



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA



# Student and Staff Partnerships

## UOW ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

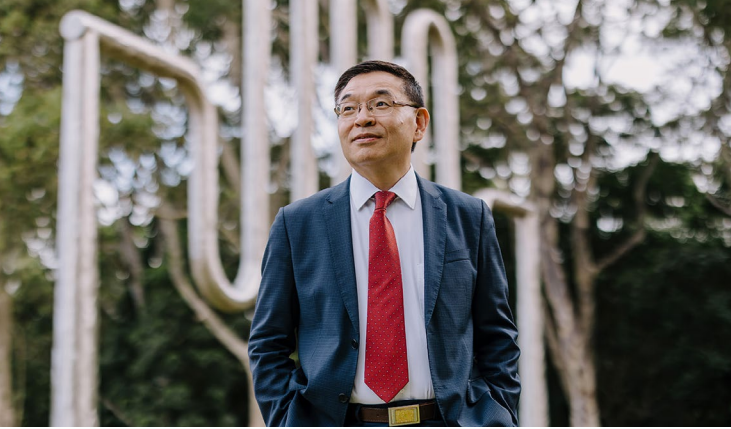
We acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient and sophisticated relationships. The University of Wollongong spreads across many interrelated Aboriginal Countries that are bound by this sacred landscape, and intimate relationship with that landscape since creation.

From Sydney to the Southern Highlands, to the South Coast. From fresh water to bitter water to salt. From City to Urban to Rural.

The University of Wollongong Acknowledges the Custodianship of the Aboriginal peoples of this place and space that has kept alive the relationships between all living things.

The University Acknowledges the devastating impact of colonisation on our campuses' footprint and commit ourselves to truth-telling, healing and education.





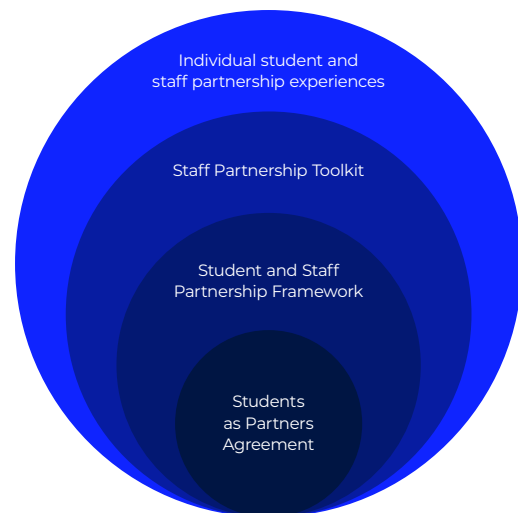
“Students as partners” in higher education is a concept that emphasises collaboration, consultation and shared decision-making between students and staff (both Academic and Professional) within the university environment. Students as partners recognises that students are not just consumers of education but active participants in shaping their own learning experiences and the broader higher education community. It’s a progressive shift towards a more student-centred and inclusive approach to education.

The University of Wollongong (UOW) has demonstrated a sustained commitment to partnership with students across many activities, with staff proactively engaging students across Faculties and Divisions. In December 2021, the Student Advisory Council (SAC) and UOW took this commitment a step further, by signing a Students as Partners (SaP) Agreement. This Agreement included a commitment from UOW to build institution wide capabilities for partnership – including establishing a student engagement framework outlining how the University will partner with students, through feedback, consultation, collaboration and engage students as leaders.

**Professor G.Q. Max Lu AO**  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
University of Wollongong

UOW, in collaboration with staff and students, has established a Student and Staff Partnerships Engagement Framework and Toolkit. This Framework and Toolkit have been created to facilitate explicit conversations, foster a commitment to personal development and promote reflective practice. The goal of the framework is to foster an inclusive community that is committed to continuous improvement of the experiences of both students and staff, and the wider UOW community.

UOW and the Student Advisory Council have jointly embraced a model of student partnership (figure 1) whereby individual staff and students across the university are encouraged to identify and enact opportunities for partnership in all aspects of operations and academic practice.



Right hand side:  
Figure 1: UOW model of student and staff partnership

## COMMITMENTS

UOW makes the following commitments to enable positive and proactive student and staff partnerships across all campuses.

## COMMITMENT ONE

# A culture of partnership

UOW will promote a culture of partnership where students are seen as active contributors and co-creators of their educational experience.

### We will do this by:

- Embedding students as partner's practices and principles in university business wherever possible, encouraging staff to ask *"Is there opportunity to engage in partnership or other student voice practices here?"*
- Establishing communities of practice to enable sharing and momentum amongst staff and students.
- Promoting a culture of transparency and open communication to ensure students and staff feel supported and able to raise opinions with confidence.
- Creating a mechanism for staff to invite students to partner and, also for students to invite staff to partner, recognising the importance of both.
- Encouraging students and staff to clearly communicate expectations and boundaries from initiation of activities to ensure that the partnership or other student voice practices are mutually beneficial and respectful.



Students staff partnership means students as colleagues working together with staff to better the university, trusted partners.

UOW Student



## COMMITMENT TWO

# Diversity of partnership opportunities

UOW will maintain that diversity, equity and inclusion remain a core value in the design, recruitment and selection of partnership opportunities.

### We will do this by:

- Demonstrating at every opportunity our commitment to reconciliation and truth telling, recognising this requires ongoing sustained effort and intentionality.
- Recognising that students and staff will wish to partner with UOW in different ways, dependent on their personal circumstances and experiences. We acknowledge that a range of partnership, engagement and student voice practices are valuable.
- Intentionally promoting varied engagement opportunities with a view to build student confidence and experience of partnership throughout the UOW student journey.
- Striving to engage students from diverse backgrounds, recognising individuals bring significant insights based on their own lived experience.
- Embed Universal and inclusive design principles in partnership and engagement opportunities.
- Introducing partnership practices early in a supportive environment, nurture student skills and experience, supporting growth as an active participant in their UOW experience.



My vision is to create a university environment where collaboration and mutual respect between students and staff are at the core of UOW's ethos. This would then lead to a transformative and enriching education experience for all.

UOW Staff Member



### COMMITMENT THREE

## Training, mentorship and professional development

UOW will provide and endorse training, mentorship and professional development for staff and students to enable stronger partnerships.

#### We will do this by:

- Providing training and resources for students and staff to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities in partnership and engagement practices.
- Educating staff on the value of engaging in partnership practices, investing in the professional development of students and staff, and providing resources to encourage staff to mentor, nurture, and support students.
- Developing resources and materials for ongoing self-education.
- Seeking student and staff feedback on development needs to create a thriving partnership environment.
- Building training and development opportunities for students to enable them to understand and work effectively in the complex university environment.

### COMMITMENT FOUR

## Recognition and celebration

UOW will recognise and celebrate the contributions of student and staff partners in a variety of ways.

#### We will do this by:

- Ensuring all staff are committed to closing the loop on partnership and student voice activities, by ensuring students are aware of the outcomes of any experiences.
- Providing staff with a guideline and tools for recognition mechanisms aligned to partnership practices.
- Fostering an environment where both student and staff partners are recognised and celebrated, proudly sharing stories of partnership.
- Working with all staff to create a clearer understanding of the differentiation of partnership practices and students as staff employment opportunities.

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My vision is greater student collaboration and input in a way that equitably enables collaboration, i.e., mindful of student workload and the need to recognise students for their time.

UOW Staff Member

## COMMITMENT FIVE

# Governance

UOW will embed the Student Staff Partnership practices within institutional structures and regular review cycles.

### We will do this by:

- Having a biannual review in consultation with the Student Advisory Council 'Students as Partners Sub Committee'.
- Providing formal and accessible feedback mechanisms for all partnership activities across the university, in forms appropriate for the needs of all partners and partnerships.
- Ensuring ethical partnerships by promoting a culture of respect, professional conduct, and shared values and principles to which all partners and partnerships can adhere.
- Providing mentorship for students on UOW committees, for example UOW Council, Academic Senate, to enable greater participation and active engagement.
- Maintaining membership with Student Voice Australasia.

## COMMITMENT SIX

# Reporting and evaluation

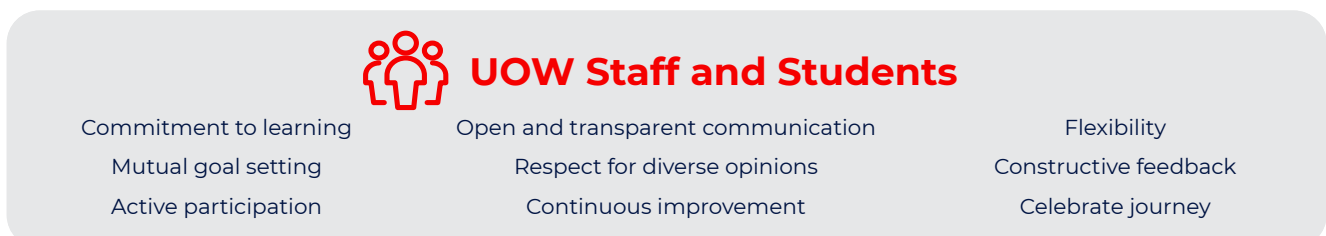
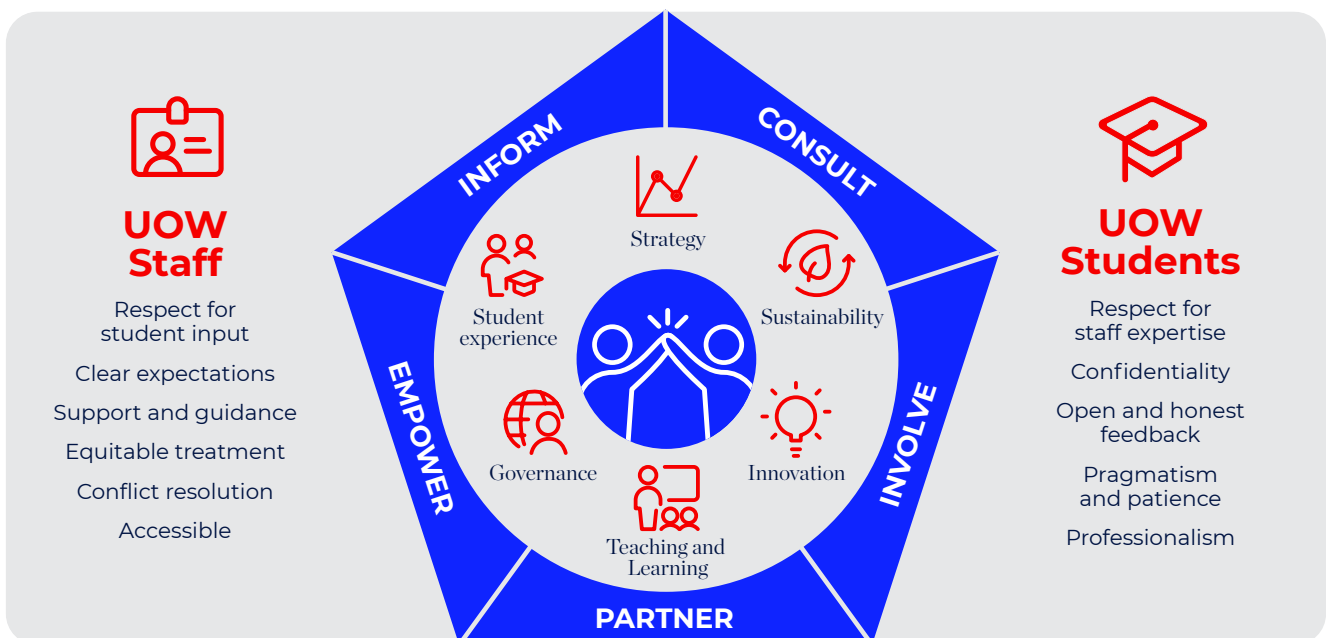
UOW will strive for excellence in evidence-based evaluation and transparent reporting.

### We will do this by:

- Providing tools to support partners to use continuous quality improvement for evaluating the effectiveness of partnership practices, and adapt those practices based on the feedback received from stakeholders.
- Frequent collection and sharing of data associated with partnership activities to inform a responsive continuous improvement cycle and promote transparency.
- Evaluating short and medium-term outcomes and long-term impact of students as partners on the university's overall success and the student experience.
- Sharing an annual activity and impact report with the university community and the public.

## ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

### VISUALISING PARTNERSHIP



## PARTNERSHIP DOMAINS

# The six domains of engagement






Student and Staff Partnerships at UOW will operate and be evaluated across six domains. These domains allow for connections and quality evaluation of UOW decentralised model across functional areas.

Domain	Ethos
 <b>Strategy</b>	Partnership through open discussion and collaboration to develop shared goals, interpret and analyse performance together, and jointly set the strategic direction of the institution, from the Schools and Units to the Executive level.
 <b>Governance</b>	Students and staff work together as trusted and equal partners and leaders on governing boards and committees. Collectively, they are making decisions affecting each of their experiences and the operation of the university.
 <b>Teaching and Learning</b>	Academic and professional staff partnering with students in developing curriculum and courses to meet the educational and research needs of day and building systems and services to enrich the teaching and learning experience for students and staff alike.
 <b>Student Experience</b>	Working with students, based on mutual trust and respect, as the subject matters experts to co-design their own higher education experience through projects, programs, and events, including social experiences; student life; wellbeing; physical and digital spaces.
 <b>Innovation</b>	Partnerships focused on novel ideas that bring students and staff together to design our shared future in higher education, including, research, projects and working groups to write the rules, plans, programs, and policies of the future.
 <b>Sustainability</b>	Collaborations focused on building a shared and sustainable future, from projects, planning and oversight of our natural and built environment, to co-designing a practical, equitable and durable academic and operational direction and experience for students and staff alike.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES

# Differing levels of partnership

Student and Staff Partnerships at UOW is used as an overarching ethos which can incorporate multiple levels of participation\* designed to promote collaboration, shared decision-making, and a sense of ownership across the entire student journey. Noting, that some partnerships may incorporate multiple partnership practices, such that multiple experiences may factor into the same project or experience.

Design principle	Focus
 <b>Inform</b>	Staff providing students with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the process, problem, alternatives and/or solutions.
 <b>Consult</b>	Staff collecting student feedback via one way communication such as surveys or polls on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions or exploring existing data available.
 <b>Involve</b>	Focus on two way communication, staff working directly with students throughout a process to ensure that their concerns, views and aspirations are understood.
 <b>Partner</b>	Authentic partnership where outcome is not predetermined. Each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
 <b>Empower</b>	Students design and lead initiatives that matter to them and are in control of final decision making, supported by staff as required.

\* Taxonomy is adapted from International Association for Public Participation – Spectrum of Public Participation [cdn.ymaws.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2\\_Federation\\_-\\_P2\\_Pillars.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2_Federation_-_P2_Pillars.pdf). Inspired by initial adaptation by [Student Voice Australasia](#).

## **PARTNERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The conduct in all partnership activities will promote values outlined in the Students as Partners Agreement (2021) – *Respect and Empathy; Excellence; Integrity and Transparency; Diversity and Inclusion; and Community* and the University of Wollongong Strategic Plan.

All conduct will be in alignment with UOW code of conduct and policies.

In engaging in any partnership practice at UOW:

### **UOW Staff will;**

- Demonstrate respect for student lived experiences, knowledge and skills
- Strive to set clear expectations
- Provide mentorship and guidance
- Ensure equitable treatment of all involved
- Provide mechanisms for open and honest feedback
- Lead conflict resolution as and when is needed
- Be accessible within the boundaries of the partnership practice to provide clarification, guidance and direction as required
- Commend the work of other staff as well the contributions of students.

### **UOW Students will;**

- Demonstrate respect for staff expertise
- Abide by confidentiality requirements in any partnership
- Provide open and honest feedback
- Approach partnership practices with pragmatism, patience, and practicality
- Commit to professional and personal conduct and development
- Recognise and support the work of other students, as well as their staff partners

### **Together we will**

- Have a commitment to continuous learning
- Participate actively in all partnership practices we commit to
- Show respect for diversity of opinions and experiences
- Use open and transparent communication
- Proactively engage in mutual goal setting
- Embrace continuous improvement
- Demonstrate flexibility
- Provide constructive feedback as opportunities arise.
- Celebrate achievements

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Thank you to all students and staff of the University of Wollongong who contributed their feedback, ideas, and/or examples of good practice which supported the development of this Framework and the associated toolkit in 2023.



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