Student Voice Strategy

1/ Introduction and aims

What do we mean by 'student voice'?

Student voice is the overarching term to describe the many ways in which the RVC can gain insights from students that can be used to enhance education and the student experience. At its most basic level, student voice can refer to students as members of RVC committees and working groups or feedback captured via end of course surveys. This strategy sets out the overall aims and vision for capturing student voice in a variety of ways.

To maintain a high-quality student experience, it is essential that all students have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experiences of study and the wider service offering. To facilitate this, we use a variety of mechanisms with a view to learning from and responding to their feedback individually, collectively and through their representatives.

2/ Scope of the strategy

The RVC is committed to working in partnership with our students to gather feedback through surveys, focus groups or workshops to help us identify trends, issues and to establish priorities for future developments.

Student voice activities in different forms if essential in order to:

- ensure that students are key participants in governance and decision making;
- ensure that students are key participants in quality assurance and enhancement;
- provide opportunities for students to become active participants in their learning;
- foster collaboration between students and staff.

Throughout this Strategy, the student experience encompasses the learning, teaching and assessment experience and the wider student experience, including the experience of student support services.
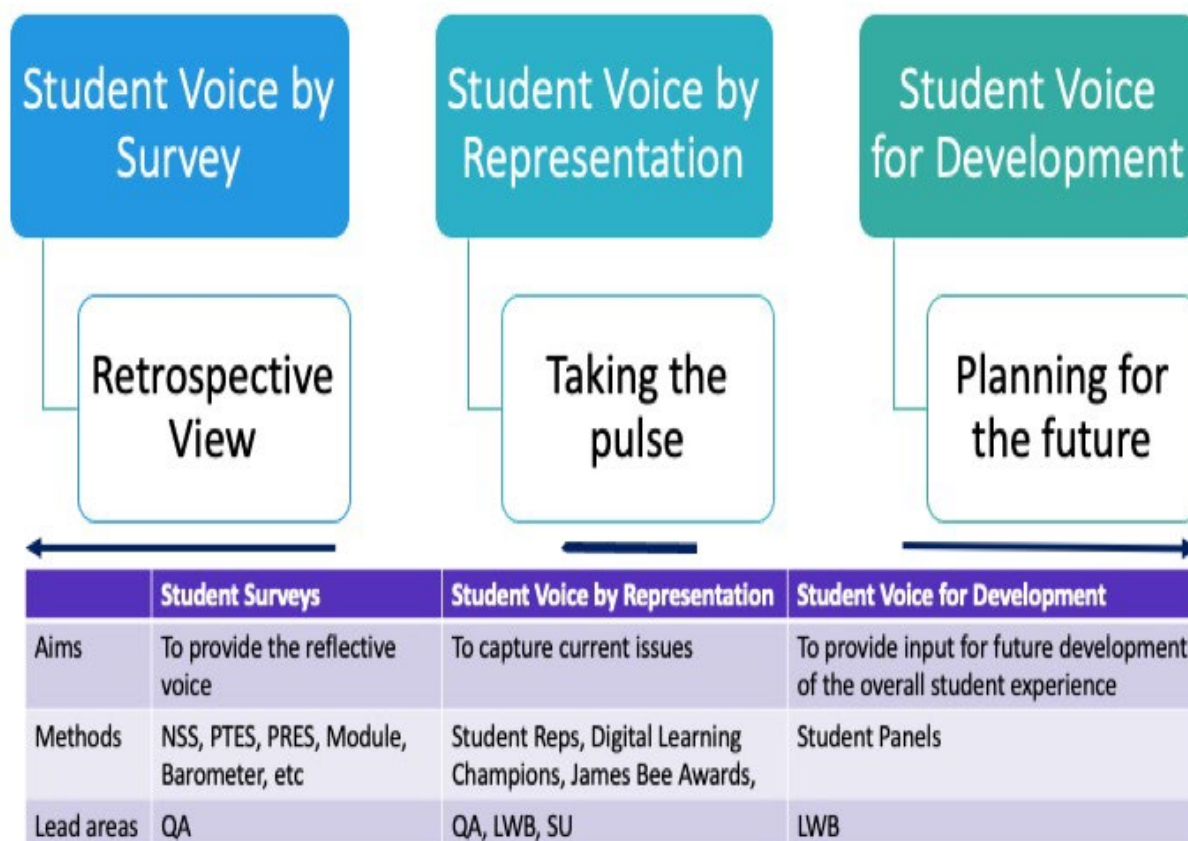
Students contribute valuable and diverse perspectives and are not a unified group. As such there will be a range of student voices within the RVC. All conversations with students should recognise that our student body diversity is a strength and that students will have varied views on issues. When seeking feedback from students, colleagues should ensure that conversations are inclusive and enable all students to participate so that as many student voices as possible may be captured.

Students' views of their RVC experience and student voice mechanisms are an essential part of the RVC's Quality Assurance and Enhancement framework as laid out in RVC's Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement policy. This strategy seeks to align this policy with other student voice activities in a holistic vision of RVC's approach to the student voice.

The Student Voice Strategy is one of several sub-strategies that supports the RVC's overall approach to its educational offering and student experience and supports the achievement of the aims of RVC's Strategic Plan. It interconnects with the Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy, the Blended Learning Strategy, the Feedback policy and the Student Social Media policy to shape our overall educational offering. This strategy recognises that student voice interconnects with many areas of the RVC and that no strategy can be implemented without an understanding of how these areas will be affected. Its implementation is aligned to the Professional Services Division (PSD) operational plan, our Access and Participation plan (APP), and our TEF Submission. All strategies at the RVC are underpinned by a commitment to sustainable wellbeing as a guiding principle.

3/ A Student Voice framework

The Student Voice framework aims to provide a way of understanding how different mechanisms for gathering the student voice can provide different vantage points on the student experience and can assist the RVC in identifying areas of excellence and for improvement. It contextualises the established work done to support the use of the student voice in quality assurance and enhancement with newer initiatives for wider representational channels such as the Digital learning champions and the use of Student Panels to support future developments.

	Student Surveys	Student Voice by Representation	Student Voice for Development
Aims	To provide the reflective voice	To capture current issues	To provide input for future development of the overall student experience
Methods	NSS, PTES, PRES, Module, Barometer, etc	Student Reps, Digital Learning Champions, James Bee Awards,	Student Panels
Lead areas	QA	QA, LWB, SU	LWB

4/   Principles for student voice activities

Our principles for student voice activities tell us how we will achieve the strategy.

1. **Enhancement-focused**
   Ensuring each student has multiple ways (surveys, representation, focus groups, panels, polls, etc) to contribute their voice to an improved educational and student experience at the RVC.

2. **Inclusive of all RVC students**
   All student voice activities are inclusive and accessible for all RVC students.

3. **Contributes to a culture that values and shares positive practice as well as identifying areas for improvement.**
   All feedback should be valued in its role to drive positive change and should strive to consider how this can best be achieved.

4. **Provides student voice opportunities to respond, reflect and develop.**
   Feedback and student voice activities should provide timely opportunities for feedback of different kinds, whether this is reflecting on recent activities through surveys; capturing more immediate feedback through representation, and polls; or using the student voice in panel activities (focus groups/surveys) to plan new developments for the curriculum or aspects of the wider student experience.

5. **Is transparent and communicated effectively**
   Student voice activities are a two-way process between students and the RVC. When collecting data from students it is essential to be clear why the data is being collected; how it will be used and by whom. Equally important is the need to communicate effectively when decisions or changes are made as a result of student feedback (ie closing the loop).

6. **Adheres to data protection regulations and policies.**
   Any activities that involve the gathering and storing of data must adhere to RVC policies around the collection and storage of personal data and to UKDPR guidelines. This includes ensuring the use of RVC supported technologies (such as survey and polling tools). Where feedback results are shared, steps should be taken to protect respondent anonymity unless the student or students have consented to share their feedback without anonymity.

5/   Measuring Success – How will we know we are achieving these principles?

We'll measure our success using both internal and external methods:

- Improved engagement and participation with RVC student voice activities
- Increased number of students applying to be Course Representatives, Digital Learning Champions, Student Ambassadors, etc
- Increased participation in Student Services feedback opportunities
- Increased participation in James Bee Student Led Educator awards
- Decrease in the number of student complaints
- External measures such as the Student Barometer, NSS. PTES, PRES and TEF award.

6/   Role and Responsibilities

Students	• Provide open and constructive feedback

	• Ensure feedback is in line with the Dignity at work policy
Course Directors	• Ensure that all students have an opportunity to provide feedback • Listen to student feedback and let students know how their feedback has or has not been acted on and why
Heads of Departments (Academic and PSD) VP Students	• Ensure that all staff are aware of appropriate ways for students to provide feedback at course, programme and College level and communicate these opportunities to students. • Ensure that all students are offered appropriate ways of providing feedback at course, programme and College level • Ensure that students are engaged in the design of feedback processes.
RVC Committees	• Provide opportunities for sharing of best practice • Identify areas for development

7/ Glossary of terminology

Term or Acronym	Description
Accessibility	Ensures that all students can equally access the data collection mechanisms.
Data Driven	Data is considered to have value in and of itself. Having the right insight into the information available to you can lead to worthwhile and new processes, goals and outcomes.
Equality Act 2010	A legal framework to require the exercise of certain functions to be with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other prohibited conduct and to increase equality of opportunity.
UKDPR	UK Data Protection Regulation (UKDPR) is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the UK.
Inclusivity	Inclusive feedback opportunities support all students to be able to contribute their feedback. It recognises and promotes the importance of diverse student voices and enables participation through effective communication strategies and the removal of barriers.
Personal data	Any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ("data subject"). An identifiable person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that person.
RVC Supported technologies	RVC provides a number of centrally supported technologies a part of the digital infrastructure for learning and teaching. They are accessible to staff and students using an RVC username and password. The use of centrally supported technologies allow for data streams to be developed which can be used as part of learning analytics and which provide institutional data to various stakeholders and should be used for all student voice data collection activities.
Student Panels	The method of gathering student feedback or through participation in various types of feedback opportunities either by focus group or survey. Student are recruited to participate at the beginning of each academic year and asked to provide feedback in a minimum number of feedback opportunities (3-4/year). The issues that

	student provide feedback on may pertain to curricular developments, student services or other planned developments of the student experience.

Contact
For more information on this strategy, please contact Director of Learning and Wellbeing, Registrar or VP for Students.

References
University of Edinburgh, Student Voice Policy (2020)
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2020) *Evidence for Enhancement, Student Voice Principles*