

# Student Engagement Strategy 2016-2019

February 2017

Also available in large print (16pt)  
and electronic format.

Ask Student Services for details.

[www.perth.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk)



## Version Control History

Version Number	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions Made
3.1	August 2016	Footer updated to reflect new template model.
4	December 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="660 353 1461 645">1 Context: expanded to highlight that this Strategy aligns with and contributes to the achievement of the cross-cutting themes from the UHI Strategic Plan 2015-20; Scottish Government Social Justice agenda and other aims and policies measured and monitored by the Scottish Funding Council; and the revised monitoring approach from Education Scotland.</li> <li data-bbox="660 645 1461 824">2 Development: expanded to show how the Student Partnership Agreement will focus on developing the student experience and student engagement aspects of College life, focussed on quality enhancement rather than assurance.</li> <li data-bbox="660 824 1461 1048">3 Information added on Page 3 on the use of an annual Enabling Plan as a flexible model to set out aims and measure achievement against changing priorities in student engagement. Page 8 also shows that CMT has the responsibility for reviewing and monitoring progress of annual enabling plans.</li> <li data-bbox="660 1048 1461 1160">4 An aim added to Strategic Objective 3 to show how PCSA and the Student Union/Link will work in partnership on social events and activities.</li> <li data-bbox="660 1160 1461 1227">5 Responsibilities outlined for the new Sector Manager role.</li> <li data-bbox="660 1227 1461 1294">6 Revised job title of Head of Student Services and Vice Principal, Academic changed throughout.</li> <li data-bbox="660 1294 1461 1339">7 UHISA changed to HISA throughout.</li> <li data-bbox="660 1339 1461 1440">8 Student Conveners changed to PCSA staff throughout to reflect their more autonomous relationship with the College.</li> </ol>



# Student Engagement Strategy 2016-19

## Purpose

Perth UHI recognises the importance and value of embedding Student Engagement into operating practices and systems within the institution, and is committed to maintaining a focus on this area of work. Perth UHI has been successful in developing its' approaches to Student Engagement through the implementation of effective structures and as a result, in hearing, listening to and acting upon the student voice. However, as an institution we remain eager to maintain a focus on Student Engagement that is both strategic and operational in nature, and to build further in our approaches in order to bring about the enhancement in some areas of Student Engagement within the College which we believe is still required.

This Strategy builds on the previous version (2013-16) and aims to maintain an appropriate institutional focus and impetus in progressing Student Engagement in line with internal strategy and relevant external drivers.

## Context

To provide appropriate systems, structures, processes and the positive environment to support the enhancement and ongoing development of a high quality student engagement culture. Ensuring student engagement is at the core of Perth UHI activity.

This new student engagement strategy is being produced within a complex, changing and challenging educational environment. It's aim is to provide a comprehensive framework within which we enhance our student engagement activity.

This student engagement strategy is being renewed at a time when a number of substantial changes are affecting the College and University sector. These changes, include a new model and approach from Education Scotland around how they will work with, monitor, support and judge the overall health of each individual College in future. Other changes affecting the education sector are part of the wider 'Social Justice' agenda that forms a key part of the Scottish Government aims. This includes key legislative and policy drivers, some of which will be measured and monitored in Colleges by organisations like the SFC and Education Scotland.

Perth UHI will develop a student engagement strategy that will also embrace and contribute to the broader cross cutting themes set out in the UHI Strategic Plan 2015-20. There are 3 cross-cutting themes headed as: Enterprise, and Innovation, Internationalisation and Recognition, Reputation and Brand. These themes were identified to develop a unique brand and model of tertiary education that the UHI are best placed to provide. All of this will rely heavily on offering excellent student engagement opportunities and providing a first class student experience across all UHI partners.

Perth UHI will play a key part in this joined up approach across the UHI partnership. The Perth UHI student engagement strategy will identify it's own specific aims while also contributing to wider UHI themes that all academic partners help progress together.

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**Version/Status:** 4, Final

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**Owner:** Vice Principal, Academic

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**Review Timing/Date:** 4 Years / 2020/21

Perth UHI as a key UHI partner and contributor to these broader UHI cross-cutting themes will also report into a wider UHI reporting mechanism: one that measures progress of these themes overall. Perth UHI will be able to demonstrate the contributions and progress it has made to these themes as a partner and in turn to the UHI.

The overall aim of our College student engagement strategy is to create an environment and culture that offers the broadest range of opportunities for students, to allow learners of all types and abilities the chance to get involved in College life and to play an active role in creating the future of Perth UHI and also the UHI itself.

This engagement strategy will help to ensure that we have the student (and their experience) at the centre of what we do and that we work in partnership to provide the best experience for all our learners.

## Development

This new 3 year strategy has been drafted using the SPARQS Student Engagement Framework (SEF) Scotland document. This document provides a framework for Perth UHI to identify, progress and evaluate effective change in key areas of Student Engagement.

The framework document highlights 5 key elements of student engagement and 6 features of effective engagement. Our new 3 year strategy has been organised using this framework and we have set out our own priorities within this structure. Thus, we are committed to develop across all recognised areas of student engagement.

As student engagement spans most of College life, the division between the key elements of student engagement are often blurred and overlap. However, the framework offers a mechanism to track progress in specific key areas as well as developing our engagement across all of the areas which are fundamental to effective student engagement.

This framework document will form the backdrop for our new 3 year strategy.

See below the 5 key Elements of student engagement:

- 1 Students feeling part of a supportive institution.
- 2 Students engaging in their own learning.
- 3 Students working with their institution in shaping the direction of learning.
- 4 Formal mechanisms for quality and governance.
- 5 Influencing the student experience at national level.

The 6 features of effective engagement are: (these features will help us measure and evaluate more effectively in the areas above).

- 1 A culture of engagement.
- 2 Students as partners.
- 3 Responding to diversity.
- 4 Valuing the student contribution.
- 5 Focus on enhancement and change.
- 6 Appropriate resources and support.

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One final, fundamental, additional resource that will enhance our Student Engagement Strategy is the use and implementation of a Student Partnership Agreement.

This is viewed as an effective resource tool that can be used to both build on the current strengths and approaches within Perth UHI (in assuring and enhancing quality of education) while at the same time providing an opportunity to monitor and review the impact the way we work has on the student experience.

Adopting this resource tool will offer opportunities for Perth UHI to progress and monitor more effectively some specific key areas.

Perth UHI will use the SEF framework document introduced by SPARQS, along with its the key guiding elements for student engagement, to assist with the implementation of effective Student Partnership Arrangements. The Student Partnership Agreement will focus-on developing the student experience and student engagement aspects of College/University life. It will enable Perth UHI to focus on developing the quality enhancement (not assurance) for our students.

Perth UHI will develop it's Student Partnership Agreement, working directly in partnership with the Students Association (PCSA).

The first section of the agreement will contain a broad statement on ways that the student body can engage with Perth UHI, this will remain standard for the next 3 years in line with this Strategy.

The second section will be an annual agreement which will identify specific areas of focus (or common themes to be developed across UHI by HISA) which will enhance the student experience. This will be taken through the Engagement Committee and the Senior Management Team (SMT) for ratification. In agreeing these priorities, cognisance will be taken of the UHI Student Partnership Agreement with HISA. A UHI agreement will be in place that identifies and highlights progress in shared key areas of student engagement across all Academic Partners. This partnership agreement will be a key aspect in progressing specific aspects of Student Engagement in Perth UHI and will be an effective way forward, including through any external audits; Student Engagement being part of Education Scotland and the QAA remits and reviews.

## **Enabling Plans**

To help Perth UHI progress and deliver on the wider aims of its 3 year strategy: which are set out under each of the SEF's 5 key elements.

An Enabling Plan, will be drafted for each academic year over the life of strategic plan (3 in total).

Each Enabling Plan will set-out the specific aims and achievements for that year and highlight how, they, in turn, pertain and contribute to the wider aims within the strategy (under each of the 5 key elements of student engagement).

These annual plans will allow Perth UHI a more flexible model in which to achieve it's student engagement priorities. The enabling plans will provide a mechanism to review and measure progress, achievements and journey travelled within each of the 5 wider aims of the strategy.

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Perth UHI will have the flexibility, to adapt, amend or make appropriate changes throughout the year if need be; and ensure we remain on task to meet our wider aims of the strategy. These annual plans can be used like organic, evolving, living plans and will allow the College to reflect student engagement in all aspects and life in Perth UHI.

The enabling plans will be reviewed and monitored regularly through the College Management Team (CMT) for operational purposes and for quality and governance reasons.

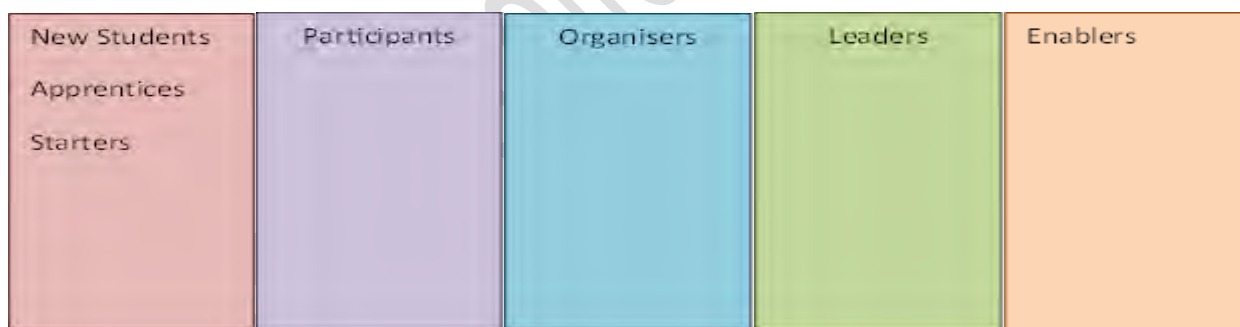
### Vision for Student Engagement

Enhancing the student experience is a key priority and Student Engagement is one of the broad themes within the Perth UHI's Strategic Plan 2016-19, and our mission within this Strategy in relation to this is:

"To work collaboratively: this includes all staff and students along with local, national and international stakeholders to create a confident atmosphere at the College and to provide opportunities for everyone to shape the staff and student experience."

The Student Engagement Journey Model<sup>1</sup> this linear model provides us with a reference to consider how we can work with students across a range of levels of engagement, building capacity and involvement. This can be at an individual level or as an institution. The model uses a 5 stage process, starting from New Students as 'apprentices' in the engagement process, building through participation in various opportunities, through being involved in organising engagement in a more formal sense, to leading engagement through elected positions in a formal structure such as the Perth College Students' Association, to being an enabler where a vision and legacy of engagement and partnership is developed. This Strategy supports each student being able to participate in student engagement, but provides a structure and supporting strategies for students to build capacity in their personal level of engagement as well as institutionally.

### Student Engagement Journey Model



<sup>1</sup> Amended from University of Exeter, [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academic-services-website/student-and-staff-development/education-enhancement/sacadigitalage/lt/B6\\_Opportunities\\_for\\_enhancing\\_student\\_engagement\\_.pdf](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academic-services-website/student-and-staff-development/education-enhancement/sacadigitalage/lt/B6_Opportunities_for_enhancing_student_engagement_.pdf), 2012

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## Strategic Objectives

In taking forward a new Student Engagement Strategy for the period 2016-19 Perth UHI will focus on the following strategic areas, and a number of key objectives within each area.

- 1 **To adopt practices and positive approaches that enable all our students to feel part of a supportive institution and ensure all students feel part of our college community, through an inclusive approach.**
  - To work towards embedding an approach of partnership within the College between staff and students, in relation to learning and teaching enhancement and development of the student experience. Specific aims are identified in the Student Partnership Agreement.
  - To increase the range of opportunities that allow staff and students to engage jointly in research or project related activity relevant to the on-going development of the student experience, student engagement and other topics of mutual interest. For example: through new work experience and employer related changes to courses.
  - To increase the quantity and range of paid and unpaid opportunities available to all students through the college. For example volunteering fair and job shop-plus.
  - To develop the methods, models and types of communication used with students; with a particular focus on the use of technology, social media and other dynamic means, whilst meeting and enhancing our Equality and Diversity and inclusiveness requirements.
  - To build models of excellence in staff-student partnership working across college and through our induction program, processes and arrangements.
  - To further develop and maintain excellent working partnerships both internally and externally for work related to pre-entry, enhanced transition to college, and specific support for students identified as in need of additional help.
  - To progress student engagement key areas across UHI partners as via the Student Engagement Group and the Student Services Group and HISA.
  - To continue to develop a range of events and activities which are inclusive and open to all. To engage with the widest range of students, to ensure that the class representative system is understood and promoted throughout.
  - To develop an annual Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) between Perth College UHI and the Perth College Student Association (PCSA) to identify plans and priorities that will be progressed through a collaborative working partnership.

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- Student Union/Link and PCSA to meet regularly (monthly) and agree at the start of each academic year a wide range of social events/activities that will be done collaboratively in partnership.
- To use existing students to help promote the college to others and to offer positive peer support networks.
- To raise the profile and importance of developing enterprise and employability skills, and increase the number of work related and volunteering opportunities on offer to develop these skills for all students.

**2 Ensuring all our students have the opportunity to engage in their own academic and personal learning and are viewed as key partners in our operational processes and approaches.**

- To further develop a positive culture where students are involved in decisions which affect them and the quality of their learning.
- Increasing the quantity and range of opportunities for students to network and engage with their peers for both learning and social purposes.
- To further develop Personal Development Planning (PDP) classes to develop students' skills and understanding in areas like self awareness to enhance their ability to reflect on their own learning journey. Improve student ability in identifying their own strengths and development areas, linking in other aspects of college life, support and opportunity.
- To further develop student engagement with and to actively engage in developments related to the "Take 5" principles in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
- Continue to work with the student body to develop effective formal and informal inclusive approaches used to communicate with students.
- To encourage students to use the Students Representative Council (SRC) as an effective method of highlighting broad issues relating to enhancing the student experience.
- To gather feedback on the experience of specific student groups for example: those from care experienced backgrounds, those with a disability and on generic areas like induction, transitions and support.

**3 Provide structure that allows our learners to engage with and shape the direction of their own learning. Create a culture where students feel they are making a valued contribution to planning and developments.**

- To support the SRC to be at the heart of student engagement and experience.

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- To review the "Your Voice" feedback boxes used to gather feedback from students – promote these and their purpose more regularly as a means of informal ways to have you say on your student experience.
- To use the PDP structure to engage with students about the value of participating in surveys and raising awareness of other engagement opportunities.
- To support the Students Association to engage in informal methods of gathering feedback (February each year) on the wider college learning experience of students or/and feedback on identified issues.
- To increase the quantity and range of opportunities available to students to engage with employers for both work skills and experience. Also to improve students networks and resources available, to develop their awareness of employers, the labour market and industry.
- To continue to develop/increase the return rate on student feedback surveys, identifying areas of low participation.
- To build the class representative engagement and target those from under represented groups and classes.
- To work with the PCSA and the wider student body to identify what topics students want to be consulted on and taken forward in the Student Partnership Agreement.

**4 Use appropriate college systems and formal structures that allow student representatives to work in partnership with the college to enhance the student experience for quality and governance purposes.**

- To further develop the range of opportunities available for students to become involved in quality arrangements and processes within the College; including areas such as Self Evaluation, and course review and approval.
- To develop enhanced models for students who may face barriers to participation in the quality processes, for example, distance learners, part-time students, disabled students.
- Continued development and enhancement of the means through which students can provide feedback to the college on their overall learning experience and specific elements of this.
- To ensure that PCSA staff are involved in key College committees.
- HISA/NUS, student volunteers or reps will be supported to apply to working groups or committess with NUS, HISA as appropriate.

5 **Encourage and support any student representatives and groups interested in influencing the student experience at a national level.**

- To support and encourage the SRC, and PCSA staff to support local and national issues that effect our students.
- To support the Student Association/HISA student led campaigns in areas of mutual interest.
- To enable PCSA staff to attend appropriate NUS training events/and sponsored activities.
- To encourage the SRC, PCSA and any student groups to support their student colleagues through awareness raising events, arranging guest speakers.
- To support and assist any of our sports teams and clubs where possible to take part and compete in national college/university leagues.
- To raise awareness of the value of contributing and completing annual student surveys questionnaires, and annual destinations reports, seeking best practice from students in our communication in this respect.

### **Responsibility, Monitoring and Review**

Student Engagement is relevant to every area of work at College, and as such, responsibility is held by each SMT, CMT, Sector Manager and Subject Leader for progressing this strategy and contributing to the achievement of its objectives.

The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) will consider on-going progress in relation to this strategy, while the Academic Affairs Committee will monitor and review achievement. The Engagement Committee will be provided with periodic updates on the progress of the strategy through an enabling plan and any Strategic Scorecard or Regional Outcome measures relating to student engagement.

The College Management Team (CMT) will review and monitor progress of annual enabling plans for operational purposes.

The Vice Principal (Academic) will have overall responsibility for the Student Engagement Strategy. The Head of Student Services will renew and review the strategy in conjunction with a range of stakeholders, including students.

The Head of Student Services will produce an annual enabling plan which will effectively monitor and measure progress and achievement of individual objectives within the strategy.

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## Students' Association Engagement

The College recognises and values the involvement that students have had in considering this strategy. The Strategy and associated enabling plans will be discussed in an ongoing manner with the PCSA and wider SRC to ensure shared understanding and partnership working.

## 6 Linked Strategies, Policies and Documents

Perth UHI's Strategic Plan 2016-19  
UHI Strategic Plan 2015-2020  
Perth College UHI Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy  
Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Strategy  
Perth College UHI Equality Report and Mainstreaming Plan 2013-2017  
UHI Academic Standards and Quality Procedures  
Perth College UHI Quality Manual Procedures  
Perth College UHI: Equality Report and Mainstreaming Plan 2013-2017  
Equality and Diversity Policy

### External Links

A Student Engagement Framework for Scotland. (SEF)  
Student Engagement

Equality Challenge Unit and The Higher Education Academy (2010),  
*Strategic Approaches to Disabled Student Engagement.*

QAA: The Quality Code for Higher Education: Chapter 5B: Student Engagement.  
Audit Paper – linked to QAA chapter B5 on Student Engagement

Children and Young Persons Bill (Scotland) 2014.  
Equalities Act 2010

HMIE (2008), *External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges.*

Scottish Funding Council (2008), *SFC Circular 33/2008 Council Guidance to Colleges on Quality.*