

# University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and Student Union

## Student Partnership Agreement 2024-25



UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WEST of SCOTLAND

**UWS**









# SECTION A

## PURPOSE, APPROACH & VALUES

### SPA: PURPOSE

We believe partnership should be at the heart of a 21st Century University. To reinforce this, the Students' Union, and the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) have agreed to annually review the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). The purpose of this Student Partnership Agreement is to outline the areas in which UWS, and the Students' Union will work together in partnership to enhance the student learning experience. The 2024-2025 agreement reinforces our commitment to working together to create a contemporary, inspirational, and collaborative learning environment where everyone is valued and has the opportunity to enhance the learning experience, both for themselves and future students.

### SPA: APPROACH

We agree that our partnership approach is based on mutual respect, trust, and genuine commitment to instil and enhance feelings of belonging and worth. Section A provides an overview of partnership opportunities at UWS and describes how all students can get involved. Section B identifies our agreed priorities and actions, which will be the focus of our shared activity across the next academic session. Section C provides an update on the successes achieved through our partnership.

### SPA: VALUES

The Students' Union and UWS believe that the SPA continues to be a powerful driver of positive change, promoting critical reflection and enhancement activity across the work and activity of the University. Through a united approach to partnership working, we actively draw upon the diverse perspectives, experience, and expertise available across the University. Our Partnership Agreement emphasises the significance and importance of the role of students in decision-making at UWS.

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PARTNERSHIP AT UWS?

The commitment to partnership can be clearly seen in the University's Strategy 2025 and Learning and Teaching Thematic plan. The University and the Students' Union also have a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out how the two organisations work together in a practice manner. This Student Partnership Agreement is written for all partners, including students, academics, professional service staff and senior managers, vigorously supporting a breadth and depth of reflection on our current relationships and practices. The 2024-2025 SPA explicitly places students at the centre of the enhancement work of our university.



# SECTION B

## PRIORITIES AND ACTION

### EDUCATION

We will continue to work together to keep developing the involvement of students in improving their educational experience at UWS. We will:

- Work in partnership with students and staff to create a truly inclusive curriculum to ensure academic and student support comes together.
- Provide opportunities for students to work in partnership to shape the curriculum as standard practice in partnership with staff
- Continue to collaborate to promote positive practices and compliance with agreed policies.

### STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

We will work together to ensure students have the opportunity to work in partnership and participate fully in life at UWS. We will:

- Achieve a sense of belonging by working together to develop knowledge, confidence, and identity through meaningful interaction between staff and students
- Collaborate internally and externally to ensure an enhanced student experience relevant to students' interests and future goals
- Promote involvement with societies and sport clubs to develop meaningful connections and community
- Enhance membership of academic societies through committees, forums, and other feedback collaboration opportunities

### WELLBEING AND STUDENT SUPPORT

We will support students' wellbeing throughout their academic journey as well as during transition periods, while being mindful of the additional challenges: external (cost of living, changes in education policies, UKVI guidelines, funding etc) and internal (UWS changes in strategy, policy, etc). We will aim to work in partnership to streamline UWS processes and support continuity while we respond to external and internal challenges. We will:

- Focus on creating an inclusive environment where individuals can thrive by applying support through an intersectional lens
- Promote positive mental and physical health by continued focus on connectedness and belonging in partnership with wellbeing and student services
- Co-create on EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) topics through inclusive dialogue in partnership with the People and Student Wellbeing Team
- Continue to foster a sense of community between our diverse student body at UWS, encouraging supportive and empathetic behaviour towards each other.

## **SECTION C**

# **SPA PARTNERSHIP SUCCESSES**

The following section provides an overview of partnership achievements during 2023–2024 which are successes we will continue to build on as we progress this new partnership agreement for 2024/2025.

### **EDUCATION**

The Student Partnership Forum is run in partnership with students and staff, attended by students, Union, and University colleagues to ensure true partnership working in breaking down barriers to retention and progression. The Director of Student Success, Dr Emily McIntosh, model on 'Early Intervention' was implemented to ensure students have a supportive learning environment to succeed in their academic journey and to develop their sense of belonging throughout the University. The Forum was also recognized by SPARQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) in their recent Student Engagement Awards for the strong partnership approach that the Forum encourages.

Introduction of Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) for learning and support to enhance student's transition into and throughout UWS, promoting the development of group-based learning strategies and independent, critical thinking. Embedded peer learning and support interventions also promote a sense of belonging.

The Student Representation Working Group which is a joint group with UWS Staff, Union staff and students reconvened to address issues caused by external challenges, the Working Group developed contingency plans effective for both staff and students ensuring Student Reps during the year were fully supported.

The Student Union Representation Team worked closely with the UWS IT Department to implement a new Rep Teams group which housed Rep Training and supported increased communication via Teams Channels for each School and Division.

A selection of examples of positive practices and collaboration between students, staff and industries during AY 2023–24 were shared during "Positive Practices Workshop" in February 2024:

- Dr Zorlu Senyuçel, School of Business and Creative Industries (BCI), from London campus outlined importance of having realistic expectations of what students' priorities outside of education may be (e.g. work/family/managing expenses etc) and the importance of promoting positive relationship between students and educators which can be accomplished by creating a strong learning environment.
- David Scott, BCI, emphasized importance of developing the "student voice" in art programmes.

- Dr Xiuli Guo, BCI, shared her findings based on the Borton's model of reflection to evaluate students' satisfaction to highlight how positive practices are appreciated by the students.
- Prof. Margaret Hughes, BCI, advised on how the School is keeping close contacts with students and alumni, emphasizing the importance of showing respect and recognition when communicating with students.
- Dr Hayley McEwen, School of Health, and Life Sciences (HLS), & Dr Johanne Miller, School of Education and Social Sciences (ESS) presented the outcomes of the Mental Health Literacy tool/resource, which was co-created (4 weeks co-production in May 2023) with students for students.

### **STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Over 25 students were employed as buddies via the Student Success Team across all campuses working with staff and students to represent and support students. The Student Success Team worked in partnership with students and buddies at external events, ministerial visits and focus groups.

The Student Success Systems and Analytics Manager worked in partnership with the Student Union and students to develop a festival approach to the Welcome Event. This was for new and continuing students and where possible, employed students to support the festival approach. This included musicians from Commercial Music programme in BCI and Student Buddies from all schools on each campus with a focus on students supporting students.

In continuing the students supporting students' approach, UWS introduced PASS and the aspiration to work with Student Reps and Academic Societies. Student Buddies led campus tours, working directly with Programme teams, and included engagement with the Gym and Student Union on each tour.

The Student Success Team worked with Student Union Officers to create opportunities for graduates under the university graduate programme to actively encourage applications from UWS graduates in permanent employment roles.

The Student Union has held regular catch ups and worked closely with UWS Communications team to utilise the Student App to share activities including Big Elections and Big Awards.

The UWS Nursing Society is a standing item on the HLS Pre-registration Nursing, Student Staff Liaison Group (SSLG) meeting agendas. The Student Opportunities Coordinator (Students' Union) has provided input to term one (23/24) SSLG meetings to promote engagement with academic societies.

The UWS Careers Service and Student Opportunities ran workshops at Paisley Campus and London Campus to support and encourage students to submit their Volunteer Recognition Award, this was attended by 30 students.

International Students at UWS had an opportunity to join #WeAreInternational UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) campaign relaunched in May 2023 to become International Student Ambassadors representing UWS students.



The campaign was first established with the intention of turning the tide against a backdrop of negative political and media rhetoric, the campaign also aims to celebrate and communicate the cultural, social, and civic contribution that international students make to the UK. One of the London campus students also attended a UKCISA event in November 2023.

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

The Student Success Team in partnership with students, the Union, and staff, supported students to succeed and promoted wellbeing with the Early Intervention Model to ensure students felt connected.

Students received check in calls, were offered support and signposted to all resources in partnership with the Union and wider student services teams. Working together created the ability to view a wider, holistic sense of challenges that students face, allowing barriers to be removed to make sure students were supported, creating a sense of belonging.

There are two members of staff in post who work in student engagement specifically, looking for opportunities, events, and projects to foster a sense of community, engagement and belonging in our student body. In partnership with students, 'how to' videos were produced to support students with various processes.

Student Buddies helped to promote physical health through free gym membership.

The University, Students' Union and Team UWS worked in partnership to develop a Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA). The SMHA is a project led by Think Positive – Student Mental Health Scotland on behalf of NUS Scotland, and is a formal agreement to work jointly on promoting student mental health on campus. The agreement details actions which set out to change perceptions of mental health among the university community, challenge negative attitudes, and promote positive outcomes and supportive strategies to maximise student resilience. The agreement will be reviewed and developed each academic year, and signed by the executive lead in both the University and Students' Union.

Postgraduate students had the opportunity to become Mental Health Champions (MHCs) as part of a Vice Chancellor Funded project called; 'It's good to talk co-producing a mental health literacy (MHL) resource' with students for students. PG students undertook the Mental Health First Aid award as part of their training and co-produced a MHL resource consisting of topics relevant to today's students such as the influence of social media on their mental health, and where to seek help both internal and external to the university. The MHCs delivered an interactive workshop to around 1000 undergraduate students during Induction Week and to all new PG (postgraduate) and PGR (postgraduate research) students in two schools.

The Student Union in partnership with UWS Counselling service ran 'Paws Against Stress' alongside Mental Health week, this was attended by 296 students and staff. This was different to previous years and enabled the Counselling Team to not only



promote their service but also offer support to students who attended. This activity was triangulated with the Student Union Big Election which enabled greater promotion resulting in increased voter turnout.

Undergraduate Psychology ran 'Writing Power Hour' which was student-led, facilitated by Dr Amanda Simpson. This was protected time (extra-curricular) for students to have a private space (in person) to work on some aspect of their degree. This was run by L10 students who have written a manuscript which has been accepted for publication about the success of the scheme.

The Psychology course introduced the Student Assistant Researcher (STaR) scheme facilitated by Dr Graham Scott. This was an opportunity for L9 students to work alongside psychologists who have a project ongoing as a research assistant for one term, to gain valuable research and employability skills. The above Power Hour was developed from a STaR project.

The UWS Alumni Development fund supported International Student Groups including Nepalese Society, Chinese Students and Scholars Association and Afro-Caribbean Society to hold events to share cultural experiences.

International Student Support (ISST) held their annual feedback sessions and focus groups with students in April and May resulting in a review of existing processes within visa extensions for PhD and DBA students resulting in a reduction in impact of viva delays. Visa support was offered to all international students affected by the cyber incident and, where appropriate, exceptional visa extensions were negotiated with UKVI.

ISST collaborated with a range of student services to create tailored information resources and offer new targeted support sessions for international students. Collaborative working on visa extension and Graduate Route reporting processes improved communications with the outcome of reduced stress levels for students and staff.

UWS Rep Society (URS) were invited to attend the Offer Holders Session in Paisley. It was a great success and URS had the opportunity to speak to incoming students about their experience as a student and the opportunities presented by becoming a Student Rep. During the Offer Holders Session, URS saw the potential to reach out to incoming students by providing their social media as a means of contact for any further student related questions. URS then attended the Offer Holders Session in Ayr and duplicated the process. URS has now been invited to attend future events with the Student Recruitment Team.

# THE AGREEMENT

This partnership agreement communicates our commitment to continue to work in partnership to enhance and improve UWS for all members of the University.

Signed on behalf of  
University of the West of Scotland

Signed on behalf of the  
Students' Union of UWS

UWS Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Students' Union President



# SPA WORKING GROUP ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Student Partnership Agreement was created in partnership with staff and students, thank you to the following members of the SPA Working Group:

- Anastasia Korniienko – Student Services International Advice
- Astrid Smallenbroek – Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Consultant
- Claire Lumsden – Student Representation and Training Coordinator
- Emmett McKenna – School Officer, Computing, Engineering and Physical Science (2023-24)
- Gavin Baxter – Lecturer, Computing, Engineering and Physical Science
- Gemma Murrell – Psychology Representative, UWS Rep Society President (2023-24)
- Helen McLean – Senior Quality Officer
- Iain McLellan – Associate Dean: Learning and Teaching
- Jenny Morton – Student Hub Manager
- Julie Clark – Senior Lecturer, Health and Life Science
- Muhammad Rauf Saddique – Vice President Student Development Elect (2024-25)
- Omowaleola Adebayo – President Elect (2024-25)
- Subuola Elufioye – Vice President Education (2022-24)
- Susan Docherty – Early Intervention Specialist Team
- Timiebi Oyinpere – Vice President Education Elect (2024-25)





UNIVERSITY OF THE  
WEST *of* SCOTLAND  
**UWS**

**YOUR** **union**  
UWS