

# U of A Student Participation Process Handbook — Summary

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.

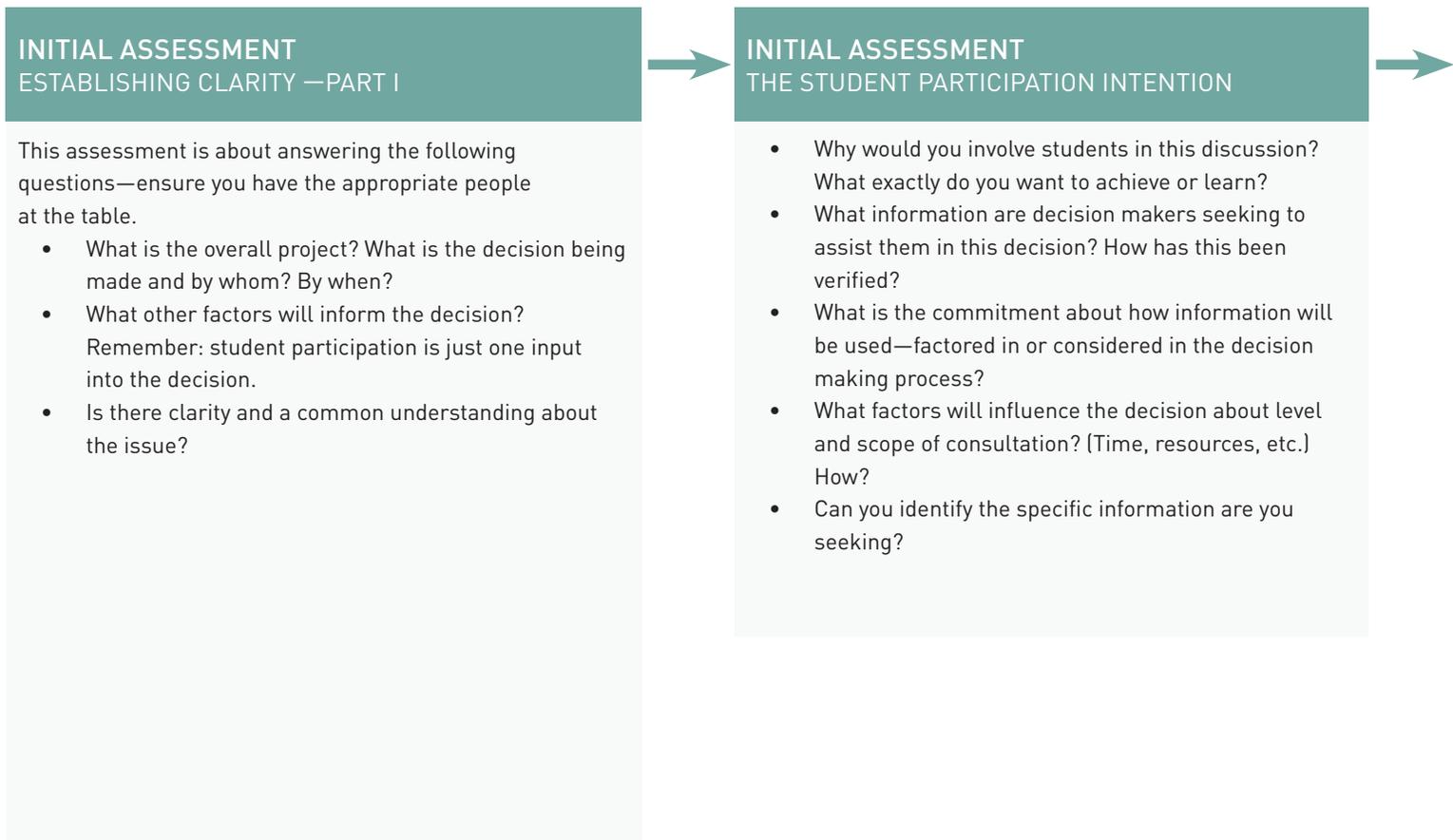
## Participation Values and Guiding Principles

VALUE	PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE
<b>RESPECT OF INDIVIDUALS</b> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect the individuals involved in participation processes</li><li>• Seek to understand the diversity of perspectives</li><li>• Not engage in or condone any form of personal attack or intimidation</li></ul>
<b>CONSTRUCTIVE AND SHARED LEADERSHIP</b> The stakeholders recognize that they hold, and will uphold, a shared responsibility in facilitating effective participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model and encourage constructive leadership</li><li>• Earn trust by consistently acting in an honest and trustworthy manner</li><li>• Honor and uphold agreed upon protocols</li><li>• Focus on developing workable solutions that reflect the vision and values of the University</li></ul>
<b>THE ABILITY TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS</b> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaboratively develop a participation strategy to help guide each participation initiative</li><li>• Design participation to elicit a full range of opinions and perspectives</li><li>• Ensure decision making processes reflect the consideration of student input</li></ul>
<b>CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY</b> Informed participation means that students will understand and are fully able to participate in the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide timely notice and information that is accessible to enable full participation</li><li>• Use the participation process to ensure participants receive all pertinent participation process information including but not limited to context, scope, and use of information</li><li>• Ensure participants are aware of interim decisions</li></ul>
<b>AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH</b> A creative, collaborative and collegial approach to participation will support inclusive and strategic participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be open to new, innovative, participation practices</li><li>• Treat each process as a separate process</li><li>• Use creativity to manage design challenges</li></ul>

## Continuum of Student Participation

STAGES OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION	INFORMATION SHARING	CONSULTATION
	INFORM	CONSULT
THE INTENTIONS	To build awareness	To build knowledge
PURPOSE FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION	To share information with students about issues that may affect them.	Gathering information, testing ideas or concepts by providing information and obtaining feedback on alternatives, and/or analysis of proposed decisions.
STUDENT PARTICIPATION COMMITMENT	To keep students informed — about the project, the decision making process, the larger scope, and the ongoing developments.	To keep students informed, to listen, acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how student input influenced the decision.
RESPONSIBILITY OR ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE DECISION MAKER	Provide complete, objective, reliable, timely and easy to access information.	Define the goals and processes, clearly state and articulate the decision-maker's commitment.

## Participation Planning Process



PARTICIPATION	ACTIVE PARTICIPATION	
ENGAGE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
To build commitment	To build ownership	To build responsibility
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 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 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.	To implement what the participants decide.
Define the purpose and scope of the exercise, and attend to the utilization of student input.	Facilitate an effective process by providing time, information, and flexibility for consultation, and by clarifying the process for integrating decisions into the larger context.	



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.

## Student Participation Readiness Assessment

Addressing these elements will enable an effective design for your student participation process.

### READINESS 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.
- Our strategy has been creatively designed to accommodate project timelines.
- 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.

#### 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

*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.*

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.