

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

POLICY ON CONSULTING STUDENTS ABOUT MAJOR CHANGES

Index of points

1. Introduction
2. Applicability and Exceptions
3. Definition of Major Change
4. Process of Consultation
5. Provision of Information and Level of Detail
6. Responsibility for Consultation Process

Policy on Consulting Students about Major Changes

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Students are major stakeholders in the University's operations and decision-making processes. They experience the frontline impact of changes to academic and corporate service departments, facilities and the University's structure. Provision of a unique student perspective is a valuable, positive contribution to decision making within the University.
- 1.2 The Institutional Audit quality assurance process asks key questions of the University. Annex D of the Handbook¹ covers the opportunity for the Guild to make a written submission. Four points define the scope of that submission, one of which covers student representation. It has been reworded by a QAA Director as "Do you have a voice? Does anyone listen?"² Whilst students' formal representation on decision making committees at Birmingham meets best practice, the process of consulting students on major changes is not as strong.
- 1.3 The emphasis of student consultation is to provide accurate, complete information and collect feedback from various groups of students who may be affected by a change. Collated feedback to this consultation should be analysed and the University should address the concerns that are raised and, where necessary and possible, adjust plans. The consultation process should take place before final plans are confirmed and final decision are made.

2. Applicability and Exceptions

This policy applies to academic and service departments, and central management. Exceptions to this policy will necessarily apply where factors outside the University's control require or suggest that. Such exceptions should be agreed and their circumstances discussed with the Guild and/or the local elected student representatives.

3. Definition of Major Change

A major change, as a minimum, materially impacts on a cohort of students', e.g. a year group within an academic department (a unit within a School) or a residence, pursuit of study and/ or student life. Interpretation of this definition may evolve as greater experience of consultation on major changes is gained.

4. Process of Consultation

- 4.1 Information should be circulated to Student Reps/Staff Student Committees within a department affected by the change and posted on noticeboards within the department. The Guild will advertise information through Bugged and place information on its website. The information will make clear who is responsible for the consultation. There should be one month between publication of information and the deadline for feedback.

¹ [QAA Handbook for institutional audit:](#)

² QAA Director Nicola Channon at QAA/NUS training event January 2003

- 4.2 Responses will be collated by the Guild/local elected student representatives and submitted as one coherent document. The collective response will be provided within two working weeks of the deadline for feedback.
- 4.3 The University should consider and respond to the document, addressing the concerns within the students' feedback. The University's detailed response to that feedback should be made available to the Guild/students within a month of submission and demonstrate that concerns have been taken into account in subsequent plans.

5. Provision of Information and Level of Detail

It is understood that some information cannot be provided, as it would affect staff and their individual jobs. Notwithstanding that restriction appropriate information should be provided to illustrate the scale and implications of a change. Where possible a range of options should be included and not a *fait accompli*.

6. Responsibility for Consultation Process

- 6.1 Both the Guild and the University have a role in this process:
 - 6.1 .1 the University's role is to provide timely, adequate information; ensure that it is made available to students; and respond to students' concerns;
 - 6.1 .2 the Chair of the appropriate decision making forum or his/ her nominee is responsible for the consultation;
 - 6.1 .3 the Guild's/elected student representatives' role is to encourage provision of and collate students' feedback, produce a coherent summary of concerns and questions and represent those views in the appropriate decision making fora
 - 6.1 .4 the Guild will provide advice and support, as requested, to local student representatives.