Social Experience Policy

POL067

Lead Officer (Post):	Dean of Students
Responsible Office/ Department:	Student Services
Responsible Committee:	Finance and General Purposes Committee
Review Officer (Post):	Student Engagement Manager
Date policy approved:	20/08/2013
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Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	Not yet completed
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	Not yet completed

Accessible versions of this policy are available upon request. Please contact the Governance and Policy Officer on 01463 279000.

Policy Summary

Overview	To improve and build upon the social experience for all University of the Highlands and Islands' students.
Purpose	The University of the Highlands and Islands aims to provide an excellent student social experience which allows all students to develop interests, engenders a sense of belonging to the University, and supports the formation of social relationships with students from across the University.
Scope	This policy covers social interaction that is not related to learning and teaching at the University.
Consultation	Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) Student Engagement Group
Implementation & Monitoring	Student Engagement Group will oversee and monitor on an annual basis
Risk Implications	None
Link with Strategy	Student Partnership Agreement
Impact Assessment	Equality Impact Assessment: Not yet completed
	Privacy Impact Assessment: Not yet completed

Social Experience Policy

1.   Introduction

Attending university is a life changing experience. As significant as the educational experience, are the social and personal development opportunities available to students. Providing students with a range of opportunities to engage with their peers for both learning and social purposes has a direct impact on their overall experience.

Feedback from our students continues to tell us that they wish to have a greater sense of belonging to the institution, and more opportunities to interact with fellow students – particularly following the pandemic, students have shown an increased interest in meeting and socialising in person, with peers. The University is committed to enhancing these aspects of the student social experience. This policy sets out the framework for ensuring a positive social experience for all students at the University, together with objectives for enhancing and developing this aspect of the student experience.

It should also be noted that while some aspects of the social experience at UHI are more challenging, others offer distinct benefits over the traditional university experience. Many of the University's campuses are in vibrant local communities, which themselves are ideally placed to take advantage of numerous outdoor pursuits and activities. In addition, many of our academic partners, already offer an array of social opportunities. Delivery of these local social activities is led by the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA), in partnership with colleagues at the Academic Partners. This policy is about building on what already exists and ensuring that opportunities for greater social interaction are maximised.

As a partnership of colleges and research centres with campuses spread over a large geographic area, providing excellent unified social experience has unique challenges. However, this does not mean that the social experience cannot be equivalent to that offered at other HEI's. Technology is available that allows meaningful interaction online. With careful consideration most areas of student life should be as fulfilling as at any single campus university.

2.   Commitment and Partnership

The University, in partnership with the Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA), and academic partners, has a commitment to improve and build upon the social experience for all students. To achieve this a variety of methods are used including the development of clubs and societies, developing and supporting student conferences, creating opportunities for cross-campus networking, financial support through the Student Development Fund, providing volunteering opportunities, peer support and sports. Delivery of social activities is carried out by HISA, while the University provides funding to HISA and students to support these activities.

Increasing the quality and range of these extracurricular activities will enhance the feeling of being part of a wider student body.

With the geographic spread of the University, it is important to identify the different needs for social experience and methods of addressing these needs. We recognise that not all students will necessarily want greater social interaction, perhaps due to work or family commitments. For those who do want this, however, the provision of opportunities in a variety of formats enables barriers of geography, isolation and disability to be overcome. It is also important that when designing

experiences for our campus based students, those at a distance are included as far as possible. Experience during the pandemic demonstrated that these various needs can be met.

3.   Aim

The University of the Highlands and Islands and HISA aims to provide an excellent student social experience which allows all students to develop interests, engenders a sense of belonging to the University, and supports the formation of social relationships with students from across the University.

4.   Scope

This policy covers extra – curricular social interaction, both within and external to class time at the University.

5.   Objectives

In meeting the following objectives, the University will ensure as far as is possible that opportunities are available to as many students as possible, taking account of geography, isolation, disability, climate change, and other factors.

To achieve its aim the University intends to:

Clubs and Societies

5.1   Support the students' association to develop the range and availability of clubs and societies and support the affiliation to HISA of all student-led clubs and societies, whilst working to do so across the network, and to the inclusion of students who are not based at a campus.

5.2   Work with HISA, students, and staff to establish course-related societies, affiliated to HISA, in addition to those originating from hobbies and interests.

5.3   Actively promote clubs and societies.

5.4   Support HISA's Community Engagement team to develop partnerships with the local community so as to provide student spaces in community activities and to invite associate memberships and mentors into existing clubs and societies.

Fresher's Fayres

5.5   Support HISA and partners to hold fresher's fayres and social events during induction periods.

5.6   Work towards the development of online versions of these events to make information available across the partnership.

5.7   Support the provision of social experiences and opportunities for networking during the induction period.

Induction

5.8   Support HISA representatives to meet students during induction.

Social Interaction for Students

5.9   Support HISA to provide opportunities for online and remote students to network and interact socially with other students from across the University.

5.10   As far as possible, attempt to ensure that services are accessible to the entire student population, and where this is not possible, provide alternative methods of student participation.

5.11   Encourage social interaction of all students and facilitate this interaction using the technology

available to the University where possible.

Peer Support

5.12   Encourage students to use peer support resources to set up their own study groups and facilitate communities of learning within their course.

Local Events

5.13   Ensure that events and activities run by Academic Partners and HISA are, where appropriate, also promoted to students studying elsewhere.

5.14   Encourage working with local community groups and to engage with relevant local events.

Student Sport

5.15   Support HISA and the Sporting Development Coordinator to develop a sustainable and cohesive model for student sports through the Sports Development Group.

5.16   Work towards increased availability of health and fitness opportunities, working with local community groups and facilities for the inclusion of students at all campuses.

5.17   Support HISA's Sporting Development Coordinator to develop and manage student-led sporting opportunities.

5.18   Help facilitate the coordination and collaboration of Active Campus Officers and HISA to engage students in physical activity.

Charities and volunteering

5.19   Support HISA's Community Engagement Team to develop a new model for student volunteering in local communities.

5.20   Support and encourage student-led charities events.

5.21   Encourage students to participate in volunteering opportunities and link this into their employability development through the work of the Career Centre.

5.22   Support curriculum – based volunteering and charities support within work placements.

6.   Development Planning and Reporting

The Social Experience policy shall be overseen by the University's Student Engagement Group (SEG).