HSU Student and Learner Engagement Strategy (2026-2029)

Executive Summary

The Student Engagement Strategy 2026–2029 builds on the strong foundations and demonstrable progress achieved through the University's first Student Engagement Strategy (2023–2026). Over the past three years, the University has made significant gains in student engagement, belonging, and voice, as evidenced through annual Student Engagement Survey data across Bournemouth and London campuses. Notably, there have been substantial improvements in students/learners feeling engaged with the University, feeling they belong, and having a voice in institutional decision-making. While this progress is encouraging, survey data also highlights areas where further development is required, particularly in strengthening sense of community, consistency of experience across sites, and ensuring all students/learners feel included and valued.

This new strategy is firmly aligned with the current University Strategic Plan, *Fit for the Future 2021–2026*, and directly supports Strategic Aim 1: to provide an outstanding student experience and deliver excellent graduate outcomes. Student/learner engagement is recognised as a core enabler of success, wellbeing, retention, and graduate achievement. The Strategy adopts a whole-institution approach, embedding engagement across all levels of the University and positioning students/learners as active partners in shaping their educational experience.

The Strategy is underpinned by four interlinked principles:

1. **Students and Learners as Partners** – committing to meaningful partnership through co-creation, shared decision-making, and recognition of student/learner contributions. This includes enhanced training for both staff and students/learners, strengthening representative roles, and embedding partnership within quality assurance and governance processes.
2. **Enhancing Student/Learner Voice** – continuing to develop inclusive, transparent, and representative mechanisms for student feedback and dialogue. Focus will be placed on growing participation in student voice activity, strengthening partnership with the Students' Union, and clearly demonstrating how student/learners feedback leads to change.
3. **Developing Student/Learner Communications and Digital Engagement –** improving how the University communicates with students/learners through compassionate, accessible, and effective communication strategies, alongside exploration of enhanced digital engagement solutions.

4. **Identity, Inclusion and Belonging** – ensuring engagement opportunities reflect the diversity of the student/learner population and actively supporting participation from traditionally under-represented or harder-to-reach groups. This includes recognising professional and institutional identity, fostering cross-course community, and creating inclusive opportunities for students/learners studying off-campus, on placement, or through partner organisations.

Through delivery of this Strategy, the University aims to ensure that every student/learner feels they belong, that they matter, and that their voice influences positive change. The Student Engagement Strategy 2026–2029 will strengthen the student/learner experience, support institutional values of inclusivity and partnership, and contribute to excellent outcomes for students/learners and the wider University community.

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Background

The first AECC University College Student Engagement Strategy was approved by the Board of Governors in summer 2023 and covered the period 2023–2026. Following the merger with UCO in 2024, a roundtable discussion was held to confirm that the priorities of the strategy were also relevant and appropriate for the London student population.

Significant progress was made over the lifetime of the strategy. Further detail on outcomes and impact is provided in the evaluation report for the 2023–2026 strategy.

Each year, students and learners were invited to complete a short Student Engagement Survey, which captured perceptions across key aspects of the student/learner experience. Summary statistics demonstrating progress over the three-year period are presented below.

The survey was initially launched in Bournemouth and extended to London following the merger in August 2024; as a result, some data is reported institution wider and some site specific.

Table A – responses from face to face student polls 2025-2026

Statement	2025 Face to Face London	2026 Face to Face London	2025 Face to face sessions Bournemouth	2026 Face to Face Bournemouth
Feel engaged at HSU	**36%**	**78%**	**67%**	**67%**
Feel engaged in studies	**68%**	**73%**	**70%**	**76%**
Feel I belong at HSU	**56%**	**79%**	**82%**	**67%**
Feel I matter at HSU	**32%**	**56%**	**62%**	**73%**
Feel a part of HSU community	**36%**	**50%**	**67%**	**67%**
Have a voice at HSU	**32%**	**55%**	**62%**	**55%**
Course is value for money	**56%**	**63%**	**20%**	**44%**

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Table B - Total responses to the Student Engagement Survey across sites and online

Statement	2023	2024	2025	2026
Feel engaged at HSU	**49%**	**62%**	**46%**	**65%**
Feel engaged in studies	**74%**	**79%**	**61%**	**73%**
Feel I belong at HSU	**62%**	**74%**	**66%**	**72%**
Feel I matter at HSU	**60%**	**60%**	**50%**	**63%**
Feel a part of a community	**60%**	**62%**	**53%**	**62%**
Have a voice at HSU	**40%**	**47%**	**41%**	**56%**
Course is value for money*	**N/A**	**N/A**	**42%**	**69%**

**The Value for Money question was added by the incoming Deputy Vice Chancellor in 2025 to be able to provide requested information to the Board of Governors.*

From these statistics, significant improvement can be seen in the majority of areas, particularly in engagement, sense of belonging and student/learner voice. However, there is still work to do in these areas, as well as further developing sense of community and helping all students/learners to know they matter to us.

Introduction

The Student Engagement strategy is grounded in the current University Strategic Plan 2021-2026 “Fit for the Future”. It sets out themes for further developing student voice, experience and engagement at HSU.

This strategy aligns to Strategic Aim 1: Provide an outstanding student experience and deliver excellent graduate outcomes

Strategic Aim One aims to achieve this through :

• Maintaining our outstanding graduate outcomes

• Addressing gaps in the success of different groups of students

• Providing a unique opportunity for students’ study and practice together in a multi

-professional health science environment

• Providing more support for student enterprise/entrepreneurialism

• Investing in learning spaces and facilities

• Creating lifelong learning opportunities

Student Engagement is an essential part of the student/learner experience here at HSU. Through implementation of this strategy we will enhance the student/learner voice within the institution, as well as continue to expand partnership working with our students/learners. The Strategy is intended to support the development of inclusive and embedded student/learner engagement at all levels and in all areas of the university, through a whole of institution approach.

This approach will help us to ensure each individual student/learner feels they matter to HSU, feel included and that they have a voice. Student/learner experience and engagement are intrinsically linked and the wider student experience will underpin work across a number of themes in the new HSU Student Engagement strategy.

Aims of the Student Engagement Strategy

The aims of the wider Student Engagement strategy are to:

1. Increase awareness and understanding of Student/Learner Engagement to enhance learning and wider student experience

2. To develop understanding of, and share good practice in order to make a positive difference to student learning outcomes and success

3. Create more opportunities for staff and students/learners to work closely together in the cocreation of the student experience including the HSU Student Fellowship scheme

4. Build opportunities for our unique specialist community to network and for all students/learners to feel included and that they matter to HSU

At the core of this framework, staff and students/learners should be empowered within their individual context and student-staff partnership working supported as the key to meaningful student/learner engagement.

Objectives for individual themes will be agreed with the leads for each student/staff co-lead team but should align with the wider principles above.

Principle 1: Students and Learners as Partners

The Students and learners as Partners theme focuses on facilitation of our students/learners as equal Partners. Our student/learner body will be trained and valued appropriately to support contributions. Through this theme we aim to foster an environment of co-creation and problem solving and indeed celebration in partnership. We will embed delivery through:

- Development and delivery of a staff training programme to accompany the strategy and enhance knowledge and understanding within the staff body
- Students/learners acting as co-chair of Student Voice Forum meetings
- Opportunities through Students as Partners projects for students/learners to become co-creators of their own education, empowered to lead change with support from staff partners
- Ensure that collegues and the Students' Union promote the Student Representative programme and that they make students/learners aware of the representatives

- Continue to develop the roles of school representations, both within their academic schools and within the Students' Union
- Celebrate the successes of our student/learner community with awards and recognition including the proposed HSU Awards scheme
- Continue to develop appropriate and relevant student/learner voice and representation in Quality Assurance processes
- Ensure our policies and procedures are accessible to all students/learners and include accompanying student/learner friendly guides and flowcharts where possible.
- Develop a training programme to support all students/learners involved in Committees and Quality Assurance projects.
- Evaluate the impact of events and projects including benefits to students/learners

Principle 2: Enhancing Student and Learner Voice

Whilst we have made huge strides in building the student/learner voice and feedback over the last three years we will continue to enhance this work through this theme. At all levels of decision making the university will actively promote, support and encourage the student/learner voice. Work will take place to expand the pool of students/learners involved and ensure voice is representative of our wider university and student/learner body

We will use the Student Voice Guide and annual voice cycle to review regularly our practice, ensure students know how to give feedback, feel confident to do this and know what actions we are taking as a result of any feedback given.

We commit as part of this strategy:

- To continue to strengthen partnership working between the university and Students' Union, working on shared initiatives to positively impact the student/learner experience
- To develop a student and learner voice panel, extending students/learners actively involved in university processes and ensuring activities are representative of our wider student body

- Continue to run an annual student/learner voice week and other promotional activities to support the student/learner voice to be heard, building confidence in our student body to share their experiences
- Develop a Student Leadership programme to recognise support students/learners in leadership roles within the University and develop their wider skills set
- To develop and deliver a campaign to demonstrate how the university listens and responds to feedback at all levels (for example, You Said, We Did, You Said, We Changed etc)

Principle 3: Developing student/learner communications and digital engagement

Following feedback from students/learners this theme aims to clarify preferences for communication and digital engagement across the student body. Using this, clear strategies and resources will be developed to help students/learners know how and where we will communicate with them, support them to access information as well as continuing compassionate communications implementation across the university.

To develop this we will:

- Explore student/learner communication experiences, preferences and challenges for communication from the University
- Develop a student/learner communications strategy in partnership with the Students' Union to enhance the University's communications with students and learners
- Produce a compassionate communications strategy for HSU and extend the compassionate communications campaign to cover different methods of communication
- Explore how digital engagement for HSU students/learners can be improved through an app or similar

Principle 4: Identity, Inclusion and Belonging

This theme focuses on the vital importance of ensuring that our student/learner representative system and student/learner voice mechanisms represent our increasingly diverse student and learner population and offer opportunities for all to engage. This should be regardless of their course, background, abilities, mode of study or personal circumstances.

This theme aims to break down any barriers and encourage engagement from traditionally 'hard to reach' groups. We will work to support the engagement of all students/learners through considering and planning accessible delivery and ensuring options are available for students and learners to engage with feedback.

Following our merger and growth as a wider Health Sciences institution, we are also keen to recognise and celebrate the various professional identities of our students/learners as well as their identity as a HSU student and part of our unique community.

We will achieve this by:

- Developing a campaign to help students and learners recognise and celebrate their identity within their individual profession as well as as a HSU student and member of our unique health sciences community
- Working with the Students' Union to ensure that the Student Representative body reflects the diversity of our changing student population
- Working with the Students' Union to ensure that students/learners with protected characteristics are encouraged and supported and have as much opportunity to engage as other students/learners
- To develop new ways to engage with students/learners who may not be on campus, i.e. commuter students, those engaging in placements or research off campus
- Seek to develop opportunities to engage with students/learners at partner organisations
- To enhance opportunities for students/learners from different courses to mix and share their experiences
- To continue to develop and deliver events and activities bringing together our diverse and multi professional community
- Support and advise staff on the delivery of feedback and training that is inclusive and appropriate
- Celebrate the diversity in our HSU community through annual events, training and a joint student-staff conference

Measuring Success

Following approval of this strategy, a working group, including the SU Executive, will put together an implementation and evaluation plan. Methods for monitoring and evaluation will include:

- Standing item at each Student Experience Committee on areas of work from the strategy
- Review of the strategy annually with a report to the Board of Governors
- Annual Student Engagement Survey reporting
- Engagement in feedback mechanisms and satisfaction reported
- Reduced gaps in success and progression for underrepresented groups of students
- Submissions and dissemination of good practice shared through staff training days, the annual Student Engagement Conference and VC Student Engagement Awards
- Attendance at events and training sessions and engagement with interactive tasks to track progress
- Number of joint staff/student projects delivered

As Chair of the Student Experience Committee, the Head of Student Services and Wellbeing is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this strategy. Progress on this strategy will be reported into the Student Experience Committee, Academic Board, the Board of Governors and be formally reviewed annually.

Staff across the university will play their part in delivery and success. This will form part of the annual review and reporting process.