



Education alongside research as the mission of a medical, dental and veterinary school

ASPIRE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT APPLICATION: GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTERS

This booklet provides detailed guidance on how to complete the student engagement application form. This includes:

- Descriptions of the types of evidence that should be included as supporting documentation
- Examples of good practice taken from previously successful applications
- A glossary of key terms

Please read this document carefully and refer to the background paper on student engagement, *ASPIRE Recognition of Excellence in Student Engagement in a Medical, Dental and Veterinary School –An Introduction* before completing the application form

EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT – THE CRITERIA

For a school to be regarded as achieving excellence in student engagement in a school there must be evidence that students contribute to the academic community and that they take an active role and are consulted, involved and participate in shaping the teaching and learning experience. Four spheres of engagement can be recognised:

- Student engagement with the management of the school, including matters of policy and the mission and vision of the school. (*Student engagement with the structures and processes*)
- Student engagement in the provision of the school's education programme. (*Student engagement with the delivery of teaching and assessment*)
- Student engagement in the academic community (*Student's engagement in the school's research programme and participation in meetings*)
- Student engagement in the local community and the service delivery.

For each of the four spheres of student engagement, more detailed criteria are described.

THE APPLICATION FORM

The Application form contains 5 sections:

SECTION A	SUBMITTER INFORMATION
SECTION B	RESPONSE RELATING TO CRITERIA
SECTION C	SUMMARY
SECTION D	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
SECTION E	STUDENT PERSPECTIVE
SECTION F	CERTIFICATION

Each of these sections must be completed in full.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Responses

The notion of excellence embodies the active engagement with scholarship and a desire to seek continuous improvement in the area of student engagement.

Responses to each criterion need to be specific and provide the evidence necessary to support the statement. Examples should be given where students' involvement has had an impact.

It is recognised that cultural, social and other issues are likely to have an influence on the engagement of students in a school and that how student engagement manifests itself will vary from school to school. Excellence may be found in institutions with limited access to resources just as much as in wealthier institutions. The way in which institutions demonstrate cost effectiveness and context appropriateness will be taken into account by the panel when reviewing individual submissions.

Language

With the exception of the appendices, all documentation should be in English. Where the appendices are in another language the supporting commentary must be in English.

Glossary

A glossary of the key terms used in criteria as indicators of student engagement are included at the end of this booklet. Please refer to these terms in filling in the application form.

Word limits

The expected word limit for each section is clearly stated within the form. It is important that these word limits are adhered to, and that the number of words used is indicated in the box provided.

Missing information

If a criterion or sub-category is considered not to be applicable to the school it should be stated on the form why this is so.

Appendices

Where additional evidence is provided in the appendices, it must be made clear how the evidence demonstrates that the criteria have been met by the school.

The appropriate section of the appendix should be identified and cross-referenced to Section B in the application form, making clear how the evidence is relevant. Where possible it would also be helpful if the relevant section was highlighted within the appendix. For example, several schools submitting electronic evidence used a text highlight colour to mark the relevant sections within the document.

All appendices should be numbered and listed in **Section D** of the form as **Supporting Documentation**.

Commentary to appendices

Each piece of supporting documentation included as an appendix must be accompanied by a short commentary in English to explain the relevance of the document and how it supports the school's statement. It should be clearly indicated which criterion or criteria are supported by the evidence in the appendix. The commentary should be no more than 300 words and summarise the key points from the appendix, including how the appendix provides evidence to support the statements in the submission document.

Please note: Evidence in an appendix that is not accompanied by a short commentary will not be examined.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

SECTION A – SUBMITTER INFORMATION

Key features of the school programme –

It is important that the key information regarding the school programme are summarised here.

This would normally include:

- The dates the University and school were established.
- The programme length.
- The curriculum type, distinctive features and any significant changes that have taken place.
- Entry routes into the school, for example, high-school entry; graduate entry and any other routes available.
- Student numbers – overall and per year, including any significant changes that have taken place.

As a guide for reviewers it would be a valuable addition to include as an appendix an outline of the school curriculum to provide a background context to the evidence that will be supplied in subsequent sections.

For example, one medical school included with its submission, tables to demonstrate the subjects, hours, teaching method and credits for each semester and year of study.

Accreditation status –

Please include here details of the accreditation status of the school. This should include: date of first accreditation, current accreditation dates, accrediting agency and any conditions.

It is essential that a copy of the accreditation letter is appended to the application. This should be marked as Appendix one and listed in **Section D** of the application form

SECTION B - RESPONSE RELATING TO CRITERIA

This is the main part of your submission. Please ensure that you address the various criteria listed. Try and avoid repetition, referring to earlier sections where necessary.

If some criteria do not apply to your programme, please indicate this and explain the reasons why.

When you respond to the ASPIRE criteria, you must provide evidence of attaining the criteria and include specific examples to support your submission.

Provide information about the extent and frequency of the student engagement, for example, the number of students on a committee and how often it meets or the number of students engaged as peer tutors and how important this features in the curriculum. Avoid terms like 'many', 'a few' or 'several.'

Refer to innovations, sustainability and, where appropriate, the uptake of your efforts by other health professions programmes.

In the main text refer to the relevant sections of supporting documentation included as an appendix and the associated commentaries.

If a link to a website is useful, please indicate the specific section of the website that is to be considered.

For each piece of evidence included in the appendix to support your claim, attach a commentary in English (maximum 300 words) detailing how excellence is demonstrated. The evidence may be in a language other than English.

All appendices including web links should be numbered and included in **Section D** of this form.

Please remember that we are looking to recognise and reward excellence, and the evidence provided by you has to be convincing.

1. CRITERION 1 – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL, INCLUDING MATTERS OF POLICY AND THE MISSION AND VISION OF THE SCHOOL

1.1. Students have been involved in the development of the school’s vision and mission.

The **school mission** is a public statement of an institutions founding purpose and major organisational commitments; that is, what the school does and why it does it.

The school vision is a public statement of an institutions high-level ideals, core values and long-term objectives, the goals for the future to fulfil the mission of the school.

Please provide details of the ways in which students have been involved in such developments and/or any subsequent reviews.

1.2. Students are represented on school committees.

Students may be represented on a range of committees in the school, for example school management, quality assurance, and curriculum and assessment committees.

Please provide details of student involvement in relevant committees. Describe how the student body as a whole is involved and the proportion of students actively engaged in committees. Submissions would be enhanced by the inclusion of details of the numbers of students involved, and details of any initiatives or changes that have resulted from student participation.

Examples of supporting documentation that may be included are: minutes of meetings showing student membership, examples of student participation and contributions.

1.3. Students are involved in the establishment of policy statements or guidelines.

Students in your school may have been involved in the development of policy statements or guidelines; or policies and guidelines may have been changed in response to student input.

Please demonstrate the ways in which students have been involved in the establishment of policy statements or guidelines. Examples may include: student consultations or feedback on proposed changes; policies or guidelines produced by or in conjunction with students that have been adopted by the school. Examples may address areas such as cheating, plagiarism and use of social media, or areas such as the organisation of electives/options or for student symposia.

1.4. Students are involved in the accreditation process for the school.

An **accreditation process** is a self-regulatory process by which governmental, non-governmental, voluntary associations or other statutory bodies grant formal recognition to educational programmes or institutions that meet stated criteria of educational quality. Educational programmes or institutions are measured against certain standards by a review of written information, self-studies, site visits to the educational programme, and thoughtful consideration of the findings by a review committee.

Please supply details of any involvement that students have had in the school's accreditation process. This could include accreditation panels meeting or interviewing students, student consultation or evaluations.

1.5 Students have a management/leadership role in relation to elements of the curriculum.

There are a variety of ways in which students may participate in a management or leadership role in relation to the curriculum. This may relate to their involvement in decisions regarding the content or delivery of the curriculum, or the inclusion of student-led or independent learning initiatives.

Please supply details of student involvement in curriculum organisation, including decisions about the sequence, timing, and content of courses and the educational strategies adopted. Where possible, give examples of where the students' involvement and leadership role has made a difference.

1.6 Students' views are taken into account in decisions about faculty (staff) promotion.

Faculty as a term can be used to refer to an organisational division in a university (e.g. Faculty of Medicine) or the academic staff. In the context of this application faculty refers to academic staff.

Please supply details of how, if at all, student evaluations of teachers influence staff promotion decisions.

1.7 Students play an active part in faculty (staff) development activities.

Training and development of faculty are an essential part of improving teaching and learning and adapting to changes and new initiatives.

Please supply details of ways in which students participate in staff development activity. This could include, for example, students serving as simulated patients in an OSCE implemented as part of a faculty development programme workshop or input to the planning of a workshop.

CRITERION 2 – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROVISION OF THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME

2.1. Students evaluate the curriculum and teaching and learning processes

Gaining the student's perspective on the curriculum and the teaching and teaching approaches they experience is vital to the on-going development of a school. A variety of mechanisms may be utilised to engage students in such an evaluation, whether that it is at the level of an individual module or course or the programme as a whole.

Please supply details of the ways in which students evaluate the curriculum and teaching and learning processes. For example, is feedback obtained for individual module, or the overall year or programme? Submissions would be enhanced by the including of details of the proportion of students involved, how often they take place, and any outcomes that have occurred as a result.

2.2. Feedback from the student body is taken into account in curriculum development

Feedback is often gathered from students, but engagement may be enhanced by demonstrating that issues raised are taken into account and change implemented.

Please provide examples of how any feedback obtained from students informs curriculum development.

2.3. Students participate as active learners with responsibility for their own learning.

Active learning is an approach that places responsibility for learning on the learner. Students may be required to participate in activities, apply their knowledge, seek solutions to problems and to reflect on their experience.

Please provide examples of active learning and how it is encouraged for your students.

2.4. Students are involved formally and/or informally in peer teaching.

Peer teaching involves students taking an active role in presenting and discussing themes and issues and learning from each other in ways that supplement the teaching of academic staff. Examples may include a student taking responsibility, perhaps within a small group, to investigate one aspect of a topic and give a short summary to the group, leading or facilitating discussions.

Please provide examples of the ways in which students are involved in teaching their peers and any support or training they receive. Information about the proportion of teaching in the curriculum and the numbers of students involved should be included.

2.5. Students are engaged in the development of learning resources for use by other students.

Learning resources are materials used for the purposes of teaching and learning. They can take a variety of formats, both written and visual, including summaries, papers, instructions, diagrams, and videos.

Please provide details of ways in which students are involved in developing learning resources for use by other students. Submissions would be enhanced by including examples, an indication of how frequently this occurs and the numbers of students involved.

2.6. Students provide a supportive or mentor role for other students

A **mentoring role** involves a two-way relationship between a mentor and a mentee. A mentor is usually a person with greater experience in the same field than the mentee, who can offer advice, information and critically, support in times of need. **Peer mentoring** concerns a more equal relationship between people at the same stage of experience in a mutually supportive relationship.

Please give examples, including of any appropriate training and support students receive to perform this role.

2.7. Students are encouraged to assess their own competence

Self-assessment is the process of evaluating one's own achievements, strengths, weaknesses, development, performance and competencies. It is an important part of active learning, and engaging students in their learning process.

Please give details of how students are encouraged to self-assess, including and strategies that are adopted to support this.

2.8. Students engage in peer assessment.

Peer assessment concerns the active participation of students in assessing their peers. Such assessment can be in the form of formative feedback in the course of study, but may also be part of summative assessment and contribute to the final score, particularly in a team-based or group-work situation. It is important that guidance is provided on learning outcomes, marking criteria and rating scales.

Please give details of ways in which peer assessment takes place in the curriculum. In particular, demonstrate whether this contributes to the school's assessment process.

3. CRITERION 3 – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

3.1. Students are engaged in school research projects carried out by faculty members.

This criterion is concerned with whether students, as part of the academic community of the school, contribute to the work of the school in the area of research, **not** with research as a subject in the curriculum and research assignments carried out by the student.

Please provide details of the ways in which students are involved in the research of the school, supporting the work of faculty members. Please give an indication of the numbers of students involved and whether this work is credited as part of their studies. Evidence should be provided with regard to whether students are engaged with and involved in the school's research programme and the research work of staff within the school.

3.2. Students are supported in their participation at local, regional or international medical, dental, veterinary and health professions education meetings.

Are your students' members of students associations or medical/dental/veterinary education associations? How do they participate and at what level?

Please supply evidence of the involvement of students in meetings and associations connected to medicine or medical or dental or veterinary education. Evidence should be provided as to the number of students supported and attending national and international meetings and how this is encouraged and supported by the school including the resources allocated to support students' participation. Students' involvement in assisting with the organisation of local meetings should also be described.

4. CRITERION 4 – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1. Students are involved in local community projects

Local community projects are those that exist in the local area which provide support and services for the local population. Students may become involved on a voluntary basis, as part of their studies or as employees. Such projects may or may not relate to their professional studies.

Evidence should be provided of students' involvement in community activities, for example, in a community health promotion initiative and in healthcare delivery in the community and of the resources available to support students' activities in this area.

4.2. Students participate in the delivery of local healthcare services

Students in the course of their studies have much to contribute and gain from participating in the delivery of local healthcare services. Examples may include: health promotion activities, drop-in clinics, first aid etc.

Please provide evidence of ways in which students are encouraged and supported to participate in the delivery of local health care services. Please indicate whether this is part of their studies and whether involvement is time-limited or on-going. Submissions would be enhanced by providing an indication of the numbers of students involved.

4.3. Students participate in healthcare delivery during electives/attachments overseas

Electives play an important role in many curricula. The increasing globalisation of education means that students often desire and are encouraged to gain experience of the practice of healthcare overseas.

Please provide details of any activity of students in delivering health care services during electives either locally or overseas. The extent and form of students' involvement should be described, for example, whether it is a required part of the curriculum or an elective.

4.4. Extracurricular activities for students are available

Extracurricular activities are those performed by students that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school or university education. Such activities may form an important part of integrating students into university life and offer opportunities for developing key life and social skills. Examples may include: sports, drama, languages, politics, debating, journalism, events organising, choir, music, amongst many others.

Please provide details of what activities are available, and an indication of the numbers of students who take part in these activities and their role in the organisation of the activities. Evidence should be provided as to the school's policy with regard to extracurricular activities that promote the wellbeing and development of students. Evidence of the resources devoted to such activities and the extent of involvement of students and staff in extracurricular activities should be described.

SECTION C - SUMMARY OF JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In this section it is important to summarise your school's interpretation of student engagement and the reasons why your school should be recognised as excellent with regard to student engagement.

It should read as a stand-alone statement, highlighting the key features within your school which stand out as demonstrating excellence in student engagement. It should also highlight how excellence is achieved in relation to the four spheres of student engagement as described in **Section B**, referring to any innovative approaches adopted.

Do not repeat the general information about the school provided in Section A.

SECTION D

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

You may wish to attach additional information relating to the submission or support for the submission from a range of stakeholders, for example, health authorities, those concerned with post-graduate education or the local community.

Appendices should be numbered.

Appendix 1 should be the accreditation letter.

Appendix 2 can be an acknowledgement and list of all who contributed to the preparation of the submission.

Other appendices with supporting evidence may be submitted in a language other than English.

Each appendix, with evidence to support the submission, must be accompanied by a commentary in English (maximum 300 words) that summarises the content of the material provided and how it contributes as evidence to support the case for excellence in student engagement.

Where confidential material, for example, relating to finances is included in an appendix, this should be clearly stated at the top of the appendix and noted in the letter accompanying the submission.

SECTION E

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Student evaluation

The provision of corroborative evidence from students is considered important to the assessment of excellence in student engagement. As part of the ASPIRE submission process it is a requirement that you show the final version of your application to representatives of students in your institution and seek from them a statement that provides their perspective.

The school should have sight of the student form but may not amend it or their own statement or evidence.

Where a discrepancy occurs between the school statement and the student report it would be helpful if the discrepancy is noted and commented on by the school in the covering letter which should accompany the application.

Several different examples exist from successful applicants of ways of gathering the student perspective. One school used a social media site to share the document with all students and gather responses. Another conducted a survey of a small but representative group of students.

Submitting the report

The application form includes a student evaluation checklist for students to rate whether they consider the school submission to be accurate, partially accurate or not accurate in relation to each of the sub-categories. There are also open response questions and a request for information on how the report was compiled.

The school and students are free to choose the best means for them to gather the student perspective. However, it is essential that information in the student form is based on a representative sample of students. It is essential that it is shown that this sample is representative of the student body.

It is suggested that the views of a minimum sample of between 10-25 students are gathered before the form is completed. All students should have the opportunity to view and comment on the completed application.

The consensus report, reflecting the views of and approved by a representative groups of students should be submitted with the application form.

Glossary terms

School mission and vision	<p>The school mission is a public statement of an institution’s founding purpose and major organisational commitments; that is, what the school does and why it does it.</p> <p>The school vision is a public statement of an institution’s high-level ideals, core values and long-term objectives, the goals for the future to fulfil the mission of the school.</p>
Accreditation process	<p>An accreditation process is a self-regulatory process by which governmental, non-governmental, voluntary associations or other statutory bodies grant formal recognition to educational programmes or institutions that meet stated criteria of educational quality. Educational programmes or institutions are measured against certain standards by a review of written information, self-studies, site visits to the educational programme, and thoughtful consideration of the findings by a review committee.</p>
Faculty	<p>Faculty as a term can be used to refer to an organisational division in a university (e.g. Faculty of Medicine) or the academic staff. In the context of this application faculty refers to academic staff.</p>
Active learning	<p>Active learning is an approach that places responsibility of learning on the learner. Students may be required to participate in activities, apply their knowledge, seek solutions to problems and to reflect on their experience.</p>
Peer teaching	<p>Peer teaching involves students taking an active role in presenting and discussing themes and issues and learning from each other in ways that supplement the teaching of academic staff. Examples may include a student taking responsibility, perhaps within a small group, to investigate one aspect of a topic and give a short summary to the group, leading or facilitating discussions.</p>
Learning resources	<p>Learning resources are materials used for the purposes of teaching and learning. They can take a variety of formats, both written and visual, including summaries, papers, instructions, diagrams, and videos.</p>
Mentor role	<p>A mentoring role involves a two-way relationship between a mentor and a mentee. A mentor is usually a person with greater experience in the same field than the mentee, who can offer advice, information and critically, support in times of need. Peer mentoring concerns a more equal relationship between people at the same stage of experience in a mutually supportive relationship.</p>
Self-assessment	<p>Self-assessment is the process of evaluating one’s own achievements, strengths, weaknesses, development, performance and competencies.</p>
Peer assessment	<p>Peer assessment concerns the active participation of students in assessing their peers. Such assessment can be in the form of formative feedback in the course of study, but may also be part of summative assessment and contribute to the final score, particularly in a team-based or group-work situation. It is important that guidance is provided on learning outcomes, marking criteria and rating scales.</p>

Local community projects	Local community projects are those that exist in the local area which provide support and services for local groups. Students may become involved on a voluntary basis, as part of their studies or as employees. Such projects may or may not relate to their professional studies.
Extracurricular activities	Extracurricular activities are those performed by students that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school or university education. Such activities may form an important part of integrating students into university life and offer opportunities for developing key life and social skills. Examples may include: sports, drama, languages, politics, debating, journalism, events organising, choir, music, amongst many others.