Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 11 - Taught student/staff liaison committees: code of good practice

[Partner Institutions: All partner institutions delivering programmes validated by the University of Exeter are required to observe this code of good practice]

1.   Introduction

1.1.   Each Faculty should possess one or more Student/Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) covering all taught programmes.

1.2.   Research degree programmes are covered by the PGR Liaison forums code in the research section of the TQA manual.

1.3.   This chapter refers to an Academic Representation "Toolkit" (see Annex 1). The Toolkit is a collection of alternative ways to engage students in the management and review of our educational provision beyond traditional SSLC and PGRLF processes, both through formal and more informal means. The Toolkit, published by the Guild, provides some examples, such as more informal lecture shout-outs, rep drop-ins and small thematic focus groups, and more formal Town Hall Forums, large thematic meetings/Big Rep Meetings, and surveys.

2.   Aims and objectives of an SSLC

2.1.   To enable students and staff to jointly participate in the composition, management and review of Faculty provision with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

2.2.   To facilitate greater communication between students and staff within a Faculty.

2.3.   To identify and address areas of concern to students and staff.

2.4.   To assist student contribution at all levels of decision-making concerning unreserved business within the Faculty and University.

2.5.   To disseminate examples of good practice.

2.6.   To provide documentary evidence of the participation of students in the quality assurance and development of the programmes delivered by the Faculty.

3.   Faculty committee structure and process

3.1.   Each Faculty shall have as many SSLCs as is appropriate to effectively represent the interests of their students, subject to the recommendations and approval of the

Students' Guild/ the Students' Union, but this **must** be at least one per Department. Where specific student groups/cohorts within each SSLC can meet separately to represent specific cohorts within SSLCs need to be consulted, such as taught postgraduate students, or specific subject and programme cohorts, an appropriate method of engagement should be used, as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit. The Faculty **should** ensure that there are clear and effective reporting mechanisms into the wider Faculty processes, such as through a Student Partnership Board.

3.2.   The SSLC Action Plan or minutes of SSLC meetings should be a standing item on the agenda of the Faculty's Education and Student Partnership Committee.

4.   SSLC membership

4.1.   Student membership of each SSLC **should** be drawn from a diversity of student groups so as to be representative of the major constituencies of students within the Department/specific student groups/cohorts, and will be set by the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union following consultation between the student volunteers and the relevant Director of Education and Student Experience, or equivalent.

4.2.   Anyone taking a module in a subject is eligible to volunteer for that SSLC, regardless of their course title. Following consultation and appointment, the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union will provide the Student Communities and Partnerships Team (within Quality and Standards) with a full list of academic representative posts for each SSLC, who **should** then share it with Faculties/Departments.

4.3.   Academic representative posts under the jurisdiction of the Students' Guild will be filled by students who have applied to be volunteers.

4.4.   Academic posts based in Cornwall under the jurisdiction of the Students' Union will be elected by a ballot among their peers run by the Students' Union. The Faculties and the Students' Union are jointly responsible for promoting and supporting the election.

4.5.   Where an unavoidable situation precludes the election of student representatives by a ballot run by the Students' Guild, student representatives can be selected.

4.6.   Where an unavoidable situation precludes the election of student representatives by a ballot run by the Students' Union, student representatives can be elected by an in house vote conducted by the Faculty.

4.7. Election of Department Officers / Subject Chairs should, where possible, be held in Term 2 to ensure continuity of representation over the summer. The Academic Representation Operations Network (ARON) will agree the necessary timeline, processes and procedures to support this process.

4.8. The Students' Guild/ the Students' Union are responsible for the organisation and running of training sessions for academic representation posts, supported as appropriate by the Student Communities and Partnerships Team.

4.9. Where there is a corresponding academic society to a department SSLC, a member of the society committee should be invited to be a member of the SSLC. Invitations will be sent by the Student Community and Partnerships Team. The appropriate Faculty-facing coordinator will be responsible for this process.

4.10. The Student Community and Partnerships Team will provide a member of staff responsible for administering each SSLC, including fulfilling the role of secretary. Where this is not possible or alternative arrangements are agreed, the Faculty will provide a member of administrative support for this purpose. Please see 5.12 for further details on the role of the secretary.

4.11. Staff membership of the SSLC **should** not normally exceed six representatives and should not be in the majority. The staff representatives should be nominated by the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, though this can be delegated to a member of staff within each Department or School. Directors of Education and Student Experience or their equivalent **must** be members of SSLCs.

5.   SSLC meetings

5.1. Each SSLC **should** have agreed and documented terms of reference and follow the standard agenda as laid down by this Code of Practice.

5.2. A full SSLC **should** meet a minimum of once per term to ensure that the membership conducts an end-of-year review of the SSLC Action Plan or any matters still arising from previous minutes, and to facilitate a handover between the outgoing and incoming student representatives.

5.3. Where possible, SSLCs **should** take full advantage of online meeting technology available to ensure that all representatives and student groups/cohorts within its remit can be included and represented in meetings, such as for distance learning programmes and degree apprenticeships.

5.4. Members of an SSLC **should** also be invited to relevant supplementary events on specific matters. For example, to focus on issues relating to a specific student group/cohort, such as for individual programmes or taught postgraduates within the subject, or at the beginning of Term 1 to specifically discuss the subject's Teaching Excellence Action Plan (TEAP).

5.5. In the spirit of ongoing partnership and dialogue, student and staff members of an SSLC should aim to identify and resolve matters as they arise outside of meetings, unless further discussion, escalation, or action only available through a full SSLC meeting is required. SSLC business conducted like this will be noted at the next full meeting and recorded appropriately in the relevant SSLC Action Plan or minutes.

5.6. An Action Plan for the SSLC must be kept and used to record outputs from all meetings and conversations, such as agreed actions and details of discussions where context or a record of this having taken place is necessary. Minutes for each meeting can also be used instead of a single Action Plan, should an SSLC's membership agree this is more appropriate.

5.7. The agenda for SSLC meetings **must**, as a minimum, include the following standard items:

5.7.1. Matters arising and actions taken following the previous meeting.

5.7.2. Report from a nominated student on developments (such as activities undertaken as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit, for example) since the previous meeting.

5.7.3. Report from the Director of Education and Student Experience on any departmental developments.

5.8. Over the course of an academic year, SSLCs (or other methods of engagement as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit) **should** have an opportunity to discuss the following themes:

a. Information relating to internal and external systems of accountability, to include:

  i. Professional, statutory and regulatory body reports and Faculty responses to recommendations.

  ii. External examiners' reports and Faculty responses to recommendations.

b. Teaching (including the dissemination of good practice and programme and module evaluation).

c.   Organisation and management (including timetabling and Faculty administrative processes).

d.   Learning resources (including library, IT and other teaching/learning resources).

e.   Employment, employability and personal development.

f.   Outcomes of student evaluations e.g. Accelerate and NSS and any action plans arising from these.

g.   Barriers to access or learning, and other diversity and inclusion related issues affecting particular groups within the subject cohort.

h.   New and revised programme developments.

i.   Assessment and feedback.

j.   Personal tutoring.

k.   Student-led projects or events.

l.   The effectiveness of the SSLC and the actions of the Students' Guild/ the Students'

m.   Union and Faculty in response to it.

5.9.   Where the SSLC's nominated student and Director of Education and Student Experience agree, the agenda points may be adapted to suit the particular needs of any courses that may have more specific needs. This includes postgraduate programmes. They should still be encouraged to cover these items throughout the course of the year where possible.

5.10.   The completed minutes or the updates to the SSLC Action Plan subsequent to the SSLC meeting, as approved by the Chair(s), shall be emailed to all the committee members and made available to all students and staff through an appropriate online medium normally within one week of that meeting by the secretary responsible for the SSLC.

5.11.   Each set of completed minutes or update to an SSLC Action Plan following an SSLC meeting should be forwarded to the Students' Guild/ the Student' Union, and to the Faculty Senior Education Partner or nominated individual who will supply them to the Faculty's Education Strategy Group as appropriate.

5.12.   The role of the Secretary, as outlined in 4.9, will be to service the Committee. This **should** include providing secretarial support and managing the dissemination of the Action Log (or minutes), and the provision of standard items for SSLC consideration as required by the default agenda, such as external examiners' reports/responses, programme approval documentation and material arising from the Quality Review and

Enhancement Framework (e.g. student evaluations, Teaching Excellence Action Plans, etc).

5.13. The allocated staff secretary is responsible for recording and updating the SSLC Action Plan or taking minutes and **should** also be responsible for the general administration of the meeting. The SSLC Action Plan or minutes taken **should** clearly indicate who attended each meeting and their role in relation to the Committee.

5.14. All administrative costs beyond providing a secretary to service meetings should be via the Faculty.

5.15. Any student may attend a meeting of an SSLC as a non-participating observer. Other members of the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union (not already included within the membership of the SSLC) will be invited to attend at SSLCs in each Faculty every academic year, also as non-participating observers. Other members of staff from the Faculty may attend at the discretion of the Chair, also as non-participating observers.

6.   Department Officers and Subject Chairs

6.1.   Department Officers or Subject Chairs will be elected by a ballot among their peers run by the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union.

6.1.1. The Faculties and the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union are jointly responsible for promoting and supporting the election.

6.1.2. Specific responsibilities for publicity and promotion of each election will be agreed between the Students' Guild/ the Students' Union and each Faculty at least one month before each election.

6.2.   The responsibility for managing the role descriptions of the Department Officers and Subject Chair will lie with the Students' Guild/Student's Union.

6.3.   The Department Officers and Subject Chair(s) will liaise with class representatives where the Departments use them, in order to gain wider student feedback and provide a fuller picture of student opinion.

6.4.   Where it is beneficial to both student and University, Department Officers/Subject Chairs or academic representatives may be invited to take on additional responsibilities.

6.4.1. This may include invitations to sit on University Working Groups and Faculty-level Education meetings, acting as representatives on particular University service offerings, or organising academic events, subject to the approval of the Students' Guild/

the Students' Union. Liaison should happen with the relevant Students' Guild/the Students' Union staff members before inviting Subject Chairs/Department Officers.

6.4.2. In addition, where appropriate under the recommendations of the Student's Union, the Subject Chair can also take Chair's actions to approve changes that require action before an SSLC can be convened. Where such action is taken, the Chair must be allowed time to consult with the SSLC to gain wider student feedback and the Chair should provide a full report to the next formal SSLC meeting.

6.5. A table demonstrating the role of Subject Chairs and Department Officers is provided below. Further details are available from the SU / the Student's Guild.

Role	Subject Chair	Department Officer
Region	Cornwall	Devon
Elected and trained via	The SU	Student's Guild
Level appointed at	By SSLC	By Department
Number appointed	1-2 per SSLC	1-4 per Department
Expected to Chair SSLCs?	Yes. Subject Chairs are responsible for promoting the role of the SSLC and coordinating the student members of their SSLC.	No. They are invited to, but not expected to Chair. The Chair will usually be the Director of Student Experience and Engagement (DESE).

7.   Partner institutions

7.1. The University's partner institutions should incorporate SSLCs or their equivalent into their quality assurance systems.