



The paper below was considered by LTC at its meeting on 22 June 2016. At the end of the document is the confidential, unconfirmed minute of LTC's discussion

**Title:** *Annual Review of Code of Practice on Student Representation*  
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**Date:** June 2016  
**Circulation:** Learning and Teaching Committee, 22 June 2016  
**Agenda:**  
**Version:** FINAL  
**Status:** Confidential: Information obtained in confidence by the UEA whose release would be an actionable breach of confidence (s.41(1))

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**Issue**

To provide an annual update report on the Code of Practice on Student Representation.

**Recommendation**

Recipients are invited:

- To consider the findings of the annual review of the Code of Practice on Student Representation.
- To consider and approve the Recommendations for 2016/17.

**Resource Implications**

The evaluation process has highlighted a number of areas for further development. This report sets out recommendations to address these areas, some of which will have associated resource implications. These will be met from within existing resources, mainly:

- Academic, administrative and Students' Union staff time to support and facilitate student representation
- Student representatives' time as volunteers

### **Risk Implications**

- A continued strengthening of student representation will improve student satisfaction with, and engagement in, their learning.
- The Code of Practice will enhance the University's ability to meet the QAA expectations and indicators of sound practice in relation to student engagement in quality systems.
- Meet the commitments in the Student Charter surrounding this area of work.
- Be in a position to respond to the changes which are impending for the National Student Survey surrounding student engagement in their program of study.

There is therefore a risk in these areas if the recommendations are not adopted.

### **Equality and Diversity**

The Code of Practice recognises the importance of equality and diversity in terms of student representation and the need to ensure that student reps are truly representative of the student body given their diverse characteristics.

### **Further information**

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### **Background**

The revised Code of Practice was developed in partnership by the UEA and UUEAS and agreed by LTC in June 2015. Schools have been implementing the key recommendations during the academic year 2015/16. In some Schools the Code represented little change to current good practice, for others it represented a significant shift in behaviour. An interim report from UUEAS to Student Experience Committee in January 2016 noted some areas of good practice but also highlighted where improvements were still required.

As part of the Code, there is a commitment to undertake an annual University-wide evaluation of student representation. This report presents the findings of this evaluation, and includes:

- a) Reporting of key performance indicators demonstrating adoption of the Code of Practice
- b) Reporting of feedback in relation to student representation from existing student surveys and focus groups
- c) Outcomes from a self-evaluation of Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs)
- d) Recommendations for 2016/17 to further improve student representation

### **Discussion**

#### ***a) Key performance indicators***

There has been progress made across a range of indicators that demonstrate the extent to which the Code has been adopted and where further improvements are needed.

#### Student Partnership Officers (SPO):

All Schools have appointed an SPO. In some cases the role is shared.

#### Student representatives:

The recommendation in the Code of Practice is for Schools to "aim to have a minimum of at least one representative per course for every year group". This has been achieved in the

majority of Schools, and Schools where this has not been possible are aware and working to encourage more students to volunteer to be reps. Schools have been proactive in promoting the opportunity to students, utilising induction, lectures, School bulletins and social media. UUEAS is also actively working with a couple of Schools to increase the number of student reps and have provided guidance on running elections for candidates. 358 reps are known to UUEAS, of which 157 received training in 2015/16. We would like to increase the proportion of reps who receive training (see Recommendations for 2016/17).

#### Student Chairs/Co-Chairs:

Again, this recommendation from the Code has been widely adopted with only a small number of Schools with a staff member as the sole Chair. Improved training for SPOs and student reps in 2016/17 will seek to address this (see Recommendations for 2016/17).

#### Frequency of meetings:

The recommendation in the Code is for two meetings held per semester. This recommendation has been fully adopted, with all Schools setting dates for two meetings. However, there were some instances of meetings being cancelled. This is to be discouraged as students may have issues they wish to raise as part of general feedback rather than a specific agenda item (see Recommendations for 2016/17).

Whilst not all Schools are fulfilling all of the recommendations in the Code, the direction of travel for all Schools is positive. Most Schools have adopted the spirit of the Code and have made changes to adopt the recommendations. We are aware of the Schools that require additional support and will continue to work with them in 2016/17. We will improve monitoring of these and other key indicators (such as attendance of student reps at Schools Boards).

### ***b) Feedback from student surveys and focus groups***

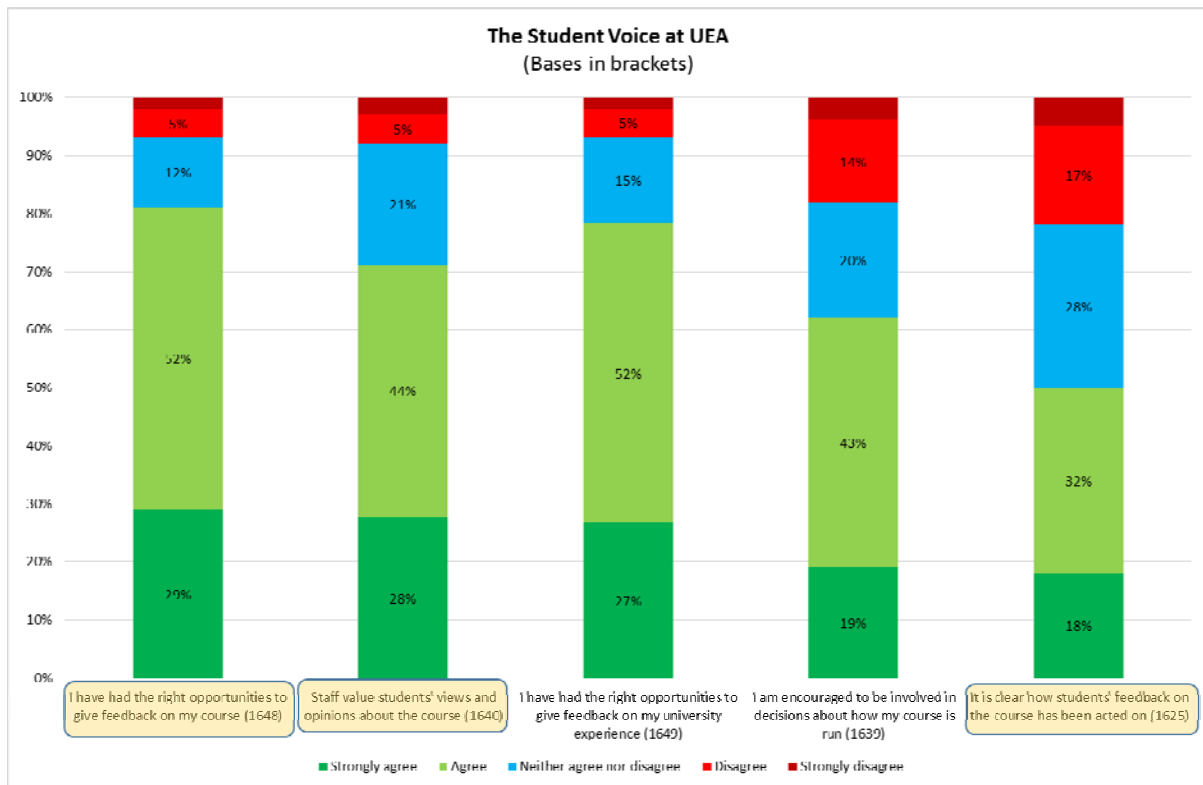
To aid in monitoring the effectiveness of taught student representation, the annual review will draw upon existing reporting to provide specific results on relevant questions in surveys with current taught students. For this report the internal surveys used are The Student Experience Survey 2016 (SES)<sup>1</sup> and The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2015 (PTES). Full reports on these surveys, including details on methodology and sampling, are available on the BIU Blackboard site.

#### SES 2016 results on the 'Student Voice'

Fig 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that 2016 is the last time that the Student Experience Survey will be run at UEA. From 2017 onwards we instead run the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) with non-final year UG students. This survey will not include internal only questions so moving forward only those highlighted in yellow in Fig 1 will be available. In addition, those three highlighted statements are likely to be included in the NSS from 2017 onwards which will allow benchmarking against other participating institutions.



		Higher reported satisfaction/ agreement	Lower reported satisfaction/ agreement
<b>I have had the right opportunities to give feedback on my course</b> Average agree = 81%	<b>Expected degree</b>	2.1 or 1st (82%)	2.2, 3rd or pass (78%)
	<b>PAL</b>	Involved (85%)	Not involved (80%)
	<b>Grant</b>	Yes (88%)	No (81%)
	<b>Domicile</b>	Home (81%),	Overseas (78%)
	<b>School</b>	MED (94%)	CHE (75%), LDC (73%), MTH (68%)
<b>Staff value students' views and opinions about the course</b> Average agree = 72%	<b>Expected degree</b>	2.1 or 1st (72%)	2.2, 3rd or pass (74%)
	<b>PAL</b>	Involved (73%)	Not involved (71%)
	<b>Year of study</b>	First years (74%)	Middle years (69%)
	<b>School</b>	ECO (83%), MED (79%), PHA (79%), PSY (77%)	AMA (60%), CHE (56%), LDC (59%)
<b>I have had the right opportunities to give feedback on my university experience</b> Average agree = 79%	<b>PAL</b>	Involved (83%)	Not involved (78%)
	<b>Expected degree</b>	2.1 or 1st (80%)	2.2, 3rd or pass (74%)
	<b>Grant</b>	Yes (77%)	No (71%)
	<b>Domicile</b>	Home (80%)	Overseas (75%)
	<b>School</b>	MED (88%), PHA (82%)	LDC (71%)
<b>I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run</b> Average agree = 62%	<b>PAL</b>	<b>Involved (70%)</b>	<b>Not involved (60%)</b>
	<b>Domicile</b>	Overseas (69%)	<b>Home (62%)</b>
	<b>Year of study</b>	First years (65%)	Middle years (60%)
	<b>School</b>	<b>HSC (72%), MED (82%), PHA (76%)</b>	AMA (45%), LDC (46%)
<b>It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on</b> Average agree = 50%	<b>Age</b>	Mature (53%)	Younger (50%)
	<b>PAL</b>	Involved (57%)	Not involved (47%)
	<b>Grant</b>	Yes (52%)	No (46%)
	<b>Domicile</b>	Overseas (65%)	Home (49%), EU (48%)
	<b>School</b>	HSC (59%), MED (78%), NBS (60%), PHA (69%)	AMA (34%), ENV (40%), HIS (37%), LAW (36%), LDC (32%)

*NB. Three new statements were added to the survey for 2016 and phrasing was adjusted on one other so only very minimal year on year analysis is possible.*

The findings indicate that student satisfaction is high in terms of the opportunities available for students to give feedback. Approximately 80% of respondents agreed that they have had the **right**

**opportunities to give feedback on their course and on their university experience** with only 6% actively disagreeing with each. Looking at the results by subgroup shows similar trends across these two statements which may highlight best practice examples in terms of gathering student feedback and potential areas for improvement. Trends include:

- Higher levels of agreement with both statements among MED students and lower among LDC students.
- Higher levels of agreement among home respondents in comparison to overseas respondents. (It is worth noting that this is reflected in lower response rates to UEA strategic surveys, including NSS, among overseas students in comparison to Home).
- In addition, those in receipt of a grant, involved in PAL and expecting a good honours degree were all more likely to agree.

However, the findings indicate that there is room for improvement in how the university listens to the UG student voice, particular in terms of taking and/or reporting action on the basis of feedback.

Less than three quarters of respondents agreed with the other three statements in this section indicating broad potential for improvement around helping students to be actively involved in decision and staff response to feedback.

Of particular note, only half of respondents agreed **that it is clear how student feedback has been acted on** with almost a quarter actively disagreeing. This highlights that students perceive that action is not always taken which could indicate the need for a more strategic approach to taking action on the basis of feedback and/or the need to better communicate what has been done with students.

This is one of the highest levels of disagreement seen across the results of the Student Experience Survey 2016 and the highest for those questions used which form part of the NSS questionnaire for 2017. Whilst benchmark data are not available at this stage, so it is not possible to look at this result in context and tell what this may mean in terms of rank, this indicates that this may become a new weakness for UEA in terms of the NSS results.

Again, looking at the results by subgroup highlights potential areas of best practice and for improvement. Trends include:

- Especially high agreement among MED students and above average agreement among HSC, NBS and PHA respondents in comparison to much lower agreement among respondents from AMA, ENV, HIS, LAW and LDC.
- Higher levels of agreement among overseas respondents in comparison to home and EU students (in contrast to the results around having the right opportunities to feedback).
- Higher levels of agreement among those participating in PAL activities.

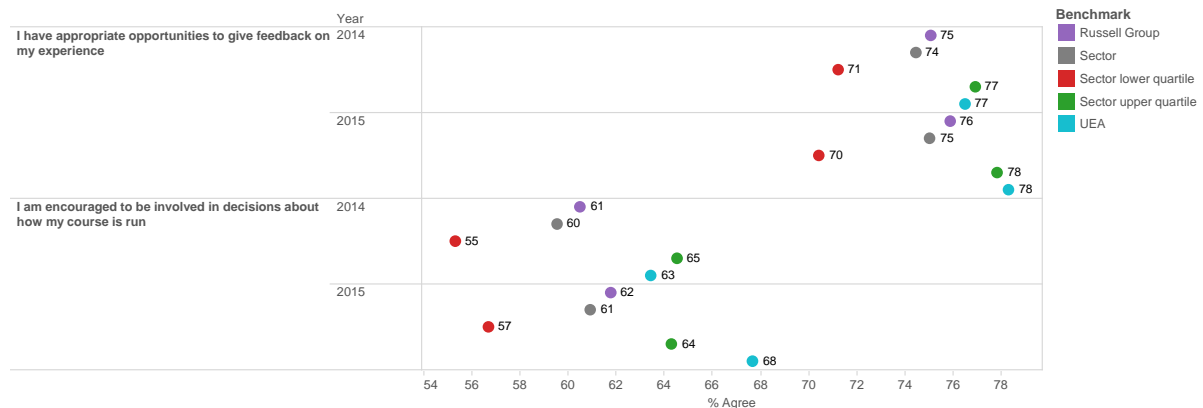
In addition, under two thirds of respondents agreed that they are **encouraged to be involved in decisions about how their course is run** with almost one in five actively disagreeing and under three quarters agreed that they **staff value student feedback** with almost one in ten actively disagreeing.

As outlined analysis by subgroup does highlight particular strengths and weaknesses in terms of meeting UG student expectation around the student voice. To summarise, some overall trends include:

- **Best practice examples and areas for improvement at School level** - Key best practice examples may including activities in MED, PHA and HSC. Particular action for improvement may be needed in LDC but also some other Schools, including, but not exclusive to, other areas of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.
- **Potential need to consider ways to increase international student engagement with feedback methods** - Notable that some feedback mechanisms currently used may be less appropriate for some overseas students.

## PTES 2015 results on the student representation questions

Fig 2. 2014 and 2015 UEA overall results against the sector



Similar to the UG results, the findings indicate that UEA has some strengths in terms of PGT student representation in terms of providing opportunities for students to give feedback.

In 2015, 78% of PGT respondents agreed that 'I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience'.

In addition, 68% agreed that 'I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run' which is a 5 percentage point improvement on the result in 2014 (this is one of very few changes in the score that UEA achieved across the PTES survey that year).

Positively, this sees UEA rank in the upper quartile of the sector for both statements. However, results do indicate some room for improvement in terms of involving student in decision making and reactions to some student feedback.

Whilst in line with the sector trend, it may be notable that UEA's lowest scoring question across all questions in PTES in 2014 and 2015 is 'I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run' (68%).

It may be notable that some respondents reported some discomfort around giving direct feedback on their experience, either having had a negative experience personally or fearing the repercussions of giving the feedback.

Fig 3. 2015 results by subject area against the sector

Subject	I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience					I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run				
	Russell Group	Sector	Sector lower quartile	Sector upper quartile	UEA	Russell Group	Sector	Sector lower quartile	Sector upper quartile	UEA
	All Subjects	76	75	70	78	78	62	61	57	64
Biology and related Sciences	78	75	70	80	66	64	63	59	69	50
Business	75	74	69	79	82	58	59	53	66	75
Combined	74	73	68	78	67	64	61	52	64	38
Computer Science	75	73	69	80	70	60	58	49	64	45
Economics	78	76	70	78	73	61	63	50	67	65
Education studies	78	77	74	83	75	64	61	57	70	72
English-based studies	76	76	72	81	58	59	59	50	64	32
Finance and Accounting	75	76	71	80	88	67	67	57	75	89
History and Archaeology	72	69	58	76	64	58	55	45	60	51
Law	72	74	67	82	83	57	58	51	65	63
Management	75	76	70	82	80	64	60	51	72	74
Media studies	79	77	67	79	77	60	64	53	68	77
Medical Science and Pharmacy	81	79	75	84	56	65	61	51	72	56
Medicine and Dentistry	77	79	69	80	87	61	62	53	68	47
Other subjects allied to Medicine	80	79	72	85	76	60	63	54	71	64
Physical Geography and Environmental Science	70	72			95	66	61			65
Politics	72	74	67	76	70	57	59	52	65	67
Psychology	79	76	72	80	73	64	62	55	69	55
Social Work	74	76	67	82	100	59	60	46	69	71
Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology	76	75	66	80	70	62	61	51	67	70
Teacher Training	77	73	67	81	85	64	61	52	67	70

Fig 4. 2015 and 2014 Results by School

School	I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience		I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
ALL UEA	77	78	63	68
AMA		47		44
BIO		63		54
CMP	63	71	63	48
DEV	78	67	59	75
ECO	79	72	71	65
EDU	84	82	73	62
ENV	91	90	73	52
HIS	85	80	69	64
HSC		70		50
LAW	65	84	52	62
LDC	69	69	43	40
MED		79		46
NBS	74	86	72	81
PHA		64		71
PPL		71		69
PSY		69		54
SWK	77	100	69	70

As with the UG results, analysis by School/Subject area highlights best practice examples and areas for improvement.

The following bullet points summarise some of the results by School/Subject area which may provide areas for further exploration to learn about best practice activity and/or need for improvements.

'I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback'

- UEA in upper quartile of the sector – Business, Finance and Accounting, Law, Medicine and Dentistry, Social Work, Teacher Training
- 10 percentage points or more above UEA average - ENV, SWK
- UEA in lower quartile of the sector – Biology and related subjects, Computer Science English-based studies, Medical Science and Pharmacy
- 10 percentage points or more below – AMA, BIO, DEV, LDC, PHA

'I am encouraged to be involved in decisions about how my course is run'

UEA In upper quartile of the sector – Business, Education Studies, Finance and Accounting, Management, Media Studies, Politics, Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology, Teacher Training

10 percentage points or more above UEA average - NBS

UEA In lower quartile of the sector – Biology and related subjects, English-based studies, Medicine and Dentistry, Psychology

10 percentage points or more below UEA average – AMA, BIO, CMP, ENV, HSC, LDC, MED, PSY

### Summary

Overall, student satisfaction with opportunities to feedback appear high. However, findings indicate scope to improve the way in which the feedback is responded to both in terms of staff valuing the input and action being taken/reported. The findings also highlight areas of best practice and need for improvement in terms of School provision and/or suitability for different student types.



### **c) Self-evaluation of Staff Student Liaison Committees**

As part of the annual review all Schools have been asked to undertake a self-evaluation during their final SSLC meeting of this academic year, the majority of which took place in April and May. Student Partnership Officers (SPOs) were provided with a toolkit (see Appendix A) to help them to undertake this exercise. They were also provided with guidance about how to conduct the evaluation (there are a number of alternative methods to suit the needs of different committees). Facilitation support was also provided at the meetings by a member of UUEAS staff or Senior Faculty Manager. The toolkit enabled each committee to consider at what stage student representation is currently operating in their School and to think about how to work towards the higher stages of representation.

Take up of the self-evaluation by Schools was very positive, with only a handful of Schools not participating (mainly due to time constraints). Whilst the self-evaluation provided some useful and insightful comment it is important to recognise that those completing it are involved in the current representative system and usually have limited experience beyond the status quo. However, it is possible to draw some over-arching themes from the feedback.

- The majority of staff and students currently participating in the current student representation system feel positive about it, see value in what they are doing and can identify changes brought about because of it
- Most SSLCs reported a good level of ownership and opportunity for quality discussion
- There is some uncertainty about how student reps should be recognised and rewarded for undertaking this role (this requires further investigation)
- A number of Schools highlighted how valuable they have found attendance from Library staff

The exercise also prompted discussions about improvements that could be taken to support the development and effectiveness of SSLCs (and thereby progress through the stages set out in the toolkit). Many of these suggestions will be taken forward by individual Schools, a sample of which are summarised below:

- AMA: Will institute 'surgeries' for reps to meet students at key points in the year to feedback on what happened in the meetings and to suggest agenda items they want to raise.
- PHA: student reps will copy staff members into emails to students to help give legitimacy to the message; and ideas about rewarding SSLC members in their email bulletin.
- CHE: proposal for more experienced reps to 'buddy' new or less confident reps; student co-chair compiling list of SSLC achievements from this year to include on next year's rep application form.

A number of other suggestions arising from the self-evaluation would require University-wide action. These included:

- More training for SPOs and student reps
- A way for students to email cohorts directly, rather than via LTS
- Perception that SSLCs are effective at influencing change at a School level, but less so at a University level – don't want to just "rubber stamp" items from Central Divisions (more meaningful consultation)

### **Recommendations for 2016/17**

1. Improved training for staff and student representatives
  - Training for academic and administrative staff supporting student representation will be refocussed and refreshed.

- All SPOs will need to attend a training sessions once every two years.
  - More sessions for student representatives will be provided by UUEAS.
2. The Student Representation Blackboard site
    - Will be refreshed and relaunched
    - It will become the hub for all information, guidance and good practice relating to student representation activity.
    - It will incorporate a feedback area, where the “We said, We did” approach will be adopted, enabling individual feedback from students outside the student representation system
    - All Schools will upload their SSLC agendas and minutes onto the site.
  3. Encouraging student representation
    - To increase the visibility of student course reps by posting photographs of reps on SSLC noticeboards, and exploring other measures such as providing reps with branded hoodies.
  4. To embed the annual self-evaluation exercise for SSLCs.
    - This will support continuous improvement in student representation among all Schools and provide an annual snapshot of practice across the University
  5. To have a number of standing items for SSLC agendas (see Appendix B for proposed annual cycle of agenda items)
    - This is to ensure that:
      - o there is equality of opportunity for students to contribute to key issues affecting teaching and learning throughout the year;
      - o that appropriate reports and data are provided by University Services as required to inform discussions
      - o that meetings are not cancelled when there are no agenda items.
  6. To extend the annual review to other University and Faculty committees on which students are represented, i.e. Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees.
  7. Attendance by student representatives on University Committees will be monitored by the Committee Office and included in the annual report to LTC on Student Representation.

## Student representation self-evaluation chart: where does *your* school fit?

	Ownership	Feedback Loop	Recognising Talent	Effective Change	Contact & Awareness	Discussion
Stage One	No clear structure as to who is responsible for student representation and engagement. Roles and structure of meetings are not defined creating confusion	Reps receive the agenda for their SSLC either on the day or within 2 days of the meeting. The agenda isn't put on blackboard regularly and minutes are not taken. Little knowledge of what is discussed across the faculty or school. Faculty Convenors not appointed. Students do not feel confident to participate in meetings. SSLCs occur three times or less a year.	Student reps or staff members are not recognised in any way for their work	No or little action from SSLC with sparse communication between reps, staff members, the university and the student union. Confusion about representative system and student engagement	The student reps and staff members have not attended training. Student reps only talk from their experience and little action is taken from each SSLC. Students are not aware who their student reps or Student Partnership officer is. Staff members or reps do not turn up	The only thing that is discussed is the problems students have with their course and school with limited action to improve these problems
Stage Two	The University or the Students Union has control of student representation, with clear guidelines however there is limited interaction between the two	Students are expected to talk and feedback to students but are given no help and/or little time to do so. Agendas are given in advance and minutes are written, however not every meeting or prompt in completion. SSLCs occur twice a semester.	Student reps and staff members are thanked sporadically by either their school, faculty or the Student's Union	Representation isn't very well organised with confusion over who attends meeting, lack of contact details and action points are not followed through. However meetings take place and issues are discussed. Faculty Convenors help to solve school issues	Student reps have trouble contacting their cohort, with some help from the Student Union. Students are aware of their rep and student partnership officer, and how to contact them	Problems with their course and school again discussed plus anything that has been assigned for the group to be asked about by a higher up committee
Stage Three	The ownership, running and responsibility is shared however there is confusion over the roles, responsibilities and actions of staff and students	Student reps and staff feedback and discuss upcoming items to their cohorts, with help from either the University or the Student Union. They feel confident to do so. Student reps attend all school level meetings and faculty convenors attend faculty level meetings. Agendas are sent out at least 10 days before the SSLC and minutes are taken and uploaded to Blackboard within two weeks of the meeting	The Student Union recognises student reps and staff members through awards or certificates on a university wide level each year	Student engagement is taking place, with productive meetings as both staff and students are invested in bring about positive change. Faculty Convenors help to solve faculty issues	Student reps regularly contact students to collect their views. Student Partnership officers regularly contact staff members to collect information and views. Both receive help from either the Student's union or the University	All of the above plus feedback on some issues- good, bad and ideas - that students and staff have about their programme and school which are active discussions
Stage Four	Student engagement is shared between the Student Union and the University, with continued funding, resources and help. However, only at Senior levels is the system fully organised and implemented.	Student reps discuss issues and ideas with faculty reps and student union. Staff members discuss issues and ideas with staff. These are then placed on the agenda to be actively discussed by all. Student Reps sit on all levels of university meetings	Student reps work is regularly featured and celebrated in Concrete or the Student Union's website.	The engagement system is regularly reviewed. Both student reps and staff, of all levels, are encouraged by both the university and the student union to bring about effective change.	Student reps regularly contact their cohorts through a variety of different methods (email, Facebook, shout outs etc). SSLCs are attended by heads of school and directors of teaching.	All of the above plus feedback from the staff and students- both good, bad and ideas- about the programme organised by sections (ie organisation and management, teaching and assessment etc) as well as a start of active discussions of projects and ideas to improve the student's experience
Stage Five	The representative system is an equal partnership between the Student Union and the University, where individuals are clear about their role, responsibilities and where to get help. All members of the SSLC are also clear on the wider representation structure.	Student reps are supported and helped to feedback to students by different methods. Student reps are held to account with meetings with students and elections. Student reps and staff members are respected and valued within their school, faculty and university; meaning their opinion is willingly sort out and ideas are taken forward into completion	The work of student reps and staff are recognised across the school, faculty and the university by the Student Union and the University	The Student Union can demonstrate the impact that the student rep system has on the effective change and improvement of the student's experience. Effective change has occurred from student and staff actions for example, starting new and successful projects	Student reps use research or NSS data as evidence for ideas at meetings, as well as focus groups and surveys showcasing student viewpoints to propose new ideas and action.	Projects and initiatives are set up and run successfully that are about quality enhancement (ie what learning resources would help). The committee supervises these enhancement projects that are worked on between academics and students/ reps outside of the meeting. It commissions them and receives reports on them

## Appendix B

### **Standing items for SSLC agendas**

#### Semester 1:

##### Meeting 1

- Induction
- NSS analysis

##### Meeting 2

- Learning Support Resources
- Upcoming surveys

#### Semester 2

##### Meeting 1

- Teaching spaces
- Assessment and feedback
- PTES

##### Meeting 2

- Employability/Careers
- Self-evaluation of SSLC function
- Election of new reps for following academic year

**Confidential draft Minute of the discussions at LTC on 22 June 2016**

\*146. REVIEW OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATION CODE OF PRACTICE

Considered

recommendations following a review of the operation of the Student Representation Code of Practice. (A copy is filed in the Minute Book, ref. LTC15D159)

- a) Improved training for staff and student representatives;
- b) Enhancements to the Student Representation Blackboard site;
- c) Encouraging student representation: To increase the visibility of student course reps by posting photographs of reps on SSLC noticeboards, and exploring other measures such as providing reps with branded hoodies;
- d) Embed the annual self-evaluation exercise for SSLCs;
- e) Have a number of standing items for SSLC agendas;
- f) Extend the annual review to other University and Faculty committees on which students are represented, i.e. Faculty Learning & Teaching Committees;
- g) Attendance by student representatives on University Committees will be monitored by the Committee Office and included in the annual report to LTC on Student Representation.

Resolved

- 1) to approve the recommendations noting that further work was required on enhancing the Student Representation Blackboard site;
- 2) the Academic Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement and the SSF Senior Faculty Manager will give further consideration to how to ensure that the mechanisms for student representation in Schools are working effectively.