

# INTERNAL PROCEDURE

The word "Quality" is written in a white, sans-serif font inside a purple rounded rectangle with a gradient from light purple at the top to a darker purple at the bottom.

## **Title: ENGAGING WITH THE STUDENT VOICE**

**POLICY HOLDER:** Students' Union President

**PRINCIPALSHIP OWNER:** Corrienne Peasgood

**VERSION NO:** 2 (2013)

**DUE DATE FOR REVIEW:** March 2014

**SUMMARY:** This procedure outlines City College Norwich's commitment to engaging with the student voice and the principles, methods and roles in engagement.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** If you would like this information in an alternative format, e.g. Easy to Read, large print, Braille or audio tape, or if you would like the procedure explained to you in your language, please contact the Communications & PR Officer on 01603 773 169.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** If you have any queries about this policy or procedure, please contact the named policy holder or the Communications & PR Officer on 01603 773 169.

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## 1. City College Norwich's commitment to engaging with the student voice.

Effective engagement with the student voice is encouraging and ensuring that students (individually and collectively) have a say in the way they are taught and the way their College is run and working together to improve the student experience.

At City College Norwich our mission is to 'challenge minds and inspire success.' We exist in order to help our students achieve, succeed and progress so that they are ready for further or higher education, employment or enterprise. Our ambition is to be an outstanding college and in order to achieve this, we are committed to being student focused and focused on our students' success.

City College Norwich is committed to ensuring that the student voice is at the heart of everything we do. We will not only consult students on their views but actively involve and collaborate with students to shape college decisions. Our aim is to encourage students who are active participators and co-producers, not just passive receivers of initiatives or requests for information but putting themselves forward to make a positive contribution to their learning and to college life.

City College Norwich has been pioneering new methods of engaging with the student voice since 2003 and its current model of engagement has been in place since 2007. The College's commitment to the student voice was recognised in 2010 when Principal Dick Palmer was awarded 'Principal of the Year' at the LSIS Learner Voice awards and the College's Students' Union was announced as runner up in the Further Education Union of the Year category at the NUS Awards in July 2010. Both awards were in recognition for respective roles in ensuring the Student Voice is a priority at the College.

## 2. What are we trying to achieve in focusing on the student voice?

At City College Norwich our ultimate aim of engaging with the student voice is to **increase student retention, achievement and progression.**

Policy research and experience shows that engaging students in organisation and learning improvements also has other key benefits which include:

- A more engaging and higher quality learning experience.<sup>1</sup>
- Improved motivation and better learning outcomes.
- Better understanding of the barriers to participation and success and how to overcome them.
- Better relationships between students and staff with more mutual respect and understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> Most benefits referenced from: *The Student Voice handbook: Bridging the Academic/Practitioner divide*. Edited by Warren Kidd, Gerry Czerniawski

- Personal development – greater student self awareness and responsibility for their learning.
- Boost to student confidence and self esteem.
- Enhanced learning for effective citizenship and democratic participation, immediately and in the longer term.
- Contribution to staff development and organisational quality improvement.
- Genuinely better understanding of student needs and interests.
- Staff confidence that the college is making decisions and changes with the benefit of students in minds.

### 3. Methods of engagement

- 3.1 Students Union:** City College Norwich will work with the Students' Union as its primary method of engagement with students. City College Norwich will fund the Students' Union, including sabbatical posts for the SU President and Deputy President. The Students Union will be responsible for championing and enabling the student voice and encouraging students to actively participate in college life. The College supports the Students' Union's aims of embedding the Student Voice, empowering student members and creating positive change.
- 3.2 Students part of college decision making:** The Students' Union (SU) President will be part of Principalship and the Senior Leadership Team, having regular one to ones with the Principal and Deputy Principal, attending weekly Principalship meetings and fortnightly College Management Team meetings. The Deputy Students' Union President will also be part of the Senior Leadership Team and College Management Team. This structure gives students a voice in the highest levels of decision making and ensures that the Students' Union understands how the College is managed, the opportunities and constraints, reasoning for decisions and can represent these to the student body.
- 3.3 Student governors:** The Students' Union President will be a student governor and there will be two additional elected student governors (an FE student and an HE student). The Corporation will run a subcommittee that focuses on student affairs, chaired by The Students' Union President. The agenda and matters for discussion will be defined by the student governors, feeding into the full corporation board.
- 3.4 College Improvement and Assurance process:** The Students Union President and Deputy President will be part of the College improvement and assurance processes, including internal inspection and peer review.
- 3.5 Student representation:** Officers will be elected to the Students Union annually that are representative of the student body. The Students' Union will recruit department and course representatives as the main method of communication with students. School councils will be held termly in each school to allow student representatives to meet with school management teams and a HE student forum will be held for HE student representatives.
- 3.6 Student Parliament** will be held three times a year as the main decision making vehicle for the Students' Union and as an opportunity for school representatives to meet with the Principal and members of the College Management team to share news, discuss student concerns and proposals. Student Parliament decides the direction of the Students' Union, including long term strategic aims and campaigns.
- 3.7 Course reviews:** It is a mandatory part of the quality cycle that student feedback is incorporated into all course reviews and into the review of all HE modules.

**3.8 Cross College Communications:** The Students' Union will be supported in communications by the College communications department, including student newsletters and the 'Your Voice' section on blackboard.

**3.9 Encouraging feedback:** In addition to the above engagement methods, student feedback will be encouraged through the use of processes such as student polls on blackboard, student surveys, student 'mystery shopping', focus groups, suggestions boxes and a termly 'Principal and President's tea', an open surgery for any student to come and talk to the Principal and Students' Union President.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities in engagement

### 4.1 City College Norwich responsibilities. CCN commits to:

- **Enabling the student voice to be heard** through the Students Union, representation and other processes where students are able to contribute their views, needs, ideas and concerns relating to their learning and the way the College is run.
- **Representing students throughout the College decision making process**, providing direct access to governors and senior management, therefore enabling student representatives to take part in making strategic decisions.
- **Supporting managers, teachers and College support staff** to engage with student feedback in order to facilitate more effective learning and achievement.
- **Resourcing and working with the Students Union** to engage with the student voice throughout the organisation.
- **Incorporating student feedback** into the quality, improvement and assurance processes and into course reviews.
- **Finding the most appropriate ways to communicate with students** to reflect how the College has listened and responded to the student voice, with honest feedback when suggested initiatives are not possible.

### 4.2 Staff responsibilities. CCN staff need to:

- **Be student focused** in the delivery of every College role.
- **Be prepared for and expect challenge and feedback** from students and be willing and able to respond to feedback
- **Encourage and enable student participation** in the quality improvement and assurance process, course reviews and representation (including school council meetings). Students should be allowed to take authorised absence from classes to participate.

### 4.3 Student representative's responsibilities:

- **Championing and enabling the student voice** and encouraging students to actively participate in college life.
- **Attending management team meetings** (Governors, Principalship, Senior Leadership and College Management teams) as appropriate to role.
- **Enable equality of opportunity**, encouraging all groups of students from every department to have a voice.
- **Adding the City College Norwich student voice to local and national debate** through, for example, the National Union of Students.
- **Committed to understanding the bigger picture.** The FE landscape, financing and governance is quite daunting and complicated to understand but it is not possible to contribute effectively around the management table without this understanding. This understanding will be enhanced through a close working partnership with both the college and through the Students' Union's relationship with the National Union of Students.

### 4.4 Student responsibilities

- **Use your voice:** talk to your tutors or other College staff or the Students Union.
- Don't just be passive receivers of initiatives or requests for information but **actively participate** in college life; put yourself forward to make a positive contribution.

## 5. Measuring success

City College Norwich will use the following methods for measuring the success of our engagement with the student voice:

- **The College Self Assessment Report.**
- **The Common Inspection Framework** judges FE colleges on how well they engage with students to improve the effectiveness of the organisation and provision.
- **FE Choices** (previously Framework For Excellence) surveys students and publicly rates FE Colleges on how well they respond to student views.
- **Student participation and responses** to City College Norwich engagement methods and student surveys, including the National student survey.
- **External awards and accreditations.**
- **City College Norwich student and staff awards eg. FE awards.**

If the national methods of evaluation change, City College Norwich will put in place its own measures for evaluating success of engagement with the student voice, as necessary.