

Developing College

Students' Associations

FRAMEWORK

for the Development of Strong and Effective
College Students' Associations in Scotland



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba

nus
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sparqs 
student partnerships in quality scotland



Contents

- 05 Ministerial Foreword
- 06 The Framework
- 09 Introduction to the Principles and Themes
- 10 **THE PRINCIPLES**
- 11 **Autonomous**
- 12 **Partnered**
- 13 **Accountable**
- 14 **Representative**
- 15 **Sustainable**
- 16 **THEMES**
- 17 **Shaping the Life and Work of the College**
- 18 **Governance and Democracy**
- 19 **Aware and Active Students**
- 20 **Sustainable Resources**
- 21 **Value and Impact**
- 22 Acknowledgements
- 22 References

Ministerial Foreword

I want to thank students, principals and other college staff, college chairs and other college board members, as well as colleagues in sparqs, NUS Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for their contribution to this, Scotland's first framework for supporting the development of effective students' associations.

Its publication marks another important step in our collective journey to put students at the centre. I endorse the approach it takes, including the five principles on which it is based – autonomous, partnered, accountable, representative and sustainable.

This Government has done more to advance student representation than any other, legislating as we have to put students at the heart of college life. It is no accident that the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 contains more references to students' associations than any other piece of legislation in Scottish history. Or that one of the first changes made by the Act was to require colleges to seek to ensure the interests of their students are represented by an association. We have introduced new duties to consult and collaborate with associations and doubled the number of students they nominate to incorporated college boards.

I look to colleges and associations to work in partnership with common purpose in a spirit of openness, trust and mutual respect. The distinctive contribution that associations make to college life arises from their autonomous, representative role. It is therefore essential to the success of partnership that this is cherished and developed. It makes sense for colleges to support vibrant, autonomous and thriving students' associations, given how integral they are to colleges' mission to deliver positive outcomes for students. In line with the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges, I have no doubt that they will ensure they are adequately resourced.



**Cabinet Secretary for Education
and Lifelong Learning -
Angela Constance MSP**

The Framework

The Role and Importance of Students' Associations

Students' associations are the legally representative voice of students. A strong, effective students' association should enable students to make their voices heard, and to take collective action to change and improve their student experience.

Strong students' associations will be able to work as equal partners with their college, acting as critical friends, and enabling the college to develop robust quality and governance processes. A well-developed association will enable students to self-organise and speak in a representative, autonomous voice in discussions and decision making. Students' associations can introduce students to democratic activity and empower them to become active citizens both within the college and in the wider world. Students' associations can also come together to strengthen the student voice at a national level.

Scotland is world-leading in student engagement but students' associations have, in the past, been relatively underdeveloped. Students' associations have made great strides forward in recent years, even as the expectations on them have increased. This has included both new duties in legislation and increased responsibilities under sector policies.

However, both student officers and college staff recognise that there is still much work to be done. This Students' Association Development Framework is a sector-agreed shared way forward for students' association and college partnership development.

Legislative Context: Summary 1994 Education Act

The 1994 Education Act places a number of obligations on relevant governing bodies with regard to the proper running of their students' association. This includes ensuring that the association operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances. The governing body has a duty to prepare and revise a code of practice on how the various requirements are observed by or in relation to the association.

Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013

- Two student members on incorporated college boards. Two student members on Regional Boards.
- The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) must be satisfied each college has suitable "arrangements for the purpose of seeking to ensure that the interests of the body's students are represented by a students' association".
- Regional colleges and regional strategic bodies must:
 - seek to secure the collaboration of students' association(s) (so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions).
 - consult students' association(s) where they consider it appropriate to do so in the exercise of their functions.
- Other specific duties to consult students' associations on regional strategic bodies, Regional Boards, Ministers and SFC.

In multi-college regions, students' associations will therefore have a direct relationship with their regional strategic bodies, as well as with their colleges.

Please see Legislation Supplement: References to Students' Associations in Legislation at saframework.co.uk

Sector Expectations of College and Students' Association Partnerships

The Student Engagement Framework for Scotland identifies and defines five Elements of Student Engagement. Students' associations have a particularly key role to play in Element 4 which focuses on "formal engagement with institutions through representative structures and processes operated primarily by students' associations" but they can also contribute to the delivery of the other elements.¹

Since 2007 'Student Engagement' has been one of the three Pillars underpinning college quality arrangements in Scotland. Education Scotland emphasise the role of students through a confidence statement against the question "How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?"

² Students' associations therefore have a key role to play in supporting college quality processes and quality enhancement. They also have an increasingly key role to play in external quality reviews.

The College Code of Good Governance states that the college governing bodies "must have close regard to the voice of its students and the quality of the student experience should be central to all board decisions." It goes on to say that "the board must lead by example in relation to openness, by ensuring that there is meaningful on-going engagement and dialogue with students, the students' association and as appropriate staff and trades unions in relation to the quality of the student experience."³

Students' associations also play a key role in the negotiation of Outcome Agreements. SFC expect to see evidence of how "outcomes within the outcome agreements have been developed and discussed with the students' association."⁴

Purpose of Framework

Students' associations need to be strong and effective in order to fulfil their role in the partnership, and both the college and students' association have a key role to play in making that partnership a success. The Framework has been developed through strategic dialogue with the college sector including colleges, students' associations, government, and sector agencies. Its purpose is to set out a sector-agreed framework for how colleges and students' associations can work in partnership, with the support of sector agencies and NUS Scotland, to develop strong and effective students' associations.

This Framework therefore provides:

- a shared vision for students' association development and a common understanding of its key concepts and qualities.

It is accompanied by a Self-Evaluation and Development Planning Tool which outlines:

- a set of standards and indicators/ prompts which identify the resources and support a students' association needs to be effective.

The Self-Evaluation and Development Planning Tool enables colleges and students' associations to measure the current level of development of their students' associations and college/ association partnership against the broad Principles of the Framework, to identify strengths and areas for development, and to agree actions for a Development Plan.

Implementing the Framework

As the students' association and the college both have key roles to play in ensuring students' association effectiveness, a partnership approach is essential for the effective implementation of this Framework.

Joint Working Group

Students' associations and colleges will want to set up a Joint Working Group to implement this Framework locally. Membership of this group should include student officers and senior college staff. Some partnerships may have already established groups which can take on this remit.

Resources and Support

In order for students' associations to be able to develop they need resources and support. Dedicated, highly skilled staff who are accountable to the students' association are absolutely fundamental to developing effective students' associations, and to their ongoing success. Students' associations will also need buy-in and support from all college staff.

Resources and tailored support is available nationally from sparqs and NUS Scotland.

Development of the Framework

The Framework has developed out of the increased focus and expectations placed on students' associations as a result of the Post-16 Reforms first identified in the Review of Further Education Governance in Scotland. The review recommended that "Student participation and representation become a commitment across the College Sector. Student Associations should be strengthened and become appropriately funded, autonomous and sustainable."⁵

NUS Scotland, SFC, and the Scottish Government led on the development and were joined by a representative from the Regional Chairs Group to provide high level sector support. Four Strategic Dialogue Events were held in May 2014 at which over a hundred and fifty delegates from across the college sector discussed good practice and areas for development in their students' association and college partnerships, and their vision for the future. Feedback on the final draft of the Framework was sought from seventy stakeholders at Validation Events in January 2015.

Through these events common themes were identified and these have guided the development of the Framework. Some key themes included:

- The need for a common language or framework for students' association development.
- The need for the development of both a culture supportive of students' associations and the embedding of processes and structures to enable students' associations to function effectively.

Some of the key issues identified included:

- Lack of resources, both in terms of operating budget and dedicated association staff and paid officers. However, associations who had accessed temporary funds cited their increase in sabbatical officers and dedicated staff as key factors in their success.
- Lack of autonomy, and confusion over what is meant by that term, and unclear accountability processes.
- Need to develop partnership working between the association and all levels of the college.
- Difficulty maintaining and building on achievements over multiple years.

Introduction to the Principles & Themes

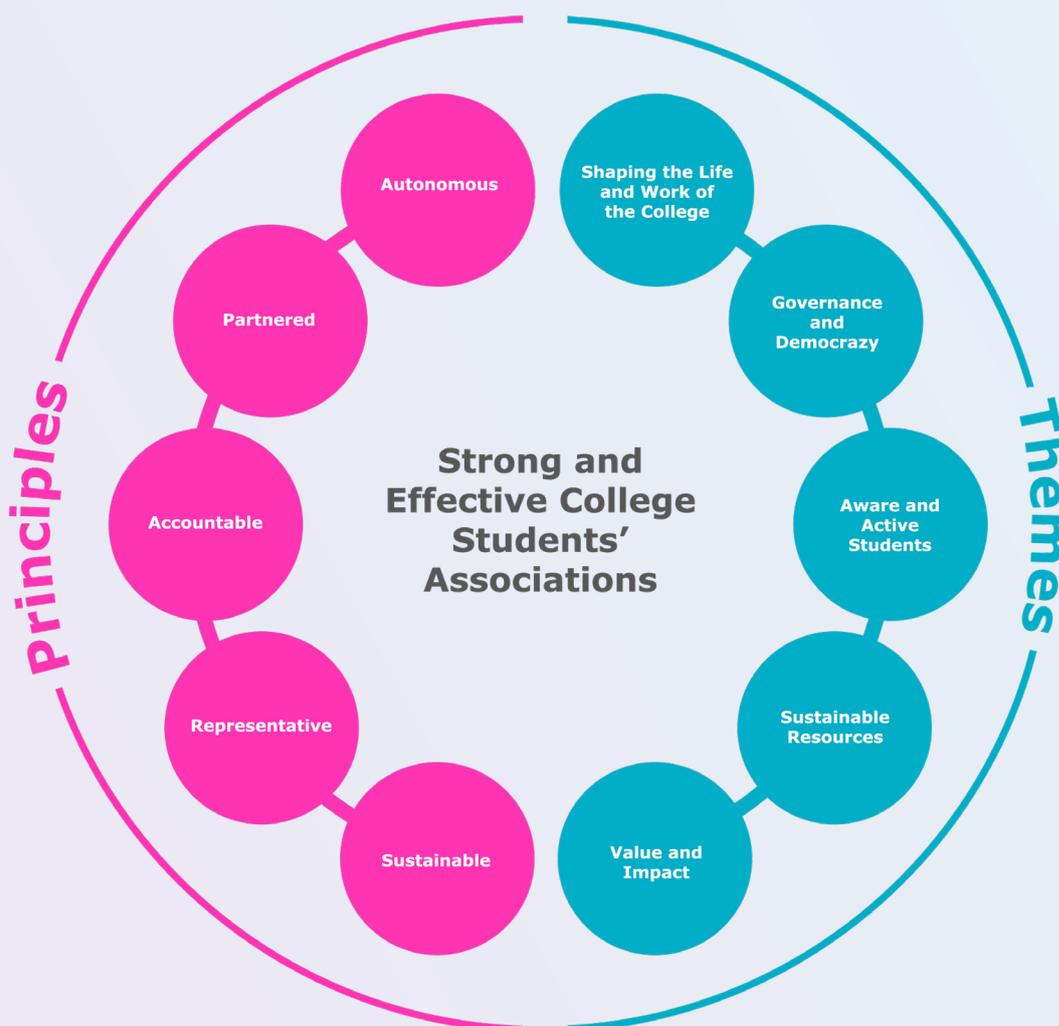
There are two interdependent factors which are key to developing and sustaining effective students' associations. These are:

One: A culture within the college which actively values, supports, and encourages the students' association to develop and deliver its autonomous, representative role.

The Principles section outlines five key principles that must underpin, and drive forward, all the development and work of students' associations if they are to operate effectively.

Two: A scaffolding of resources, working structures, processes, and procedures which govern the students' association and ensure that it is able to deliver its responsibilities and manage the changeover between student officers and between staff.

The Themes section outlines five areas of development that colleges and students' associations will need to work together to put in place in order to enable the students' association to develop the key Principles and to fulfil its role effectively.



The Principles

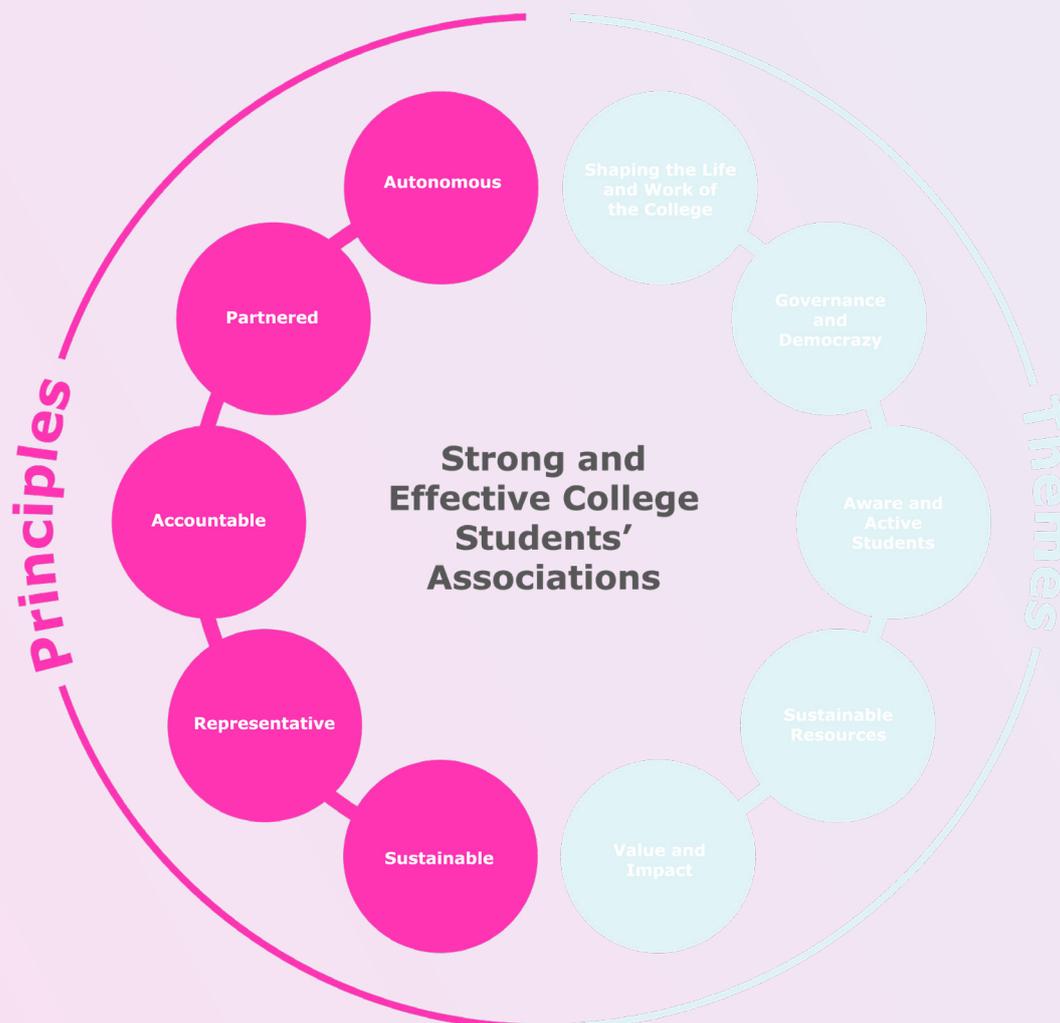
The Principles

There are five Principles:

- Autonomous.
- Partnered.
- Accountable.
- Representative.
- Sustainable.

These Principles together make up the foundations of strong, effective students' associations and a culture which enables students' associations to thrive. This section of the Framework provides definitions of these Principles that students' associations and colleges will need to develop and implement.

All of the Principles are interdependent and therefore need to be developed simultaneously in order to succeed. If not, the students' association risks becoming unstable and will be unable to fulfil its representative purpose. For example, a students' association which has a well-developed Partnership will lose all progress if it's not also Sustainable. Similarly a students' association with a well developed representative structure will not be able to speak in an unbiased, independent student voice if it is not also Autonomous.



Autonomous

An autonomous students' association is one which enables students to articulate an independent student voice, and which can ensure that voice will be heard at the highest levels. Students determine its internal organisation and representative structures. Student representatives act according to the student determined priorities and policies and engage with college leaders as equal partners to negotiate how these priorities will be implemented.

Why Autonomy is Important

Autonomy enables students to determine their own policies and priorities independently which means that they are able to set the agenda for discussion and ensure the focus is kept on students. This enables the students' association and college to build a stronger relationship as the college is able to hear un-influenced truth about the quality of learning and teaching and the wider student experience

The students' association and college must be able to act as critical friends to each other, supporting each other to grow and develop. Students' association autonomy rebalances the distribution of power between the association and the college by ensuring the association is able to determine its own direction. This gives student officers the confidence to raise student identified issues, speak in an impartial and unbiased voice, and disagree with the college without fear of repercussions. Equally, the college should feel able to offer advice and recommendations to support the association while being mindful of the power differential between the association and college and ensuring that recommendations are not misinterpreted as directions.

By working together as equal partners in this way the students' association and the college can deliver stronger outcomes for students.

Autonomy will mean different things to students' associations at different stages of development; some will want to develop as separate organisations, others will be more comfortable with a greater degree of closeness with the college. As the principles outlined in this Framework are embedded, self-determination will develop and grow.

Key Characteristics

- The college, as the association's principal partner and funder, recognises the natural power imbalance and the degree to which it could unduly influence the association. It therefore releases its controls over the association and actively supports its autonomy.
- The students' association is able to decide, within its agreed budget and financial management procedures, how to use the resources and support it receives from their college. It is supported by staff who are accountable to the association and who can provide advice and guidance.
- The students' association has organisational autonomy. It is able to decide how best to organise to represent its students, and make decisions on its own structures and processes. It has procedures and processes in place which enable it to resolve any internal issues itself, and sufficient resources to manage its own structures.
- The students' association is able to develop and articulate an independent student voice; students can decide their own priorities, ideas, and plans. The students' association's right to run campaigns is recognised and supported.
- The students' association is able to take ownership of projects and responsibilities. It has the 'freedom to fail' and to learn from its experiences.
- The students' association is included in the colleges' governance and decision making processes as an equal partner, not as a sub-department of the college.

Partnered

A college and students' association in partnership have an equal relationship based on mutual value, trust, and respect. They have clearly agreed roles and responsibilities and work together to deliver positive change for students.

Why Partnership is Important

Partnership is a widely accepted concept in colleges in Scotland. Effective students' associations are built on a strong, equal partnership between the students' association and the college.

College support is key to students' association success, and strong partnership is fundamental to the development of strong and effective students' associations. The relationship between the two organisations, and between college staff and student officers, is therefore key.

There will be times when the students' association and college will disagree. A strong partnership relationship enables the students' association and college to disagree on some areas, and the students' association to campaign on college policies, while continuing to respect each other, and to work in partnership on different areas of work or policy. Assurance that the partnership will survive disagreement gives the students' association confidence to act as a critical friend.

Partnership working is the most effective way for students' associations to deliver change, and therefore a strong partnership relationship between the students' association and the college enables the students' association to represent students effectively within the college's decision making processes and achieve positive change on their behalf. This also enables the students' association to contribute effectively to college governance and quality procedures.

Key Characteristics

- The roles and responsibilities of the association and the college within the partnership are clear and understood. In particular, the association's role as the college's 'critical friend', and the importance of this role to college governance, is understood by college staff. Both partners have realistic expectations of each other.
- The students' association and the college have embedded partnership procedures through which they can work together to achieve change and which are supported by regular and open communications.
- Partnership working takes place at both strategic and operational levels. The students' association is involved in all decision making which impacts students. Both the college and the students' association supports their partner to work more effectively, for example, taking each other's priorities and vision into account when developing strategic plans.
- The college ensures that their students' association has the support and resources it needs in order to realise their ambitions.
- The college and the students' association respect each other, recognising that they both bring a unique and valuable perspective to the partnership, and work to build trust, being mindful of the other's perspectives. For example, the association utilises its resources responsibly and the college hands areas of responsibility to the association.
- The college encourages student officers to develop into equal partners and avoid slipping into a 'teacher-student' or 'employer-employee' relationship which could put the officers' ability to think and act autonomously at risk.
- The college works proactively with the association, is actively committed to partnership working to create a direct positive impact on the student experience, and validates the importance of the students' association's role.

Accountable

An accountable students' association has clearly defined lines of accountability for its policy decisions and for its performance. It is accountable to its student members for what it says and does on their behalf. It is accountable, where appropriate, to its college's governing board for its compliance with the 1994 Education Act, the agreed terms and conditions of the funding it receives from its college, and for its performance against any other such agreements the students' association and the college have made in partnership.

Why Accountability is Important

An accountable students' association knows what it is responsible for. Responsibility encourages the association to take ownership of its activities.

If the students' association is not accountable to its student members then it loses its legitimacy as the voice of students and is unable to fulfil its role in its partnership with the college. Conversely, an accountable students' association can speak on behalf of the student body with authority and credibility.

An accountable students' association supports the college's governing body to fulfil its responsibility under legislation to seek to ensure that there is a students' association which represents the interests of its students.

Robust accountability processes enables the students' association to develop autonomously because they give the college and students reassurance that it can self-monitor and function effectively day to day.

Key Characteristics

- The students' association has clearly defined and understood lines of accountability which have been developed in partnership. Expectations are realistic.
- The students' association takes its mandate from the wishes of its students, and regularly and formally justifies what it says and does on their behalf to its student members. Student members understand their right and responsibility to hold their association to account. Democratic processes are the means by which the students' association is held to account for its policy decisions. The students' association also has other governance processes, such as a Trustee or Advisory Board, which complements and enforces the democratic processes and hold the students' association to account for its overall functioning.
- There are formal arms-length processes in place, though not line management of sabbaticals, through which the college can scrutinise the students' association and thereby uphold its legal responsibilities. This may include written agreements for delivery of services. For example, as part of budget negotiations reasonable terms and conditions may be agreed; the college should ensure that these do not overly limit association decision-making.
- The college supports the functioning of the association's democratic procedures. For example, providing meeting space, facilitating publicity, encouraging students to attend meetings and participate in elections, etc.
- The students' association has robust financial processes through which it is held to account for expenditure against its budget.
- Student officers who are also college board members are accountable to the board in their role as a board members, and to the association in their role as representative officers.

Representative

A representative students' association takes its mandate from its student members through its democratic processes. It speaks on their behalf with a collective, evidenced, and informed voice and is able to make claims, negotiate solutions, campaign, and create the change its members want. Its officers are elected through free and fair elections.

Why Representation is Important

A students' association must be representative in order to fulfil its core function of representing the interests of all students. It is important that the quality of the representation is high in order to ensure that the students' association is performing its function well and giving value to the students it represents. This increases the association's legitimacy in the eyes of the students, the college, and national bodies.

A representative students' association will challenge the college on occasion. This is important as it demonstrates that the association is fulfilling its roles and bringing issues which might be damaging to the college to its attention. If the association never challenges the college, this should be a cause for concern.

A representative students' associations has the right to speak out on issues of interest to its student members. If an acceptable compromise cannot be reached through the association and the college's partnership working structures the students' association must have the ability to continue the campaign through other methods. Preventing the students' association from doing so would be preventing it from representing its students. It is therefore important that the college understands that the students' association can exercise this right and it is important that the association takes into account the college's concerns when it does so.

Key Characteristics

- The students' association represents the interests of its students and should not be dominated by the views of a vocal minority. It is able to evaluate the different voices of the students it represents in order to develop a single students' association vision. A representative students' association understands that the majority opinion is not always the representative opinion, and ensures that the interests of disadvantaged minority student groups also shape students' association policy. On occasion, this may mean that the needs of the few will outweigh the wishes of the many.
- The college recognises and values the benefits of the students' association's representative role to the quality, life, and work of the college. It supports the association to gather evidence, influence decision making, and have an impact on student lives.
- The students' association supports all students to have a voice on decisions that affect them. The students' association actively engages with students with protected characteristics and with 'non-traditional' students to ensure it is representing different groups and that its democratic processes are accessible.
- Officers are elected in free and fair elections, receive training in their representative role, and are supported by skilled staff.
- The students' association has effective democratic and accountability structures. Class reps and student members are able to actively engage in the democratic processes and ensure that the association speaks in a legitimate voice.

Sustainable

A sustainable students' association is able to function effectively and deliver its core representative purpose, at the same or a higher level, year after year. There is continuity of organisational memory, skills, plans and structures.

Why Sustainability is Important

Student officers are elected for one year terms, and most will serve only two. Under the 1994 Education Act students may only serve two paid terms in total at an institution. This means that there is a high turnover of student leadership within the association. If a students' association is not sustainable it has to start from the beginning every year, which means that it can do very little to fulfil its representative purpose.

Sustainability ensures that all the work and resources put in to students' association development are not wasted, and that there is value for money, because the achievements of one year are not immediately lost. Because the students' association and the college are not continually 'reinventing the wheel' structures and activities can be reviewed and improved in an incremental and organic way.

Sustainable does not mean the association is self-funding; a students' association reliant entirely on commercial activity would be very unsustainable as funding could never be guaranteed, and commercial efforts would leave little time for the association to deliver its representative purpose. The college will need to ensure that the students' association has the resources and support it needs to function effectively. The support and advice needed by the association may vary year to year.

Sustainability of structures and resources makes future planning possible, and enables the students' association and college to embark on long term projects and services which improve the student experience.

Key Characteristics

- The students' association has the resilience and flexibility to respond to challenges and solve problems using its own structures and processes.
- The students' association has long term dedicated staff who ensure the organisation continues to work and develop year on year, who manage progression planning and knowledge transfer, and who develop partnership relationships with college staff.
- The students' association is not person dependent or vulnerable to changes in leadership. It is able to maintain its structures and processes, and maintain and increase its levels of effectiveness regardless of changes in personnel and relationships due to elections and staff changes. It is not reliant on the goodwill of individuals.
- The primary responsibility for supporting and advising the students' association is written into the role of a key senior college staff member.
- There is effective progression planning, handover, and induction for students' association officers.
- The students' association is able to make long term plans for the future. Student officers are able to leave a legacy, and incoming officers are able to build on the achievements of previous years.
- The students' association has continuity of funding and resources. These are taken into account during the college's planning processes.
- There is continuity of organisational knowledge, planning and activities, structures, and processes. This includes both internal students' association processes, partnership processes with the college, and resources. The students' association has a college who is committed to partnership working.

Themes

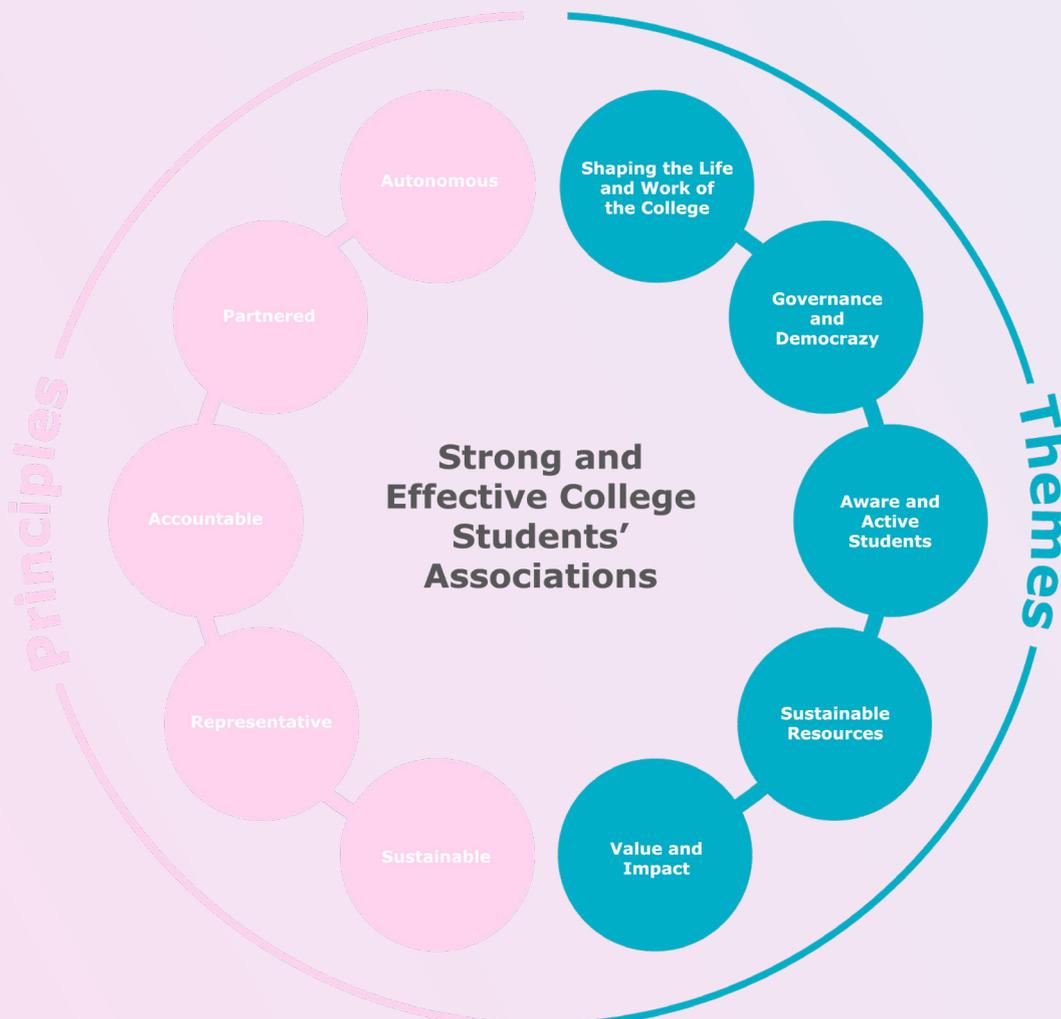
This section looks at the processes, procedures and structures – ‘the scaffolding’ - that enables a students’ association to function. These are the practical steps and actions that students’ associations need to take in order to embed the Principles and to represent the interests of their students effectively.

These development actions have been organised into five thematic areas:

- Shaping the Life and Work of the College.
- Governance and Democracy.
- Aware and Active Students.
- Sustainable Resources.
- Value and Impact.

Each Theme feeds into and enhances the quality of the others. Each Theme also contributes to all five of the Principles. Students’ associations and colleges therefore need to move forward on all of them together.

This section introduces each of the Themes and briefly summarises the elements of development they cover. The Self-Evaluation and Development Planning Tool breaks each Theme down further into actionable measures.



Shaping the Life & Work of the College

This Theme looks at how colleges and students' associations can ensure that students, and the student voice, are at the centre of everything that colleges – and the sector – do. It looks at what actions and processes colleges and students' associations need to put in place if students' associations are to be able to act as co-decision makers within the college and be able to influence its direction for the benefit of students and, ultimately, the college itself.

It is about:

- Ensuring that the students' association is regarded as an integral part of the college's governance, quality development, and decision making processes.
- Ensuring that the students' association is fully involved at all levels of the college decision making processes.
- Developing partnership working relationships between the students' association, senior management, board members, and teaching and nonteaching staff.
- Developing the association into an autonomous partner who is able to identify issues, set the agenda for discussion, and act as a critical friend to the college.
- Recognising that the association is a democratic, representative organisation which must be able to campaign for the needs and interests of its members.
- Ensuring that the college engages and consults with students through the association and seeks where possible to collaborate with the students' association on matters of common interest.

Self-Evaluation Measures

- There is a strong culture throughout the college that the association's influence on college policies, strategies, and delivery is highly valued, that the association is a high priority, and that it should be supported to deliver its core purpose.
- Robust, equal relationships based on trust, respect, and frequent communication exist between the association officers and the college staff. They identify, develop, and agree shared values and a shared vision and objectives for the college.
- All college staff, from the Senior Management Team to teaching staff, understand and value the role of the students' association and have clear responsibilities for supporting and facilitating the association's work.
- The partnership has mutually agreed and established equal partnership structures and processes which are embedded in the appropriate documents. For example, a Partnership Agreement.
- Students' associations act as co-creators and co-decision makers and have input into every decision which impacts on the student experience.
- The students' association acts as co-creators in the review and development of the curriculum and learning and teaching. Students' associations set the agenda for discussion as well as responding to the college's priorities.
- Two members of the college's governing body are students nominated by the students' association.
- The students' association is able to represent their students' interests at both a local and a national level, if they choose, and to work with NUS Scotland to ensure this takes place.
- Skilled, engaged class reps contribute to a smooth flow of information from class reps to the student officers, enabling the development of a college-wide evidenced student voice; the class rep system is integrated into the college's quality processes.

Governance & Democracy

This Theme looks at how students' associations and colleges can ensure that the association has an effective and democratic governance structure in place which enables it to represent the interest of its student members. It looks at how students' associations, with the support of their colleges, can develop robust governance systems.

It is about ensuring that:

- The students' association has organisational autonomy and takes autonomous positions.
- The students' association has appropriate lines of accountability in place.
- All student members have the opportunity to influence the priorities, decisions, and actions of the association and to hold their elected officers to account.
- The students' association and college are able to monitor the governance structures to check they are functioning effectively.
- Governance and democratic processes are sustained year on year.

Self-Evaluation Measures

- Student officers make autonomous decisions - informed by student opinion - on the organisation of the association, its priorities, and its activities. Student members are able to influence and shape the students' association's agenda throughout the year.
- The college and students' association ensure that all major officer roles are elected through free and fair elections.
- The association is structured in a way that best enables it to meet the needs of its student members and to represent their interests to the college.
- Student officers are accountable to their student members for the decisions and actions they take on their behalf.
- The students' association has governance structures which complement and reinforce its democracy and which ensure the students' association is appropriately accountable. The college's governing body has confidence that the association is operating effectively and fulfilling its responsibilities.
- Robust procedures are in place to hold paid officers to account and to safeguard their autonomy and ability to act as a critical friend to the college.
- The governance structures and processes are embedded and sustained year on year.
- The association's governance and democratic structures are reviewed regularly to ensure they are functioning effectively.

Aware & Active Students

This Theme looks at how students' associations and colleges can ensure that all students are aware the association exists, that they understand its representative role, and that they are able to play an active role within it. It looks at how the association is able to develop an evidenced, representative student viewpoint.

It is about ensuring that:

- The students' association is visible to students and that it delivers accessible and relevant services which meet their needs.
- Students feel able to bring their issues and concerns to the students' association.
- The students' association is able to gather views from all student groups.
- Student members engage with the association's democratic governance structures enabling them to function effectively.
- Enthusiastic, motivated students take up leadership roles at all levels of the association, from President to Faculty Reps to event organisers, in order for the association to develop and deliver services and activities effectively.

Self-Evaluation Measures

- The students' association is highly visible in all aspects of students' college experience. All students are aware of their students' association, understand its role as their representative body, and know how to engage with it.
- A significant number of students choose to take part in association activities and fulfil their roles as members of a democratic organisation. This will range from attending association organised social events, bringing their concerns to the attention of the association, and voting in elections. Students are able to see the changes that result from their engagement.
- A significant number of students choose to take a more active role in the association. This may be through volunteering as a course rep, organising events, societies, and campaigns, or running for election.
- There is a pool of motivated students running for major officer posts each year, supporting the sustainability of the students' association.
- All students are able to engage with the students' association and make their voices heard. The students' association is able to understand the perspectives of different groups of students and represent them effectively. This includes students on all campuses, part time, evening, and distance learners, students with protected characteristics, and students with additional or complex support needs.

Sustainable Resources

This Theme looks at how colleges and sector agencies can ensure that students' associations have the resources and support they need to function and to deliver their core purpose effectively. Without resources, students' associations can't function.

It is about:

- Ensuring that the students' association has the resources it needs, particularly funding, paid officers, and students' association staff.
- Ensuring that officers and association staff have the skills they need in order to deliver their roles.
- Ensuring that all resources are managed in a way which supports both the association's autonomy and its partnership with the college.

Self-Evaluation Measures

- The students' association has a sustainable funding stream. The funding is at a level which enables it to have functioning organisational structures, to deliver its core representative purpose, and to have a positive impact on the student experience and the life and work of the college. There is an agreed process and timeline by which the students' association budget is negotiated and signed off.
- The students' association has robust financial management processes.
- The students' association has dedicated, long term staff who provide continuity, sustainability, and a stable skills base which enables the development and operation of an effective students' association.
- The students' association's major office holders are able to focus on their representative role. They have time to plan ways to increase the effectiveness of the students' association, to engage with hard to reach student groups, to attend college meetings and to build relationships with college staff and, where relevant, the college's regional strategic body.
- Volunteer officers and volunteers in general play a valuable role in the association, increasing its capacity, ensuring it has officers who are also current students, enabling students to get involved at all levels and stimulating interest in the major association offices.
- Student officers are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role effectively. There is an effective handover and induction process for new officers.
- Students' association has a dedicated social or office space.

Value & Impact

This Theme looks at how students' associations can prioritise and plan activities that meet the needs of their students and deliver positive change. It looks at how students' associations and colleges can evaluate and measure the partnership's success and ensure that students' associations represent students and have a positive impact on their experience at college. A students' association's success is highly dependent on its college's actions, and so any evaluation of impact must evaluate the contributions of both partners.

It is about:

- Enabling the association to articulate how it is aiming to improve the lives of students, and to evidence and evaluate how well it is succeeding.
- Exploring the other forms of beneficial activities students' associations can deliver, over and above their core representative purpose, and being able to identify the students' association's own priorities.

Self-Evaluation Measures

- The students' association plans its aims and activities to respond to the needs of its students.
- The association has continuity and sustainability of vision and planning and the flexibility to respond to changing contexts and the priorities of newly elected officers.
- The students' association and college evaluate how effectively the students' association is representing students, delivering beneficial impacts to them, and carrying out its plan. They determine whether it needs additional resources and support, and how it can continue to improve and develop.
- The students' association and college demonstrate impact to students and external partners.
- The students' association acts on the evidenced voice of students to represent them and achieves change on their behalf.
- The students' association takes ownership of college services, or works in partnership with the college to deliver them, where students' association leadership can add value to the services.
- The students' association delivers direct services or activities which enhance the student experience. The students' association's core representative purpose is prioritised. These are not essential, and should not be prioritised over the students' association's core representative purpose.

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Website

For full framework and supporting documents see:

<http://dcsa.uk/>

