



Queen Margaret University  
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## **Student Partnership Agreement (SPA)**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this Partnership Agreement is to present the work being done to improve the student experience in partnership between Queen Margaret University ('the University') and the Students' Union ('SU'), and to show students how they can get involved in that activity.

It does not replace other strategic documents; rather it is intended as a short user-friendly document to make students and staff aware of agreed areas for enhancement.

We believe that this Partnership Agreement is an important statement of our commitment to further developing as a University community within which we all have a role and a function to perform and where we all have rights and responsibilities. It is designed to promote student engagement, and students are encouraged to provide feedback on their experience whenever possible.

The Agreement reinforces the joint commitment of the University and the SU to developing and supporting effective student engagement and representation. Important principles underpinning this are:

- Student engagement is a partnership between the University, the SU and all of our students.
- Students have the opportunity to engage at all levels of decision making in learning and teaching and the overall student experience, promoting an environment which empowers the student voice.

### **What is partnership?**

This Agreement recognises that all members of the University community, including both staff and students, have legitimate, though sometimes different, perceptions and experiences. The University and the SU value the diversity of the student population and are committed to ensuring all students have a sense of belonging to the University. By working together to a shared goal, steps can be taken that promote enhancement in a way that works for all concerned. The use of the term partnership reflects a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff.

Partnership working is based on the values of:

- Celebrating and building on good practice
- A constructive on-going dialogue
- Trust and honesty
- Openness
- Agreed shared goals and principles



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### **Contact details**

Further information on the Student Partnership Agreement is available from:

[union@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:union@qmu.ac.uk)

### **Other useful reference points**

QMU Student Experience Strategy <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/quality-a-z-index/>

The Students' Union <http://qmusu.org.uk/>

SPARQS (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland) <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/>



## **PART A – Student Engagement and Representation**

The SU and the University acknowledge and welcome the essential role that student engagement plays in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching and more broadly the student experience. We are committed to involving students in decision making processes and making sure that they have the best possible experience while studying with us. We work closely together to ensure that students are represented on all relevant University committees and are supported and trained to fulfil their roles.

Opportunities for students to formally engage with their University experience are:

### **1. Academic representation**

Each class should have a Class Representative whose role is to feedback students' views on their learning and teaching experience through appropriate channels including Student-Staff Consultative Committees, Programme Committees and the Academic Council.

There should be a student representative from each Division on each School Academic Board (SAB) so students' views are considered in the strategic direction of the School.

There are student representatives on Senate, the Student Experience Committee and the Research Strategy Committee so decisions affecting the University experience reflect students' needs.

Students are involved in a wide range of other quality assurance and enhancement related activities, for example as members of working groups and validation and review panels.

### **2. Students' Union and Democracy**

The Officers' Committee (2 full time and 8 part time Officers) represents the full student body and engages with students to get their feedback. The Officers' Committee articulates students' views at various working groups and committees, including the Equality and Diversity Committee and the NSS Results Working Group.

The Student President and Vice-President are also members of the Court, the University's governing body, and the Senate, the body to which the Court delegates authority for academic matters.

The four representative groups (Academic Council, Campus Life Forum, Equality and Diversity Forum and Sport and Societies Committee) provide students with space to provide feedback to the Officers and stay informed on relevant developments that concern the student experience.

The Officers' Committee is held to account by students at the Annual General Meeting and any other General Meeting.



### 3. Other opportunities for students to provide feedback

Students can use other channels to shape their learning and University experience such as:

- Participating in focus groups and surveys, including the National Student Survey, QMU Student Survey and the SU's 'Question of the Month'
- Providing face-to-face feedback to academic, professional support staff and the Students' Union
- Sharing their views with Class Representatives.
- Using the routes set out in the [Easy Guide](#) for providing feedback on the University website.
- Submitting ideas through the '[Your Voice, Your Ideas](#)' section on the SU website.
- Sharing their views with the Captains and Presidents of Sports and Societies, who will participate in bi-annual feedback forums with the Student Vice-President.

## PART B – Partnership Projects for 2018/19

### Introduction

Using student feedback from a range of sources<sup>1</sup> and existing initiatives, the University and the SU have agreed to work together on the following areas over the coming year.

#### 1. Student Life

Feedback from students tells us that they would welcome an improved experience with different aspects of life on campus. This includes increased social opportunities to help develop a better sense of belonging to the University and fostering community spirit.

**Action:** The Students' Union Campus Life Forum will consider student feedback to identify potential solutions and implement appropriate changes.

Student Mental Health remains a growing concern within Higher Education. The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group oversee the implementation of the University Student Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and action plan. Members of the group come from the SU, the University, National Union of Students (NUS) and NHS Lothian.

**Action:** Scotland's Mental Health First Aid Training will be offered to students thanks to funding secured from the Lottery Young Start Fund. The University also continues to deliver training to staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Student responses to feedback surveys including the NSS; the Annual SU survey; recommendations from ELIR; discussions at the Students' Union representation groups; External Examiners' reports and priorities identified by institutional committees.



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**Action:** The steering group has formed a subgroup which will be working on delivering Healthy Body Healthy Mind – a NUS scheme the Students' Union is taking part in.

**Action:** The SU will continue to work closely with relevant departments, including Student Services and Accommodation to ensure vulnerable students are supported.

**Action:** Progress work on Prevention of Sexual Violence at an institutional level. The SU will roll out training to students in partnership with Police Scotland and sit on Equally Safe

The QMU student body is diverse and the University is committed to promoting equal opportunities and an inclusive institution. The University develops activities to widen participation and supports student retention.

**Action:** The Equality and Diversity Committee and the WISER Board will continue to work towards providing an equal and inclusive student experience and will run annual initiatives.

## 2. Academic Life

Enhancing the student learning and teaching experience is a core focus of both the University and the SU. This is demonstrated through the joint working approach to the development and implementation of the Student Experience Strategy. We work to continuously improve assessment and feedback, timetable and the academic calendar in response to student survey results and other feedback

**Action:** The SU and the University will continue to support an effective Class Rep system. New tools are now available to students and staff such as guidance on arrangements for Student Staff Consultative Committee, update staff briefing and Class Reps role description and Hub site for Class Reps.

**Action:** Students and staff will be jointly involved in NSS and other enhancement activities.

**Action:** The SU and the University will work closely to ensure that Wednesday afternoons are kept free from timetabled activities.

**Action:** The SU and the University will continue to work in partnership to communicate with students on the implementation of Electronic Registration of Attendance and enhancements to ERA arising from evaluation

## 3. Communication with and by students

The aim of this theme is to ensure everyone is aware of communication channels and their responsibility to keep themselves informed of essential University and SU information. The University and the SU will also work with students to improve communication channels and consider new initiatives.



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Students, the SU and staff all have a responsibility to take proactive steps to keep themselves informed and should be aware of the existing communication channels. There is a diverse range, including Moderator messages, SU bulletins, Hub announcements, and social media.

**Action:** The University and the SU will work together and support each other with all communication to students

**Action:** The University Marketing and Communications Team and the SU will continue to meet regularly to update each other on key events and developments to promote

#### **4. Employability**

The University and the SU will work together to develop and implement the Employability Strategy to provide focus, drive and resources to support students and graduates, further connecting their studies with their future employment and life opportunities. We will develop, promote and recognise learning achieved through co- and extra-curricular activities.

**Action:** Students and staff will contribute to the implementation of the Employability Strategy.

**Action:** Students and staff will work together to review the Graduate Attributes.

**Action:** We will develop HEAR or an alternative for QMU. .

#### **Reporting/monitoring**

Overseeing and monitoring of this Agreement will be undertaken by the Students' Union Partnership Group, which will request feedback on progress from the relevant project leaders. The Student Experience Committee will receive an annual report outlining progress and achievements.

Professor Petra Wend  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Stewart Sands  
Student President