

Student representation on boards and committees: Notes of guidance for student representatives

Background

- 1 A Working Group for Student Representation on Boards and Committees was established by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 17 November 2005. Its remit was to consider a range of issues relating to student representation, including operational processes and to highlight areas of good practice. The Working Group reported to the University Board on 8 June 2006, at which time its report was approved. These Notes of guidance for student representatives are part of a suite of Notes of guidance on student representation on committees that are a result of the report.¹
- 2 There are three tiers of student representation, School/Department, Faculty and University Level. The aim of these Notes of guidance is to assist student representatives, to set out the University's expectations in the area of student representation on School/Department and Faculty-level boards/committees, and to highlight areas of good practice.

School/Department committees

- 3 Every School, or every Department within a particular School where a broad range of programmes are studied, should operate a student/staff committee.
- 4 Student/staff committees are responsible for the following:
 - Providing a formal channel for students to meet with staff in order to discuss the operation of programmes;
 - Keeping under review the aims and objectives of programmes;
 - Reviewing issues relating to teaching and learning and student support;
 - Considering other matters including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provision.
- 5 There should be a minimum of two representatives per year group on each School/Department student/staff committee.

¹ There are also Notes of Guidance for Faculties and Notes of Guidance for Schools/Departments.

- 6 Student/staff committees should usually report to School/Department staff meetings. However, in some cases Schools/Departments may deem it more appropriate for a report to be received by either a Board of Studies or by a Teaching and Learning Committee. In some cases student/staff committees should report to more than one place.
- 7 Where feasible, representatives will be elected at the start of the academic year. Training will take place in the beginning of the Autumn Term and be provided by RUSU (see section on 'Communication').
- 8 Students are encouraged to become School/Department representatives from the full range of the student community, including postgraduate students (both taught and research), international students and part-time students.
- 9 A job description for student representatives will be available on-line on the RUSU website, and on Faculty and School/Department Office websites. A sample job description is attached (Annex A).
- 10 Students should be given the opportunity to chair staff/student committee meetings. However, responsibility for taking minutes of meetings and for making them available to students following the meeting should lie with a member of staff.
- 11 A recommended time frame of two weeks is used for making minutes available to students following a meeting; these should be circulated electronically to all students within the School/Department.
- 12 One student representative will be appointed to act as a key contact with RUSU. This person will be asked to maintain close links with the Vice-President (Academic Affairs).
- 13 During the Summer Term, School/Department level student representatives are encouraged to stand for election as representatives on Faculty and University-level boards and committees. Training will be provided by RUSU in conjunction with NUS (see section on 'Communication').

Faculty student/staff committees

- 14 Every Faculty has a Faculty student/staff committee (a joint committee in the case of the Faculties of Life Science and Science).
- 15 Faculty student/staff committees are responsible for the following:
 - Providing a formal channel for student representatives to meet with peers in other School/Departments within the Faculty, and with office holders in the Faculty.
 - Providing a forum for the consideration of teaching and learning and should support in the Faculty, including by receiving reports on

teaching and learning and student support from School/Department Student/Staff Committees.

- Considering other matters, including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provision.
 - Reporting on teaching and learning and student support in the Faculty and other matters, including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provision, to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning and, as appropriate, to the Management Board of the Faculty and/or the Faculty Board for Research.
- 16 Students are encouraged to become Faculty representatives from the full range of the student community, including postgraduate students (both taught and research), international students and part-time students.
- 17 A job description for Faculty-level student representatives is available on Faculty Office websites. A sample job description is attached (Annex B).
- 18 Students should be given the opportunity to chair Faculty Staff/student Committee meetings. However, responsibility for taking minutes of meetings and for making them available to students following the meeting should lie with the Sub-Dean of the Faculty or his/her nominee.
- 19 The Sub-Dean or his/her nominee will, wherever possible, make the minutes available to students within a time frame of two weeks. Representatives should support the Sub-Dean in dispersing minutes and information, and where appropriate, an email might be sent from School/Department representatives to their constituents in order to contextualise the minutes and to highlight any relevant issues.

Student representation on Faculty Boards for Research and Faculty Boards for Teaching and Learning

- 20 Two Faculty representatives (with full voting rights) sit on the Faculty Boards for Teaching and Learning and Faculty Boards for Research;
- 21 One Faculty representative sits on a number of other Faculty-level committees including Undergraduate Studies Committees, PGR Committees and PGT Committees;
- 22 It is recommended that students in the first year of an undergraduate programme are not normally elected as representatives on Faculty-level Boards and Committees. Instead, it is recommended that there is a progression in student representatives from School/Department-level Committees in one year to Faculty-level Boards and Committees in a second or subsequent year.
- 23 Student representatives on Faculty-level Boards and Committees should attend Faculty Student/Staff Committees.

- 24 A system of alternates should be put in place to ensure student presence at Faculty-level Boards and Committees.

Training

- 25 A three-tiered training structure for student representatives at School/Department, Faculty and University level is provided by RUSU in conjunction with NUS.
- 26 Student representatives are encouraged to attend RUSU training sessions; as these sessions are aimed at improving the relevant skills needed so representatives reach their full potential in the role.
- 27 School/Department-level training is a pre-requisite for Faculty-level training. School/Department-level representatives who have not attended the first level of training but wish to progress to Faculty-level should attend both training sessions.
- 28 RUSU Faculty level training for representatives includes sections on University/Faculty structures, negotiation skills, how to read minutes and how to collect feedback from constituents. Where possible contributions from members of staff will be included.
- 29 All training sessions emphasise that students should be encouraged to voice both positive and negative feedback and that, wherever possible, negative feedback should be accompanied by suggestions for improvements.

Communication

- 30 One student representative is appointed at the first School/Department SSC meeting of the year to serve as the key contact with RUSU. This would entail notifying RUSU of all School representatives' names and contact details.
- 31 Student representatives should maintain regular email contact with their constituent School/Department representatives and students, making themselves known, collecting views and providing feedback.
- 32 It is useful for minutes to be sent to RUSU, thus providing information of the overall academic provision, issues and areas of good practice in the University.

Information on Student Representatives

- 33 It is helpful if names, photographs and contact details of Student/Staff Committee members are displayed in a public area within the School/Department.

- 34 RUSU will house a central database of student representatives' names and contact details, including their University email addresses, accessible to both staff and students. Students should provide RUSU with the appropriate information.

Annex A

Sample job description for a School/Department student representative

1. To liaise with students regarding issues of teaching and learning and student support;
2. To liaise with students on other matters, including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provision;
3. To represent students on the above issues and on any other matter;
4. To report to students on decisions made and on matters arising from the business of the Student/Staff Committee;
5. To liaise with the Vice-President (Academic Affairs) of RUSU, and also communicate education-related campaigns and initiatives to students.

Annex B

Sample Job Description for a Faculty-level Student Representative on the Faculty Student/Staff Committee

1. To represent students in the Faculty on issues of teaching and learning and student support; and on other matters, including health and safety and resources such as equipment and library provision at the Faculty-level;
2. To liaise with School/Department student representatives in the Faculty on the matters noted in (1);
3. To liaise with School/Department student representatives in the Faculty on decisions made and on matters arising from the business of the Student/Staff Committee;
4. To liaise with the Vice-President (Academic Affairs) of RUSU, and also communicate education related campaigns and initiatives to students.
5. Where appointed, to serve on other Faculty-level Boards and Committees.