

# **Chapter 5**

## **Student Representation, Engagement and Support**

## **5. STUDENT REPRESENTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the University works to engage all students individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience and supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. The University has a strong commitment to students as partners in their educational experience as expressed in its Student Charter and outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Student Engagement, using the principles of this document to underpin its work.

In particular, in line with QAA Guidance, it emphasises that 'partnership working is based on the values of openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between the partners. Partnerships reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff.'

This chapter focuses on the three student focused areas of work (student representation, student engagement and student support) which allow students to participate in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

This chapter gives an overview of the strategies, policies and procedures that the University operates in these areas and articulates the expectations and principles in relation to student representation, engagement and support for HE students across the UWTSD Group and its collaborative partner institutions.

The University regularly maps and monitors progress in these areas against the UK Quality Code and the relevant Advice and Guidance documents. Similarly, the effectiveness of student engagement, representation and support policies and procedures is reviewed regularly, as is the impact of any action taken.

### **5.2 Collaborative Partner institutions**

It is recognised that student engagement, representation, feedback and support at collaborative partner institutions may take a different format. For example, not all collaborative partner institutions have a Students' Union. However, all collaborative partner institutions are expected to

- value student engagement and the student voice;
- have a comparable set of systems and procedures in place which reflect the requirements of the specific delivery location;
- meet the principles of student engagement, representation and support as outlined in this chapter;
- meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- clearly articulate to students any variations to the principles (see section 5.7).

### **5.3 An inclusive and supportive environment**

In line with the University's Strategic Equality Plan and the Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the University is keen to foster a culture where all are valued and respected and to provide an inclusive, supportive, and safe learning and working environment in which all students and staff can flourish and are able to fulfil their personal potential. Staff and students work in partnership, collaboratively and as co-creators, to build a strong learning community together. Students are able to seek help and engage with support as needed.

The University is committed to recognise and celebrate the diversity of the student population, to provide an excellent student experience that supports all students to participate fully in university life, to ensure an inclusive approach to student engagement, and to take measures to remove barriers to participation.

Offering an inclusive learning and teaching experience is one of the four key principles of the University's Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy.

## **5.4 Feedback**

Student feedback is invaluable for the continuous improvement of high-quality learning and teaching and overall educational experience.

The University therefore gathers systematically and proactively informal and formal feedback from its students through a variety of mechanisms. The University also undertakes regular external benchmarking exercises to identify areas for improvement, to disseminate good practice, and to continue to enhance performance. National surveys such as the NSS, UKES, PTES and PRES and our internal Collaborative Provision Student Experience Survey are important in this respect.

Following the publication of survey results and other forms of formal feedback, action plans are drafted by academic and relevant professional units in order to further enhance provision and address any issues highlighted by students.

Clear communication mechanisms are in place to inform students about how their feedback has been used, how it has been acted upon and where action cannot be taken in response to feedback given. A traffic light system is in place throughout the institution to close the feedback loop. In collaborative partnership institutions, this may take a different format, but the principle of transparent and clear communication in response to student feedback remains the same.

## **5.5 Strategies and policies**

### **5.5.1 Strategies**

The main strategies in this area are:

- Student Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy
- Retention Strategy
- Employment and Employability Strategy
- Strategic Equality Plan

### **5.5.2 Policies and protocols in relation to the PREVENT agenda**

The University has a statutory requirement to meet the PREVENT duty guidance under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015). This guidance identifies a range of areas in which universities are expected to take action in order to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The University has prepared a Code of Practice which covers all speakers and events hosted by the University, held on University premises, or hosted online, and any such event to which the University is affiliated, has funded or carries University branding but which takes place off campus.

The University recognises the responsibilities outlined by the PREVENT Duty in relation to faith-related activities and has outlined our approach to the use and management of faith-related spaces in the Faith-Related Activities and Prayer Rooms Code of Practice.

### **5.5.3 Student support policies and protocols**

The University has a number of policies, procedures and protocols in place to support students and to protect students with protected characteristics, including:

- Admissions Policy;
- Disability Support and Needs Assessment Procedure;
- Personal Tutor Policy;
- Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy.

### **5.6 Student Charter**

The primary document that outlines the relationship between and mutual expectations of students and the institution is the Student Charter. The Student Charter is reviewed annually by all parties and then endorsed by University Council. The Student Charter covers all UWTSD's HE students, within the UWTSD Group and within collaborative partner institutions.

By having a Student Charter in place, the University demonstrates its full commitment to continually improving the quality of its services and, in line with its Strategic Plan and mission, recognises that students are at the heart of the institution.

The Student Charter emphasises the importance of belonging to a learning community, the importance of the health and wellbeing of all belonging to this community, and of partnership working between staff and students. It also emphasises the importance of a strong and effective working relationship between the University and the Students' Union, and symbolises the joint commitment to securing an excellent student experience.

### **5.7 Principles**

The University's minimum expectation is that a set of underlying principles will apply for HE students across the entire UWTSD Group and its collaborative partner institutions. These main principles are outlined below. On occasion, main principles may be followed by a number of bullet-points to explain and illustrate what this may look like in practice.

#### **5.7.1 Principles in relation to student representation and student voice**

- (1) Consistent processes are in places for the election, training and support of all student representatives across all courses and locations. Where possible student representatives are democratically elected by their peers.
- (2) All student representatives have access to appropriate training and support.
- (3) Student representatives are considered to be a representative voice for their student cohort.
- (4) Student representatives are provided with time to meet students on their course privately.
- (5) Student representation at all levels of decision making
  - A proactive academic representation system to be in place;
  - Students are a full member of any committees that they attend;
  - Course-level meetings should report to higher decision-making bodies;
  - Student representation throughout the committee structure, including representation at the highest levels.
- (6) Staff work with students to respond to their feedback on the experience and enhance their student experience.

- (7) Staff ensure that students are briefed on the purpose of specific events (e.g. Staff Student Committees, validation or annual monitoring related events).
- (8) Student voice activities are embedded within all aspects of the institution's and planning. Collaborative partner institutions embed student voice activities within all their UWTSD programmes.
- (9) Student representation mechanisms are inclusive and consider the diversity of the student body.

### **5.7.2 Principles in relation to student engagement**

- (1) The University is committed to providing a full range of opportunities to students to become engaged in all aspects of their educational experience. All staff are expected to recognise that students are active partners in the learning process and to treat all students with consideration and respect.
- (2) Engagement with students in relation to their educational experience should be on both an individual and collective basis.
- (3) Students can contribute at all key quality assurance stages in relation to their programmes of study (e.g. the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience) as outlined in Chapter 4. This includes, but is not limited to, representation at any formal meetings associated with such quality processes.
- (4) Students are provided with regular and consistent opportunities to provide formal feedback on all aspects of the educational experience, including:
  - Institutional participation in externally benchmarked surveys and/or internal surveys;
  - Module evaluations;
  - Formal and informal student feedback opportunities and / or meetings;
  - Periodic meetings with the Partnership Team Leader(s) (as appropriate);
  - Staff Student Committees (or equivalent) (see 5.9.2).
- (5) Students are given regular, informal, iterative opportunities to provide feedback on their induction, curriculum content, teaching delivery, learning opportunities, learning environment, learning resources and facilities, student support, and assessment.
- (6) A discursive culture is in place where students are given the opportunity and encouraged to raise and discuss issues and ideas with staff formally and informally:
  - There are mutual expectations and respect of ideas and opinions;
  - Effective communication mechanisms are in place to let students know what has been done in response to feedback.
- (7) Opportunities for student engagement in the development of strategies and policies (e.g. the Strategic Equality Plan) as well as major projects are systematically made available.

### **5.7.3 Principles in relation to student support**

- (1) The University is committed to supporting all students as appropriate in their studies so that they can achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.
- (2) High quality support systems are in place to ensure that all students are able to achieve positive outcomes, academically and professionally.

- (3) The key principles of offering a personalised, collaborative, inclusive and professionally focused learning and teaching experience are reflected in the support network offered to students.
- (4) Students are able to discuss their performance, studies and academic issues through access to a named tutor within their discipline.
- (5) Appropriate support arrangements are in place for students with disabilities to ensure equality of opportunity in terms of them accessing their programme of study and reaching their full potential.
- (6) All students have opportunities to develop skills that enable their academic, personal, and professional development.
- (7) A transparent and consistent framework is in place within the institution to provide students with the opportunity to apply for targeted financial support in the case of financial hardship and to enhance their study opportunities. Collaborative partnership institutions will have appropriate mechanisms in place to support students financially.
- (8) Appropriate support and guidance are provided for students involved in student cases (e.g. complaints, appeals, support for study, fitness to practise).
- (9) The University acknowledges the sensitive and confidential nature of many issues relating to student support and welfare issues. A student privacy statement is in place as part of the University's obligation to data protection regulations. The University is also mindful in this respect of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

## **5.8 Partnership work with the Students' Union**

Within UWTSD, there is a strong emphasis on partnership work with the Students' Union and the involvement of the Students' Union at all levels of the organisation. The Student Charter and Students' Union Relationship Agreement are revised annually.

The Students' Union is recognised as the voice of students within the institution. It also offers support to students from collaborative partner institutions when their cases are considered centrally as outlined in the relevant policies.

The Students' Union is responsible for the oversight and development of the student representation framework and produces an annual Academic Quality Report. It is involved with strategic planning and review processes and is represented throughout the University's committee structure. In addition, regular informal meetings are held at senior level with the Student Union.

A partnership agreement is in place with the Students' Union and is updated annually.

## **5.9 Committees within the Student Experience area:**

### **5.9.1 Safeguarding Forum**

The University's Safeguarding Forum is responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring and annual review of the University's Safeguarding Policy (see Appendix SQ1). The Safeguarding Forum also oversees the relevant operational and administrative arrangements including the administration of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedures. The University's Safeguarding Forum reports to the Student Experience Committee.

## **Terms of Reference**

- (1) To ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures across the University;
- (2) To develop, implement, monitor and undertake an annual review of the University's Safeguarding Policy;
- (3) To oversee relevant operational and administrative arrangements including the administration of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedures;
- (4) To identify and review the University's training needs in relation to safeguarding;
- (5) To oversee the provision of advice, information and training to the University community in matters relating to safeguarding;
- (6) To collaborate effectively with relevant partnerships and agencies in order to raise awareness and understanding of safeguarding matters.

## **Membership**

Chair, appointed annually by the Chair of Senate  
Lead Designated Officer (LDO) from the Institute of Education and Humanities  
Operational Officer (OO) from the Institute of Education and Humanities  
Director of Student Services  
Executive Head of Registry  
Director of Human Resources  
The Safeguarding Officer from each Institute  
The Safeguarding Officer for the Birmingham and London campuses  
Principal Student Services Officer  
One student representative nominated by the Students' Union  
One representative from the constituent colleges  
One representative from Information Technology and Systems  
Observer: a Students' Union staff member, nominated by the Students' Union Chief Executive Officer  
Membership will be extended to include external representatives as and when required

### **5.9.2 Staff Student Committees**

For the terms of reference and membership of Staff Student Committees and guidelines in relation to the monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing of Staff Student Committees or the equivalent, see Chapter 3.

Staff student committees, as a matter of course, review student feedback including but not limited to module feedback forms, survey responses, and programme reviews. Course level meetings report into higher decision-making bodies.

It is expected that all staff-student meetings will follow similar procedures to other University meetings and:

- be well publicised and accessible;
- have a formal agenda;
- have minutes taken, with action points circulated following the meeting;
- representatives should be able to add items to the agenda.

Effort is made to illustrate to students the impact of their ideas and feedback (closing the feedback loop).

Guidance in relation to the agenda and Best Practice Guidelines for Staff Student Committees is in place.