Student partnership agreement

Document type	**Guidance**
Scope (applies to)	Public
Applicability date	11/02/2025
Review / Expiry date	11/02/2028
Approved date	11/02/2025
Approver	Proctor's Office
Document owner	Administrative Officer
School / unit	Education and Student Experience
Document status	Published
Information classification	Public
EDI review/Equality impact assessment	None
Key terms	Academic policies/Quality and standards/Quality enhancement strategy
Purpose	This Agreement sets out five thematic areas which have been identified as shared priorities across the University and the Students' Association for the duration of three years (2024 – 2027).

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1	This Agreement sets out five thematic areas which have been identified as shared priorities across the University and the Students' Association for the duration of three years (2024 – 2027).	Uploaded	Administrative Officer (Education and Student Experience)	11 Feb 2025

Student Partnership Agreement

Section A – Existing Student Partnership Arrangements

As a University community, we strive to work in partnership across all areas of University governance and development. By developing active staff-student partnerships, we can achieve better outcomes and harness the collective creativity and energy of our staff and student communities for the good of St Andrews, irrespective of level or mode of study. The principles of this Agreement will cover all areas of the University, including education delivery, professional services, academic schools, and the wider operations of the University.

We share many goals across our University. We may not always immediately agree on how to achieve these, however we set out to work in partnership, with our students, the Students' Association, and our colleagues, in order to listen, work collaboratively and collegially, and develop projects and partnership approaches that allow us to move forward in the interests of our University community.

This Agreement has been drafted by a small team comprising University and Students' Association staff and elected officers. It has been developed following discussions and reflections with groups of Students' Association student representatives (specifically the Student Representative Council and the Education Committee). This review consisted of a short survey for quantitative data and an in-person consultation for qualitative data.

This refreshed Partnership Agreement is built on robust foundations of prior and existing partnership good practice, including:

- our work to 'reimagine representation'.
- our Education and Student Experience strategic change governance structures.
- the University's support of the Students' Association Change Programme.
- our StAnd Together peer support activities.
- and our approach to quality and enhancement activities.

Areas of good practice identified in the student representative consultation:

- A vast majority of student representatives indicated a good level of independence in their ability to represent their cohort.
- Overall satisfaction with meaningful staff engagement and involvement with formal or informal University structures was high.
- Existing structures of partnership like reimagining representation and the academic calendar consultation were commended.
- Positive relationships and working practices between postgraduate representative structures and senior University committees and role holders.

Areas of improvement identified in the student representative consultation:

- Time pressure was a significant constraint on student representatives – suggesting a need for greater resourcing in this area.
- Introducing a formal system of closing the feedback loop or explicitly indicating partnership in ongoing projects.

- Staff recognition of the limited tenure of student representatives was an area of improvement. There is scope for relevant staff being more involved in the handover of positions to maintain continuity.
- Access to helpful data-sharing has been highlighted as a solution to limit the need for independent data gathering projects by student representatives and to tackle areas with limited engagement.
- A lack of standardised approach to partnership was flagged. The level of engagement varies greatly by School, staff member, committee, or professional service. Similarly, while some student representatives are immediately met with a staff point of contact, a lack of standardised approach means that many student representatives have to constantly and pro-actively seek out University engagement.
- This may be as a result of an apparent lack of clarity amongst some University staff about the Students' Association and its structures of governance and representation. There is a similar lack of understanding amongst student representatives about the University's structures.
- Duplicative structures in terms of resources and funding result in confusion and additional work in applying for grants.

Section B – Partnership approach for 2024-2027

In this Agreement we set out five thematic areas which we have identified as shared priorities across the University and the Students' Association for the duration of the refreshed Partnership Agreement.

Student Voice & Representation

We will ensure that student representative voices and structures are appropriately understood, enabled, and recognised. The University and the Students' Association will:

- co-write an academic policy that reflects the structures of academic and non-academic representation.
- work towards disseminating and implementing the policy to ensure consistency and standardisation in partnership practice across the University.
- improve guidance for both staff and students to better understand structures of governance and representation.
- ensure that student representatives retain agency in the work they might engage with within their roles; and that said work is truly representative rather than bureaucratic or procedural.
- ensure that the student voice is diverse, varied, and embedded across multiple levels to ensure that students can engage with partnership processes at a level that suits them – whether that be filling in a survey or undertaking a more proactive representative role.
- build upon improvements to data-gathering and information-sharing practices to ensure that student representation is well-informed and guided.
- recognise the nuanced space that PGR representatives might occupy as both staff and students in any partnership activities.
- commit to periodically reviewing partnership work to evaluate the diversity of voices and engagement to ensure a diverse and representative student voice.

Communication

How we communicate and have meaningful engagement with and across our student communities is fundamental to our partnership approach.

We will enable this through:

- collaborative projects that focus on enhancing our communication channels.
- working with students and student representatives to understand how to engage with our student communities.
- supporting each other to develop coherent and joined-up communications to ensure our students know what's happening at the University and the Students Association and how they can get involved.
- working together in order to engage students in feedback exercises and the development of curriculum, projects and services.
- working jointly to periodically communicate specific actions taken in response to student feedback and input which have led to change at a local or strategic level.

Support

We aim to provide a University environment in which all our students, irrespective of level or mode of study, can thrive and develop, and in which our colleagues, services and systems can support them to achieve their fullest potential.

We shall work in partnership to achieve this by:

- building on our existing partnerships including our peer-led StAnd Together schemes, our Student Mental Health Agreement, and our shared approach to tackling the Cost-of-Living crisis across our communities.
- continuing to work together in our approach to sector-wide Charters, initiatives and action plans, for example the EmilyTest Charter (which counters Gender-Based Violence) and the Race Equality Charter.
- progressing projects that reduce barriers to inclusion, whether that relates to how students engage in their education, enjoy co- and extra-curricular experiences, or access information about support, including scholarships and discretionary funding.
- working with students and staff to ensure that spaces across the University and Union estate are welcoming, safe, and inclusive for our whole University community.

Policy and practice

We will work in partnership to ensure that academic and professional services colleagues and students are involved throughout the development of new and existing policy and practice across the University and encourage participation in activities that lead to changes to policy and practice.

This will be achieved by:

- identifying issues that affect the student experience and seeking ways in which these can be addressed and/or written into policy and practice.
- providing opportunities and structures for students to input into the development of existing and new policies and practices.

- ensuring that student contributions to policy changes are recognised, recorded, and communicated explicitly.
- ensuring that students are consulted with and communicated to on significant academic and non-academic policy changes.
- encouraging the expansion of the Reimagining Representation project to ensure that there is appropriate student representation on University committees at all levels across the University.
- ensuring that students and staff are involved and supported in the University's quality assurance and enhancement activities, for example, University review, University-led reviews of learning and teaching, Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP).
- encouraging staff and students to work jointly on module feedback mechanisms and offering guidance and training on best practice.

Recognition

We will recognise and reward the achievements and contributions made to the student experience by students and academic and professional services colleagues.

This will be achieved by:

- raising awareness of existing awards and activities that are recognised on the Higher Education Achievement Award (HEAR) transcript, such as the Saint Skills Awards and St Andrews Research Internship Scheme.
- exploring ways in which the Teaching Excellence Awards owned jointly by the University and Students' Association can be developed and expanded.
- sharing and celebrating achievements and successes led by individuals and staff-student collaborations within Schools and Professional Services and sharing these achievements and successes across the University.
- acknowledging the contribution and impact the student community make to university-led projects and ensuring that this is shared across the University.
- promoting the local, national and international volunteering opportunities available to students and staff and exploring the introduction of a recognition event or award.

Section C – Achieving the Partnership

As an output of this Student Partnership Agreement, work will be initiated to develop guidance, best practice and, where necessary, processes by which partnership projects can be delivered. This will include advocating for project funds to encourage more staff-student partnership applications and building awareness of how students can access and apply to such project funds.

This guidance will include information on how students can work with the Students' Association to approach projects and understand how and with whom to work within the wider University community. We shall also include guidance on how to articulate the benefit and value of partnership approaches to strengthen internal funding applications and shall continue our work to ensure funding opportunities are clearly communicated.

Furthermore, to achieve the partnership, we commit to refreshing our Representation Policy, and alongside this we will develop guidance and principles that apply to academic representatives (such as class reps or School Presidents) and non-academic representatives (such as SRC or Sabbatical Officers).

Section D – Reviewing the Partnership

This Partnership Agreement will run for a three-year period (academic years 2024/25 to 2026/27), and we commit to reviewing the progress and impact of the partnership on an annual basis, working via the Student Representative Council and the University's connections with Sabbatical Officers. The Partnership Team will do so by producing an action plan tracking progress associated with each thematic approach in the Agreement.

Resources:

[Student Learning Experience model](#) (sparqs)
[Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership](#) (sparqs)

Authors

Hitanshi Badani, Director of Education, Students' Association
Iain Cupples, Student Advocate (Education)/HR Manager, Students' Association
Ros Claase, Director of Student Experience, Education and Student Experience
Karen Murphy, Academic Policy Officer (Quality), Education and Student Experience

Contributors
Isabel Kagoo, Student Representative Council Intern, Students' Association

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1	This Agreement sets out five thematic areas which have been identified as shared priorities across the University and the Students' Association for the duration of three years (2024 – 2027).	Uploaded	Administrative Officer (Education and Student Experience)	11 Feb 2025