

STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2025-26

Introduction

What is a Student Partnership Agreement?

Student Partnership Agreements were first outlined in the Scottish Government's 2011 paper *Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education*, which proposed the development of a document setting out how students and their institutions interact. Sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) subsequently published guidance in 2013 for the development of student partnership agreements for universities. Student Partnership Agreements have since become commonplace across the sector.

Our Student Partnership Agreement is an explicit statement of the ways in which the University and the student body are working, and will continue to work, in partnership. It is a living document which is reviewed and reflected on annually by members of University Senior Leadership and the Sabbatical Officer team from the Students' Association. Its purpose is not to silo student and staff responsibilities, but to focus on where partnership working can and should occur.

The University's commitment to working in partnership with students is articulated at the highest level in the University's Strategic Plan. Staff at the University of Edinburgh often work in partnership with Edinburgh University Students' Association to ensure that students are central to governance and decision making; quality assurance and enhancement; providing opportunities for students to become active participants; and fostering collaboration between students and staff.

Benefits of a Partnership Agreement

The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Students' Association have enjoyed a long and productive partnership, which has been commended in successive external reviews from the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland.

Since the first Student Partnership Agreement in 2013, we have continued to work closely together. Now, over a decade since the first Agreement, this revamped Agreement will allow us to make enhancements to our partnership now and into the future.

The priorities in the Student Partnership Agreement align with University and Students' Association priorities and strategy. The Agreement serves to highlight ways in which all students and staff can effectively work together to enhance the student experience. It sets out our values, our approach to partnership and the priorities we have agreed to work on.

A key benefit of a Student Partnership Agreement is the ability to engage and communicate with the wider student body, beyond the Students' Association. A Student Partnership Agreement can:

- Map and promote student engagement opportunities across the University and provide evidence of partnership working between students and staff;
- Provide space to reflect on the ways in which staff and students interact and highlight potential enhancements;
- Prompt a review of the effectiveness of student engagement, and identify areas of best practice

Our shared vision of partnership

The term 'partnership' reflects a mature relationship, based on mutual trust and respect. Partnership working recognises that members of the partnership have legitimate, though sometimes different, perceptions and experiences. By working together towards common goals, we can achieve positive outcomes which benefit all concerned.

Our partnership is underpinned by a shared aspiration to: deliver and recognise high-quality teaching; foster a learning approach based on inquiry and research; encourage student-led and co-created learning; produce independent and critical thinkers; celebrate and cultivate a sense of belonging in our diverse community; behave in a just and equitable manner; and work together to enhance the student experience.

Student partnerships can be implemented in various meaningful ways. For instance, student representatives work closely with staff and use student feedback to drive enhancements to the student experience. Additionally, projects involving both students and staff—ranging from event organization to joint initiatives—offer valuable opportunities for mutual growth and innovation. Finally, partnerships in research allow both students and staff to explore ideas together, ensuring diverse perspectives are included in the research process. See 'Partnership in Practice' for further examples.

Institutional Student Partnership

The University and the Students' Association work in partnership to improve the student experience at Edinburgh. Hence the areas of partnership activity are taken from the [Students' Association's Student Experience Framework](#). The purpose of this section is to specify the areas on which the two partners will focus their efforts.

This section of the Agreement may change each academic year, once priorities have been agreed by members of University Senior Leadership and the Sabbatical Officers at the Students' Association, following engagement with relevant stakeholders. The Aims are high level multi-year ambitions that will transform the student experience. Objectives are specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound (SMART) goals that make progress on the realization of the aim. Two or three objectives should be agreed for each area.

Excellent Academic Experience

- Aim
 - ...
- Objective
 - ...

Strong Sense of Belonging

- Aim
 - ...
- Objective
 - ...

Accurate Expectations & Empowered Student Voice

- Aim
 - ...
- Objective
 - ...

Supported Transitions & Navigating the University

- Aim
 - ...
- Objective
 - ...

Partnership in Practice

These projects are either recent or ongoing examples of partnership working between staff and students. Some are led by the University, some by students, and others are jointly led by students and staff. If you're interested in student partnership but also need funding for a project, you can find more information by visiting the Student Partnership Fund [webpage](#). Below are the three areas that are the most common themes of student partnership work.

Community building

Student partnership activities that help students and staff come together to build a stronger community from small groups to university wide initiatives.

Previous partnership activities:

- Informatics Forum Roof Gardening club “Thyme to Grow”
- Mature and Access Student Society

Transforming student experience

Projects in this area bring together students and staff to trial innovative ideas aimed at enhancing the student experience—from navigating the university to refining

expectation accuracy. For guidance on designing impactful projects that will improve the student experience you could consult the [Student Associations' Student Experience Framework](#).

Previous partnership activities:

- o Co-creating an assessment that promotes collaborative learning
- o Thriving at the University of Edinburgh Student Guide

Research and Inquiry

Students and staff evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches for identifying best practices and gaining insights into how current systems operate so that they can share this knowledge with others.

Previous partnership activities:

- o Understanding the impact and effectiveness of the Academic Families scheme in Informatics
- o Mapping the Student Journey: Empowering students to navigate and thrive in university

Reviewing the Student Partnership Agreement

Institutional Student Partnership

The Agreement will be reviewed in two phases. Between June and September each year, University Senior Leadership and Students' Association Sabbatical Officers will agree on a set of shared aims and objectives and co-sign this Agreement. A shortened version of the Agreement (of roughly one page) will be shared with the University community to aid visibility of our shared aims.

Then, by May of the same academic year, The University and Students' Association will review progress on these and reflect on the impact this work has had on the student experience. Their reflections will be included as appendices to this report and will be replaced each year. Reflections will be an honest account of the process of working in partnership and explain the progress on the aims and objectives. The reflection should conclude with recommendations for improvements to achieve next year's aims and objectives.

The content of the Student Partnership Agreement should be complementary to the external Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), which is submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland in November each year.

Partnership in Practice

To demonstrate impact and reflect on the student partnership activities that take place at The University, an annual report will be written. It will give a range of examples of

best practice across the breadth of partnership activities that took place over the previous academic year.

Statement of Partnership

I confirm that this report and action plan have been produced in partnership between the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh University Students' Association and reflect our shared values and ambitions. I further confirm that the University and the Students' Association will work together in partnership to implement the aims and objectives outlined.

Signatures:

Appendices

- Reflection from previous year