

Code of Practice for Student Academic Representation

Purpose of Document

This Code of Practice should be a working document that can be used as guidance for both students and staff on Student Academic Representation. A further condensed version should be disseminated to all students at the beginning of their course, through putting it into student handbooks and on departmental webpages. Further working documents such as good practice guidelines for Student Staff Committees will sit underneath this document and will offer more real time operational best practice.

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1. Definition of Student Academic Representation

This document refers only to academic student representation. The Code of Practice covers student representation in learning and teaching at a departmental and faculty level, and does not make reference to Student Ambassadors for Learning and Teaching, as they are not representative roles. Student Ambassadors for learning and teaching should be used specific learning and teaching projects paid work and should never be utilised as a source of representation or student opinion.

Student representation in departments and faculties is one of the key ways in which students are engaged in their learning and teaching. It is also crucial in terms of quality assurance and quality in enhancement across the University.

2. Structure of Student Academic Representation

Student representation at the University is formalised through departmental Student Staff Committees (SSCs) and Faculty Student Staff Committees (FSSCs).

PGT students in most departments are represented at UG SSCs. However, some departments may wish to create a separate committee structure for PGT students, or include them in the PGR committee structure.

There should also be student representation on Departmental Learning and Teaching Committees and on Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees as standard. There can, however, be wider student representation at departmental and faculty meetings but departments should ensure that student

attendance at meetings is useful rather than tokenistic and where possible look to gather key opinions from Student Staff Committees themselves.

Elected Students' Union sabbatical officers and Students' Union Councillors also offer student representation on higher level university committees. And will, where relevant support other representatives.

The exact structure of student representation will differ between individual departments and faculties so that their suit their own structures. Departments and faculties should ensure that they formally map their own structures and pass on this document to the relevant University and Students' Union departments.

3. Purpose of Student Academic Representation

- To engage students in working to improve their education
- To enable students, on behalf of their peer group, to raise issues of a learning and teaching nature with departments and faculties, and work with staff to resolve problems
- To ensure an effective student voice at all departmental and faculty levels
- To get feedback from students on current developments in learning and teaching
- To create a student-centred, consistent approach in dealing with student issues across the university
- To engage students to discuss faculty learning and teaching issues through a representative on departmental and Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees.

4. Types of Student Academic Representation

4.1 Course Representation

Course Representation exists for the representation of students on a course level. These student representatives will relay the views of their course peers to the university at a departmental level.

Course representatives may take on additional roles of representation within a department. These roles will typically involve a reduced number of students representing the whole department at committees such as, but not exclusive to, Learning and Teaching Committees, Clinical Board of Studies and Health and Safety.

A recommended course rep structure is held by the Students' Union as a real time working document for departments and faculties to utilise as best practice.

4.2 Faculty representation

Faculty representation exists for the representation of students from a particular department to the rest of the faculty and wider institution. Faculty representation will adhere and work towards to the purpose of student representation as outlined in point 3.

4.3 Students' Union Representation

Students' Union Council is the main decision making body in the Students' Union. It has the power to make decisions about Students' Union policy, to put proposals to referenda and to oversee the work of, and mandate, the Student Officers.

There are 46 departmental councillors, 9 representative councillors and 8 Student Officers that make up the membership of Students' Union Council. Departmental Councillors are elected by students in their department each year to represent them in Students' Union. This will include, but is not limited to, issues around learning and teaching. These individuals will work closely with departments and other academic representation positions and will attend relevant departmental committee meetings.

5. Monitoring and Reviewing of Student Academic Representation

- Department and Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee should ensure their corresponding departments and faculties adhere to this Code of Practice on an annual basis.
- It is the role of the Academic Representation Coordinator within the Students' Union and the Projects and Student Partnership Manager within Academic and Learning Services to monitor and review this code annually. To support this, the code should also be aligned with the work of the Student Engagement Working Group to ensure continued relevancy with both the institution and sector guidelines (e.g. the QAA Quality Code).

6. Schedule for Elections and Recruitment

Student Representatives must be chosen by the student body they represent. The university, both centrally and departments, are responsible for the recruitment of Course and Faculty reps across the institution. The Students' Union will provide recruitment resources and is happy to assist departments with the organisation of the appointment of reps when invited. Representatives Departments can hold elections or ask for volunteers from a cohort

6.1 Course Representatives

There should be a minimum of 2 course reps per year with further considerations for dual honours or combination courses. The Students' Union places no maximum limit on the number of Course Reps and actively encourages departments to have as many course reps as possible to ensure the effective representation of the student voice within each department.

Departments should notify the Students' Union's Academic Representation Co-ordinator of the names of elected Course representatives on the appropriate pro-forma no later than the end of Week 4. This is to ensure that details of the Students' Union training can be distributed promptly.

6.2 Faculty Representatives

There should be a minimum of 1 undergraduate and postgraduate representative. Further consideration should be made for the demographic of each department when seeking further representatives.

Faculty reps should be recruited and appointed during the end of the previous academic session allowing for more comprehensive training before the start of the next session. Faculties should notify the Students' Union's Academic Representation Co-ordinator of the names of elected Faculty representatives on the appropriate pro-forma by the final week of the previous academic session. Faculty Reps can be recruited from the whole cohort within the department and are not restricted to current Course Reps.

6.3 Students' Union Councillors

The departmental and representative councillors are elected in October of each academic year via a Students' Union election. Student from each department will have the opportunity to run to represent their department in a cross-department election.

Exact election timetables will fluctuate but departments will be informed of their departmental Union Councillor by the end of October.

7. Role of the University

University of Sheffield will:

- Facilitate the recruitment of Student Representatives.
- Facilitate the effective support of student representation by providing administrative support to meetings such as organising meetings and agendas.
- Provide the Students' Union with all relevant data required for the completion of HEAR eligibility.
- Ensure the appointment and fulfilment of the role of SSC Co-ordinator role in each department. This role will be defined by departments themselves but guidance will be given from central University and the Students' Union.
- Induct student representatives into the department and/ or faculty. This includes introducing them to learning and teaching structures and priorities as well a historical context of academic representation throughout the past academic year.
- Facilitate further student representation that occurs outside of meetings such as one-to-one sessions, discussion boards or online approaches.
- Facilitate the effective communication between students and student representatives following recommendations from the Students' Union.

8. Role of student representatives

Student Representatives are expected to:

- Fulfil requirements of their role as set out in their role description.
- Attend at least 75% of relevant meetings and formally report back to the Students' Union as to topics discussed.
- Complete all relevant Students' Union training and attend any departmental/faculty-specific induction.
- Fulfil any further roles for which they have taken responsibility such as Chair of committee.

9. Role of Students' Union

The Students' Union will:

- Provide the University with the resources and support for the recruitment of Student Representatives.
- Provide training and support to all student representatives, and will be in regular contact with them to ensure that they are well informed about higher education issues.
- Hold an annual conference on student representatives for both students and staff looking to develop student representation and involved in learning and teaching.

- Engage with student representatives and encourage them to fulfil their roles to the best of their ability
- Departmental Students' Union Councillors will act as a link between the Students' Union and course representatives in departments. Departments will be informed of the name and contact details of this elected Councillor after elections have taken place, usually around Week 5.
- These Students' Union Councillors will support course representatives, and will attend SSC meetings in their department.
- Ensure the HEAR record of each student representative is kept up to date in relation to activities undertaken which are relevant to the HEAR record;
- Provide advice and support to University academic and services departments to ensure a consistent approach to academic representation across the institution.

10. Departmental Student-Staff Committees (SSC)

Further to the core guidance provided below more operational guidelines and support will be produced annually by Learning and Teaching Services and the Students' Union. This will take the form of good practice guidelines for Student Staff Committees that departments can utilise for ensuring these meetings are inclusive and productive.

10.1 Membership

Students:

- A minimum of 2 Student Reps per year per course. More may be invited dependent on department structure.
- 2 postgraduate (taught) and 2 postgraduate (research) representatives should also be invited where a separate postgraduate SSC does not exist.
- 1 Rep from the relevant Departmental Society(s). This should be an elected society committee member preferably the Academic Representative or the President
- Representative roles where needed as deemed appropriate by the SSC can be co-opted on to the committee but these students must fulfil the same role as a Course Rep.

Staff:

- SSC coordinator.
- Head of Department/ Director of Learning and Teaching/ Programme Leader
- Departmental librarian
- Up to 3 members of staff (representative of years)

10.2 Topics for Discussion

The Students' Union recommends the use of a basic structured agenda where all members are allowed to contribute under the key points facilitating both quality assurance and quality enhancement. Further points can be added to the agenda but members should be encouraged to contribute under the standing points

A basic agenda should use the categories below as standing items:

- Learning and Teaching
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Organisation
- Resources
- Personal and Professional Development

- Any other Student Business
- Any other Staff Business – This can include, when relevant, any further quality management items such as external examiners reports that weren't covered in any other points.

10.3 Organisation

- Where possible there should be two Student Staff Committees, or other forums for discussion for Student Representation, in departments each semester. If this is not possible staff should consult with Students and the Students' Union about how best to ensure that its students are still effectively represented. For courses where contact time is heavy, or that involve part-time or distance learning staff may wish to consider alternative approaches such as online forums/discussion to ensure representation continues to happen.
- Participation in meetings should not solely be through attendance at the meeting and staff should encourage a variety of ways of engagement to ensure the student voice is represented constantly. The Students' Union can, when invited, assist staff with this process.
- Agendas should follow the basic agenda as laid out in 10.2. Addition to this agenda, by students or staff, should be kept to a minimum. Where additional agenda items are added it is the responsibility of staff to collect these and the discretion of the chair whether to accept these items. Staff should distribute the finalised a minimum of 7 days in advance of each meeting.
- The minutes should identify follow up actions required and by whom. At the next meeting there should be a report on the progress of these actions.
- The ethos of Student Staff Committee meetings is that they are student-led. This means that they should be chaired or co-chaired by a student. In the absence of a student chair, whether it through lack of attendance or lack of a volunteer, a staff member may chair meetings.
- There should be at least one student representative elected from the departmental SSC to sit on the departmental Learning and Teaching Committee.

10.4 Measuring impact

- At the end of each academic session departmental committees will jointly compose a series of mutually agreed recommendations and commendations for their department. This will present a summation of the student voice for the academic session and will highlight key areas that should be have been raised throughout the academic session forward. These recommendations can be complied externally to a meeting or in the final meeting of the academic year.
- Departments should utilise these recommendations and commendations to inform the induction of the following year Academic Representatives.
- Both the recommendations and response should be forwarded to the Students' Union at the end of each academic year. Students' Union will monitor the outcomes of student

representation in all departments and Faculties, and will provide support and advice wherever required by staff or students.

11. Faculty Student-Staff Committees

Exact faculty representation structures and processes will vary between faculties to best reflect the student makeup of that faculty. Exact structures and approaches will be reviewed and agreed upon annually between Learning and Teaching Services and the Students' Union. They should in principle follow very similar structures and roles to departmental Student Staff Committees. Staff in those departments that fall outside the traditional faculty provision should ensure that their department is effectively represented at an institutional level.

12. Publicity for Student Academic Representatives

- All departments should have a well-publicised space on the Virtual Learning Environment where all Course and Faculty information is stored. This should include contact details for all SSC and FSSC members, as well as agendas and minutes for the meetings. A member of departmental staff should maintain this website.
- Staff should, where possible, allow students to utilise time pre or post lectures where student reps can talk to cohorts about their role.
- Departments should also provide notice boards for Course Reps to display contact details, and for the posting of department and faculty meeting agendas and minutes, together with publicity about departmental issues.
- Pigeonholes for Course Reps should, where possible, be made available in the departmental office in order for staff or students to be able to contact them.