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 Schools or Departments 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 Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2012) sets out an expectation that "higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience" (B5). Students are formally represented on decision-making committees of the University; this Policy sets out the process for consulting students on major changes that may affect their education.

1.3 The emphasis of student consultation is to provide as accurate and complete information as possible and collect feedback from various groups of students who may be affected by a major 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 decisions are made.

1.4 The consultation process described in this Policy should be considered as the minimum consultation required, and consideration should be given to whether additional consultation is appropriate in the circumstances.

2. Applicability and Exceptions

This policy applies to academic Schools or Departments and service departments and central management. Exceptions to this policy will necessarily apply where factors outside the University's control require or suggest that; for example, changes made by the Home Office regarding visa requirements for overseas students. Such exceptions should be agreed and their circumstances discussed with the Guild and the local elected student representatives.

3. Definition of Major Change

A major change is a change which is likely to have a material impact on the educational experience (for example, if it is likely to affect teaching, learning and supervisory arrangements as a result of organisational change) or other significant aspects of the student experience (for example, accommodation or academic or pastoral support) of a cohort of students (for example, a year group within a School or Department). A major change does not include changes to programmes or modules or to individual supervisory arrangements, although, in such cases, consideration should always be given to notifying or consulting with students likely to be affected by such changes.

4. Process

4.1 Information should be circulated to the Guild and Student Representatives/ Staff Student Committees within a School or Department/programme affected by the change, for onward circulation to affected students. The Guild will advertise information through 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.

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 wherever possible.

4.4 The University will endeavour to ensure that the consultation process does not fall entirely within a period of student vacation from the University; only under exceptional circumstances would this occur, and the University will advise the Guild of the reasons for this.

4.5 After final proposals are confirmed and approved engagement with students should continue during any implementation stage.

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.

6. Role of the University and the Guild

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.