STUDENTS AS PARTNERS FRAMEWORK

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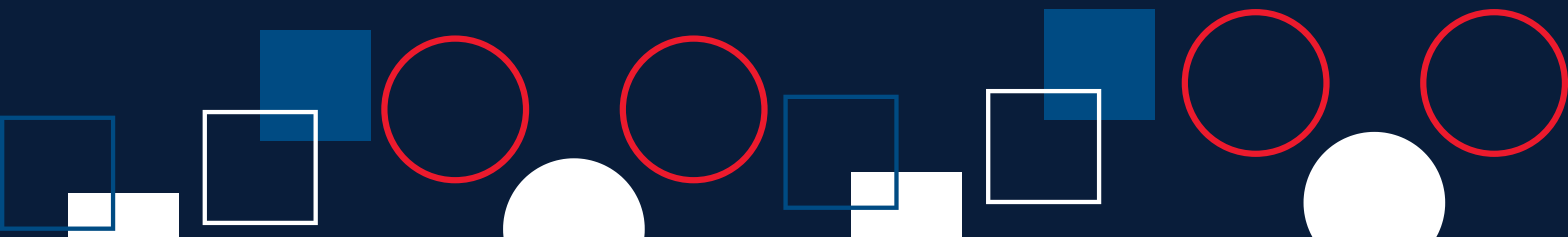
1 PURPOSE

The Students as Partnership Framework (SaPF) formalises the relationship the University of Adelaide has with students; acknowledging the crucial role students play in enhancing their own university experience. SaPF is a commitment to include the student voice in decision-making and embedding student engagement into planning and review processes.

The SaPF outlines our approach to engaging and collaborating with our students to deliver on priorities and strategic objectives that include enhancing student experience and contributing to the life-readiness of our graduates. The SaPF is designed to assist in the identification and development of a range of opportunities for our students to develop the skills, knowledge, and ways of knowing needed to be life and work ready while also contributing to enhancements to services, outreach and engagement.

SaPF seeks to empower students and staff to collaborate as equal partners and mutual learners. It facilitates opportunities to connect the diverse voices, skills and talents within the UoA community, and it aims to enhance the University experience of both students and staff.

The SaPF is built upon research and best practice across the Australian Higher Education sector [1] which have documented the value and benefit of SaP programs to university communities, including:

Benefits to Students
- Enhanced sense-of-belonging via deeper connections and as an agent for change
- Enhanced engagement via clear feedback channels that contribute to continuous improvement of student experience
- Enhanced employability via personal and professional development

Benefits to Staff
- Input that can support, direct and challenge thinking
- Removal of barriers to reliable, honest feedback

Benefits to the University of Adelaide
- Help to foster a culture of partnership and mutual respect
- Increased student satisfaction with experience and engagement

[1] Mercer-Mapstone, L., Dvorakova, S.L., Matthews, K.E., Abbot, S., Cheng, B., Felten, P., Knorr, K., Marquis, E., Shammas, R. and Swaim, K. (2017). A Systematic Literature Review of Students as Partners in Higher Education. International Journal for Students as Partners, [online] 1(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v1i1.3119

BACKGROUND

The University 21st Century Education for a Growing Community of Learners' Pillar Plan [2] seeks to make education accessible, relevant and enriching for a diverse range of students. Under the Plan, all students will receive high-quality academic support and an enriched campus experience, in both physical and digital spaces. SaPF is an acknowledgement that in order to achieve this aspiration, students voice is critical in terms of delivering a '21st century education'.

The SaPF is strategically aligned with our overarching goal of transforming educational experiences in the digital age. It embodies our ambition to revolutionise learning by placing students at the core of educational processes. By integrating SaPF, we are not only adapting to the dynamic nature of digital education but also ensuring that our approach is responsive and centered around the needs and perspectives of learners.

The SaPF acts as an enabler to support the Student Experience (SE) portfolio within the Division of Academic and Student Engagement (DASE) to achieve its vision [3] of empowering students and truly understanding and supporting their professional and personal learning journeys. The SaPF aligns with other engagement and partnership frameworks currently in operation within SE, including within the Learning Enhancement and Innovation (LEI) unit and University Library. Governed and endorsed by the University Education Committee (UEC) and the Academic Board, the SaPF ensures comprehensive oversight and adherence to our educational standards. With a commitment to continual improvement, the framework undergoes a rigorous review every 12 months.

The SaPF in its first iteration will target Student Partnerships within intra-curricular and extra-curricular contexts. Longer-term the aspiration is for a single institution-wide framework and community of practice that incorporates all aspects of Student Partnership across all student and staff partnerships.

Finally, SaPF is aligned to and underpinned by the university Student Partnership Values.

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[2] Office of the Vice-Chancellor and President (2022). Strategic Plan - Future Making. [online] Office of the Vice-Chancellor and President | University of Adelaide. Available at: https://www.adelaide.edu.au/vco/strategic-plan.

[3] *"We are united by our commitment to enrich the lives of our learners. We empower our learners with personalised experiences that foster connection and growth, truly understanding and valuing every learner's unique journey."*

3 PRINCIPLES

The following principles should be applied to all student partnership activity, ensuring engagement is genuine, meaningful and authentic:

Inclusive   Empowered   Relevant
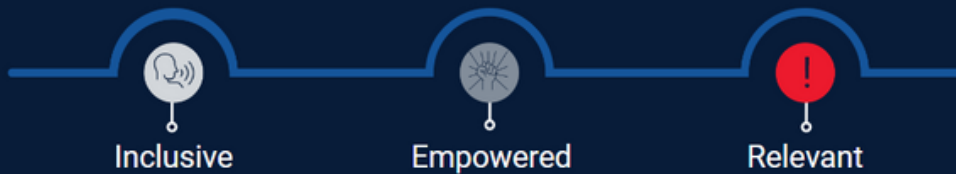
Inclusive - all students have a voice

Partnerships proactively seek diverse representation that reflects the university's student cohort, ensuring opportunities are accessible to all students, regardless of background. Partnership opportunities should consciously identify and remove barriers to student participation such as financial, time, and confidence constraints that could limit the diversity of input and quality of outcomes.

Empowered - student voice has impact

Partnership opportunities acknowledge that a student's lived experience provides a different but equally valuable contribution. Clearly defining this value ensures student feedback and input is positioned as both genuinely valued and actioned. Partnerships should only occur if student voice is listened to, acted upon, and outcomes fed back. Appropriate role description, onboarding and ongoing support seeks to ensure student partners are positioned to provide high quality input.

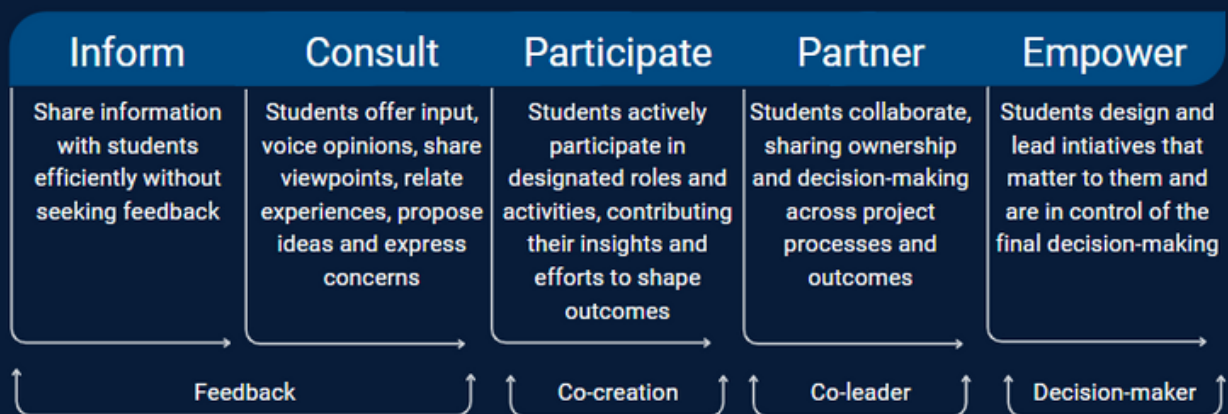## Relevant – impact is on areas important to students

Student partnerships should have value and benefit to both the university and students. For student partners, this means actively participating in projects aimed at improving the student experience that hold personal significance and are of genuine interest to them. In addition, partnership participation should enhance student partner's skills, knowledge, and growth personally and professionally. To support this, student's motivations and expectations should be understood and consideration of reward and recognition made.

FRAMEWORK

The SaPF is an adaption of the Healey (2014[4]) and the Bovill (2017[5]) models which outline the level and type of engagement along a spectrum, here from lowest to highest: inform, consult, participate, partner and empower.

Levels of Engagement Method

Inform	Consult	Participate	Partner	Empower
Share information with students efficiently without seeking feedback	Students offer input, voice opinions, share viewpoints, relate experiences, propose ideas and express concerns	Students actively participate in designated roles and activities, contributing their insights and efforts to shape outcomes	Students collaborate, sharing ownership and decision-making across project processes and outcomes	Students design and lead intiatives that matter to them and are in control of the final decision-making

Feedback	Co-creation	Co-leader	Decision-maker

[4] Healey, M., Flint, A., Harrington, K. (2014) *Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching and higher education*. York: HE Academy

[5] Bovill, C. (2017) A Framework to Explore Roles Within Student-staff Partnerships in HigherEducation: Which Students Are Partners, When, and in What Ways? International Journal for Students as Partners

Level of Engagement	Key Considerations	Activity Types	Resources
Inform (students as users) Share information with students efficiently without seeking feedback	Underpinned by principles of communication being: 1. timely 2. personalised, 3. receivable 4. accessible 5. correct. Enable students to share their thoughts at their convenience, without time constraints.	• Social media posts • Email notifications • Student News • Physical installations	Student Communications Portal Ensure transparent and concise communication with students, offering clear guidance on where to find additional information when needed.
Consult (students as consultants) Students offer input, voice opinions, share viewpoints, relate experiences, propose ideas, and express concerns. Appropriate when seeking simple feedback from students.	Ensure broad student outreach for diverse representation. A collaborative and contributing approach with student and staff to exchange viewpoints and perspectives. Minimal time commitment and one-off engagement for participating students. Typically voluntary, acknowledgment and with potential prize incentives.	• Surveys (e.g. 'share your voice'/ 'help us improve') • Ad hoc feedback (e.g. via whiteboards, MS forms) • Interactive social media posts • Event support volunteers	Student Communications Portal Volunteer	University of Adelaide In all communications with students, it's crucial to be transparent about the purpose of the initiative and the expected outcomes. If you're requesting feedback, ensure you have a plan in place to close the feedback loop. Clearly explain how their input will lead to positive changes and keep them informed about the specific improvements made based on their feedback.

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Participate (students as co-creators / co-design) Students actively participate in designated roles and activities, contributing their insights and efforts to shape outcomes	Engaging a limited number of students. Time investment for an extended period. Crediting both staff and students equally for achievements. Benefits for students encompass enhanced employability skills and connection with University staff. Remuneration/ honorarium and acknowledgment will be provided	• Learning support - content development and review • UX workshops / testing • Policy development and review • In curriculum support Students as casual staff • Supports decision making	[Refer to the Student as Partners Staff Handbook](#)
Partner (students as co-leaders) Students collaborate, sharing ownership and decision-making across project processes and outcomes. Staff and students co-deliver, facilitate, and decide on work initiatives. Genuine partnership is key, ensuring students are true colleagues. Students share their personal experiences, helping staff comprehend potential barriers faced by peers.	Engaging a limited number of students. Significant time investment expected from students, spanning multiple sessions or an extended period. Collaborative partnership, crediting both staff and students equally for achievements. Benefits for students encompass enhanced employability skills and connection with University staff. Remuneration/ honorarium and acknowledgment will be provided	Co-creation, co-design and co-deliver: • In- curriculum design, assessment pieces, rubrics, review panels • Campus culture • Autonomy for decision making and implementation	[Refer to the Student as Partners Staff Handbook](#)
Empower (students as decision-makers) Students design and lead initiatives that matter to them and are in control of the final decision-making	Provide the resources, support and agency needed to deliver projects	• Clubs	

STUDENT PARTNERSHIP PLANNING PROCESS

The table below outlines actions required for incorporating student engagement and partnership into the planning process:

Step	Action	Remember to...
Why	Determine the level of partnership required for the task, as per the framework. This requires: • Clear Objectives: ○ Establish clear objectives and outcomes for the partnership initiative. • Define the scope and purpose of student involvement	Consult with Student as Partners team for advice if required
How	Ensure the engagement is suitably planned from the project outset. This is supported by: • Transparency: ○ Clearly communicate job responsibilities, performance expectations, and evaluation criteria to ensure all members understand what is expected of them. • Resourcing: ○ Ensure the engagement is suitably resourced • Principles: ○ Reflect against the 3 SaPF Principles to ensure they have been considered and incorporated.	Consult with Student as Partners team for advice if required

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What	Execute partnership • Include induction, onboarding and ongoing support to ensure student partners are positioned to contribute and their contribution has impact	Engage with Student as Partners team as early as practicable. Engage with relevant team as early as practicable
Report	Reporting and success measures: • Report on the outcomes of the activity to both staff and participants, via appropriate communication channels. • Seek tangible feedback from participating students about the experience. • Review and revise documentation and planning relating to steps 1-3 to embed continuous improvement.	Engage the Communications / Marketing team as early as practicable

YOUR VOICE

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS