

Annex D – Learner Engagement Code



Learner Engagement Code

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Introduction

Scope of learner engagement

1. For the purposes of Medr's remit and the scope of its activities, in line with the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022, 'learner engagement' is defined as encompassing opportunities for learners to participate in the making of relevant decisions by their provider, ensuring learners are effectively represented in provider decision-making and ensuring learners have opportunities to give their views to their provider on the education they are receiving and matters of concern or interest to them. The definition of learner engagement, for the purposes of the Code, does not refer to an individual's involvement in and commitment to their own learning.
2. Learner is the collective term used for individuals undertaking learning in the tertiary education sector in a wide range of settings including classrooms, workplaces and communities. Within different parts of the tertiary education sector more specific terms are often used, such as 'student', 'pupil', 'doctoral researcher' or 'apprentice.' Where appropriate (for example, in case studies or resources relating to one part of the sector) the term common to a particular part of the sector has been used within the Code.
3. Provider is the term we use to encompass the range of organisations responsible for the delivery of tertiary education and research, these are; universities, higher education institutions, further education institutions, apprenticeship providers, local authorities responsible for adult community learning and maintained school sixth forms.
4. Provider decision-making is a broad term covering all decisions made by a provider that are of concern or interest to learners. This should include those decisions related to the quality of tertiary education, learners' teaching and learning experiences, strategic decisions made by the provider and any decisions about the wider learner experience.

Benefits of learner engagement

5. Effective learner engagement in decision-making provides benefits for current and future learners, for providers and for the tertiary education sector in Wales.
6. Individually, those learners who engage in decision-making processes and in roles as representatives, governors or leaders, have opportunities to:
 - develop additional skills and competencies
 - improve their own learning experience
 - build social connections
 - deepen their sense of belonging within their provider
7. Collectively, learners benefit from:
 - a learning experience that is centred around and responsive to their needs
 - coordinated opportunities to amplify their voices with reduced individual burden
 - improvements that benefit future cohorts of learners
8. Providers and the tertiary education sector as a whole have opportunities to benefit through:

- enhanced understanding of learner needs to guide continuous improvement of quality and the learner experience
 - positive impacts on learner satisfaction, retention and success
 - learners identifying barriers and challenges to support providers' strategic decisions and operational actions
 - learner feedback as valuable evidence to inform self-evaluation and quality processes
9. Learner engagement is most effective when led by the needs of learners, therefore there isn't a single "right" approach to learner engagement, particularly in the tertiary education sector which encompasses a diverse range of learners and settings. Medr encourages innovation in learner engagement to meet the needs of learners and to drive continuous improvement. To enable this, the Code is deliberately not prescriptive about the practice to engage learners in their provider's decision-making, or the specific mechanisms providers must use. Instead, we take a principles-based approach, primarily focusing on the **impact** of learner engagement. Impact will be explored through learner voice, examples of practice and the effect they have on learners and the learner experience.
10. Approaches to learner engagement will be shaped by each provider's size, mission, learner demographics and types of provision, as well as their unique history and experience in engaging learners in decision-making – all while being guided by learners' needs. We understand that the nature of engagement will be shaped by the context in which learning takes place; for example, apprentices' experiences are determined primarily by their employer's expectations and workplace responsibilities, and the structures they can access for representation and feedback may look very different to those in other education providers.
11. Medr recognises that providers will be starting from different points on their journey of effectively engaging learners in their decision-making and we will regulate proportionately in that context. All providers will be expected to evaluate their learner engagement to support its continuous improvement. Medr aims to support this at provider level and across the sector, through the Code, by publishing examples of effective practice and guidance, and by funding projects led by organisations with relevant experience and expertise. These activities will support Medr and the sector to meet the learner-centred vision for learner engagement which has been developed with learners and written from their perspective, reflecting Medr's strategic aim to focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner.

Vision for learner engagement

12. As learners we are at the heart of tertiary education and research in Wales. We have opportunities, as individuals and with our peers, to engage in decision-making that impacts and improves our learning experiences and those of future learners. Our voices matter throughout our learning journeys, whether we are starting a course, transitioning to new opportunities or progressing in our careers.

The Learner Engagement Code

13. The Learner Engagement Code has been developed to support tertiary education learners in Wales to have meaningful engagement in their providers' decision-making, shaping and continuously improving the learner experience and learning environment. The Code sits within Medr's regulatory and quality frameworks with

regulatory requirements for all providers of tertiary education and research in Wales. It is intended to be a resource used by providers, with their learners and learner representative bodies (where they exist), to develop, evaluate and improve learner engagement in their provider's decision-making. The Code sets out the requirements for learner engagement in the form of principles. The principles are expressed from the learner perspective, focusing learner engagement on their needs. The principles should be shared and understood by learners and throughout a provider, it is the responsibility of providers' governing bodies (or equivalent) to assure compliance with the Code.

14. The Learner Engagement Code sits within the regulatory framework through a Condition of Registration and Condition of Funding; there is a statutory duty for maintained school sixth forms to comply with the requirements of the Code. The Code applies to all provision of registered and/or funded tertiary education providers, including that provided on their behalf, for example via sub-contractual or franchise arrangements. Where validation arrangements are in place, a registered provider (in line with the Condition: Validation Arrangements) must ensure compliance with the Learner Engagement Code wherever possible. All tertiary education and research providers in Wales must align their learner engagement with the principles of the Code. For ease, these requirements are highlighted in purple throughout the Code. Each principle has accompanying text to help providers consider the key elements needed to align their practice with the requirements of the Code, this information is provided as guidance and all providers should pay regard to it – for ease, guidance is highlighted in yellow throughout the Code.
15. The examples and reflective questions provide further support for providers and learners to align with the principles for learner engagement and to evaluate and improve current practice. This information is not prescriptive and does not form part of the requirements or guidance of the Code. Reflective questions help learners, learner representative bodies (where they exist) and providers to collaboratively evaluate the extent to which they align with the principles. Examples of practice help to articulate the principles in action; it is helpful to consider these in the provider's particular context, some practice may be specific to different parts of the sector and may be accompanied by additional guidance and expectations beyond the Learner Engagement Code (these are set out in Annex A). The support and guidance will build over time, expanding on examples of practice to include case studies from the sector, building on resources in response to sector needs and through projects funded by Medr that facilitate support and collaboration in learner engagement.

Legal basis

16. The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 (the Act) requires Medr to prepare and publish the Learner Engagement Code (the Code) about the involvement of learners in the decision-making with their providers.
17. Learner engagement in decision-making includes opportunities for learners to:
 - participate in the making of relevant decisions by their provider
 - have their voices effectively represented in provider decision-making
 - give their views on the education they are receiving and matters of concern or interest to them
18. Learners must have these opportunities to be part of their provider's decisions that are of concern or interest to them.

19. The Act requires Medr to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Code on an ongoing basis for all registered providers, set out in the associated Condition of Registration. This requirement for compliance is echoed in the associated Condition of Funding for providers funded by Medr. Section 101 of the Act requires compliance with the Code for maintained school sixth forms.
20. Therefore, the Learner Engagement Code applies to all parts of the tertiary education sector in Wales:
 - further education
 - higher education
 - apprenticeships
 - adult community learning
 - local authority maintained school sixth forms.

Regulatory Framework

21. The Code forms part of Medr's regulatory framework, underpinned by our Regulatory Approach. As a regulator, we aim to take a balanced approach which is proportionate and risk-based but also expects high standards across tertiary education in Wales.
22. The Code requires learners to have opportunities for engagement across decision-making within all tertiary sector providers and therefore spans the regulatory framework with expectations across regulatory conditions. Medr will not monitor any one condition in isolation and will therefore take a holistic view of learner engagement, drawing on evidence across the framework.

Quality Framework

23. Medr's Quality Framework sets out policy and practice in relation to the quality of tertiary education. It is a key element in helping Medr to achieve its strategic aim of ensuring learners receive the highest quality provision in a tertiary education sector that strives for continuous improvement. Like the Code, the Quality Framework applies to all parts of the tertiary education sector in Wales.
24. The Quality Framework has a set of pillars, which are the criteria set out by Medr for assessing the quality of tertiary education, and which we expect to drive good learner outcomes. The learner engagement pillar of the Quality Framework focuses on the engagement of learners in their provider's processes and actions to assure and improve the quality of their learning experience. Providers are expected to implement the Learner Engagement Code as part of this. As part of this pillar, Medr also commits to supporting learner engagement in the sector through investing in resources, support and training and to sharing good practice. Organisations responsible for inspection and review are expected to engage with learners and take their views into account.

Requirements of the Learner Engagement Code

25. The Code sets out the requirements for learner engagement in the form of principles which have been developed in collaboration with learners, providers and sector stakeholders. All tertiary education providers must comply with the Code by aligning their learner engagement practice to the principles.
26. The vision and principles for learner engagement have been written from the perspective of learners, reflecting Medr's strategic aim to focus the tertiary education sector around the needs of the learner.

Principles for learner engagement¹

Learner engagement is:

1. **Embedded:** Opportunities for me to engage in decision-making with my provider are woven throughout every aspect of my educational journey and through all decisions that impact me, my peers and future learners.
2. **Valued:** I am listened to and empowered to shape my whole learning experience through engagement in my provider's decision-making.
3. **Understood:** I know where and how to raise ideas and share thoughts on topics that are important to me and topics raised by my education provider.
4. **Inclusive:** The opportunities for me and other learners to engage in decision-making reflect our diverse needs, interests and abilities to engage.
5. **Bilingual:** I can engage in decision-making through the medium of Welsh, and I have opportunities to be involved in my education provider's approach to Welsh-medium provision and how it promotes the Welsh language and culture.
6. **Individual and Collective:** In addition to the opportunities for me to engage in my providers decision-making, as learners we are supported to share our voices with each other to collectively engage in decision-making to shape the learning experience.
7. **Impactful:** My engagement is part of ongoing dialogue where outcomes and changes are discussed and reviewed, we are all able to see the impact of this on the learning experience now and for future learners.
8. **Resourced:** Resources are allocated by my education provider to ensure all learners have opportunities to engage in decision-making.
9. **Evaluated:** My education provider regularly evaluates how they engage with us as learners and whether this meets our expectations. They work with us to identify what's working well, what could be done better and to develop changes for improvement.

Considerations for practice

27. The following section of the Code provides information to support providers to align their learner engagement practice with the requirements of the Code. This section aims to provide further clarity on the principles for learner engagement, to bring the

¹ Sections highlighted in purple indicate the requirements of the Code, which providers must comply with.

principles to life through examples of practice and to aid evaluation through reflective questions.

28. This section can be used by providers, learners and learner representative bodies (where they exist) to develop, evaluate and continuously improve learner engagement in their provider's decision-making. This section will be built over time responding to evolving sector needs and practice, this will include the addition of further examples and case studies and signposting to guidance and resources funded by Medr and available to the sector. To drive continuous improvement in learner engagement, the requirements of the Code will be reviewed from time to time based on the findings of monitoring and in collaboration with learners, providers and stakeholders.
29. Sections highlighted in purple indicate the requirements of the Code, sections highlighted in yellow indicate guidance which all providers must pay regard to.

Principle 1: Embedded

Opportunities for me to engage in decision-making with my provider are woven throughout every aspect of my educational journey and through all decisions that impact me, my peers and future learners

Learners have opportunities to engage in all of their provider's decision-making that affects their learning experience and that of future learners. This includes decisions about the learning, teaching and quality of their course, the environment they learn in, and strategic decisions made by their provider. Learners should have opportunities to engage in their provider's decision-making at all levels including those decisions related to their course, to a subject area or group of courses, to the environment, facilities and support they can access, and to strategic decisions affecting learners across the provider or provision. Learners should be engaged in decisions that cover the whole learner journey including transitions into, through and out of the provider.

Opportunities for all learners' individual engagement may include learner surveys, digital channels and informal engagement with provider staff. More formal and strategic engagement will often involve collective learner voice through course representatives, learner councils or students' unions and through roles such as learner/student governors. Whilst the requirements of the Code set out that a provider must offer a broad range of opportunities for all learners to engage or be represented in their decision-making, learners are not required to engage and may choose not to.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Provider Learner Voice Strategy

This example is applicable across tertiary education and research and should be considered in a provider's particular context, where names of strategies and committees are used these can be replaced with relevant alternatives.

A provider develops, reviews and maintains a Learner Voice Strategy with engagement from learners and staff.

The strategy considers all learners, irrespective of their mode, level and location of study with consideration of learner characteristics (for example, additional learning needs) and equality of opportunity. The strategy sets out the responsibilities for learners and all levels of staff to provide effective opportunities for learners to engage in the provider's decision-making and to have their views listened to and acted upon wherever possible. Staff are trained to help ensure they understand what is expected of them.

The strategy sets out clear and accessible methods for learner voice and engagement and how learner voice feeds into the provider's governance structure and decision-making processes.

The strategy is reviewed annually, with learners and staff, and owned by the provider's Learner Voice Committee. The strategy contains objectives and actions to continuously improve learner voice and engagement and to address gaps identified through the review of its effectiveness. It also includes Key Performance Indicators that will allow the provider to evaluate the effectiveness of its strategy.

Example 2: Student Charter

This example is drawn from a higher education context where student charters are established practice supported by guidance from the former Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. The principles of developing such charters may be applicable in other areas of tertiary education and research.

A university develops, reviews and maintains a Student Charter in partnership with students and staff.

The Student Charter sets out the mutual expectations, rights and responsibilities of the university and its students, with links to further information designed to support the student's learning experience. This includes the partnership approach to engaging students and student voice in the university's decision-making and the role of the Students' Union in independently representing the voice of students. It also includes ways in which students can raise concerns and complaints. It is a high-level document, aligned with the university's strategic direction and is applicable to the diverse range of students within the university and through any validation arrangements, taking account of the individual needs of students. The Charter is a live document, actively shared and discussed with students throughout their time at the university.

The Student Charter is reviewed annually by the Students' Union in partnership with the provider's senior leadership team. Development and review of the Student Charter feeds into the provider's governance structure through the Student Experience Committee, co-chaired by a Students' Union representative.

Reflective questions:

Where are decisions made within the provider? How are learners involved in those spaces? How are learner representatives and/or learner representative bodies (where they exist) involved in those spaces?

At what points in the learner journey are learners actively invited to shape their experiences? Are there any gaps?

How are learners engaged in strategic decision-making as well as operational, day to day matters? Are there any gaps?

How are learners involved in the provider's governance structures?

What evidence of learner engagement is presented to governors? Are they presented with evidence of impact?

Principle 2: Valued

I am listened to and empowered to shape my whole learning experience through engagement in my provider's decision-making.

Learners see evidence that their feedback has been considered and action taken where possible. The learning environment is designed to enable open, transparent dialogue to welcome feedback and allow learners to effectively contribute to decision-making that drives continuous improvement. Information, training and support is offered to learners and learner representatives to facilitate effective engagement and representation. Where learners are members of provider committees and boards, they receive training and support to fulfil their roles and are offered support to prepare for meetings, which could include opportunities to discuss papers and raise questions. Training for learner representatives is accessible in formats that fit the learners' experience, for example utilising digital platforms and asynchronous activities where appropriate. As well as including practical information to fulfil their roles, training supports the development of communication skills and confidence for learners to use as representatives and beyond.

Learners are recognised and rewarded for their engagement. This could, for example, be through recognition schemes and celebration events; offering bursaries, financial incentives or reimbursements to mitigate barriers to engagement; or by accrediting engagement as part of a course, credit or digital badge.

The learning environment enables learners to feel confident that their feedback will be considered sensitively and confidentially, in line with data protection laws and provider policies. It is made clear to learners that honest feedback, whether positive or critical, is welcomed to improve the quality of their learning experience and that providing feedback will have no impact on their grades, assessment, or academic standing.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Learner Voice Conference

This example is drawn from practice seen in higher and further education institutions. Elements of this practice may be considered across tertiary education and research with a view to scalability and applicability for different types of learners.

An annual conference is held in the autumn term to welcome new and returning learner representatives. Learner representatives are provided with refreshments throughout the day and are supported to attend by being released from timetabled sessions. Funding is

available for those who wouldn't normally attend on this day to cover additional expenses incurred.

The conference involves training sessions to support learner representatives to effectively undertake their roles. Returning representatives can share their experiences and, alongside staff, provide examples of the impact of learner voice and engagement. Representatives are invited to join workshops on key matters and decisions arising from previous learner voice and engagement, these sessions involve sharing of learner voice and solution development in partnership with learners and staff. Arising actions and ideas from the workshops feed into the providers learner voice action plan that is discussed at Learner Council which feeds into the provider's Learner Experience Committee. ².

Example 2: Engagement between Student Governors and Chair of Governing Body

This example is drawn from practice in a further education institution; it has applicability across tertiary education and research where support for learner representatives and learner governors improves the effectiveness of learner engagement.

The Principal of the institution has established a trusted and open relationship between themselves and the student governors. A similar relationship is being established between the Chair of the Board and the two student governors. Once appointed student governors receive training and an induction to the Board, as part of this process they have an informal meeting with the Chair to begin establishing their relationship. The Chair plans to join a discussion with the student governors and the staff supporting them to explore the unique role and associated challenges for a student governor. A subsequent agreement is made setting out how the Chair and student governors will work together throughout the year including the support the Chair can offer.

Reflective questions:

How are learners supported to develop the capacity and confidence needed for meaningful engagement in decision-making? How is this tailored to reflect the needs of learners, including those with additional learning needs?

How do learner engagement opportunities span the entire learner journey? Are there any gaps?

How are learners invited to provide feedback and engage in decisions beyond their immediate learning experience such as estates matters, learning support and resources?

How are learner representatives recognised for their contributions?

² Further information on collective learner voice mechanisms is included in Principle 6.

Principle 3: Understood

I know where and how to raise ideas and share thoughts on topics that are important to me and topics raised by my education provider.

Routes and opportunities for learner engagement are clear. Opportunities are communicated to all learners. Learners are supported to engage in discussion around topics and decisions proposed by their provider and have opportunities to propose topics and decisions of importance to them. Staff are aware of their role in learner engagement and can signpost learners to opportunities for engagement.

These opportunities are delivered through a range of mechanisms, some open to all learners such as surveys and town hall meetings, and some where learner representatives can raise and share collective views by engaging in committee discussion or agenda setting. Providers make it clear which committees and groups have learner representation and how these fit into their wider governance structures, showing the routes for learner voice and support for representatives. Opportunities for learners to work with the provider to determine their involvement in the governance structure show a mature approach to learner engagement.

Learner voice from surveys or other feedback activities is also used to identify key themes of importance or concern to learners. These themes are explored further with learners through representative structures, focus groups or targeted engagement and can help to form agendas for discussion with learners and inform discussion and decision-making throughout the provider's governance structure.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Learner Involvement Strategy

This example is drawn from practice in further education, adult community learning and apprenticeship provision where guidance previously published by the Welsh Government required the development of such strategies. This example can be considered across tertiary education and research where taking a strategic approach to learner engagement helps to embed it across a provider.

The provider's Learner Involvement Strategy outlines the mechanisms for learner voice and engagement to feed into the provider's decision-making and for learners to share feedback on matters of concern or importance to them.

The strategy is available on the provider's website and virtual learning environment. A diagrammatic version of the mechanisms for learner voice and engagement has been produced. This shows the range of opportunities for learners and how these feed into the provider's governance structure and decision-making processes. Copies of the diagram are seen throughout the campus on screens, posters and embedded within the Learner Handbook.

Example 2: Learner led initiatives

This example has been drawn from a maintained school sixth form; it is applicable across tertiary education and research where learners can have opportunities to raise topics of importance to them to lead as projects or initiatives with their provider.

Sixth form learners identified key areas of importance to them and their school community including wellbeing and the environment. Working with staff, the learners were supported to lead projects, events and fundraising to raise awareness of their key topics across the school and in their local community. Examples include collection events for local food banks, recycling campaigns which make recycling fun and accessible within the school and a wellbeing week where learners were able to run pop-up stalls and events, staff supported by inviting guest speakers and embedding activities within taught sessions throughout the school, including inviting the sixth form learners to speak to other age groups.

Reflective questions:

How clear is our process for gathering, capturing and responding to learner feedback?

How do we ensure that all staff and learners understand learner engagement opportunities?

What spaces and opportunities are available for learners to explore and share the topics that are important to them?

When learners are invited to engage in decision-making, how is informed and effective decision-making enabled?

How are governors made aware of how learners have raised or contributed to topics and decisions? If the provider has learner governors, how effectively are they supported to contribute to decision-making?

Principle 4: Inclusive

The opportunities for me and other learners to engage in decision-making reflect our diverse needs, interests and abilities to engage.

Through a range of opportunities, learner engagement in a provider's decision-making is accessible to all learners. Providers work with their diverse learner cohorts to understand the ways they can, and would like to, engage in decision-making. The mechanisms designed to support this engagement are reflective of those desires and abilities and remove barriers to engagement wherever possible. They are flexible enough to recognise learners' existing commitments and availability.

The diversity of feedback and representation is considered, and the provider is aware of voices that may not routinely be heard. The provider supports its representative structures to engage and represent all learners, providing access to spaces and opportunities for communication with wide learner audiences wherever possible. Where appropriate, engagement opportunities are targeted to groups of learners to ensure their voices are heard. Parents and carers are involved in these processes where required, for example for learners with additional learning needs who may need assistance to advocate for themselves.

Inclusivity of learner engagement is most effectively achieved when providers, and representative structures (where they exist), understand the demographic information of their learners through effective data capture. Understanding of learner demographics can be used in the design and evaluation of learner engagement activities to identify underrepresented groups, informing further action to increase engagement of all learners.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Learner-led societies and networks

This example is drawn from further education; similar examples are seen in higher education where a students' union offers the support for student clubs and societies and works with student leaders to gather feedback and engage them in provider and students' union decision-making.

Learners are supported to lead social groups relating their course or an interest. The learner experience team support learners with access to funding, platforms to communicate with the wider learner community and opportunities to book spaces on campus. Some learner groups chose to meet regularly on-campus while others may organise a small number of larger events per year. Where groups are associated with a course or subject, academic teams can offer additional support for in-class time and access to resources. Some subject related groups work with academic teams to organise guest speaker events and trips. Through the learner experience team, the provider can meet learners where they are to gather feedback on their learner experience. Group leaders are invited to represent the views of their groups, and some groups have opted to arrange meetings that include focus group or feedback sharing sessions with the provider.

Example 2: Accessible surveys

This example is drawn from an adult community learning setting; similar practice is also seen in further education. Opportunities to adapt learner voice and engagement methods are applicable across tertiary education and research.

As part of its annual cycle of learner surveys, the provider used Learning Disability Wales' Clear and Easy Handbook ³ to develop an easy-read survey for learners with learning difficulties. The survey was drafted with learning support workers using symbols and simplified language, designed to align with the themes from the provider's main learner survey.

The provider piloted the survey with a group of learners from its specialist provision for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities, to test whether the format was clear and understandable. The pilot showed that some learners in the target population needed more time to think about the questions, and some needed help from staff to understand what was being asked. This resulted in an extended period of testing which also sought views from parents and carers, to help ensure that the survey was as inclusive as possible.

Reflective questions:

How do we ensure that all learners, regardless of level, mode of study, location, ability or additional needs, can engage meaningfully in decision-making? Do some groups of learners face barriers to meaningful engagement?

What systems have been put in place to remove barriers for learner engagement? Are these effective?

How can the representativeness of learner voice and engagement activities be measured to enable identification of gaps and potential barriers?

Principle 5: Bilingual

I can engage in decision-making through the medium of Welsh, and I have opportunities to be involved in my education provider's approach to Welsh-medium provision and how it promotes the Welsh language and culture.

Learners can share their feedback and engage in their provider's decision-making using the Welsh language if they choose. This engagement should be actively supported by the provider, ensuring no learner is disadvantaged, delayed or excluded based on their language choice.

In line with Medr's Welsh Language condition of registration and funding, learners must be engaged in the development, monitoring and evaluation of strategies that promote the Welsh language across the provider and strategies for increasing demand for and participation in tertiary education delivered through the medium of Welsh should be developed, monitored and evaluated with learners.

³ <https://www.ldw.org.uk/er-resource/clear-and-easy-handbook/>

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Y Gymdeithas Gymraeg

This example is drawn from higher education; similar societies are also seen in some further education institutions. Opportunities for learners to engage socially through the Welsh language and culture can have a positive impact on the learner experience throughout tertiary education and research.

Y Gymdeithas Gymraeg (or Y Gym Gym) is a student led society run through the medium of Welsh. The society offers Welsh speaking students the opportunity to socialise and network with each other and in intercollegiate events with Welsh societies from other providers. A key part of the society is to celebrate Welsh language and culture and to support a sense of belonging for its members. Society leaders are invited to represent the views of members to the Students' Union and the University on all matters related to the learner experience and particularly to support the celebration and promotion of Welsh language and culture, linking closely with the University's Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol branch representatives.

Reflective questions:

Is the information on how to provide feedback and engage in decision-making available in Welsh?

Are responses to learner feedback communicated in Welsh?

How do we ensure there is a comparable experience for learners engaging through the Welsh and English languages?

How have learners been engaged, and learner voice been considered, in strategies around Welsh language and culture? How are learners meaningfully engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of these strategies?

Principle 6: Individual and Collective

In addition to the opportunities for me to engage in my providers decision-making, as learners we are supported to share our voices with each other to collectively engage in decision-making to shape the learning experience.

Providers support learners to coordinate their collective voice. This may be through supporting representation roles and structures such as course representatives and learner councils or representative bodies, or by funding and recognising an independent students' union. These mechanisms, alongside individual learner voices, are engaged in all provider's decision-making relating to the learner experience, are reflective of learner cohorts and are clearly communicated and accessible to all learners as part of a cohesive approach to learner engagement.

Where learning takes place independently, for example online, remote or workplace learning, providers should work with learners to design effective opportunities for collective voice. This may include online synchronous and asynchronous activity, learner networks or communities, representative structures or students' unions.

Some learners may feel less connected to the provider or learner community; they may study remotely or predominantly from their workplace, their engagement may more often be facilitated through individual relationships with a staff member such as an assessor or tutor, but their views must still be part of provider decision-making in line with the requirements of the Code. It is important that the range of opportunities for learners to engage in decision-making are reflective of the diverse modes of study and varying learner experiences.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Learner Representatives

This example is drawn from further education. Learner representatives are seen throughout tertiary education and research; in higher education the election, support and administration of representative structures normally lies with the students' union working in partnership with their university.

At the start of each academic year, every class elects at least one class representative. This process is facilitated by the course team who share information on the role, as provided by the Learner Voice Team, and offer space during taught sessions for learners to self-nominate for an election. The names of each rep are shared with the Learner Voice Team who disseminate Class Rep Handbooks and invite all reps to training sessions which are held on campus and online. Class reps are invited to their departments termly meeting to share learner feedback, comment on items raised by the provider and engage in any decisions made. The minutes of these meetings are made available on the virtual learning environment and feed up to the providers Learner Experience Committee. Class reps are also able to nominate themselves to become Learner Council members, these roles are filled in a cross-provider election. The Learner Council also feeds into the Learner Experience Committee; it is co-chaired by learner reps and the Learner Voice Team who jointly set the agenda. Minutes of Learner Council are also made available on the virtual learning environment for all learners to see.

Example 2: Students' Union

This example is drawn from higher education where students' unions are independent representative bodies as set out in the Education Act 1994. Students' unions are also seen in some further education institutions but are not normally independent of the provider. Both fulfil an important role in representing the interests of learners within their particular contexts.

The Students' Union's (SU's) membership is made up of students at the university and is led by students and their elected representatives. The SU is a charity with its own Board of Trustees, the majority of whom are students. It has charitable objectives that include representing students to the provider, providing services to its members (for example an independent advice service), and creating opportunities for social, cultural and extracurricular activities (for example sports clubs and societies). The SU is democratically led by students in the form of democratic meetings and a team of full-time and part-time student officers, elected by their peers to serve a term of one academic year; these officers are supported by a staff team that is independent of the provider.

The SU is the recognised channel of the student voice at the university, as per the relationship agreement between them and is often referred to as a critical friend of the university, to provide support and challenge to improve the student experience. SU officers are embedded in the provider's governance and decision-making structures to represent the views of students, as well as having their own SU committees and processes that engage students and student representatives in decision-making. SU officers are the student governors on the governing body of the provider.

The provider and the SU work together in partnership on areas that concern the student experience. This includes sharing and analysing data (e.g. from student surveys) and developing action plans, policies, and strategies together. The SU officers:

- work with the university to see changes implemented for the benefit of students
- are involved from the offset in the development of action plans, policies, and strategies
- challenge and provide constructive feedback to the provider where necessary on any actions or issues impacting the student experience
- engage with course or subject level student representatives

Reflective questions:

How do we ensure that forms of collective learner voice are representative of all learners?

Where a learner representative body exists, how is it embedded in decision-making opportunities as the independent voice of learners?

What mechanisms are there for collation of individual feedback and engagement where learners have entirely independent journeys, for example, those studying remotely or predominantly in their workplace?

Principle 7: Impactful

My engagement is part of ongoing dialogue where outcomes and changes are discussed and reviewed, we are all able to see the impact of this on the learning experience now and for future learners.

Learner engagement in a provider's decision-making moves beyond transactional gathering and response to feedback to engage learners in the resulting actions and ongoing evaluation of change. While some learners are more actively involved in a decision-making process, all learners are made aware of discussions and outcomes.

Where change requested by learners cannot be implemented, this is discussed with learners and clearly communicated broadly. Learners are engaged in finding alternative solutions wherever possible. In cases where changes are likely to take place over a longer period of time, learners work with their provider to identify the intended impacts on future learners and how these could be evaluated. Timescales for change are clearly communicated to learners, including any milestones that can be reached for current cohorts.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: You Said We Did

This example is applicable across tertiary education and research feeding into wider committee, governance and learner engagement mechanisms as appropriate.

The provider runs termly pulse surveys to gather learner feedback. Following analysis of each survey, the provider works with learner representatives to identify actions or responses to learner feedback. Where action cannot be implemented, clear communication and management of expectations is included in the response. Resulting action plans are monitored through the providers committees and decision-making processes. To raise awareness of actions taken, a You Said We Did campaign is launched. The campaign involves posters and screens around campus, on the virtual learning environment and the providers social media. The campaign shares examples of feedback from learners and the resulting planned actions or responses to that feedback. The provider works with learner representatives to evaluate the impact of the 'we did' elements of the campaign and to continue the loop of engagement.

Example 2: Learner Voice Action Plan

This example is drawn from a further education institution but is applicable across tertiary education and research. The implementation and monitoring of action plans responding to learner voice is an example of effective learner engagement where learners can be involved through the engagement and representation mechanisms in their context.

The Learner Voice Action Plan is a live document co-owned by the Learner Voice Committee and learner representative body. Analysis of learner feedback is fed into the committee to inform the ongoing action plan; sources include learner survey outcomes; minutes from departmental committees and learner council; anonymised learner

complaints. The committee agrees and monitors the actions, producing an annual report for the Board of Governors.

Reflective questions:

How are responses to learner feedback regularly communicated with all learners?

What opportunities do learners have to respond to or engage in ongoing discussion on decisions?

How is the impact and effectiveness of responses to learner engagement monitored?

How is the feedback loop shared through the provider's governance structures? Do governors have sight of learner feedback, resulting actions and impact?

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Principle 8: Resourced

Resources are allocated by my education provider to ensure all learners have opportunities to engage in decision-making.

Learner engagement is resourced in a range of ways; this may include dedicated staff roles and time; training and guidance for staff and learners, or online and in-person spaces. Where independent students' unions exist, they should be funded in accordance with *Revised guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation*.⁴

The provider is aware of existing guidance and resources developed for and by the tertiary education sector (see Annex A), and adapts them to its local needs and circumstances.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Representative Training

This example is drawn from higher education where the independent SU takes responsibility for the election, support and administration of representative structures. Across all parts of tertiary education and research, the support and training of learner representatives promotes effective learner engagement.

Following the election period for class representatives, the SU run a number of on-campus training events. All new and returning class reps are invited to the training events which are delivered over all teaching sites on a range of days and times. The training involves introductions to the SU and University structures and ways of working for reps to understand their roles within these, skills for being an effective rep are covered, and further guidance is shared in a rep handbook which signposts to SU and University services for additional support. Following the in-person training opportunities, the SU launches its online training module, available through its website. The online training covers the same key skills and information as the in-person events, and the rep handbook is available online.

Reflective questions:

Are there staff members at all levels of the provider with responsibilities for supporting effective learner engagement? Is this clearly articulated in job descriptions and objectives?

Are there dedicated resources for enabling effective learner engagement? How are these reviewed and updated where necessary?

⁴ Medr endorses this HEFCW guidance and intends to work with stakeholders including learners, learner representatives and providers to publish an updated version in line with sector needs, policy changes and feedback from stakeholders.

Principle 9: Evaluated

My education provider regularly evaluates how they engage with us as learners and whether this meets our expectations. They work with us to identify what's working well, what could be done better and to develop changes for improvement.

Evaluation of learner voice and engagement activities is a key part of self-evaluation, quality and continuous improvement cycles within a provider and is reflected in Medr's Quality Framework. Learner feedback and engagement is a key part of this to understand where expectations have and haven't been met, and to identify good practice and areas for improvement. Plans for improvement of learner engagement should be developed with learners and include information on how ongoing learner engagement will feature in each action. Learner engagement and resulting actions should be made visible within the providers governance and decision-making structures to raise awareness and allow for ongoing evaluation.

Providers should measure the impact of learner engagement activities, making use of data from learner feedback mechanisms including focus groups and complaints. Where they exist, learner voice surveys on learners' experience of engagement and their perceptions of its effectiveness are also useful in supporting evaluation and measuring impact. Engaging learners in the evaluation of activities and interventions allows further exploration of the impact on target groups and wider cohorts.

Example(s) of practice:

Example 1: Responding to the Students' Union Annual Quality Report

This example is drawn from higher education where the National Union of Students produces support and guidance for students' unions to develop annual quality reports (or equivalent). Other areas of tertiary education and research may wish to access this guidance to support learner representatives to produce a summary of the learner experience to feed into learner engagement and decision-making processes.

The provider considers the Students' Unions Annual Quality Report (this may be named differently at each Students' Union in Wales). This is a report developed by the Students' Union with evidence from student feedback that provides an account of the student experience and identifies priority areas for improvement. The report draws on evidence from student surveys, student involvement in committees and feedback directly to the Students' Union. The Students' Union takes a transparent approach to developing the report, using survey data and feedback from students, and building on discussions between the Students' Union and University throughout the year. The University formally considers the recommendations at a meeting of the Governing Body, and outcomes are overseen by a relevant committee (e.g. Student Experience Committee, Academic Quality Committee). Outcomes from the report include projects or action plans, and progress is monitored by the Students' Union and University throughout the academic year and may be reflected on in the next Annual Quality Report.

Reflective questions:

How are learner engagement activities evolving to remain relevant, accessible and meaningful to current and future learners? How are learners engaged in testing this?

How are learners engaged in ongoing quality and continuous improvement processes? How do learners understand their roles in this?

Are governors clear on what success looks like for effective learner engagement? What happens if an issue is identified?

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Approach to Monitoring

30. Medr's approach to monitoring compliance with the associated Conditions of Registration and Funding and statutory duty for maintained school sixth forms, has been developed in line with our Regulatory Approach.
31. For registered and funded providers, the compliance requirements and mechanisms Medr will use for monitoring are set out in the associated Condition of Registration and Condition of Funding. This section of the Code aims to provide further clarity on the types of evidence that will be used for monitoring purposes.
32. Monitoring will primarily focus on the impact and effectiveness of learner engagement as the Code is not prescriptive about the mechanisms used, monitoring will seek examples of effective practice and impact of learner engagement and opportunities for improvement.
33. Medr will take a holistic view across the requirements of the Code and therefore does not expect each provider to submit individual evidence for each principle.
34. Medr recognises the complexities of measuring and demonstrating the impact of learner engagement and seeks succinct objective evidence on changes made as a result of learner engagement and learners' experience and perception of engagement.

Evidence Requirements

35. **Annual Assurance Return:** All providers will submit an annual assurance return providing their governing body's (or equivalent) assurance that the provider complies with the requirements of the Code.
36. The return will be a high-level confirmation of compliance accompanied by evidence.
37. The evidence requested is expected to be readily available to the provider. It should provide a holistic overview of how the provider's learner engagement in decision-making aligns with the principles of the Code, and include succinct evidence of changes made as a result of learner engagement and evidence of learners' experience and perception of engagement. It should include:
 - analysis of feedback from learners on their experience of engagement and their perceptions of its effectiveness
 - evidence shared with the governing body (or equivalent) which demonstrates the impact of learner engagement in line with the principles of the Code
38. The format and types of evidence will be individual to each provider. Examples could include:
 - analysis of data from the provider's learner surveys on learners' experience of engagement and their perceptions of its effectiveness
 - a copy of a strategy/sub-strategy for learner engagement or where learner engagement is embedded into other organisational policies or strategies
 - examples of action plans developed with or by learners
 - examples of decisions made as a result of learner feedback, or influenced by learner feedback
 - actions arising from the Students' Union Annual Quality Report or equivalent
 - revised materials or policies showing learner-led changes

- impact case studies on projects involving learners
39. These examples are illustrative, rather than intended as an exhaustive or prescriptive list.
 40. Where a holistic overview of alignment with the principles has been demonstrated through the Annual Assurance Return and evidence available to Medr, Medr officers would not normally require further information or engagement with providers and their learners, except where opportunities arise to share examples of effective practice.
 41. If concerns arise through evidence provided to or available to Medr, or where a holistic overview of alignment with the principles is not evident, Medr officers will request additional information and evidence and may require engagement with the provider and its learners. Where alignment cannot be demonstrated, Medr may need to take regulatory action and support providers to reach alignment with the Code.

Ongoing evidence gathering:

42. Across Medr's Regulatory and Quality Frameworks we will use data and evidence as part of our Provider Risk Assessment and monitoring activities. While these data and evidence sets may not be directly related to the Learner Engagement Code, they can inform our monitoring of compliance with the Code and evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of learner engagement. For example, where conditions require action planning that affects the learner experience, we would expect to see evidence of learner engagement.
43. Wherever possible we will consider evidence that is readily available to Medr through the following mechanisms:
 - outcomes from national learner voice surveys, including the National Student Survey, in instances where the outcomes are related to the effectiveness or impact of learner engagement
 - engagement with learners and providers at a sector and provider level in reviewing the effectiveness and impact of learner engagement. This will include feedback from students' unions and other representative groups, where applicable
 - outcomes relating to the effectiveness or impact of learner engagement from inspection and review undertaken by Estyn or QAA
 - monitoring of complaints data and analysis of the content of complaints and correspondence received by Medr
 - information arising from reportable events in instances that relate to the effectiveness or impact of learner engagement
44. We will only request additional evidence where concerns arise about compliance with the Code or where a holistic overview of alignment with the principles is not evident, including through any direct feedback to Medr from learner representatives or students' unions.
45. Medr officers will offer opportunities for engagement to providers and their learners who have not been required to meet with us as part of our monitoring activities. Such meetings will be taken jointly with officers from across Medr to mitigate potential burden for providers and learners. Engagement will also be undertaken in group settings, through existing sector networks, as part of Medr funded projects

and through Medr's learner voice activities. Engagement with providers and learners will support Medr to evaluate the impact of and effectiveness of learner engagement and the Learner Engagement Code, providing opportunities for practice sharing and identification of arising themes for guidance and collaborative working.

Regulatory Intervention

46. Regulatory intervention in the event of non-compliance or likely non-compliance with the Learner Engagement Code will be taken in accordance with Medr's Regulatory Approach [link]. As learner engagement is a pillar of the Quality Framework [link], non-compliance with the Code will also be considered regarding compliance with the Framework and Medr's wider Provider Risk Assessment processes.
47. Medr will celebrate the positive impact of effective learner engagement by facilitating the sharing of effective practice and collaborative working.
48. Where non-compliance is identified, this will be dealt with proportionally through engagement with learners and providers and further exploration of evidence. Medr may request the creation of action plans, to be developed with learners, which would be monitored through engagement activities.
49. Further, ongoing and serious non-compliance with the Code may lead to interventions as set out in the Regulatory Approach and with consideration of the Quality Framework.
50. Medr's intention is for the Learner Engagement Code to support continuous improvement in learner engagement and aims to resolve all issues of non-compliance through a partnership approach, accompanied by support and guidance available through Medr and its funded projects.

Annex A Learner Engagement Code: guidance and information.

Introduction

The Learner Engagement Code is principles-based and non-prescriptive regarding the mechanisms for learner engagement, recognising the diversity of the tertiary education sector and its learners. However, the Code recognises established practice, and resources do exist in each part of the sector and seeks to build on, rather than replace, these.

This annex provides details of additional legislation, guidance, resources and support that apply to specific parts of the tertiary sector. As further resources become available, they will be added to the supporting materials for the Learner Engagement Code.

Where resources and guidance have been produced for specific parts of the sector, they may have relevance throughout tertiary education and research, and we encourage collaboration and sharing across Wales.

Sixth form provision

Statutory guidance:

[Rights of Children and Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure](#), 2011

[The School Councils \(Wales\) Regulations](#), 2005

Good practice guidance and information:

[The Right Way: A Children's Human Rights Approach to Education in Wales](#), 2022

[AMPLIFY: How to maximise young people's voices through your secondary school council](#), 2021

Apprenticeships

Contractual guidance:

[Apprenticeship Commissioning Programme Wales Framework](#) (E12), 2024

Adult Community Learning

From April 2025 Medr is funding continuous improvement activities led by the Learning and Work Institute to support Adult Community Learning providers' engagement with learners. Updates, resources and outputs from the project will be shared with the sector once available. For further information please contact learnerengagement@medr.cymru.

Further Education

Medr continues to fund activities led by the National Union of Students Cymru to support the engagement of FE learners in Wales. Working with learners, learner representatives, and providers, NUS produce resources and guidance and offer training and networking opportunities to the sector. For further information please contact learnerengagement@medr.cymru.

Statutory guidance:

[Further and Higher Education \(Governance and Information\) \(Wales\) Act, 2014](#)

Good practice guidance and information:

[Research on Student Partnership in Welsh Higher Education and Further Education Institutions, 2020](#)

[Supporting College Student Governors, 2025](#)

[College Learner Representatives Systems: the Fundamentals, 2025](#)

Higher Education

Medr continues to fund activities led by the National Union of Students Cymru to support the engagement of HE students in Wales. Working with students, students' unions, and providers, NUS produce resources and guidance and offer training and networking opportunities to the sector. For further information please contact learnerengagement@medr.cymru

Statutory guidance:

[Further and Higher Education \(Governance and Information\) \(Wales\) Act, 2014](#)
[Education Act Part II \(1994\)](#)

Medr guidance:

[Revised Student Charter Guidance, 2022](#)

[Revised guidance on good practice in funding of effective, democratic student unions, and student representation, 2014](#)

Good practice guidance and information:

[UK Quality Code for Higher Education, 2024](#)

[Quality Code – Advice and Guidance. Principle 2 – Engaging students as partners, 2025](#)

[Guide for student governors in Wales, 2022](#)

[Research on Student Partnership in Welsh Higher Education and Further Education Institutions, 2020](#)

[Being a Course Rep, 2023](#)

[Course Reps – role descriptions and training, 2023](#)

[Key Annual Quality Report information, 2023](#)

[Annual Quality Report guidance and templates, 2023](#)

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