STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND STAFF STUDENT LIAISON

A CODE OF PRACTICE

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Introduction

Student representation is a key component of quality assurance in higher education in the twenty-first century. Students have a significant role too in helping to enhance the quality of their University experience. It is therefore important that student representation works in a manner which meets both institutional and student needs.

This document outlines the position of the University, Union of UEA students and the Graduate Students' Association in respect of formal arrangements for:
- student representation on School Boards
- student representation on Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees
- staff/student liaison

It sets out the minimum requirements Schools and Faculties must meet to satisfy the University's Learning and Teaching Committee and suggests good practice which Schools and Faculties may wish to adopt in order to improve the effectiveness of communication with their student body. The University acknowledges that part of UEA's strength lies in the diversity of its Schools and their inter-relationships with their Faculty and each other. Thus the minimum requirements are described in a manner that allows them to be interpreted and implemented flexibly, whilst also maintaining consistency.

While the importance of student representation should not be under-estimated, the existence of a formal system does not, in itself, ensure effective communication between students and Schools. Effective staff/student liaison is more about communication and a shared commitment to quality than about the creation of formal mechanisms for student representation. In order for students to feel confident about communicating their ideas and concerns to their Schools, there must first be a culture of student involvement and of mutual respect between staff and students. There is no recipe for creating such a culture; however, the creation of channels for informal and unbounded communication can significantly enhance staffs' and students' relations. This Code suggests ways by which such mutually beneficial informal communication can be facilitated, focusing on the creation of staff/student liaison groups and encourages Schools and Faculties to build on their achievements to date.

This updated Code of Practice reflects the restructuring of the University's academic provision into Schools and Faculties (Arts and Humanities, Health, Science and Social Sciences) from 2004-05.

1. **Information to Students**

1.1   Information to students about staff/student liaison should come primarily from the School itself since it concerns the relationship between a School and its students. Students should be given information about the opportunities available to them to act as a student representative in pre-arrival mail-outs and/or during induction and/or in Week One lectures.

1.2   Students should also be informed of the mechanisms by which they may communicate their interests and their concerns, the means by which the School will respond and where/how to access relevant information, including relevant procedures such as academic appeals and academic and non-academic complaints. Further information may be given at induction. Student Representative Nomination Forms and Information Packs should be distributed by the School at this time.

1.2   Induction sessions for new students should include their key and on-going role in quality assurance and enhancement and encourage them to contribute to the School's and the Faculty's development, for example, through regular course reviews. These messages should be reinforced through Faculty and/or School specific briefing sessions where these can practicably be arranged. Wherever possible, Schools should include representatives from the Union of UEA Students and Graduate Students' Association (GSA) in such sessions, in

order to explain the role elected Officers play in relation to representation across the board.

2. **Recruitment of School Board Representatives**

2.1   Each School has a School Board on which at least one student representative is drawn from each major level of study at which the School delivers programmes (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate taught and/or postgraduate research). The student representatives are nominated by the Staff/Student Liaison Groups of the School from within its number. By this means, the interest of students from special groups are protected and as many places as possible are filled. If there are no or insufficient nominations forthcoming, places should be open to any student, regardless of status and elections may be held.

2.2   Schools are asked to make arrangements, where feasible, to recruit/elect representatives at the end of the previous academic year from amongst those students who are due to return to UEA to continue their studies. This approach may be particularly appropriate for Schools whose students are on placement during the following session. It is recognised that this timescale may not be feasible for all Schools.

2.3   Schools should otherwise recruit/hold elections as close to the commencement of the session as possible with a view to having representatives in place by the time that the Union of UEA Students (with the GSA) delivers training for Student Representatives and/or the first Board meeting. To this end, Schools are encouraged to arrange (a) meeting(s) of the Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) in Week 2 of Semester 1 wherever possible in order to have School Board nominees confirmed in Week 3 in readiness for the first meeting of the session of the School Board.

*Where elections are held***:**

2.4   Schools should notify the Union of UEA Students/GSA preferably by email of (a) the timetable for elections (where held) and (b) the names of the students duly elected, their position(s) and their University email addresses.

2.5   The Union of UEA Students/GSA will produce some standard publicity materials for elections which will be distributed to each School at least two weeks prior to the elections. If possible, during the week prior to the election, members of staff should make announcements about the timing of the election and the voting arrangements to students on taught courses. Particular care should be taken to ensure that information reaches research/other students (using e-mail where appropriate).

2.6   Elections should be by secret ballot. The Union/GSA has a limited number of ballot boxes, which can be booked in advance by contacting the Academic Officer of the Union. Where possible, ballot boxes should be open for several hours. Schools are asked to consider whether they could hold ballots over more than one day. With at least two weeks' notice in writing to the Academic

Officer of the Union, the Union of UEA Students/GSA will be able to assist in finding students to mind ballot boxes and to conduct the count.

Alternative forms of vote-casting which comply with the need for anonymity but which minimise potential for multiple voting (e.g. by post) could be considered.

2.7 The Union of UEA Students/GSA will provide training and information for representatives. The School should ensure that it makes clear to student representatives the mechanism for suggesting agenda items, that papers and agendas are circulated in timely fashion and that opportunities for consultation with School Board representatives are available preferably a week before each meeting is due to take place. Depending on the School's preferred approach, this could take the form of a Staff/Student liaison meeting or an informal meeting between representatives, the Head of School and the Secretary of the Board.

2.8 The School Board should include an item on its agenda regarding nomination of Union Council representatives from amongst student members of the Board. Liaison with School Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) which will also consider this item will be necessary (see also 5.2 below).

3. **School Teaching Committees**

3.1 Following a review of the governance of Learning and Teaching conducted in 2006-07, the Senate agreed that Schools could decide whether they wished to retain/re-establish School Teaching Committees to support the role of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality and more generally to support collective ownership of quality assurance and enhancement in the School.

3.2 Schools that retain/re-establish School Teaching Committees should include student representatives amongst their membership, appropriate to and reflecting School provision. The number of and arrangements for appropriate student representatives are determined by each School. For example, student representatives may be nominated by the Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) of the School from within its number.

3.3 Where a School does not retain/re-establish a Teaching Committee, it is the responsibility of the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality to liaise with students within the School (this may be via students' representatives for example, Staff-Student Liaison members and/or School Board representatives) on a regular basis. The School Director is responsible for bringing forward to any relevant staff meetings concerned with operational planning (for example, learning, teaching and quality /enhancement including new course proposals, outputs from module and course update/review, student feedback on modules and external examiners' reports) any proposals, concerns and issues identified by the student representatives.

3.4 The procedure set out in 3.3. above applies to Schools that do not have a

Teaching Committee. A Teaching Committee also fulfils these requirements, albeit a different schedule may apply as the Committees typically meet on several occasions during a session.

4. **School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality**

4.1   The role of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality was created following the review of governance that accompanied the restructuring into Faculties from 2004-05.

4.2   The subsequent review by the Learning and Teaching Committee of the governance of learning and teaching in 2006-07 confirmed the continuation of the role with no significant changes except that the responsibilities of the role may now be fulfilled:

> • directly by the School Director;
> • by two academics sharing stewardship of the role, and dividing responsibility, normally between taught programmes and postgraduate research matters;
> • with the assistance of one or more than one academic carrying delegated responsibilities and reporting to the School Director.

Additionally (as noted in 3.1 above), the Senate agreed that Schools could decide to retain/re-establish School Teaching Committee to support the role of School Director and more generally to support collective ownership of quality assurance and enhancement in the School.

4.3   School Directors – particularly where there is no School Teaching Committee – are required regularly to liaise with students (this may be via students' representatives) in order to develop a partnership that will facilitate the raising and resolution of concerns regarding the academic experience outside or beyond the Module Organiser or Course Director and also the consideration of student-generated proposals and to report on these to the Head of School.

4.4   Where a School does not have a Teaching Committee, the School Directors should fulfil the responsibilities laid down in 3.3 above.

4.5   The School Director will work alongside the School's Senior Adviser in relation to the Staff/Student Liaison Committee.

5. **Staff/Student Liaison Groups**

5.1 Purpose

> In addition to operating a system of formal representation, each School should have one or more Staff/Student Liaison Groups to provide a forum for the informal discussion of matters both academic and non-academic. Such Groups are useful in offering an arena in which complex matters can be discussed and explained before students are asked to express an opinion and in which issues can be raised which do not fall within the remit of the School

Board. As such, they are important components of quality assurance and quality enhancement for the University and the School, demonstrating that the School is actively seeking and responding to students' views on their experience and their concerns and suggestions for improvement. From 2009-10, it is a requirement that the outcomes of national surveys – such as the annual National Student Survey (NSS) the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) are considered by the Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) with feed back to the School Board/Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and then to the University. External reviews such as those conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency - and the University's own annual updates and regular reviews of modules/courses - will also take note of their operational outcomes. Another topic which should be considered at least once per session where appropriate is joint course provision (see also 5.2 below).

5.2 Format and Membership

To be effective, Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) should be constituted in a format and on a basis determined (and reviewed annually) by the School Board, so that they appropriately match each School's student constituency and needs. Schools should ensure that different groups of students are given a voice, for example, part-time student, students on placement, postgraduate research students.
It is recommended that each School appoint a staff member (e.g. the Senior Adviser) to be responsible for the co-ordination of the staff/student liaison system in their School. This person may liaise with members and with the School Director, (Learning, Teaching and Quality), and with School Board representatives and respond to matters raised by individual students, referring them where appropriate to the School bodies or to individual student advisers/supervisors. Membership of Staff/Student Liaison Groups should be agreed in readiness for the start of each academic year where feasible for returning students (with elections where appropriate). Schools should issue reminders to continuing students in Semester 2 of the previous session about members for the following session. The Chair should also be elected in Semester 2 in readiness for the following session. Schools may wish to take into account the following recommendations when determining the membership of these groups:

> • a majority of the members should be students;
> • the Chair of meetings should be determined by the group at its first meeting and may be an identified student or identified staff member (for example, the Senior Adviser in the School group), or may alternate between them;
> • first-year students should have at least one representative on the group;
> • students from each of the major degree programmes operated by the School should be represented (including joint degrees, taught postgraduate degrees and research degree programmes);
> • provision should be made, where relevant, for representation by student(s) of other Schools registered on joint courses within the

School or, as a minimum, consultation of such students when joint course provision is discussed;
• provision should be made for the representation of small degree programmes;
• staff representatives should be appointed by the School Board;
• opportunities should be given for students from other Schools taking modules in the School to express views and, when appropriate, to attend any open meetings.

5.3 Frequency of Meetings

Schools should decide on the frequency of meetings and the level of formality with which these groups operate, within the following guidelines:

• a notice of the meeting should be prominently displayed/widely published (for example, by email);
• they should consider having formal agendas, finalised by the Chair with input from both staff and students;
• if formal agendas are produced, these should be circulated and displayed (by the School) at least three working days before the meeting;
• nomination of Union Council representatives from amongst student members of the Staff/Student Liaison Groups should be placed on the SSLC agenda; liaison with School Boards – which will also consider this item, will be necessary. (See also 2.8 above);
• joint course provision and the outcomes of the National Student Surveys (NSS, PTES and PRES) must be placed on the agenda at least once per session;
• there must be written notes of their meetings which identify action to be taken and associated deadlines, to be circulated by the School to all members, normally within two weeks of the meeting and displayed on a notice board and/or circulated to University email addresses. (Provision of appropriate administrative support for meetings, including agenda preparation and minutes, is a matter for each School to determine in conjunction with the Student/Staff Liaison Committee);
• the Group(s) may report on their business to the School Board directly or via a Committee of the Board as a standard agenda item and consider any items referred by the Board/Committee(s). (Where reporting is direct to the School Board, this does not mean that the issues cannot first be brought to other committees of the Board);
• the Group(s) should meet at least once per semester but offer the scope for emergency meeting(s) to be called at the request of either staff or students. At least two meetings should fit within the annual planning cycle to enable reports to be considered as a standing item at the meetings of the School Board.

Schools must lodge copies of all agendas and minutes and notify the dates of the meeting to:
• the Academic Officer and the Student Support Services Manager of the Students' Union

**• the Graduate Students' Association, the Dean of Students' Office and the Library and notify them of the dates of meetings.
Routes for the consideration of issues raised at Student/Staff Liaison Committees include the School Teaching Committee and/or School Board (academic matters) or the University Student Affairs Group (non-academic matters) and/or University Student Experience Committee. Matters arising from School Boards/Teaching Committees may be remitted to the relevant
Faculty committee (University-wide issues) and the Learning and Teaching Committee (where there are issues of principle). Matters arising from the Student Experience Committee are reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee.**

5.4 Alternative forms of liaison

Schools which do not consider that such a group or groups could operate effectively within their structure will be expected to make equivalent arrangements so that students have the opportunity to raise concerns and to be consulted on developments as set out in 3.3 above. Regular liaison is a requirement where a School has determined not to retain/re-establish a Teaching Committee.

Whatever their preferred approach, Schools should ensure that they meet the minimum requirements of regular, structured, properly notified and recorded liaison. As in 5.2 above, agendas/minutes arising from these alternative forms of liaison should be reported to the School Board or appropriate Committee, which may also refer items to Staff/Student Liaison Groups for consideration. Schools should notify the dates of the relevant meetings to the Academic Officer and the Student Support Services Manager of the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association, and must lodge copies of the relevant agenda/minutes with these Officers also. Arrangements may be subjected to audit at any time (and also with the Deans of Students and Library) by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). The Learning and Teaching Committee will monitor regularly how practices are developing within and across UEA (see paragraph 7 below).

6. **Promoting the system within Schools**

6.1   Where this is feasible, each School should provide notice-board space as a means of communication with students, in a prominent position, for the display of information regarding student representation and staff/student liaison. The maintenance of this board will be the responsibility of the student representatives themselves. Information about the appointment of representatives and once appointed, information about training, lists of the names and e-mail addresses of representatives and minutes of meetings should all be displayed on this board.

6.2 In addition, in order that information about student representatives are made as widely known as possible to the student body, Schools are strongly encouraged to consider dedicating a page on the School's intranet site (where

such a pages does not already exist) listing the School's student representatives, their contact details and their roles and the agendas/minutes of meetings.

7. **Student involvement at Faculty level**

Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees, chaired by the Faculty Associate Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality) are responsible for some important quality assurance processes reporting regularly to Learning and Teaching Committee on these activities:

- new course proposals;
- outcomes of annual module and course monitoring and update and regular review of courses
- consideration of external examiners' reports;
- consideration of the process of annual progress report in respect of postgraduate research students;
- from 2009-10, Faculty Associate Deans (LTQ) have to delegate authority of Board of Examiners and External Examiners and to approve certain concessions against regulations, as laid down by the Learning and Teaching Committee;
- sharing and dissemination of good practice within and between Faculties;
- any other issues referred to it by the Faculty Executive and/or Learning and Teaching Committee;

Each Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee should have amongst its membership the following student representatives:

- one undergraduate representative appointed by the Union Council following campus-wide election. The undergraduate representative shall therefore normally be the elected Faculty convenor;
- one postgraduate representative as appointed by the Union Council.

8. **Student involvement in Module Evaluation and Regular Course Reviews and other forms of evaluation**

Under the University's Code of Practice: Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality, students' views and feedback on the academic experience are formally sought as key parts of the on-going quality assurance and quality enhancement processes. Students have an important role to play in:

- evaluating a module each time it is run. These evaluations feed into the annual monitoring and update of modules which in turn inform the annual update of courses;
- scrutinising, as members of School Teaching Committees (where these exist) and/or via regular liaison (where there is no School Teaching Committee) the outputs of the annual monitoring and update of modules and courses and/or as members of the relevant Faculty Learning Teaching and Quality Committee;

- the regular (five-yearly) review of courses or groups of related courses via membership of the Review Panel or by being consulted as Student Representative(s) of the course(s) under review by the Review Panel.

For further details, the relevant section of the Code of Practice is available at: https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.92578!ssl_cop.pdf

In addition to module evaluation, Schools may invite students to evaluate courses. The University conducts surveys of other aspects of the student University experience (e.g. IT service/provision, accommodation).

All final year students are invited to participate in the annual National Student Survey (NSS), postgraduate taught students in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and postgraduate research students in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the outcomes of which are considered by the University's Executive Team, the Learning and Teaching Committee, Faculties and Schools. Section 5.1 above requires Staff/Student Liaison Groups to also consider the outcomes of the NSS.

9 Monitoring representation

9.1 The Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association are committed to assuring effective student representation and are convinced of the mutual benefits resulting from strong links between staff and students.

9.2 LTC will monitor student representation activity on an on-going basis. Schools will be asked to submit an annual report at the end of a session to their Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (which will, on an annual basis, confirm to the Learning and Teaching Committee that monitoring has been carried out; dentify any matters of principle and/or major issues which should be bought to the attention of the LTC and/or notify examples of good practice. The LTC may decide to take action as appropriate. LTC will periodically review arrangements, highlighting good practice, recommending changes where the systems may be improved and addressing issues which require attention.

9.3 Section 5.3 above describes how issues considered by Staff/Student Liaison Committees should be taken forward within the University.

10. Suggestions for Good Practice in Staff/Student Liaison

Many of the items on the following list of examples of good practice have been developed and proven effective in Schools at UEA. Schools that operate good practices that go beyond those described below should bring these to the attention of their Faculty Associate Dean (LTQ) and Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee in the first instance. The Faculty Associate Dean (LTQ) as ex-officio member of the Learning and Teaching Committee will ensure that their good practice is acknowledged and disseminated.

Schools may also wish to report on their experience of implementing the measures listed below so that other Schools may learn from them:

- student involvement in the consideration of course feedback;
- special consultation exercises facilitated by the School/Faculty in respect of any major change(s) proposed by either the School/Faculty or the University;
- student membership of School Teaching Committees and Course Review Panels;
- regular liaison with the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality (a requirement where there is no School Teaching Committee)
- student consideration of the outcomes of the NSS, PTES and PRES. Schools may wish to consider whether and how students might appropriately be involved in course planning, School planning days/exercises whilst recognising the confidential nature of some of the issues.

11. **Summary of requirements:**

Information to Students:
- Schools to issue pre-arrival information regarding student representation and/or during induction and/or during week one of semester;
- Faculties/Schools to promote student representation and liaison opportunities at induction session.

Representation on School Boards/School Teaching Committees
- Schools to seek nominations and where appropriate, to conduct elections preferably prior to the end of the previous academic year in respect of continuing students;
- Schools to arrange (a) meeting(s) of Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) in Week 2 of Semester 1 wherever possible in order to have School Board nominees confirmed in Week 3 in readiness for the first meeting of the session of the School Board;
- Schools to inform the Academic Officer, the Student Support Services Manager of the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association of the names of student representatives before the first Board/Teaching Committee meeting where possible;
- Schools to provide School Board Representatives with the opportunity to consult with the Head of School or nominee(s) prior to each Board meeting, either by an informal meeting or by other means e.g. Staff/Student Liaison Group(s);

Other forms of Representation
- each School to determine constitution and format of Staff/Student Liaison Group or alternative forms of liaison;
- dates of meetings of Staff/Student Liaison Groups to be notified to the Academic Officer, the Student Support Services Manager of the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association;
- agenda and minutes of Staff/Student Liaison Group meetings or

alternative forms of liaison to be lodged with the Academic Officer and the Student Support Services Manager of the Union of UEA Students, the Graduate Students' Association, the Dean of Students and the Library;

• issues raised at Staff/Student Liaison Group(s) or alternative forms of liaison to be reported to School Board and/or other appropriate committees;

• a report on student representation to be submitted to Learning and Teaching Committee on an annual basis;

• Schools to operate more than one Staff/Student Liaison Group or provide other opportunities for specialist feedback where the needs of certain groups within its membership are significantly different;

• where no Teaching Committee exists, the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality to have regular liaison with students (for example, via their representatives), taking an overview of quality assurance outputs and possibilities/proposals for enhancement and reporting to the Head of School;

Communication

• Schools to provide notice-board space where this is feasible taking account of the nature of the student group;

• Schools to promote other methods of communication such as via the School's web-site (intranet).

Student Evaluation of Modules and Courses

• students to evaluate modules each time a module is run;

• student representative(s) of course(s) to meet with Course Review Panels;

• student membership of Course Review Panels;

• other evaluation activities as the School/Faculty determines;

Summary of recommendations for good practice

• Schools to facilitate special consultation exercises in respect of any major change(s) proposed by either the School/Faculty or the University;

• Schools to consider how students might be appropriately involved in course planning, School planning days/exercises whilst recognising the confidential nature of some of the issues;

• Students to be involved in the consideration of course feedback;

• Student membership of School Teaching Committees (whether these exist) and Course Review Panels;

• Regular liaison with the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality Office (a requirement where there is no School Teaching Committee);

• Student consideration of the outcomes of the NSS, PTES and PRES