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 outlined in the Wise Wales Statement for Partnership, using the principles of that document to underpin its work.

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. Within the institution, key professional units are the Student Services and Student Experience Departments.

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.

The University regularly maps and monitors progress in these areas against the UK Quality Code. 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 and to 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, and meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. It is also expected that where there are variations that these are clearly articulated to the students (see section 5.7).

5.3 An inclusive and supportive environment

In line with the University’s Strategic Equality Plan, 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.

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, and to take measures to remove barriers to participation.

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

5.4 Feedback

The University gathers systematically and proactively informal and formal feedback from its students through a variety of mechanisms in relation to all student experience related areas. The University also undertakes regular external benchmarking exercises to identify areas for
improvement and good practice for dissemination and to continue to enhance performance. National surveys such as the NSS, UKES, PTES and PRES 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.

A traffic light system is in place throughout the institution to inform students about what has been done in response to feedback and to close the feedback loop.

5.5 Strategies and policies

5.5.1 Strategies

The main strategies in this area are:

- Student Experience Strategy
- Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy
- Retention Strategy
- Employment and Employability Strategy

5.5.2 Student-facing policies

The University has a range of student-facing policies in place to safeguard the inclusive and supportive environment:

- Student Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy (Non-academic Misconduct)
- Student Fitness to Study Policy
- Student Fitness to Practise Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

A Student Code of Conduct is in place to outline what types of behaviour are not acceptable and the possible consequences of such conduct. Student relationship guidelines detail what conduct students can expect from others.

5.5.3 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. A PREVENT guidance note has been developed.

The following PREVENT related protocols are in place:

- an External Speakers and Events Protocol
- a Prayer Room and Quiet Room Protocol

5.5.4 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.

- Admissions Policy
- Disability Support and Needs Assessment Procedure
- Personal tutor / Year tutor protocol
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, 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) Elected student representatives are considered to be a representative voice for the student body.

(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) Ensure that students are briefed on the purpose of specific events.

(8) Student voice activities are embedded within all aspects of the institution’s or collaborative partner institution’s work and planning
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 partners in their learning and to treat all students with consideration and respect.

(2) Engagement with students in relation their student experience should be on both an individual and collective basis.

(3) Students have the opportunity to contribute at all key quality assurance stages in relation to their programmes of study (e.g. programme design, approval, and any formal review stages) 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;
- Module evaluation for all modules;
- Regular student feedback opportunities and / or meetings across campuses;
- Periodic meetings with the Partnership Team Leader(s) (as appropriate);
- Staff Student consultative Committees (or equivalent) at School or subject cluster level (see 5.9.4).

(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:
- 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 strategic documents such as the Fee and Access Plan and in major University's 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 any 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 to provide students with the opportunity to apply for targeted financial support in the case of financial hardship and to enhance their study opportunities.

(8) Appropriate support and guidance is provided for students involved in student cases.

(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.

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 Corporate Policy 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
Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) (Chair)
Lead Designated Officer (LDO) from the Faculty of Education and Communities
Operational Officer (OO) from the Faculty of Education and Communities
Director of Student Services
Executive Head of Registry
Director of Human Resources
Representative of the Widening Access and Community Engagement Sub-Committee
The Safeguarding Officer from each Faculty
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 Survey and League Table Sub-Committee

The Survey and League Table Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Senior Management Team. It oversees and monitors the University’s participation and position in league tables and surveys. In addition to this committee, informal operational groups will meet before and during survey periods to monitor campaign plans and ensure that response targets are met.

Terms of Reference

(1) To have strategic oversight of all surveys and league tables in which the University participates;
(2) To oversee the work associated with participation and inclusion in surveys and league tables and sign off any campaign plans;
(3) To coordinate the response following the publication of external surveys and league tables;
(4) To oversee the analysis, identification of issues for action, benchmarking, and dissemination of results to appropriate units and committees;
(5) To analyse trends and triangulate results from different surveys and league tables;
(6) To oversee and monitor the development, implementation and review of action plans following survey and league table results;
(7) To communicate any examples of best practice to the appropriate units and provide advice and information in relation to league tables, surveys, data intelligence and data analytics.

Membership
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) or nominee (Chair)
Senior Marketing Intelligence Officer
Executive Head of Registry
Head of Management Information Systems
Senior DLHE Officer
One representative from the Student Experience Department
One representative per Faculty
One representative for the Birmingham and London campuses
One student representative nominated by the Students’ Union
One representative from INSPIRE
One representative from the Library and Learning Resources
5.9.3 Student Support and Wellbeing Forum

The Student Support and Wellbeing Forum provides a forum to facilitate, encourage and promote excellence in student support. The forum reports to the Academic Policy Committee.

Terms of Reference

1. To support the implementation of all student-facing policies and strategies across the UWTSD Group;
2. To ensure that support services are developed that meet the changing needs of a diverse student population across the UWTSD Group;
3. To proactively engage with students to enhance student support and wellbeing arrangements;
4. To ensure that effective frameworks and arrangements are in place to support students with specific needs (e.g. with a declared disability, with mental health problems);
5. To ensure close coordination and collaboration between academic and relevant professional units and between UWTSD and the Students’ Union in relation to student support and wellbeing;
6. To promote and facilitate excellent partnership working across the UWTSD Group and with relevant partner organisations in relation to student support and wellbeing;
7. To review and evaluate the effectiveness of support and wellbeing focused services and arrangements (e.g. through regular reports from academic and relevant professional units);
8. To monitor sector-wide developments and to promote and recommend the implementation of innovative and sector best practice in relation to student support and wellbeing within the UWTSD Group;
9. To oversee the University’s engagement with relevant external organisations in relation to student support and wellbeing.

Membership

Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) (Chair)
Director of Student Services
One representative from the Operations Department
One representative from each of the Faculties
One representative for the Birmingham and London campuses
One representative from the constituent colleges
One student representative nominated by the Students’ Union
Observer: a Students’ Union staff member, nominated by the Students’ Union Chief Executive Officer

5.9.4 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 published 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.