UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

STUDENT REPRESENTATION SCHEME POLICY

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Student Representation Scheme (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:

1.2 .1 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.

1.2 .2 A set of Good Practice Guidelines aimed to provide a basis for Colleges and Academic Units to practically carry out the core principles.

2. Purpose

2.1 The Student Representation Scheme Policy sets out the joint commitment of the University and the Guild of Students, so as to ensure that the SRS is run effectively throughout the University and is founded on good practice.

2.2 It is intended that this Policy will be used by University staff and the Guild of Students to establish the relationship that both will operate within. This Code will also be made available to all student representatives.

3. Core Principles

3.1 Students' feedback on their experience whilst at University is integral to quality 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 experience.

3.3 The Student Representation Scheme (SRS) is the physical manifestation of the above 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 Core Principles 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 .2 The University of Birmingham will provide appropriate levels of academic and administrative resources to facilitate student representation locally in Colleges and Academic Units.

3.4 .3 The Guild of Students will build and enhance relationships within Colleges and Academic Units and provide resources and expertise to facilitate and promote representation across the institution.

3.4 .4 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 experience at the University of Birmingham.

3.4 .5 There will be a joint University/Guild Committee with over-arching administrative responsibility for delivering the Core Principles of Student Representation.

Representation within the University Structure

3.4 .6 Student - staff interactions, which currently occur through Staff Student Committees (SSCs) and student representation on relevant internal committees, should remain through all levels of a College.

3.4 .7 Representation structures within Colleges need to reflect the Core Principles of Student Representation.

3.4 .8 Students should be represented on relevant institutional committees.

3.4 .9 Representation structures need to have a clear linear path to feed information up and down through the University and representation structures.

3.4 .10 Good practice should be shared throughout the University.

3.4 .11 There will be clear Policies and Guiding Principles for the SRS which will outline how the SRS functions across the University. These will be reviewed by the joint University/Guild Committee at regular intervals.

3.4 .12 The joint Guild/University Committee for Student Representation will report into the academic quality assurance and enhancement process(es).

3.4 .13 The SRS will inform the Guild's work with respect to academic representation.

4. The Student Representation Scheme Structure

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

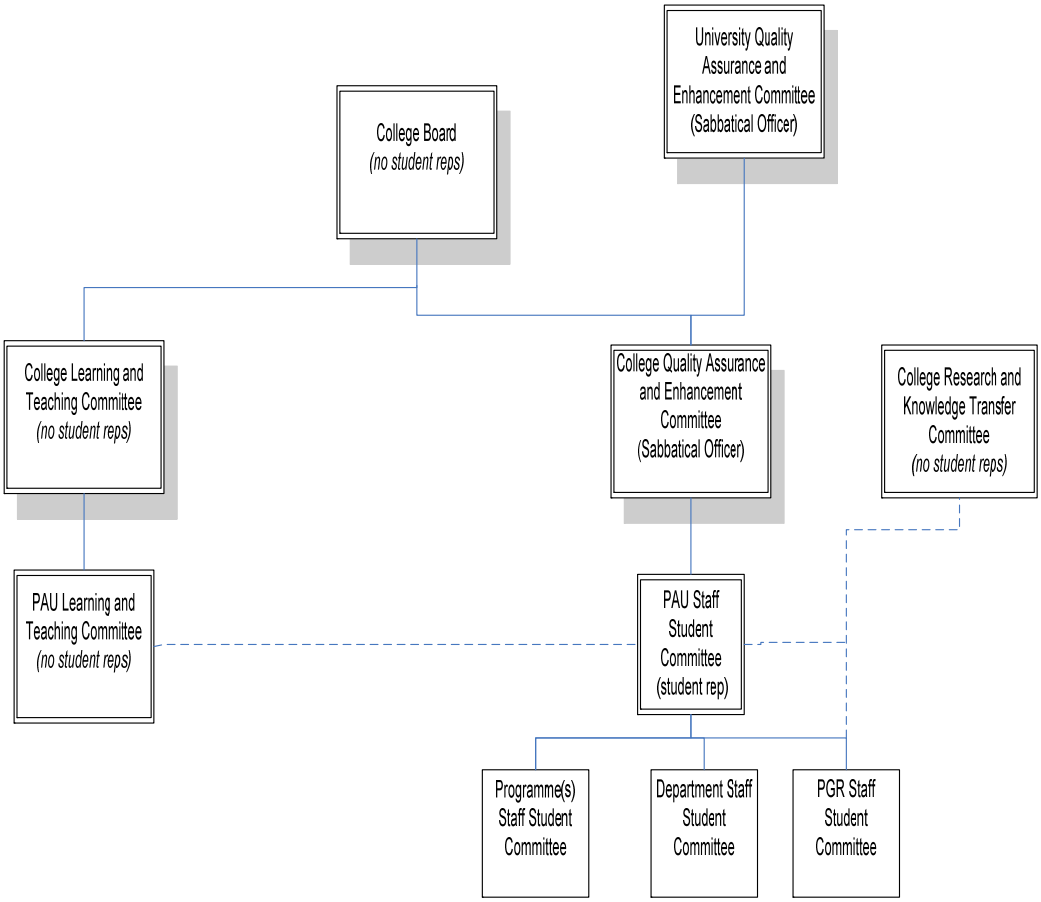

Figure 1. Diagram of the SRS within Colleges.

4.2 The structure of the SRS facilitates two-way communication. It provides a formal route or feedback from students to the Department, School, College or University, and also a route for consultation and communication with the student body.

4.3 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 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 PAU level unit. In this situation, Student Representatives at sub-PAU level SSCs will elect members for the PAU level SSC.

4.5 It is expected that the College will agree the number and level of SSCs with the Guild of Students and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Quality and Students.

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 staff and work in conjunction with them to reach satisfactory solutions for students.

5.1 .3 To be responsible for feeding back to their fellow students responses from the University regarding issues raised.

6. Good Practice Guidelines

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

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

6.2 The guidelines are included in the Code of Practice 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.

6.3 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 .1 Staff Support

.a The College Head, or nominee (e.g. Head of Quality) will be responsible for:

.i ensuring that academic staff members are allocated to act as the Staff-Liaison Contact (SLC) at an appropriate programme level;

.ii ensuring members of support staff are allocated as appropriate to act as the Guild Liaison Contact (GLC). 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 principle academic units;

.iii agreeing the number of student reps required at each year level for the appropriate programme level, and communicating this to the Student Representation System;

.iv Advisory Board.

.b The SLC will responsible for:

.i recruitment and election of student representatives at the programme level

.ii coordinating 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 Student Reps and the Guild;

.iii the first contact for student representatives within their programme level;

.iv writing and submitting the Annual Report to the Student Representation System Advisory Board in collaboration with the student representatives;

.v submitting the full minutes of every SSC to the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee;

.vi writing and submitting reports to the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee as required regarding business undertaken at meetings, including Actions resulting;

.vii liaising with the Guild of Students with regards student representative issues.

.c 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 by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk.

.d The Guild of Students will host a forum for all SLCs and GLCs during the Summer vacation. This forum will cover:

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

.ii an outline of changes made to the SRS for the forthcoming academic session;

.iii key dates for the new academic session, including those for elections of representatives, training sessions, and reporting dates;

.iv a n opportunity to provide feedback about the SRS, and discuss implementation issues that Colleges face with regards to SRS.

6.4 .2 Recruitment

.a All student representatives at PAU/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 academic unit to ensure recruitment of student representatives occurs.

.b 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.

.c 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.

.d 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.

6.4 .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 College 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 PAUs/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).

6.4 .4 Training

.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.

.b The Guild of Students will be responsible for training student representatives, and all representatives will be offered 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.

.c Student representatives are expected to attend relevant training sessions. It is expected that SLC's will promote the training sessions within their areas.

.d On 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.

6.4 .5 Staff Student Committee Meetings (SSCs)

.a Formal student feedback from representatives will be provided through the SSCs. This committee will be free to discuss the following topics related to learning and teaching at the University (this list is not exhaustive):

- Assessment methods;
- Learning and Teaching methods;
- 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 discuss:

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

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

.b The position of Chair of the committee may be offered to a student representative. Should no student want the position, the SLC will act as chair, in the first instance but students should be referred to available Chairs training provided by the Guild of Students (see D2.) The offer of the position of Chair may be offered to students at subsequent meeting.

.c SSCs will meet at least once per term, and at least three times per year. 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.

.d At least one meeting in the Summer term should be provided to discuss and agree the committee's annual report to SRSAB.

.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 academic unit, 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 College or nominee during the Summer vacation and communicated to the Student Representation System Advisory Board.

6.4 .6 Resources

.a Dedicated facilities and resources should be made available within appropriate academic areas for use by 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.

.b Facilities and resources should include:

.i a dedicated notice board;

.ii access to photocopying and filing space for committee related work;

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

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

.v access to WebCT;

.vi ability to speak to students before or at the end of lectures for publicity purposes.

7. Reporting Structures

7.1 SSCs will report to the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. The College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee should receive the full minutes of every School, Programme(s) or Department SSC. This ensures that student views are fully represented at College level.

7.2 The SSC reporting route is formally through the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement structures, but for items needing immediate action it may be appropriate for issues to be taken to the PAU or College Learning and Teaching Committee.

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

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

7.5 The Student Rep Scheme will report to Guild Council through the Vice President (Education & Access).

8. Review of Policy

8.1 This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis during the Spring Term.