

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
STUDENT REPRESENTATION SYSTEM POLICY

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Student Representation System Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Student Representation System (SRS) is a partnership between the University of Birmingham and the Guild of Students. The aim of the SRS is to ensure that every student at Birmingham is effectively represented to the University and the Guild by a fellow student. It is founded on the belief that through effective representation students become partners in their education, allowing a more active involvement in, and ownership of, their learning.
- 1.2 The document ~~is separated into two parts~~ comprises a set of essential precepts for student representation across the University which must be adhered to by all parties in the University and Guild of Students.
- 1.2 ~~4~~ Further guidance for carrying out the precepts is available from the Guild of Students and/or the Academic Quality Unit. Please contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk for additional information.
- 1.3 ~~A set of core principles for student representation across the University which must be adhered to by all parties in the University and Guild of Students.~~
- 1.4 In particular, if the implementation of any aspect of the Policy proves challenging, please contact the Guild of Students and/or the Academic Quality Unit promptly in order to discuss possible solutions.
1. ~~2~~ A set of Good Practice Guidelines aimed to provide a basis for Colleges and Schools to practically carry out the core principles.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Student Representation System Policy sets out the joint commitment of the University of Birmingham and the Guild of Students, so as to ensure that the SRS is run effectively throughout the University and is founded on ~~good~~ effective practice.
- 2.2 It is intended that this Policy will be used to ~~guide~~ direct University staff and the Guild of Students to establish the relationship ~~that within which~~ both will operate ~~within~~. This Policy will also be made available to all student representatives.

3. Core Principles

- 3.1 Students' feedback on their University experience ~~whilst at University~~ is integral to quality in higher education institutions. The University ~~of Birmingham~~ and the Guild of Students are committed to providing effective structures for student feedback and representation. Both parties will work jointly in ensuring these systems provide for the assurance and enhancement of quality.
- 3.2 The core value of student representation is that every student on every course at every level has the opportunity to impact on their student learning experience.
- 3.3 The Student Representation System (SRS) is the physical manifestation of the ~~above-mentioned~~ joint commitment to student representation at the University ~~of Birmingham~~. The SRS is run in equal partnership between the University and the Guild of Students in order to deliver academic student representation throughout the

University.

- 3.4 Below is a list of cCore pPrinciples for student representation across the University:

Core Principles for Student Representation

The University and Guild Collaboration

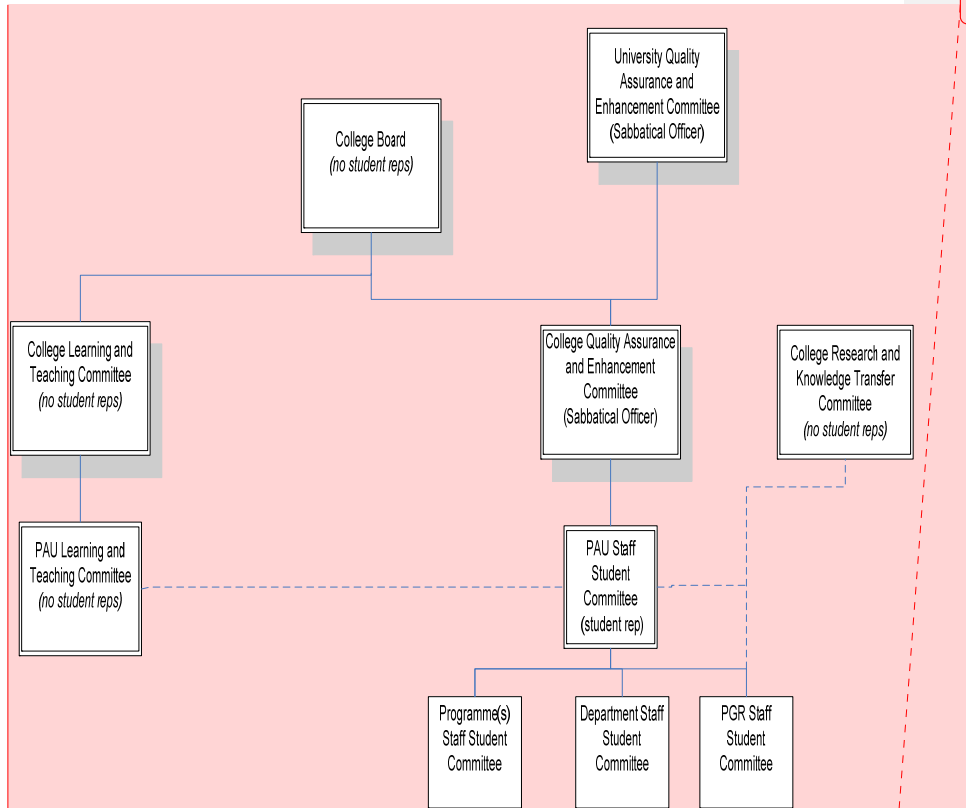
- 3.4 .1 ~~The SRS at the University of Birmingham will be run as a partnership between the University and the Guild of Students.~~
- 3.4 .21 The University ~~of Birmingham~~ will provide appropriate levels of academic and administrative resources to facilitate student representation locally in Colleges and Schools.
- 3.4 .32 The Guild of Students will build and enhance relationships within Colleges / ~~and~~ Schools and provide resources and expertise to facilitate and promote representation across the institution.
- 3.4 .43 The Guild of Students and the University will work together to respond to ~~the~~ feedback from students in order to enhance the quality of the student learning experience at the University ~~of Birmingham~~.
- 3.4 .54 There will be a joint University / Guild Committee, designated the Student Representation System Advisory Board (SRSAB), with over-arching administrative responsibility for delivering the cCore pPrinciples of student representation.

Representation within the University Structure

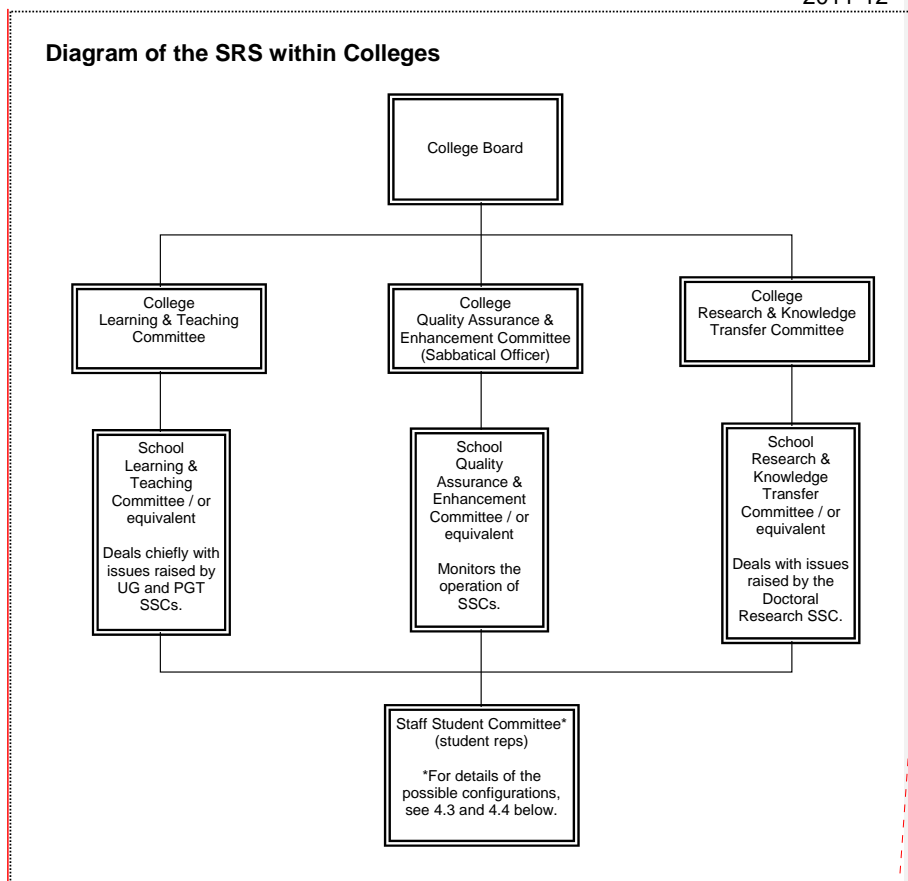
- 3.4 .65 Staff – student interactions, which occur through Staff Student Committees (SSCs) and student representation on relevant internal committees, should be present at ~~College-School~~ and ~~School-College~~ level.
- 3.4 .76 Students should be represented on relevant institutional committees, as agreed between the Guild and the University.
- 3.4 .78 Representation structures need to have a clear linear path to feed information up and down through the University ~~and representation structures~~.
- 3.4 .89 ~~Good-Effective~~ practice should be shared throughout the University.
- 3.4 .940 There will be clear ~~Policies and Guiding Principles~~guidance for the SRS which will outline how the SRS functions across the University. ~~This~~ese will be reviewed by the ~~joint University/Guild Committee~~SRSAB at regular intervals.
- 3.4 .1044 The ~~joint Guild/University Committee for Student Representation~~SRSAB will report into the University's academic quality assurance and enhancement process(es).
- 3.4 .1142 The SRS will inform the Guild's work with respect to academic representation.

4. The Student Representation System Structure

- 4.1 ~~The SRS will operate as a partnership between the University of Birmingham and the Guild of Students.~~ The structure of the SRS conforms to the cCore pPrinciples of Representation outlined above. Please see *Figure 1* for a diagram of the structure.



Comment [R1]: Original Figure 1.



Comment [R2]: Revised Figure 1.

Figure 1. Diagram of the SRS within Colleges.

- 4.2 The structure of the SRS facilitates two-way communication. It provides a formal route for feedback from students to the Department, School, College ~~or~~ and University, and also a route for consultation and communication with the student body.
- 4.3 ~~It may be appropriate for SSCs to exist at the level of a single programme or cognate group of programmes, or at the level of a Department or other sub-School level unit. In this situation, student representatives on sub-School level SSCs may elect members for a School-level SSC. It is recognised that in some Colleges the model will need to be supplemented by other structures or be amended for different constituencies. Where there are some small Schools it may be appropriate to combine SSCs, or where there are large Schools it may be appropriate to have more than one SSC.~~
- 4.4 ~~It is strongly recommended that a separate Doctoral Research SSC is maintained within the structure to ensure that doctoral researchers' representation needs are met while reducing conflicts of interest related to doctoral researchers teaching within Colleges. This Research SSC may be at a Department / School Level or at~~

College level depending on the number of doctoral researchers.¹

~~4.4 It is also recognised that different Colleges may have different structure sub-College level, and that it may be appropriate for SSCs at a single programme or suite of programmes level, or for a Department/Centre/ sub-School level unit. In this situation, Student Representatives at sub-School level SSCs will elect members for the School level SSC.~~

4.5 It is recognised that variants from the agreed model may be appropriate for some constituencies. Where the operation of a different model is proposed, this should first be agreed with the SRSAB (contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk) in a timely manner, and then the approval of the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee should be sought.

~~4.6 It is expected that the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committees will~~
5 annually agree the number and level of SSCs in the College for the following academic year, with the Guild of Students and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Students and will report this to the SRSAB in the Summer Term.

~~4.6 It is strongly recommended that a separate Postgraduate Research SSC is maintained within the structure to ensure that research students' representation needs are met while reducing conflicts of interest related to PGR students teaching within Colleges. This research SSC may be at a Departmental/ School Level, or a College level depending on the number of PGR students.~~

5. Role of Student Representatives

5.1 Student representatives provide the peer representation essential for the SRS to succeed. They have three key responsibilities:

- 5.1 .1 To be responsible for gathering student opinion and presenting this in an appropriate and objective form to University Staff and the Guild of Students.
- 5.1 .2 To be responsible for providing constructive feedback to University staff and work in conjunction with them to reach workable and mutually satisfactory solutions for students.
- 5.1 .3 To be responsible for feeding back to their fellow students responses from the University regarding issues raised.

5.2 This Policy assumes that the SRS can only be effective if the student representatives carry out all of their responsibilities.

6. ~~Good Practice Guidelines~~Key Requirements

6.1 The key requirements for the effective operation of the SRS across the University are as follows:

~~6. The guidelines are broken into six sections representing the main areas of the SRS.~~
~~4 These are:~~

¹ The term 'Doctoral Researcher' refers to individuals registered on a research degree, such as PhD, Professional Doctorate or MPhil.

- A. Staff Support
- B. Student Recruitment
- C. Student Elections
- D. Student Training
- E. Meetings
- F. Resources

6. The guidelines are included in the Policy because they are considered to represent good practice for student representation across the University. Although alternative approaches may be adopted, the core principles stated in **Section 3** must be adhered to.

6. These guidelines assume that the SRS can only be successful if the student representatives carry out all of their responsibilities, as listed in **Section 5**.

6.4 **Staff Support**

6.2 .1 a

The Head of School, or specified nominee (e.g. School Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement), will be responsible for:

6.2 .1 (a) i

ensuring that an academic staff members is allocated to act as the Staff Liaison Contact (SLC) at an appropriate programme level for each Staff Student Committee (SSC);

6.2 .1 (b) ensuring that all staff new to the role of SLC will be provided with a thorough induction to the SRS and their role. The Guild of Students will be prepared to assist in this induction if required, and will do so upon request (contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk);

6.2 .1 (c) notifying the SRSAB (contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk) when a new SLC is appointed;

6.2 .1 (d) ii

ensuring that members of support staff are allocated as appropriate to act as the Guild Liaison Contact (GLC) to provide administrative support for the SRS at the appropriate level; This post is responsible for providing the administrative support to the SRS at the programme level, and providing the first point of contact for the Guild of Students in Colleges and Schools;

6.2 .1 (e) iii

annually agreeing the number of student representatives required at each year level for the appropriate programme level on each Staff Student Committee (SSC) with the SLC; and communicating this to the Student Representation Advisory Board;

6.2 .1 (f) ensuring that SLCs have access to External Examiner report(s), the School's NSS action plan, and summaries of the outcomes of the annual programme review and postgraduate research annual review processes (see 6.5.2).

6.2 .2 ~~b~~

The SLC will be responsible for:

6.2 .2 (a) ~~i~~

the recruitment and election of student representatives at the programme appropriate level;

6.2 .2 (b) ~~ii~~

coordinating the ~~SSCs at the programme level~~. This will include arranging meeting dates and venues, and informing all attendees of these details, distribution of minutes to the sStudent ~~r~~Representatives, etc. ~~and the Guild~~;

6.2 .2 (c) ~~iii~~

providing the first point of contact for the student representatives ~~within their programme level~~;

6.2 .2 (d) ~~iv~~

writing and submitting the Annual SSC Report to the Student Representation System Advisory Board ~~SRSAB~~, in collaboration with the student representatives;

6.2 .2 (e) ~~v~~

submitting the full minutes of every SSC meeting to the appropriate School committees and the nominated School Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement ~~lead in each School~~;

6.2 .2 (f) ~~vi~~

besides the formal Annual Report (refer to Section 7), writing and submitting reports as determined by the SSC, to the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and / or College Learning and Teaching Committee as required regarding business undertaken at meetings, including Actions resulting on matters of concern;

6.2 .2 (g) ~~vii~~

liaising with the Guild of Students with regard tos student representation issues.

~~6~~

~~Each College will be responsible for ensuring that all staff new to the role of SLC or GLC will be provided with a thorough induction to the SRS and their role. The Guild of Students will be prepared to assist in this induction if required, and will do so on request of a member of staff from the respective College. Assistance can be requested from support staff by emailing~~

~~studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk.~~

~~6.2 .3 -d~~

~~The Guild of Students will~~SRSAB will host ~~two~~a forums ~~per year~~ for all SLCs and GLCs ~~during the Summer vacation~~(in October and March). ~~These~~is forums will cover:

~~6.2 .3 (a) -i~~

an introduction to the ~~new~~ Guild of Students Vice President (Education & Access) and the PVC (~~Academic Quality and Students Education~~), and to staff of the Guild and ~~the~~ Academic Quality Unit responsible for administrating the SRS;

~~6.2 .3 (b) -ii~~

an outline of ~~recent~~ changes ~~and developments made to within~~ the SRS ~~for the forthcoming academic session;~~

~~6.2 .3 (c) -iii~~

key dates ~~in the SRS cycle for the new academic session~~, including those for ~~the~~ elections of representatives, training sessions, and reporting dates; ~~and~~

~~6.2 .3 (d) -iv~~

an opportunity to provide feedback about the SRS, ~~to~~and discuss implementation issues that Colleges face with regards to ~~the~~ SRS, ~~and to share effective practice;~~and

~~-v SLC folders to support staff in their role~~

~~6.4 -2~~

~~3~~ **Recruitment and Elections**

~~6.3 .1 -a~~

~~During the student induction / re-induction period, the principles of student representation at the University of Birmingham, and the role of student representatives, will be explained to students. It is at this time that recruitment of student representatives will usually occur. However, where appropriate, student representative elections for continuing cohorts may be held before the end of the academic year for the following academic year. All student representatives at School level should be recruited by the end of October (for September intakes) or mid-February (for January intakes). It is the responsibility of the individual School to ensure recruitment of student representatives occurs.~~

~~6.3 .2 -b~~

~~Upon request, the Guild of Students will attend induction lectures and initial meetings with student cohorts to speak about student representation and the SRS. Staff can arrange these meetings by emailing: studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk. During the student induction period, the principles of student representation at the University of Birmingham, and the role of student representatives, should be explained to students. It is at this time~~

~~that recruitment of student representatives should occur.~~

6.3 ~~.3~~ ~~-e~~

~~All student representatives will normally be democratically elected by those that they are to represent (their peers). Elections will be free and fair, and the election process will allow for full representation of the diversity of students within the School (including part time and distance learning students). Upon request, the Guild of Students will attend induction lectures and initial meetings with student cohorts to speak about student representation and the SRS. Staff can arrange these meetings by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk, or vpea@guild.bham.ac.uk.~~

6.3 ~~.4~~ ~~-d~~

~~A specific date and time will be determined for the election to be held, and publicised to students at least five working days prior to the election in order to allow time for students to volunteer themselves and / or nominate other students for student representative places. The Guild of Students will provide recruitment materials on request (e.g. posters, leaflets, and SRS information), will be available to offer advice and support to overcome recruitment issues, and will respond to queries as they arise.~~

6.3 ~~.5~~ ~~If, after the close of the nomination period, the number of volunteers / nominees for student representative places is less than or equal to the number of places available, all volunteers / nominees will automatically become student representatives. Any student representative place not filled during the election period will preferably be filled by a new election process or, alternatively, may be filled by the co-option of additional student representatives by the existing student members of the SSC.~~

6.3 ~~.6~~ ~~All student representatives at School level will be elected or co-opted, at the latest, by the end of October (for September intakes) or the end of January (for January intakes). It is the responsibility of the SLC to ensure that the democratic election of student representatives occurs.~~

6.3 ~~.7~~ ~~The Guild of Students will assist Schools in running elections upon request (contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk). An Elections Guidance document can also be obtained from the Guild of Students.~~

6.3 ~~.8~~ ~~Once elections have taken place, SLCs will ask student representatives to complete a Student Representative Contact Details Consent Form, which will enable SLCs to share the contact details of student representatives with the Guild of Students.~~

6.4 ~~.3~~ **Elections**

~~a All student representatives should be fairly elected by those that they are to represent (their peers). It is the responsibility of the Head of School or nominee to ensure that fair elections are held.~~

~~b A specific time should be made for the election to be held, and publicised to students at least five working days prior to the election.~~

~~c Where appropriate elections for student representatives for continuing~~

~~cohorts may be held before the end of the academic year for the following academic year. Names and contact details for these students will then need to be returned to the Guild of Students by the end of the Summer Term.~~

- ~~.d The Guild of Students will assist Schools in running elections upon request. Help with elections can be requested by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk, or vpea@guild.bham.ac.uk~~
- ~~.e Once elected, student representatives must complete a *Student Representative Role Description* pro forma provided by the Guild of Students. This must be returned to the SLC who will then forward it to the Guild of Students.~~
- ~~.f Any student representative place not filled during the election period may be taken by any relevant student as long as there are no objections from other students (determined through a group email to students or other such means).~~

6.4 .4

Training

6.4 .1 .a

The Guild of Students will provide all student representatives with a handbook. The handbook will explain the SRS, the role of student representatives, and provide tips for successful representation.

6.4 .2 .b

The Guild of Students will be responsible for training student representatives, and all representatives will be ~~offered expected to undertake~~ appropriate training. ~~Training will include:~~

- ~~.i the principles and importance of student representation;~~
- ~~.ii the role of student representatives at Birmingham;~~
- ~~.iii accountability of representatives;~~
- ~~.iv the representation structure at Birmingham (including the Guild of Students);~~
- ~~.v communication skills to help gain and deliver feedback to students;~~
- ~~.vi preparation and participation in meetings.~~

6.4 .3 .c

~~Student representatives are expected to attend relevant training sessions. The Guild of Students will provide information regarding how to access the training to student representatives and SLCs, and it is expected that SLCs will promote the training sessions within their areas.~~

6.4 .4 .d

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Upon request the Guild of Students will provide bespoke training for cohort groups, and Chair's training for any student reps taking on the role of Chair of the SSC. Staff can arrange this by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk.

6.4 .5 A Training Guidance document, which can be obtained from the Guild of Students (contact studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk), provides more detail about the available training and development opportunities for student representatives.

6.4 .5 Staff Student Committee (SSC) Meetings (SSCs)

6.5 .1 a

Formal student feedback from representatives will be provided by student representatives through the SSCs. These committees will be free to discuss the following topics related to learning and teaching at the University, which may include the content and quality of programmes and modules, assessment methods, learning and teaching methods, feedback on assessed work, student support, learning resources and facilities, etc. (this list is not exhaustive):

- Assessment methods;
- Learning and Teaching methods;
- Summaries of External Examiner Reports
- Student evaluation;
- Quality of teaching;
- Project work;
- Work placements, year abroad arrangements;
- University and departmental academic policy;
- Quality and availability of resources;
- Reading lists and library resources (including opening times);
- Student support;
- Content and quality of programmes and modules;
- Feedback and evaluation on assessed work;
- Personal tutor system;
- Student handbooks;
- Induction.

The committee must not engage in the discussion of:

- Discussion of individual staff members;
- Discussion of individual students;
- Personal complaints/grievances.

Should these topics arise, the SLC-s must tell inform students of the appropriate mechanisms through which to raise these issues, and arrange an alternative time to discuss them (if necessary).

6.5 .2 At least once per year, the committee will discuss:

6.5 .2 (a) Section A of the External Examiner reports relevant to the constituency represented by the SSC (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught SSCs only);

6.5 .2 (b) the subject-specific report of NSS results (available from

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www.unistats.direct.gov.uk), together with the School's NSS action plan (Undergraduate SSCs only);

6.5 .2 (c) a summary of the outcomes of the annual programme review (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught SSCs) or postgraduate research annual review (Doctoral Research SSCs) process.

6.5 .3 ~~b~~

The positions of Chair and Secretary of the committee may be offered to a student representative~~s~~. Should no student ~~want accept the either of these positions~~, the SLC will act as ~~Cehair, and a member of support staff will act as the Secretary~~ in the first instance, but students ~~who might be interested~~ should be referred to ~~the available Chair~~s and Secretary training. ~~provided by the Guild of Students (see D2.)~~ The offer of the position~~s~~ of Chair and Secretary may ~~then~~ be offered to student representatives at a subsequent meeting.

6.5 .4 ~~e~~

SSCs will meet at least once per term, and at least three times per year, ~~unless agreed otherwise by the SSC~~. Dates and times for scheduled meetings should be agreed with all attendees soon after the election of representatives, but not later than the conclusion of the first SSC meeting of the academic year. All scheduled meetings should be publicised to all representatives, and should be attended by all student representatives and the SLC.

6.5 .5 ~~d~~

At least one meeting in the Summer term should be provided to discuss and agree the committee's annual report to the SRSAB, unless ~~agreed otherwise~~ an alternative means of agreeing the report is determined by the SSC.

6.5 .6 ~~e~~

Any member of the committee may call an additional meeting when required. The request should be accompanied by a clear outline of the purpose of the meeting, and should be seconded by two other members of the SSC. The SLC will be responsible for ensuring that all members of the committee are aware of the time and date of the additional meetings.

~~f The membership of the SSC should allow for full representation of the students within the School, ensuring part-time and distance learners are taken into consideration also. The number of representatives needed each year will be agreed by the Head of School or nominee during the Summer vacation and communicated to the Student Representation System Advisory Board.~~

6.5 .7 ~~g~~

Minutes of every meeting ~~shall will~~ be taken by the SSC and made available to all members. The minutes ~~should will~~ also be disseminated through appropriate means to the student body, highlighting the actions taken in response to issues raised.

6.4 ~~6~~

6 Resources

6.6 .1 ~~→~~

Dedicated facilities and resources ~~should will~~ be made available within appropriate academic areas for use by those ~~see involved in the~~ SRS (including the student representatives). These facilities can be used for advertising who the student representatives are, publicising meeting dates, and asking for and gaining feedback.

6.6 .2 ~~→~~

Facilities and resources should include:

6.6 .2 (a) ~~→~~

a dedicated notice board;

6.6 .2 (b) ~~→~~

access to photocopying and filing space for committee related work;

6.6 .2 (c) ~~→~~

access to meeting rooms to hold student forums and drop-ins;

6.6 .2 (d) ~~→~~

access to all student email lists (through Admin Manager if necessary);

~~→~~

~~access to WebCT;~~

6.6 .2 (e) ~~→~~

~~with the~~ ability opportunity to speak to students ~~before or~~ at the end of lectures for publicity purposes.

7. Reporting Structures

7.1 For items arising out of SSC minutes needing immediate consideration and action it may be appropriate for issues to be taken to the School Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) or equivalent, or the College Learning and Teaching Committee LTC. It may also be appropriate for issues arising from Doctoral Research SSC minutes to be taken to the School Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee (R&KTC) or equivalent, or the College R&KTC, if it is not possible to address particular issues at LTCs. In these cases Schools and Colleges should ensure that any resulting action is reported back to the SSC.

7.2 SSCs will also ~~report provide~~ their minutes to the School Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement~~lead~~. The School Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement~~lead~~ will regularly report to the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) on the operation of SSCs within their School during the academic year. College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committees~~QAECs~~ may ask to see copies of SSC meetings minutes where specific issues needing attention have arisen.

7.3 SSCs will also report to the Student Representation System Advisory Board~~SRSAB~~ (SRSAB) through the completion of an Annual Report to be completed in the

Summer Term. The ~~A~~Annual ~~R~~report will ~~consist of~~address operational matters and ~~include~~ a summary of issues considered ~~by the SSC~~ during the academic session.

- 7.4 The SRSAB will summarise the responses received from ~~SSC~~ ~~A~~annual ~~SSC~~ ~~R~~reports to produce College-level reports for both College QAEC and College LTC.

~~7.4 .1 College QAEC will assure the operation of the SRS is in accordance with this Policy.~~

~~7.4 .2 College LTC will monitor the academic issues arising from the SRS, and take action as appropriate.~~

~~7.4 .3 Both College QAEC and College LTC will provide feedback to the SRSAB on action taken as a result of issues raised in the College-level reports.~~

- 7.5 The SRSAB will report to the University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee formally through an Annual Report to be presented to the October meeting. ~~The~~ SRSAB may be asked to report activities to other University QAEC meetings throughout the year.

~~7.6 The Student Representation System will report to the Guild Council through the Vice President (Education & Access).~~