

**Student Experience Strategy**

2020

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# Student Experience Strategy

### Introduction

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**Strategy 2020: Building Success** sets out our vision of becoming “an enterprising and innovative community, renowned internationally, with an unrivalled student learning experience”.

In particular, a commitment is given to creating “a student learning environment that integrates academic theory and challenge with work-related experiences” and “developing highly valued graduates”; contributing to our stated purpose “to deliver high quality education and research to add value to the social, cultural, economic capital of the communities we serve”.

The purpose of this Student Experience Strategy is to deliver the student experience ambitions of Edinburgh Napier University as set out in **Strategy 2020**, focusing on the experience out with formal teaching and assessment. In particular, this strategy builds on the Student Experience Strand of the **Academic Strategy**:

In delivering this strategy we want to achieve:

- **Students enjoying their university experience and benefitting from a strong sense of community.**
- **An inclusive environment that celebrates and supports the achievements of all, valuing diversity of experience, background, culture and ability.**
- **A strong and successful Students’ Association.**
- **Students encouraged and supported to engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activity including sports, societies and volunteering.**
- **Extra-curricular achievement recognised and captured via the Higher Education Achievement Award (HEAR).**
- **Students working in partnership with staff, informing, influencing and shaping decision making through involvement as programme and School representatives.**
- **Access to excellent support and advice services.**
- **High quality facilities (physical classroom and other, IT, residential).**
- **Positive interactions with the University from application enquiry to alumni.**

We have identified the following Indicators of Success:

### **Our students:**

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A student population that is highly inclusive, diverse and representative in terms of background, ethnicity, gender, disability and age. High levels of student engagement in both Students' Association and extra-curricular activity and an effective student representative system.

### **Our programmes:**

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High levels of student satisfaction, as measured by surveys including NSS, PTES, PRES, along with low levels of student complaints. Recognition given for volunteering and engagement.

### **Our graduates:**

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Excellent student outcomes, including good awards, employment and student business start-ups. A strong and supportive alumni community.

In addition to building upon the Academic Strategy, this Student Experience Strategy is also linked to and complements other thematic strategies and operational plans. In particular, our commitment to working in partnership with our students to help us achieve our goals is set out in our **Student Partnership Agreement** with Napier Students' Association (NSA). Our commitment to ongoing improvements can also be seen in the operational plans of schools and professional services. Details of specific projects aimed at supporting our ambition of delivering an excellent personalised student experience can be found in the **Corporate Plan**.

### Approach

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We recognise the benefits of adopting a holistic view of the student journey, from initial enquiry through to graduation and beyond, founded on our academic provision. We also recognise that we can learn from good practice elsewhere. As such, we will actively seek out that good practice and contribute to it. We will take an evidenced-based approach to new developments, build on and contribute to that evidence-base.

Our ambitions will be underpinned by a delivery plan and progress will be monitored and reviewed through the Student Experience Committee and annual planning and performance round. An initial route map is given in **Appendix 1** with relevant performance indicators in **Appendix 2**.

#### Section 1 *Valuing our Students – our ambitions*

This section outlines the broad aspirations we have for our students and what we plan to do to achieve them. Essentially the why and the what. The initial route map in Appendix 1 provides some initial headline information on the how and when.

#### Section 2 *Opportunities – the catalyst for transformational change*

This section captures more detail around the theme at the heart of the strategy, which is to encourage ALL our students to seek opportunities to develop personally and professionally in line with current needs and future aspirations, engage in these opportunities and learn from their experiences.

#### Section 3 *Facilities and Services – a fundamental requirement*

This section sets out our shared commitment to provide all our students access to high quality facilities and services. Whilst this commitment will be delivered through a series of separate plans and strategies, such as the emerging Estate Strategy, the aim of this section is to provide clarity around that what and *why* to enable effective engagement with those developing the *how*.

### Section 1: Valuing Our Students - *our ambitions*

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Our aspirations for and interactions with our students are underpinned by our University values.

- **We expect to be recognised as - professional, innovative, ambitious & inclusive**
- **We will act with – respect and integrity**
- **We will all feel – proud, confident, challenged and supported**

We value all our students and are committed to delivering an excellent personalised student experience. This means we will work to provide opportunities for growth for all our students, through encouraging active learning outside the classroom as well as inside. We will also continue to focus on providing high quality facilities and services for all our students, where every interaction matters.

This commitment is given to all our students, whether they be: undergraduate, taught postgraduate or research postgraduate; studying on-campus in Edinburgh, internationally with a partner or online; full-time or part-time; and joining us straight from school or as a direct entrant. There is no single student experience at Edinburgh Napier: we recognise that each student is different, coming to us from different backgrounds, with different experiences and with different aspirations. We acknowledge and celebrate that diversity.

Ultimately we recognise that our students have joined us to grow and develop, to transform their lives. We therefore want to challenge our students and provide opportunities that encourage growth and development, both inside and outside the classroom. We also expect our students to benefit from a strong sense of identity and community through our programmes.

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In order to simplify delivery, our ambitions have been broken into six strands, five of which are covered in this section, with the sixth being covered in section 3. Our high-level roadmap in Appendix 1, captures our high level commitments against each strand across a timeline to 2020.

# Student Experience Strategy

## 1. Student Partnership

We believe it is key to involve our students as partners in decision-making, so we will continue to actively engage students in our plans in partnership with the Napier Students' Association (NSA). We expect every student to be ambitious for themselves and to actively participate in learning, personal and professional development, broader student life opportunities and citizenship. We expect students and staff to work together to enhance the student experience, with students actively informing, influencing and shaping decision making through their involvement as programme and School representatives. Our student partnership agreement (SPA) sets out the specific priorities we will collaborate with the NSA to deliver over the next three years.

## 2. Engagement

We welcome feedback from our students, as by better understanding our students' experiences we can work to improve the services and opportunities we offer. We will therefore actively seek feedback from our students through internal student satisfaction surveys, staff student liaison committees and programme board studies and will encourage our students to take part in external surveys. We will consider the feedback we receive and respond to that feedback. We also recognise we could do more to inform students of the actions we have taken as a result of their feedback and so will identify and implement methods to help address this.

We will strive to maintain relationships with our students after graduation and will encourage ongoing interaction through active alumni engagement.

We will seek to understand our students' expectations. Expectations and mutual responsibilities are set out in our **Student Charter**. We will also seek to articulate our expectations of our students by communicating with our students in ways that are meaningful to them, whether face-to face, by letter, email, text or social media.

In order to ensure a consistent approach which promotes constructive dialogue, we will develop and implement a student engagement strategy.

## 3. Student Opportunities

We want to ensure that all our students enjoy their university experience and graduate with positive and lasting memories, having been encouraged and supported to engage in a wide range of activities. A key focus of this strategy is therefore to provide opportunities for learning outside the classroom to enable our students to develop skills and attributes that will complement their academic studies. Engagement in these co-curricular opportunities will help our students in their transition to becoming graduates who are confident, enquiring and possess the skills for employment and enterprise that are valued nationally and internationally. More background is provided with regards to this important theme in Section 2.

## Student Experience Strategy

### 4. Recognition

We believe that co-curricular activity should be recognised and recording alongside that which is academic credit. We are therefore committed to developing a robust means of recognising the associated learning and achievements and are going to implement HEAR 6.1. We will also introduce an associated Napier Excellence Award which will recognise participation in a range of developmental activities, both academic credit bearing and co-curricular.

More background is provided with regards to this important theme in Section 2.

### 5. Mentoring and Development

We recognise the contribution that mentoring can make to enabling our students in identifying stretching goals and working towards achieving these goals, through providing constructive challenge and support. We will undertake a review of personal development tutoring to better serve and realise our ambitions for our students. We will also seek to extend opportunities for students to be mentored and to be mentored.

In delivering our student experience strategy we will also seek to involve our alumni through inviting them to mentor students, deliver guest lectures and offering internships and placements to current students. We will also seek to involve current students in the recruitment of future students through, for example, involvement in open days, school visits and summer schools.

### Section 2: Opportunities - *the catalyst for transformational change*

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The development of graduate attributes, including employability, depends increasingly not just on academic study but also on learning from experience. This includes applying formal teaching, learning and assessment study outside the classroom and developing a wide range of transferable or soft skills. These in turn reinforce academic learning and help with academic success.

Key to achieving our ambition of enabling and empowering our students to become confident and enquiring graduates with well-developed graduate attributes is to encourage ALL our students to seek opportunities to develop personally and professionally in line with current needs and future aspirations, engage in these opportunities and learn from their experiences. Our students will be encouraged to personalise their experience through identifying, engaging with and reflecting on opportunities relevant to their personal and professional aspirations.

Edinburgh Napier and the NSA will encourage our students to identify, engage and reflect on these opportunities against specified criteria. Some of these opportunities may be offered as part of a student's programme of study and carry academic credits. Some will be accessed by students themselves. Many will be non-academic credit bearing extra-curricular activities and it is therefore proposed that these will be recognised and recorded through HEAR 6.1.

These opportunities can be broadly categorised as:

- **work related**
- **international**
- **innovation and enterprise**
- **volunteering**
- **academic citizenship**
- **sports, culture and society**

In addition to opportunities provided by us, students will be encouraged to identify opportunities for themselves.

We will introduce a suite of Napier Excellence Awards for students who have gained experiences in multiple categories. Depth will be recognised as well as breadth. Experience gained as part of a student's programme of study as well as accredited through HEAR 6.1 can count towards the achievement of the Napier Excellence Award.

We will also seek to increase the quantity and range of paid opportunities available to our students by offering part-time employment across the University, including casual staff, student ambassadors, internships and placements. Involving our students in real-life projects to enhance our services and provision is another clear opportunity for experiential development with a mutual benefit.

Opportunities to be mentored and to be a mentor will also be provided to enhance the learning benefits. Likewise, engagement in university life will also be encouraged post-graduation through the development of a stronger and more active alumni community.

Through encouraging our students to engage in and learn from opportunities outwith the classroom we will achieve the following objectives identified in the **Academic Strategy**:

- **Placement & enterprise opportunities for all students.**
- **Students as researchers at all levels in every programme.**
- **Increased international study opportunities and increased outward mobility.**
- **Strong partnership with NSA to enhance experience, engagement and volunteering.**
- **Volunteering opportunities expanded in partnership with NSA and recognised in HEAR transcripts.**
- **Increased opportunities for, and participation in, sports and societies.**
- **Effective programme representative system and peer mentoring in all areas.**
- **High quality and accessible support for academic and pastoral issues.**

### Section 3: Facilities and Services - *a fundamental requirement*

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We are committed to providing to all our students with access to **high quality facilities and services**, which are environmentally sustainable, regardless of where and what they are studying. This includes physical infrastructure, online facilities and access to services.

We recognise that everyone is an individual and want to continue to build an inclusive environment that celebrates and supports the achievements of our academic community and values the diversity of experience, background and cultures. We will therefore design inclusive services and empower our students to access and benefit from excellent support and advice services regardless of their mode of attendance or location of study. For example, ensuring access to appropriate facilities and services will be a critical factor when developing transnational education opportunities.

We will strive to deliver excellent customer service founded on the principle that every interaction matters, extending this principle to our applicants and potential applicants, thus responding to queries in a timely manner.

We will seek to understand our students' expectations and update **Student Charter** to reflect our mutual responsibilities, designing and delivering our face-to-face and online services to meet, and ideally, exceed, these expectations. We will also seek to articulate our expectations of our students by communicating with our students in ways that are meaningful to them, whether face-to face, by letter, email, text or social media.

We will deliver a set of standardised, core and comparable services that provide a platform for more specialist support, advice and guidance. We will tailor our services to reflect the different backgrounds, experiences and needs of our students, and personalise our support and communications through providing high quality systems.

We will provide personalised support and guidance to enable students to proceed through their academic career with us as effectively as possible. Each interaction from enquiry through to application, matriculation, study, graduation and beyond will deliver excellent levels of customer service that will leave the student feeling well-informed and valued.

Our online provision is an essential part of the student experience and should be welcoming, easy to use and with access to information and discussion fora which allow students from around the world to interact with each other and our staff. Our staff will be well informed and will engage fully with the needs of those studying with the University, regardless of where or what they are studying.

We want our students to develop trust and reliance in our facilities and services so that they can work with us to develop improvements. However, if things go wrong, for whatever reason, we will take concerns seriously and seek to resolve difficulties informally, where possible, and within good time.

The activity to deliver these ambitions are driven through a number of strategic and projects, rather than specifically through the delivery plan:

- **Estate Strategy**
- **eServices for Students**
- **Information strategy**
- **Internationalisation strategy**

	Activity	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
<b>1. Student Partnership</b>	a	Deliver Commitments in SPA 1	X	X	X	
	b	Review SPA 1 and Develop SPA 2			X	
	c	Deliver commitments in SPA 2				X
<b>2. Student Engagement</b>	a	Develop and implement student engagement strategy and review/revise the Student Charter accordingly	X	→	→	→
	b	Identify, trial and evaluate methods to improve the timeliness of our response to feedback, with support from the Student Survey Steering Group	X			
<b>3. Student Opportunities</b> (Note: there will be different solutions for UG, TPG & RPG)	a	Scope the change required to deliver strategic objectives in relation to work-related learning, employer engagement and volunteering, develop a plan and implement	X	→	→	
	b	Scope the change required to deliver our strategic objectives in relation to student mobility, develop a plan and implement <sup>1</sup>	X	→	→	
	c	Work with Dean LTA to embed programme design focus on employability & enterprise including social enterprise		X	→	→
	d	Work with Dean LTA to embed programme design focus on innovation & enterprise including students as researchers			X	→
<b>4. Recognition of Student Achievement</b>	a	Define requirements for UG HEAR 6.1, including Napier Excellence Award	X			
	b	Trial HEAR 6.1 and UG Napier Excellence Award and roll out		X	→	
	c	Define TPG Equivalent of Napier Excellence Award			X	
	d	Trial TPG Napier Excellence Award and roll out				X
<b>5. Student Mentoring/ Development</b>	a	Review Personal Development Tutoring System (UG) & develop revised mentoring approach		X		
	b	Pilot revised UG mentoring system and roll out			X	→
	c	Review Personal Development Tutoring System (TPG) & develop revised mentoring approach				X
	d	Pilot revised TPG mentoring system and roll out				
	e	Review Continuous Professional Development Framework for RPGs				

<sup>1</sup>This includes programme design as a key enabler

Note: This initial route map focuses on specific actions to enable our students to identify opportunities to develop personally and professionally in line with current needs and future aspirations, engage in these opportunities and learn from their experiences. The route map will be underpinned by a more detailed delivery plan and oversight will be provided by the Student Experience Committee. The student experience strategy is also linked to and complements other thematic strategies and operational plans from schools and professional services with key commitments for a given year included in the Corporate Plan.

## Measuring our Success

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The following are Court-level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to this strategy:

- **Student satisfaction (NSS Overall Satisfaction)**
- **Graduate employability**
- **Entrants to programmes with work-related experience element**

The following are PIs from the Academic Strategy, relevant to this strategy:

- **Module evaluation**
- **Student satisfaction (PTES overall satisfaction)**
- **Graduate-level employment**
- **Placement and enterprise opportunities (under development)**
- **International study opportunities and outward mobility (under development)**
- **High quality and accessible support for academic and pastoral issues (Academic support section in NSS)**
- **Good awards at honours**
- **Good retention and progression**

The following are additional PIs that will be used or developed:

- **Student satisfaction (PRES Overall satisfaction & International student overall satisfaction)**
- **Specific PIs may also be developed in relation to the commitments in the SPA and the student engagement strategy once these have been agreed**

The Student Experience Committee will review progress against the strategy and will provide Academic Board with an annual update.