

Sheffield Students' Union – The University of Sheffield

DRAFT Relationship Agreement

The University of Sheffield is committed to the highest quality education and experience for all students. This Relationship Agreement builds on a strong tradition of working with our students to ensure that we are attuned to their changing needs.

The key principles underpinning excellent working relationships between universities and students' unions have been set out and endorsed by the Committee of University Chairs and the National Union of Students. We have used their work as the basis for this Relationship Agreement between Sheffield Students' Union and The University of Sheffield.

Context

The Relationship Agreement sits within the context of the Students' Union Plan 2016 and The University of Sheffield Strategic Plan 2016-2021. It reflects the mission and purpose of both the Students' Union and the University, as summarised below.

Sheffield Students' Union Purpose: Representing, supporting and enhancing the lives of The University of Sheffield students.

The University of Sheffield Mission: To educate ourselves and others and to learn through doing so, thereby improving the world.

The Relationship Agreement

The University has established in its Statutes that "there shall be a Students' Union of the University and the University shall take steps to ensure that the Students' Union acts fairly and democratically and is accountable for its finances". Sheffield Students' Union has fulfilled that role since 1906. The two organisations have long enjoyed positive and respectful relationships. The Relationship Agreement seeks to confirm and continue this well-established approach, complementing other relevant documents, such as the Code of Practice relating to the Students' Union.

1. Strategic Partnership

We are committed to a spirit of partnership between The University of Sheffield and The Student's Union informing our strategic direction and service-related agreements. We value the informed engagement of Students' Union representatives in University decision-making bodies.

2. Student Centred

We are committed to developing and improving our students' educational and extra-curricular experience. We place this interest in students at the heart of our activities.

3. Respect & Understanding

We are committed to a clear mutual understanding of the distinct roles of the University and the Students' Union and the value that each brings to the relationship. Where disagreements occur, we seek to build on these towards a strengthened outcome, remaining committed to the spirit of partnership.

4. Openness & Trust

We are committed to open and timely communication and consultation, in particular on

issues likely to have an impact on the other party, and on the life of the University community.

5. Mutual Support & Commitment

We are committed to constructive interactions. We want to make the relationship work through appropriate investment of time, people and resources.

6. Independence

We are committed to the value of a strong, student-led Students' Union empowered to determine and manage its own affairs. This aligns with our recognition of the need for the University to balance the interests of a range of stakeholders within an increasingly challenging external context.

7. Accountability

We are committed to the requirements of the 1994 Education Act as regards the relationship between the Students' Union and the University. We will also operate within the reporting requirements of other regulators (where relevant), such as the Charity Commission and Companies House.

8. Diversity & Equality

We are committed to working proactively in support of equality, diversity and inclusion, and to the fair treatment of all staff and students.

In signing this Relationship Agreement, both the University President & Vice-Chancellor and the SU President acknowledge that each organisation will work together to embed the principles across both organisations. Points in support of practical application are set out in an accompanying appendix.

This agreement will be reviewed annually (and amended if necessary) and signed by each President and the President & Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Sir Keith Burnett
President & Vice-Chancellor

Dominic Trendall
Students' Union President 2016-17

Appendix – Practical Application

The eight principles included in the relationship agreement come to life each year in multi-layered partnership. The following are examples:

The Students' Union leads:

- Representation of student opinion to inform university plans and decisions.
- Support to the range of student groups which our students create and lead.
- An independent advice service for our students.
- Advice, guidance and campaigns to improve students' lives.
- A communication channel with students.

The University provides:

- An annual subvention to the Students' Union.
- Use and occupancy of various facilities and physical spaces.
- Student membership of formal university committees including the Senate and the Council.
- Student membership of university project and working groups, as appropriate, such as current work on the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Together we deliver an enhanced student experience:

- Welfare support.
- Development of educational opportunities in support of academic achievement.
- Employability support.
- Community Volunteering.
- Faith provision.
- Sporting opportunities.
- Student Development opportunities.
- Performing Arts.
- Activities supporting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Developing student focussed facilities.
- Accommodation support.

Review, monitoring, development

When the new Students' Union Officers take up their role each year, they will present their goals and objectives for the year to the University, including directly to the University Executive Board.

During their term of office, each Student Officer is paired with a member of the University Executive Board as 'buddy'. This scheme operates flexibly, according to the preferences of each buddy pair. Suggested pairing is proposed each July by the Students' Union, to be confirmed by the University.

Every year a series of opportunities will be provided to allow Student Officers and senior members of University staff to meet with appropriate colleagues and discuss progress. Regular communications take place between the Chief Executive of the Students' Union and the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, as a formal point of contact.

At the end of each year, this relationship agreement will be jointly reviewed to identify whether any changes or improvements should be made.