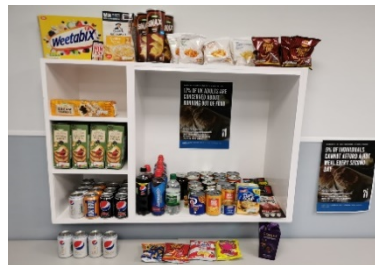


# REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Subject:</b> BCSA Annual Report   | <b>Purpose:</b><br>For Approval <input type="checkbox"/><br>For Discussion <input type="checkbox"/><br>For Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Prepared by:</b><br><br>A Brydon, A Letham & D Elder  | <b>Date:</b><br><br>4 <sup>th</sup> June 2020  |
| <b>Purpose:</b><br>To update the Regional Board on the work undertaken by BCSA in AY 2019/20.  |  |
| <b>Linked to Strategic Goal 3: Provide a high quality College experience.</b>  |  |
| <b>Executive Summary:</b><br><br>BCSA activity and impact will be reported under the following themes as outlined in the Framework for Strong and Effective College Students' Associations in Scotland; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shaping the Life and Work of the College</li> <li>Governance and Democracy</li> <li>Aware and Active Students</li> <li>Sustainable Resources</li> <li>Value and Impact</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Recommendation:</b><br><br>N/A  |  |
| <b>Previous Committee Approvals:</b><br><br>N/A  |  |
| For publication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  | For publication with redactions <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Not for publication <input type="checkbox"/>   |  |



# Annual Report

Borders College Students'  
Association

Session 2019/20



**BORDERS  
COLLEGE  
STUDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION**

# INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the activity undertaken by the Students' Association and associated impact during AY 2019/20. Activities and initiatives will be reported under the five themes within in the sector agreed '*Framework for the Development of Strong and Effective College Students' Associations in Scotland*', upon which Borders College Students' Association evaluates itself. Themes are outlined below;

1. Shaping the Life and Work of the College
2. Governance and Democracy
3. Aware and Active Students
4. Sustainable Resources
5. Value and Impact








## IMPACT OF COVID-19








BCSA are moving through a period of considerable change. The impact of COVID-19 and associated physical distancing measures means that the Students' Association will need to re-design many of the approaches already in place, particularly in relation to our core purposes of student representation and engagement. The year ahead will focus largely on development work and consultation with students to ensure we continue to provide an effective service post-lockdown.

# SHAPING THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE COLLEGE

A number of processes and procedures have been put in place to ensure the Students' Association has the ability to influence and shape decisions which have impact of the student experience. These are outlined below.




## STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT





| Not Started   |  | Complete |                             | In progress, carried over to next Agreement |   |
|---|--|----------|---|---|---|
| Actions   |  |          | Progress  |   | Completion  |
| Partnership Theme 1: Representation   |  |          |   |   |   |
| Review the Student Experience Committee structure.  |  |          | SEC reviewed; changes implemented. SA will continue to review in light of COVID-19 social distancing measures |   |  |
| Ensure Student feedback is a central part of the decision-making process                      |  |          | Consultation on most issues is forthcoming but more involvement at initial stages required                    |   |  |
| Offer a broad range of opportunities to all students to feed back on their college experience |  |          | Most students aware of different feedback systems although engagement less during lockdown                    |   |  |
| Work with Reps to make improvements to learning and teaching                                  |  |          | Valuable feedback gathered and a working group contributed to a Core Skills review                            |   |  |






| Partnership Theme 2: Wellbeing                             |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Student Mental Health Agreement                            | Mental Health Agreement in place and reviewed regularly   |    |
| Consultation with students regarding counselling provision | Students held focus group with BCSA and College Principal   |    |
| Create opportunities to engage in physical activity        | A range of events and activities in place   |    |
| Embed opportunities to tackle food insecurity              | On campus BCSA made free food accessible in various ways e.g. Free Food Fridays, College Foodbank, Teabags, Free soup Wednesdays in winter<br><br>The college is an approved referral agency for local foodbanks, working with local food waste CIC |    |
| Partnership Theme 3: Community                             |   |   |
| Embed equalities and diversity into the student community  | Students active and aware regarding equalities and diversity  |  |
| Expand and promote extra-curricular activities             | Five regular groups prior to lockdown, more online clubs after lockdown   |  |
| Deliver a varied program of inclusive student events       | Numerous events hosted including Welcome Week, various charity events and mental health events  |  |





## STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT

The 2019-20 Agreement has been signed off by the Board and the college continues to make progress on our objectives despite the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions

|             |   |             |   |          |  |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|----------|--|
| Not Started |  | In Progress |  | Complete |  |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|----------|--|

| Action   | Progress  | Completion  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Objective 1: Develop and implement ongoing campaigns to promote wellbeing and raise awareness of mental health challenges to relevant students.</b> |   |   |
| Complete mapping exercise to identify key issues faced by students through the year  | Mapping exercise to identify key issues faced by students throughout the year started but priorities changed after lockdown |    |
| Contact organisations and individuals who are able to support activity identified through mapping exercise   | Working with various external agencies to support students' mental health   |   |
| Develop and implement proposed activities  | Survey run September, January and June to map students' perception of their physical health and mental wellbeing            |  |
| Liaise with Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer to provide additional support for the development and delivery of activities                           | Work with Mental Health Officer to provide additional support and activities for students                                   |  |

| <b>Objective 2: Provide training opportunities to enhance the capacity of staff and student representatives to identify and support students who are experiencing mental ill health.</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Online mental health modules to be made available to all staff within the suite of Engage induction modules  | Mental health modules made available to all staff.<br><br>Also available to students.  |    |
| Make Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training available to all staff.   | Training opportunities have been promoted both internally and through external training providers. 15 staff have attended internal training with many others taking advantage of alternative delivery options. |    |
| Organise Scottish Mental Health First Aid Training for Class Representatives.  | All Class Reps were given the opportunity to sign up to training. 24 completed.  |  |
| Develop policy to provide guidance for staff supporting transgender and gender diverse students  | Guidance document to be developed with support from LGBT Youth Scotland.   |  |
| <b>Objective 3: Focus on preventative aspects of mental health and wellbeing to raise overall awareness of mental health issues and help students self-manage their mental health.</b>   |  |   |
| Ensure a range of wellbeing support options are accessible to students on the student portal   | Information available in the BCSA and Student Services sections.<br><br>Range of wellbeing initiatives delivered.  |  |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Recruitment of Mental Health Wellbeing Officer with responsibility to develop and implement activities to support improved mental health and wellbeing. | Mental Health Officer recruited and in the process of developing an in-house mental health service.                 |   |
| Promote the Big White Wall as a self-help resource for students   | Big White Wall promoted regularly on social media and through Student Services/BCSA. Uptake remains relatively low. |   |
| Investigate the opportunity to deliver a suite of mental health self-management courses   | Resources are currently available through Big White Wall, NUS and NHS.  |   |
| Develop a student mental health forum to drive improvements in local mental health support  | Forum has been advertised, currently awaiting uptake.   |  |

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

The feedback mechanisms within the new system are aligned with *How Good is our College?* Framework themes to provide opportunities for students to contribute productively to the college's evaluative processes and help drive improvements to the student experience. Developments this year included granting more autonomy and responsibility to Lead Reps in terms of information gathering and engaging with Class Reps, and the addition of Class Rep Conferences. In some areas this has led to a marked improvement in the detail - and therefore value - of class rep feedback.

BCSA continue to provide support to Supported Programme Class Reps.

Below are a few examples of improvements to the learning experience as a result of the Student Experience Committee;



| Issue Raised   | Solution   |
|--|--|
| Students noted that some staff have issues using Smartboards                                     | Staff training arranged by the College   |
| Core Skills classes contain students of varying ability and experience, making them inefficient  | Focus groups set up, more communication to students on Core Skills and an updated Core and Essential Skills Policy |
| Students reported that learning support was slow to be offered and some students were struggling | Scaffolding put in place immediately for affected classes  |
| General concerns regarding availability of teaching resources and equipment in some classes      | Items sourced where possible   |



*Student Experience Committee meeting, March 2019*

#### ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

BCSA have worked with the College Principal to establish and promote additional feedback mechanisms. Focus Pizzas (lunchtime focus group with the Principal and BCSA) have been successful in capturing student feedback, and BCSA has worked to support the college with a number of consultations, including capturing student views regarding the college's new strategy (123 responses gathered).

Examples of feedback and associated actions are below.

| Issue Raised   | Outcome  |
|--|--|
| Limited funding for Mental Health Officer            | Students were involved in an exercise to prioritise different areas of Mental Health support. This input supported the college's recruitment of a part time Student Counsellor and other Mental Health resources |
| Lack of appropriate IT at Newtown St Boswells Campus | New Lapsafe lockers installed and all desktops upgraded  |
| College Strategy Survey                              | Ambiguous words reviewed and replaced, resulting in a more concise strategy.   |
| Induction and Student Portal consultations           | Students in a focus group worked out priorities for information during induction. This led to the entire Induction timetable being redesigned based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs.                              |

## GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

The Students' Association has ensured there exist a set of effective structures which enables it to function democratically and effectively represent the interests of Borders College students.

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING

BCSA continues its work on its current strategic plan which can be viewed at <http://www.tartanmonkey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Our-Plan-BCSA-Strategy-2018-2020.pdf>. A new strategy will be developed this year which we intend to align with the colleges new plan.

## ONLINE-ONLY ELECTIONS

To ensure elections were able to continue during lockdown, the process was moved to online-only. SA staff worked with the Returning Officer to develop alternative processes to support online campaigning. Five candidates ran in the election with a total of 109 votes cast. Although voter turnout was lower than the previous year (-16%, a difference of 17 votes in real terms), the SA considers this a positive outcome. Voting numbers indicate good awareness of the SA, and good engagement with the SA's virtual communications. Borders College became the first college in Scotland to host an online-only election.

## OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Each year, the Students' Association creates an Operational Plan (*Appendix. A*), which is linked to the Framework for Strong and Effective Students' Associations. BCSA successfully completed the majority of operational objectives.

### Key Achievements:

- Delivered engaging 'Welcome Week' activities at the beginning of term, engaging face-to-face with over 600 new students
- Over 1,000 nutritious meals provided to Borders College students
- Free food available every Friday during term-time through the FareShare initiative
- 5 well-functioning clubs operating on campus
- Successfully delivering social opportunities to students remotely
- Migrated Class Rep system to teams during lockdown

## ACTIONS AGREED TO CARRY FORWARD TO AY 2020-2021;

- Redesign Class Rep System to accommodate social distancing measures and to be more inclusive of different modes of study
- Deliver a virtual Welcome Week
- Create opportunities for students to socialise remotely
- Review election timeline
- Review Officer roles

# AWARE AND ACTIVE STUDENTS

BCSA work to ensure students are aware of the purpose of the SA, and take an active role within it.

## STUDENT EVENTS

### Welcome Week

Welcome Week provided students with a range of welcome events to augment other induction activities taking place in the College. Across the week BCSA welcomed over 30 local businesses and organisations to the Freshers Fair, met with over 300 students at BCSA Welcome Sessions and provided refreshments to over 500 students at the BCSA Welcome Café.



*BCSA Welcome Café, Enrolment 2019*

### Tiny Changes

Tiny Changes, which aimed to raise awareness for a recently established local mental health charity, created an opportunity to speak to staff and students the importance of speaking up about mental health, and promoting strategies and techniques to maintain positive mental health.

View the Tiny Changes video here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_FI5UXfMDo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_FI5UXfMDo)

## Christmas Fair

We worked with the Enterprise Co-ordinator to help organise a Christmas Fair. Hoodies, travel mugs and ties were available to purchase from the BCSA stall. The aim was to encourage more entrepreneurship in the College and provide an opportunity for students, staff and visitors to purchase Christmas presents.

## Clubs & Societies

Due to the large geographical spread of students across the Borders where many students are reliant on contract buses to take them home at the end of the college day, engaging students in regular after-college clubs is challenging. However, BCSA have supported six student clubs this year.

## AWARENESS RAISING

### Equalities Calendar

In partnership with staff across the college, a calendar was developed to provide focus on specific equalities issues each month. BCSA have played an active role in raising awareness for these themes, which have included Women's History Month, Mental Health Awareness Month and LGBT History Month.



VP Activities Billy Brogan running our LGBT History Month stall

### Preparing for COVID-19 Building Closures

The following measures were taken by the Students' Association to support students preparing for lockdown and beyond;

- Distribution of food hampers to those in most need
- Provision of sanitary items
- Contacting all local food banks and ensuring students were eligible for referral
- Maintaining good communication with students during lockdown – including through the creating of videos, social media posts and vlogs.
- Migration of Class Rep System on to Teams to support students working remotely
- Developed and distributed COVID-19 survey to identify key challenges for students learning from home
- Providing advocacy and signposting to students
- Developing opportunities for students to socialise remotely
- Supporting student referrals to food banks

### External Representation

Student Officers and staff represent BCSA across a number of external forums and organisations, including sparqs Staff Network, sparqs Academic Representation Coordinators network, Wellbeing College Advisory Group and NUS.

We have been well represented by our VP Education at the National Education Officers Network (NEON), a forum for Student Officers to discuss ways in students can be better represented on issues relating to learning and teaching.

## STUDENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES

### Free Sanitary Provision

BCSA worked with Student Services to support the Scottish Governments £5.2million initiative to provide free sanitary provision to pupils and students across Scotland. Between Sept 2018-April 2019, Borders College have supported over 371 students to access free sanitary products through this initiative. This service was impacted by lockdown measures. We are working with Student Services to arrange an online ordering service through an external company.

### Food Poverty

The Tea Bags initiative has provided over 1,000 nutritious meals to students. The scheme allows students to purchase pre-portioned ingredients to make a home-cooked meal. Initially priced at £1 the scheme soon moved to a 'pay what you can' provision to support those facing food poverty.





*Tea Bags ready to be distributed*

Free Food Fridays makes food available each week to students in need. This is a FareShare partnership initiative with ASDA. BCSA also purchase noodle pots and breakfast bars, which are available to students at Galashiels and Newtown campuses.

#### Sustainability Initiatives

BCSA have established a campus sustainability shop where clothing donations are made available to students for no cost.



*BCSA Sustainability Shop*

#### Student Engagement Tracker

The Students' Association continue to track and monitor student support engagements throughout lockdown. At the time of writing, we were receiving an average 25 engagements per week.

## SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

BCSA continues to develop resources and support required to function effectively and to deliver its core representative purpose.

#### LEAD REP AND CLASS REP TRAINING

All Lead Reps and Class Reps are offered training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to be an effective student representative. Training is facilitated by Student Officers and staff and covers the following learning outcomes;

- Role and responsibility of Lead Reps/Class Reps
- Role and responsibility of BCSA
- Purpose of Student Experience Committee
- Consultation on Student Partnership Agreement and Mental Health Agreement
- Session with Chair of Regional Board



A total of 49 Student Reps have been trained by BCSA this year.



*Class Reps take part in the final activity of the day: The Web of Connectivity*

#### STUDENT OFFICER INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Training is facilitated by the Students' Association Support Officer and consists of introductory meetings with key staff, needs analyses, introduction to key documents and action plans, operational planning sessions and development of appropriate Student Officer roles to support planned activity.

#### ADDITIONAL REVENUE STREAMS

BCSA supplements its annual budget through a range of merchandise available for students to purchase from the campus shop. This includes hoodies, ties and travel mugs. We also receive income through the use of pool table and games tables across the estate

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2020/21

BCSA WILL SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT ELECT TO ACHIEVE THE AIMS OUTLINED IN THEIR MANIFESTO;







- Sustainability – Building initiatives that protect the environment and save students money
- Unity – Encouraging students to come up with ideas to bring the student community together and support worthwhile causes





- Nourishment – Ensuring students have access to the best resources to mentally grow and stay healthy




IN ADDITION, BCSA WILL FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES;




- Re-designing our service to operate effectively while accommodating physical distancing with particular focus on developing student community and representative systems.
- Delivering fun and engaging welcome week activities using a range of digital and face-to-face methods (where possible).


Appendix A.

| Not Started   |                  | In Progress   |   | Complete   |      |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| Goal  | Purpose   | Actions   | Progress   | Measurement  | Completion  |
| <b>Education</b>                                      |   |   |  |  |   |
| Increase engagement with part-time/work-based courses | To ensure all students have an equal opportunity to feedback on their student experience          | <p>Arrange meeting with K Matheson to discuss</p> <p>Create standardised welcome e-mail for all BDU students</p> <p>Develop suitable feedback forum (e-mail questionnaire)</p>                              | Standard e-mail completed. New Class Rep model be rolled out is hoped to be more inclusive of different modes of study   | ALFS   |    |
| Ensure better representation across all campuses      | To ensure all students have an equal opportunity to feedback on their student experience          | <p>Appointment of VP for outlying campuses</p> <p>Develop good working relationships with managers responsible for outlying campuses</p> <p>Dedicated time for Student President to attend all campuses</p> | <p>VP for Outlying Campuses was appointed.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with CLMs, and a particularly good working relationship with Newtown CLM.</p> <p>Strain on resource has meant dedicated time has not been achieved, however Student President has maintained a good presence across Galashiels and Newtown Campuses.</p> | Student survey<br>Evidence of representation on all campuses |    |
| Review and update Student Partnership Agreement       | To ensure the college and SA are working in partnership on areas affecting the student experience | <p>Consulting with students &amp; staff to develop themes</p> <p>Approval of SPA 2019/20 at BoM</p> <p>Sign off SPA</p>   | SPA in place   | Approval at BoM  |  |

|  |   |   |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| Elect student officers to support operational objectives               | To support the SA in delivering their plan of work for the year | Run elections<br>Run Student officer training   | Student Officer elected  | VP Elections  |    |
| Hold a review of the new Class Rep System                              | To drive improvements to the class rep system                   | Review the system & develop recommendations<br>Improving student rep networks<br>Developing the Lead Rep role   | Addition of Class Rep Conferences.<br>Extra responsibility and autonomy granted to Lead Reps in relation to information gathering and Class Rep engagement activity.<br>Migrated Class Rep System to Teams during Lockdown   | Student rep evaluation (e.g. focus group/survey)<br>Feedback from APs |    |
| Plan a programme of student events to be delivered throughout the year | To build a vibrant student community                            | Freshers<br>Stressbusters<br>LGBT History Month<br>Face Your Fears (Care Day)<br>Diversiday<br>Refer to national awareness days to build into calendar of SA events | Freshers and Tiny Changes mental health event arranged.<br>Equalities calendar developed with key national awareness days/months celebrated<br>Lockdown measures impacted on a number of scheduled events. Digital events now hosted on Thursday nights, and Breakfast Club meets each weekday morning | Post-event surveys<br>Photographs/marketing                           |    |
| Create a range of mechanisms for students to feedback                  | To ensure the student voice is heard                            | Liaise with Sheila to arrange dates for focus pizzas  | Two Focus Pizzas sessions took place.  | Feedback/outcomes   |  |

|   |  |   |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| about their college experience              |  | Liaise with CLMs to identify students to attend focus pizzas<br>Agree on themes with AC   | Principal & VPs Question Time event organised during lockdown   |  |   |
| <b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>               |  |   |   |  |   |
| Deliver Tiny Changes mental health campaign | To encourage Borders College students to engage in open dialogue about mental health, and promote their right to have fair access to mental health services. | Invites out<br>Host Tiny Changes Day (campaign launch)<br>Deliver Tiny Changes campaign throughout the year<br>Develop a campus wide approach to promoting national mental health awareness days<br>Tiny Changes Walk                                 | Tiny Changes event took place, the SA continues to promote messages around maintaining good mental health.  | Surveys<br>Referral rates                                  |    |
| Introducing sustainability projects         | To encourage students to reduce waste going to landfill<br>Supporting students who face significant financial challenges.                                    | Free Food Fridays (partnership with ASDA and Coop)<br>Coats & hats for the winter<br>Staff donations<br>Working with BS to reduce single use plastics<br>Introduce sustainability shop  | Free Food giveaways continued until lockdown.<br>During lockdown BCSA ensured students were eligible for food bank referral across the Scottish Borders<br>Sustainability shop established      | Free food giveaways<br><br>Presence of sustainability shop |    |
| Providing nutritious meals on a budget      | Improving health and wellbeing of students   | Review provision of tea and toast<br>Create meal packs available to all students & promotional materials<br>Working in partnership with access dept to prepare Tea Bags<br>Working in partnership with the college and to reduce food waste on campus | Tea Bag initiative launched, providing over 1,000 meals to students this year.<br><br>Initially charged at £1 we quickly moved to an honest box policy where students were encouraged to donate | Uptake rates   |  |

|   |   |   |  |  |   |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|
|   |   |   | what they could afford in a bid to support those facing food poverty,  |  |   |
| Develop and Implement Mental Health Agreement | Ensuring that anyone experiencing mental ill-health can feel that they can continue in their studies without facing stigma or discrimination. | Consult with key staff and students to develop themes<br>Present MHA at SLT for approval<br>Embed within a college working group  | Mental Health agreement in place   | MHA approved by SLT<br>MHA in place for 2020 |  |
| Conduct survey on student health & wellbeing  | Identify trends re: health and wellbeing throughout the year  | Develop survey, responses collected at 3 points throughout the year<br>Look to college to support development and distribution of survey  | In progress. Third survey will be launched in June.  | Survey responses                             |  |
| <b>Student Community</b>                      |   |   |  |  |   |
| Develop a range of student activities         | To develop the Borders College community  | Commitment to have 3 clubs meeting regularly<br>Pub Quizzes<br>Pub Quizzes at Gala & NT<br>Christmas Fair<br>Brew Monday<br>Stressbuster event<br>TM Birthday<br>TMs Big End Of Year Bash<br>Borders College Oscars<br>Inspirational speakers | Most events took place, some we were unable to complete due to lockdown.<br>Events moved to digital delivery where possible.<br>2x inspirational speakers<br>5 clubs meeting regularly<br>Nominations currently out for Borders College Oscars | Evidence of activities<br>Surveys            |  |

|                             |  |  |  |                                 |   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------|---|
| Develop induction programme | To develop the Borders College community and ensure students have access to relevant information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host welcome event inc. club sign up</li> <li>• Financial workshops</li> <li>• Student tours</li> </ul> | <p>Welcome Week hosted.</p> <p>Tours advertised although uptake was low</p> <p>Welcome café hosted during enrolment, and welcome sessions delivered to all new students.</p> | Evidence of activity<br>Surveys |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------------|---|