This summary refers to University of Alberta Student Participation Process Handbook, which was the product of a collaboration between representatives from University administration, the Students’ Union (SU), and the Graduate Students’ Association (GSA).

In service to the Vision and Values of the University of Alberta, the administration, SU, and GSA have developed a collaborative approach to appropriate and effective student participation in matters that affect the student body to support a “diverse, yet inclusive, dynamic collegial community that welcomes change and seizes opportunity with passion and creativity.”

The handbook is one tool that contains a participation process and delineates a methodical approach to student engagement, and is intended to support effective conversations relevant to the student constituencies at the University of Alberta.

### Participation Values and Guiding Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE</th>
<th>PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESPECT OF INDIVIDUALS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Student participation draws together persons with a diversity of opinions and positions. The cornerstone of effective student participation is to respect the right to hold individual positions, and to always demonstrate respectful behavior to the people that hold them.</td>
<td>• Respect the individuals involved in participation processes&lt;br&gt;• Seek to understand the diversity of perspectives&lt;br&gt;• Not engage in or condone any form of personal attack or intimidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONSTRUCTIVE AND SHARED LEADERSHIP</strong>&lt;br&gt;The stakeholders recognize that they hold, and will uphold, a shared responsibility in facilitating effective participation.</td>
<td>• Model and encourage constructive leadership&lt;br&gt;• Earn trust by consistently acting in an honest and trustworthy manner&lt;br&gt;• Honor and uphold agreed upon protocols&lt;br&gt;• Focus on developing workable solutions that reflect the vision and values of the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE ABILITY TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS</strong>&lt;br&gt;We believe student participation provides perspectives and information that can make a significant contribution to the quality and sustainability of decisions. We are committed to strategic and methodical processes that support our ability to make informed decisions.</td>
<td>• Collaboratively develop a participation strategy to help guide each participation initiative&lt;br&gt;• Design participation to elicit a full range of opinions and perspectives&lt;br&gt;• Ensure decision making processes reflect the consideration of student input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY</strong>&lt;br&gt;Informed participation means that students will understand and are fully able to participate in the process.</td>
<td>• Provide timely notice and information that is accessible to enable full participation&lt;br&gt;• Use the participation process to ensure participants receive all pertinent participation process information including but not limited to context, scope, and use of information&lt;br&gt;• Ensure participants are aware of interim decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH</strong>&lt;br&gt;A creative, collaborative and collegial approach to participation will support inclusive and strategic participation.</td>
<td>• Be open to new, innovative, participation practices&lt;br&gt;• Treat each process as a separate process&lt;br&gt;• Use creativity to manage design challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGES OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>INFORMATION SHARING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE INTENTIONS</td>
<td>To build awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>To share information with students about issues that may affect them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT PARTICIPATION COMMITMENT</td>
<td>To keep students informed — about the project, the decision making process, the larger scope, and the ongoing developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIBILITY OR ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE DECISION MAKER</td>
<td>Provide complete, objective, reliable, timely and easy to access information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation Planning Process**

**INITIAL ASSESSMENT**

**ESTABLISHING CLARITY — PART I**

This assessment is about answering the following questions—ensure you have the appropriate people at the table.

- Why would you involve students in this discussion? What exactly do you want to achieve or learn?
- What information are decision makers seeking to assist them in this decision? How has this been verified?
- What is the commitment about how information will be used—factored in or considered in the decision making process?
- What factors will influence the decision about level and scope of consultation? (Time, resources, etc.) How?
- Can you identify the specific information are you seeking?
### Collaborate

**To build ownership**

Involving students in the development of solutions throughout the process to ensure that relevant concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.

Sharing decision making by partnering with students in aspects of decision making, including the development of alternatives and/or recommendations.

Delegating decision making wherein the participants have responsibility for the decision.

**To look to students for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate student advice and/or recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.**

**Facilitate an effective process by providing time, information, and flexibility for consultation, and by clarifying the process for integrating decisions into the larger context.**

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### Empower

**To build responsibility**

Involving students in the development of solutions throughout the process to ensure that relevant concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.

To work with students to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are reflected in alternatives developed and provide feedback on how student input influenced the decision.

To implement what the participants decide.

**To build ownership**

Involving students in the development of solutions throughout the process to ensure that relevant concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.

To work with students to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are reflected in alternatives developed and provide feedback on how student input influenced the decision.

Facilitate an effective process by providing time, information, and flexibility for consultation, and by clarifying the process for integrating decisions into the larger context.

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### Engage

**To build commitment**

Involving students in the development of solutions throughout the process to ensure that relevant concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.

To work with students to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are reflected in alternatives developed and provide feedback on how student input influenced the decision.

Facilitate an effective process by providing time, information, and flexibility for consultation, and by clarifying the process for integrating decisions into the larger context.

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### The Participation Decision

- Will/how will student participation add value to this decision?
- Where will it fit on the continuum?

### Process and Resource Considerations

- Identification of participants and levels of engagement
- Timelines including key decision points
- Budget and human resources available
- Confirm outcomes and information required by decision makers
- Risk assessment, communication plan, values alignment

### Designing a Student Participation Strategy and Plan

- Collaborative design of process/methods with stakeholders
- Implementation plan
- Data management strategy
- Communication strategy
- Evaluation Framework (including values alignment)

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At this point the group that is convened should be able to prepare a Student Participation Invitation that states the intention of the conversation (we want to learn... or we are going to inform...), the values that will guide the process, the larger context, key considerations or factors that will affect the discussion, and where it fits on the continuum and how the information will be used. NOTE: In the spirit of transparency, it may be important to share this information more broadly.
### READY STATEMENT

#### VALUING
- We are utilizing our Student Participation Values and Guiding Principles in considering our approach.

#### INITIAL ASSESSMENT: CONTEXT AND PURPOSE
- We can confirm that the decision we are discussing has not been made.
- We know what information the decision makers are looking for, and how they will use it in their reflection process.
- We have identified where this initiative fits on the continuum.
- We have a clear understanding of the overall project decision, or the conversation being held, and the purpose for an involvement process.
- We have a clear understanding of what we want to know, or the conversations we want to have with the public.

#### EXPLORING: PROCESS SCOPING
- We have identified potential participants, and their sphere of interest or engagement.
- We have tested and assessed the student participation climate—we have identified any historical aspects that might affect the involvement process; we know who ‘was out there last’ and how that might affect the public response to us.
- Our strategy has been creatively designed to accommodate project timelines.

#### ORGANIZING AND DOING
- We have assessed the timing of our project (in the context of other events or projects) to enable active participation. Or, we have coordinated our process with other relevant processes so we don’t overwhelm the stakeholders and to increase our ability to get quality feedback.
- We have developed a process strategy.
- We have addressed the following:
  - Risk identification and assessment
  - Project spokespersons identified
  - Communication strategy
  - Resource strategy
  - Formative and summative evaluations that provide for amending the process if it isn’t working

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*Depending on the scope and complexity of the initiative the participation process could be simple and informal, but might need to be complex. Summaries of the previous information could be included into a student participation strategy. The student participation process strategy is tool for accountability to your participants and the decision makers.*

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This summary outlines some of the key aspects of a framework designed to support the three U of A process partners in their individual and collective student participation initiatives. It is only a summary of the more in-depth Handbook that is intended to serve as a reference guide to support and enhance but not replace existing U of A governance processes. Please refer to the full Handbook for expanded information on the topics and process outlined in this summary.

The Handbook is one tool and contains more detail on the participation process and delineates a methodical approach to student engagement, which can range from simple information sharing to active responsibility for a decision. Whether in this summary or the full report, the intent is to support effective conversations relevant to the student constituencies at the University of Alberta, recognizing that conversations will often involve the SU and GSA as the representative bodies of their students.