

Policy Coversheet

Name of Policy:	Strategic Vision for Student Engagement
Purpose of Policy:	To articulate Staffordshire University's strategic vision for student engagement.
Intended audience(s):	Staff/External Parties
Approval for this policy given by:	Academic Board
Last Review Date:	04/09/2017
Review Due Date: (3 years from last review)	03/09/2018
Individual responsible for review:	Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards
Authorising department:	Academic Development Unit

Staffordshire University – A Strategic Vision for Student Engagement

Introduction:

1. Following discussions (in 2015/16) between Staffordshire University, the Students' Union and Student Academic Representatives a strategic vision and principles for Student Engagement was developed. This strategy will be reviewed annually by the University and Students' Union, with input from Student Academic Representatives and is intended to be brought to the attention of all students and staff on an annual basis.
2. This strategy has been developed principally from the perspective of courses delivered directly to students by Staffordshire University whether full-time or part-time, on campus or via distance-learning. In addition Staffordshire University has many students studying at it various collaborative partners around the world and this vision for and the principles of student engagement should be equally applicable to those students as well. It is recognised that some of the nomenclature and mechanisms of delivering engagement might not be used within those partners. However, it is expected that partners delivering or co-delivering Staffordshire University awards will adopt equivalent procedures and practices to meet the spirit and intent of this strategy. This strategy will be used as a benchmark at course approval events for partners seeking to deliver Staffordshire University courses.
3. The University has pledged to hear and respond to the student voice and create '*...an academic community that values our students as partners and co-producers of their own learning [where students] are actively involved in decision-making, curriculum design and enhanced service provision.*' (Staffordshire University Plan 2012-2017). This statement still applies, with the continued commitment (in the University Strategic Plan 2016) to '*... encourage students to own their learning through co-creation*'.
4. The Students' Union's Strategic Plan 2012-2017 states its commitment to '*representing [the] views, concerns and aspirations*' of students and '*helping the University interpret and act upon all research and student feedback effectively.*'
5. The University recognises the wide ranging benefits associated with engaging students as '*partners and co-producers*', both for the University and for students themselves; the culmination of which results in an enhanced student experience. The Student Charter (developed in collaboration between the University and the Students' Union) sets out the commitments and expectations that need to be delivered and met by the University, the Union and by students.
6. The University acknowledges that its student (and staff) population is diverse, and as such requires a diverse range of appropriate engagement mechanisms. This document therefore makes clear to both staff and students the range of engagement opportunities and support available to facilitate its pledge (see Appendix A).

The Vision:

7. This strategic vision is complementary to existing University Strategy, and is embedded across three key areas:
 - a) Student engagement in **learning and teaching** involves creating an inspiring, active and supportive community of learning for staff and students that ensures engagement in truly collaborative learning experiences, both now and in the future.
 - b) Student engagement in **quality assurance and enhancement** involves enabling and encouraging students to work in partnership with staff to actively contribute to quality processes, resulting in the continual improvement of the student educational experience.
 - c) Student engagement in **decision making, governance and strategy** involves all student communities working with staff to proactively take purposeful steps to shape the future of the University at Institutional, Faculty and subject levels.

The Underpinning Principles:

8. The following principles explain the foundation behind the ways in which the University will engage students. These principles (in most cases) are applicable to all three areas listed above:
 - a) **A Shared Culture/Ethos** – The University and Students’ Union will facilitate a shared culture/ethos of engagement and partnership between students and staff, which is embedded throughout the University.
 - b) **Transition, Induction and Refreshment** – The University and Students’ Union will ensure that as soon as students join the University they are introduced to the concept of engagement and are encouraged to become proactive, critical, engaged partners in the development of the student experience. Students are regularly reminded of this throughout their University life.
 - c) **Student Representation** – The University and Students’ Union will work together to ensure a strong, stable system of student representation at all levels, which reflects the diversity of the student population.
 - d) **Appropriate Mechanisms** – The University and Students’ Union will ensure that appropriate mechanisms are used for engaging students, which ensure they can become actively involved (whether it is in a University Quality process, a decision making body or any other engagement opportunity). The purpose of the engagement will be clearly defined.
 - e) **Monitoring of Effectiveness** – Through regular monitoring and review, the University and Students’ Union will ensure that engagement mechanisms are effective and appropriate and opportunities for improvement identified.
 - f) **Accessibility and Opportunities for All** – The University and Students’ Union will ensure that all students have the opportunity to have their voice heard and that mechanisms for engagement are accessible to all. For example, the language, timing and format of engagement

mechanisms will not make disproportionate demands on students' time. Mechanisms for engagement should be appropriate to maximise participation from non-traditional students, such as mature, part-time and distance-learners and learners from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

- g) **Training, Support and Development for Students and Staff** – The University and Students' Union will ensure that training, support and development opportunities are available to students and staff to enable them to participate fully in engagement activities, as well as to aid the development of a shared culture of engagement, openness and co-ownership.
- h) **Guidance on Roles and Responsibilities** – The University and Students' Union will provide clear guidance to both students and staff on their roles and responsibilities in relation to engagement activities.
- i) **Promotion of Opportunities and Benefits** – The University and Students' Union will ensure that all engagement opportunities, and the associated benefits of involvement, are clearly articulated and promoted to students and staff.
- j) **Action and Feedback** – The University and Students' Union will ensure that students are kept fully informed of actions undertaken based on their feedback. Where it has not been possible to action issues/queries raised, the University and Students' Union will ensure the reasons why are fully explained.
- k) **Celebration, Reward and Sharing of Successes and Good Practice** – The University and Students' Union will ensure that both student and staff involvement in engagement activities are celebrated and rewarded, and success and good practice shared across the University.

The Principles in Practice:

9. The University is committed to providing a wide range of engagement mechanisms, based on the vision and associated principles, which are appropriate and accessible to all students and staff. Student engagement happens at all levels within the University, from the module, through the course, at the School and the University level. We expect engagement from students as individuals and within various 'communities' e.g. course cohorts and the Students' Union. Appendix A collates all the current practice of student engagement in one place to clearly articulate how the strategic vision might be put into practice, with examples of the types of opportunities available to students and staff and the ways in which they are or might be expected to engage.
10. The ethos of this student engagement strategy is to encourage openness and transparency so that the student experience is improved by responding to issues and sharing good practice. However, it needs to be recognised that at times individuals may raise issues and formal meetings may discuss subjects which may be confidential or private. Therefore it may be appropriate that discussions about such matters may need to be treated in confidence and specific details may need to be withheld from wider reporting.
11. Key 'agents' of engagement are the Student Academic Representatives, the Department-Lead Student Representatives and the full-time Student Union Officers:

Student Academic Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will have access to representation on all matters that affect the learning experience and they will be made aware of this both during induction to the course and later on in the academic year. Representation will be available in the form of annually elected Student Officers and Student Academic Representatives (at both course and department level). • Each year of a course, or group of courses, will normally have a minimum of one Student Academic Representative chosen on an annual basis either by election or by volunteering (dependant on numbers) who is accountable to their peers. • The role of a Student Academic Representative will be to gain feedback from and represent the views and needs of their peers. • The University and Students' Union will jointly ensure that Student Academic Representatives and University staff receive appropriate training and support to enable them to understand the purpose and nature of the role and how both parties can best work together. • Student Academic Representatives and module/course leaders will work together to utilise student feedback. • Student Academic Representatives will feed back to students on any changes made, or that were not possible to make, as a result of their comments. Where changes were not possible, an explanation will be provided as to why. • Student Academic Representatives will be required to complete a meeting report after each Course Committee meeting (CC). Representatives will be required to detail all points discussed at the meeting along with actions to be taken and an approximate timescale (by next CC, before a course deadline etc.). This will allow Academic Representatives and Schools to be held to account and ensure effective and standardised representation across the institution. Before the Students' Union can confirm their attendance for the purposes of recognition, a completed meeting report must be received by the Students' Union.
Department-Lead Student Academic Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each department (within a School) will have a voluntary Department-lead Student Academic Representative assigned by the Students' Union on an annual basis and accountable to their peers. • The role of department representatives will be to gain feedback from and represent the views and needs of students within the Department. They will also ensure they feed back to students on decisions or actions taken as a result of their comments. • The Students' Union will provide clear guidance and training on the role and responsibilities of the department representatives during their period of induction into the role. • Effective engagement of School Lead Representatives will be monitored through regular mentoring sessions with the Students' Union. School Lead Representatives will be required to present a debrief report at the end of each semester detailing key points or actions each School Lead is required to act upon as a result of the mentoring meetings. School Lead Representatives will also be required to meet the Students' Union membership Services recruitment targets for Academic Representatives in their School.
Full Time Student Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each School will have been designated a key Student Officer who is elected by the student body in a cross campus ballot. • Student Officers will support student representatives within their school when facilitating the student voice. • Student Officers will meet on a monthly basis with the Faculty Dean and with other members of staff, as appropriate, to raise issues that affect the learning and overall student experience. • Informed student issues will be represented at senior and strategic level through full-time officer attendance and contribution at 95%+ University Boards and Committees and quarterly Executive Team meetings. • Student Officers are held accountable via the Students' Union's own internal accountability mechanisms such as Officer Question time and the Better Staffs Forums.

Appendix A

In Practice: Engagement in Learning and Teaching

Vision	Engagement Opportunities and expectations – on-campus courses (including distance learning courses run from on-campus)	Collaborative Partners
The University and students will work together in partnership in developing a culture of learning and mutual benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University will develop activities for students to develop as learning partners. • The University will provide learning opportunities taking into account the values of equality, diversity, social inclusion and mobility. • The University will provide appropriate access to the physical, technical, learning and human resources required for successful study. • There will be opportunities for students to learn from each other and for tutors and students to learn together. 	It would be expected that partners would provide the same opportunities and have the same expectations.
Students engage in setting the direction of their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be full participants in their own learning. • There will be advice and guidance available to students on their choice of course and any options within their course. • Where possible, there will be alternative learning strategies available for students that suit their individual learning styles. • There will be opportunities to develop learning activities between students and academic staff. 	It would be expected that partners would provide the same opportunities and have the same expectations.
Students engage in and with their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will attend all scheduled teaching sessions. If they are not able to attend a session, they will inform the tutor and do additional study in place of the session. • Students and staff will treat each other with mutual respect and tolerance. • Students will be proactive in their learning and commit to an appropriate level of independent learning. • Students will frequently review the VLE on their course/ modules and check their university email account. • Staff will be available to meet students outside timetabled classes and if students request meetings they will make every effort to attend or contact staff to request to reschedule. • Students will meet deadlines for formative and summative assessments wherever possible. • If students are not able to complete assessments due to illness or other unforeseen problems they will use the extenuating circumstances processes. • Where appropriate students will take advantage of work experience, placement and volunteering opportunities and the University will endeavour to provide such opportunities. • Students will commit to acquiring the attributes of the 'Staffordshire Graduate'. 	It would be expected that partners would provide the same opportunities and have the same expectations.

In Practice: Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement, and Decision Making, Governance and Strategy

Activity [Principles]	Engagement Opportunities and expectations – on-campus courses (including distance learning courses run from on-campus)	Collaborative Partners
Module Evaluation and Feedback [a b d e f g h i j k]	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> - All students will be given at least one opportunity to participate in a formal evaluation of their learning and teaching experience on each and every module they study. • <i>Information</i> - At the start of every module the module leader will outline how and when the module evaluation will happen and how feedback on the module evaluation will be provided. The mechanism of evaluation should be designed to maximise the level of student engagement in line with the delivery nature of the module. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> - Module leaders will feed back to students, via module handbooks, appropriate responses to the module evaluation. <p>Module evaluation analysis will be collated and monitored by Schools to inform course annual monitoring and strategic planning processes within home Schools and the University.</p> <p>Aspiration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module leaders will be approachable and promote an ethos of engagement in order to gain student feedback through informal discussions with individuals or groups of students, providing opportunities to suggest changes to module content and delivery. • For modules running over at least two semesters, mid-module student feedback about content and delivery will also be collected and reported back to enable adaption of the learning and teaching practice for the remainder of the module. 	<p>It would be expected that partners would evaluate student views on each module and feed back the results and outcomes of those evaluations which would inform annual course monitoring.</p>
Course / Level Evaluation and Feedback [a b d e f g h i j k]	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> - All students will be given the opportunity to participate in a formal survey of their academic experience of their course at each level of study via the Student Viewfinder Survey (SVS), the National Student Survey (NSS), the Post-graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Research Postgraduate (PRES) Survey as appropriate. • <i>Information</i> - At the start of level of the course the course leader will outline how and when the appropriate course survey will happen and how feedback on the survey will be provided. Course leaders will implement appropriate promotion of the survey to maximise student engagement in line with the delivery nature of the course; Associate Dean Students in each School will work with Heads of Department, course leaders and student academic representatives to devise strategies to maximise student engagement. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> - Course leaders will feed back 'You Said, We Did' to current students, via the VLE and feed forward to future cohorts via course handbooks, appropriate responses to the survey. <p>Course level survey evaluation analysis will be collated and monitored by Schools to inform course annual monitoring and strategic planning process within home Schools and the University.</p>	<p>It would be expected that partners would conduct a student course experience survey for each level / year of study and feed back the results and outcomes of those surveys which would inform annual course monitoring.</p>

Course Committees [a c d e f g h i j]	Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> - Each course/course cluster will hold a CC meeting at least twice per year to review the delivery and management of the course(s) including student items reported by Student Academic Representatives. Agenda items will include review of course annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports. • <i>Information</i> – Course Leaders will at the start of each level of study provide clear information on how students can become a Student Academic Representative, the mechanisms by which students on the course can raise issues with their Student Academic Representatives and when the CCs are scheduled. Clear guidance on discussion board fora will be provided. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – The CC minutes/action plans will be available to students electronically. CC minutes will inform course annual monitoring and strategic planning process within home Schools and the University. 	It would be expected that partners would have the equivalent of student representatives for each course or grouping of courses and conduct forums to discuss course issues. The discussions would be recorded and outcomes would be reported back to the student body and inform the course annual monitoring.
Student Council [a c d e f j]	Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – At least twice a semester, the Students’ Union shall convene a meeting of the Student Representative Council, this brings together each Department Representative and leaders of groups from underrepresented demographics. This committee is responsible for the overall representation of students’ academic interests at Staffordshire University within the Students’ Union. • <i>Information</i> – Each Council attendee shall provide a brief report on the work they have done for the students they represent which shall be delivered by the full-time officer team to the Academic Board within the University. Councillors will hold each other to account for their work. The Students’ Union shall provide training and support for each of the Councillors in order for them to carry out their role effectively. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Minutes from the meetings, produced by the Students’ Union, will also be made electronically available via the Students’ Union website for people to view. Outcomes from this committee will be communicated via social media and other communication methods. 	
Annual Monitoring [a c d e f g h j k]	Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – At each of the Course Annual Monitoring events held in Schools during the autumn term there will be participation by a Student Academic Representative. • <i>Information</i> – Student Academic Representatives will receive training on the Annual Monitoring Process and their role within it. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – The wider course student body can request to view annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports, and the minutes of CCs at which these were discussed. 	Collaborative Annual Monitoring events would occur in Schools.

<p>School Academic Committees [a b c d e f g h j]</p>	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – At each of the School Academic Committees, where the quality of learning and teaching is discussed, Department Lead and/or Student Academic Representatives will be present from each Department within the School and have full member rights. • <i>Information</i> – Student Academic Representatives will receive an induction to each of the committees by the appropriate chair and / or administrative officer. Information provided will include dates, Terms of Reference of the committee, the current work being considered and the student’s role on the committee. School staff will provide ‘briefing’ support to student representatives on committee papers ahead of meetings. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Student representatives and staff will feed back decisions that have been made and how any changes will affect students to the wider student body. 	
<p>Course Design and Approval [a c d g h]</p>	<p>Preparation, Consultation and Design - Aspiration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – Subjects will, where feasible, consult with former, current and/or prospective students regarding the design of new modules or course curriculum. • <i>Information</i> – Students’ views will be solicited in good time to be able to be incorporated into the design of the course and the Approval rationale document. This will be undertaken via appropriate methods e.g. focus groups, surveys, discussion boards etc. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Where feasible, students involved in the consultation, will be provided with feedback, and/or the final documentation related to the area under consultation, for information. <p>Course Approval – Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – At least one impartial student representative (i.e. from the Union or another School) will participate as a full member of the Review panel. Two SU Officers will act as full members on University Quality Committee which holds final responsibility for Course Approval. • <i>Information</i> – The Quality Committee Officer will ensure that student representatives are invited to all meetings of the Committee and receive the dates and papers for these meetings in good time; the Committee Chair or Committee Officer will provide an appropriate induction to new officers about the role of the committee and the Students’ Union staff will provide ‘briefing’ support to student representatives on committee papers ahead of meetings. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Final approval of courses lies with University Quality Committee on which sit Student Union Officers; approval outcomes will be reported by the subject area at the earliest post event CC. 	
<p>Course Periodic Review [a c d g h]</p>	<p>Preparation, Consultation and Redesign - Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – Subjects will, in the lead-up to periodic review, consult with Student Academic Representatives, current student cohorts and recent alumni to obtain feedback on the current health of the provision and the redesign of the courses. • <i>Information</i> – students’ views will be solicited in good time to be able to be incorporated into the review and re-approval event through appropriate methods e.g. focus groups, surveys, discussion boards etc. 	<p>It would be expected that students would be consulted about the delivery of the course(s) and</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Final versions of the documentation related to the course(s) under Review will be considered at the appropriate CC and / or reported electronically. <p>The Periodic Review Event - Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – At least one impartial student representative (i.e. from the Union or another School) will participate as a full member of the Review panel. A representative group of current and, when possible, past students will meet with the review panel to provide direct views on the provision being considered, either face-to-face or via telephone / Skype as appropriate. • <i>Information</i> – Review panel student-members will receive appropriate training from the Quality Enhancement Service. Representative student cohorts will, before the event, be briefed by the subject team about the review event and also be provided with a summary of the SED. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Final approval of Periodic Reviews lies with University Quality Committee on which sit Student Union Officers; review outcomes will be reported by the subject area at the earliest post event CC. 	<p>proposed course developments.</p> <p>It would be expected that students on the partner courses would meet and discuss their experiences with the panel.</p>
<p>University Committee Representation [a b c d e f g h j]</p>	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – The University is committed to ensuring students are represented at all levels within the University. The Union President and a nominated Vice President will be full members of the Board of Governors and the Honorary Awards Committee. Student Union Officers will be full members of Academic Board and its sub-committees (with the exception of the Professorial Conferments Committee). • <i>Information</i> – Committee Officers will ensure that student representatives are invited to all committee meetings and receive the dates and papers for these meetings in good time; Committee Chairs/Committee Officers will provide appropriate induction to new Student Union officers about the role of their committee and the Student Union staff will provide 'briefing' support to student representatives on committee papers ahead of meetings. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Student representatives and staff will feed back decisions that have been made and how any changes will affect students to the wider student body. 	
<p>Students' Union and University Senior Leadership Meetings [a c d]</p>	<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – The Student's Union President, or nominated Vice President, will formally meet on a monthly basis with the Vice-Chancellor and with other members of staff, as appropriate, to raise issues that affect the learning and overall student experience. School link full time Student Officers will meet on a monthly basis with the School Dean and with other members of staff, as appropriate, to raise issues that affect the learning and overall student experience. Senior staff from Student and Academic Services will meet regularly with Student Officers and supporting staff representatives from the Students' Union. • <i>Information</i> – The aim of these meetings is to allow Students' Union Officers to feed into, and actively develop and enhance learning and teaching at Staffordshire University by raising overarching issues on behalf of students. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Feedback on the outcomes of these meetings will be provided to the student/s who raised the issues alongside online updates from the Students’ Union Officers which will cover any positive changes which have been implemented as a result. 	
University Working Groups [a d]	Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – Working groups that include students will be established by the University, and supported by the Students’ Union, on a task and finish basis to deal with specific issues e.g. the student experience, student communications, service developments. • <i>Information</i> – Students will be encouraged to actively contribute to these working groups to ensure that students and staff inform the development and enhancement of all aspects of educational provision. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – Feedback on the outcomes of the working groups will be provided to all students who attended, to the appropriate University committee (on which student representatives sit) that tasked the working group and the wider student body when appropriate. 	
Students’ Union Reward and Recognition [c k]	Aspiration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – A joint annual celebration will be held for all Student Academic Representatives and staff (across the institution) who have been nominated for their contribution to the Student Experience. The Students’ Union will reward Student Academic representatives, dependant on their level of commitment and engagement. This will be included on their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). • <i>Information</i> –The aim of the annual celebration event will be to not only recognise the achievements of students, staff and volunteers but also to take the opportunity to single out and share best practice amongst teaching and support staff across the institution. Students will have the opportunity to nominate staff or Student Academic Representatives for their contributions and will be made aware of these opportunities via various means e.g. targeted emails, social media and advertisements on Union and University websites. • <i>Closing the Loop</i> – All nominations for Awards will be communicated to both the staff and students in question and those who have been shortlisted will be invited to the celebratory event. 	
Students’ Union Academic Societies	Requirement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – As part of the “Belonging” strand within the Students’ Union, the Union is committed to help students feel part of a larger community whilst studying at University. As a result, every student enrolled on a course shall be auto-enrolled into their respective academic society (within a Department), this will be communicated to students at the beginning of the year and the leaders of these societies shall be encouraged to make each of their members feel welcome through both extra and co-curricular activities. • <i>Information</i> – New and returning students shall be informed of their membership via email in the first week of the academic year, along with who the committee is, the date and location of the next society event and how individuals can get involved. Regular information of activities shall be updates by the student group committees via the Students’ Union website. Aspiration	

	<p><i>Opportunity</i> – We hope that academic staff will get involved with these societies wherever possible in order to promote a positive working environment between staff and students so as to foster a culture of mutual respect and partnership in approaches to issues and feedback raised by students.</p>	
<p>Cross University Sharing of Good Practice / Review of the Strategic Vision for Student Engagement [a k]</p>	<p>Aspiration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Opportunity</i> – Information will be made available to staff in a shared area relating to good practice in student engagement. The Strategic Vision for Student Engagement document will be reviewed on an annual basis by senior University staff, Students’ Union staff, Student Officers and Student Academic Representatives. Measurement of engagement and effectiveness of the strategic vision will be based on student attendance (across the range of engagement mechanisms available for the previous academic year) and through feedback gathered throughout the year, as well as from staff and student representatives present during the review. This will be brought together in an Annual Report. 	