1495 UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UK Quality Code 2024: Institutional Mapping

Principle 2: Engaging students as partners

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PRINCIPLE 2: ENGAGING STUDENTS AS PARTNERS

Introduction

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) articulates the principles of UK higher education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. The Quality Code is a sector-led reference point which can be used in a range of flexible ways. It enables providers to evaluate their policies and practices with reference to Sector-Agreed Principles and it aligns with key international reference points including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The Quality Code is comprised of two key elements: (i) sector-agreed principles; and (ii) key practices. Sector-agreed principles identify the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience. Key practices set out how a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the sector-agreed principles. There are 12 principles and each has a set of key practices which providers can follow to demonstrate how they are adhering to that principle.

Under the theme, strategic approach, **Principle 2: Engaging students as partners** outlines key practices in relation to effective student engagement as part of quality assurance and enhancement processes. In doing so, the Quality Code sets out the following: *Providers take deliberate steps to engage students as active partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Engagement happens individually and collectively to influence all levels of study and decision making. Enhancements identified through student engagement activities are implemented, where appropriate, and communicated to staff and students.*

In undertaking this mapping to the UK Quality Code, a number of stakeholders were consulted across the University to ensure that the information presented is as accurate and up-to-date as possible. Additionally, it should be noted that the information contained within each section of the mapping is current as at time of publication. Further updates to the UK Quality Code Mapping will follow on an annual basis and will be overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

Key Practices

Key Practices	University Commentary	Supporting Documentation
(a) Student engagement through partnership working is strategically led, student-centred and embedded in the culture of providers.	~~The University and its Students' Union enjoy a collaborative working relationship. The University's Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) sets out the University's and Student Union's joint commitment to:~~ ~~• fostering an environment for open and ongoing dialogue between students and staff, and~~ ~~• embedding transparency and honesty throughout~~ ~~• recognising and being respectful of different approaches to ensuring the best Aberdeen student experience.~~ ~~The agreement is based on a set of core themes to support organisational objectives, continuity and allows for annual updates in line with Sabbatical Officer priorities.~~ The University of Aberdeen and its Students' Union are committed to working in partnership through a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). This agreement sets out how, through a collaborative approach, we can enhance our university so that students feel part of a supportive community and benefit from an outstanding educational experience, including a broad range of co-curricular opportunities. To ensure continuity, themes will be agreed on a three-year cycle, with goals and action plans set for years one, two, and three, supported by an annual action plan. The SPA 2025 - 2028 reflects our shared commitment to enhancing the student experience by improving student spaces across campus. With a strong focus on belonging, community, and wellbeing, the agreement prioritises inclusion, accessibility, availability, and utility. By establishing a clear scope that amplifies and prioritises the space-related issues that matter most to students, the SPA ensures that their needs and perspectives remain central to every development.	Engaging Student in Quality Processes (Webpage) Excellence Awards (Webpage) Student Engagement (Webpage) Student Feedback Form (Webpage) Surveys (Webpage) ~~Student Mental Health Agreement (Webpage)~~ ~~Student Mental Health Agreement~~Student Mental Health Agreement (Webpage) ~~Student Partnership Agreement (Document)~~

	The agreement will align with both the University of Aberdeen and Students' Union strategies as well as institutional projects such as Adapting for Continued Success and Rejuvenating the Campus. It will be informed annually through student consultation, including feedback from the Students' Union, the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES), and the National Student Survey (NSS). This ensures we prioritise the areas that matter most to our student community. Student Officer leads have been identified to drive and champion partnership working, encouraging others to ensure that we are continually exploring the opportunities to work together, where we can, for the good of the student body throughout the academic year. The University adopts a holistic approach to feedback, recognising that both academic and non-academic matters contribute to the overall student experience. Through gathering regular and detailed feedback enables us to monitor, develop and improve the student experience and gain valuable insight of our student voice. There is strong recognition of the importance of ensuring that there is closure of the feedback loop to provide assurance to the student body that the University takes their feedback seriously and that it is used to inform enhancements. Student feedback and consultation shapes our focus and priorities annually. We are committed to enhancing the inclusive environment and positive culture at the UoA, supporting students to maintain positive mental health, manage problems and support the prevention of mental ill health. We support students' career success through a range of opportunities by exploring options, developing skills and connecting with employers. This is monitored by data such as the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey. The University places strong emphasis on the involvement of students on committees and in decision making thus helping to shape the student experience. Each School has a Students' Union elected School Convener who is the lead student representative for each School. They work closely with the elected class representatives to feed any concerns about courses and programmes to the School either informally or via the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The School Convener (or other student representative) attends School-level committees (e.g. School Education Committee) where they can	

	contribute to discussions around future courses and programmes, policy matters, feedback (e.g. survey results) and other matters relating to the wider student experience. At a University level, Students' Union representatives are also full members of all Education committees including the Quality Assurance Committee, University Education Committee and their sub-committees and with Senate which is the University's main academic decision-making body, the University Court, our Governing Body and the University Management Group. Additionally, the Principal and members of Senior Management meeting regularly with Students' Union Sabbatical Officers ensuring close partnership working between the University and the Students' Union. The University, Students' Union and the Rector meet regularly to identify, discuss and respond to themes arising from student interaction. The Excellence Awards, including the Principal's Teaching Excellence Awards, are an annual celebration of the outstanding achievements of University of Aberdeen staff and students across teaching, pastoral support, and research activities which recognises the contributions made by academics, colleagues in professional services, and alumni to the student experience. Student nominations are central to these awards ensuring that student partnership is culturally embedded within our activities. The University of Aberdeen and the Aberdeen University Students' Union are committed to working in partnership to deliver initiatives and systemic changes to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all our students through our Student Mental Health Agreement. Key working area and themes will be set on a three-year cycle, with annual action plans that align with wider institutional priorities such as Aberdeen 2040, the Wellbeing strategy, and the Students' Union strategy. Leads from the University and Students' Union will champion partnership working and ensure continuous progress and student co-design. The Student Mental Health Agreement 2026 – 2029 reflects the University's and Students' Union's joint commitment to work on these key areas: • Embedding wellbeing within the curriculum • Tackling stigma and fostering an open culture around mental health	

	~~—~~Improving communication and awareness of available support ~~The Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) is on track for 2025/2026 year. The SMHA outlines shared priorities between the University and Students' Union, raising awareness of support available; encouraging, promoting and facilitating self-care; and ensuring that support services are both available and accessible to all. The areas of focus are:~~ 1. ~~**Student Training Audit Review –** with the aim of producing a webpage that outlines all courses, workshops and development opportunities available to students around upskilling and knowledge development in the areas of mental health and wellbeing. Also looking at peer support options.~~ 2. ~~**Suicide Prevention –** promotion and marketing of the Suicide Safer University commitment and what this means for students. With the addition of further resources/training being added to the new webpage developed in the above area.~~ 3. ~~**Student Consultation** looking at well-being and mental health, which will inform the working areas for year 2 of the SMHA.~~	
(b) Student engagement and representation activities are clearly defined, communicated, resourced and supported. Transparent arrangements are in place for the collective student voice to be heard and responded to.	The University works in close partnership with the Students' Union. Agreed annual shared priorities for focus are documented in the ~~Student Partnership Agreement~~Student Partnership Agreement. These are informed by and support both University and Students' Union strategies with the overarching goal of enhancing the student experience. The Students' Union, led by 5 student officers, exists to make students' lives better, and they have a huge range of activities, events and support on offer. The Officers ~~elects five sabbatical officers each year to~~ take forward a series of priorities as campaigned in their manifesto to represent students and the student voice. Student ~~abbatical~~ Officers work with colleagues at the Students' Union and within the University to achieve their manifesto priorities, drive forward partnership projects and ~~have a role in~~ represent~~ing~~ students at University-level discussions. The University actively contributes to the induction of Students' Union Student~~abbatical~~ Officers to ensure that they are appropriately appraised of University policies and procedures, their role on committees and that they can establish effective working relationships with relevant University staff.	Class Representative (Webpage) Course Evaluation (Webpage) MySkills (Webpage) Rectorial Election (Webpage) Representation at Students' Union (Webpage) Representation at Students' Union (Webpage) ~~Student Partnership Agreement (Document)~~ Student Representation and Engagement (Webpage) Transcripts (Webpage)

	The Students' Union provides comprehensive training and support for class representatives and club and society officer bearers both in person and virtually (a suite of online resources is available via MyAberdeen). Students' Union representatives who serve on Internal Teaching Review panels or as members of Appeals, Complaints and Discipline panels are provided with training in the same way as that provided to academic staff members of these bodies. Similarly, all student members of Senate receive induction into their role. The role of the class representatives and School Conveners is also important in the collective student voice, ensuring that concerns are relayed to Schools, and therefore the University, by means of open forum and Staff-Student Liaison Committees. School Conveners also serve as members of School Education Committees ensuring the student voice is able to inform decision making. Students are invited to consult and feedback, through survey, focus groups and face to face interaction on a wide range of enhancement activities. This feedback is shared with the respective working group to inform each project. The Rector of the University of Aberdeen is elected by registered students. Their main role is to work closely with the Students' Union to bring student concerns to the attention of University management. Students are supported to reflect on the skills developed through any roles they undertake via the MySkills framework. MySkills gives students the opportunity to: • assess their skills development (using the MySkills Audit) • record and reflect on their experiences (using the MySkills Portfolio) • develop their skills (using the MySkills Resources) during and beyond university and export a record of their engagement and achievements. The tool is available to all students through the MyAberdeen platform. Students are also asked to comment on aspects of MySkills through the Course Feedback and Reflection Forms.	
(c) Providers demonstrate effective engagement with students, ensuring any representative groups or panels	The University places great value on student feedback in its processes of monitoring and evaluation, both in regard to our academic provision and more widely in regard to the overall student experience. There is strong recognition of the importance of ensuring that there is closure of the feedback loop to	Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (Webpage) Annual Course Review (Webpage) Course Evaluation (Webpage)

reflect the diversity of the student body. Students understand that their voice has been listened to and are aware of how their views have impacted the assurance and enhancement of the student experience.	provide assurance to the student body that the University takes their feedback seriously and that it is used to inform enhancements. Student feedback is collected via institution-wide surveys, for example the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (all students), the Undergraduate Experience Survey (all students not in their final year), the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys. Collectively these surveys provide a comprehensive overview of the student experience across all stages of the student journey. Survey questions are prepared in collaboration with the Students' Union and results are shared with appropriate school and university committees (which also include student representatives) for comment and feedback. Survey data is analysed by various demographics (e.g. gender, race etc) to understand the experiences of our diverse student body. At a course level, discussion at Staff-Student Liaison Committees takes into account feedback provided through Course Feedback and Reflection Forms and the wider content which is used to inform Annual Course Reviews (ACR). Class representatives and School Convener membership of SSLCs ensures students are able to contribute to discussion and decision-making arising from this feedback. Minutes of SSLCs are made available to all students via MyAberdeen ensuring closure of the feedback loop. Additionally, External Examiners are required to submit a report annually for programmes and courses. These reports confirm that academic standards have been maintained and any observations therein. The reports also cover aspects of good practice and recommendations for quality enhancement. External reports also evaluate the quality of learning and teaching, and content of programmes/courses. Upon their final report, External Examiners are able to provide a holistic summary of their tenure as an External Examiner. External Examiner Reports are published for students to access via the University's Virtual Learning Environment in a dedicated site, *Acting on Feedback*. More informal means of feedback e.g. mid-course questionnaires or use of focus groups are used to collect early feedback. This approach provides the opportunity for changes to be made during the delivery of the course in response to this feedback enabling the current cohort to benefit.	External Examining (Webpage) National Student Survey (Webpage) Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (Webpage) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (Webpage) Surveys (Webpage) Undergraduate Experience Survey (Webpage) You Said, We Did (Webpage)

	In regard to the wider student experience, the outcomes of the various feedback opportunities including student surveys are advised to students by means of the 'You Said, We Did' Campaign, which assists the closure of the feedback loop. A webpage provides examples of changes made covering areas including student support, digital experience and supporting your learning in response to student feedback. Further communication is also provided in fortnightly school student newsletters (term time) reporting both institutional and school actions on feedback.	
(d) Student engagement opportunities and processes are inclusive of students' characteristics and responsive to the diversity of each provider's student population. They involve student representative bodies, where applicable.	The University is fully committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. We take an innovative and proactive approach to embedding and mainstreaming the principles of equality, diversity and creating an inclusive environment for work and study which celebrates the diversity of our staff and students. Student representation is encouraged on informal working groups such as the EDI event and engagement network. The University and Students Union work collaboratively on a range of events and engagement opportunities to support our diversity community. As part of the University's Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, inclusivity is a key strand and incorporates equality of opportunity and accessibility for all students. The University's vision for Equality & Diversity is to strive to create an inclusive culture which celebrates the diversity of the University's staff and students. In recognising that this diversity brings new and engaging perspectives and enriches the experience of all who work, study and visit the University, we will take a proactive approach to embedding and mainstreaming the principles of Equality and Diversity. The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy supports this work and overseen by the University Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee which is further support by the activities of School EDI committees. The University operates Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that no group is unduly discriminated against and to ensure activities are carried out in a fair and transparent way. All new policies should be reviewed by means of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure they are fit for purpose in an inclusive environment.	Aberdeen 2040 Strategy (Webpage) Equality Impact Assessments (Webpage) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (Document) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Webpage) (Staff) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Webpage) (Students) Inclusivity and Accessibility in Education Framework (Webpage) Qatar Campus (Webpage) Support for Online Students (Webpage) University Campuses (Webpage)

	The University has developed a Framework for Accessibility and Inclusion in Education. This encompasses all aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion in the student experience, ensuring all students are supported to study. In relation to online and transnational campuses, fully online students, both those studying at a programme level and those taking a short course, have access to the same opportunities that on campus students do. The University works closely with colleagues at the campuses in Qatar and Mumbai at the Joint Institute with South China Normal University, and other international partners, to ensure students studying at campuses overseas have the same opportunities and support.	
(e) Providers and student representative bodies, where such bodies are in place, recognise and celebrate the contribution of students to the enhancement of teaching and learning and the wider student experience.	Engaging students in their learning is crucial to the quality of the University's teaching and learning provision and the overall student experience. We have several formalised opportunities in which students can become involved with quality processes and provide feedback on their experience, in order to both influence their own period of study and also that of future students. The Students' Union, led by ~~elects~~ five elected Student ~~sabbatical~~ officers ~~each year to~~ take forward a series of priorities as campaigned in their manifesto to represent students and the student voice. Student ~~abbatical~~ Officers work with colleagues at the Students' Union and within the University to achieve their manifesto priorities and have a role in representing students at University-level discussions. The Students' Union have a prominent role, via its role on Committees and other bodies, to recognise the contribution of students to the enhancement of teaching and learning at the University. Student feedback is also a key component of the University's processes of monitoring and evaluation. The University use Course Feedback and Reflection Forms to seek views from students on their academic experience. These forms seek feedback on what they have liked about the course and what they have not liked together with areas of good practice. This process provides valuable feedback to course coordinators to inform review of their course and to identify any changes requiring to be made for the next year. The feedback from this process informs the Annual Course and Programme Review process. Additionally, student engagement is integral to the University's Internal Teaching Review process. The Centre for Academic Development support Schools with outcomes of Internal Teaching Reviews, where necessary, ensuring the closure of the feedback loop to students.	Academic Quality Handbook (Webpage) Annual Course and Programme Review (Webpage) Become an Academic Representative (Webpage) Course Evaluation Forms (Webpage) Give Feedback on your Courses (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Student Feedback (Webpages) Student Representation and Engagement (Webpages) Staff-Student Liaison Committees (Document) Surveys (Webpage) University Committees (Webpage) You Said, We Did (Webpage)

	Class or Academic Representatives are elected student volunteers chosen by their fellow students who function as a vital link between staff and students, fostering and maintaining open dialogue to improve the students learning experience. They work together with staff throughout the year and have the opportunity to feedback at Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, which take place regularly across an academic year. The Academic Quality Handbook contains the University's policies, procedures and regulations relating to all aspects of teaching and learning, including research degrees at the University of Aberdeen. This includes details of how students can engage in quality assurance and enhancement processes.	
(f) Students are enabled and encouraged to actively engage in the governance and enhancement of the wider student experience beyond the formal curriculum.	Student membership of formal committees and more informal working or task and finish groups is important in the transparency and engagement of students. The University includes students on all Education Committees and has students on Committees of the highest level. Some examples include the University Education Committee and its sub-committees, the School Engagement Leads Group, Senior Pastoral Support Groups. Student membership of committees and Task & Finish Groups also ensures students are actively able to inform and contribute to decision making in regard to enhancements made to the student experience. Recent TFGs have included Institutional Extension Policy working group, the Report and Request tool working group, and the Digital Assessment Guidance Working group which all included student input. The remit and composition of these groups are reviewed regularly with student input. Students are also integral members of panels reviewing Academic Appeals and Student Complaints. Feedback is also gathered through discussion at Staff-Student Liaison Committees, through the University's Course Feedback and Reflection Forms or more informally through focus groups, mid-term student feedback or other means. To help us make the student experience even better, students are offered a wide range of opportunities to provide feedback on their overall University experience such as completing a survey, joining a focus group, coming along to an open session or filling in our online feedback form. Students are invited to consult and feedback, through survey, focus groups and face to face interaction on a wide range of enhancement activities. Students can send	ABDN Internships (Webpage) Appeals and Complaints (Webpage) (Students) Become an Academic Representative (Webpage) Course Evaluation Forms (Webpage) Internal Teaching Review (Webpage) Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme (Webpage) Student Feedback (Webpages) Student Representation and Engagement (Webpages) Staff-Student Liaison Committees (Document) Surveys (Webpage) University Committees (Webpage) You Said, We Did (Webpage)

	instant feedback to the University on various topics. An online feedback form is available on the student webpages for use at any time throughout the year. This is promoted in student ~~eZines~~ eNewsletters and can be accessed via the main navigation menu. Feedback submitted through this form is processed by the Student Experience Team. When necessary, the feedback will be passed to the relevant School or Professional Services Team to assist in the response. Responses are logged in an anonymised spreadsheet for future reference. The Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) and the New to UoA Survey provides students with the opportunity to tell us about their non-academic experiences as a student at the University of Aberdeen, each academic year; what we have done well, and what we can improve on in the future. The ASES is run in October for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, and November for postgraduate research students. In addition, the New to UoA survey is run in October and January targeting all new students focusing on their welcome experience. The NSS, UES, PTES and PRES surveys allows the University to collect feedback on their academic experience. An academic *Survey Season* is run in the second semester, where students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on academic related matters over a specific period of time. *Survey Season* comprises of the following surveys: • National Student Survey (NSS) – final year UG students • Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES) – UG students not eligible to complete NSS • Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) • Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES) All of these surveys allow the University to enhance and improve their services based on the feedback provided. All surveys are approved by the Feedback Working Group to allow a more coordinated approach to surveying students, and to facilitate the sharing of information that has already been harnessed elsewhere. In addition, many departments create their own ad-hoc surveys to gather non-academic feedback which are shared through their own channels. As an institution, it is essential that efforts are streamlined to avoid feedback fatigue.	

	The National Student Survey (NSS) Steering Group, reporting to the Student Support & Experience Committee, ensures institutional oversight and action on the NSS survey results. The creation of a University Action Plan and School Action Plans are central to this work to ensure that student feedback is taken on board and actioned. Through Internal Teaching Review, students are able to engage actively in the review of the provision in their School and relevant Student-Facing Professional Services and provide meaningful contributions to the pedagogic action plan for the following few years. Student feedback is valued in these fora as they often give a different and interesting perspectives. Student appeals and complaints are often a way of expressing feedback on a particular issue that has arisen over the course of their studies. This could be academic or non-academic related. The University takes these very seriously and uses them as an enhancement measure to ensure services are continually improving. Reports on student complaints are considered by bi-annually by the Senior Management Team while the University Education and Quality Assurance Committees are responsible for monitoring academic appeals. CAD regularly employs student interns to gather student feedback which informs further enhancements to the virtual learning environment. CAD also meets regularly with the School Directors of Education and the users of MyAberdeen to discuss and inform changes to the virtual learning environment. For example, an intern was employed to assist with the roll-out of a new institutional course template for MyAberdeen, ensuring consistency across all course areas in the Virtual Learning Environment. Students can also take the opportunity for engagement in paid work, including internships with the Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) and ABDN: Internship Programme, for example. Both programmes encourage student engagement and are available at various points throughout a student's studies. Closing the feedback loop is an important factor for student engagement in the feedback process. Actions on feedback are relayed to students by means of 'You Said: We Did' messaging, which helps to close the feedback loop.	

	Data regarding student careers and employability interests and priorities (Career Readiness Survey), and regional sector insights are used to design a range of careers and employability opportunities. Examples include focused careers fairs (such as part-time jobs, energy, law, charity careers), inspiring careers networking events (such as Working with Words) and sector focused internships programmes (such as nature jobs sector and cultural/arts sector).	