

**UNIVERSITY of  
STIRLING**



# **STUDENT PARTNERSHIP POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

## **VERSION CONTROL STATEMENT**

|                       |                                                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>Author:</b>        | <b>Dean for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience</b> |
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## Purpose

1. The University aims to support students to work in partnership with staff to shape their student experience as part of a positive academic community. Student partnership includes student representation systems, student partnership in decision making; working with the Students' Union; module evaluation; student surveys; student voice; student engagement in quality processes and student led projects and initiatives<sup>1</sup>.
2. In addition, the University aims to provide opportunities and the conditions for students to contribute to and foster a positive academic community with a sense of belonging.

## Principles

3. The key principles upon which this policy is based are:
  - a. **Student partnership** at the heart of our quality and enhancement approach
  - b. **Co-ownership and responsibility** for our academic community
  - c. **Clarity** of roles, responsibilities and expectations on staff and students
  - d. **Consistency and equity** of processes and access to representation and student voice.

## Scope

4. This policy applies to students on all the University's taught programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

## Definitions

5. **Academic Reps:** Students who volunteer to represent their cohort and commit to active participation in the Student Staff Feedback Conversation process.
6. **Early Module Check-in.** Pulse surveys that take place at around week 3 or 4 of a module delivery and offer students the opportunity to provide initial feedback and facilitate early actions to improve student experience.
7. **Feedback Forum.** A meeting to discuss student feedback, share information and plans and celebrate success, which takes place between staff and Academic Reps as part of the Student Staff Feedback Conversation.
8. **Module Evaluation.** A formal opportunity for students to provide feedback on their experience of a module through a survey and to receive staff reflections on that feedback. Feedback is gathered near the end of the module, via an online survey, as specified by the University.
9. **Sabbatical Officers.** The Students' Union Sabbatical Officers are elected annually from the student body. The full-time roles are Union President; Vice President Education; Vice President Sport and Vice President Communities.
10. **The Student Staff Feedback Conversation process.** The Student Staff Feedback Conversation (SSFC) process provides an opportunity for Academic Reps and academic

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<sup>1</sup> Sparqs Student Learning Experience model 2024; [SLE\\_model\\_digital\\_resource.pdf \(sparqs.ac.uk\)](#)

staff to openly and constructively discuss and act on issues relating to learning, teaching and student experience.

11. **Volunteer Officers.** Volunteer Officers are elected part-time student volunteers who have specific remits. They sit on the Union's Executive Council, alongside Sabbatical Officers, representing and championing the rights and views of the student body. Roles may include Housing Volunteer Officer, Sustainability Volunteer Officer and International Volunteer Officer.

## Part 1: Student representation

Students will work in partnership with the University in shaping their experience and learning at the University by engaging with student representation, through our Students' Union.

### Student democracy - Sabbatical Officers and Voluntary Officers

12. All enrolled students will be eligible to vote in the Students' Union annual elections to appoint Sabbatical Officers and Volunteer Officers. Training and support for Sabbatical Officers and Volunteer Officers will be provided by the Students' Union with input from the University.
13. Sabbatical Officers will provide leadership for the Union and provide support and advice to students, in collaboration with the Union staff. They will help to deliver the Students' Union strategic plan, projects and campaigns based on their manifestos. They will also be trustees of the Union and sit on the Union's Executive Council.
14. Volunteer Officers will contribute to delivering change projects and campaigns agreed with the Students' Union.

### University committee representation

15. One or more Sabbatical Officers will represent the student body (ex officio, as members of the Students' Union executive) on:
  - a. relevant Faculty and University governance committees which consider the student experience, learning and teaching and academic quality and will be represented on Academic Council and Court;
  - b. discipline committees relating to the University's regulatory framework; and
  - c. other University committees and working groups as required for time to time.

### Faculty Officers

16. The Students' Union in consultation with Faculties will appoint Faculty Officers for the period of one academic year. This role attracts an honorarium. Training is provided by the Students' Union with input from the University.
17. The undergraduate Faculty Officer's role will represent all students at a divisional level and the postgraduate Officers will represent all students at a research and postgraduate

taught level in each Faculty. Both roles will represent their cohort with the aim of improving student experience and ensuring students' voices are heard at the University. They will sit on the Faculty Learning & Teaching Committee.

18. Faculty Officers may be called upon to participate as full panel members of internal Learning and Teaching Reviews, which are part of University quality processes. Details of the process are available in the [Quality Monitoring and Evaluation policy](#). Governance and review of this process sits with the Education Committee.

## **Academic Reps**

19. Academic Reps are the foundation of student academic representation at the University. They will gather feedback from their cohort on their learning experience and liaise with staff and students locally, to help improve the student experience and outcomes.
20. Academic Reps will represent a module cohort, year group, programme or other cohort. Faculties will decide on the most effective cohort to be represented by the Academic Rep and will liaise with Students' Union in advance of semester to plan. The default arrangement will be by module unless otherwise advised.
21. Academic Reps volunteer for the role through Canvas or as requested by academic staff. Academic Rep recruitment is open until the beginning of week 5 of semester. When no Academic Rep has been identified at this stage, the Students' Union will accept a student volunteered through academic staff.
22. The Academic Rep position will be unremunerated and voluntary, and training is provided by the Students' Union with input from the University. Where Academic Reps fulfil the conditions of their role, they will receive recognition on their academic transcript.
23. Students are encouraged to become Academic Reps where there are vacancies, to engage in rep training and to fulfil the role by actively representing their cohort.
24. Academic staff should support the process of appointing Academic Reps and encourage students to come forward.
25. The Students' Union will lead the Academic Rep process in partnership with Faculties, to recruit and support Academic Reps each semester. Where no Academic Reps have been appointed for a cohort by week 5 of semester, despite efforts to recruit, the module coordinator or cohort lead can contact the Students' Union at [studentreps.union@stir.ac.uk](mailto:studentreps.union@stir.ac.uk) and the Students' Union will assist in allocating Academic Reps.
26. Academic Reps will be supported by academic staff to ensure they have opportunities to communicate with and gather feedback from the student cohort. Staff will also work with the Academic Reps to resolve issues which arise from time to time for the cohort and work with the academic representatives to communicate to the wider cohort as effectively as possible reflections and actions arising from feedback from students, closing the feedback loop.
27. Governance and annual review of the effectiveness of the process will be provided by the Education committee.

## Part 2: Student voice

Students will have the right opportunities to provide feedback on their experience, staff will demonstrate to students that their views and opinions are valued, and students will be clear on how their feedback is acted upon.

- 28. The University will provide students with a range of ways to shape and feedback on their experience. Student feedback gathered through these processes will inform improvements to the student experience, module delivery and programme delivery.
- 29. As part of the academic community, students will be encouraged to engage constructively with surveys and other feedback opportunities to inform enhancements to the student experience for their cohort and future students.
- 30. When staff receive feedback from students by any method, they will respond to that feedback in a timely manner, clarifying any actions that will be taken and/or providing information on why it may not be possible or desirable to do so.

### Informal Feedback

- 31. Staff will seek and engage with constructive feedback and dialogue with students, to inform immediate and longer-term enhancements to practice, pedagogy and student services. In turn, students will seek such opportunities and engage with staff to support enhancement.
- 32. Students may provide informal feedback directly to the relevant staff, including their module coordinator or programme director, Student Support Hub or via Reps, Faculty Officers and the Students' Union.

### Programme-based surveys

#### Early Module Check-in

- 33. Early module check-in surveys will offer new students the opportunity to provide feedback on their early experience in the module. The results will be shared with Module Co-ordinators, Faculty and University senior management so immediate action can be taken as necessary. This will also provide the University with early insights into the experience of new students to inform both programme and wider student experience developments. Further details can be found in the [Policy on Student Module Evaluation Surveys](#).

#### Module evaluation

- 34. The module evaluation survey process will support the enhancement of modules and of the wider student experience through gathering and acting upon student insights as part of our institutional quality process. It is a formal and consistent opportunity for students to provide feedback on their experience of a module and to receive staff reflections on that feedback.

35. Module evaluation will take place near the end of the module, via an online survey, which is issued centrally.
36. Module Co-ordinators will engage in this required module process, to encourage student engagement, promptly provide reflections on student feedback and take appropriate action in response to feedback.
37. Feedback captured in this way will form part of the evidence used by programme directors to reflect on their programme and to inform enhancement.
38. Further details of the principles and process can be found in the policy on Module Evaluation Surveys. The procedure for staff is available on the Staff Module Evaluation Resources SharePoint site and student guidance is available on the website.
39. Governance and review of programmes and module feedback processes and outcomes will be provided by the Education Committee.

## **Institutional and National Surveys**

### **Student Experience Surveys**

40. The University will participate in external sector benchmark student experience surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS) (final year undergraduates), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the International Student Barometer (ISB) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
41. The University will also conduct the Stirling Experience Survey, an internal survey, which aligns to the NSS and will be issued to all undergraduate students, except those in their final year of study.
42. Faculties and staff will support a good response rate to these surveys by promoting them to their students.
43. Survey arrangements will be led by the Student Surveys Group which reports to the Education Committee. Reporting, consideration and actions taken on outcomes of such surveys will be led by the University Strategy and Policy Group.
44. Faculties and services will effectively communicate to students the actions taken in response to feedback, through a variety of appropriate communications channels, closing the feedback loop.

### **Student Staff Feedback Conversation Process**

45. The SSFC process is a consistent process to support communication between staff and students directly and through Academic Reps. The Head of Division will ensure that each cohort is represented through the SSFC process in their division. SSFCs will capture students views on their learning experience, both immediate concerns and their wider reflections.
46. The process:
  - a. staff will share feedback and actions from previous semesters with the current cohort early in semester;
  - b. the Academic Rep will gather feedback and views from the current cohort on their experience;

- c. at least one Feedback Forum per semester will be held to discuss student feedback, staff reflections and relevant actions to be taken in response;
- d. staff will promptly and clearly communicate the outcomes of the Feedback Forum to the current cohort and maintain a record which can be shared with subsequent cohorts.

## Feedback Forum

47. As part of the SSFC process, the Feedback Forum is a meeting between staff and Academic Reps representing a cohort, which will place at least once per semester. The meeting can take place on campus/online or hybrid to increase participation.
48. Items for discussion at the Feedback Forum will include:
- a. update on actions taken since last Feedback Forum;
  - b. feedback, reflections and actions (to be) taken on the semester so far;
  - c. resolving immediate issues with student input;
  - d. wider discussion on the programme;
  - e. sharing key information with the cohort;
  - f. consultation on developments of the programme and wider student experience;
  - g. noting and celebrating any relevant successes; and
  - h. agreeing the method of communicating outcomes to the cohort.
- Sufficient time should be provided for discussion.
49. The Head of Division will ensure there is a Chairperson appointed for each Feedback Forum. The Chairperson can be a member of staff or the Faculty Officer. When the Faculty Officer is appointed, they will be supported by a member of academic staff to meet the requirements of the role.
50. The Chairperson of the Feedback Forum will ensure the process is effective. They will organize the Feedback Forum with Faculty staff; ensure the meeting details are published in good time for students to make arrangements to attend; agree an agenda; arrange for minutes and attendance to be taken; share outcomes of the previous meeting; ensure meetings are welcoming and stay on track; create space at the meetings for discussion of wider topics; record outcomes; and ensure there are clear plans to share minutes and outcomes promptly with the student cohorts in an inclusive and engaging way.
51. The composition of the Feedback Forum will be:

|    | Composition                                  | Category      | Representing                 |
|----|----------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | ADLT/Divisional Learning & Teaching Officer  | Ex-officio    | Faculty                      |
| 2. | Student Faculty Officer                      | Ex-officio    | Students' Union              |
| 3. | Programme Directors and Module Co-ordinators | Ex-officio    | Programme staff              |
| 4. | Student Academic Representatives             | Ex-officio    | Student body                 |
|    | <b>In attendance</b>                         |               |                              |
|    | Committee Administrator                      | In attendance | Faculty & Student Operations |

52. Other staff and students may be invited to attend at the Chair's discretion. Those attending ex-officio are full members and have equal say at the Feedback Forum.
53. The Academic Rep's role is to work with academic staff to share past feedback and actions with the current students; gather feedback from their cohort before the Feedback Forum; actively contribute to Feedback Forum, sharing feedback constructively and contributing to solutions and enhancements; work with academic staff to share outcomes of the Feedback Forum with their cohort as soon as possible in a clear, accessible and respectful way and to collaborate with the Faculty Officer if they need support.
54. Faculty Officers will support Academic Reps in this process and report Feedback Forum outcomes to the Students' Union VP Education. They will also report outcomes to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC) and contribute to developing solutions and innovation as appropriate.
55. The role of academic staff in the process is to share feedback from previous cohorts and the actions taken with the current cohort at the beginning of semester; support the Academic Reps to gather feedback before the Feedback Forum; engage openly and honestly during the process; review any student feedback, provide reflections and encourage students to co-produce enhancements and solutions; communicate any actions to be taken to the cohort, by the method agreed at the Feedback Forum; and maintain a record of student feedback, responses and actions for future cohorts.
56. Where issues cannot be resolved locally, academic staff should refer to their line manager for guidance and/or escalation and students should be advised accordingly.
57. It is not always possible or appropriate to action all student feedback. Where this is the case, the cohort should be advised of the rationale.
58. As a minimum, details of student feedback and outcomes will be shared on Canvas for the cohort. The format should be engaging, inclusive and accessible and it will be shared in a timely way. Academic staff should engage with Academic Reps to inform what works best for the cohort.
59. The outcomes and actions from the Feedback Forum process will be reported to:
  - a. the Head of Division by the Chairperson;
  - b. Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee by the ADLT/Faculty Officer;
  - c. the student cohort by the Module Co-ordinator/Programme Director/cohort lead as relevant; and
  - d. the VP Education of the Students' Union by the Faculty OfficerThey will also form part of the evidence which informs Annual Programme Review and Learning and Teaching Reviews.
60. Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees will review Feedback Forum outcomes each semester to support enhancement and will report on the efficacy of the Academic Rep and SSFC processes annually to the Student Experience Committee.
61. If students feel the process has not worked well, for example if a Feedback Forum has not taken place or students have not been advised of the outcomes and actions, then

they should speak to the VP Education in the Students' Union or the Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching in their Faculty so issues can be resolved quickly.

### **Capturing diverse student voices**

62. The University will monitor student voice processes to ensure all student with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 have equitable access to student voice processes.
63. Where possible, institutional student voice surveys and the Academic Rep process will capture demographic data of participants. Outcome/review reports will reflect aggregated demographic data on participants and any differential outcomes from student feedback, to inform enhancement activity.

## **Part 3: Contribution to the academic community**

Students will be responsible partners in the academic and wider community. By positively contributing to these communities, they will enhance their own skills and experience and the experience of others.

### **Student Partnership Agreement**

64. The Students' Union and the University will work in partnership on a range of student experience activities and annual priority projects are captured within a [Student Partnership Agreement](#).
65. The Student Partnership Agreement will run for periods of three years and specific priorities for each year will be jointly identified between the University and the Students' Union.
66. Annual reports on work carried out under the Student Partnership Agreement and an end-of-cycle triennial review on the effectiveness of the process will be reported to the Student Experience Committee.

### **Quality Review and Enhancement Activity**

67. Students will work in partnership with the University in delivering quality review and enhancement activity at all levels:
  - a. Programme and module reviews rely heavily on student feedback gathered through the processes described in this policy.
  - b. Faculty Officers will be full members of subject-based Learning and Teaching Review Panels.
  - c. Sabbatical Officers and other students will be part of the groups who prepare and respond to external review by the QAA and other external professional bodies.
68. QAA Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) activity will be delivered in partnership with students, both in respect of governance arrangements and in delivering projects.

## **Student behaviours contributing to a positive environment**

69. All students will contribute to a positive learning environment through complying with our [Student Charter](#) which sets out the behaviours expected of students and the [Communication Charter](#) which sets out how we communicate with each other. All students and staff should expect to be treated with respect as described in the [Respect at Work and Study Policy](#).

## **Student-led activities**

70. Students will be encouraged to lead projects to improve the student experience both facilitated by the Students' Union and independently. Examples include Faculty Officer projects, the Vice Chancellor's Fund or Stirling Fund supported projects and projects under the auspices of the QAA Enhancement Themes.
71. Within the Students' Union, the [RATE Teaching Awards](#), [STEER student mentoring](#) scheme have a direct impact on student experience. In addition, Sabbatical, Volunteer and Faculty Officers will lead projects based on their manifesto priorities, in collaboration with the University or independently on behalf of the Students' Union. The Students' Union will report on these activities through the Student Experience Committee, at least on an annual basis.
72. The Students' Union and clubs and societies will work closely with the University to inform and participate in the delivery of student life activities.

## **Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities**

73. In addition to contribution to the academic community described elsewhere in this policy, students will contribute to learning and teaching and student life in a range of ways.
74. Student sports clubs and societies will continue to contribute to student experience, not only in their traditional activities but also in helping the University spread positive behaviours and understanding through acting as positive role models and raising awareness amongst the wider student population.
75. Students will be given the opportunity to undertake voluntary activities around the University and in the local community to enriches their experience and those of the University and wider community. Achievements in this area may be recognised through the [My Stirling Award](#).
76. Students will be given the opportunity to engaged in paid roles supporting learning, teaching and student experience from time to time. For example, as Student Ambassadors, Student Residence Assistants or Wi-Fi Wizards. In some areas of study, students at a senior stage of study may support the learning of those at an earlier stage.