



NCG Student Partnership and Engagement Strategy (SPES)

Aims:

- To support the delivery and achievement of NCG 2030 strategy.
- To support the delivery of a consistently outstanding student experience.
- To actively involve students in the shaping of their learning experiences.

Why do we need a SPES?

Student Partnership and Engagement is core to us achieving our six strategic objectives:

1. Transformative student experience and outcomes
2. Stay and Succeed
3. Shaping the places we live and work through an aligned and inclusive curriculum
4. A culture of community, inclusion and resilience
5. Outstanding digital and physical learning environments
6. Investing in a bright future

Some good student partnership and engagement mechanisms have been introduced at NCG over the years, under a framework which was last updated in 2019.

As our HE provision grows across the other colleges within NCG, there is a clear need for an overarching NCG strategy for Student Partnership and Engagement, which sets the institutional strategic direction and enables implementation that fits the college contexts.

The student partnership and engagement ethos needs embedding across all areas of the institution and we need to encourage further development and enhancement of mechanisms for students and staff to develop solutions in partnership.

This will benefit the students, staff and institution by enabling us to achieve our strategic objectives.

What does this mean at NCG?

NCG value student agency in enhancing learning and the wider student experience. We want to move beyond the traditional student engagement of listening to 'student voice' through surveys and evaluations.

We have a vision of students as partners in the design, delivery, evaluation, decision-making, governance and enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment. We aim to empower students to actively engage in, and share responsibility for, their own education.



Staff and students have different expertise but are equally valuable in contributing to enhancements. They will be active collaborators (co-creation) in learning and teaching, community, research and enterprise and the student experience.

Core values of NCG student partnership are respect, reciprocity and shared responsibility. We will provide an environment of trust, empowerment, inclusivity, honesty and curiosity.

Strategic Principles

Collaboration and commitment to continuous improvement. An excellent student experience is the responsibility of everyone at NCG, and is achieved through the joint endeavour of our community of academic and professional services staff, students' union, and students.

The QAA have provided the following criteria which can be utilised in the development of a Student Engagement Plan.

Collaborative Partnerships - Student engagement through partnership working is integral to the culture of higher education, however and wherever provision is delivered - student engagement is led strategically, but widely owned.

Partnership working is a key concept for student engagement in higher education - students and staff fulfil mutually important roles in shaping the student experience that enables staff and students to recognise and value the impact of student engagement, enhancement and quality assurance.

Quality Assurance - Higher education providers, in partnership with their student body, define, promote, monitor and evaluate the range of opportunities to enable all students to engage in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Higher education providers ensure that students and staff can define, own and promote the full range of opportunities for student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Student Voice - Arrangements exist for effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels including decision-making bodies.

Collective student engagement involves students considering, deliberating, and developing informed views, independent from the provider, which are representative of the wider student body. Collective engagement will happen primarily through student representative structures such as course/class/faculty representatives, and where they exist through the students' representative body

Transforming Communities - Effective student engagement supports enhancements, innovation and transformation in the community within and outside the provider, driving improvements to the experience of students.

Student engagement can produce changes that help build a dynamic and inclusive learning community. A provider-wide approach will demonstrate multiple student



engagement activities at all levels. Providers demonstrate how approaches to student engagement drive enhancements to the educational experience at each level.

Diversity - Providers recognise and respond to the diversity of their student body in the design and delivery of student engagement, partnership working and representation processes.

Providers ensure that approaches to student engagement and representation are designed to include the diversity of their student body, identifying and removing barriers to participation, to ensure that the full diversity of student voices can contribute to enhancement and assurance activities. Consideration is given to students' modes of study, the composition and demographic of the student population, and the different backgrounds that students have, to ensure effective engagement and representation

Feedback - Providers work in partnership with the student body to close the feedback loop.

All stakeholders are clear about their role in the dissemination of feedback related to the student experience. Providers recognise and promote joint recognition and value of enhancements made to the student educational experience, and the contribution of students in achieving these successes. Providers devise effective and appropriate ways of communicating with students how, when and where their feedback has been used and acted upon. Where action is not taken in response to student feedback, the rationale for this decision should be effectively communicated to students

Why Student Partnership?

What does a consistently outstanding student experience consist of? This is a constantly changing landscape and as such we need to regularly be working with our students to ensure they:

- have positive interactions with staff and peers
- feel part of a community
- feel included, listened to, valued and cared about
- are prepared for their future – academic, career, social and emotional
- have access to outstanding facilities and resources
- have outstanding academic and pastoral support

Benefits of a partnership approach (from the literature): increasing sense of belonging; developing ownership of, engagement in, and motivation for learning; enhancing academic achievement and resources, improving disciplinary and metacognitive learning; addressing educational inequities; building meaningful relationships and networks; and the development of important skills like collaboration and leadership.

Student in Partnership at Newcastle College is based on the principle that our students are active agents in their learning, directly involved in the production of knowledge, and partners in our higher education community. Partnership working is



integral to the culture of higher education, students and staff fulfil mutually important roles in shaping the student experience that enables staff and students to recognise and value the impact of student engagement, enhancement, and quality assurance. Working in Partnership can take various forms. Examples of such include:

- Student as Partners in the classroom: in which a selected lecture, seminar or workshop is delivered by students rather than the lecturer, with the aim of the student seeking and then shaping knowledge so it can be shared with peers and tutors.
- Student as Partners in the curriculum: in which students are involved in developing, writing and validating a module or programme of study.
- Student as Partners linked to assessment: assignment briefs are written in an open (yet guided) format to allow the student to dictate the focus of their work.
- Student as Partners within a working context: in which students are the key conduit between their curriculum and industry. Students here might work with tutors and employers to devise live briefs or problem-based learning tasks to address a sector need.
- Student as Partners linked to research: HE Learning and Teaching at NCL is research-informed and research-engaged, embodying the idea of staff-student scholarly collaboration. This might involve students presenting their work to different scholarly audiences, disseminating their work internally and externally, or working with peers, teaching staff and an external professional network to enhance their field of study and, with it, their own understanding and stake in that field.
- Student as Partners: linked to the student experience: offering our students a variety of opportunities to participate, shape and lead in our HE Community via the *Student Leaders Programme*. This programme includes Student Fellowships, Student Representatives, and those with a role in our Students' Union.

Student Partnership recognises the student voice within higher education, repositioning the power dynamics at the source of our HE programmes content, its delivery and ultimately wider knowledge generation. Here, at Newcastle College we recognise the need to re-establish the balance of teaching and research within our college-based higher education context. As such, *Student as Partners* for us involves supporting and enhancing the connections between teaching, research *and* the vocational.

Benefits for Students

Developing opportunities for students to become actively involved in their learning journey can have a number of beneficial effects, allowing students to:



- Play a part in improving the experience for themselves, their peers and future students
- Build up professional working relationships with staff and peers
- Build confidence and resilience
- Gain a better understanding of how the colleges and higher education works
- Be part of enhancement projects that have a real impact (meaningful projects with the potential to be presented as sector-leading)
- Employability (transferable skills development) – CV building, leadership skills, networking, confidence-building, teamwork
- Learning about work-related confidentiality and integrity
- Leadership Hub - Entrepreneurship

The Key Performance indicators for this strategy include:

- Exceed our national benchmark for overall student satisfaction in the National Student Survey. Increased year-on-year scores and engagement levels in the HESS and PGT surveys.
- Increase the number of student representatives, both formally appointed and democratically elected by the Students' Union and as representatives on **Student Opinion Panels** and within the Student Fellowships.
- Increase engagement with informal student feedback mechanisms, such as focus groups and food for thought events.
- Increase engagement with Module Feedback Surveys.
- Increased number of students receiving training as student representatives, **student ambassador**, and the student fellow community.
- Improved student representative attendance rates at Curriculum, College and Group Committees.

Implementation:

HE Student Partnership and Engagement Committee – Needs info about SPEC

The Student Partnership and Engagement Committee (SPEC) has been initiated to oversee the implementation of the Student Partnership and Engagement strategy to ensure a consistently outstanding student experience across NCG. The committee will be chaired by the Research and Student Engagement Manager and co-chaired by a student fellow. The committee will report on themes coming through feedback systems and the escalation of any unresolved issues. This will enable any issues raised by students to be resolved in collaboration with staff and will develop opportunities to share best practice. The committee will report to LTEC regarding key issues and reports raised, as well as the newly-established Student Council. There will be continuing dialogue between these structures to ensure that ideas, concerns and feedback are disseminated through the correct channels so they can be acted on in a timely and appropriate manner.

Further areas of implementation have been identified, including but not exclusive to:

- Student Reps



- Student Fellows
- LTEC, Q&S and Academic Board Fellows
- Together We Changed
- Student Fellows as reviewers/researchers – increase engagement with student voice (HESS, NSS, MF) and enhancements
- Co-creation of action plans
- Module feedback
- HESS, NSS and PGT
- Student Forums
- Student Partnership and Engagement Committee
- Food for Thought
- Student Showcase Week
- Publications such as Folio, Seven Bridges and The View
- Inclusivity Council
- Alumni