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**Student Support Initiative Award 2017 – Nomination**

**1) Outline the project or initiative and what makes it innovative and inspiring (max 300 words).**

In February 2017 student representatives from both Shetland College UHI and NAFC Marine Centre UHI were brought together for a two day Away Day. This was in response to the recent Tertiary Review of Education in Shetland, which seeks to encourage both Colleges to work closer together. Students had requested an opportunity to have more dedicated time to focus on student experience discussions outwith current ad-hoc arrangements.

This was seen as an important initiative to not only unite the student voice in Shetland but to also establish a clear student led action plan, which would ensure that students would be in a better position to influence and inform ongoing developments and learning/student experiences at both Colleges. Fundamentally, it was a crucial way to ensure the student voice was more established within our organisations respectively.

In addition, HISA Deputes for both NAFC and Shetland College UHI have had challenges in the first 2 years. Specifically, students had raised concerns in the last academic year about the timing of the Depute elections which, in consideration of the number of FE students at SC and the nature of the student population at NAFC, was felt to be problematic. HISA social activities and clubs had also been challenging to get established.

By the end of the two days students had agreed clear ways forward and have been reassured that the Colleges and HISA were fully onboard with working with and supporting them as they move forward from these important first steps. Furthermore, there had been really important sharing of student experiences, an acknowledgement of common ground, agreement to work together for the benefit of all students and an eagerness to work effectively and in partnership in the future – by students, support staff and management.

**2) Detail how the project or initiative was delivered, from the planning stage through to its successful conclusion (max 300 words). Include details of timing\* and funding.**

Students came up with the idea for an Away Day at their December ½ hour meeting and asked engagement staff to explore venue options and if HISA could be involved. A date was agreed for February, prior to the HISA Regional Council.

The SC HISA Depute was directly involved in preparing the agenda for the day and student reps were kept informed on progress and asked for opinions through email communication.

HISA were invited to participate and to facilitate Day 1, to allow students to focus on activities and clubs. This was felt to be especially important to allow the opportunity for students to speak freely and openly without SC/NAFC staff present.

The first part of the day focussed on gathering student views via a SWOT analysis. HISA then facilitated a session to explore ideas on social activities and clubs which both NAFC and SC students wished to organise collectively. In the afternoon, the Vice Principal of NAFC and SC was invited to a post-lunch ‘grilling’ with students where they could ask him any question they liked. This was seen as an opportunity for students to engage with management, obtain answers to questions, concerns or requests for improvements to the student experience to be heard and solutions found as well as establishing if he waxed! This was a two-way conversation and one which will be maintained.

Day 2 was focussed on exploring how staff at the Colleges could support students in having an effective structure for HISA which would meet student’s needs whilst also exploring their priorities for the student voice for the coming months and beyond.

HISA provided necessary subsidy, free venue hire was sourced and staff support was provided by both Colleges.

**3) Outline the project or initiative’s outcome(s) within the university and beyond with relevant supporting evidence, metrics or testimony where appropriate (max 400 words).**

Day 1:

* HISA are now actively supporting the students to establish their new Shetland Adventure Days as well as supporting the idea of establishing a Photographic club
* The Vice-Principal and support staff have already explored many of the questions and concerns which students raised on the afternoon. This is an ongoing discussion which will be continued

Day 2. Important changes were voted for and agreed by students. These included:

* Combining the current 10 hr and 4 hr HISA Depute positions into 3 roles – 1 x 7 hour Depute for SC and NAFC combined elected in the Spring, 1 x 3 hour NAFC Depute elected in October, 1 x 3 hour FE (or HE if 7 hr post is represented by FE) SC Depute elected in October.
* NAFC and SC class reps to hold joint monthly student experience meetings with immediate effect, with arrangements made for these to be held in SC and at NAFC on occasions. Students requested tours of each other’s campuses to help inform their understanding of their fellow student’s learning experiences.

Furthermore, students agreed priority areas which they wished to focus on over coming months. These included, but were not limited to:

* Transport – local costs, lack of frequency of local transport to/from campus and high costs of getting off island
* Environment – students wish to reduce the amount of paper used in their respective Colleges and promote more environmentally friendly approaches
* Establish clearer lines of communication with College management and Boards, ensuring that students are involved at all levels and that the student voice is taken seriously, along with HISA

Following the day, a statement of the way forward was agreed by all elected student representatives in early March and signed by the HISA Depute. This was then forwarded to College Management for signing. The next stage is to agree clear timelines and agreed working practices to ensure that students are supported in achieving their agreed outcomes.

In the future, and following the success of this project, it has been agreed that students will be offered an Away Day annually in early October which will be combined with their class rep training. This will ensure the work started is built on in the future. It has also been agreed to hold progress review days in February, as close to the HISA Regional Council as possible.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE ATTACHED TO EMAIL:

1. **Signed student agreement**
2. **Photograph of student agreement being signed**
3. **Photograph of joint meeting between NAFC & Shetland College students organised to plan social activities and clubs**