Development of Strong and Effective College Students' Associations in Scotland:
Self-Evaluation

nus scotland
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Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Contents

Introduction to the Self-Evaluation and Development Planning Tool

The primary purpose of the self-evaluation is to enable student officers and college staff to take stock and take action. It focuses on two simple but very challenging questions:

- How good are we now?

- How good can we be?

The self-evaluation should facilitate a shared assessment of the current effectiveness of the students' association in representing the interests of students. It should enable recognition of skills and good practice, as well as areas for development, and spark off new ideas and opportunities. As the students' association and the college both have key roles to play in ensuring the students' association's effectiveness, the self-evaluation should asses the activities and practices of both organisations. To enable the Joint Working Group to do this the Self-Evaluation Tool sets out a series of Measures, organised by Theme, and recommended Indicators of Good Practice.

The process of self-evaluation should aid learning and common understanding between partners. Recognising that each partner may have different perspectives, students' association and college may want to carry out separate evaluations first, and then combine results. This would enable the students' association and college to identify any conflicting perceptions, expectations, or priorities, and to explore and develop their own knowledge and practice. They would then be in a strong position to agree objectives and ways forward. Openness, honesty, and trust between the partners will be key.

Partners should take care to ensure that the process of self-evaluation is consistent with the Principles of the Framework, and support and embed student leadership of the association. College staff and officers should undertake the process as equal partners, but final decisions about the organisation of their association should be made by students themselves.

Timescales

The self-evaluation should be carried out yearly. After the first year it may only require updating in line with new evidence and priorities, and to ensure that each officer team is able to bring in new perspectives. The timing of the self-evaluation should fit with the students' association's and college's own planning cycles. However, there is value in holding it later in the academic year when officers will be able to speak with more experience.

Sources of Evidence

Self-evaluation should be based on verifiable evidence gathered from a range of sources. The more robust the self-evaluation the more reliance can be placed on it. A key source of information for completing the self-evaluation will be professional discussions between student officers and college staff. Taking other sources into account will enable partners to corroborate their own judgements. The Joint Working Group will also need to refer to written guidance and documentation and cross reference this with what actually happens. Completing the self-evaluation should also ideally include conducting research into students' views of the association and student voice in the college to ensure that planning takes the needs of student members into account.

Self-Evaluation Process

The students' association and the college should agree a process which ensures that all partners are able to be involved in the self-evaluation and planning; the outcomes of the partnership working are jointly agreed; and this strategic level planning translates into action at an operational level. Partners will need to ensure that there is sufficient time and resources available for this process to be effective.

Using the Self-Evaluation Tool

Key measures for students' association development are organised into Themes, and organised into a Self-Evaluation Plan to support students' association and college partners to work through them.

� **Self-Evaluation Measures:** key elements against which you can gauge your development of a strong and effective students' association.

▼ **Indicators of Good Practice:** practical steps to take to implement the Measure, with space to add your own.

▼ **Self-Evaluation Score:** Assign your partnership a numerical score which will enable you to identify your priority areas within the self-evaluation, and to measure your progress over time.

▼ **What do we do well? What can we do better?:** A space to record your own strengths and areas for development.

▼ **What will success look like?:** A space to record your ambitions and actions which can then be used to populate your Students' Association Development Plan.

Self-Evaluation Scoring System

Score 4. The element is strongly evident in the work of both partners, is consistent with the Principles, and helps enable the association to represent the interests of students.

Score 3. The element is evident in the work of both partners and is consistent with the majority of the Principles.

Score 2. The element is present in the work of the college and students' association intermittently. There are some activities or processes in place which might support its development, but no coherent approach to embedding the measure.

Score 1. The element is not present in the work of the college or the students' association.

This self-evaluation tool is intended to evaluate how effectively the students' association is able to function and represent the interests of students. The impact of its representational activities should be evaluated by the most appropriate mechanism. Eg, Partnership Agreements. The Value and Impact theme goes into this in more detail.

Students' Association Development Plan

The Joint Working Group will need to create a multiyear Students' Association Development Plan. This plan should set out how the students' association and the college will work together to address weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation process and to develop the students' association and strengthen its ability to fulfil its representative purpose.
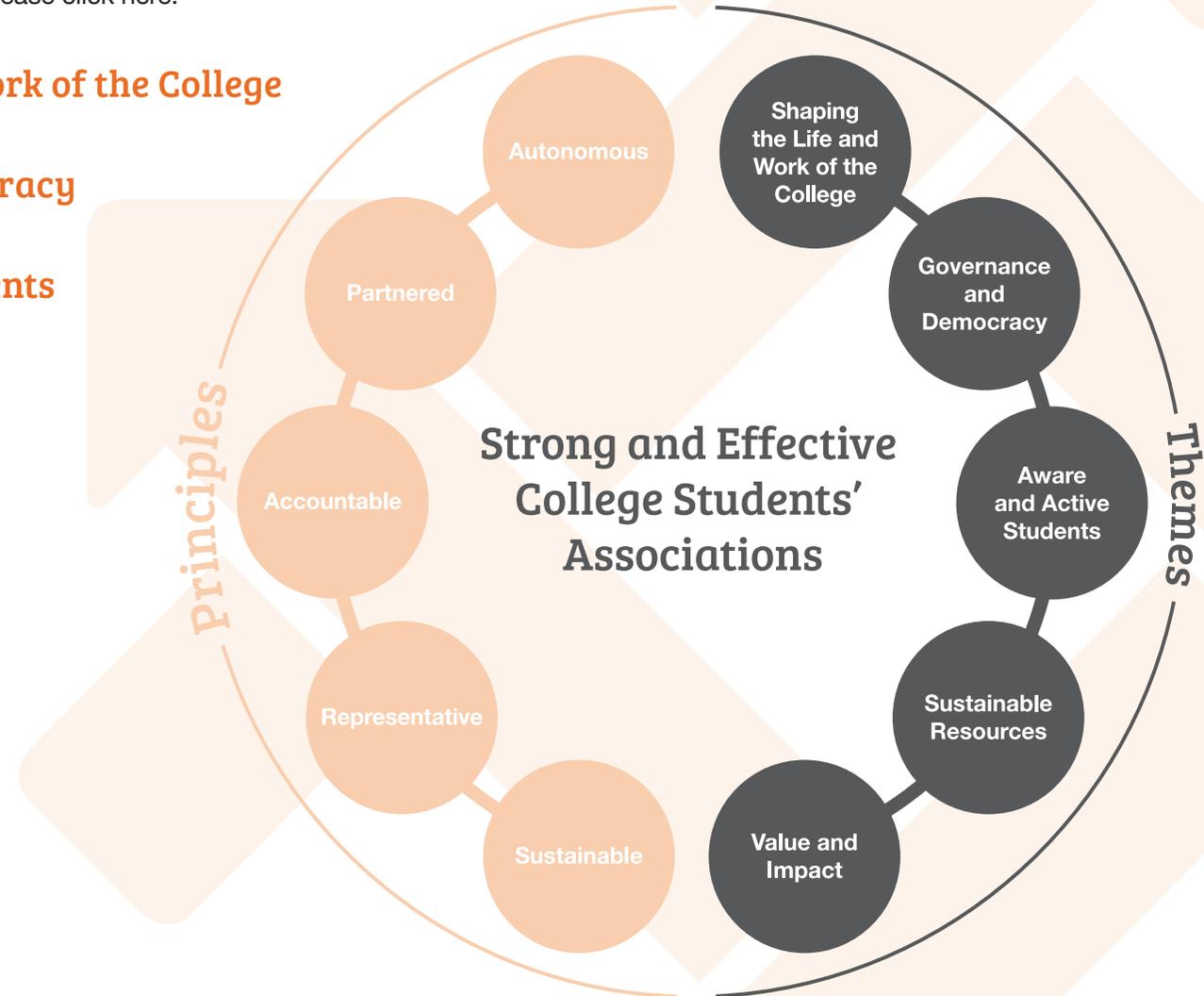
All students' associations and colleges will be at different stages of development and they will all have different contexts which will influence their approach. Joint Working Groups will need to tailor the model project plans to meet the needs of their own students. Project Plans should be able to demonstrate how the chosen methods will enable the college and association to deliver the Principles. Principles should become standard and normalised throughout the college culture.

The Students' Association Development Plan should be jointly owned by the college and the students' association in order to support both partnership working and sustainability. Senior Management will need to ensure that it is embedded in the college's planning process and committees. Incoming officers should be introduced to the partnership's ongoing Development Plan by the Joint Working Group as part of their induction.

Theme Downloads

If you wish to download just one Theme please click here:

- Shaping the Life and Work of the College
- Governance and Democracy
- Aware and Active Students
- Sustainable Resources
- Value and Impact

Principles

- Autonomous
- Partnered
- Accountable
- Representative
- Sustainable

Strong and Effective College Students' Associations

Themes

- Shaping the Life and Work of the College
- Governance and Democracy
- Aware and Active Students
- Sustainable Resources
- Value and Impact

Shaping the Life and Work of the College

Download this section

This theme looks at how colleges and students' associations can ensure that students, and the student voice, are at the centre of everything that colleges – and the sector – do. It looks at what actions and processes colleges and students' associations need to put in place if students' associations are to be able to act as co-decision makers within the college and be able to influence its direction for the benefit of students and, ultimately, the college itself.

It is about:

◤ Ensuring that the students' association is regarded as an integral part of the college's governance, quality development, and decision making processes.

◤ Ensuring that the students' association is fully involved at all levels of the college decision making processes.

◤ Developing partnership working relationships between the students' association, senior management, board members, and teaching, and non-teaching staff.

◤ Developing the association into an autonomous partner who is able to identify issues, set the agenda for discussion, and act as a critical friend to the college.

◤ Recognising that the association is a democratic, representative organisation which must be able to campaign for the needs and interests of its members.

◤ Ensuring that the college engages and consults with students through the association and seeks where possible to collaborate with the students' association on matters of common interest.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
There is a strong culture throughout the college that the association's influence on college policies, strategies, and delivery is highly valued, that the association is a high priority, and that they should be supported to deliver their core purpose. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** � Senior staff regularly give out key messages that the students' association is a high priority. ▪ The college's partnership approach to student representation is defined and is highlighted in college communications. ▪ There are specific forums dedicated to ensuring these priorities are taken forward.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Robust, equal relationships based on trust, respect, and frequent communication exist between the association officers and the college staff. They identify, develop, and agree shared values and a shared vision and objectives for the college. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ◤ As part of the Partnership Agreement, Strategic Planning and/or Outcome Agreement process the college and the students' associations agree a shared vision for the college and shared values for how the partnership will work together. ◤ The Principal has regular meetings with the students' association's major office holders.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
All college staff, from the Senior Management Team to teaching staff, understand and value the role of the students' association and have clear responsibilities for supporting and facilitating the Association's work.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

� Training on the students' association is included in all staff induction and continuing professional development. Students' association deliver or participate in staff training.

▸ The students' association includes staff in their communications and keeps them up to date.

▸ The responsibility to promote student representation is included in all staff members' objectives and/or role description, eg, Teaching staff promote students' association and encourage students to get involved.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The partnership has mutually agreed and established equal partnership structures and processes which are embedded in the appropriate documents. For example, a Partnership Agreement.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

- The student engagement strategy is developed in partnership and sets out how the students' association links to the other forms of college led student engagement.

- College governance documents incorporate the students' association's role.

- A Partnership Agreement is agreed through open dialogue, is revised each year, and sets out the college and students' association's:

  - shared priorities.
  - mutual expectations.
  - roles and responsibilities.
  - boundaries.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?

Students' associations act as co-creators and co-decision makers and have input into every decision which impacts on the student experience.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▸ Regional colleges and regional strategic bodies must, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, seek to secure the collaboration of students' associations.

Required as a result of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013. See Legislation Supplement.

▸ Regional colleges, regional strategic bodies, Scottish Ministers and the SFC have duties to consult students' associations

Required as a result of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013. See Legislation Supplement.

▸ The college keeps the students' association informed about college policy making and decisions so it has the opportunity to get involved and influence them.

▸ The college actively consults the students' association on all matters which are important to students.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
◤ Students are involved in college meetings and committee structures at all levels and work in partnership with the college executive and leadership teams. Students are represented on all the college's key decision making bodies.			
◤ The students' association has enough paid officer and volunteer officer capacity to send members to participate in all relevant meetings.			
◤ The students' association ensures that the papers and points it puts to committees and boards are backed up by evidenced student opinion.			
◤ Students are able to participate meaningfully at committees. They are treated with respect as equal partners and have the opportunity to represent the student voice.			
◤ The students' association is involved in the formulation of college policies. For example retention and recruitment.			
◤ Students' association works with the college to develop and discuss the outcomes within the outcome agreement.			

Taken from SFC College Outcome Agreement Guidance 2015-16.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
⬩ Students have an opportunity to contribute to the recruitment process of the College Principal. The views of students are sought as part of the process for setting the Principal's performance indicators. Students have a role in gathering and submitting evidence to the committee deciding the Principals' remuneration. Taken from the College Code of Good Governance.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association acts as co-creators in the review and development of the curriculum and learning and teaching. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▰ The students' association is involved in curriculum planning and the development of learning and teaching. ▰ There is an effective student review process of learning and teaching.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Students' associations set the agenda for discussion as well as responding to the college's priorities. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▰ The right of the students' association to campaign on behalf of its students is recognised and supported by the college. The students' association exercises this right responsibly. ▰ Students are supported to put items on the agendas of the meetings they attend, from committees to the college's governing body. They are able to identify both issues and solutions. ▰ The students' association has the ability to run campaigns on issues that affect students both locally, regionally (where relevant) and nationally. ▰ Student board members, in their capacity as student governors, are able to put items on the agenda of college's governing body.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Two members of the college's governing body are students nominated by the students' association.

Required under the 2013 Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act. See Legislation Supplement.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▼ The students' association has clear procedures for nominating the student board members which are recorded in its governing documents. If the association has decided that the nomination is part of the President's, or a Vice President's role, this is made clear in the candidate briefing.

▼ Student board members are full board members and are not excluded from board business unless there is a clear conflict of interest, in common with all board members.

Taken from the College Code of Good Governance.

▼ The board and the students' association establish clear guidelines on relationships and effective communication.

Taken from the College Code of Good Governance.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ The chair ensures that new board members receive a formal induction on joining the board, tailored in accordance with their individual needs. Taken from the College Code of Good Governance. ▸ Student Board members have access to ongoing support throughout the year, including via a mentor on the board. ▸ All Board members receive training about the role of the association and the role of the student board members, and support and encourage them to speak at Board meetings.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?

The students' association is able to represent their students' interests at both a local and a national level, if they choose, and to work with NUS Scotland to ensure this takes place.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▰ The students' association is able to engage students in campaigns on national issues of interest to students.

▰ An affiliated students' association is able to actively engage with NUS Scotland's democratic processes through attending events such as National Conference and thereby play a role in setting NUS' priorities and national agenda.

   Delegates' discussions at national events are based on the policies agreed through their students' association's democratic structures.

▰ An affiliated association is able to set the policy of the National Union of Students who will then take it forward on their behalf.

▰ Students' association staff are able to support student officers to engage at a national level.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
◤ The students' association is able to get involved in national campaigns it believes are relevant to their students and are able to gather strong evidence in order to support the case for national change. ◤ Strong and effective local students' associations come together into a powerful college student movement which can lobby on behalf of students at national level.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Skilled, engaged class representatives contribute to a smooth flow of information from class reps to the student officers enabling the development of a college wide evidenced student voice; the class rep system is integrated into the college's quality processes. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▰ A robust class representatives system with established processes to enable the flow of information from class representatives to student officers is well established. ▰ The college and the students' association both support the development and operation of the class representative system. For example, lecturers are responsible for promoting and conducting class representative elections in the first week of terms, and all class reps are able to access quality training. The college ensures it is adequately resourced. ▰ The class representative system is integrated into the students' association structure, with class representative and faculty/lead representative feedback flowing to the students' association's decision making processes.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ Class representatives receive accreditation for their work. The students' association and college demonstrate to class representatives how their contributions have had an impact and formally recognise the work they do.			

Governance and Democracy

Download this section

This theme looks at how students' associations and colleges can ensure that the association has an effective and democratic governance structure in place which enables it to represent the interest of its student members. It looks at how students' associations, with the support of their colleges, can develop robust governance systems.

It is about ensuring that:

- The students' association has organisational autonomy and takes autonomous positions.

- The students' association has appropriate lines of accountability in place.

- All student members have the opportunity to influence the priorities, decisions, and actions of the association and to hold their elected officers to account.

- Students' associations and colleges are able to monitor governance structures to check they are functioning effectively.

- Governance and democratic processes are sustained year on year.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Student officers make autonomous decisions - informed by student opinion- on the organisation of the association, its priorities, and its activities. Student members are able to influence and shape the students' association agenda throughout the year. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The college understands and supports the autonomy and accountability of its students' association. The college and the college's governing body ensure that the association has the necessary support and advice to ensure the association's democratic structures function effectively. ▸ College staff provide mentoring support to student officers to enable them to develop into the elected leaders of an autonomous partner organisation. ▸ The process for making decisions is clearly set out, as are which officers or groups of officers are responsible for making which decisions.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▶ Student decision makers have access to the information they need to make informed decisions. For example, class representatives meeting reports, college performance indicator data, etc.			
▶ The students' association has democratic processes through which students can influence the association's plans for the year. These are tailored to the needs of the college's students and are accessible to all students in all locations and programmes of study.			
▶ Consultation procedures are built into the association's decision making processes.			
▶ Course representatives are able to feed into the association's decision making processes.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The college and students' association ensure that all major officer roles are elected through free and fair elections.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

- Appointment to major union offices is by election in a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote. The college's governing body satisfies themselves that the elections are fairly and properly conducted.

  Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.

- The association has the resources and support necessary to run fair and vibrant elections. This might include extra staff support, online capability, marketing and communications and an election budget.

- Barriers to students voting are understood and every effort is made to remove them. All students have the opportunity to vote.

- There is a robust online voting system or similar arrangements to facilitate multi campus voting.

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
� Current student officers are not involved in planning or managing the election; this helps to maintain the integrity of the democratic process and avoid perceptions of bias.			
� Election regulations are set out in the association's governing documents and are upheld by the Returning Officer.			
� Returning Officers are ideally either external staff from NUS Scotland, the College Board Secretary, or a senior member of college staff who does not have direct responsibility for the students' association. The Returning Officer is supported by Deputy Returning Officers who are usually students' association staff.			
� There is an appropriate complaints and appeals process.			
� There is an official reporting mechanism to the college's governing body enabling them to ensure that the elections are fairly and properly conducted.			
� A robust process is in place to deal with officer resignations.			

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▟ All college staff understand the purpose of the elections and support and promote them to students. ▟ A person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?

The association is structured in a way that best enables it to meet the needs of its student members and to represent their interests to the college.
 	
Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:
 	
▰ It is clear which officer, or which officer group, is responsible for making which decisions.
 	
▰ Responsibilities for key association activities are assigned to specific officers or staff. These include:
 	
  - ensuring democratic processes function and are upheld.
  - deciding on strategic priorities and direction.
  - financial planning.
  - legal compliance.
  - staff management.
 	
▰ There is a process for evaluating gathered student opinion and, if there are contradictions, deciding on a way forward. These meetings are minuted.
 	
▰ The students' association has a balance between locally focused roles and activity and whole-association/college remit based roles and activity.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ As far as possible the students' association mirrors its college's structures. This makes it easier for college and association to engage with each other, and for the association to represent student interests. ▰ The students' association actively explores examples of good practice from other associations and regions.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Student officers are account-able to their student members for the decisions and actions they take on their behalf.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▼ The college recognises that the students' association is accountable only to its student members for decisions on priorities, policies, and activities.

▼ Students are informed of their responsibility to hold officers to account and how they can do this. (See Aware and Active Students).

▼ Decision making processes are open and transparent. The association publishes its plans and minutes of decision-making meetings, ideally on an association website. Student officers report to students on the actions of the association at set times using the most accessible formats available.

▼ There are clear procedures in place by which students can no-confidence an officer. | | | |

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Students are kept informed of the association's affiliations to external organisations, and there are procedures by which continuing affiliations may be decided by referendum. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association has governance structures which complement and reinforce its democracy and which ensure the students' association is appropriately accountable. The college's governing body has confidence that the association is operating effectively and fulfilling its responsibilities. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The students' association has a Trustee Board or Advisory Group which is responsible for overseeing and safeguarding the organisation. It ensures that the governance of the students' association is functioning effectively, and that it is delivering on the objectives that have been agreed through its democratic processes. This Trustee Board or Advisory Group should comprise the major student office holders, student representatives, and externals. ▸ All student officers are signed up to a code of conduct which has been developed by the students' association. ▸ There is a code of conduct for student members.			

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
◤ There is a students' association complaints procedure which is available to all students. It aims to resolve the complaint within the association first, but includes provision for an independent person appointed by the college's governing body to investigate and report. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.			
◤ The college complies with all relevant legislation on students' associations including the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Acts of 1992 and 2005, including as amended by the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act and the Education Act 1994.			
◤ Where suitable the students' association has charitable status, its own legal identity, and is additionally accountable to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in accordance with charitable law. There are processes in place to ensure that the association is accountable for the use of its budget. See Theme: Sustainable Resources for more information.			
◤ The students' association has robust financial governance procedures in place. See Sustainable Resources for full details.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Robust procedures in place to hold paid officers to account and to safeguard their autonomy and ability to act as a critical friend to the association.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

◤ The employment status of paid student officers is agreed by the college and the students' association. Whether officers are employed by the college or are office holders with a service level agreement there are robust safeguards in place to protect their autonomy and ability to act as a critical friend to the association.

◤ Student officers have clearly defined role descriptions which are publicised during elections. These include responsibilities for sitting on college committees or Boards, and other actions agreed between the association and the college.

◤ There is a process in place for dealing with allegations of gross misconduct.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
◤ There is a separate Performance Management Policy in place for student officers. Student officers are not line managed as staff. Day to day support and challenge is provided by students' association staff and/or senior college staff member to enable the officers to deliver against their democratically agreed objectives. Minor performance issues are addressed informally. Student officers are accountable to the Trustee Board, Advisory Group, or relevant student democratic body for their performance against their democratically agreed objectives. If the association considers there are grounds for formal action over performance issues, the association's Performance Management Policy should be followed. This should follow a staged process with multiple warnings and provision of support. If there is no improvement the issue should be referred to the relevant democratic body for a vote of no confidence. ◤ There is a robust process that allows students to call for a vote of no confidence in students' association officers.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The governance structures and processes are embedded and sustained year on year.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

◤ The students' association has a written constitution mutually agreed by the college's governing body and the association.

Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.

◤ Appropriate supplementary governing documents or schedules which contain additional detail are in place.

◤ The students' association's staff are responsible for supporting the democratic processes of the association. Eg, arranging meetings, posting minutes, etc.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The association governance and democratic structures are reviewed regularly to ensure they are functioning effectively. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** �':' The association's constitution is reviewed at least every five years. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement. ▾ By-laws and schedules that supplement and support the constitution are in place and can be changed through the processes outlined within the constitution when necessary. They are reviewed at least every five years. ▾ The students' association innovates and regularly reviews its democratic structures taking into account new forms of participation and good practice.			

Aware and Active Students

Download this section

This theme looks at how students' associations and colleges can ensure that all students are aware the association exists, that they understand its representative role, and that they are able to play an active role within it. It looks at how the association is able to develop an evidenced, representative student viewpoint.

It is about ensuring that:

◢ The students' association is visible to students and that it delivers accessible and relevant services which meet their needs.

◢ The students association is able to gather views from all student groups.

◢ Students feel able to bring their issues and concerns to the students' association.

◢ Student members engage with the association's democratic governance structures enabling them to function effectively.

◢ Enthusiastic, motivated students take up leadership roles at all levels of the association, from President to Faculty Reps to event organisers, in order for the association to develop and deliver services and activities effectively.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The Students' Association is highly visible in all aspects of students' college experience. All students are aware of their students' association, understand its role as their representative body, and know how to engage with it. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** � The college and students' association work together to agree messages and develop a co-ordinated approach to promoting the association. ▰ The association has a dedicated office or social space in a high traffic location, and similar spaces or signposted areas in all major centres. ▰ All teaching and support staff understand the role of the association and actively signpost it to their students. (See 'Shaping the Life and Work of the College' for more detail). ▰ The college promotes the students' association through its marketing and communication materials, particularly as part of the induction process.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ The students' association creates its own communication tools, such as a website or a social media presence.			
▸ The students' association is an active presence in the college.			
▸ Students have the right not to be a represented by the association and there is a process by which they can exercise that right. They are not unfairly disadvantage by, for example, provision of services, because they have done so. The governing body of the college brings this right to the attention of all students at least once a year. Required under the 1994 Education Act. See Annex 1.			
▸ The governing bodies of incorporated colleges set out a code of practice as to how the requirements set on them by the 1994 Education Act will be carried out and bring this and any restrictions imposed on the activities of the association by the law relating to charities to the attention of all students at least once a year. Required under the 1994 Education Act. See Annex 1.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
A significant number of students choose to take part in association activities and fulfil their roles as members of a democratic organisation. This will range from attending association organised social events, bringing their concerns to the attention of the association, and voting in elections. Students are able to see the changes that result from their engagement. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ◤ The students' association reaches out to students through democratic structures and other routes and actively seeks to make the association's activities relevant and accessible. ◤ Teaching staff promote the course representative role and support them to engage with their students. ◤ The students' association fulfils its promoted role and takes forward the concerns students raise with it. The association and the college feedback to students on the changes that have happened as a result, incentivising further engagement. Otherwise there is a significant risk of students becoming disillusioned.			

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Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The college and students' association demonstrate the value of the association, and the importance the college places on it, by promoting its impacts and successes. The promotion is done in a way that stimulates interest by proving that students who participate can have a positive impact that will be of benefit to them and their fellow students.			
▰ The students' association and college implement a range of communication methods to ensure that the widest possible range of students is aware of and involved in the association. This includes:			
- The college enabling the association to access college communication channels, such as the students' association being able to email all students.			
- Officers making themselves available and approachable in both formal and appropriate informal settings.			
- Students' association activities being highly visible with clear information for students about how to take part and/or shape the associations priorities. For example, students' associations and colleges promoting elections to engage students and generate vigorous campaigning.			
- The association developing creative ways to engage students.			

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The association maintains a steady level of engagement with students.			
▰ The college works with the Association to emphasise the importance of elections and to build momentum and excitement.			
▰ Students are encouraged to question and challenge officers.			
▰ Students are informed of what they will get out of taking part in students' association activities. For example:			
- Support in studying for their course.			
- Increased employability through skills learned.			
- Volunteering activities to go on their CV.			
- The opportunity to engage with support networks eg LGBT or Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) student groups.			
▰ The students' association identifies, and takes action on, issues which are of urgent, important interest to students.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?

A significant number of students choose to take a more active role in the association. This may be through volunteering as a course rep, organising events, societies, and campaigns, or running for election.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

◤ The college and association highlight and advertise opportunities to take up roles in the association, and actively encourage students to take them on. Getting involved provides valuable opportunities for students including influencing college life, personal development, and leadership experience.

◤ The students' association has opportunity profiles which outline what the role is, what skills they will develop through involvement, how much time commitment is required, if there is payment, any other benefits or rewards, and an idea of what it could lead to.

◤ The college recognises and rewards student engagement.

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The students' association creates opportunities for students to take an active role and, based on evidence of interest or need, sets up activities which volunteers can then take over, rather than waiting for students to come up with ideas and start up activities themselves.			
▰ The college and students' association actively seeks to empower students to use their skills to deliver change and encourage and supports students to step up to a greater leadership role.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?

There is a pool of motivated students running for major officer posts each year, supporting the sustainability of the students' association.

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▸ The association develops a communication and engagement plan through which it identifies all the different student groups it needs to engage with, any gaps, and the most effective communication channels by which to reach them. The college helps its students' association to maximise the range of different channels and approaches available to communicate and engage with students. Approaches are tailored to fit the needs of different student groups.

▸ The college ensures the association has access to the resources it needs to engage with all student groups effectively. The students' association has sufficient resources in terms of a travel budget, paid officer time, and access to video conference equipment to enable it to deliver to, and engage with, students across the college.

▸ There is parity of provision and access across campuses; students are not disadvantaged by the campus they study at. All students are able to access its services.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
All students are able to engage with the students' association and make their voices heard. The students' association is able to understand the perspectives of different groups of students and represent them effectively. This includes students on all campuses, part time, evening, and distance learners, students with protected characteristics, and students with additional or complex support needs.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

- The college recognises and rewards student engagement and builds this into its formal structures.

- The college and students' association actively seek to empower students to use their skills to deliver change and encourage and support students to step up to a greater leadership role.

Sustainable Resources

Download this section

This theme looks at how colleges and sector agencies can ensure that students' associations have the resources and support they need to function and to deliver their core purpose effectively. Without resources, students' associations can't function.

It is about:

- Ensuring that the students' association has the resources its needs, particularly funding, paid officers, and students' association staff.

- Ensuring that officers and association staff have the skills they need in order to deliver their roles.

- Ensuring that all resources are managed in a way which supports both the association's autonomy and its partnership with the college.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association has a sustainable funding stream that is at a level which enables its organisational structures to function, to deliver its core representative purpose, and to have a positive impact on the student experience and the life and work of the college. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ◗ The students' association receives its core funding from its college governing body ensuring its sustainability. ◗ The students' association core funding enables it to have: - a strong people resource, including sabbatical officer roles and professional level association staff. - sufficient funding for its organisational, governance, and democratic structures. - an operational budget that enables it to deliver high quality representation and other activities and to deliver its work to all student members across all its campuses.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ The students' association is able to supplement this with commercial activity where it chooses.			
▸ The students' association has certainty regarding sabbatical officers, dedicated staff, and long term funding, enabling it to plan and develop its activities more effectively. This enables the recruitment of long term staff and advanced officer election and activity planning, thereby increasing sustainability.			
▸ The students' association is included in the college's strategic plan to ensure that it is in the operational plan and is therefore funded.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
There is an agreed process by which the students' association budget is negotiated and signed off.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

◤ Budget planning reflects the priorities of both the students' association and the college. The students' association gathers and evaluates student priorities as part of the budget planning process. It researches, measures, and justifies the need for resources and the worthwhile impact they will have. The students' association make use of its strategic and operational plan as part of its budgeting process. See 'Value and Impact.'

◤ The students' association's budget for the following academic year is signed of in sufficient time for sabbatical and other paid officer posts to be advertised and elected before the end of the summer term.

◤ The students' association leads on the development of its budget; the association writes the first draft.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The college acts as a critical friend to the association, using staff members' professional expertise to support the association in this important area. Staff help the association to think through its plans in depth and to identify the impacts of its budgeting priorities on students and the college as a whole.			
▰ There is an agreed timeline for budget discussions and decisions.			
▰ Both parties approach discussions openly and transparently and there is mutual comprehension of the consequences budget decisions will have.			
▰ The students' association is able to evaluate their progress, mistakes, and successes in order to make the case for future resources. See 'Value and Impact.'			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association has robust financial management processes. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The students' association has robust financial management processes. ▸ The College's governing body ensures the students' association fulfils the requirements of the 1994 Education Act. The financial affairs of the association are properly conducted and appropriate arrangements exist for the approval of the association's budget, and the monitoring of its expenditure, by the governing body. Financial reports are published annually and are available to the governing body and all students. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement. ▸ The students' association officers have access to their budget. They receive training on how to interpret and manage it, including budgeting across the year.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▶ The students' association staff assist new officers to quickly understand the budget and to get up to speed.			
▶ The students' association has a set of democratic processes by which officers decide, in line with their budget, how funding is spent. For example, expenditure over specified limits (such as £500) requires a majority vote by the association executive.			
▶ The students' association spends within the budget agreed; if the budget needs to be adjusted there is a set process to do this.			
▶ The students' association and the college have financial processes that check that democratic processes have been followed and that all funding is spent properly and accounted for.			
▶ The college ensures that the association has access to the expertise it needs in order to publish its financial reports. For example, the college's Director of Finance might assign time to support the association to fulfil its obligations, and to design functional financial management processes.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The procedure for allocating resources to groups or clubs is fair, set down in writing, and accessible to all students. Required of incorporated colleges under the 1994 Education Act. See Legislation Supplement.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association has dedicated, long term staff who provide continuity, sustainability, and a stable skills base which enables the development and operation of an effective students' association. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▼ There is a clear distinction between students' association staff who support the students' association and learner engagement or liaison staff who engage with students on behalf of the college. Both roles are key and the teams should work closely together. ▼ Staff have the skills and experience necessary to fulfil their role and support the student officers. This includes managerial and organisational skills and capacity. They ensure the association meets its obligations and runs effectively, and free up officers to concentrate on their representative role.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▼ Dedicated staff are employed on long term or permanent contracts. They manage and support the handover and transition between student officers. They coordinate succession planning ensuring progress isn't lost between one officer team and the next, which enables the college to have greater certainty about the activity the association will deliver year on year. They develop and keep an organisational memory for the association.			
▼ Association staff are remunerated at a level which reflects their remit and level of responsibility and have access to continuing professional development opportunities throughout the college, as well as national specialist development opportunities. These measures help enable the association to recruit and retain highly skilled staff.			
▼ Staff are mindful of the student-led nature of the organisation, and understand and support the association's role as an autonomous, representative body. Association staff provide advice and support, but the elected officers make the final decision and set the work of the association.			

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▼ Staff support students to engage with often daunting work such as attending big meetings and acting as a critical friend to the college. They support them to develop confidence.			
▼ The students' association sets its staffs' objectives. The college is mindful of the potential conflict of interest students' association staff face in being responsible for supporting a representative organisation. Students' association staff are not held to account for the actions they support the association to take, but for how well they support it to deliver its objectives.			
▼ Student officers take the lead in working out what the 'right' staff support would be for their association. Ideal minimum would be one professional or managerial level staff member and one admin support. Additional support is determined by the size of the association, and its priorities. For example, recruiting someone to manage the development of a sports union.			
▼ Student officers play a full role in the recruitment process with support from their college.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association's major office holders are able to focus on their representative role. They have time to plan ways to increase the effectiveness of the students' association, to engage with hard to reach student groups, to attend college meetings and to build relationships with the college staff.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

▼ Sabbatical officers receive a remuneration which enables them to focus on their role without having to take another part time job, and to maintain a good standard of living during their period in office.

▼ Sabbatical officers are elected before the end of the summer term enabling the association to function and to prepare for the new academic year over the summer months.

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association has sufficient sabbatical posts to enable it to meet the needs of the student population. All students' associations have at least one sabbatical officer and aim to have at least two to give the association maximum flexibility. The number of paid sabbatical officers takes into account: - The size of the student population. - The number of campuses and the travel time between them. - The level of activity the association is expected to deliver. *Note: Students' associations might experiment with a combination of full time and part time paid officers. Part time paid officers, however, will face the same challenges of balancing their course of study with their representative role that volunteer officers will. In some colleges in which student numbers are very low a full time sabbatical officer might not be cost effective and other ways to deliver the same benefits should be sought.*			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Volunteer officers and volunteers in general play a valuable role in the association, increasing its capacity, ensuring it has officers who are also current students, enabling students to get involved at all levels and stimulating interest in the major association offices.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

- The association has a mix of full-time paid and volunteer officer posts.
- Volunteers are supported through appropriate training and development.
- There is a range of opportunities for students to volunteer in the association across the whole college community.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Student officers are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to carry out their role effectively. There is an effective handover and induction process for new officers.			
Indicators of Good Practice. Might include: ▸ Officers receive both induction and continuing professional development support throughout their time in office. This is delivered by students' association staff, by the college, and by national organisations such as NUS and sparqs as appropriate. ▸ Training is timely and ongoing throughout their term to ensure officers' skills and knowledge are current and that it enables them to fulfil their role effectively. ▸ Training is appropriate to the needs of individual officers and their college environment. It covers skills development, such as decision making and relationship management, and knowledge development such as the students' association's and college's decision making processes.			

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ New officers are supported through an effective handover and induction process developed and coordinated by the students' association staff, supported by the college. This includes: - Full training programme. - Support to develop their own plans for the priorities they want to take forward. - Effective handover from their predecessors to ensure continuity and transfer of knowledge and skills. - Association team building. - Relationship building with key college staff. ▸ The association has access to the following resources to enable it to deliver effective inductions and continuing officer development: - Students' association staff who can deliver training and development. - College staff mentoring time. - Appropriate training and development opportunities, including national training programmes such as those delivered by NUS Scotland (for affiliated associations) and sparqs. - Officers able to access corporate college induction and staff development days.			

Continued ▾

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ The college ensures that student officers are aware of and can access training and development opportunities in house and through regional collaboration and national programmes. ▸ College staff support the students' association by giving it access to their specialist skills and advice. For example, College Finance Director might work with the association to develop robust financial procedures.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Students' association has a dedicated social or office space **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The students' association has a dedicated social or office space at a high traffic location in the college. ▸ The students' association has a dedicated space on every major campus, and a physical information point on all campuses.			

Value and Impact

Download this section

This theme looks at how students' associations can prioritise and plan activities that meet the needs of their students and deliver positive change. It looks at how students' associations and colleges can evaluate and measure the partnership's success and ensure that students' associations represent students and have a positive impact on their experience at college. A students' association's success is highly dependent on its college's actions, and so any evaluation of impact must evaluate the contributions of both partners.

It is about:

- Enabling the association to articulate how it is aiming to improve the lives of students, and to evaluate how well it is succeeding.

- Exploring the other forms of beneficial activities students' associations can deliver, over and above their core representative purpose, and being able to identify your own students' association's priorities.

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association plans its aims and activities to respond to the needs of their students. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The students' association plans its activities and services to respond to the needs and interests of students. See 'Aware and Active Students'. ▸ Developing the strategic plan involves consultation and research into the needs and issues of the students and the college. ▸ The students' association takes college priorities into account when setting its own objectives. The students' association, in turn, has a role in jointly agreeing the college's priorities.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The association has continuity and sustainability of vision and planning and the flexibility to respond to changing contexts and the priorities of newly elected officers. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▼ The students' association has an established planning process which facilitates the development of both long term and short term plans. ▼ The students' association has long term strategic planning processes and a two to five year strategic plan which includes pieces of work that will take longer than a single officer's term. It sets out the association's vision for the future of the college and the students' association. ▼ There is sufficient staff resource to support the delivery of the strategic plan. ▼ The strategic plan is a flexible working document which is revised every year to ensure it is responsive to changing student needs, and to enable elected representatives to take forward their manifesto commitments.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▸ The students' association has operational planning processes which create a work plan for the year after the new officers are elected. ▸ The association has key priorities which keeps it moving forward between officer teams.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association and college evaluate how effectively the students' association is representing students, delivering beneficial impacts to them, and carrying out its plan. They are able to determine whether it needs additional resources and support, and how it can continue to improve and develop.			

Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:

- Students' association and college are able to demonstrate impact to students and external partners.

- The students' association is able to measure, evaluate, and demonstrate its success and impact in delivering its plan and representing the needs of students.

- Evaluation takes into account the influence of college controlled factors.

- The association and the college have robust joint evaluation and review processes which demonstrate where the student voice was heard and how it was acted upon.

- The college records and publishes what it has done differently as a result of the student voice.

Continued ▼

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
▰ The association has processes which enable it to evaluate how effectively it is responding to the needs of students and to utilise the results to make improvements.			
▰ Direct feedback from students is sought as a measure of impact.			
▰ Evaluation takes into account impact on all stakeholders, including externals.			
▰ The association keeps a log of its activity.			
▰ The association regularly measures and evaluates its progress in delivering their plan.			
▰ Impact is publicised to students, and to prospective students through, for example, an annual report. The impact of students' association activity, such as sitting on committees, is demonstrated.			
▰ Both partners recognise that students' association impacts may not be instant, and that they may be soft impacts such as building student confidence which is difficult to measure.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association acts on the evidenced voice of students to represent them and achieve change on their behalf. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▸ The students' association is able to achieve change through representation, partnership working, and campaigning. See 'Students at the Centre'.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
The students' association takes ownership of college services, or work in partnership with the college to deliver them, where student association leadership can add value to the services. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▰ The respective roles of the association and the college are clearly defined and understood.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
Students' associations deliver direct services or activities to enhance the student experience. These should respond to student interests and should not be prioritised over the students' association's core representative purpose. **Indicators of Good Practice. Might include:** ▰ Students' association delivers activities tailored to the interests and needs of the students, and which are appropriate to the association's capacity and resources. These activities might include: - Activities which aim to address issues which impact on students such as domestic violence, bullying, and mental and sexual health, or which promote equality and diversity. - Activities' aimed at involving students in the democracy of the students' associations and in national democracy, supporting students to develop as active citizens. For example, many students' associations played a role in raising student awareness of the Independence Referendum.			

Self Evaluation Measures	Self-Evaluation Score	What do we do well? What can we do better?	What would success look like?
- Social activities which help the development of social networks and promote the creation of a college community. - Students' association develop, or supports students to develop, social activities.			

Self-Evaluation

Development of Strong and Effective College Students' Associations in Scotland:

Legislation Supplement: References to Students' Associations in Legislation

See: **saframework.com**