

Handout 3. Definitions and descriptions of good practice – Student Engagement

Sustainability is a holistic approach necessitating the involvement of the entire community. For universities, students are clearly a significant part of the internal community both in terms of numbers and also in the potential that they offer. Every new intake of students offers a surge of fresh energy and ideas that can be harnessed for the benefit of all. As future leaders, professionals and policy makers, students should also be considered as future change agents given they will interact with wider society where their learning from university will continue to be felt. Students who are actively engaged with sustainability agendas as part of their student experience are more likely to emerge as graduates who are equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience that make positive contributions to sustainability throughout their lives.

	Policy and Strategy	Action Planning	Stakeholder Engagement	Measurement
Activity Area Description	The university's strategies for student engagement are well developed and aligned with university social responsibility and sustainability strategies to maximise impact. Activity is reviewed on a regular basis. There are clear reporting lines into formal university management structures.	Action Plans, which incorporate objectives and associated targets, drive the cycles of activity across the university. This includes the development of mutually beneficial links between student engagement and sustainability.	Key stakeholders (including staff and students) review this activity and shape its development.	The impacts and benefits of student engagement are routinely monitored and evaluated as part of existing university practice. There is evidence of continual improvement and feedback loops.
What does good practice look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student engagement strategy will clearly articulate institutional objectives. The Sustainability Strategy and associated policies will reference student engagement and similarly the student engagement strategy will reference social responsibility and sustainability. A well-articulated strategy will include analysis of issues specific to the institution and a focus that is relevant and appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clear links between the development of student engagement activity and the university's own business planning processes. Clear actions and objectives are evident and the university can trace these objectives through its planning system. It is clear to staff and students where social responsibility and sustainability is included and how it relates to student engagement. There is explicit support for staff and students to engage and these activities are recognised and rewarded effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and external stakeholder views are sought, captured and responded to throughout strategy development and review processes. Student representation is integral to this process and therefore the 'student voice' is captured and responded to throughout the process. Clear communication links are established with a variety of stakeholders, in a meaningful two-way dialogue. Links between social responsibility and sustainability and student engagement are clearly defined and published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A commitment to measuring the impact and benefit of student engagement is embedded into policy, strategy and action plans. There is careful consideration of the reach of the activities undertaken and the university is not afraid to review activities that are not working to ensure that resources are not wasted but redirected to worthwhile activity. The university actively encourages feedback from stakeholders as part of the process. The university can demonstrate a behavioural change which can be tracked over time.
	Communications	Training and Support	Implementation	Links to curriculum
Activity Area Description	The strategy(s) is in the public domain. There is a planned approach to communicating to relevant stakeholders the strategies, associated activities and their implications. The agenda has clear, high-level support within the university.	Commitments and/or targets are linked to named individuals or teams within the university. Staff have either appropriate sustainability skills and knowledge, or opportunities to develop them through access to specialist support.	There is evidence of student engagement activity across the university and beyond through the Student Union, student societies, volunteering programmes, staff groups, trade unions or individual sustainability champions.	Students are actively encouraged to be involved in curriculum development and to support the process of embedding education for sustainability (EFS) at programme level.
What does good practice look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Strategy(s) is in the public domain. A co-ordinated approach to communicating the strategies and associated actions to appropriate audiences will be evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plans that are linked to the Student Engagement Strategy(s) include named individuals or groups who have clearly defined responsibility for implementation. There is a clear mechanism for identifying training needs and delivering that training, guidance and support for those responsible for student engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of activity and engagement between the university and students are apparent. Strong and meaningful partnership activity is developing. Flourishing networks of those involved in student engagement might organically develop across a range of interest areas. Stakeholders within the university begin to identify how their activity can be enhanced to capitalise student engagement and the student experience and they see clear linkages to social responsibility, sustainability and employability. The university encourages learning, reflection and evaluation to improve practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged students are supported in their understanding of sustainability and how it relates to them, the university and the formal and informal curriculum. Support is available for curriculum leads on how to constructively engage with students on curriculum development and explicit links are made between student engagement, the student experience and employability.