

Scotland's Rural College Student Partnership Agreement

Part A

The agreement

This agreement sets out how Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and Scotland's Rural College Students' Association (SRUCSA) work together to improve the experience for all SRUC students, how students can be actively involved, and the ways in which SRUC engages with its students, as both individuals and as a collective. This agreement does not replace other strategic documents and student involvement in the enhancement of their SRUC experience is not limited by its contents – every student is actively encouraged to participate, in whatever way they are able.

Our community

SRUC and SRUCSA are proud of the contribution the college makes to our local communities and the wider Scottish rural sector. SRUC is currently undergoing extensive strategic change to achieve a vision to be a unique, market-led and mission diverse 21st Century rural university. SRUC's mission is to drive the future needs of a dynamic, innovative and competitive rural sector in Scotland and to solve the biggest global agrifood challenges, and this is underpinned by the core values of:

- ◆ **Respect** – we will recognise that everyone in the organisation makes a valuable contribution to our success.
- ◆ **Innovate** – we don't wait for things to happen, we constructively challenge how things are done.
- ◆ **Support** – we look beyond the boundary of our own roles to support others and share knowledge.
- ◆ **Excel** – we take pride in contributions, have high standards of excellence and always work to our core values.

SRUC's student body is central to achieving its vision and driving forward its mission, within the Scottish rural sector and beyond. Both SRUC and SRUCSA value the diversity of the student population and work to make sure everyone feels welcome and supported. All staff and students should interact in a way which helps create an inclusive, welcoming and productive environment for everyone.

SRUC students are represented collectively by SRUCSA. Through the elected mandate of their officers, SRUCSA represents the views and interests of all students to SRUC and other decision makers, and works in partnership with SRUC to secure the best possible student experience.

What is partnership?

Within this agreement, the terms 'partner' and 'partnership' are used in a broad sense to indicate joint working between students and staff.

Working in partnership is based on the values of:

- ◆ Openness;
- ◆ Trust and honesty;
- ◆ Agreed shared goals and values;
- ◆ Regular communication between the partners.

It is not based on the legal concept of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. The terms reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between staff and students; SRUC and SRUCSA.

Student representation

SRUC recognises the importance of students being involved in decision making at the college, to ensure all students have the best possible experience. SRUC and SRUCSA work together to ensure that the student voice contributes to SRUC decision making through the following mechanisms:

- ◆ Students are represented by two non-executive student board members on the SRUC board.
- ◆ Students are represented by SRUCSA representative(s) on the SRUC academic board.
- ◆ Students are represented by SRUCSA representative(s) on all other committees relevant to the student experience.

Student and SRUCSA representatives are supported in their work on these committees, to ensure they are able to represent students' views and interests effectively.

SRUCSA facilitates a class representative system designed to ensure students' views on their course and college experience are invited, listened to and, where necessary acted upon. Through regular course Student Liaison Group meetings, Year Tutors and Programme Leaders meet with class representatives to discuss any relevant issues, and class representatives also meet with senior managers and board members at campus Student Liaison Committee meetings twice yearly.

Students shaping their college experience

Student involvement in decision-making is key to creating the best possible student experience. At SRUC there are lots of ways that students can help shape their experience, these include:

- ◆ Giving honest, constructive feedback by taking part in feedback surveys, focus groups, and other feedback processes which are available.
- ◆ Using these same mechanisms to suggest solutions to any problems they may have experienced.
- ◆ Speaking to their Programme Lead or Year Tutor directly.
- ◆ Sharing their opinion with their class representative.
- ◆ Standing to be a class representative, or a member of the SRUCSA executive committee.

- ◆ Actively contributing to SRUCSA Campus Councils, Student Liaison Group meetings, and Student Liaison Committee meetings.

SRUC will:

- ◆ Enable students to take part in feedback surveys, focus groups, and other feedback processes.
- ◆ Consider the information derived from these mechanisms and, working with SRUCSA, prioritise action and provide feedback.
- ◆ Encourage a culture where staff are responsive to student concerns and proactively seek realistic solutions, providing feedback on progress as appropriate.
- ◆ Assist SRUCSA in training class representatives, and recognise that class representatives are the collective voice of their class.
- ◆ Ensure SRUCSA is appropriately funded and resourced.

The students' association and its role in the college

SRUCSA is a student-led organisation created to represent and ensure the best possible student experience for all those studying at SRUC. All SRUC students are automatically members of SRUCSA and anyone can get involved in helping to run the association.

- ◆ **SRUCSA'S Mission:** A community and culture of confident and successful students who are proud to be part of SRUC.
- ◆ **SRUCSA's Vision:** Enhancing opportunities for students to further develop their student experience with effective communication, representation and engagement.
- ◆ **SRUCSA's Values:** Friendliness, Opportunity, Respect, Transparency, and Equality.

The SRUCSA Executive Committee consists of the following elected posts to represent students across the college:

- ◆ The President and Vice President.
- ◆ Six Campus Officers, one at each of our campuses.
- ◆ The Sports and Activities Officer.
- ◆ Four Liberation Officers, for Black and Ethnic Minority students, Disabled students, LGBT+ students, and Women students.

SRUCSA also facilitate the following forums and meetings to increase wider student engagement in decision making and setting the strategic direction of the students' association:

- ◆ Campus Councils, with representation from each class and open to all students at the campus.
- ◆ Open forums on Learning and Teaching, Welfare and Community, and Campaigning.

However, students are not limited by these forums and every student is actively encouraged to participate in SRUCSA's activities, in whatever way they are able.

As the SRUC strategic plan develops, SRUCSA will continue to review its structure to ensure all students studying at SRUC are fairly represented and have the opportunity to contribute.

Partnership projects

In addition following up on issues raised through the feedback opportunities highlighted above, each year up to three projects will operate which address longer term priorities. These projects would generally relate to academic affairs, student support or student voice initiatives and normally last for two calendar years.

Part B of this agreement, provides details of the projects. This Section will be updated annually. It sets out the outcomes of the projects, provides a mid-project progress update and summarises concluding projects, highlighting the final outputs and successes.

Part C of this agreement sets out how the SPA is managed, and how projects are identified, agreed and communicated to students and staff.



SRUCSA Student President
October 2019



Principal & Chief Executive
October 2019

Part B

The Projects

Student Feedback

One of the key ways SRUC and SRUCSA measure success in the organisation is by asking students to take part in anonymised surveys. The Student Evaluation project seeks to improve the quality and quantity of the anonymous feedback that students provide through annual surveys.

In the initial year of the project (2018) the project team set out a plan of action for the surveys and focused on the existing four student surveys operating in SRUC, the Induction Survey, End of Year Survey, National Student Survey (NSS), and Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES). The project team made changes to the Induction Survey and the End of Year Survey, to attempt to reduce the number of questions in both, and co-ordinated promotion plans were drawn up for both of these surveys.

In 2019, the project team has sought to further refine the survey burden on students in an attempt to gather more meaningful and timely feedback. This has involved merging the SSES and End of Year Survey into a far more concise survey, now issued in March. The project team will follow this with a series of workshops exploring directly with students the function of surveys and barriers that student might face in completing them. Feedback Fridays have also been introduced during term three to provide high level results information and feedback on immediately identified actions.

Class Representatives

The Class Representatives project was initiated in the 2017/18 academic year when the project team held a successful workshop on the current class representative system at the SRUC Learning & Teaching Conference.

The Class Representatives project will continue to build the class representative community, by creating a knowledge resource base on Moodle which will include training, reference pages and minutes of Student Liaison Committee and Campus Council meetings.

Future plans include: providing SRUCSA promotional materials which stress the importance of class representative, and the benefits of becoming a class representative; better collation and improved access of Student Liaison Group, Student Liaison Committee, and Campus Council minutes; implementing an online class rep training resource; improving communication, by including issues raised by Student Liaison Groups in the 'You said... We did...' feedback cycle; bringing together the SRUCSA elected officers and class representatives more effectively; formalising the class representative system with SRUC staff and streamlining the election process.

Gender-Based Violence

In 2017 the Scottish Government announced its commitment to eradicating gender-based violence, with its Equally Safe initiative, and in support NUS Scotland has made combating gender-based violence one of its priority campaigns. This project seeks to encourage a collaborative approach toward developing strategies for addressing the threat of gender-based violence within the SRUC environment, by raising awareness of what gender-based violence is, how to counter it and support survivors.

SRUC and SRUCSA believe our campuses should provide a safe environment in which everyone can to work and study. This project will, as part of an SRUC Gender-Based Violence Strategy, develop a campaign which will focus on raising awareness, challenging cultural perceptions, and encouraging changes in attitude and behaviour. This will include;

- ◆ Engaging students to better understand what constitutes gender-based violence, consent, and bystander principals.
- ◆ Challenging narratives and inappropriate behaviour.
- ◆ Encouraging students to make pledges of zero tolerance.
- ◆ Signposting students to support and advice, by providing training to SRUCSA officers so they are sufficiently skilled to be an initial point of contact and able to provide information on how to disclose any suspected cases of gender-based violence.

SRUC strategy and policy regarding gender-based violence will also be developed under the remit of the Equality, Human Rights and Inclusion Committee, of which the Student Experience Manager and the Student President are members. This will include the training of SRUC safeguarding team members, and other appropriate staff, as Gender-Based Violence First Responders' and the updating of SRUC policies to ensure a joined up, whole college approach to addressing the impact of gender-based violence.

Part C

The Student Partnership Agreement is a live document, and with regular review and consultation, it will evolve to ensure the needs of the SRUC/SRUCSA partnership are met.

The agreement will be overseen by the SPA Management Team, comprising of the Student President and Vice President, the Student Experience Manager, a Head of Department, a Senior Tutor, a member of the Quality Team, and two student members, supported by a Learner Engagement Officer. The team will meet three times a year, in October, February, and June.

The SPA Management team's responsibilities are to:

- ◆ Identify, monitor and review the final outputs of the Part B projects annually, informed by the operational and plans of both SRUCSA and SRUC.
- ◆ Report on the progress of the projects to both the Student Support and Engagement Committee (SSEC) and the SRUCSA Executive Committee.
- ◆ Ensure that Parts A and C are kept up to date and relevant. It is intended that Part A will be reviewed, and if required updated, on a three-year basis.

Each November the SPA Management Team will recommend to the SSEC and the SRUCSA Executive Committee the continuation of projects or the introduction of new projects in Part B of this agreement. In doing so the scope, aims, outputs, and project team members will be proposed. New projects will begin January of each year, and will normally last for two calendar years. The project co-leads, from SRUC and SRUCSA, will report to the Management Team termly. When a project is completed its outcomes and progress will be reported to the student body and SRUC staff via media outlets, the SRUCSA representative network and at the Learning and Teaching Conference.