STUDENT CHARTER GROUP

Final Report

JANUARY 2011

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1. Introduction and context

Student Charter Group

1.1   The Student Charter Group was established as a small 'task and finish' working group, bringing together higher education institution (HEI) representatives and student representatives – to explore current best practice in the use of Student Charters and other student agreements. The Group was asked to report by the end of January 2011 to the Minister of State for Universities and Science, the Rt. Hon. David Willetts MP.

1.2   The Group met four times between July 2010 and January 2011, under the joint chairs, Janet Beer (Vice Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University) and Aaron Porter (President, National Union of Students). Section 4 of this report contains the Group's Terms of Reference and Membership.

Purpose of the Report

1.3   This report was sent on 31 January to David Willetts, to inform the Government's future strategy for higher education and the planned Higher Education White Paper.

1.4   The report is deliberately concise and focuses on practical principles and recommendations – which we hope that HEIs and Students' Unions (SUs) can use in jointly reviewing, or in some cases developing, a Student Charter for their institution. (See the Toolkit at section 3).

Context – Student Information

1.5   Improving the accessibility and transparency of information for higher education students is a topic of great interest and importance for the sector. The Coalition Government has made specific commitments to help improve the information available to prospective students, so that they can make well informed choices when applying to higher education.

1.6   Although information can be used for several purposes, it is helpful to think about the information, advice and guidance which a student needs at distinct stages of their journey:

* Advice and guidance on whether higher education is a suitable option, for example through advisers in schools, FE colleges, or the new Next Steps service;

* Comparable information on HE courses and the institutions themselves, to help applicants make the best choices – this is the main focus of the proposed **Key Information Set** (see *Public information about higher education: Consultation on changes to information published by institutions* www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2010/choices.htm);

* Information for students when they are starting a course – and during the course – so they know what they can expect and what is expected of them. This is the main focus of **Student Charters** and hence the work of this group;

- Information, advice and guidance for students to help them move on from higher education to employment, internships, further learning or professional development.

Changing landscape

1.7   The Group is very aware that major changes to the higher education funding system and its regulatory framework have the potential to alter the relationship between universities and students. There will be increased pressure for HEIs to be clear about what they provide and how the experience at their particular institution differs from other universities.

1.8   It is very likely that transparency of information for students, and the contribution of Student Charters will come under greater scrutiny.

1.9   However, the Group's work – and this report – focuses on the current situation. Our survey of the sector was completed before the Browne Report was published. We have not attempted to 'second guess' how charters may develop when the funding changes begin to take effect, nor the particular form which they will take.

1.10 Nevertheless, we believe that the principles which we have identified for successfully utilising Student Charters will provide a sound foundation for their future development, particularly if our recommendations for annual review are followed.

1.11 Furthermore, we believe that the time is right for all HEIs and Students' Unions to review the top level information and commitments which they provide to students – as detailed in Student Charters and similar agreements. By investing time now, they will help current students to make the most of their time in higher education and also begin to establish mechanisms for updating and refreshing their charters on a regular basis. We expect the matter of Student Charters to be revisited in the next three to four years, as a result of the introduction of new financial and structural arrangements from 2012 to 2015.

Benefits of Charters

1.12   In short, we consider that, if charters are: kept up to date through regular review, jointly owned by the HEI and the SU, written concisely with clear links to detailed information, and clearly communicated to all staff and all students, then they can be: important communication tools for HEIs to establish clear mutual expectations, and help monitor the student experience and how relationships are working.

1.13 Charters will do this by acting as a 'front page', or the top of a pyramid, of the information which a HEI makes available to its students. They cannot provide a detailed description of how each individual student will learn, but should provide clear pointers to the information which is available, e.g. in programme handbooks and specifications.

Approach of the Group

1.14 Our research has confirmed that many HEIs already have charters or other agreements in place, which have been refined over a number of years. We have also found that that no 'one size fits all' and it would not be appropriate to impose a single, prescribed charter.

1.15 Our approach has been to identify the key principles which can be applied in institutions across the sector and which HE staff and student representatives can use to review their charters. We hope that the Toolkit in Section 3 will help them to do so.

GROUP OUTPUTS

2. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Having explored how charters (and other agreements) are being used in English HEIs, and having consulted sector representatives, the Student Charter Group agreed the following conclusions and recommendations.

2.2 As stated elsewhere, the Group believes that its recommendations can help HEIs and SUs to develop new or review existing current charters and agreements. We recognise that the new funding system will greatly influence the nature of the relationship between HEIs and students. However, we judge that the following recommendations and principles in Section 3 will provide a good foundation for the future review and development of charters.

2.3 These conclusions and recommendations should be read in conjunction with:

- the principles for developing, designing and using Student Charters (see Section 3a);

- the topics and issues to include in Student Charters (see Section 3b); and

- the draft example of an outline Student Charter (Section 3c).

Should each HEI publish a Student Charter?

1. Yes, we recommend that each HEI should have a Student Charter – or similar high level statement – to set out the mutual expectations of universities and students.

2. We have found that there are clear benefits in providing short, clear statements - of student rights and responsibilities –so students know broadly what they should be able to expect, what is required of them, and what to do if things do not meet expected standards.

   The Key Benefits are in providing:

   a. Clarity and consistency throughout the institution - across all subject areas;
   b. A single overview document which clearly signposts additional information;
   c. A focus for regular engagement and review with student representatives – to consider alongside other feedback from students and internal quality assurance and management information.

What form should Student Charters take and how should they be used?

3. We recommend that there is a single charter for each HEI and that charters cover all students, undergraduate and postgraduate (both taught and research students). This will help to emphasise that all students need to know how they will be supported to learn.

4. Charters can be especially useful when introduced during induction for students but also for new members of staff.

5. Charters should mainly focus on current students. A secondary benefit is that they may help prospective students to get a 'feel' for the institution.

6. We do not recommend the introduction of new legal style student 'contracts' between institutions and students.

7. Rather, a charter should be seen as a summary document, which provides signposts and links to more detailed regulations and course information – so it is the 'front page' of the whole package of information for students and sources of further information. A charter therefore must include clear signposting, e.g. to appeals and complaints procedures.

8. Charters should be used to emphasise the importance of belonging to a learning community and the importance of partnership between staff and students – so that, in focusing on rights and responsibilities, students will understand the need to develop effective working relationships.

What are the key success factors?

We have found that Student Charters will only work if:

9. There is real partnership working with student representatives and students.

10. The charter is regularly reviewed by HEI and SU officers – we suggest annually – so there is a clear management process to ensure that the document is being used and is still relevant. Reviews should incorporate other feedback from students – e.g. satisfaction surveys on teaching and learning and support services.

11. There is a clear communication and dissemination strategy, also reviewed regularly – to ensure that the whole student body and all HEI staff are informed and engaged and that awareness of the charter is not limited to SU representatives and senior staff.

3. TOOLKIT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS' UNIONS

3a Principles for the development, design and use of Student Charters

In addition to our Conclusions and Recommendations (Section 2), we recommend that HEIs and SUs take account of the following list of principles when reviewing or developing charters, together with the Topics for Inclusion (Section 3b), and Example Student Charter (Section 3c).

Charter Principles

- Charters are a joint venture with the Students' Union and must involve students and student representatives at the outset.

- This partnership working must continue after development – with joint monitoring and review.

- Joint monitoring and review should occur regularly – at least annually - with the use of other evidence and feedback e.g. student surveys.

- Charters should be signed off by Vice-Chancellors and Students' Union's Presidents. Senior staff should demonstrate buy-in at strategic committees, e.g. Learning and Teaching Committees.

- Communication and dissemination of charters needs careful thought, so that they are accessible by all students and staff.

- Charters should be for all staff and should engage and involve all student facing staff.

- Charters should be for all students, covering both undergraduates and postgraduates.

- The main focus should be on current students – for induction and during their time in higher education.

- Charters should be clear on their purpose, acting as a front page, with links included to more detailed information in university regulations and course handbooks.

- So should be kept as short as possible – suggest 2 pages maximum.

- It should be clear what a charter is not. It is not a detailed personal agreement or contract.

- A charter should communicate the ethos of the institution.

- The emphasis should be on partnership working between staff and students.

3b. Topics and Issues which Student Charters might cover

1. We recommend a high level, succinct document – e.g. 2 pages.

2. We recommend 3 parts – HEI, students, Students' Union.

3. Each HEI should review the following 'checklist' with its Students' Union – to decide whether these topics should be included in their charter:

a) Diversity, Respect, Communication
- Encouraging equality and promoting diversity – outlining obligations in a diverse community of staff and students
- Mutual respect, courtesy and professionalism for other members of the community
- Methods of two way communication between staff, students and student representatives
- Respect for physical environment

b) Teaching, Learning, Research and Assessment
- Teaching, Learning and Research Facilities
- HEI support for student-facing staff (including continuing professional development)
- Staff input and learner support, including personal tutors and supervisors
- Students' responsibilities/obligations as learners
- Assessment and feedback guidelines

c) Finance
- Essential course costs and estimate of additional costs
- Payment options and deadlines
- Financial Advice services available

d) Complaints, Appeals, Discipline
- Redress if students are not satisfied that commitments are being fulfilled
- Complaints and appeals
- Student discipline

e) Personal Development and Employment
- Personal development, including employability
- Professional accreditation (where appropriate)
- Students and part-time work

f) Student Services (non academic)
- Health and welfare support services
- Accommodation and security

g) Community, Sports and Social
- Obligations to wider community
- Sports and social opportunities
- Students and work
- Volunteering

3c. Outline Student Charter — Draft example

SU logo   **HEI logo**

Introductory sentence or two: referring to the institution's mission/vision; and outlining the process for developing the charter, the review process and the spirit of partnership between the HEI and the Students' Union.

The HEI undertakes to:

- Encourage its employees to treat students and colleagues equally and respectfully.

The HEI undertakes to provide:

- High standards of teaching, support, advice and guidance.

- Access to activities that will enhance employability and personal development.

- Regular continuing professional development for its staff.

- Support for student participation in academic development and course management, including elections of representatives.

- Access to counselling and advice on: health and welfare; accommodation; finance and careers etc.

- Clearly defined access to library and IT facilities.

The HEI undertakes to provide students with the following information:

- Stated periods of notice for changes to timetable, cancelled classes, re-scheduling of content etc.

- Clear deadlines and timeframes – in course handbooks – for feedback on submitted work.

- A course handbook which details assessment criteria, contact hours, mode of delivery of course, examination arrangements and regulations, academic guidance and support, appeals and complaints procedures, professional requirements (if appropriate).

- Course costs, payment options and deadlines, and an estimate of necessary additional costs.

Students undertake to:

- Treat staff and their fellow students equally and respectfully.

- Attend induction, participate in timetabled classes, attend meetings with tutors etc.

- Obtain agreement from their Department, in advance, for any essential absences.

- Take responsibility for managing their own learning: actively engaging in their course; ensuring they spend sufficient regular time in private study, and participating fully in group learning activities.

- Submit assessed work by stated deadlines, actively participate in feedback.

- Make prompt payment of charges made by the institution.

- Support course representatives and participate in systems which will lead to improvements in the quality of learning and teaching.

- Respect the physical environment of the institution, including accommodation and behave respectfully towards neighbours.

The Students' Union undertakes to:

- Support all students to ensure they receive equal treatment and are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

- Support student participation in quality enhancement activities – especially through the election, development and training of course representatives.

- Assist students with academic and welfare problems.

- Represent the interests of students at local and national level.

- Support active student/community engagement, especially as regards combating anti-social behaviour.

- Provide a range of athletic and social clubs and societies to enhance personal and professional development.

Date last reviewed and who by (e.g. University Committee):

Signatures of Vice-Chancellor and SU President:

Further Information: Names and contact details of lead staff member and student officer.

NB For further examples of current charters, see
http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/StudentExperience/Pages/StudentCharter.aspx

SUMMARY OF THE GROUP'S WORK

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

4a. Terms of Reference

The Coalition Government is committed to improving the quality of higher education teaching and the information provided by HEIs to students.

To support this agenda, the Government asked the NUS, UUK and GuildHE to bring together HEI and student representatives to: explore best practice in the use of Student Charters and other student agreements; and to develop an outline Student Charter which can be used to inform a new basic standard and develop good practice across all English HEIs.

Objectives:

a) To explore current practice in HEI/student agreements

To include student 'contracts' and other forms of student agreements in English HEIs, especially those developed in collaboration with local Students' Unions.

b) To assess the current impact of such agreements and explore lessons which could be drawn, as a means of spreading best practice across the sector

The group will also take account of the evidence provided to the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG) on the key pieces of information required by students and the work to implement the Coalition commitment to "publish more information about the costs, graduate earnings and student satisfaction of different university courses". It will also need to take account of proposed revisions to sector-wide quality assurance arrangements.

The Group will then:

c) Develop an outline charter, showing the topics and issues which individual HEI agreements might cover and develop and publish guidance on the preparation, design and use of Student Charters, and provide information to inform and support the work of institutions and Students' Unions

For example, charters could include: expectations on feedback, learning support facilities available, welfare support; as well as responsibilities of students such as private study time and complying with academic regulations.

Reporting and Timing

The Group will report in January 2011. BIS will publish the report online, with NUS, UUK and GuildHE support.

4b. Membership of the Group

The members of the Group were as follows:

1. Aaron Porter, NUS President (co-chair)
2. Janet Beer, Vice Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University (co-chair)
3. Chris Brink, Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University
4. Liam Challenger, Students' Union President, Leeds Metropolitan University
5. Mark Hunt, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts (and GuildHE)
6. Amanda Chetwynd, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Lancaster University
7. Anna Vignoles, Institute of Education, University of London
8. Graeme Wise, NUS
9. Douglas Blackstock, QAA
10. Hannah Pudner, HEFCE
11. Paul Clark, UUK

Secretariat

The secretariat was provided by BIS.

5. EVIDENCE REVIEW — CURRENT PRACTICE, IMPACT and LESSONS

Evidence gathering - methodology

5.1   To establish an evidence base, the Student Charter Group commissioned research from a wide range of HE providers in order to: investigate the current availability and use of Student Charters and other similar agreements; assess the impact of such agreements; and explore issues which could be drawn from their implementation.

5.2   Given the limited resources available, the research was carried out by staff in Universities UK, GuildHE, BIS and the NUS.

Email survey of HEIs

5.3   UUK and GuildHE first sent out a detailed email survey to all their member institutions (see Annex A for Questionnaire) and a request for HEIs to send examples of charters or weblinks. The response rate was high: 88 of UUK's 105 English members responded (83%) and 19 of 31 GuildHE institutions responded (61%) over a three week period (30 July to 23 August 2010).

Semi-structured interviews (institutions)

5.4   To gain a more in-depth understanding of the use of Student Charters, UUK, GuildHE and BIS also conducted 12 semi-structured interviews, lasting between 45 minutes and one hour, with a number of institutions who had responded to the survey. (For brief summaries of the interviews conducted see Annex B).

5.5   The quota sample of institutions consisted of: seven HEIs with a Student Charter (including one very long document); one which has never had a charter; two which have revised and re-branded charters into new documents; two which were considering developing Student Charters or Learning Agreements. (See Annex B for full details.)

Semi-structured interviews (students)

5.6   In parallel, in August the NUS invited student officers to respond to some short initial questions about charters via an online mailbase. This was also promoted through an annual summer training programme for new and continuing officers.

5.7   Six open-ended interviews were carried out in person or via telephone with key officers in selected Students' Unions. This was based on a convenience sample of institutions that responded to the requests by the NUS in the timeframe. (See Annex C for a summary of student officer responses.)

5.8   The semi-structured interviews conducted with institutions were designed to match up with those interviewed by student officers.

Observations and analysis

Terminology

5.9 In gathering the evidence on current practice, we used a broad definition of HEI / student agreements, to include those labelled charters, contracts, agreements (or another definition). This was because the research found that there was a great variety of terms and no standard definitions across the sector (although it must be noted that several responses suggested that there were significant differences between the terms charter/contract/agreement). Some institutions had revised and rebranded their charters and other names included "Student Protocol", "Working Together", "Our commitment and responsibilities", "Learning and Partnership Agreement" etc

5.10 However, the Group agreed to continue to use charter or Student Charter as the best umbrella term, and this is reflected throughout this report. In the overall conclusions we do draw the distinction between a charter type of document and a Student Contract - which we do not recommend for new documents.

Prevalence of Charters

5.11 Out of the total 104 English institutions from UUK and GuildHE that responded (see Annex E for full list), 60% have a Student Charter in place (excluding two entries from Winchester and the University of Cumbria who are members of both).The proportion at a UK-level, including Scotland, Wales and NI, was similar (57%).

5.12 The English UUK institutions that have a charter in place can be broken down as follows by Mission Group. (NB: since this is not a not a full response rate, this is not strictly representative.):

Mission Group	Total
1994 Group	5
Alliance	11
Million+	13
Russell Group	11
Non aligned	12
Total	**52**

5.13 Six English UUK members who do not have a Student Charter in place are currently developing a charter:

- Birmingham City University

- Imperial College London (piloting a Student Agreement with 1st, 2nd and 3rd year medical students during 2010–11)

- Kingston University (academic year 2010–11 in the form of a 'Guidance Note')

- London Metropolitan University (to be in place 2011–12)

- Roehampton University (to be in place during 2010–11)

- University of Sussex

5.14   Ten UUK members are considering developing a charter:

- Birkbeck, University of London
- The Central School of Speech and Drama
- University of Cumbria
- University of Essex
- University of Exeter
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- Liverpool John Moores University
- University of Salford
- University of Surrey
- The University of Winchester

5.15   20 out of 88 English members (23% of English HEIs who responded) stated that they did not have a formalised charter in place and were not currently developing one.

5.16   Of the 12 English UUK institutions who had discontinued a charter, a number had actually re-branded their charter under a different name.

5.17   Of the eight GuildHE institutions that do not have a Student Charter, four are developing or considering developing a charter.

5.18   Three private providers responded to GuildHE; one has a student code of conduct, and two are considering developing a charter.

5.19   Two GuildHE respondents said their institution had once had a charter but it had been discontinued because it was not fit for purpose, and information was duplicated in other student publications.

Student involvement

5.20   According to the survey, 96% of institutions (UUK) who have a charter in place stated that they had involved student representatives in this process. The vast majority of UUK institutions indicated that students had been involved/ represented through a clearly defined policy process.

5.21   However, the data provided by the NUS did suggest that although students were involved in the process of creating the document, this did not always mean that the Students' Union saw the end product as a joint effort.

5.22   The evidence therefore implies that it is essential to work in partnership with student representatives and students to encourage ownership of the charter. It suggests that

monitoring student opinion after delivery is essential in order to ensure that it will have maximum impact.

Reviewing/monitoring/updating

5.23　The questions in this section of the UUK/GuildHE survey were divided into:

- What is the procedure for reviewing and updating the Student Charter?

- How do you monitor whether commitments are measured in practice?

5.24　Both of these questions provided an opportunity for elaboration on quality assurance mechanisms within universities.

5.25　The vast majority of institutions referred to the use of broader quality assurance mechanisms being in place as a procedure for monitoring charters. Broader quality assurance mechanisms include National Student Survey results and university student surveys, committees charged with ensuring quality and analysis of complaints data.

5.26　In terms of annual monitoring, 51% of UUK English institutions said that charters are subject to a periodic and annual review process. 24% of UUK English members have a specific working group in place which reviews the terms and conditions of the charter.

5.27　This information implies that institutions believe that regular review is essential to ensure the information is up to date – with half of institutions opting for a periodic or annual review. The vast majority of institutions said that they make use of broader quality assurance mechanisms to compare feedback from a wider body of staff and students.

5.28　There was also strong evidence that a number of institutions have done a considerable amount of work in revising charters to make them more accessible to their own student and staff populations. This evidence highlights the importance of institutions providing opportunities for regular engagement and review with their own student representatives and staff:

- Six of the institutions interviewed stated that they had significantly updated their charters.

- Two institutions said they had revised their charters to address a wider audience, including: international students, post graduate students and employers.

- Eight English members who responded to the survey had rebranded former charters to documents with a different name. All of these institutions took this decision on the basis that it was a more effective way of communicating expectations to their own staff and students.

Redress and complaints

5.29　Information about the relationship between charters and complaints procedures was drawn from two survey questions:

- Whether a student would be made aware of a complaints procedure through the charter;

and more specifically:

- Whether the charter included a formal link to a complaints procedure.

(UUK)

- 51% of institutions stated that there is a formal link to the student complaints system and 40% stated there is no formal link.

- However, many institutions said that their charters did refer to the student complaints system.

(GuildHE)

- The results from GuildHE indicate that the vast majority of documents have information on how to address issues. 36% of the charters included specific details of what a student should do if they feel it is not being implemented, and 45% identified a formal link to the student complaints system.

Benefits and Impact

5.30   More than half (61%) of UUK and a significant number of GuildHE English members who have a charter in place, highlighted that one benefit was that it helped <u>manage expectations.</u>

Consultation Question
e.1. What do you see as the main benefits of your Student Charter/contract/agreement?
Managing expectations and providing clarity (University of Plymouth)
Fundamental to ensuring that we set out our promise, and seek to deliver it; also fundamental to students knowing the university's legitimate expectations of them. (Manchester Metropolitan University)
The intended benefit of the Student Charter (as was) was to offer clear guidance on the expectations of the institution and students (Norwich University College of the Arts- NUCA)
The Charter sets out the partnership between the student and the university. It is expressly a two way process. (University of Northampton)
It has been useful in making UCB's service levels clear and transparent, for teaching and support staff as well as students. (University College Birmingham)

> *The LPA has been useful in setting clear expectations for employees as well as students. It is also important for parents (who may be providing funding) to see what service is being provided and the seriousness of the institution's approach.(Bucks New University)*

5.31 Feedback also focused around the importance of the document as a platform for effective communication to students. Institutions focused on the importance of this document in providing information on where to direct students if there are complaints, setting out a picture of the culture of the university and providing information on the responsibilities of the students.

5.32 This contrasts slightly with the data presented in the six NUS qualitative interviews, which were less positive about the impact of charters, suggesting that it is difficult to monitor what is delivered and then compare it to what a charter says, in practice. One of the Unions also stated that that the truly powerful documents are the academic regulations of the institution, and another stated that the charter is seen as too long and inaccessible.

5.33 This reinforces the message that it is essential to work with students in the development of the charter to obtain maximum impact.

5.34 More generally, we recognise that it is difficult to isolate the specific impact of charters and this is an issue which HEIs will need to consider in the future development of charters.

5.35 Some of the more salient themes – in addition to the two key themes of managing expectations and providing an effective platform for communication – were that:

5.36 Several institutions stated that the framework had permitted a useful benchmark to measure performance. (University of the West of England, University of Greenwich and Loughborough University)

Consultation Question
e2: How has it helped a) staff and b) students
Ongoing, the charter sets us benchmarks against which we can judge our provision (University of the West of England)
The framework also allows for measurements of performance to be set up. (University of Greenwich)
The charter will provide the overarching framework for consistency of practice and transparency at institutional level to the benefit of all staff and students. (Loughborough University)

5.37 Five institutions stated that their charters were helpful in setting the scene, describing the culture of the university and its community approach towards its staff and students.

5.38 One institution (Northumbria University) stated that one of the benefits of devising a charter had been that it had helped design university policy.

5.39   The University of Hull in an interview stated that the charter had helped new students to understand, 'How higher education differs from their previous learning experiences – and so helps them make an effective transition'.

5.40   Two institutions noted that the charters had been referred to when addressing disputes that had occurred (University of Huddersfield and Newcastle University).

Dissemination and Communication

5.41   A number of universities highlighted that methods of distribution needed to be carefully considered when making decisions about implementing charters. Frustrations reflected by all avenues of research were that the charter could be low profile and not read.

5.42   The vast majority of universities had moved away from the requirement of staff and students to sign a document - viewing this as overly legalistic.

5.43   How the charters were communicated and disseminated to students appeared to vary widely between institutions, with revisions taking place over time in accordance to demand.

5.44   Eight English members had rebranded former charters/contracts to documents with a different name. All of these institutions took this decision on the basis that it was a more effective way of communicating expectations to students.

5.45   As previously mentioned there were a variety of terms for a Student Charter that were submitted in the survey:

- Statement of Responsibilities - University of Hertfordshire (UUK)
- Student Relationship Document - University College London (UUK)
- Our Rights and Responsibilities- University of Plymouth and University of Westminster (UUK)
- Statement of learner responsibilities - University of Reading (UUK)
- Our commitments to students - Liverpool John Moores University (UUK)
- Student entitlement document - Sheffield Hallam University (UUK)
- Entry Agreement - St George's University of London (UUK)
- Student Agreement - Norwich University College of the Arts (GuildHE)
- Learning Partnership Agreement - Buckinghamshire New University (Private Provider)

5.46   From the GuildHE and UUK results it is apparent that copies of the charters were contained in a variety of locations: some were given to students in hard copy, some were contained within Student Handbooks, others were posted on intranets, or were widely available on institution public websites, others were distributed to staff in different faculties.

5.47   Two of the institutions interviewed had changed how they disseminate charters and had made them available in an electronic format. Another institution mentioned that the success of a charter always depended on the prominence given to it by an institution. Two institutions

made the point that charters need to speak to a wider pool of students than just full time undergraduates.

5.48   The format of a charter varied from a single side of bullet-points to a 30 page document (see the documentary analysis section for an indication of the variance between institutions). One GuildHE respondent raised concern that if the document was presented as large blocks of text, students would be less likely to read it. A common format was a list of bullet points e.g. ''You are expected to…. You may expect us to".

5.49   The five case studies from the NUS also suggested that effective dissemination and presentation could play a large part in encouraging engagement. One institution asserted that, 'The new document by contrast is much more user friendly and more accessible', whereas another Students' Union asserted that, 'The final document does not feel like a joint effort (it uses institutional branding and fits the institutional uniform)'.

5.50   This information suggests that regular review of communication and dissemination is essential in order to ensure that the document is as accessible and visible as possible to all staff and students.

The use of national guidelines – interviews

5.51   In order to inform the strategic direction and currency of the Group's work, all institutions interviewed were asked, 'How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Students' Unions?' There were a number of different suggestions as to how the work of this group might be helpful:

National guidelines could help to crystallise what is meant by excellence in the student experience and provide an agreement across the sector in terms of core charter content.(University College Birmingham)
I think the dissemination of good practice would be helpful to institutions, Students' Unions and students. (University College Birmingham)
National guidelines could usefully include advice on what areas to cover, how to manage the process of development (though institutional cultures and organisations will vary enormously), where to publish and how to monitor its impact. (University of Exeter)
To demonstrate how charters can help within a university. I think they could also help within the sector, as national guidelines would draw attention to existence of charters and people would start to think more about them. (University of the West of England)
We would certainly welcome the opportunity to explore in greater depths the potential benefits of a Student Charter.(De Montfort University)
It is possible that the national guidelines would include things that we wouldn't have thought of doing and that we would therefore welcome.(University X)

The future of Charters

5.52   The vast majority of institutions believe that improved public information is likely to have increased importance as a result of the major changes to the HE funding arrangements.

Universities will need to respond with high quality IAG and clear statements about students' rights and responsibilities. We see the Student Learning Partnership as part of Exeter's response to these new pressures. (University of Exeter)
Anticipate charters becoming increasingly important in differentiating the services of HEIs and informing student choice as well as demonstrating value for money.(University College Birmingham)
With higher fees, less money, a more demanding environment and what the coalition government is asking of the HE sector, there will be a greater demand for transparency and accountability. Charters are a way of doing this and could become more important. (University of the West of England)
Given the current review of tuition fees this may impact on how students view institutions and they will ask more e.g. 'What can I expect from HEIs'? This would cause us to review how we can best meet their expectations (University College London)
I think with the likely outcome of the Browne Review that the cap on tuition fees will at least be lifted (if not removed altogether) it will be essential for HEIs to manage students' expectations with some form of formal charter/agreement of rights and responsibilities of both student and institution.(University of Surrey)

Other comments from HEIs

5.53   Other key issues identified by HEIs were as follows:

- One institution mentioned that employer engagement is now also high on the agenda and this might be incorporated into their charter;

- Staffordshire University stated that, 'We need a fundamental rethink of the charter. We have more part-time students, distance learning students, international students and partner colleges. The whole HE environment has changed for us. It is too focused on full time undergraduates'.

- One institution stated that they had expected more of an interest in charters when the fee went up to £3000 but this had not been the case.

- There were a number of comments from universities in the survey regarding striking the correct balance between meaningless broad statements and encouraging unnecessary litigation.

- In the survey a number of institutions mentioned that the level of bureaucracy involved placed a heavy resource on institutions and acted as a deterrent for the implementation of charters.

- A number of institutions warned that national guidelines might be too prescriptive and might result in too much direction with accompanying reduction in flexibility for different institutions to focus on different aspects, according to their particular missions.

Documentary analysis

5.54   Alongside the questionnaires, UUK and GuildHE requested examples of charters/contracts/agreements from institutions to inform the group of the different types of documents that exist.

5.55   As this investigation is focused predominantly on charters, this documentary analysis specifically analyses those documents sent in and termed as 'charters' as opposed to contracts and agreements.

5.56   The Group conducted documentary analysis of six Student Charters from UUK members and reviewed three charters from GuildHE institutions (see Annex D for some examples).

UUK Institutions

- Edge Hill University
- Northampton University
- University of Hull
- Nottingham Trent University
- St George's University of London
- Chichester University

Introductions

5.57   Two of the charters include the university mission statement in the introduction.

5.58   Five out of six institutions set out what the purpose of the document is. For example, 'This charter sets out the relationship between (the institution) and its students, irrespective of the intended mode of delivery and wherever they may be located.

Style

5.59   Five out of six documents are at a high level and do not differentiate at departmental level. One institution (Nottingham Trent University) details that it is a large and complex organisation and that each department operates specific standards.

5.60   In half of these documents, the style appears formal whilst the other half refer directly to the reader. Half of the charters, for example, use language such as, 'The student will be

expected to' whereas the other half of the charters examined use less formal language such as, 'You will be expected to'.

5.61   The typical format is that of, 'The university will be expected to…' and this is followed by 'You/The student will be expected to...'

Complaints

5.62   The majority of documents have links to a complaints system located within the document. Some make reference to complaints whilst others provide a direct email/web link. Others advise the student to contact the appropriate person, but do not provide a phone number or email address in the document. This information varies in location within the document.

5.63   The language for dealing with complaints is often presented with a positive tone. For example, 'We look forward to receiving your feedback' or 'If you wish to tell us whether we are achieving this commitment please contact xxx' as opposed to stating that the student refers to the complaints system should there be any grievances about the charter.

5.64   The Edge Hill Charter firstly states that, 'We are always pleased to receive compliments' and details direct links and numbers to do this. Students are referred to the university handbook should they wish to take up a complaint or advised that they can do this via the same procedure as the compliments procedure.

5.65   The perceived legal status of charters is clearly a concern. Two universities detail on the front page that the charter does not constitute a legal document and is not a contractually binding agreement. (Northampton University, Nottingham Trent University). Edge Hill specifies that "although every effort to ensure the information provided in this booklet is accurate, over time circumstances may change. Edge Hill University does not accept liability arising out of, or in connection with, any changes."

Length

5.66   The length of the charters varies very significantly. Edge Hill and Nottingham Trent charters are 23 to 40 pages long.

5.67   One university (University of Northampton) has a summary document and provides a link to the full charter at the end of the document.

5.68   The other 4 documents range from 2-4 pages.

Dissemination

5.69   User accessibility is an issue of which could not be determined from the survey results. Edge Hill University provides an audio tape to aid accessibility and states on the second page that alternative formats of the charter can be acquired. St George's University of London details that further copies are available from the registry.

5.70   Many of the charters are supplemented by a handbook or direct the reader to the institution's website for further information on detailed policies and procedures.

Date

5.71   With one exception, all institutions include the date of the initial agreement and when the Student Charter was last revised/published. This varies in location within the document.

Content

5.72   More lengthy documents (Edge Hill and Nottingham Trent) provide contents pages at the beginning of the documents which include information on the various 'sections' that the charter covers.

5.73   In most of the documents, there are typically sections covering: Learning and Teaching, Support Services, Student Participation and Fees and Payment.

5.74   All of the documents use headings which are later denoted into bullet points. Large blocks of text are uncommon in all of the charters, apart from in the introductory paragraph.

GuildHE

5.75   Annex D also includes three charters from GuildHE institutions as examples of the different approaches.

- Buckinghamshire New University developed a 'Learning Partnership Agreement' for staff and students, highlighting the 'two-way process'. This is a relatively new document, but in discussion stress has been laid on the value of the process through which it was developed, involving an intensive series of discussions and meetings for staff and students across the institution as a whole;

- Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln is a good example of a charter developed jointly with the Students' Union, showing clearly the responsibilities of the students and the institution and updated on a regular basis;

- University College Birmingham has had a charter in place since 1993. Reviewed annually, the format is geared to prospective and current students for both FE and HE courses.

6. CONCLUSIONS FROM ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PRACTICE

The Group drew the following conclusions from their analysis of current practice:

1. Institutions should work in partnership with student representatives and students to encourage ownership of the charter.

2. Institutions should monitor student opinion after delivery of the charter to ensure that it has maximum impact.

3. Institutions could make use of broader quality assurance mechanisms to compare other feedback from a wider body of staff and students.

4. Institutions should provide opportunities for regular engagement and review with its own student representatives, students and staff to ensure that it addresses its particular population.

5. Institutions should regularly review their communication and dissemination strategies to ensure that the document is as accessible as possible to all staff and students.

6. A number of institutions believe that charters are an important communication tool for HEIs to establish clear mutual expectations.

7. A number of institutions believe that this document is essential in providing information on where to direct students if there are complaints, setting out a picture of the culture of the university and providing information on the responsibility of the students.

8. A small majority (60%) of English HEIs currently have a student/charter/contract/agreement (defined widely) in place. These vary very significantly in length, content, formality and dissemination.

9. The vast majority of institutions believe that improved public information is likely to have increased focus as a result of the major changes to the HE funding arrangements.

10. There were a number of comments from universities in the survey regarding striking the correct balance between meaningless broad statements and encouraging unnecessary litigation.

7. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION and WORKSHOP

7.1   The Student Charter Group was deliberately kept to a minimum size and the majority of Group Members were either student representatives or representatives of HE Institutions (HEFCE, QAA and UUK did have places on the Group).

7.2   As described in the previous section, HE institutions and Students' Unions were consulted during the evidence gathering process.

7.3   Bilateral meetings were also held by Group representatives with the following organisations:

- Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA);

- Association of Colleges (AOC);

- Academic Registrars Council (ARC);

- Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA).

7.4   These stakeholder organisations were then invited to join a Sector Consultation Workshop, which was held on 7 December 2010.

7.5   Eighty delegates from across the HE sector attended the workshop, including: HEI staff, student representatives and representatives from ARC, AHUA, OIA and AMOSSHE (the Student Services Organisation).

7.6   Given the limited timescales of the Group, the main aims of the workshop were: to comment on the emerging conclusions and recommendations of the Group, and to advise on how they might be effectively used by HEIs and Students' Unions in reviewing and developing Student Charters.

7.7   The main themes emerging from the discussion were:

1. The need for a flexible framework – to allow HEIs to reflect their distinctive character/ethos in a charter.
2. The need for charters to demonstrate clear accountability.
3. The importance of genuine shared partnership and ownership of the charter by the institution and the Students' Union.
4. That well considered communication and dissemination of charters is essential – to both students and staff.

5. That charters should have not only high level 'buy-in' from senior staff and student officers, but should involve all students and all student facing staff in an institution.
6. Without regular review, a charter may quickly become outdated and unused.
7. Feedback on charters should be combined with other student feedback – to help monitor and measure the impact of charters.
8. Charters can and should be used to support transparency and consistency.
9. HEIs need guidance on how charters will be viewed by QAA's external reviewers.

7.8   The Workshop also had input from the Independent Adjudicator, Rob Behrens (see Section 8).

7.9   Other points highlighted during discussion groups and plenary sessions included:

- An injunction to include, inform and involve all staff in an institution – to look much wider than a narrow description of teaching and learning staff. There were several useful suggestions about how the information could be disseminated through staff appraisals and reviews.

- The potential of using charters in induction for both students and new staff in an institution.

- Practical suggestions to include additional items in the suggested list of topics for a charter – such as personal tutor support, health and welfare, accommodation and security.

- The need to present and badge/'brand' charters as documents jointly owned and published by the HEI and Students' Union.

- Sign off (and annual review) should be by the Students' Union President and the Vice Chancellor.

- A warning not to underestimate the time taken to develop a new charter from scratch.

- Suggestions to avoid creating a huge level of bureaucracy or administration – monitoring and review could be done through existing forums, rather than adding additional layers.

- A range of views about whether (or to what extent) charters should be enforceable and 'have teeth'.

- The need for student officers to link effectively with course representatives – and for all student representatives to actively disseminate information as well as gathering student opinions.

- On reviewing the charter's content and currency, a number of delegates questioned whether a full review was necessary every year – because the university's culture and ethos (which the charter should reflect) would not change.

- Some delegates suggested that each year the review could concentrate on certain sections of the charter.

- On timing, it was proposed that a good time for reviewing charters for SU Presidents and Sabbaticals was the three month period between the beginning of November and end January; alternatively the review could form a part of the induction for the new sabbatical team.

- A reminder that the Students' Union should be involved in monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the charter.

- The use of clear and accessible language use would help engage both staff and students.

- Student representatives were well placed to advise on how best to reach the wider student body.

8.   LEGAL ISSUES and REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

8.1   The Group do not recommend the introduction of new legal style student contracts (see Recommendation 6, page 5). However, we recognise that the information in a Student Charter might be used by students when approaching the OIA (following issue of the Completion of Procedures letter) or when taking legal action.

8.2   In addition, several HE representatives have asked how Student Charters would be viewed by the QAA.

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

8.3   At the sector workshop in December, Rob Behrens (OIA Chief Executive and Independent Adjudicator) confirmed that the OIA would consider Student Charters, if in existence, as part of the available evidence when considering individual cases. The OIA fully support the adoption of charters as an aid to increasing consistency of handling appeals and complaints and ensuring that student officers are kept fully involved and informed.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

8.4   QAA understands that Student Charters will not form part of the required public information set and, unless that changes, will not therefore form part of the evidence base for the new judgement (to be introduced from 2012-13 on Public Information). However, QAA has confirmed that Student Charters will be considered within the scope of future institutional review and could influence lines of enquiry developed during the review.

8.5   The Student Charter Group (SCG) welcomes the inclusion of Student Charters (and their effective implementation) into the new QAA institutional review as an area that reviewers will take account of when enquiring about how institutions manage the quality of student learning opportunities. The SCG encourages QAA to take due account of Student Charters as it develops its proposed new UK Code of Practice for standards, quality and enhancement.

Legal Opinion

8.6   The Student Charter Group has received the following opinion from Mills & Reeve LLP[1] on the status of student charters, according to the law of England and Wales:

8.7   *We would suggest that a Student Charter includes a positive statement early on about its purpose, namely that it is intended to act as a signpost to key information which is likely to be relevant to students. Some wording should also be included in each Student Charter along the following lines:*

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[1] Gary Attle, Partner, Head of the University Business Group, Mills & Reeve LLP

"Our Student Charter gives a summary of our aspirations and expectations for each other at [insert name of institution]. It is not, however, a legally binding contract and it is not intended either to define or limit the legal rights and responsibilities of [insert name of institution], the [insert name of students' union] and each student. All students should ensure that they are aware of all documents published by [insert names of institution and students' union] which relate in any way to being a registered student and/or a member of the students' union, including [insert names of: constitutional documents such as Royal Charter, Statutes, Instruments and Articles etc, any specific registration "agreements", course specific documentation] and all regulations, policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines issued by the [insert name of institution] and/or the [insert name of students' union] from time to time."

8.8   It would ultimately be for the courts to construe and determine the legal status of a Student Charter. It may be that a court would say that a Student Charter was not intended to be a legally binding document in itself and/or that certain provisions are too general to be contractually enforceable. Equally, it would be unwise for an institution or students' union to include a statement in its Student Charter which is untrue (or not capable of being undertaken or performed) or which is not reflected in the services provided by, or the regulations governing, the institution given the possibility of someone seeking to base a claim upon that document.

8.9   We have not reviewed in detail what might be included in the template Student Charter, although we do suggest that a key undertaking from students is to abide by the regulations, policies and procedures of the higher education institution and the students' union from time to time in force.

8.10   Seeking accountability through the courts for not adhering to the terms of a Student Charter may not be the most appropriate or effective mechanism, although experience suggests that a Student Charter is likely to be tested in the courts and with the OIA at some stage.

8.11 These comments are provided as general legal information only; institutions and students' unions should seek their own specific legal advice on their own Student Charter.

Annexes

a. HEI questionnaire

b. Follow up phone interviews

c. Students' Union interviews

d. Charters used for document analysis

e. List of HEIs who responded to the survey

Annex A

Survey of UUK/GuildHE institutions for response by 23 August 2010

Name of HEI

Contact and Position

E mail address and phone

a) Prevalence of formalised student charters/ contracts/ agreements

Does your institution have a formalised student charter/ contract/ agreement ? (If yes, please give date implemented and attach a weblink/ send a copy to Naomi.drinkwater@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

If not, is your institution currently developing a student charter/ contract/ agreement? (If possible, please send a draft copy to Naomi.drinkwater@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Or is your institution considering developing a student charter/ contract/ agreement? (If so, what is your timescale?)

Has your institution previously had a student charter/ contract/ agreement, which has been discontinued? If yes, please give reasons.

If your institution has a student charter/ contract/ agreement or is currently developing one, please answer sections b-e, otherwise please skip to question f.

b) Student Involvement

Please describe how students and student representatives have been involved in its development.

c) Monitoring, Review and Updating

What is the procedure for reviewing and updating the student charter/ contract/ agreement?

How (and when) do you monitor whether commitments in the document are delivered in practice?

d) Redress and complaints

Does the student charter/ contract/ agreement include specific details of what a student should do if they feel it is not being implemented?

Is there a formal link with your student complaints system? Please explain.

e) Impact

What do you see as the main benefits of your student charter/ contract/ agreement?

How has it helped a) staff and b) students?

f) Free Comments Section (ALL)

Do you have any other comments about the use of student charters/ contracts/ agreements, or any other points which you would like to raise?

g) Telephone follow up survey (ALL)

Are you willing to participate in a telephone follow up?

Yes/No

Thank you for completing this survey.

Follow Up Phone Interviews with Selected HEIs

Student Charter Interview

Liz Buckton, Assistant Registrar (Service Quality)

University of Sheffield

1.What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter?

2. Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

The Students' Charter is intended to provide a clear and succinct statement of policies, rights, responsibilities and expectations. The Charter provides a comprehensive list of guidance, sources of further information, and links to more detail in Codes of Practice and disciplinary and complaints procedures.

There are separate sections for Academic Guidance for Taught and Research Students respectively. Other topics include: University Services, Diversity, Personal Development, Rights and Responsibilities, Legal Matters, Students and Work, Students and the Local Community.

The first Charter was developed in 1995-96. It has been reviewed annually since then and was first published solely on the web in 2004-05. The Charter is aimed at current students only (a previous section on Admissions has been removed).

Following an in-depth review in 2009-10, the Charter has been re-branded as "Our Commitment" http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/ourcommitment , which includes two introductory pages listing:

- 10 things students should do
  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/ourcommitment/students.html and
- 10 things the University will do http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/ourcommitment/staff.html .

3. What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

The Charter is intended to provide a backbone, or framework, for a set of more detailed key information for students.

The Charter has helped to increase awareness of student issues and provides an annual focus for discussion with student representatives (new sabbatical officers).

The Charter also helps to highlight complementary initiatives to support students:

- All central University service departments publish <u>Service Level Agreements</u> annually which set out the range and level of services they aim to provide
- The University also carries out regular Student Satisfaction Surveys on (non academic) university services. It specifically publishes improvements made to University services as a result of student feedback.

4. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

Students were initially involved in drawing up the Students' Charter in 1995-6, through a process of consultation between Officers of the University and the Union of Students. Every year since then, the Union of Students has been involved in an annual review of the contents of the Charter, which was first published solely on the web in 2004-5. During the academic year 2009-10 an in-depth review has been carried out by a working group, half of which were representatives of the Union of Students.

5. Why has this worked (hasn't this worked)?

This has been developed in partnership with student representatives at each stage of development. In addition, students are represented at each level of university committee, up to the Senates' Learning and Teaching Committee The main issue has been increasing awareness with the average student. It is hoped that the re-branding and re-launching as "Our Commitment" will help to address that; a quick reference guide is being issued to staff and students to help them identify more easily with the Charter.

6. Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future?

Monitor impact of change to 'Our Commitment' and consider including more information on employability.

7. Advice for national working group ?

National guidelines would be helpful; would not want prescriptive national template.

Student Charter Interview

Interview with Andy Saffery, Assistant Academic Registrar

University College London

- **Date 7th October 2010**
- **UCL has an online student relationship document**

Description

As part of the enrolment process students are presented with a summary document which outlines the key strands of their relationship with UCL. This occurs as part of the enrolment process and on the first instance of signing into the student intranet/email, they are asked to note the contents of the summary. The language of the text is fairly formal. The webpage is broken up into several sections that include electronic links to the substantive policy documents to which the sections refer. A clear link exists if students wish to feedback any comments.

What were your main reasons for introducing a student relationship agreement?

Did establish a student charter in 1999. This was to reassert UCL's mission statement. It set out briefly, in paragraphs, what students could expect but nothing more was really done after that. The issue of developing a student contract was then raised in spring 2008. This was taken forward by the academic committee. UCL did a bit of research and found that at the time approximately 13 institutions had a contract, others had a charter but many had nothing at all. Upon evaluating these documents UCL concluded that a formal contract was probably overly legalistic and inflexible So we went down another route with the 'Student Relationship' summary which was felt would be more appropriate to UCL and the needs of its students.

What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

Introduced in 2009/2010 – very recently.

Previously students would sign their enrolment form at the beginning of each year to confirm that they would agree to abide by the rules and regulations of UCL. Subsequent legal advice suggested that, without giving students the opportunity to have sight of all the rules and regulations to which the form referred, the signing of such a document would have little legal value. So the relationship summary was born to hold all the policies and procedures in one online document to which they would be referred to when they enrolled or when signing up to modules or if they are returning students they encounter our Student Relationship and they have to click *'I abide by the terms and conditions'*. We had lengthy discussions about needing to sign it and we thought this was the most appropriate route as they then can take responsibility for reading the documents.

Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

Hopefully important information is now more readily available in an accessible format.

Why do you think this has worked?

Because important information is available in a more readily available and accessible format. It also helps us to review those policies and procedures which inform our relationship with our students on a more regular basis. I send an email around to those who look after the substantive documents to which the summary refers on an annual basis to ensure that the content is up-to-date.

Is there anything you would have done differently?

Simultaneously, the student union developed a code of conduct so there was potential overlap. This could have been coordinated better but we have now reviewed both documents and they co-exist quite happily.

How did you consult students in the development of the student relationship agreement?

Responsibility for formally approving the summary rested with UCL's senior academic policy-making committee, Academic Committee, whose membership included the UCL Union's Education Officer and the Medical and Postgraduate Officer. Revisions would also be sent to the Students' Union for other Union officers to look at. They came back to us with some useful advice e.g. toning down the language.

Have you got any feedback from students since it has been implemented?

No, apparently we have not received any feedback from students.

Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future? How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters?

Such documents help us to focus on what we are committing to. Given the current review of tuition fees this may impact on how students view institutions and they will ask more e.g. 'What can expect from HEIs'? This would cause us to review how we can best meet their expectations

What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

That every institution is fairly different and don't assume there is one best way. I would recommend review all the models that could possibly be used and choose one that is most suitable.

How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Students' Unions?

I think the dissemination of good practice would be helpful to institutions, students unions and students. I would worry, however, that national guidelines could be too prescriptive: one model wouldn't be suitable for all. To insist that an HEI should go down a certain route might not be appropriate.

David Gibson

Assistant Director, Academic Services (Academic Policy & Student Administration)

University of Exeter

- **Currently developing a Student Learning Partnership (plan to publish this in the Spring of 2011, subject to the external landscape)**
- **Date 5th October 2010**

Description

The proposed Student Learning Partnership is designed to provide clarity about the nature of the student learning experience and to help manage student expectations. It is different in scope from a student charter in that it does not seek to cover the entire spectrum of the student experience e.g. finance and accommodation.

What were the main reasons for introducing a student learning partnership?

The Student Learning Partnership is being introduced as part of the University's response to the need for high quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) that is becoming increasingly important across the sector. The statement, which will complement more detailed information about individual academic programmes, is intended to underscore the active and constructive partnership between the student and the University that lies at the heart of the learning experience.

What will be the main benefits for the HEI and for students?

The main benefit for Exeter is that it allows us to frame the learning experience as a partnership, and to communicate to prospective students what we see as distinctive about the Exeter experience. Students know what to expect at Exeter and can make a more informed choice about university and programme of study. The partnership would not be presented as a contract. However, it could lead to a higher risk of complaint.

How have you consulted students in the development of the student learning agreement?

We intend that the Student Learning Partnership should be co-created with the student body. We have prepared a first draft for review and development with the Students' Guild and other student forums. We believe that student involvement will be crucial in getting the statement right in both its content and its language.

Going forward, how do you plan to use the agreement in the future? How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters?

We believe that the quality of the student experience will be of paramount importance in universities' ability to compete in the post Browne world we are entering. Increases in student fees – or more accurately future graduate contributions – will lead to increases in student expectations about the quality of the student experience and the value of their investment. Universities will need to respond with high quality IAG and clear statements about students' rights and responsibilities. We see the Student Learning Partnership as part of Exeter's response to these new pressures.

What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

HEIs should ensure that their student bodies are fully involved in the development or review of their charters.

How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Students' Unions?

National guidelines could usefully include advice on what areas to cover, how to manage the process of development (though institutional cultures and organisations will vary enormously), where to publish and how to monitor its impact.

Student Charter - Interview

Alison Rhodes, Head of Learning and Teaching Quality

University of East Anglia

1. When was the Charter introduced ?

The Charter was introduced in 2008-09 following discussions in the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC); Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (FLTQCs) and the Student Experience Committee.

2. What does it contain ?

The UEA Charter is 1.5 pages long and comprises of the university mission and vision and 7 student rights and 6 student responsibilities.

3. What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter?

The impetus for introducing the Charter came from the [then] PVC for Teaching, Learning and Quality and the Students' Union. The PVC used discussions with other PVCs, especially from the 1994 Group.

The main aim of the Charter is, by identifying rights and responsibilities, to instil a sense of partnership between the university and students and to increase student academic engagement – to enhance the overall student experience and so that individual students get the maximum benefit from university life.

The Student Charter reflects this vision and is an expression of values, intent and direction of travel. It is not a contractual document between students and the University. It flows, instead, from our concept of the University as a community of learning and our aspiration that its members exhibit good citizenship within UEA and in their dealings with the wider world. The Charter rests on the guiding principle that students are to be active partners in their own education and in the academic development of the University.

4. How and when do you plan to monitor and review the impact of the Charter ?

The Student Charter is kept under review by Faculty LTQCs, the Student Experience Committee and by LTC. There is no specific review date but in keeping with normal practice, the LTC would expect to review every three years or so. The first formal review is therefore scheduled for 2011-12 – pending the outcome of current national developments.

5. What do you see as the main benefits for the HEI and for students?

For both staff and students, the expression of rights and responsibilities has the attraction of clarity of expectations and responsibilities. For the University, the Student Charter is both a 'carrot' and a 'stick' to help develop and even change behaviours, to the benefit of students and to enhance the reputation and attractiveness of UEA.

6. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

As indicated above (1), the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students and students have membership of the Senate, LTC, LTC's Taught and Research Programmes policy groups, FLTQCs, the Student Experience Committee as well as School Committees and Staff: Student Liaison Committees. All are in a position to comment on the operation of aspects of the Student Charter.

In addition, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) holds regular informal meetings with the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students and with the LTC student member of the Graduate Students' Association. These are wide-ranging, open discussions.

7. Do you think the Charter will work ?

We think that the development of a Student Charter has been positive on the whole thus far. We are comfortable with it as a 'top level' expression of a balance of rights and responsibilities as between students and staff.

8. Any overall conclusions and advice for the national working group ?

There is a concern that the current national focus on Student Charters might result in too much direction with accompanying reduction in flexibility for different institutions to focus on different aspects, according to their particular missions. We would also urge some caution against the prospect of Student Charters becoming 'Consumer' Charters with their attendant legal connotations.

Student Charter Interview

David Ball, Dean of Students

University of Hertfordshire

1. Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

Hertfordshire first introduced a Student Charter in 1994/95 and this was updated in 2000/01.

In 2008/09 the University moved beyond a Charter by introducing a Statement of Responsibilities and Commitments. This statement was aligned with a student Code of Conduct introduced at the same time. Both the Statement and the Code of Conduct are included in the comprehensive 'A-Z of the University Hertfordshire' which is published electronically and on paper each September.

The Charter was found to be a useful document but without real 'bite'. By moving to a Statement of Responsibilities and Commitments (and the allied Code of Conduct) the University is attempting to provide a very clear message of what students can expect of the University and the standards that the University expects of them,

2. What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

The Charter provides a useful reminder of:

a) Staff responsibilities towards students

b) Students' own responsibilities.

It also explains to students how they can forward queries/complaints if they are not satisfied, and, because it is included in the 'A-Z' also provides students with a more detailed view of the University and the contacts that they may need in any given circumstances.

3. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

Work on the original Charter was staff led but the 2000/01 update and the 2008/09 Statement came from a working groups chaired by the Dean of Students and with Students' Union input into those working groups.

4. Why has this worked?

It provides a clear statement of the current position and aims to set reasonable and realistic expectations on both sides.

The university aims to keep this a living document, under constant review.

The Statement is reviewed annually by the Dean of Students. The review takes into account local and national changes.

There are regular meeting between the Office of the Vice Chancellor and the Sabbaticals and the Executive of the Students' Union (7 meeting planned for 2010/11) and this provides the forum for discussion about changes to the Statement. Discussion is also informed by feedback from internal student surveys and external surveys such as NSS.

5. Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future?

Continue ongoing monitoring and review (with SU involvement).

The University has just published its Student Experience Strategy 2010 - 15 and from this will come a new senior level committee (the Student Educational Experience Committee) and a completely revised model of student representation, both of which are likely to influence future versions of the Statement.

Student Charter Interview

Jonathan Bradley, Dean of Students

University of the West of England

Characteristics

- **Have a charter in place (since 2009)**
- **Date 24th September 2010**

Description of charter

The charter is 14 pages long. Student friendly informal language. Document shaped in a student lifecycle: Thinking of studying? Gaining a place, while you are a UWE student. student support services, what if things go wrong?, when you graduate. It also contains a link should a student have any comments.

What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter ?

Main original motivation was the VC at the time, the Dean of students and the student body were keen to put a greater focus on the student experience. Also wanted to show that we were up to speed on the expectations on what a contemporary university should do at the time.

Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

About to promote a new version. Areas where it particularly needed to be revised were the focus on international students and postgraduate students and FE colleges.

What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students ? How has this differed from what you expected ?

Since the process of developing the charter began a lot has changed in enhancement of the student experience generally. Complaints are treated more responsively and quickly than they would have been 5-6 years ago.

I think it codifies what we do and what we recognise as good practice. Helps us to understand in an organised way what the student experience is like. The student charter is structured in a student lifecycle it goes through from pre admission to post graduation, and helps to clarify thinking about enhancement.

Why has this worked?

Not been a driver of great change in itself but helps to have changed the mood and assumptions.

What would you have done differently ?

Charter has encouraged communication to diverse interest groups. It is first initial form it didn't speak quite as widely as it should to all groups in the university and that is why in its second draft it has been revised. The clarity and brevity of it also means that it is more user-friendly. Success of it will also depend on how much prominence we give it.

How did you consult students in the development of the charter ?

Didn't just consult students but actively involved them in it. Members of the SU were part of the project team that developed it. This institution has many 100s of student representatives. The charter was available for comment to a large number of student representatives because we feel as though it would not carry much weight any other way.

Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future ? How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters ?

I think we would want to review it once a year, and we would see it as always evolving. We might take bits on it and promote more actively with types of students and types of staff.

With higher fees less money a more demanding environment and what coalition government is asking of HE sector there will be a greater demand for transparency and accountability. Charters are a way of doing this and could become more important.

What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

Advise that top down doesn't work very well. You have got to get people on the ground talking about it and debating it. There are some resource implications for implementing it properly. Just having it sitting there doesn't help that much to make people aware of it and to take it seriously. It takes true commitment from the top. The senior management team have got to buy into it but it also has to be brought in from the bottom up,

How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Students' Unions?

To demonstrate how charters can help within a university. I think they could also help within the sector, as national guidelines would draw attention to existence of charters and people would start to think more about them. They vary a lot but if the sector wants to demonstrate its responsiveness to government then some kind of greater acceptance of certain principles is likely to strengthen the hand of the sector talking to government. Everybody can then say we are really making an effort on this and it also in turn has more political clout.

Student Charter Interview

Bruce Armstrong, Director of Student Services and Administration

Kingston University

1. Why are you considering introducing a student charter?

Kingston do not currently have a charter but are considering introducing, for 2010/11, a 'Guidance Note' (i.e. not formal or contractual), and follow up in 2011/2012 with a revised document, which will take account of recommendations and good practice from the national working group.

The University has not yet decided whether to adopt a formal (i.e. contractual) Charter, and would need to consider this during the forthcoming year.

In a highly devolved academic structure, within a multi campus institution, the intention behind the Notes for Guidance is that this should greatly enhance the general understanding of each "party's" rights and obligations towards each other, thereby reinforcing the notion of equality and parity across the university.

2. What do you hope will be the main benefits ?

We want to provide clarity about the rights and obligations of our students – to explain the standards of behaviour expected of them and the support which they can expect. (And to explain the disciplinary procedures for students who do not comply with the University's regulations).

We want to ensure that students understand how they should properly respect and engage with other members of the learning community, whatever their background.

We also want to set out the University's expectations of how students should conduct themselves in the local community.

We also hope that it will help to manage student expectations and help to educate students about how they will learn in higher education (and how that differs from previous educational environments).

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We want to ensure that staff understand the standards which are expected of them to help ensure consistency across the University.

3.   How are students being consulted ?

The officers and sabbaticals from our Student Union are involved in the drafting of the document. The final draft will be presented to our Student Experience Group (SEG) for approval – which includes student representatives.

4.   How will you know if this has worked ?

We do not know yet - we are likely to build in a review as an annual activity, commissioned by the SEG and involving a small group of both staff and student unions reps.

We will is likely to be included as part of our annual student satisfaction monitoring exercise, again under the responsibility of SEG.

5. Overall observations for the national working group

We are convinced that any tool that clarifies the rights and obligations our students, and therefore, helps to mange expectations is something to be welcomed.

We are less convinced, at the moment, of the advisability of 'formalising' this in some form of contractual agreement. However, we look forward to reading the findings of the Working Group.

- **Currently have a student charter (Have had a charter for approx 10 years)**
- **Date 6th October 2010**

Description of charter

Charter is 22 pages. Outlines in introduction that it is not contractually binding but an evolving document. Outlines charter in terms of the student lifecycle – admissions, learning opportunities, student support, students union, standards of behaviour, regulations and procedures and suggestions and complaints.

What are the reasons for introducing a student charter?

Had discussions with the students' union for a number of years regarding student expectations. Agreed that we would develop a joint publication something that was co-owned that students might take more notice of. There was a general swell of opinion that charters were going to come in.

Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

Not really, format has stayed the same. Now chairing student experience subcommittee and one of plans is to review the student charter.

What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

For the university it allows us to point to the document. The biggest problem is that it isn't read. We have produced it in a credit card size that fits into wallet with key headlines; however, students were just throwing it away and didn't think it was important. One of the issues is about getting students to use it and take it seriously. In a sense institution has used it more but very

little has come the other way. I will be sending an email and will provide a web link to the charter next week to raise profile.

Why hasn't it worked?

Students are provided with a number of regulations, course handbooks etc and there is only so much they are prepared to read. Students don't tend to read appeal regulations unless it is relevant to them at the time. It may also be that the charter is a bit long. We did talk about length about this issue but then decided that this was all useful information.

Also don't think students understand the notion of a student charter. I think it is confusing to students in distinguishing the difference between a charter, a policy or a regulation. Maybe the term charter is 'old hat'. We need as a sector to be clearer about this term and what we want it to do.

What would you have done differently?

Should have piloted it at the beginning and consulted the students in more detail. Would have conducted some focus groups.

How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

Through the Students' Union and a working group.

Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future?

We need a fundamental rethink of the charter. We have more part-time students, distance learning students, international students and partner colleges. The whole HE environment has changed for us. It is too focused on full time undergraduates.

How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters?

I would expect that if fees go up students will be more interested because they would be expecting more for their money. However, we expected more interest in this when the fees went up to £3,000 but it didn't. Employer engagement is now high on the agenda - we have such different markets now.

What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

You need to be clear about why you want a charter. I think it needs a really critical look e.g. looking at whether it is necessary and whether there are other things that do the job. The involvement of students from the outset is essential.

How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Student Unions?

Help us to determine a common format and also sharing good practice help us to see what does work and what doesn't. Would like some guidance on measuring the impact of student charters. If you are going to continue with charters you have got to measure their impact otherwise they are going to become 'dead-documents'.

Student Charter Interview

University X (Indicated would like to remain anonymous)

Characteristics

- **Do not have a charter in place**

- **Small institution**

- **Date 24th September 2010**

What are the main reasons for not introducing a student charter?

Already a number of initiatives in place and don't feel as though this would add to the already existing arrangements. The institution would therefore rather be doing something at own pace and in own control.

Have you ever considered developing a charter?

In the 1990s there was an initiative on student charters but we didn't find it very useful and the students did not seem interested.

Would you consider developing a charter in the future?

We are a single subject and very small institution as a result we have individual relationships with all students. All students have a 1:1 professor and have personal direct contact with other key academic and administrative staff. Students expect their problems to be addressed in this way and take very little interest in centrally driven initiatives of this sort.

Also think we have a clear regulatory framework which includes a lot of ongoing dialogue with students, including with our Students' Association. We also feel as a result that a charter would just look like a bureaucratic thing that sits on top.

What do you see as the main benefits of developing a charter?

Wouldn't consider developing a charter in future as can't see any benefit in doing so.

What do you see as the main disadvantages of developing a charter?

The main disadvantage would be that it would be something that students would not actually recognise and that didn't have much meaning.

Do you think that national guidelines or good practice would inspire you to develop a charter?

It is possible that the national guidelines would include things that we wouldn't have thought of doing and that we would therefore welcome. We'd rather it wasn't coming forward saying, 'This is a student charter and this is what has to be in it', but that it was broader about good practice in areas that a student charter would cover.

One other thing is that we are a small specialist institution and this plays quite a part in any considerations around this. We are talking about a single subject institution and a total student body of 650. What works here may be rather different from what works in a regular university and vice versa. Other larger universities might see this as more beneficial as there is a larger chain and it could therefore be a useful managerial tool here.

Student Charter Interview

Simon Allison, Head of Student Support Services

University of Hull

1. What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter?

The Student Charter was introduced to set out clear expectations about the role and responsibilities of students and the service and support which they in turn can expect from the University.

The Charter specifically <u>invites feedback</u> from students on whether they feel that the university is meeting its commitment to:

providing an environment that supports and develops students through high quality learning and teaching, and services that underpin a positive student experience.

2. Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

The first version – in 2004 - was extremely detailed and comprehensive (described as something of a 'Ben Hur' production).

The revised version, dated 2007, is only 2 sides – to make it as 'short and punchy' as possible.

It summarises mutual expectations at a high level, for all students across the University under the headings of 'Commitment', 'Equity', 'Understanding', 'Learning' and 'Living':

The Student Charter is published in hard copy as the first 2 pages of the student diary (along with information on personal development planning and the diversity statement).

3. What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

Hull has a traditional university structure, with a fair degree of autonomy for Departments, Faculties and Schools. So one of the benefits of the Charter has been to help establish consistent expectations across the university in respect of student behaviour, attendance and discipline.

The Charter helps new students to understand how higher education differs from their previous learning experiences – and so helps them make an effective transition.

As stated above, the Charter invites specific feedback from individual students. Student representatives and University staff review whether the Charter commitments are being met – and consider this as part of wider evidence from student surveys (including the National Student Survey).

4. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

The Charter is jointly badged from the University and Hull University Students' Union. The Students Union were fully involved in the production and subsequent revision of the Charter.

5. Why has this worked (/hasn't this worked)?

The active involvement of student representatives has been key – in producing the Charter document and also in its subsequent monitoring. The annual review, and the new insights provided by a new sabbatical officer ensures that the Charter is kept up to date and refreshed.

The practical incorporation into the student diary is intended to increase awareness of the Charter amongst ordinary students and it is now written in a way that makes it more accessible.

6. Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future?

Plan to continue reviewing the existing charter – through the Learning teaching and Assessment Committee and to consider its role as part of a wider review of all University Communications with students. Will consider how to relate the Charter to the new Employability Statement.

Student Charter Interview

Robin Dutton, Quality Systems Manager

University College Birmingham

1. What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter?

The charter was first introduced in 1993 (when UCB was an FE college) in response to recommendations by John Major's government.

2. Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

Over the years the charter has been developed as UCB's 'service promise' and extended to include sections for groups other than current students e.g. prospective students, employers and the community. The charter is reviewed annually as part of a formal process and there are usually minor updates based on internal procedures, contacts, government policy, funding etc.

3. What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

It has been useful in making UCB's service levels clear and transparent, for teaching and support staff as well as students. It has provided clear service targets, and has helped in accreditation and quality standard assessments e.g. 'Hospitality Assured', the 'Charter Mark', OFSTED and QAA audits. The charter includes UCB's recent achievements – and the wide audience means that it can be used as a marketing tool as well as a resource for students.

4. Why has this worked (/hasn't this worked)?

UCB have kept the charter separate from the General Student Regulations (comprehensive list of student responsibilities and institution rules) so the focus of the charter remains on the service of the institution with just the key student responsibilities. Copies of the charter are given to students on a memory stick with other key files to reduce the amount of paperwork given to students during induction. In terms of purpose, students tend to use it as a reference document as and when they have a need. For example, if they need to sort out a problem or make a complaint as it explains how they can do this.

5. What would you have done differently?

No regrets!

6. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

When the charter was first set up there were student focus groups, and the students are involved in the annual review process via a representative from the Student Guild (Union).

7. Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future? How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters?

Plan to continue reviewing the existing charter and there is potential for increasing the number and type of targets. Anticipate charters becoming increasingly important in differentiating the services of HEIs and informing student choice as well as demonstrating value for money.

8. What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

Have student focus groups and involve students in the process. Review regularly and do not allow the charter to go out of date. Look at the charters of other institutions including FE colleges for good practice and ideas that may be relevant to you. Have a clear idea about how the charter can benefit the institution and your students.

9. How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Student Unions?

National guidelines could help to crystallise what is meant by excellence in the student experience and provide an agreement across the sector in terms of core charter content.

Student Charter Interview

Ruth Gunstone, Director of Student Experience

Bucks New University

1. What were the main reasons for introducing a student charter?

The main reason for having a charter at Bucks is to set out in formal terms what students (prospective and current) can expect from the institution, and what the institution can expect from the students.

2. Since the introduction of the student charter has anything changed?

Yes - the Learning Partnership Agreement (LPA) was developed as the previous charter had become outdated and the terms were felt to be too general. The charter was very much focused on what was expected of students, and there was a need to articulate more clearly what students could expect from the institution, as well as providing an update to the view of the relationship between staff and students. The charter was renamed and the content revised and ordered under four headings (Behaviour, Academic Support, Learning and Teaching, Assessment and Feedback).

3. What have been the main benefits for the HEI and for students? How has this differed from what you expected?

The LPA has been useful in setting clear expectations for employees as well as students. It is also important for parents (who may be providing funding) to see what service is being provided and the seriousness of the institution's approach. 'Partnership' emphasises the joint responsibility and the fact that the students are in an environment where they are being treated as adults. An unexpected benefit has been that the LPA has served as a new mode of communication between the institution and its students, formalising the working relationship.

4. Why has this worked (hasn't this worked)?

By involving institution staff and students, the process was democratic and achieved buy-in from all parties (including the Students' Union, UCU and Bucks New University Senior Management Team). The specific commitments rather than general statements have led to a meaningful and concise document. The headings, without a student/staff separation, highlight the joint contribution.

5. What would you have done differently?

Process was very positive so no regrets!

6. How did you consult students in the development of the charter?

The LPA was developed over the course of a year in partnership with the Students' Union, and there were student representatives at each meeting.

7. Going forward, how do you plan to use charters in the future? How do you think the current HE environment will impact on charters?

The LPA will continue and be reviewed at the programme committees that meet once a term. Ideally the current HE environment and potential cuts to resource will not mean that charter commitments need to be scaled back. With the focus on fees, the idea of the charter as 'soft contract' will become more important.

8. What advice would you give to HEIs introducing or refreshing their charters?

Look at other charters and involve students and staff in the process. Ensure that the terms being used in the charter are understood. Keep the document concise so it is more likely to be read in full. Make sure the charter is high profile e.g. on website, send out as part of joining instructions, hard copies on service points and reception, presentations to new and returning students, build into student surveys.

9. How do you think national guidelines or good practice could help HEIs and Student Unions?

There should be guidelines on process of charter development as well as content. It would be useful to have good examples of charters to use as models.

Annex C

Student Officers' perspectives on student charters/agreements

University A

At **University A**, the Student Charter sets out expectations on the part of both student and institution. It also establishes several roles for and obligations of the Students' Union. The Charter is seen, at least by student representatives, as very much a jointly owed document. It was initially drafted two years ago, through a lengthy 18 month process involving elected student officers and the Dean of Students; it was ratified by the Academic Board but not formally ratified on the Union side (e.g. by Union Council). There had been no widespread student consultation. This may raise questions about the extent to which the document really feels like either a living or a shared document among students more widely.

That concern continues into practice – the union reports that little practical use is made of the Charter beyond occasional reference in individual casework; it just 'sits on the website'. This may be because the document has become merely a codification of existing custom and practice and/or because it is 'too vague and wordy'. The Union would like to visit the document again, perhaps with a view to making it firmer, with more specifics – though this potentially sits in tension with other aims to make it shorter and more accessible.

University B

The University and Union at **University B** have been collaborating on a major overhaul of the Student Charter to modernise it and make it more important. The old 'Student Charter' will be replaced with a document entitled 'Our Commitment' setting out commitments on the part of the student and the institution. The old document was seen as institution-owned (even institution-imposed) and felt too much like a formal contract; the new document, by contrast, aims to be friendlier and more accessible, though this makes it rather broader in focus and less specific. It has been developed through a joint institution and union working group, which first examined content and presentation and is now looking at communication and dissemination.

There is now an intention to review the document annually. It is hoped that this new approach will lead to more practical use – the old charter was rarely used or even referred to, but student officers hope that the new ' Our Commitment' document will be much more widely read, and will help them to raise concerns where appropriate about the performance of the institution at the departmental level. This may be supported by the approach planned for dissemination – the intention at present is for all students and academic staff in the institution to receive a physical copy of the document.

University C

The **University C** Charter is seen mainly as an institutional document, although the union was involved in the original 'concept' stage. Several hundred copies were printed, but the union's impression is that awareness of the Charter is generally pretty low. The union believes that in redrafting the Charter (which is believed to have involved some scrutiny by lawyers), the language was 'diluted so much that it is not really a helpful document', and there is concern that it 'doesn't promise anything'. A project is underway to review the Charter, but this seems to have become 'bogged down' in efforts to map out exactly which departments of the institution are responsible for each element covered in the document. The union would like to see a new Charter, 'embedded' across the institution – at present there is a feeling that it is difficult to monitor what is delivered and compare it to what the Charter says.

University D

The Student Charter at **University D** aims to set out what students are expected to do and what the institution will do in return. It is organised, broadly speaking, in terms of the 'student lifecycle'; therefore it contains sections dealing with offer and acceptance, pre-arrival, enrolment and registration, communication between institution and students, learning and teaching, ancillary and support services, learning resources, assessment, graduation and support services after leaving, amongst others. Notable areas of weakness, in the union's view, are the exclusion of content around student induction and plagiarism.

There is a feeling that the Charter is an institution-owed document; the union can recommend amendments (and has in the past), but it is up to the institution to decide on them – there is no sense of negotiation involved, and the document is not seen as an 'agreement'. The Charter is well recognised by students and staff, as it is 'put everywhere', with thousands of printed copies available. It is used frequently in individual casework and the union is also planning to cite the Charter in representations to the institution about academic feedback this term, as it sets out minimum expectations in that area that union officers do not believe are being met universally.

One interesting note is that students widely see the Charter as their 'contract' with the institution, where from a casework and indeed educational practice point of view, the truly powerful documents are in fact the academic regulations of the institution. This tension has left a number of students feeling wrong-footed in the past. The Charter is not regularly reviewed, but will probably be reviewed this year as part of a much wider review of 'customer service excellence'.

University E

The Charter at **University E** is focused on fair expectations on both students and the institution, and also covers many stages in the 'student life cycle', though this is not explicitly the structure of the document. It also contains a section on how complaints should be dealt with. The process of creating the Charter was quite inclusive, with extensive discussions between institutional managers and student representatives, but the final document does not feel like a joint effort (it uses institutional branding and fits the institutional 'uniform'). Over time, this has possibly become a factor in the union doing little to promote the document or its use – which is now largely confined to individual casework. There is a feeling that the Charter is too long and inaccessible, and although it will probably undergo some minor revisions this year to reflect structural changes in the institution, there does not seem to be any great enthusiasm to develop it further.

University F

At **University F** a strategic decision was made within the institution to treat students as partners in as many areas of the institution's work as possible. This implied major changes to the existing Student Charter, which was felt to be too one-sided in favour of the institution, and used as a tool against students especially in settings like academic appeals. A working group was established to review the charter, involving two union sabbatical officers, a union staff member and a Pro-Vice Chancellor of the university. There was wide consultation with students during the early work of the group. The group brought work forward through the formal committee structure of the institution and it was finally ratified by the senate and separately by the union's executive committee.

The outcome has been a document called, in contrast to the Charter, a 'Student Partnership Agreement'; it is structured more as a 'value set' than as a 'checklist', and is very concise at around two sides of A4. Content is nevertheless quite detailed on key educational experience issues, e.g. timely feedback, punctuality, assessment methods, on the staff side and punctuality, active engagement in sessions and through the online learning system. It is very much felt to be a joint document, and is jointly branded to emphasise this. Union officer now feel that this document has the potential to ensure 'positive mutual accountability' between students and the institution.

They will be putting it at the centre of training for course representatives this term, but are determined to make sure that it is 'not dragged into every situation or encounter'. There is recognition that a difficult balancing act is being attempted: to make the document strong enough to be of serious use, but light and flexible enough to prevent it from becoming a 'stick to beat people with'.

UNIVERSITY OF **Hull**

Student Charter

Commitment: The University of Hull and Hull University Union are committed to providing an environment that supports and develops students through high quality learning and teaching, and services that underpin a positive student experience.

If you wish to tell us whether we are achieving this commitment, please email studenthelp@hull.ac.uk

Equity   We will act in a fair, just and legal manner in our dealings with you, provide equal opportunity, and comply with appropriate legislation

In return we will expect you to also act in a fair, just and legal manner, accepting that you are in a diverse university community, and respecting staff and your fellow students.

Understanding   Our relationship is built upon joint understanding and open communication channels; we will:

- Provide opportunities for you to raise your concerns, queries and complaints
- Respond to feedback and act upon it where possible
- Be timely in our dealings with you

In return, we will expect you to:

- Use the feedback mechanisms that exist to communicate with us
- Be open and honest with your concerns, queries and complaints
- Be timely in your dealings with the University.

Learning   We will provide:

- Facilities and resources that are fit for purpose
- Tools to undertake your studies, including library and virtual learning environments, and various student support functions
- The opportunity to develop transferable skills via support and feedback mechanisms, including staff-student committees, faculty board meetings, departmental feedback sessions, module design groups and PDPs.

Examples of student charters

In return we will expect you to:

- Study diligently, attend classes and meet deadlines
- Make use of the feedback opportunities and engage positively with your department and faculty
- Respect those facilities provided for you
- Act as an independent learner, taking advantage of services that enable you to learn positively.

Living We will provide:

- Services that you will need in order to enjoy your time at University
- High-quality support services that are there to help when you need them
- A range of opportunities to develop skills outside of your academic department.

In return we will expect you to:

- Be courteous and timely in your dealings with University of Hull services
- Make the most of the services available to you
- Adhere to the rules and regulations of the University of Hull as laid down in the online student handbook.

More Details, Policies, Regulations: http://www.hull.ac.uk/handbook

Aug 2007

Edge Hill University

Student Charter

This Charter sets out the terms of the partnership between Edge Hill University and its students. It summarises what a student can expect from the University and what is expected of them in return.

To help us provide you with a quality higher education experience and to help you make the most of your time at Edge Hill University, please give us your feedback on the quality of our support for you and whether or not you feel we meet the intentions set out in this Charter.

When you feel you have received a good experience, please let us know. We are always pleased to receive **compliments.** Your feedback on what we do well means a lot to us. You can do this verbally or by letter or email by contacting our Student Information Desk in the Student Information Centre or by telephone on 01695 584554. We will use this information to help us feedback praise to our staff and to cascade good practice. Written compliments will be acknowledged and a copy forwarded to the relevant department. Verbal compliments will be documented in our Compliments Log and details forwarded to the appropriate staff.

If however you wish to complain about the standards of service or programme provision outlined in this Charter, the University has an agreed and published **Complaints Procedure.** This is available in full in Section 5 of this document and in your Student Handbook or through the Student Information Desk in the Student Information Centre.

Student Services is pleased to provide the information in this booklet. However, although every effort is made to ensure the information provided in this booklet is accurate, over time circumstances may change. Edge Hill University does not accept liability arising out of, or in connection with, any changes.

Inclusive Provision

Edge Hill University's aim is to make our services and provision accessible to all users.

Edge Hill University Student Charter is available in large print version and also on audio tape.

If you need us to present our training / resources / information in a different format (e.g. electronic copy, large print), or need any other modifications, please contact the Edge Ahead Centre:

c/o The Library, 1st Floor (Ormskirk Campus)
Tel: 01695 584372
E-mail eac@edgehill.ac.uk

We will do our best to accommodate your requirements.

Preface

Edge Hill University will strive to meet all the aims set out in this Charter. The obligations set out are expressions of intent and are not legally binding.

Academic and student support services exist to enable **all** students to meet and exceed their expectations. Every one of us needs support to help us achieve, to help us improve.

We are committed to continuously evaluating and improving our services to meet the changing needs of our student body. Please give us your feedback on the quality of our support for you and whether or not you feel we meet the intentions set out in this Charter.

Copies of all documents referred to in this Charter are available on our website or from the Student Information Centre (SIC) Student Information Desk on the Ormskirk Campus or any of our Outreach Centres.

The Student Information Desk referred to in this Charter is the Ground Floor Student Information Desk in the Student Information Centre, Ormskirk unless specified otherwise.

Edge Hill University is situated on 3 main sites:-

1. **Ormskirk Campus, St Helens Road, Ormskirk, Lancs, L39 4QP.**
   Tel: 01695 575171

2. **Woodland Campus, Southport Road, Chorley, Lancs, PR7 1QR.**
   Tel: 01257 265811

3. **Aintree Campus, University Hospital Aintree, Longmoor Lane, Liverpool, Mersyside, L9 7LN.**
   Tel: 0151 525 5980

Edge Hill also operates at Armstrong House, Manchester and at a number of Outreach Centres and has collaborative partnership arrangements with a number of other providers. Details of the Outreach Ô^}ɗ^•Ææ}åÚæɗ^¦ÁÔ[||^*^•Æ&æ}Áæ^Á[˘}åÁ}Á˘¦Á^à•ã^Áæ¦ÁÁ
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Contents

Introduction

Edge Hill University is committed to:
- providing excellent learning and support services which help **all** students achieve their full potential
- setting attainable standards of service and stating these standards clearly
- setting out clearly the commitment and participation we expect from you
- encouraging you to give us your views and comments
- taking prompt action to explain, remedy or improve any situation or service which has fallen short of standards set

Our aim is to **help you to help yourself** and to proactively **promote equality of opportunity** by providing an environment which is welcoming and which values and affirms the positive contributions of all. In all our dealings, staff and students are expected to identify and eradicate any practices which promote discrimination, for example racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, discrimination against disabled people, or against people from particular socio-economic backgrounds.

This Charter has been developed jointly by Edge Hill University and your Students' Union. It sets out the standards of our curriculum, teaching, support services and facilities that you can expect and your responsibilities and commitments as a student of the University.

In addition to the rights and responsibilities outlined in this Charter, all students are expected to follow all the rules and regulations of the University. You are particularly expected to familiarise yourself with the Student and Academic Regulations available in full on the website.

To minimise duplication, this Charter clearly signposts many sources of useful information which already exist. It is generic; it covers all students currently registered at the University, whether they are full time, part time, learning at a distance, studying on campus or at one of our many Outreach Centres or Partner Institutions.

This Charter covers the following key areas of importance to you as a student:
i)   Recruitment, Admissions and Induction
ii)   Learning, Teaching and Assessment
iii)   Support Services and Facilities

iv)   Edge Hill As A Community and Your Participation In It.

Section 1 -   Recruitment, Admissions and Induction

Edge Hill University is committed to widening access and support for entry to higher education. We aim to operate flexibly to meet students' needs and undertake to provide accurate information about our programmes, facilities and services for applicants. All FT applications will be processed within the timescales laid down by the various application Clearing Houses, e.g. UCAS / GTTR.   For all PT applications, we aim to communicate an initial decision, normally within 10 working days of receipt of application.

We aim to provide:

- prospectuses and other publications which provide information that will help you to make an informed choice about studying a programme at Edge Hill[1]

- notifications of any relevant changes to your proposed programme of study

- full and fair consideration of your application[2]

- a response to any request for information within 10 working days

- the opportunity to visit Edge Hill University or any of our Outreach Centres before or after you have made an application

- an appropriate induction for all new students to help you settle in to University life and academic study

Your responsibility is to:

- provide us with full and accurate information on all application forms[3]

- keep or cancel, with notice, any interviews or appointments

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[1] **Please note**: Information is accurate at the time of printing or publication on our website. Information can be made available in a range of formats on request.
[2] Please see our Admissions Policy and our Academic Regulations
[3] Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action

- keep us informed of any change of circumstances which may affect your offer of a place on the programme for which you have applied

- respond to an offer of a place within the specified time period[4]

- comply with medical/police check procedures and other professionally related requirements on appropriate programmes

- participate in your induction programme

Section 2 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Edge Hill University is committed to achieving excellence in every area of professional and academic life, through a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. We aim to provide a high quality teaching and learning experience and high quality support for all students. We aim to enable students to develop a range of transferable skills and abilities, which will equip them to become autonomous and active learners for life.

FACILITATING LEARNING

We aim to provide:

- accurate and up to date information about all aspects of your learning, teaching and assessment[5]

- clear and up to date information relating to programme timetabling, professional placement allocation and notification of any changes to published timetables

- inclusive learning support for disabled students, specific learning difficulties or mental health needs

- mentors and assessors to support you on educational and health placements

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[4] Otherwise the offer may be withdrawn
[5] Please see http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/about/policies for further information

Your responsibility is to:

- take your studies seriously and use information and support provided to facilitate <u>your</u> learning process

- make sure you are familiar with and follow the requirements of your programme of study or research and its regulations[6]

- actively participate in and reflect on your own learning

- take advice from your mentors / assessors on educational and health placements

- regularly check your University email account / Blackboard and the University website, as email is the primary means by which we will communicate with you[7]

- familiarise yourself with your timetable, attend all timetabled classes promptly and advise subject areas or programme leaders immediately of any problems you are experiencing

- inform placement supervisors and placement officers of any issues affecting your attendance[8].

- adhere to all placement policies and procedures

YOUR PROGRAMME

We aim to provide:

- full and accurate information at the start of your programme of study

- guidance on all aspects of your work and assessment through programme and module handbooks and through our website / VLE

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[6] Please see Guidance & Support 10/11, University Regulations for further information
[7] **Please note**: It is <u>your</u> responsibility to keep the University informed of any changes to contact or other personal details.
[8] Please use the Faculty procedures outlined in your programme documentation.

- fair assessment of your work and feedback within a reasonable time, **normally 4 weeks**

- feedback on all aspects of your work, which will include reference to areas where work can be improved

- appropriate arrangements for students with additional needs

- clarification of programme content for purposes of transfer of credit

- a framework for tutorial support in which you and your tutors discuss and set targets with regard to planning and progression

- a University framework for your personal development planning (PDP)

- mentors / assessors on education and health placements

Your responsibility is to:

- attend induction events, lectures, seminars, tutorials, examinations and other activities, which form part of your programme

- familiarise yourself with submission deadlines and other relevant programme requirements

- hand work in on time to set criteria and deadlines

- inform tutors in good time of any mitigating circumstances which prevent you meeting deadlines, so that appropriate action can be taken[9]

- plan your studies and your workload

- seek advice whenever you need clarification on any aspect of your programme, or want to improve your performance, or if you have a problem

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[9] Please note: failure to meet deadlines without good reason may result in penalties or the work may not be assessed.

- adhere to guidelines in respect of confidentiality and professionalism on educational and health placements and programmes

- adhere to any professional standards for your programme and the Student Code of Behaviour

Section 3 - Support Services and Facilities

Edge Hill University aims to provide information about and access to a wide range of high quality teaching and learning facilities, resources and academic support systems and high quality confidential personal support services to enable students to undertake their programmes of study.

We aim to provide:

- information and access to a wide range of learning resources, equipment and materials, electronic communication systems and electronic information services[10]

- information and access to a wide range of personal support services[11]

- on-line information about both on site and off site services, facilities and support

- help desk services for on and for off campus users by telephone and email

- a range of training and support workshops including group sessions, 1 – 1 sessions covering ICT, information resources and study skills

- a range of study and learning environments including group and individual study areas, quiet areas, computer suites, media production facilities, laboratories[12]

- an inclusive learning support service for all students with diverse learning needs

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[10] For further information see http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/ & http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ls/
[11] For further information see http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/studentservices/
[12] **Please note:** not all facilities are available on all sites

Your responsibility is to:

- use learning resources, support services and facilities with care and consideration for other users and comply with any University regulations, codes of conduct, Health and Safety regulations concerning their use, including the IT Acceptable Use Policy and the present laws on the use of copyright material

- provide full and accurate information to the required deadlines when involved in any University procedure[13]

- take advantage of on-line help facilities, information services, tutorials, documentation, and to attend training sessions where available and appropriate

- seek the guidance of fellow students, tutors, and members of learning support staff to help you improve your learning or if you are encountering any difficulties with your learning

- make full use of the services and facilities available to support you

Section 4 - Edge Hill As A Community and Your Participation In It.

Your active involvement and participation in Edge Hill as a community is really important to us.

We aim to:

- treat all people who live, work, study or are connected with the University with respect

- provide a range of opportunities for you to give feedback and comments on your programme and modules and on our services and facilities, through for example, module evaluations; course

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[13] **Please note**: We strongly encourage you to inform the University as soon as possible of any change in personal circumstances, such as a disability or medical condition, which may impact on your opportunities to study.

representation; Staff / Student Consultative Groups; satisfaction surveys and focus groups.

- provide high standards of residential, social and sporting facilities

- provide policies and procedures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the Edge Hill community e.g. Smoking Policy, emergency evacuation procedures

- provide a clean and healthy environment conducive to teaching and learning excellence

- provide opportunities for you to feedback on the future developments of our University, through for example, consultation on policy and campus developments

- provide clear information on tuition and accommodation fees and advice for students applying for student loans, Access to Learning Funding or other student funding

Your responsibility is to:

- treat all people who live, work, study or are connected with the University with respect

- get involved and participate in University processes and make sure that your views are heard

- comply with any Edge Hill University safety policies or procedures in place to protect the welfare of yourself and others e.g. emergency evacuation procedures

- respect the campus environment, use all facilities with care and consideration and behave in an appropriate manner

- make arrangements to pay your tuition fees, accommodation fees and any other expenses relating to your programme or charges for the use of any University services or facilities

SECTION 5   What To Do If Things Go Wrong

If you wish to complain about any aspect of our services or programmes or any aspect of our provision outlined in our Charter, Edge Hill University has an agreed and published Student Complaints Procedure. This is presented in full on the following pages.

Why Complain?

Edge Hill University is committed to providing services and provision of the highest quality as outlined in our Charter. Our Student Charter outlines what you can expect from us as a University (**your rights**) as well as defining your corresponding responsibilities (**your responsibilities**).

We do however recognise that on occasion you may feel we have not met our specified standards and that you have legitimate cause for complaint. If this is the case, we encourage you to tell us. At the same time however, please make sure that, in raising possible matters of complaint, that you recognise your own responsibilities as a student, both in terms of your academic commitments and general behaviour and consideration towards others.

This Complaints Procedure is intended to help students bring matters of concern about their experiences of our services and provision to our attention and to enable investigation of those concerns with the aim of satisfactory resolution. We regard student feedback, both negative and positive, as a valuable resource to help us improve the quality of our services and provision to students, as well as helping us resolve any particular problems arising for you. The complaints procedure seeks to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved. It is based on the belief that complaints from students should be taken seriously, investigated promptly and dealt with as closely as possible to their origins. For this reason all complainants are requested to try to resolve the issue as informally as possible in the first instance with the relevant department or service area. The intention is that most issues can be effectively handled locally, in a spirit of conciliation. Thus, the formal complaints procedure should be seen as a last resort in the search for a solution.

Edge Hill University therefore sees the use of its Complaints Procedures as a positive, non-threatening means for change to the benefit of all.

The following guidelines provide a framework in which complaints made about Edge Hill University and/or its students or staff are dealt with fairly, quickly and efficiently.

What Is A Complaint?

A complaint is an informal or formal expression of concern in relation to an aspect of the University's operations, services, staff or people associated with the University or using University facilities.[14]

A complaint is more than negative criticism or any objection to the merits of any decision or action taken by the University. It is a specific concern that requires a response from the University.

The Student Complaints Procedure does not cover the following:

- matters of academic judgement (that is about your academic performance) *(see section on Academic Appeals below)*

- requests for new or different services or provisions

- matters where there are separate policies or procedures, specifically:

Academic Appeals
*(An **academic appeal** is a request for a review of a decision of an Assessment Board or Panel which makes decisions about your academic performance, progression or award. For all matters relating to academic performance, including examinations and assessment, academic malpractice (cheating), academic progression, fitness to practise, expulsion or exclusion on academic grounds, contact Academic Registry in the Student Information Centre for the Academic Appeals Regulations.)*

Bullying & Harassment
(For all matters relating to allegations of bullying and / or harassment by a member of Edge Hill University contact Human Resources or Student Services. Please note that if a student wishes to raise a formal complaint of bullying or harassment against a member of staff, the staff Bullying and Harassment Policy will be used.)

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[14] University of Newcastle, Australia

Disciplinary
(All matters relating to complaints about student conduct and behaviour will be dealt with under the Student Code of Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures.   For all matters relating to appeals against disciplinary action or sanctions, students should follow the appeals process in the Student Regulations including the Student Code of Behaviour & Disciplinary Procedures for Students.)

Research Misconduct
(All matters relating to Research Misconduct are dealt with under the Research Ethics Code of Conduct and the Malpractice Regulations For Research Degrees. Students should contact the Graduate School Support Team in Academic Registry for further information.)

Whistleblowing
(The University operates a separate whistleblowing procedure. Students should contact Student Services for information, advice and guidance in the first instance.)

We recognise that on rare occasions complex issues may arise where an issue can be classified as either a complaint or an appeal. Under these circumstances our procedures allow the facility for reclassification of an issue as either a complaint or an appeal. Such issues would not however be dealt with under more than one procedure.

WHO CAN COMPLAIN?

This procedure is for use by any student or prospective student, who seeks or receives a service from Edge Hill University. Complaints are usually made by individual students or by groups of students.

A person's capacity to make a complaint only exists in relation to issues which affect his or her interests, therefore a person does not have the authority to make a complaint on behalf of others. Complaints may not be lodged by a representative, a parent or any other third party. Complaints made by groups of students must therefore be confirmed and signed by all parties.

Students studying at Partner Colleges (franchised centres) are required to follow the Partner College's (franchised centre's) Complaints Procedures in the first instance.   Students studying at Partner Colleges (franchised centres) do however have the ultimate right to complain to

Edge Hill about academic matters. Any academic appeal should be made directly to the Academic Registrar at Edge Hill University.

WHAT ARE THE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MAKING AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS?

Handling of Complaints

As a general principle, the University seeks to respond to complaints in an open and constructive manner and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

To this end, the University will:

➢ ensure all parties to a complaint are advised on what to expect during the complaint handling process

➢ carry out the complaint handling process in a transparent way, ensuring that all parties involved in the complaint have access to any allegations and evidence presented

➢ provide all parties with the opportunity to participate in the process

➢ treat all parties in a respectful manner

➢ not discriminate or take action against any individual making a complaint, unless it is found to be malicious or vexatious

➢ provide reasons for any decisions made.

All complaints will be taken seriously and, as far as is reasonable, be treated in a consistent fashion throughout the University. The same issue will not be dealt with under more than one internal process at the same time. Wherever possible, the concern(s) raised will be dealt with in totality through the investigation process.

In line with our equality and diversity policy, all complainants will be treated equally and students who make complaints will not suffer any disadvantage or recrimination as a result of making a complaint. Only where complaints are proven to be malicious or vexatious may there be any recourse to disciplinary investigation and possible sanction against the complainant.

As a general rule, complaints, which are made more than three months after the incident or action being complained about will not be investigated.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and with due consideration to confidentiality for students and staff. Any person named in a complaint however, will be informed of the complaint, supplied with a copy of the complaint and any evidence in relation to it and be informed of the outcome. They will also have a right of reply as part of the investigative process. A complaint cannot therefore be investigated if the student does not wish the substance of the allegation to be made known to the individual concerned.

Anonymous Complaints

All complaints require investigation. Where anonymous complaints are made however it is not possible to investigate the complaint. For this reason anonymous complaints will not normally result in action under this procedure.

Third Party Complaints

Complaints must be made by students themselves and not by others acting on their behalf.

Collective Complaints

If a group of students makes a collective complaint about the same issue, each student will receive an individual acknowledgement and response letter. Each student will also be asked independently to confirm that they wish to personally register the complaint. If any meetings are deemed necessary to investigate the complaint, only one meeting, to which all complainants will be invited, will be held.

The Right To Be Accompanied At Any Stage

Students wishing to make a complaint at any stage have a right to be accompanied. In the event that meetings or hearings are arranged to consider complaints, any student or member of staff asked to attend such a meeting or hearing has a right to be accompanied by a person of his/her choosing. Individuals are asked however to notify the University whom they wish to attend in advance of the meeting.

Help, Support and Representation

Support and guidance on procedures and representation are available from a number of sources within the University. Student Services and the Students' Union can provide general and specific support as requested. It is however the complainant's responsibility to seek advice and support where necessary.

To contact Student Services call 01695 58 4554 or call in to the Student Information Centre.

To contact the Students' Union call 01695 584255 or e-mail martinj@edgehill.ac.uk

Complaints to the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Governors and Other Senior Members of Staff
If a complaint is received directly by the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, the Governing Body or a senior member of staff, it will be acknowledged and referred to the Director of Student Services and the appropriate manager, who will make sure it is dealt with and enters the procedure at the appropriate point.

Multi-faceted Complaints
If the complaint covers a variety of issues, a manager will be nominated to provide a co-ordinated response.

Remedy or Redress
If a complaint is upheld at any stage Edge Hill will seek to take such action as may be appropriate in relation to remedy or redress. If a complaint is not found to be justified at any stage Edge Hill will communicate this to the complainant, giving reasons for the decision that the complaint was deemed to be unfounded.

Reimbursement of Expenses
If a complaint is upheld, Edge Hill will meet any reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses connected with the formal stage of the procedure. This may include travel and subsistence costs incurred in connection with the student's attendance at a complaint hearing. Any legitimate expenses will only be paid on production of valid receipts.

Recording of Complaints
Every department or service area must notify the Student Information Desk at the Student Information Centre of every formal complaint received, giving details of the complaint, the date received, its resolution and outcome, including the date of resolution. Records of any correspondence or investigation of the complaint should be kept throughout the procedure under confidential cover and destroyed in line with the University's guidelines on the handling and storage of confidential information.

Time Limits

Staff will make every effort to keep to the time limits set out in this procedure. However, where, for good reason, this is not possible, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

HOW, WHERE, AND WHEN AND TO WHOM TO COMPLAIN?

The procedure aims to be simple, clear and fair to all parties involved and seeks to allow issues to be explored in a supportive conciliatory framework. Informal resolution is encouraged at every stage of the process. The formal complaints procedure should only be used as a last resort.

STAGE 1 – The Informal Stage

Members of the Edge Hill University Community are encouraged to raise any issues at an early stage and to discuss the matter with the person concerned. Many apparent concerns result from misunderstandings, which can often be quickly resolved by talking through the matter.

You can either:

- Ring the person concerned

- Call in and see the person concerned, but please make sure you make an appointment in the interests of all concerned;

- Write to the person concerned

Informal complaints should normally be responded to *within 7 working days of receipt of complaint*. The informal stage will frequently be an oral process and records of such complaints will not normally be retained or recorded centrally, unless the complainant and the member of staff dealing with it wish to do so. If this is the case, a complaints form should be completed and used in the normal way.

STAGE 2 – The Formal Stage

A complaint that cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally may then be submitted formally. Complaints must be made within three months after

the incident or action being complained about . You should complete a Complaints Form and hand it in to the Student Information Centre Student Information Officer, who will forward it to the appropriate Dean of Faculty/Director of Service.   The Dean of Faculty/Director of Service will either investigate the matter him / herself or will delegate responsibility to another manager of appropriate standing and background to undertake the investigation on his or her behalf. The manager dealing with the formal complaint however must be independent of the complaint itself.

The Dean of Faculty/Director of Service or his or her designated alternate will:

- Provide a written acknowledgement of the complaint.

- Inform any member of staff concerned that a complaint has been submitted and provide them with a copy of the complaint.

- Review the complaint and decide whether or not to call a meeting to discuss the complaint with you and any other named party within the complaint.

- Investigate the complaint

- Seek to resolve the complaint.

- Provide a written response to the complainant outlining whether or not the complaint is upheld or dismissed.   In cases where there is also a respondent, this information will also be shared with the respondent.

Written responses to complaints will be given within a reasonable time, normally no longer than 14 working days.

Copies of complaints forms may be obtained from all Faculty Offices, the Student Information Centre Student Information Desk and the Students' Union.

At this stage the majority of complaints will be resolved satisfactorily with no further action being necessary.

If however, you are not satisfied with the response received following the outcome of Stage 2, you can take the complaint further and proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

STAGE 3 – INTERNAL REVIEW

If you are still not satisfied by the response to your complaint you may send your written complaint, together with any documentary evidence relating to the complaint, to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations *within 10 working days of receiving the response* at Stage 2.

No new grounds for complaint may be introduced at this stage.

(If the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations has been involved in the complaint previously, the complaint should be sent to the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs & Quality Management).

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations will decide whether to review the complaint him / herself or to convene a panel to hear the complaint and review the evidence.

Please note: This procedure also allows for the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations to designate an alternate Senior Manager to consider the complaint.

Membership and Conduct of the Complaints Panel

The complaints panel will normally comprise three people, including the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations (the Chair)[15], and two members of the University selected by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations.

Selection of panel members will be on the basis of no previous involvement in the complaint at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

In the case of all complaints reviewed by a complaints panel, the complainant can request that a representative of the Students' Union be appointed as an independent observer of the complaints panel proceedings.

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[15] or his / her designated alternate Senior Manager.

In the case of a complaint where there is a specific named staff respondent, a representative of the relevant Staff Union can also be requested to act as independent observer to the proceedings.

Information on panel membership will be given to both parties to the complaint in advance of the panel hearing. Any request to veto any member of the panel for good reason must be made in advance to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations[16], stating clearly the reason for the request.

The panel will investigate the complaint including all documentary evidence relating to the complaint. The panel may seek to resolve the complaint on the basis of the documentation provided. As necessary, the panel will invite all parties to the complaint to a panel meeting to present evidence and to be questioned on the evidence presented.

After investigation of the complaint the Chair will submit a written report & response[17] to all parties involved in the complaint, outlining whether the complaint is justified or not and determining what actions, if any, are necessary to resolve the issue.

Written responses to complaints at this stage will be given within a reasonable time, *normally no longer than 30 working days.* On completion of this stage we will send you a Completion of Procedures letter. The letter will outline to you the results of the investigation into your complaint. This letter also confirms that the internal complaints procedures of Edge Hill University in relation to your complaint have been completed.

STAGE 4 – Independent Review

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome and any decision taken at Stage 3, you can pursue your complaint further by submitting your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints.

Any student not satisfied with the outcome and any decision taken at Stage 3 can submit an application in writing to the OIA scheme using a Scheme Application Form. This form is available from Student Services

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[16] or his / her designated alternate Senior Manager.
[17] normally in the form of a letter

or the Students' Union, or alternatively it can be downloaded from the OIA web site, **www.oiahe.org.uk** or requested by telephone or letter. This is Stage 4 of the procedure.   Please note that time limits apply. See OIA leaflets for further information.

The OIA cannot look at any complaint if:

- It relates to a matter of academic judgement (that is about your academic performance);
- The matter is or has been the subject of court proceedings;
- It is about a student employment matter;
- It concerns an Institution which is not a higher education Institution, or
- It is an admission matter.

The OIA will normally only consider your complaint if:

(i)   you have exhausted all internal procedures;

(ii)   there had been a material administrative error or irregularity in the conduct of the investigation of the complaint

(iii)   the University had contravened any of the basic principles of natural justice

(iv)   the University had failed to act within a reasonable period of time, as specified in the complaints procedure

The OIA will not undertake a review of the complaint if they consider on the face of it:

(i)   there is no case to answer
(ii)   the Higher Education Institution has satisfactorily dealt with the complaint, see page 4 of the OIA Guide.

If you experience difficulties or you are not sure who to contact, call in or ring for advice to the *SIC Student Information Desk* Ext. 4554. For outside calls: 01695 584554
Students & staff on the Aintree Campus please tel: 0151 529 3113

COMPLAINTS: OUR PROMISE TO YOU

EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY WILL:

- handle your complaint in a quick, polite and straightforward way;

- investigate your complaint thoroughly;

- inform you of when you can expect a reply if one cannot be given in the first instance;

- keep you up to date on progress.

ACTIONS

In all cases of complaint, Edge Hill University seeks to ensure that appropriate and reasonable action is taken.

LEARNING FROM YOUR COMPLAINTS

In order that Edge Hill University can learn from your complaints each Dean of Faculty / Director of Service and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students & External Relations will keep accurate and complete records of any complaints received and any resulting correspondence, interviews and interactions. Outcomes on complaints will be submitted to Student Services who will prepare an annual report on complaints received and their resolution. This will help us to improve services throughout Edge Hill University and monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

EDGE HILL UNIVERSITY STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS AT STAGE 2

This form is to be completed under Stage 2 of the complaints procedures and should be sent to the Director of Student Services. Advice on completing the form can be obtained from Student Services or the Students' Union.

**Personal Details
(Please complete in block capitals)**

Full Name:_____ Student No:_____

Programme and year of study: _____

Address for correspondence in connection with the complaint :

_____

_____

_____

Postcode: _____Telephone No:_____

(in the case of a group complaint please attach a list of complainants on a separate sheet of paper)

Outline of Complaint, including dates (please use additional sheets if necessary):

Please explain here what steps you have taken, together with dates, to resolve your complaint locally (as per Stage 1 of the procedures):

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Please indicate, without prejudice, what outcome or further action you are expecting:

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If you have written a formal letter of complaint to anyone else in Edge Hill please indicate names and/or let us know whether you intend to copy this to anyone else.

Declaration

I declare that the information given in this form is true, and that I would be willing to answer further questions relating to it if necessary.

I understand that full disclosure of any allegations or evidence will be made to any parties named in my complaint.

Signed: _____

Date _____

| **Office Use Only** |
| **Received by:** |
| **Date:** |
| **Acknowledged:** |

THE UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT CHARTER: TAUGHT COURSE STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the University and its students is a two-way one, with rights and obligations flowing both ways. The University has set out the commitments by staff to inform and help students – in the 'University Commitment Charter' - since 1995. This has been substantially reviewed and revised, after wide discussion including with the Students Union, for 2009/10. It has been approved by the Academic Board and everyone in the University, whether staff or student, is committed to the obligations set out in the Charter.

It does focus on undergraduate and postgraduate taught course students, and postgraduate research degree students will find statements of commitments in relevant handbooks.

The format is clear: each commitment by the University has an equal commitment on the part of students.

The Charter is supplemented by the online Student Handbook which provides an easily accessible guide of electronic sources of information and advice.

Comment and feedback is very welcome. Please contact Graham Fice, Director of Student and Academic Services.

The University is committed:

- To promotion of an active learning community in which you have the opportunity of development as an independent learner.

- To respecting the rights of, and to treating with dignity, all students and other members of the University; to having regulations, policies and processes in place which will work towards equality and diversity and address discrimination.

- To be professional in our dealings with you including setting out the standards of service you can expect where possible; to provide you with fair and efficient complaints, appeals and disciplinary procedures within their defined remits, based on established criteria.

- To provide you with full and accurate information about the University, its facilities, its courses and its regulations.

- To provide well-designed, relevant, and quality assured courses,

As a student you are expected to commit yourself:

- To be actively engaged in the process of learning; to attend all scheduled module sessions; to value the contributions of others be they your peers, staff or external 'experts'; to present the best possible work promptly and to seek help if needed.

- To respect the rights of, and to treat with dignity, all fellow students and other members of the University; to observe regulations, policies and processes which support equality and diversity.

- To behave in a responsible manner on and off campus, and ensure that your actions do not have an adverse impact on the University's reputation, its environment, your neighbours, the local community or those who work or study at the University .

- To read and note information in all official publications and to comply with all University procedures, regulations, policies and communications that we draw to your attention.

maximizing student choice where reasonably possible. Courses should be well resourced and varied in delivery, yielding both scholarly content and wide-ranging skills.

- To have all submitted coursework, assignments and examinations scripts marked promptly, checked and moderated as appropriate, and made available with feedback to you as soon as possible (normally within three working weeks) subject to University rules concerning retention.

- To provide an appropriate learning environment for all students with a range of study areas and access to resources and support, both on campus and online.

- To communicate with you as efficiently as possible through a variety of means, principally electronic and online.

- To provide timely and accurate information about fees due from you and academic administrative processes which involve you such as registration and assessment.

- To provide a wide range of student and academic support services designed to promote your well-being and enhance general progress.

- To create opportunities for you to express your views about your experience as a Chichester student, and to involve you in University decision-making processes at various levels and as broadly as reasonably possible.

- To safeguard information you supply in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act or any other statutory obligations of the University; to explain to you why we need to collect information.

- To study diligently, organize your work effectively and endeavour always to produce quality assignments; to attend classes punctually, submit coursework and assignments on time, and follow University procedures following absence.

- To complete assessment tasks by the required dates and deadlines, observing University requirements for originality and presentation; to pay attention to and act on all feedback given to you by your Tutors in connection with assessment, and to keep all assessed work completed during your programme.

- To respect other users of the learning environment; to observe formal institutional opening times.

- To read and to act on communications from us and particularly to notify us immediately if you have problems or difficulties with attendance.

- To read and respond to communications from the University; to ensure that you are registered for a viable programme of modules where your course has a choice; to pay fees or charges when they are due.

- To engage positively with the services as appropriate and to give us constructive views on how we can best enhance those services.

- To provide your feedback and comments on the quality of your learning experience and to contribute to the University's decision making procedures, wherever and whenever reasonably possible, for the benefit and advancement of all.

- To provide us with accurate information when we ask you for it, and to keep it updated.

This Charter sets out the relationship between The University of Northampton and its students, irrespective of the intended mode of delivery and wherever they may be located.

It is intended to provide a framework through which The University of Northampton and its students can work together to create a positive environment for learning and academic achievement.

Whilst the Charter does not constitute a legal document, your enrolment onto a programme of study at The University of Northampton implies a contractual arrangement whereby you are entitled to receive appropriate tuition and other support to assist you in completing the course. We are entitled to expect certain levels of engagement and compliance from you. Thus you have both rights and responsibilities as a student and so do we as providers. This Charter sets out the principal obligations on each party.

The University of Northampton is a diverse community and is committed to treating all members of staff, students and applicants fairly and equitably regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious or political beliefs, membership of professional associations or trade unions, disability, marital status, family responsibilities and socio-economic standing or any other category where discrimination cannot be justified.

The Charter should be read in conjunction with the Student Handbook and the General Student Regulations. By enrolling with The University of Northampton you are agreeing to abide by its academic and general regulations.

COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

The University of Northampton will communicate with you through your term time or home address as appropriate, by letter, by e-mail or by phone or through other approved electronic media.

We will provide you with and will expect you to consult handbooks, module guides, notice boards, website, intranet and other appropriate sources of information on a regular basis.

Through these medium The University of Northampton will provide clear and unambiguous information about:
● your course, including aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, structure, assessment methods, regulations and support mechanisms.
● your timetable
● academic resources, including Administration and Student Services, IT Services, Learning Resources, Facilities
● procedures, in relation to mitigating circumstances, the use of unfair means, non-compliance with academic and professional obligations, appeals, complaints. (An explanation can be found in the Student Code)
● your progress, including module grades, accumulated credit, progression status, and eligibility for award.

You will ensure you respond promptly to communications from the University and inform us of any relevant changes to your situation, including:
● your address, including telephone numbers
● your intended programme of study
● any significant illness, disability or changes in material personal circumstance
● employment status, if required.

IN RELATION TO YOUR COURSE

The University of Northampton
will provide:
A programme of study that is:
* structured towards a named award and leads to specified aims;
* allows flexible learning where possible.

A programme of teaching and placement opportunities (where appropriate) that:
* supports your achievement of specified learning outcomes;
* is provided by appropriately qualified staff and prepared work-based learning mentors (where appropriate);

A personal tutor:
* who will support your academic progress throughout your studies encouraging your autonomy, self-reflection and action planning.

Assessment (including assessment of placement where appropriate) that:
* is set at the appropriate standard and level;
* is designed to test the achievement of stated learning outcomes;
* is fairly and objectively graded and on which you will receive regular, supportive feedback;
* is measured against criteria which are open, transparent and free from bias.

Progression and award regulations that:
* are fair, objective, consistent and explicit;

However, The University of Northampton must manage its resources efficiently and shall be entitled:
● to alter the timetable, location, number of classes and method of delivery of your programme, provided such alterations are reasonable
● to make reasonable variations to the content and syllabus of your programme
● to discontinue your programme, in exceptional circumstances

● not to provide your programme, or to combine it with others, if The University of Northampton reasonably considers this to be necessary.

You will:
● ensure you are enrolled for a valid programme that fulfils your award requirements
● comply with the academic and professional obligations set out in course documentation, including:
● attend classes as provided
● notify tutors when you are unable to attend
● attend at placements as required
● complete preparatory work in advance of teaching sessions to ensure full contribution to such sessions can be made
● attend personal tutorials, as required
● submit coursework items by the given due date
● attend examinations at stated times and places.
● adhere to procedures for the selection of module choices, if appropriate, and other similar administrative processes
● not use dishonest means in the completion of any assessment
● comply with The University of Northampton's rules and regulations including those relating to conduct and behaviour and use of the University's facilities (in addition to local rules and regulations if studying at a partner college).

IN SUPPORT OF YOUR LEARNING

The University of Northampton
will provide:
● administrative support through the Office of the Academic Registrar, the Office of Taught Programmes and the Student Admin.Teams located within each school.
● procedures enabling you to make academic appeals and complaints, if necessary
● advice in relation to finance, accommodation, careers, etc…
● access to support and counselling through Student Services
● Information Technology Services (

● Learning Resources
● support for learning for students with specific needs, especially those relating to disclosed disabilities (see Centre for Academic Practice Charter under development)
● a suitable learning environment
● access to a Students' Union.

BEING INVOLVED IN YOUR COURSE

The University of Northampton will:

- seek feedback from students about the delivery of programmes and academic services;
- ensure that students are informed of the responses to issues raised, in the feedback process;
- encourage, promote and monitor the involvement of student representatives at University committees and boards of study as appropriate;
- provide training for student representatives on committees/boards;
- provide for the sabbatical officers of the Students' Union to meet with Senior Management and to attend committees;

You will be expected to:
● participate responsibly in surveys of student opinion
● report any dissatisfaction in a timely and appropriate fashion
● (if elected as a student representative) attend the meetings of boards and committees, and contribute to and communicate with those you are representing.

AT THE END OF YOUR COURSE

The University of Northampton will:
● provide you with a record of achievement
● invite you to a Graduation Ceremony, if appropriate
● provide you with appropriate certification

● request information relating to your first destination
● invite you to join the Alumni Association
● provide references at the request of future employers or other educational institutions.

FEES AND PAYMENT

It is your responsibility to make sure your tuition fees and other expenses relating to your programme are paid on time.

You are bound by The University of Northampton regulations on the payment of fees, refunds in the event of withdrawal or termination of your studies and the consequences of non-payment as set out in the General Student Regulations

DATA

The General Student Regulations set out the data The University of Northampton will keep on you.

Disclosure to persons or institutions not specified in the regulations will only be made with student permission unless exceptional circumstances apply, as provided by law.

There is also separate guidance and information in respect of disclosure of disability and how we seek consent from you before disclosure to others both within The University of Northampton and externally.

The full Student Charter can be viewed at: http://www2.northamtpon.ac.uk/port al/page/portal/AcademicRegistry/doc store/Charter.doc

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

bucks new university

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bucks new university

Freephone: 0800 0565 660
Switchboard: 01494 522 141
Fax: 01494 524 392
International: 01494 605 259
Email: advice@bucks.ac.uk
Website: bucks.ac.uk

High Wycombe Campus
Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire HP11 2JZ

Uxbridge Campus
106 Oxford Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex UB8 1NA

For enquires in regard to the Learning Partnership Agreement please contact:

Ruth Gunstone
Director of Student Experience
Email: **ruth.gunstone@bucks.ac.uk**
Tel: (internal) ext **3052**, (external) **01494 603 052**

We will consider any requests for accessible formats. Please let us know what you need.

Introduction

The Learning Partnership Agreement has been jointly created by the University and Bucks Students' Union to encourage the commitment of all employees and students to the principle of partnership and to make clearer the basis on which that partnership rests. This two-way process will relate to resources, both physical and human, behaviour, academic support, learning and teaching and assessment and has been created to enhance the learning and teaching experience of University life. All University employees and students will be respectful and courteous in their dealings with each other.

The Learning Partnership Agreement is divided into four sections. These sections relate directly to the employee/student partnership elements which are fundamental to the agreement. The intention of this document is to provide guidance and encourage personal responsibility for behaviour and actions in line with the University's core values of clarity, openness, respect and delivery on commitments.

Assessment and feedback

- Instructions for all assessment and/or critiques should be identified on the assessment sheet which will specify the nature, method and timing of the feedback and should relate directly to the learning outcomes of the module.

- Informal and formative feedback is an integral part of an ongoing learning process. Personal/module tutors should seek to provide students with regular opportunities to update them on their progress. Equally, students should seek regular opportunities to receive informal and formative feedback in order to improve upon their work.

- Assessment timetables across courses will be co-ordinated to ensure that students receive a manageable workload.

- Feedback is essential to learning and is an integral part of all teaching. All academic employees and students will make best use of feedback at the appropriate level and commensurate with enhanced student learning.

- Feedback should be useful and given in a constructive, honest and supportive manner. Where criticism is part of the learning process students should be alerted to and coached on the benefits of the critical approach in advance. This will ensure that students are well-prepared for the process.

- All formal assessment feedback should be made available for students within a three working week turnaround period from the stated assignment deadline, through VLE, virtually or in hard copy. If it is not feasible to provide feedback within three working weeks, the date feedback will be given must be specified on the assignment brief, and this should be not more than four working weeks. All work where the three working week turnaround period is not feasible must be agreed by the tutor with the Pro Vice Chancellor.

- All assessment feedback must be clear, concise and legible if hand-written and follow accessibility guidelines. Students will be timely in the collection of feedback and respond to recommendations if and when requested.

Behaviour

- It is expected that students will share in the responsibility for establishing an effective and enjoyable community of learning with fellow students by engaging in all timetabled activities.

- All University employees and students will be punctual and prepared for all scheduled learning and teaching sessions.

- All University employees and students are required to treat the University buildings and learning environment, including workshops, with respect.

- It is the joint responsibility of all University employees and students to endeavour to maintain up-to-date contact details, including telephone, email and postal address information in the spirit of clarity.

- The University in the spirit of openness provides equality of treatment for all regardless of gender, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. In partnership we will work together to create and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning and an environment which encourages equality of treatment.

Academic support

- Timetabling will wherever possible take into consideration student and employee needs. Timetables will be available in advance of the beginning of the academic year.

- Tutors will identify periods during term time when they are available to have meetings with students on a week by week basis. Details will be posted on their virtual learning environment (VLE) module shell, through email notification, on their office door and/or at the Faculty Helpdesk. Students should normally make appointments if they wish to see tutors during these times.

- Students have the right to expect that all information provided in the prospectus and at open days is a realistic description of what they receive in practice. This includes the provision of practical resources, industrial links and support services. The University will publish realistic estimates of extra course-related costs for each year of study.

- Students and employees will give notice of at least 12 hours if they will not be able to make a scheduled appointment. It is noted where illness or unforeseen circumstances is a factor this may not be possible and notification should be sent to the student or employee as soon as possible. Where students or employees are working in groups they must ensure that other members are made aware of their absence.

- Where an email enquiry to an employee is made, all employees should turn around such enquiries or acknowledge receipt and give an expected time of answer normally within the next two working days. Where students are contacted by academic employees in relation to their programme, all students should reply by their next timetabled session.

- The University will provide access to a range of personal support services to underpin the students' learning experiences – these comprise personal tutorial support, the Learning Development Unit, careers and employment services, and other specialist learning support (such as counselling, money advice, chaplaincy, and the Disability Service).

Learning and teaching

- The University will provide students with a stimulating, interactive and challenging learning environment relevant to the subject discipline.

- A variety of accessible methods for academic delivery and student presentation will be offered and encouraged to avoid over-reliance on reading from texts and electronic presentations.

- All academic employees will enable students to receive essential course material through the VLE. The VLE is a support to learning and not a replacement for face to face contact.

- All pre-course resource materials will be made available to students in advance of each year and contain a series of highlighted core texts which will be those recommended in the module. Essential lists of course texts will be provided to the bookshop and library.

STUDENT CHARTER

BISHOP GROSSETESTE
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE
LINCOLN

A joint message from the Principal of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln and the President of the Students' Union.

This Student Charter is to help students and staff at BG understand each others' expectations and responsibilities. The Charter outlines the responsibilities the University College has to its students. It also outlines what responsibilities Bishop Grosseteste expects its students to fulfil, in relation to the institution, its staff, other students and partner organisations with which they work. The different sections cover all the key areas in which students and staff will come into contact and for each area there are clear statements to say what BG staff will do and what students are expected to do.

The Charter has been developed jointly by the Students' Union and the University College as part of our ongoing shared commitment to providing an appropriate, supportive and accessible learning environment in line with the University College core beliefs and values. At the heart of these values is a commitment to diversity and equality and to excellence in learning and teaching, and we hope that the Charter will be one more way in which we can continue to enhance what we do.

The University College and BG Students' Union are committed to working in partnership in the best interests of all students. We see the collaboration which has led to the production of this Charter as an important step forward in demonstrating our commitment to students. We hope you will find it useful and look forward to hearing from you if there are ways you think it could be improved.

Professor Muriel Robinson
Principal of Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln

Gavin Smith
Students' Union President 2009-10

APPLICATION, ADMISSION AND ARRIVAL

We will:

- provide full, timely and accurate information about our courses, tuition fees, and quality of provision
- give confidential consideration to your application and reach a speedy decision
- apply the University College's Diversity and Equality policies to ensure that you are treated fairly in every way, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religion and belief
- send an induction pack to you, providing information about induction and enrolment events
- organise induction events that will introduce you to, and help you engage with, academic and social life at the University College
- organise an enrolment event that enables you to formally register with the University College

You will:

- provide full, timely and accurate information about yourself to enable the University College to make a timely decision about your application
- keep appointments made for interviews at, or visits to, the University College, or advise staff of alternative arrangements
- take part in induction events, actively seeking assistance if required
- complete the required formal enrolment procedures
- pay University College fees within the required timescales
- tell us if you change your personal details, such as your address, phone number or name

FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

We will:

- always treat you with courtesy and respect and respond to your reasonable needs
- enable you to join in the University College's activities without harassment or discrimination and regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, religion and belief, disability, or sexual orientation
- keep your personal information confidential, in accordance with Data Protection legislation
- provide you with accurate information before and during your course
- maintain the quality of the University College environment
- keep to the rules, regulations and procedures of the University College

You will:

- always treat staff and fellow students with courtesy and show respect for difference
- be committed to your studies and work to achieve the best results that you can
- act properly during University College activities and never harass or discriminate against other students and staff
- show respect for the environment and the local community
- provide accurate information about yourself before and during your course
- keep to the rules, regulations and procedures and not bring the University College into disrepute

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

We will:

- assess your work in a way which is fair, efficient professional and externally verified
- give you clear information about your assessments, when they are due and how they will be marked, at the beginning of the academic year, and to provide an examination timetable at least 6 weeks in advance
- give you a receipt for the work you hand in, return coursework to you promptly, and send you a results letter and a transcript of marks following the relevant Assessment Board
- give you helpful and timely feedback for all your assessed work
- tell you what happens if you hand in work late or do not submit an assessment and how we will deal with plagiarism, collusion and other dishonest means
- give sympathetic consideration to any individual circumstances that might affect your assessments
- provide an open, transparent and timely appeals process

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

You will:

- ensure you are dedicated and conscientious in your studies
- take responsibility for your own independent learning
- ensure you refer to appropriate information in your Programme and Module handbooks
- ensure you familiarise yourself with the University College's Academic Regulations and Codes of Practice
- prepare and revise for all your assessments and write and reference your work in an appropriate academic style
- hand in your coursework on the due dates and attend examinations
- collect your returned work promptly and take note of the feedback offered
- never cheat in any way and act responsibly in all assessments and examinations
- tell us about any special needs you have relating to any disability or dyslexia so that we can help you and, if needed, make appropriate arrangements for your assessments
- tell us about any individual circumstances which might affect your work or your ability to meet coursework deadlines as soon as they occur by submitting an application for an extension, or an extenuating circumstances application, with sufficient independent evidence to support your case, such as doctor's notes or met office reports.
- use the appeals process responsibly

LEARNING AND TEACHING

We will:

- employ well-qualified professional staff who are trained to teach and support you during your studies, and committed to continual professional development
- provide courses that are well organised, well taught and up-to-date
- explain to you clearly what you have to do, how to do it, and how your progress will be tested
- provide individual academic advice to support your own learning needs and goals
- ensure that teaching takes place in suitable and appropriately equipped rooms.
- provide you with an accurate timetable for your course, and cancel or alter sessions only in exceptional circumstances
- provide and support placement learning where the academic provision includes either work-based learning or specific placements any and all placement/visits which are part of the programme of study (for example, school placements, visits, etc)

You will:

- be conscientious and dedicated to your studies
- take responsibility for your own independent learning, and academic development
- respect the educational experience of others around you
- prepare for and attend the sessions in your timetable
- participate actively in seminars, workshops and other group work
- seek and listen to the advice of your academic tutors in your academic development
- use the resources provided to help you
- tell us if you are having difficulties with your academic work, or if you have any problems that may affect that work, as soon as possible
- engage actively with placement activities responsibly and professionally
- notify placement providers if you are unable to attend placement

LEARNING RESOURCES

We will:

- maintain a good quality and well-resourced library, e-learning and computing facilities which are accessible, suitable to students' needs and open as advertised
- ensure welcoming and professional staff are available to give you guidance and support so that you can make the best use of the learning resources
- give you a concise list of core texts and sufficient guidance on a reasonable "advised buy" shortlist
- make available suitable individual and group study space
- have an easy-to-use, web-based library catalogue accessible from both on and off campus, with appropriate guidance and support.

You will:

- take time to access the varied and complex resources
- fully investigate the resources available to meet your needs
- make the best use of all learning resources available to you
- respect the rights of other students to enjoy equal and undisturbed access to those facilities
- treat learning resources staff, resources and equipment with courtesy and respect
- return undamaged all items that you borrow when they are due and to pay promptly any fines or debts incurred
- buy recommended core texts where necessary and appropriate

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We will:

- support extra curricular activities to enrich the student learning experience
- support opportunities for voluntary experience
- in partnership with the Student Union, provide a range of societies catering for sporting, social, and special interests
- provide on campus sport and fitness facilities

You will:

- always seek to fulfil your obligations to the activity or opportunity you are taking part in
- take time to consider the range of opportunities available
- consider extra curricular activities as a means of enhancing your student experience and personal development

STUDENT SUPPORT

We will:

- provide a range of sources of support, offering confidential and impartial advice in a fair and non-judgemental way
- have welcoming, polite and professional staff who will provide accurate advice, information and support about both university and personal matters
- make every effort to enable you to resolve your situation, providing accurate information about the options available to you
- with your agreement, make sensitive and confidential referrals to appropriate specialist services
- give you support and encouragement to seek further help or advice

You will:

- take responsibility for your own circumstances
- seek help with any situations which you cannot resolve yourself as soon as possible
- tell staff who need to know about any problems you might have so that they can help
- try to act on the advice that you get

STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

We will:

- provide opportunities for voluntary and vocational experience to enhance your academic experience
- provide formal opportunities for student representation (whether individual or through the Students' Union) at the University College, School and Department boards, committees, sub-groups and working parties
- encourage informal ways for you to make your views known through surveys, staff-student forums, and conversations with your tutors
- listen to your views, act upon them appropriately and tell you what actions have been taken
- provide training for student representatives in partnership with your Students' Union

You will:

- engage with the appropriate student representative structure
- tell us as soon as you have concerns about issues affecting you either through your student representative or through the Students' Union
- take part in surveys and consultative forums, help choose your representatives and consider standing as a representative yourself
- if a representative, attend the training, seek the views of fellow students, and give them feedback afterwards
- act responsibly and give careful consideration about the issues that you want to raise through the appropriate channels

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We will:

- provide safe working facilities, equipment and environments around campus
- carry out risk assessments for activities involving students, including placement and field trip activities
- provide precautionary advice and guidance on matters of personal safety
- provide timely advice on matters relating to public health and communicable disease
- carry out regular fire and safety checks throughout the campus
- in partnership with the Student Union, provide welfare advice and guidance on a range of health matters including sexual health

You will:

- take responsibility for your own safety at all times
- observe health and safety notices, procedures and practices at all times
- observe instructions and notices given by staff during emergency situations
- observe and act on precautionary guidance to minimise the spread of communicable diseases
- not engage in activities which put you or others at risk
- familiarise yourself with guidance issued by the Student Union welfare team
- take whatever steps you can to support the University College in its Healthy Campus initiative

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

We will:

- deal with all of your concerns and enquiries properly, either informally or formally, in a professional and timely way
- give you clear and correct responses to your enquiries or, if an enquiry cannot be answered directly, guide you to the person, department or agency who can answer it
- give you full access to, and guidance on, the University College's Complaints Procedure
- investigate your concerns, where necessary, in a full and impartial way
- provide details of how to refer your complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) if it remains unresolved

You will:

- normally communicate verbally to students representatives
- raise your concerns and queries with us as soon as you can
- deal with the issues, if possible, directly and informally with the persons concerned, making use of the support systems in your School, the Students' Union or Student Support as appropriate
- seek help and guidance before using the formal complaints procedure
- provide evidence to help in any investigation
- use the formal complaints procedure responsibly for matters of concern which cannot be otherwise addressed
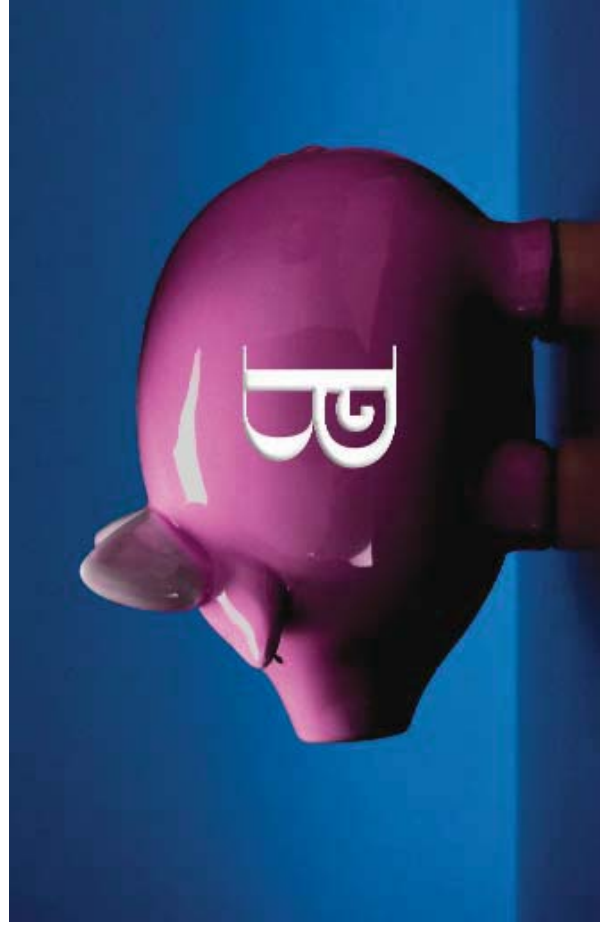
FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

We will:

• give you clear and accurate information about tuition fees and other University College charges and how you can pay for them

• give you help and support in dealing with Local Authorities, the Student Loans Company and other funding agencies

• provide information and advice on the financial support available to you

• offer professional and impartial advice on issues relating to personal finance, debt and benefits

You will:

• make timely payments to the University College for all fees and charges

• tell us about any changes in your circumstances which might affect the amount of fees and charges we ask you to pay

• tell us about any changes in your circumstances which might affect your ability to pay what you owe to the University College

• seek advice from the University College support services as soon as you run into any financial difficulties, and discuss with us ways in which you can manage your payments

APPENDIX: POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

University College Codes of Practice, Policies and Notes of Guidance

For Codes of Practice see: **www.bishopg.ac.uk/cop**

For Policies and Notes of Guidance see: **www.bishopg.ac.uk/policies**

For information on making a complaint about the University College, including the content of this Charter, see: **http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/complaints**

Useful contacts:

Students' Union:
www.bishopgsu.co.uk
01522 583615 or 01522 544378

Student Support:
email: **studentsupport@bishopg.ac.uk**
01522 583600

Academic Registry:
email: **info@bishopg.ac.uk**
01522 583658

Chaplaincy:
email: **chaplaincy@bishopg.ac.uk**
01522 583607

THE STUDENT CHARTER

Read the Charter at http://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/ucb-charter.aspx

University College Birmingham

UCB

Charter

Issue 17, September 2010

Annex E: List of HEIs who responded to the survey

1	**Universities UK**
2	Anglia Ruskin University
3	Aston University
4	Bedfordshire University
5	Birkbeck, University of London
6	Birmingham City University
7	Bournemouth University
8	Central School of Speech and Drama
9	City University London
10	Coventry University
11	Cranfield University
12	De Montfort University
13	Durham University
14	Edge Hill University
15	Goldsmiths
16	Huddersfield University
17	Imperial College London
18	Institute of Education University of London
19	Keele University
20	King's College London
21	Kingston University
22	Lancaster University
23	Leeds Metropolitan University
24	Liverpool Hope University
25	Liverpool John Moores University
26	London Business School
27	London Metropolitan University
28	London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
29	Loughborough University
30	Manchester Metropolitan University
31	Newcastle University
32	Northumbria University
33	Nottingham Trent University
34	Open University
35	Oxford Brookes University
36	Queen Mary, University of London
37	Roehampton University
38	Royal College of Music
39	Royal Veterinary College
40	Sheffield Hallam University
41	Southampton Solent University
42	St George's, University of London
43	Staffordshire University
44	Teesside University
45	The Royal College of Art

46	The School of Pharmacy, University of London
47	The University of Liverpool
48	The University of Manchester
49	The University of Westminster
50	UCLAN
51	University College London
52	University of Bath
53	University of Birmingham
54	University of Bolton
55	University of Brighton
56	University of Bristol
57	University of Cambridge
58	University of Chester
59	University of Chichester
60	University of Cumbria
61	University of Derby
62	University of East Anglia
63	University of East London
64	University of Essex
65	University of Exeter
66	University of Gloucestershire
67	University of Greenwich
68	University of Hertfordshire
69	University of Hull
70	University of Kent
71	University of Leeds
72	University of Lincoln
73	University of Northampton
74	University of Nottingham
75	University of Oxford
76	University of Plymouth
77	University of Reading
78	University of Salford
79	University of Sheffield
80	University of Southampton
81	University of Sunderland
82	University of Surrey
83	University of Sussex
84	University of the Arts London
85	University of the West of England
86	University of Warwick
87	University of Winchester
88	University of Wolverhampton
	University of York

1	**Guild HE**
2	Arts University College Bournemouth
3	Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln
4	Buckinghamshire New University

5	Harper Adams University College
6	Leeds College of Art
7	Leeds Trinity University College
8	Norwich University College of the Arts
9	Ravensbourne
10	Regent's College
11	University College Birmingham
12	University College Plymouth St Mark & St John
13	York SJ University
14	Anglo-European College of Chiropractic
15	British School of Osteopathy
16	Newman University College
17	Royal Agricultural College
18	University for the Creative Arts
19	University of Cumbria
	University of Winchester