.

It is not a contract and has no legal basis. The term 'partnership' reflects a mature relationship, based on mutual trust and respect. Partnership working recognises that members of the partnership have legitimate, though sometimes different, perceptions and experiences. By working together towards a common agreed purpose, we can achieve positive outcomes to the benefit of all concerned. The core emphasis is on common goals and activity rather than separating out staff and student responsibilities.

##### **Benefits of a Partnership Agreement**

A key benefit of a Student Partnership Agreement is the ability to engage and communicate with the wider student body, beyond the Students' Association. In particular, a Student Partnership Agreement can:

- serve to map and promote student engagement opportunities across the University;
- act as a tool to reflect on the way in which staff and students interact and any improvements;
- be used to monitor and review the effectiveness of student engagement;
- provide tangible evidence of the partnership between students and staff.

##### **Why develop a Student Partnership Agreement ?**

The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Students' Association have enjoyed a long and productive partnership, which was commended in the recent Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR 2015) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland. This agreement builds on the strength of that partnership.

Moreover, we were ahead of most Scottish HEIs in developing a joint Students' Association and University of Edinburgh Student Engagement Statement in 2013 that sets out our explicit commitment to working in partnership with our students and outlines the various ways in which students can engage with the University.

The priorities in the agreement align with the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy and Students' Association own priorities, rather than creating new initiatives. The agreement serves to highlight ways in which the wider University, including all staff and students, can effectively work together to enhance the student experience. It sets out our values, our approach to partnership and the priorities we have agreed to work on.

## **Our values**

Our partnership is underpinned by the following core values and sets out expectations of both students and staff to enhance the student experience:

**Excellence** – We are committed to excellence in education, expect the highest standards of our teachers and learners, and recognise high quality teaching. We want to be known nationally and internationally for the quality of our teaching and the quality of our graduates.

**Inquiry** – We foster an approach to learning based on research and inquiry. We celebrate and encourage independent, critical thinkers. We provide opportunities for student-led, co-designed learning within and beyond the main discipline. Our excellence in research enhances our teaching and we consider that every student is an active researcher and participant in building knowledge.

**Community** – We are all members of a vibrant community based on collaboration, co-creation and support for one another. Our connectivity extends across different disciplines and outside the University to our alumni and external partnerships. Our community is underpinned by high-quality academic and pastoral support, peer-learning, clubs and societies.

**Inclusion** – We celebrate the diversity of our University community. We value and respect each other. We create a welcoming and supportive environment in which all members of our community have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

**Responsibility** – We promote the highest standards of individual behaviour and personal accountability, ensuring we act ethically and sustainably. We all have a responsibility to develop the student experience, including engaging constructively in giving and receiving feedback to positively enhance the Edinburgh experience for current and future students.

## Partnership at Edinburgh

Our commitment to working in partnership with students is articulated at the highest level in the University's Strategic Plan and the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. Staff at the University of Edinburgh currently work in partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association to ensure that students are central to:

- governance and decision making,
- quality assurance and enhancement,
- providing opportunities for students to become active participants,
- fostering collaboration between students and staff.

Appendix 1 sets out examples of working in partnership

## Partnership in Practice – Our Priorities

The themes relate to ongoing work in the Student Experience Action Plan and the University Strategy and have been discussed with the Students' Association, the Deputy Secretary Student Experience and the Vice Principal (Students).

### **Community:**

- Supporting staff and students to develop, enhance, and support effective communities that promote a sense of wellbeing and belonging

### **Student Voices:**

- Continue working to enable student feedback to be shared and addressed, in particular exploring innovative ways to use the new student voice feedback diagram or enhancing aspects of existing mechanisms to close the feedback loop.

### **Social Justice:**

- Exploring issues of diversity, sustainability and justice with the aim of empowering students and staff to engage critically and sensitively with the challenges of our contemporary world. This includes engaging with discourses of liberation, or embedding sustainability within the curriculum

## **Reviewing the Student Partnership Agreement**

The Partnership Agreement will continue to be reviewed annually to check on progress and to review the themes following the election of student sabbatical officers and outcomes from major student surveys. If the themes remain relevant they may continue for a further academic year to allow for greater continuity and impact.

## Appendix 1: Examples of working in partnership

### University level involvement:

- The Student Representation system - [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation)
- Student participation on committees at every level of the University, including
  - Student-Staff Liaison Committees,
  - School and subject area committees,
  - College Committees,
  - Senate, Court and the Senate Committees
- Student participation in Task and Project Groups
- Student participation in the Internal Periodic Review Process, including full membership of review teams – [Information for students on Internal Review Process](#)

### Student-led initiatives, including, but not limited to:

- Peer Learning and Support – <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/peersupport>
- Student-Led Individually Created Courses (SLICCs)
- Impact Awards, recognising outstanding student leaders and student/staff partnerships on campus: <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/impactawards>
- Student-Led Teaching Awards - [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/teachingawards](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/teachingawards)
- Student Led Activities from Societies to volunteering that enhance student life. – [www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/activities)
- The Activities Awards, to celebrate and showcase what makes the University such a fantastic place to be and the experiences that it offers and to recognise the contributions that societies and volunteering make to the University and the community.
- Student Groups which provide support and representation for marginalised and underrepresented student communities: <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation/yourrepresentatives/>