



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

Degree Enhancement – Strategy

Version No:	Reason for Development	Date of Review/Consultation	Updated By
1	The previous strategy was due for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial draft to Academic Leadership Team – 4 April 2016 	Dr Ken Gibson
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with potential employers – 25 April 2106 	Dr Ken Gibson & Ms Audrey Curry
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft to Academic Leadership Team – 9 May 2016 Union Forum - 4 May 2016 	Dr Ken Gibson & Ms Audrey Curry
4		Presented to the Education Committee - 24 May 2016	
5		For ratification at Governing Body - 14 June 2016	

Introduction

The University College's Degree Enhancement Strategy is aligned to the strategic priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2015-18. The primary aim of this strategy is to further enhance Student Employability (Ref Corporate Business Plan 2015-16: 2.8)" in order to support the College's mission:

'To sustain a vibrant, inclusive community, educating, enriching and shaping society through excellence in teaching, scholarship and research.'

The strategy is created in order to encourage the active engagement of our students with a range of opportunities as a means of further developing their 'graduate identity'. One of the key challenges for the College is to increase awareness of such opportunities amongst students and staff. In addition a further, and even more significant, challenge is to increase knowledge and understanding of Degree Enhancement with those outside the College, in particular potential employers. Degree Enhancement engagement has the potential to increase student retention, satisfaction scores, achievement and ultimately graduate employability. As an institution, our aim is to help students make the most effective use of their time at Stranmillis and to enable them to compete with confidence and competence in the graduate labour market. This area of engagement is very important in order to successfully realise the College's vision:

'To lead innovative professional practice.'

In order to achieve this strategic vision the University College through its Teaching and Learning Strategy (2015-2018) seeks to provide "an engaging and dynamic curriculum delivered by our leading professionals to meet the current and future needs of our students and the wider society" (6(i)) which is underpinned by this Degree Enhancement Strategy. The Degree Enhancement Strategy aims to provide a relevant optional co-curriculum which seeks to enable the students to optimise their skills, competences and experiences for life (Teaching and Learning Strategy – 6(i)).

In the context of the University College's Teaching and Learning Strategy Degree Enhancement:

- Is available to **all** students at Stranmillis University College;
- Recognises the wide variety of activities that students can (and do) get involved in;
- Helps students develop and articulate their involvement and learning.

This strategy outlines the College's commitment to supporting the achievement of ambitious strategic aims. By adhering to the College's core values, which are set out

below, we want to build, develop and further enhance the employability of our students as:

- ❖ We pursue excellence
- ❖ We respect difference
- ❖ We embrace collaboration
- ❖ We promote social responsibility
- ❖ We practise good governance

What is Degree Enhancement – a Definition?

Degree Enhancement is a structured activity in addition to the normal degree. Degree Enhancement consists of those “things” that contribute to a student’s experiential learning which ultimately makes a significant contribution to their personal profile and hence their potential graduate employability.

Aims

The aims of Degree Enhancement are to:

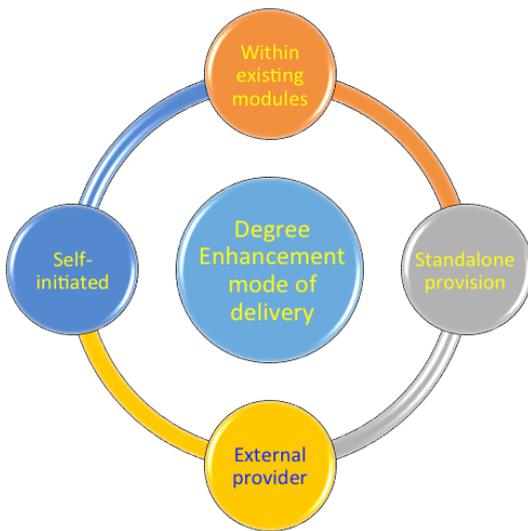
- Increase student engagement with the wide range of “experiences” available at Stranmillis - experiences may be internal and/or external to the College;
- Further increase student engagement with the life and work of the College;
- Enable students to gain a greater understanding of their own strengths and to provide a structure for them to increase their personal and professional development; and
- Help students enhance their own CVs to enable them to compete with increased effectiveness in the graduate employment market and to clearly articulate their active engagement.

Purposes

The purposes of this Strategy document are to:

1. Provide a structured and sustainable framework for Degree Enhancement across the College;
2. Provide students with the best Degree Enhancement experience possible;
3. Provide for an effective and operationally possible implementation structure;
4. Provide a greater understanding of Degree Enhancement amongst potential employers; and
5. Make provision for differentiated levels of outcome based on the level, and extent, of student engagement with Degree Enhancement.

Mode of Delivery



Modes of delivery

There are four possible modes of Degree Enhancement delivery:

1. Selecting non-mandated 'option' modules as 'attendance only'
2. Standalone internal provision
3. External provider
4. Self-initiated (student involvement in an activity that they have initiated).

Degree Enhancement - three key elements:

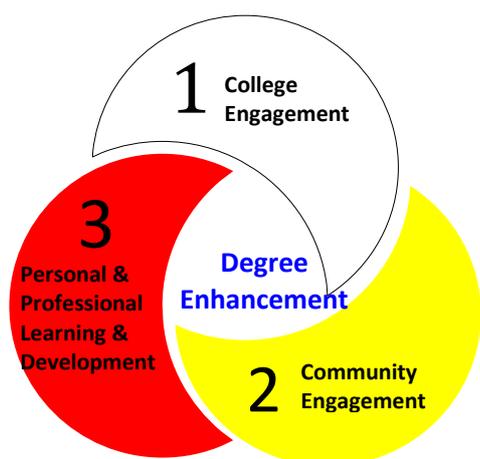
In order to give Degree Enhancement a more definite framework or structure each potential "activity" is located under one of three generalised headings; "College Engagement", "Community Engagement", and "Personal and Professional Learning and Development" (see Annex One).

Degree Enhancement Outcomes

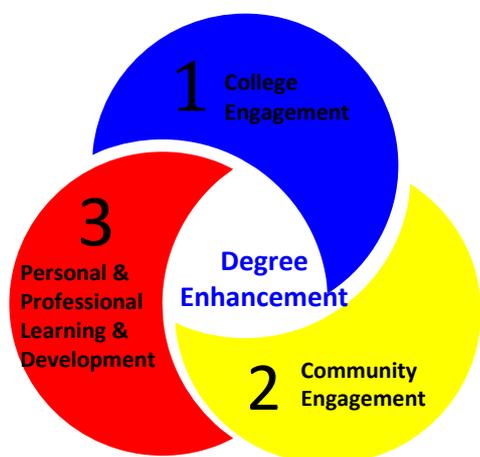
There are three potential Degree Enhancement outcomes (i.e. Bronze, Silver & Gold).



Bronze - Students would be encouraged to actively engage in a series of Degree Enhancement activities from across the range of activities on offer. Student would be required to complete a total of **at least 50** hours of active engagement from across three areas (College, Community, Personal and Professional Learning and Development) to **demonstrate active engagement**. There is no requirement to engage in each of the three areas, students would be free to choose as they wish. Students, as a result of such engagement, would be awarded a series of College, or externally, validated certificates for each activity/experience/course undertaken and this would equate to Degree Enhancement at Bronze Level.



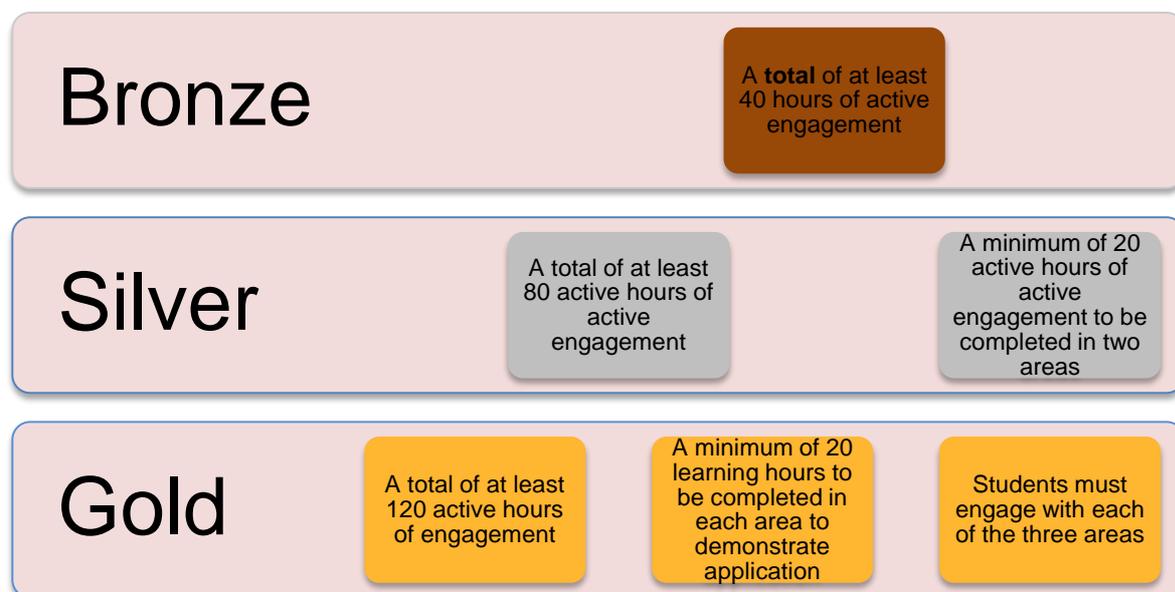
Silver - Student must complete a total of **at least 100** active hours of active engagement in at least two of the three areas (College, Community, Personal and Professional Learning and Development). A minimum of 20 active hours of active engagement must be completed in each of the two areas to **demonstrate active engagement**.



Gold - Degree Enhancement at this level is a 'structured' experience that requires active engagement in each of the three designated areas (College, Community, Personal and Professional Learning and Development). At this level a student must complete **at least 200** hours across **ALL** three areas with a minimum of 20 learning hours to be completed in each to **demonstrate application**.

The move from Bronze Degree Enhancement through Silver to Gold Degree Enhancement reflects increasing engagement in terms of time, commitment and level.

At all stages, and at all levels, it is the responsibility of each student, as a part of the Degree Enhancement verification process, to compile, maintain and present his or her own portfolio of evidence.



Development and Review

Academic teams will be expected to engage with this Degree Enhancement Strategy in order to translate it into a three year operational plan setting out clear objectives, timescales and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). Priorities will be identified in the Annual Corporate Business Plan and reviewed on an annual basis. While the Student Support & Welfare Team will take the lead in monitoring the implementation of the operational plan and producing reports as appropriate, all academic teams will be expected to participate in the annual review process.

The Degree Enhancement Strategy will be reviewed at the end of the three year period. It will inform the next planning exercise and will be aligned to the strategic priorities identified in the Corporate Plan for 2019-2021.

Annex One - Three Key Elements

Degree Enhancement - three key elements:

In order to give Degree Enhancement a more definite framework or structure each potential “activity” is located under one of three generalised headings; “College Engagement”, “Community Engagement”, and “Personal and Professional Learning and Development”.

1. “College Engagement” - focuses on serving the College and the College community. ‘College Engagement’ represents those “*things*” that enhance community life on-site and those ‘*things*’ off-site that seek to promote the College, as an organisation. Typically this could involve representing the College at a UCAS event or as a volunteer, acting as a student ambassador, working as an active member of the Student Executive or the Students’ Representative Council, representing the College as a team member, panel member or an individual (e.g. Greenpower Racing Team, Scholars’ Rugby Team). Furthermore it would be possible for a student to satisfy the College Engagement element of Degree Enhancement by their active involvement in any of the community projects operated by the College. Alternatively student involvement as a part of College Engagement might work as part of an editorial team to support College publicity.

2. “Community Engagement” - focuses on serving the community outside Stranmillis – taking the College into the community (outreach). ‘Community Engagement’ recognises the world beyond Stranmillis and the importance of active engagement in it. It represents active and committed engagement beyond Stranmillis; locally, nationally or internationally. It is possible for students to satisfy the Community Engagement element of Degree Enhancement primarily through their active involvement in College–related community projects. Typically this could involve students making a funding bid for a project, under Widening Participation, and thereby gain valuable experience putting together teams to manage suitable community-based projects the project. Alternatively student may be actively engaged in working with Girl Guides or Scouts, Church-based organisations, community sports or community organisations, or work with a homework club. Active Community Engagement could equally well be demonstrated by working overseas e.g. by serving with a church-based or charity organisation such as ‘War on Want’.

3. “Personal and Professional Learning and Development” - Engagement in this area primarily focuses on the student’s own personal and professional learning and development. Personal and Professional Learning and Development are linked because personal learning and development will ultimately result in professional learning and development. Learning at one level is the development of knowledge and at a higher level it the application of, and reflection on, that knowledge. Personal and Professional Learning and Development can take place ‘on’ or ‘off-site’. Such learning and development could result from involvement in such activities as “Primary Movement”, “Working with Parents”, the “Use of iPads in Schools”, “Leadership in Diversity and Mutual Understanding”. It is important that any activity involved has a clear application in a context that is relevant to the professional profile of the student concerned while adding value to the College.

Note:

Degree Enhancement activities:

- Are additional to 'normal' degree modules – students are not allowed to “double count” units of work from within their degree studies.
- Should not be “double counted” themselves i.e. a student cannot count engagement in an area under two elements. For example a student involved in a Homework Club set up by Stranmillis cannot claim this as “Community Engagement” and “College Engagement”.
- In order to enable the validation process students would be required to indicate their intent to become involved in an area of engagement before becoming actually becoming involved in it. Validation cannot be given retrospectively to any particular activity.
- Should have relevance to the student and at the same time be of ‘value’ to the College.
- Would be attributed a “score” in terms of “learning hours” inline with the demands placed upon the student.
- Could be offered at either ‘engagement’ or ‘application’ level.
- Should be accessible to all students, wherever possible, irrespective of degree programme.
- In combination would result in defined outcomes, as set out above.