



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

# Students as Partners

**STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC)**

# BACKGROUND

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University Council approved the Student Advisory Council on 20 October 2017, as an outcome of the University's 2017 Review of Student Representation at UOW. Formed in May 2018, the Student Advisory Council is the peak body of student representatives, formally recognised with the University of Wollongong Governance Organisational structure, reporting to the Vice-Chancellor.

A key component of the 2017 review of student representation was identifying the barriers that limit the opportunity for the student voice to be heard in the reporting of issues and concerns to the UOW Executive and University Council. The review resulted in a modernised student representative framework and an opportunity for the University to continue developing an agile and robust partnership with students.

Recommendations to implement a framework of representation built on best practice were approved by Council. This framework enables deep engagement with students and maximises opportunities for student voice to be heard in governance and decision making at UOW.

Under the heading, 'Students as Partners' the recommendations included:

- a) Create a working party from the Student Advisory Council to work with the University (Student and Accommodation Services Division and Governance and Legal Division) to create a Partnership Agreement that encompasses the ethos of students as partners and the involvement of student voice. The Partnership Agreement is to be presented to the University Council for consideration and feedback.

# SCOPE

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The University of Wollongong and the Student Advisory Council (SAC) agree that Student as Partners:

- Encompasses the ethos of Students as Partners as generally understood and seeks to build a community, which fosters inclusive partnerships.
- Recognises that students are co-creators of their learning experience.
- Seeks to develop a mutually beneficial learning partnership to strengthen student representation in decision-making, including curriculum design, course development and governance.
- Will guide and strengthen the working relationship between the University and its students to actively encourage a reciprocal relationship of respect and provide an exceptional student experience.
- Supports a culture of partnership through the co-creation of shared goals and outcomes.
- Recognises students have a life-long association with the University and its reputation.

Students as Partners does not set out defining roles but sets out expectations for students and university staff to work together and defines the core values that will reflect and guide the relationship.



# STUDENTS AS PARTNERS

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Student as Partners is not a transactional concept but one that fosters an inclusive community that continually improves the outcomes and experiences of staff and students.

Students as Partners provides a framework for strengthening the relationship between students and the University. Students as Partners enhances student voices that are actively embedded in the governance, curriculum and content delivery of all programs provided by UOW. The relationship will be flexible, and promote a mutual understanding of the different needs of the University and that of the students, to promote inclusivity and a sense of wellbeing and belonging in a safe and supportive study environment.

This collaboration provides the University with a greater understanding of the needs, ambitions, values and ideas of students to inform the strategic and operational objectives of the University. Students will have greater involvement and understanding of the action and reasoning of the University's activities.

## CORE VALUES

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Students as Partners is underpinned by a set of core values and expectations to ensure students and staff are working together to enhance all facets of the student experience through:

- **RESPECT & EMPATHY** – We respect each other as valued members of the University community. We work together to create and promote a culture of partnership at all levels of decision-making. We listen proactively and seek to understand diverse perspectives.
- **EXCELLENCE** - We commit to excellence in teaching, learning, research, administration, and local and global impact. We recognise the shared interest of Students and the University in the creation and transfer of knowledge and skills, and in the development of teaching innovations.
- **INTEGRITY & TRANSPARENCY** – We strive for open and trustful relationships and respect the views, opinions and beliefs of others. In working towards common agreed goals, we are dedicated to transparent communication and information sharing.
- **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION** – We jointly celebrate and encourage diversity. We recognize that students, professional services and academic staff may have different perceptions and experiences. We use methods of engagement that provide an opportunity for all students to participate, and provide opportunities for the underrepresented.
- **COMMUNITY** – We foster and support an effective community for staff and students that promotes a culture of wellbeing and belonging and creates a safe and supportive environment.



# COMMITMENT

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This commitment is made between the Vice-Chancellor, representing the University and the Student Advisory Council, representing the student body collectively. The SAC makes its specific commitments in relation to students in representative roles.

The specific commitments of each of the University and student representatives to Students as Partners are outlined below.

## THE UNIVERSITY

The University is committed to empowering students for their future as part of the University's Goal 1 objective in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

To achieve this the University will engage with students as trusted partners, with a shared responsibility for their educational journey and the development of the University. The University will empower the diverse student body to co-design their education experience, enhancing their participation in decision-making bodies and the services and programs offered to support their success.

The University will establish a student engagement framework that will set out the ways the University will partner with students, through feedback, consultation, collaboration and using students as leaders. The framework will include rules on how students are to be selected for ad hoc representative roles. The University will provide professional development to staff on how to actively involve students in decision-making throughout the University.

The University will invest in student representatives developing the vital skills required to participate professionally and effectively in decision-making and governance. This will be achieved by providing support and incentives to students active in formal and ad hoc representative roles, including through training and support. The University will assist student representatives in ensuring that the views of wide student audiences are available to them.

The University will monitor and review the effectiveness of student engagement through feedback and consultation.

The University will join Student Voice Australia and support staff and student participation in its programs and events.

## THE STUDENT

Student representatives are committed to the University being a safe and respectful environment for all. Student representatives will work with the University on the further development of policy and its promotion to students.

Student representatives will promote the objects of the University in the provision of education and engagement with research. Student representatives will promote the Student Charter and the adherence to policies on student conduct.

Student representatives will seek to represent the diverse range of student voices at the University in an authentic and fair manner. Where possible, student representatives will seek the views of wide student audiences through meetings, direct discussions, surveys, and social media.



Student representatives will provide effective means for students' views to be incorporated at all levels of governance through collaboration with the University professional and academic staff.

Student representatives will be committed to their individual and collective skill development and participating positively in all engagement opportunities.

## OUTCOMES

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Students as Partners will provide the foundation for increased student engagement, motivation and ownership of learning. The University of Wollongong (UOW) and the Student Advisory Council (SAC) agree that:<sup>1</sup>

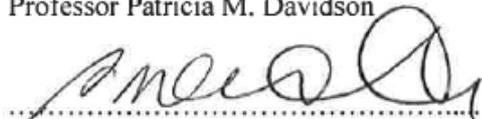
- Students as Partners will become effective upon signature by the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of SAC and continue for a period of 4 years. Modifications may be made by mutual agreement of these officers, which is documented in writing and signed by both officers.
- The University and the SAC may commence a review annually after the date it has been entered into.
- The University and SAC will review the commitments prior to the end of the 4 year period.
- UOW and the SAC will promote Students as Partners to staff and the student body.
- UOW and the SAC will work collaboratively to identify goals and projects to further the commitments with a view to reaching agreement on the terms of cooperation for each goal or project. Where such goals and projects are agreed, they will be documented in writing, signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of SAC and added as schedules to this Statement. Each schedule will specify the project, the University's commitment to the project, the student representatives' commitment to the project and a timeline for the project.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF

University of Wollongong

Vice-Chancellor and President,

Professor Patricia M. Davidson

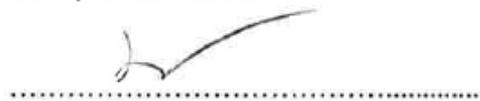


Date: 02/12/21

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF

the Student Advisory Council

Chair, Jackson Cocks



Date: 02/12/21

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<sup>1</sup> This agreement is not intended to replace or change existing University rules and policies, and does not constitute a legally binding document.