
Bedford College Group Student Involvement Strategy

1. Vision

The Bedford College Group is committed to involving students in its decision-making and operational management processes. The Bedford College Group believes that embracing student views and offering an opportunity for students to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant impact on developing the college's quality improvement processes and increasing student success. Student participation and representation bring to life the British value of democracy.

1.1 The Bedford College Group is committed to;

- consulting its students on all aspects of the organisation, including teaching, learning and assessment, facilities, support services and overall strategic direction.
- providing opportunities for students to participate in the College community.
- supporting the effective running of a Students' Union.

The importance of the student focus in creating high quality learning experiences is enshrined in the College's values and strategic plans. The College is diverse, and includes full and part-time learners on a range of campuses as well as higher education students, apprentices and work-based learners. The term 'student' in this strategy is used to denote all those engaged in learning with the College.

All students have an equal voice, although how they exercise that voice may vary according to the nature of their relationship to the College.

2. Benefits of student involvement

2.1 To students:

- improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- better feedback on the students' experience informs quality improvements
- students become empowered, more self-confident and motivated
- students learn the British value of democracy
- students have the opportunity to become directly involved in social action for the benefit of others
- services and facilities are improved to better meet the needs of students
- identification and sharing of good practice
- promotion of an environment of mutual respect
- enhanced CV for entry into higher education or employment with training

2.2 To college:

- improved participation, retention, achievement and progression
- students who are more expert and independent
- better quality information about the students' perspective so improvements can be made
- better decisions about resource allocation and investment
- students who feel more involved, see college as a place where they belong and are motivated to
- put something back into the college
- enhanced college reputation within the community

4. Involving students collectively

The Bedford College Group recognises that involving students in all aspects of the organisation will support us in delivering on our strategic plan by increasing our responsiveness to the needs both of individuals and of the wider College community. We are therefore committed to embedding a culture of student involvement throughout the College.

This strategy includes a number of different approaches to enable us to listen to the student voice:

4.1 Student Governors

Two students each year are elected to become college governors through a formal application and voting process; The students are elected from across the college group. Student Governors receive training and induction and participate fully in Corporation and Board meetings and any sub committees and training.

4.2 The Bedford College Group Students' Union

The Students' Union works in partnership with the College, driving for outstanding teaching and learning, services and facilities. The Students' Union has a passion for participation and a drive for diversity, with great equality and diversity officers leading the way in innovation and practice.

4.3 Student Presidents

The Student Presidents will serve as an advocate for the student body through representation to the Colleges Strategic Leadership Team to articulate the needs, wishes, interests and concerns of the student body. Each campus will have a Student President who will lead the student ambassadors and represent the students.

4.4 Student Ambassadors

Student Ambassadors find out about issues affecting students' studies and experience and represent these issues to the College and to the Students' Union both informally, and formally at committees and meetings. Student Ambassadors will represent issues and

communities, such as LGBTQIA+, Disabilities, Gender, Race and Culture. Student Ambassadors will represent and attend meetings such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and academic meetings. Student Ambassadors will have a say in all aspects of the college from careers and progression to apprenticeships and HE.

4.5 Student groups

Student groups (such as the LGBTQIA+, Trans, disability awareness and race and culture group), set up and led by the students for the students are another channel of communication. A member of staff facilitates each group and liaises with a member of the Student Services Management team and the staff group chairs to ensure views are shared and acted on.

4.6 College Committees and boards

These cross-college groups are composed of representatives from the leadership team, staff and a student representative from the Students' Union. These groups meet regularly to provide strategic oversight of all matters from equality and diversity to health and safety and safeguarding. Issues are cascaded via each representative of their particular group.

4.7 LIVE events

The College has a varied programme of enhancement activities delivered through study programmes and cross-College. Participation is promoted by personal tutors and via the lively and vibrant freshers' Fair during induction week. Cross-College themed events (e.g. Health & Wellbeing, Equality & Diversity) increase students' awareness of wider lifestyle and citizenship issues, contribute to meeting Ofsted's expectations in relation to personal development, behaviour and wellbeing, and provide additional opportunities to promote the core values of modern Britain. Programme areas offer a range of opportunities to participate in enhancement and skills development activities to enrich their learning and employability, including trips, competitions and projects delivered in collaboration with employers and the local community.

4.8 Focus Groups and Snapshot Surveys

Teaching departments may seek targeted feedback, for example on individual units, sessions and assignments.

Student Services, as part of its continuous quality improvement activity under the Matrix quality standard, seeks feedback on a wide range of services using a variety of formal and informal methods including as appropriate:

- focus groups
- targeted feedback questionnaires and Snapshot Surveys on specific areas of service activity
- informal discussion and observed behaviours.

The Marketing Department employs a range of techniques to gain feedback from prospective and current learners including for example:

- focus groups and questionnaires to elicit student feedback on the design, layout and navigation of the College's prospectuses and website
- feedback from prospective students and parents on College open days
- quantitative and qualitative research with various student/stakeholder groups to aid curriculum planning and design and the development of services
- interviews with students to find out about their experience at College so that the student voice can be communicated to prospective students, for example through case studies.
- recruitment of students as mystery shoppers with a view to improving customer service throughout the student journey.

5. Involving students individually

Student involvement also includes the need for students to actively participate in shaping their own learning experience. By increasing students' understanding of their own needs and preferred styles we will enable them to take part in a dialogue about their learning and become 'expert learners'. This will result not only in more effective feedback to the College on teaching, learning and assessment, but will also create a learning programme which is responsive to students' individual needs.

5.1 Student satisfaction and impressions surveys

Student surveys are formally reported on to SLT and the Directors, as well as being fed back to all curriculum and cross college areas and students.

A survey researching student views on the impact and reach of the college's pre-enrolment marketing is run in October each year. A further student survey takes place each March. This survey asks specific questions about student satisfaction on a range of cross college issues. A formal report is generated for SLT by the Quality Department. Results of the surveys and any additional actions are communicated to staff and students subsequently.

5.2 Ofsted learner view survey

This is emailed out to colleges annually and shared with students and parents. A further email is requested when Ofsted notify the college of and inspection.

5.3 Have your say

A complaints, compliments and suggestions system available online via the virtual learning environment (VLE) and the website. These are managed by the college Customer Feedback Manager in line with college policy.

5.4 College induction

The induction programme includes:

- an initial skills assessment to identify further maths/English development needs
- the development of Individual Support Plans where additional needs have been identified.

The Tutorial policy includes an entitlement to regular one-to-one meetings with a personal tutor to:

- discuss progress
- set realistic but challenging targets which raise aspirations
- identify and resolve any barriers to learning.

5.5 Support services

Student support services contribute to the development of students' confidence, employability, independence and motivation by helping

individuals to:

- identify and achieve career and learning goals
- set their sights as high as possible
- work through personal problems which are getting in the way of learning
- resolve practical difficulties
- participate in the wider College community.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 The College values feedback, and there is no come-back on students who, either individually or collectively, make complaints, raise grievances or suggest improvements.

6.2 Student involvement and responsiveness to the student voice are everyone's responsibility and are embedded in all areas of the College, especially in relation to teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum development and service delivery.

6.3 Vice Principals and managers will ensure that they consult with their student body on a regular basis, make effective use of course representatives and provide feedback on actions taken.

6.4 Support directors and managers will involve students in reviewing, developing and improving services to make them more responsive to the needs of our customers.

6.5 The Quality Department will manage a range of processes for obtaining feedback from across the student body and publishing the results.

6.6 The Director of Sales and Marketing will undertake qualitative and quantitative research with current and prospective students to inform the development of curriculum and services.

6.7 The Director of Student Services will ensure the student voice is reflected at Executive level, with the Student Services Managers having responsibility for liaising with students, developing and supporting the Student' Union and providing other opportunities for representation and participation.

6.8 The Executive team will continue to maximise opportunities to interact with the student body. The Chairs of the Board and any relevant committees, assisted by the Clerk to the Corporation, will ensure that the student voice is fully reflected at all meetings.

7. Promoting the strategy

7.1 To staff

This strategy is publicised through internal communication channels and is made available to all staff via the staff intranet.

7.2 To students

The College's vision in relation to student involvement and how students can exercise their voice is promoted via a range of media including:

- course teams and personal achievement tutors at induction and in tutorials
- student handbooks and other induction materials
- the Student Services website, social media and the College VLE
- Student Voice network and Students' Union meetings
- websites, prospectuses, social media and applicant information packs (for prospective students).

A consistent message is given to students that there will be no adverse come-back as a result of any complaints or negative feedback, other than in exceptional circumstances if there is found to be malicious intent.

8. Monitoring and reporting on the impact of the strategy

The strategy is monitored annually by the Executive and reported to the Board of Governors via the Quality, Standards and Achievement Committee. Student voice is embedded in course reviews and in teaching and support department self-assessment reports, and managers are expected to seek, act on and report the outcomes of student feedback. Feedback is given to staff where students have commented on good practice, and students are informed about improvements made as a result of their formal or informal feedback.

9. Equality and diversity statement

The Bedford College Group is committed to the advancement and promotion of equality and diversity. We aim to provide a learning and working environment which values individuals equally.

It is our duty and obligation under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different groups

The College does not disadvantage individuals by discriminating on any grounds, particularly - Disability, Age, Race, Gender (Sex), Religion and Belief, Sexual orientation, Gender

reassignment, Pregnancy & Maternity and Marriage and Civil Partnership (not applicable to Education).

In implementing this strategy, we aim to provide appropriate opportunities for involvement for the full range of learners, regardless of their individual characteristics, type of course or mode of attendance.

Will Sparrow

Student Experience and Progression Manager

March 2023