



Prifysgol Cymru  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
University of Wales  
Trinity Saint David



# Relationship Agreement

between

University of Wales  
Trinity Saint David

and

Trinity Saint David  
Students' Union

2017/178

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## **1. Introduction**

This Relationship Agreement, dated 1 November 2017, between the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and the Trinity Saint David Students' Union (the SU) exists to provide a clear understanding of the importance of the strategic relationship between the two organisations.

### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Following a project undertaken by the National Union of Students (the Good Governance and Good Relationships survey) eight key principles have been identified that underpin excellent working relationships between students' unions and higher education institutions. The principles now form the basis for a model Relationship Agreement endorsed by the CUC, Universities UK and GuildHE.

1.1.2 This document is published in line with the requirements of HEFCW circular W14/06HE, the Education Act 1994 and the underpinning principles of WISE Wales.

1.1.3 This document may be accessed on the websites of the University and the SU and may also be requested in an alternative format.

### **1.2 The University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

1.2.1 The University of Wales Trinity Saint David was created in November 2010 by supplemental Royal Charter, through the merger of Trinity University College Carmarthen and the University of Wales Lampeter. In 2012 a further merger took place between the University and Swansea Metropolitan University. Two Further Education providers, Coleg Sir Gâr (2013) and Coleg Ceredigion (2014) have also joined the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Group.

1.2.2 The student body of the University is diverse and widespread. The University currently teaches across a range of campuses located in South and West Wales as well as London. The University recognises the invaluable and central role that has been, and will be, played by the SU and by Student Representatives across the campuses to celebrate distinctiveness and to integrate the student body.

### **1.3 The Trinity Saint David Students' Union**

1.3.1 The SU was incorporated on 1 August 2014, establishing a new charitable body whose objects are the advancement of education of Students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David for the public benefit by:

- i. promoting the interests and welfare of Students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David during their course of study and representing, supporting and advising Students;

- ii. being the recognised representative channel between Students and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and any other external bodies; and
- iii. providing social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and forums for discussions and debate for the personal development of its Students.

## **1.4 Principles of the Agreement**

1.4.1 The University is committed to the appropriate resourcing of the SU to allow it to undertake its core functions effectively, fulfil its mission and support students in being full partners in their learning.

University funding for the SU is contingent on the adherence to the following principles:

- (i) The SU will have a published mission and constitution, which sets out its roles, responsibilities and aims;
- (ii) The SU will be an independent, autonomous, transparent, professionally run and democratically led organisation;
- (iii) The SU will act with integrity, and in accordance with the Nolan principles of conduct in public life, to assure its stakeholders that the SU and its officers adhere to high standards of conduct and work in the interests of its members;
- (iv) The SU will represent the full and diverse range of its student members;
- (v) The SU will be financially transparent and will undertake effective and ongoing evaluation to enable it to account for the funding it receives to a range of stakeholders;
- (vi) The SU participation in delivery of the objectives of WISE Wales through its funded activity.

## **2. Relationship Agreement**

### **2.1 Strategic Partnership**

2.1.1 The University of Wales Trinity Saint David has a tradition of positive student engagement in its decision-making processes at all levels of the institution.

2.1.2 The sabbatical officers of the SU have two full voting seats on the University's Council – the body responsible for the governance and strategic direction of the institution. One of these seats will be occupied by the SU Group President. The SU also has agreed representation on the University Senate - the sovereign academic body of the institution. Through the sabbatical officers and other student representatives, the student body is represented on Senate and its relevant standing committees.

2.1.3 Senior engagement with the SU is primarily facilitated through the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) with other senior officers of the University and the Group President and the Chief Executive of the SU.

- 2.1.4 Weekly meetings are held between senior University officers and the sabbatical officers of the SU. This engagement is a valuable mechanism for sharing and addressing issues as they arise.
- 2.1.5 The Student Charter has been created in partnership between the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Trinity Saint David SU. It explains clearly the mutual expectations of the University and its students, and recognises that providing an excellent experience for every student is a key strategic priority for the University and the SU.
- 2.1.6 The Student Charter is underpinned by the principle of an excellent student experience and has due regard to the UK Quality Code maintained by the QAA (see section 2.9) which describe best practice in relation to student engagement, provision of information and the educational experience. The publication of the Charter is a clear demonstration of the University's commitment to the continuous improvement of the quality of its services, in the recognition of the centrality of students within the University and in the positive contribution made by the SU.
- 2.1.7 The Charter and this agreement also reflects the requirements of the governing body and the SU as set out in Paragraph 22, Part II of the Education Act 1994.

## **2.2 Student-centred**

- 2.2.1 The University and the SU have a firm commitment to improving the educational experience of all students and developing their extra and co-curricular activities whilst studying at the University. Both the University and the SU recognise the centrality of student voice and extensive mechanisms exist to ensure that students have the opportunity to effect change at the University and participate as partners in their learning. These mechanisms are described in 2.9 Student Voice.
- 2.2.2 The University and the Trinity Saint David SU are committed to the ongoing development and improvement of the student experience. The student voice is a driver for the implementation of new systems and initiatives and student feedback is used to inform decisions affecting the student community. Current systems for the gathering of student feedback include:
- Student feedback through module questionnaires that feed into Faculty Boards /Annual Programme Reviews ;
  - The National Student Survey (NSS) and other relevant student surveys;
  - Focus groups & Student Experience fora organised jointly by the SU and Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience);
  - External research into the experiences and expectations of the University's students;

- SU online feedback platforms;
- The SU's 'Annual Student Statement' developed in line with QAA guidance.

2.2.3 As part of its commitment to providing a quality student experience and to demonstrate its commitment to enhancing the employability of its graduates and their commitment to the sustainable development principle of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the University has established schemes to promote extra-curricular and co-curricular personal and skills development activities that lead to a range of key graduate attributes, including promoting learning and social responsibility. These schemes are developed in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations. This includes collaboration between the University and the SU to promote an active programme of personal development for all students including the Life Design initiative, volunteering, internships and work placements, part-time and vacation work and involvement in running clubs and societies that contribute towards the seven Well-Being Goals.

### **2.3 Respect and understanding**

2.3.1 The University and SU recognise the critical contribution that each makes to maintaining and building upon a thriving environment in which students are able to live, work and learn. This is reflected in the consultative and decision-making processes that exist to ensure the continuing success of the close relationship, and in the number of collaborative and partnership projects in existence.

2.3.2 Both the University and SU are committed to maintaining a culture of mutual understanding and respect.

2.3.3 Both the University and the SU commit to maintaining a constructive, respectful and professional working partnership where consultation is timely & meaningful and feedback is evidence-based.

### **2.4 Openness and Trust**

2.4.1 The University and the SU work together in a transparent and open manner to ensure that institutional decisions can be made with a full understanding of the potential impact and effect upon the student body and other key stakeholders. Student consultation and contribution to the University's Fee Plan and other key strategy documents are practical examples of this commitment.

2.4.2 The University will continue to engage and support the SU as it seeks to respond to new challenges and adapt to meet the ever-changing needs of the student body.

2.4.3 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience), the Student Experience Department, and other senior officers of the University, work closely with the Chief Executive of the SU and elected Union officers to provide a critical link between the University Council, Senior Officers of the University and the SU.

2.4.4 Where possible, and always in compliance with Data Protection regulations, this openness and trust extends to sharing relevant membership data and access to critical information and systems (e.g. student data for elections).

## **2.5 Mutual support and commitment**

2.5.1 The University and the SU are committed to the enhancement of their excellent consultative and working relationship. In addition to the student engagement measures described above, the University seeks to ensure that the University Community is kept aware of developments through the circulation of Student Bulletins and Staff Bulletins and is provided with clear channels to respond to proposals or to offer views.

2.5.2 The University offers support and commitment to the development of individuals as well as the SU by encouraging and supporting student representatives to attend relevant external workshops and conferences.

2.5.3 Both the University and SU commit to understand each other's strategic goals and work to identify areas of mutual benefit, opportunities for effective partnership and efficient delivery in order to maximise the impact and sustainability of resources.

## **2.6 Independence**

2.6.1 The SU is an independent organisation that works in close partnership with the University. It is led by democratically elected officers and is responsible for its own budgeting, management and staffing arrangements. It is independently registered with the Charity Commission and Companies House and has its own Board of Trustees who are responsible for the proper running of the SU.

2.6.2 Both parties recognise the value of a strong and independent SU and understand the challenges faced by the University associated with balancing the interests of a range of stakeholders within an increasingly challenging external context.

2.6.3 The University and SU proactively engage and review the relationship, including the funding arrangements, on an annual basis.

## **2.7 Accountability**

- 2.7.1 The Council of the University recognises the SU as the representative of the University's student body.
- 2.7.2 The Trustee Board of the SU recognise the Council of the University as a regulatory body of the SU in accordance with the Education Act (1994).
- 2.7.3 In accordance with Paragraph 22, Part II of the Education Act (1994) University Council has a duty to ensure the SU fulfils its responsibilities. These responsibilities are set out in the University Council and SU Code of Practice.
- 2.7.4 The Student Charter applies to all students and staff at the University. It sets out the responsibilities which the University will fulfil to its students; the responsibilities which students should fulfil whilst studying at the University; and the responsibilities of the SU to the University and its students.

## **2.8 Diversity and Equality**

- 2.8.1 Both the University and the SU are committed to equality of opportunity within the University's community and its activities.
- 2.8.2 The University has published its Strategic Equality Plan which describes the commitment of the University to equality of opportunity and how it will promote equality in all aspects of its activities as an employer, a provider of Higher Education and in its interaction with the wider community, in order to provide a working and learning environment which is free from discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act (2010).
- 2.8.3 The University works closely with the SU in the preparation and delivery of equality and diversity training sessions. Involvement of both staff and students takes place through equality focus groups which covers all equality strands. Representation from staff and students is encouraged so that issues relating to all equality strands within the University community can be discussed.
- 2.8.4 The SU Constitution includes the following commitments which underpins all of their work and guides the approach of all staff and officers:

The Union will seek at all times to:

- (i) ensure that the diversity of its membership is recognised and that equal access is available to all Members of whatever origin or orientation:
- (ii) pursue its aims and objectives independent of any political party or religious group; and
- (iii) pursue equal opportunities by taking positive action within the law to facilitate participation of groups discriminated against by society.



## **2.9 Student Voice**

- 2.9.1 The University and the SU work together to secure a strong and vibrant student voice and consider student engagement and representation to be of vital importance. Both parties recognise the importance of student representation at all levels of the University to strengthen their partnership. They seek to continuously improve their close partnership and engagement with the SU to ensure the student voice is heard and acted upon at all levels within the institution with due regard to the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code (Chapter B5) relating to student engagement.
- 2.9.2 The University and the SU work in partnership to provide and promote a wide range of opportunities and channels through which students can engage with and contribute to the enhancement of their learning experiences and their broader experience of university life. Feedback is considered a vital part of this process and both parties work in partnership to develop and promote feedback mechanisms.
- 2.9.3 The SU is also committed to delivering an Annual Student Statement on students' academic experience and to investigate additional opportunities to expand and consolidate student participation in academic quality and programme design processes. The Annual Student Statement will be submitted to the University's Council for consideration and the University will produce an annual response.

## **2.10 Funding**

- 2.10.1 The University is committed to funding the SU to deliver core activity as defined by the HEFCW circular on 'good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation' (W14/06HE, January 2014).

This includes the following (as a minimum expectation):

- i. Ensure the democratic election of officers to deliver the mission of the SU in line with its constitution.
- ii. Support, represent and advise students.
- iii. Promote and protect the interests and welfare of students at the institution during their course of study, in partnership with the institution.
- iv. Provide and support for an effective system of student representation in order to achieve its object of being the recognised representative channel between students and the institution, and any other external bodies.
- v. Provide and support for an effective system of student representation in order to achieve its object of being the recognised representative channel between students and the institution, and any other external bodies.

- vi. Write and review the Student Charter jointly with the institution.
- vii. Produce an annual student statement, to form the basis of dialogue with the institution, report to students, and inform the development of the student submission for the institutional review.
- viii. Provide trained advisors to give independent advice on academic and welfare issues, which link effectively with the services of the institution, and is underpinned by an agreement between the SU and the institution.
- ix. Promote student participation in surveys and other forms of feedback, including the National Student Survey, as appropriate.
- x. Provide or support social, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and fora for discussions and debate for the personal development of its students.
- xi. Ensure its advice and services, and access to these, meet the needs of the diverse student body.

2.10.2 The University and SU have developed a transparent mechanism for the identification and allocation of appropriate funding on an annual basis which requires the identification of core and additional activities (for example, special projects to add value to the student experience) for the forthcoming sessions. The funding for the coming year is approved in line with the University Council and SU Code of Practice.

### **3. Review Process**

3.1.1 This agreement will be jointly reviewed in June of each year, in conjunction with the annual review of the Student Charter and quinquennially in conjunction with the review of the SU Memorandum and Articles of Association.

3.1.2 The incoming and outgoing officers of the SU will be involved in the review process, with responsibility for sign off resting with the incoming officers. The relationship agreement will be presented to University Council in July annually and published by the 1st of August each year.

### **4. Endorsement**

#### **4.1 Endorsement of the University Council**

Signed: .....

Date: .....

The Venerable Randolph Thomas

Chair of University Council

**4.2 Endorsement of the Students' Union**

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Mr Rob Simkins

Group President of the Students' Union 2017/18

November 2017