Digital Equity Charter

This charter sets out the University's commitment to ensuring all students have equitable access to development opportunities, hardware, software, connectivity and study space to effectively engage with their learning and establishes the expectations on students to engage with the opportunities available.

This is in accordance with the University's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), with digital equity underpinning each of the 3 priorities of the EDI strategy: Inclusive environment and culture; Diversity and equity across our community, and Inclusive practice.

Scope and Definitions

Scope

This charter applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in addition to postgraduate researchers (PGRs). Digital accessibility is a critical consideration contributing to digital equity and this document should be read alongside the University's Website Accessibility Policy which is currently in development.

Definitions

- **Digital inclusion or equity** is defined by the United Nations as "equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere." Within the context of Higher Education, in addition to the opportunities for students to develop their digital capabilities, this necessitates the equitable provision of software, hardware, connectivity and safe places to study.

- **Digital accessibility** "or web accessibility, is about universality and making websites and digital services that can be accessed and used by everyone - people on different devices, in different environments and with different abilities."

- **Digital wellbeing** is influenced by "the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical, social and emotional health."

- **Device agnostic software delivery** - software delivery that is not dependent on the specification of a student's device or location.

Roles and Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of students to engage as needed with the opportunities the charter provides.

- It is the responsibility of all staff, concurrent with their role-based responsibilities, to adhere to and implement the charter.

- It is the responsibility of the University to signpost support as needed to students, applicants; offer holders and prospective students.

- It is the responsibility of the University and Students' Union to review and update the charter and accompanying implementation documentation annually.

- The Students' Union will work in partnership with the University to ensure that the University is held accountable to the delivery and upkeeping of the charter.
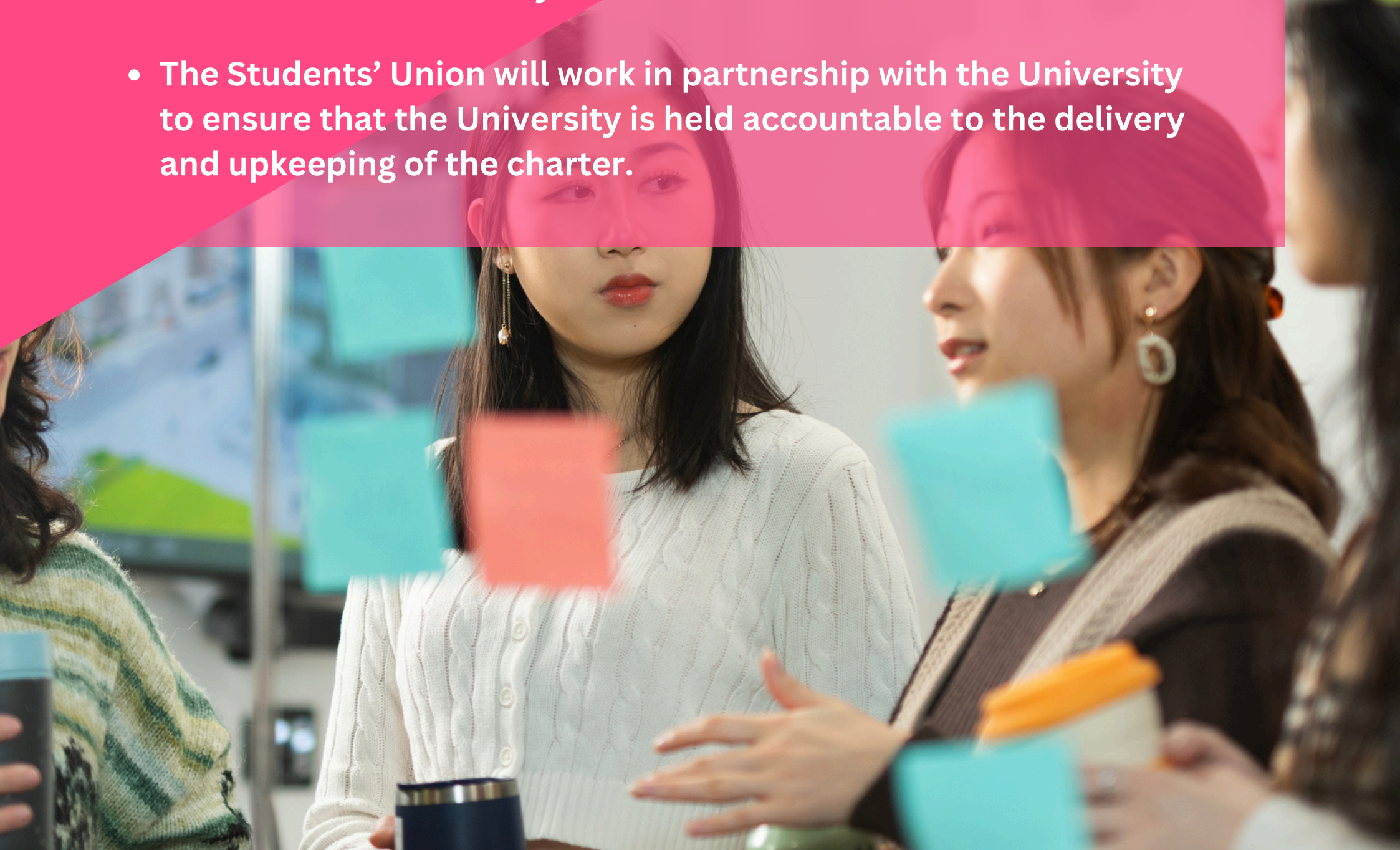
General Principles

As stated in Our Future Strategic vision and plan, the University is committed to ensuring that students / PGRs must be appropriately supported to develop the digital capabilities necessary to prepare them for their University studies and the workplace beyond.

The University is equally committed to ensuring that access to appropriate hardware, software, connectivity and infrastructure is provided and suitable spaces to study are provided, accessible and fit for purpose.

Flexible Learning

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The University commits to ensuring that, wherever possible:

- Curricular and extracurricular opportunities are provided for all students in order to develop and evidence their digital capabilities.

- Teaching, learning and assessment will be designed and delivered to ensure digital equity.

- Learning materials, websites and mobile applications will be designed to be accessible as required by <u>The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018</u>.

- University Programmes/PGR Research projects will be inclusively designed and consider the digital wellbeing of students and staff.

- University Programmes/Units/PGR Supervisors will recommend a minimum suitable specification of computing device, this should be reviewed annually, until such times as University software is delivered in a device agnostic manner.

Access to hardware, software, connectivity and infrastructure

- In line with the University's commitment to our strategic ambitions for 'An Education for Global Leadership' and 'Lifelong and Flexible Learning', no student should be disadvantaged by not having access to software, hardware, connectivity due to barriers to inclusion, such as disability, geopolitical and economic. This additionally links to the University's commitment to the United Nation's Sustainable Delivery Goals, contributing to: Goal 4 Quality Education; Goal 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure and Goal 10 Reduced Inequalities. Where there are resource implications for students, funding / support will be signposted.

- The University aims to move to a manner of software delivery that is not dependent on the specification of a student's device or location, wherever possible. Where there are resource implications for students, funding/support will be signposted.

- The University provides a range of University wide assistive software to support both disabled and non-disabled students, in addition to more specialised software to meet individual student needs being available through the Disability Advisory and Support Service. The University commits to ensuring students are aware of the assistive software available, that those are up to date with current accessibility standards and to provide training on that software.

Flexible Learning

Access to study spaces

All on campus students will have access to suitable, accessible study space within accessible buildings.

The University commits to providing physical or hybrid study spaces that are adaptable and flexible and embrace digital learning, motivate user participation, encourage teachers and students to optimise the use of facilities and promote authentic learning.