

## Student Representative Conference

### 1) Outline the project or initiative and what makes it innovative and inspiring (max 300 words).

In June 2014 Shetland College UHI held a special conference event for course representatives, the first of its kind at the college. The main aim of the event was to bring the representatives together and encourage them to reflect on their role and the impact they have made on the life and work of the college.



The representatives took part in a workshop led by Stewart Hay MBE, previously Depute Head of the Anderson High School, who delivered a key note speech and facilitated a group discussion. Reflections and comments from the representatives were prominently on display during an afternoon social event which all learners and staff were invited to attend.

Skills for Work: Hospitality students, Secondary 3 pupils who study at the college every two weeks, prepared and served a range of canapés; while NC Music Students Eve Maguire and Sarah Thomson provided live music. This was a particularly good opportunity for the hospitality learners to get some events experience.



This was an innovative project for Shetland College UHI because our course representatives usually perform their role in isolation from other departments. We felt it was important to provide an opportunity for them to come together and reflect on how being a course representative has benefited themselves, other learners and the college as a whole. The college-wide social event provided an opportunity to remind staff of the impact course representatives have and hopefully inspire other students to take on the role next year.

### 2) Detail how the project or initiative was delivered, from the planning stage through to its successful conclusion (max 300 words). Include details of timing\* and funding.

Funding for the event was secured through the 'Staff Challenge Fund' made available by the Student Representation Project, which is currently developing a new framework for student representation across UHI.

With the aim of organising a cross-curricular event, staff from the music and hospitality departments were involved from an early stage to ensure that timing of the event would suit their teaching schedules.

Irene Peterson, Acting Principal, opened the event with a speech which emphasised the important role that course representatives play in taking forward the college quality agenda. She then handed over to Stewart Hay MBE, previously Depute Head of the Anderson High School, who delivered an inspiring keynote speech which incorporated the benefits and challenges of a representative role. He highlighted that it takes courage to be 'the nail that sticks up' and how important it is to engage classmates in the discussion of how they learn best.

The representatives then worked as a group to record their



thoughts about the role – in particular the opportunities and the challenges. They commented on the importance of empowering the student voice, consistent evaluation of college processes, and fully engaging with staff to optimise the teaching and social experience. Their comments and ideas were put on display during an afternoon social event which was open to all learners and staff.

Following the refreshments and music, Simon Varwell, a visiting representative from SPARQs spoke about the importance of class representatives and how his organisation can offer support. The event was closed by Peter Campbell, Chair of the Shetland College UHI Board, who reiterated the value which the college places on course representatives and presented certificates of attendance.

### **3) Outline the project or initiative's outcome(s) within the university and beyond with relevant supporting evidence, metrics or testimony where appropriate (max 400 words).**

The feedback from the students was very positive, all feeling that the conference was a great learning experience and should be a regular feature. While it was appropriate to reflect at the end of the academic year, they also felt that a similar event would be valuable when new representatives are starting out in their role. With this in mind, the college is planning a similar conference event early in the second semester of 2014-15. Stewart Hay noted that the representatives were 'keen, insightful and thoughtful concerning all that is involved in representing their fellow learners.' He went on to say that for him 'the day raised the importance of Student Voice especially when reflecting on all aspects of learning. It highlighted a key role for a small team of student representatives researching future learning perhaps in parallel to the current Council review.'



There was some coverage in the event of local press which demonstrated the value which Shetland College UHI places on the learner voice. This was similarly demonstrated to our staff and learners who attended the social event.

Irene Peterson, Acting Principal, said following the event: 'The Student Rep Conference has been a great success, and is the first of many such conferences which we will hold here at Shetland College UHI. Today's conference has provided the college with an excellent platform on which to continue to strengthen the "student voice" and further develop the college's approaches to student engagement, all of which focus on putting our learners at the centre and meeting their needs to ensure the quality of their learning experience.'

