



Mapping the STEPUP Principles

Steps Towards Partnership

This comprehensive **mapping exercise** has been developed by [Student Voice Australia](#) through a cross-institutional collaboration between students and staff to support and showcase authentic student informed decision making and governance.

Using a developmental model, it maps the [STEPUP Principles](#) that were created through a national sector-wide collaboration around student engagement and partnership as part of a National Senior Teaching Fellowship awarded to Professor Sally Varnham. The Principles assist institutions to develop an approach to student engagement across the broad spectrum of an institution's operations, from learning and teaching to direction and strategy. In acknowledging the variation and diversity of institutions and student cohorts which make up the Australian tertiary education sector, the Principles are sufficiently broad to enable facilitation of student partnership processes by institutions which suit their particular characteristics.

Aspirational in intent, this mapping exercise provides **guidance and motivation** for institutions. It is a starting point for conversations to occur between staff and students in each unique tertiary setting. It is not prescriptive, but a representation of how the Principles can be articulated as practice develops and matures over time. The examples provided are interpretations of how a principle may look in practice, however, they should be viewed as examples of good practice and are not definitive. Student Voice Australia recognises the importance for each institution to develop their own structures, processes and approaches to enable a culture of student engagement, fully responsive to the diversity of the student body and the needs and interests of students.

The intention moving forward is that this will be a living document. **We encourage institutions to get in touch and suggest their own examples of good practice to be included in the document.**

DEFINITIONS

To assist with understanding, definitions are provided for the following terms:

Student leadership: the president and executive officers of the student association, union body or guild elected (usually on a yearly basis) by its student members.

Student representatives: students elected or appointed on a regular basis to sit on faculty/college committees and boards; students representing their cohorts in courses, programs, subjects and the like; any other formal or informal representation of student views on a regular or ad hoc basis, for example as members of working groups.

This mapping exercise provides a framework to:

- **Showcase** current practice and initiatives within your institution.
- **Develop**, compare and share good practice models across institutions.
- **Start** inclusive conversations around mapping each Principle within your institution.
- **Generate** ideas of how to approach each principle by engaging with the sector-wide examples.
- **Map** current practice to identify to gaps and opportunities for further development.
- **Commence** meaningful institution specific benchmarking practices.

Principles	First Steps	Developing	Established	Refining	Outstanding
<p>1. Building Authentic Partnerships</p> <p>Tertiary education institutions, staff and students should work together as partners at all levels of decision-making and governance for the enhancement of quality of learning and teaching, the student experience and outcomes for students. Institutions should create and promote a culture of partnership which is supported by all members of the institution's community.</p>	<p>Students and staff (including senior leaders) define together what partnership means in the context of their institution. Example: University of Adelaide Student Partnership Values</p> <p>The benefits of working in partnership with students within a range of contexts are promoted and encouraged across the institution. Example: UQ Staff Guidelines</p> <p>Student representatives sit at all levels within an institution. Example: USC Student Reps USQ Academic Student Reps</p> <p>The institution actively consults the students' association on all matters which are important to students. Example: La Trobe Recognition of Student Organisations Policy</p> <p>Guidelines are developed to support effective student representation on governance bodies across the institution Example: UQ Staff Guidelines</p>	<p>Staff and student organisations work together to make opportunities to engage in partnership clear to all students. Example: UWA Guild</p> <p>There are both formal and informal opportunities for students to engage in governance processes and decision-making. Example: Flinders University Project Compass USC Student Forums GSA Policy Working Groups</p> <p>Student leaders liaise with and build relationships with different student cohorts to effectively represent a broader perspective. Example: UQ Union's Academic Advocacy Network UTS Collectives</p> <p>Institutions acknowledge the central role of student leaders in building authentic partnerships by resourcing them accordingly. Example: Flinders University 'Be a Better Human' campaign</p>	<p>Students are involved in defining where and how student voice is articulated. Example: USC Student Governance Framework Curtin Course Reps case study RMIT Have Your Say Day case study</p> <p>Staff and students understand what partnership means within the institution Example: University of Adelaide Student Partnership Values UQ Student Staff Partnership Projects Handbook</p> <p>Student representative positions are allocated for particular student cohorts according to need. Example: University of Sydney SRC</p>	<p>Institutions work with students from the beginning of a decision-making process, to identify issues and to reach decisions on solutions, strategy and direction. Example: WSU Student Curriculum Partners UQ Digital Experience case study</p> <p>Representatives are supported to see themselves as leaders and understand their role, value and ability to make change for the benefits of students. Example: CSU Strive Student Leadership Program USC Student Leaders Symposium</p>	<p>A Student Partnership Agreement is developed between students (or the student representative body) and their institution. The SPA is reviewed and updated annually. Example: UWA SPA / UWA SPA case study SVA Good Practice Guidelines</p> <p>Partnership is understood and practiced as a 'way we do things' within the institution to enhance learning and teaching, and the student experience.</p>

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<p>2. Communication – honesty & transparency</p> <p>Transparency and honesty on the part of institutions, staff and students is essential for building trust. An open and trustful relationship is necessary to encourage all members of the institution to work together.</p>	<p>Institutions work with students to determine the most effective means of communicating with different cohorts of students in line with changing technological and physical environments.</p> <p>Students know who their representatives are and how to contact them. Example: The Curtin Guild</p> <p>Communication with students should be clear, targeted, purposeful and avoid jargon.</p>	<p>Institutions seek out appropriate advice from students and specialist services/divisions within the institution on the best methods of communication to reach a diversity of student cohorts.</p> <p>Student representatives actively seek feedback from students they represent and use this feedback to inform their responses as representatives. RMIT case study</p>	<p>Students are aware of the outcomes of their input/engagement (closing the loop) and changes that result. Flinders University Student Success Report</p> <p>Student representatives are provided with the means to communicate with the students they are representing. UQ Student Representation program - funding available for students to host feedback sessions</p> <p>Multiple communication channels are utilised to engage different student cohorts.</p> <p>Students have access to information and data required to enable them to effectively participate in decision making and governance activities.</p>	<p>There is transparency within the institution between management, staff and students around how decisions are made.</p> <p>Staff ensure that student representatives are supported to understand and interpret institutional data.</p> <p>The right of the student association to campaign on behalf of its students is recognised and supported by the institution. The student association exercises this right responsibly.</p>	<p>Student representatives participate in decision making about institutional strategy and priorities.</p> <p>Student representatives and senior staff have conversations about key institutional challenges arising from internal evaluation and external influences, and work together on actions</p>

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<p>3. Strong student leadership</p> <p>Strong student leadership and representation plays a critical role in developing partnership nationally and within institutions. Student leaders play key roles in providing professional representation of student interests. Effective knowledge management, transfer and handover between outgoing and incoming representatives is crucial.</p>	<p>Student representatives sit on institutional boards and committees and have access to appropriate induction and training according to their roles. Example: La Trobe Student Governance and Training Program</p> <p>Student representatives have access to relevant information outlining the student rep role, expectations, and responsibilities. Example: UQ Student Handbook</p> <p>Student representatives on boards and committees regularly attend meetings as scheduled. Example: RUSU SUC Attendance</p>	<p>Student representatives are active contributors to the boards/committees they are members of and their views and opinions are valued and acted upon.</p> <p>Students regularly add items for discussion to the agenda of meetings and present papers and/or make presentations.</p> <p>There are opportunities for student reps to come together to share their experiences as students and to identify systemic issues within the institution. Example: USC Student Senate</p>	<p>Student representatives are committed to knowledge management and the transfer of that knowledge to incoming representatives. Example: GSA Councillor Reporting RUSU Quarterly Reports</p> <p>Student reps understand the key issues affecting the student experience at different levels of the institution, including those affecting specific groups of students. Example: RMIT case study</p> <p>Handover between key student rep roles on institutional boards and committees is staggered to allow for knowledge transfer. Example: UNSW Arc Board Chair and SRC President crossover</p>	<p>Student reps and senior staff are both able to demonstrate the ability to compromise and negotiate in decision making processes.</p> <p>Student representatives have influence and contribute meaningfully to strategic decision making within the institution.</p>	<p>Interaction between student leaders and the university is acknowledged and recognised as positive and professional and working together in the best interests of the institution and the students. Example: ANU Student Partnership Agreement</p> <p>Students are equal and valued contributors to institutional decision-making and governance.</p>

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<p>4. Training & support – as a partnership</p> <p>Appropriate training and support is vital to enabling students to participate professionally and effectively in decision-making and governance. This function is a joint responsibility of both staff and students and requires appropriate resourcing. Support should also be available to staff to assist their partnership with students.</p>	<p>Basic training is developed and delivered for students who participate in governance and decision-making bodies within the institution. Example: UQ student reps training program</p> <p>Induction and training is compulsory for all students who sit on governance and decision-making bodies within the institution.</p> <p>Staff are available to support/mentor incoming student reps when newly appointed to governance and decision making bodies.</p> <p>Student reps know where and how to access personal and professional support within the institution.</p>	<p>Student reps have opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to contribute constructively to decision-making through access to further professional skills development. Example: UQ Student Rep program Flinders University Horizon Award;</p> <p>Student reps can identify and have access to appropriate and willing staff to act as mentors and guides when they need to seek advice.</p> <p>Online student representatives have access to online induction & training. Example: CSU Online Study SRC</p> <p>During recruitment clearly explain the representative role so that students understand what is expected of them and feel confident they can fulfill their duties. Example: GSA Councillors</p>	<p>All student reps receive training relevant to their role. e.g. students on boards & committees, union reps, academic reps. Example: FUSA Topic/Course Rep case study</p> <p>Staff have access to training and guidelines to assist them to support and partner with students. Example: UQ Staff Guidelines for Effective student Representation</p> <p>Student reps receive briefings prior to attending meetings. Example: Student Rep Briefings at LTSU</p>	<p>Students are trained to deliver training for student representatives (paid role) Example: FUSA Topic/Course Rep case study</p> <p>Student representatives have the opportunity to take on more senior representative roles as they progress through their study.</p> <p>Students refine & develop content of training for incoming reps.</p>	<p>Formal recognition of training and extracurricular leadership experience is in place and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Credit • Microcredentials • Recognition on AHEGS

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<p>5. Every student's voice – diversity and inclusivity</p> <p>Systems for engagement should provide opportunities for every student to present views on issues that affect them. It is important that institutions consider processes for incorporating the voice of underrepresented student groups in the diverse Australian sector.</p>	<p>Student representatives are supported/resourced to engage with diverse student cohorts both on and off campus. (multiple campuses)</p> <p>Open and accessible selection processes are in place for student representative roles and opportunities. Example: FUSA Student Representation and Leadership Opportunities</p>	<p>Opportunities for both individual and collective student voices exist within the institution (e.g. course surveys and course reps).</p> <p>Students studying online have equivalent opportunities as on-campus students to shape their learning experience and participate in governance and decision making processes within their institution Example: USQ online student reps CSU Online Study SRC</p>	<p>Recruitment and engagement of diverse/ underrepresented students are factored in from the beginning of a project/process. Honorarium payments are in place for higher level student representative roles to enable the participation of students who do not have the opportunity to volunteer their time.</p> <p>Student representative roles are subject to a recruitment process (such as an expression of interest/elections) that are well publicised and targeted to particular student cohorts where appropriate. Example: UQ Student Rep program</p>	<p>Processes exist for incorporating the voices of underrepresented student groups in governance and decision-making activities as well as conversations/ contributions about/to learning and teaching and the student experience. Example: UNSW Diversity Champions</p> <p>The diversity of student representatives is monitored, evaluated and reported on to ensure that a diversity of students have the opportunity to take on representative roles. Example: GUPSA LGBTI Report</p>	<p>Inclusivity and diversity measures and targets are in place to ensure all students have the opportunity to be heard and to contribute to decision making processes in a meaningful way.</p>

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<p>6. Valuing student voice – recognition of formal and informal engagement</p> <p>All forms of engagement and representation should be valued. The difference students make to institutional decision-making and governance, the quality of learning and teaching and the student experience and outcomes should be clear. Institutions should consider coherent schemes for recognition of student engagement.</p>	<p>The time and effort students invest in representative activities is formally and tangibly acknowledged. Example: Melbourne GSA Honorarium for student reps</p> <p>Student representatives receive adequate reward and recognition for their roles. Example: Arc @ UNSW - every year at Arc Dinner the graduating student board members are presented with official recognition of their contribution.</p>	<p>Student voice is routinely understood as important and valued by the institution and the difference students make to institutional decision-making and governance, the quality of learning and teaching and the student experience and outcomes is acknowledged. Example: Curtin Guild Excellence in Teaching Awards</p> <p>Acknowledgment of student time and expertise is provided in the following ways: payment; closing the loop with public thanks to reps / partners; visibility via websites; exclusive access to opportunities to attend leadership conferences; and recognition through internal rewards program /AHEGS or second transcript. Example: University of Adelaide Adelaide Graduate Award USC Student Sponsorship Scheme</p>	<p>Student representatives are able to identify the skills and capabilities they have developed in their representative roles.</p> <p>Different pressures on students' time is acknowledged and actively managed within committees.</p> <p>Clear reward and recognition guidelines and processes across the institution enable equitable recognition of student contributions.</p>	<p>The means of reward and recognition in individual institutions is included within an infrastructure formulated by all members of the institution in partnership.</p> <p>Recognition includes academic credit, payment, specific awards and transcript recognition, and internships for student representative activities.</p>	<p>Opportunities exist to build representative, leadership and governance experiences into specific units of study.</p> <p>Student voice is valued within the institution and is central to all institutional initiatives, strategies and direction.</p>

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<p>7. A national presence – for facilitation & support</p> <p>A national presence supported by the sector is needed to sustain and strengthen the culture of partnership to support and build capacity in tertiary institutions, staff and students.</p>	<p>A network exists to support and promote good practice for student engagement through partnership within the tertiary education sector. Example: SVA Practitioner Network</p> <p>National student bodies are engaged by any national presence in active collaboration.</p>	<p>An annual national conference is held to engage students and institutions within the sector to share good practice and discuss current issues. Example: SVA Symposium</p> <p>Opportunities exist to bring students together from across institutions to share and learn from each other. Example: SVA Student Summit</p>	<p>National level training developed and delivered for students and staff building on good practice identified across institutions and appropriate for the Australian tertiary education sector.</p> <p>Senior leaders / managers recognise the importance of funding staff and students to undertake national level training when available.</p>	<p>National education sector awards celebrating student partnership achievements to assist in demonstrating sector wide commitment to student partnership. Example: sparqs Student Engagement Awards</p>	<p>A national presence is supported by the sector to sustain and strengthen the culture of partnership and build capacity in tertiary institutions, staff and students.</p> <p>National presence contributes to the development of policy and national processes to support the development of student partnership in governance and decision making across the sector</p> <p>National presence is acknowledged as a key stakeholder in the tertiary education sector in Australia.</p>