

Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff Met Students' Union Relationship Agreement

Introduction and Context

This Relationship Agreement aims to provide a clear and concise account of the relationship between Cardiff Metropolitan University (the University) and Cardiff Met Students' Union (the SU) and outlines the basis for the relationship between the two parties and the principles under which they both shall operate.

By this Agreement the University acknowledges that the SU is a major stakeholder and the primary body representing the student voice.

The SU recognises the need for the University to balance the interests of a range of stakeholders within an increasingly challenging external context.

The Relationship Agreement takes account of the legal requirement on the University, outlined in the Education Act 1994, to ensure that the SU operates in a fair and democratic manner, and the legalities relating to the registered charity status of both parties. It draws on the March 2011 *Guide for members of Higher Education Governing Bodies: Supplementary guide regarding the role of university governing bodies in relation to students' unions* and HEFCW Circular W14/06HE: *Revised guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation* dated 29 January 2014, and complements the Student Charter.

Collective Statement of Aims

The University and the SU seek to work in partnership to enhance their effectiveness based on shared values and behaviours. In working together, and by championing the values of creativity, diversity, freedom and innovation and the behaviours of leadership, trust, courage and accountability we will enable every student to fulfil their potential.

The principles outlined below will apply to all interaction between the parties and to the University's commitment to communicating these principles to all academic and support units throughout the University.

Principles

Strategic Partnership

The University and SU contribute positively to each other's strategic development. We welcome and respect the fact that we have shared aims and strategic directions and that we may sometimes have different views.

Student Voice

The university recognises that the SU is the primary voice of students and that the SU should be afforded the opportunity for informed engagement with university decisions. As such, the university will ensure that the SU is consulted in a timely fashion before decisions are taken which will impact students and their experience.

The University and SU work together to define and promote a range of methods to engage the student voice and student partnership at every level of the institution. There is a shared commitment to engage a student voice that resonates throughout the whole Cardiff Met experience. To achieve this, both parties commit to developing open, constructive and continuous dialogue between students and staff, and amongst students.

Respect and Understanding

There is mutual recognition of the expertise and insight available in both the University and the SU and the value that each party brings to the relationship. There is a shared understanding of the distinct roles and responsibilities of the University and the SU alongside the opportunities to work in partnership. This includes full, open and regular communication and meetings on issues relevant to the SU and the students.

Openness, Trust and Reputation

There is a commitment to regular, open communication, based on the principle of 'no surprises' and where both parties accept the need for compromise, where appropriate and feasible, in the interest of students. The SU will follow the principle of being a 'critical friend' as necessary when engaging with the university's decision-making process.

Independence

The University recognises the value of a strong, independent, student-led SU empowered to determine its priorities and manage its operations.

Accountability

The SU is accountable to students to provide true and fair representation on their behalf and accountable to the University for maintaining this commitment. The University recognises the SU as the primary body representing students and which scrutinises the University on their behalf. The SU recognises and will fulfil its responsibilities to the University, acknowledging its role as supervisor and principal funder (under the 1994 Education Act), and its legal responsibilities as a registered charity and company.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University and the SU support each other in encouraging equality and promoting diversity and inclusion in everything they do, as outlined in the Student Charter.

Funding

In regard of the independence of the SU, the parties will consider and agree the core and additional functions of the SU and agree appropriate funding for the SU having due regard to the current Fee Plan.

Working Relationship

At a strategic level, the working relationship between the University and the SU is based on a number of arrangements including:

- Representation of the student voice via the sabbatical officers and student representatives on the Board of Governors, Academic Board, SU and the sub-committees of these Boards.
- Representation of the student voice by the SU and student representatives on other committees and working groups or equivalent.

- Regular meetings of SU, including sabbatical officers and senior staff with representatives of the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group.
- Support by the University Secretary and Clerk to the Board of Governors for sabbatical officers in their role as governors through training and development and opportunities for briefing and consultation in advance of formal Board meetings, in addition to support for the sabbatical officers in their attendance at committee meetings within the University.

Review

A meeting will be held at the end of each academic year between the University and the SU to review how the partnership has operated over the year.

It is intended that the Relationship Agreement be reviewed at the end of each academic year, allowing the process to be overseen outgoing sabbatical officers, but communicated to incoming sabbaticals before being submitted to the July meeting of the Board of Governors.

Signed on behalf of the Students Union:

Signature: 

Name: Midhun Pavuluri

Title: SU PRESIDENT

Date: 29/07/2021

Signed on behalf of the Students Union:

Signature: 

Name: Venkateswaramma Gonavaram

Title: SU president: Affairs & Community

Date: 29/07/2021

Signed on behalf of the University:

Signature: 

Name: Professor Cara Aitchison

Title: President and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 29/07/2021

Relationship Agreement Implementation Plan 2021/22

1. Introduction

This Implementation Plan supports the 2020/21 Relationship Agreement between Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff Met Students' Union. The actions outline the ways in which the two parties will work together to deliver the Principles of the Relationship Agreement.

The Relationship Agreement and Implementation Plan will be monitored and evaluated through the formal meetings outlined below, allowing both parties to contribute effectively to the success of the University and the overall student experience.

2. Working relationship between the Senior Teams

Terms of Reference will be developed for regular, agenda-led meetings between the Officers and senior staff of the SU and the Vice Chancellor and Executive. The first and final meeting of the parties is to be attended and chaired by the Vice Chancellor, and the remaining meetings will be chaired by the PVC Student Engagement, with the University Secretary in attendance at all meetings.

There are to be a minimum of 5 meetings per year. The first formal meeting of the parties is to take place before the start of the Academic Year 2021/22.

A schedule of these meetings for the full academic year shall be made available at the first meeting. This meeting will also be used to discuss meetings of Board and University Committees and agree appropriate membership from the SU.

3. Support for Incoming SU President- Affairs & Community and SU Vice President- Student Voice

Incoming sabbatical officers will receive a comprehensive introductory programme to the Boards and Committees of the University and its senior staff.

As members of the University Board of Governors, they will receive an introduction to the Chair of the Board of Governors, the role of the board and its members, including an introduction to current Governors. Where possible this will include an invitation to the July meeting of the Board. Induction will also include relevant background information of the institution, such as an introduction to corporate strategy, major governance decisions from the past few years and any other information that will help the sabbatical officers have a full understanding of the institution's governance context.

Further to this and following best practice from the sector, the SU will be able to nominate a specific and suitable SU staff member(s) who will be allowed to assist the sabbatical officers with their governance commitments. This may include, for instance, specific permissions for these staff members to be shown the documents being sent to the Board of Governors in order to ensure the Officers understand what is being presented and empower them to ask the right questions, or the ability for this staff member to attend specific meetings of the Governors in an observer capacity.

4. Governance Committees

Further to the introduction to Boards and Committees of the University, the University will recognise the importance of and support the representation of the student voice at its committees throughout the academic year.

The university will ensure the SU is involved in the setting of the agenda, and that the nominated representative receives all papers allowing sufficient time to prepare for the meeting. This may include consultation with other SU Officers and representatives prior to the meeting.

Sabbatical officers will be given the opportunity to send SU Reports on an as-needed basis.

5. Relationship Review and Development

The SU and the PVC Student Engagement shall undertake a review of the agreement in the final term of the academic year, this will identify opportunities to develop the agreement and enhance the relationship.

The review process will feed into the Relationship Agreement for the subsequent academic year. Should there be any issues or concerns relating to the implementation of the agreement, the matters will in the first instance be raised with the PVC Student Engagement. If the matters are not resolved, they will be included on the agenda for the full meeting.