

Following Learning and Teaching Committee held on 4/3/15  
From Dr Katherine Birch (SAQA)

Re: UPDATED Guidance on the **Operation of Staff Student Liaison Committees**

Key Matters This updated guidance has been developed to complement the refreshed Student Voice document. It sets out the University's expectations in respect of the operation of SSLCs. The large majority of the current arrangements have been retained. The document provides further details regarding the principles underpinning SSLCs, clarifies a number of matters and proposes a small number of enhancement actions.

### **Key enhancements endorsed by LTC**

- Representation of PGR students (p3) – 2 Faculty PGR Reps to be elected / nominated to represent the views of PGR students within a faculty to Faculty Research Committees and work closely with the PGR Student Rep on RDSC.
- Inclusion of details within their HEAR for those Course Reps who (i) undergo training and (ii) whose SSLC Leads confirm to the University Registrar that individuals have completed their term of office as a Course or PGR Representative to their satisfaction.
- Information about Course Reps and SSLCs (remit and minutes) to be provided on the relevant Moodle/s.
- Student Reps to be elected by the end of **Week 3** of the academic year.
- LHUSU to be advised of details of Course Reps at the end of **Week 4**.
- Clarification re Equality of Opportunity.
- Clarification that Course Reps should be provided with reasonable access to photocopying etc.
- Minimum of **2 SSLC meetings per term**.
- There is a sector requirement that student engagement is actively monitored by Key Performance Indicators (see below). **The following will be used for 2015/16:**
  1. SSLCs to be established in line with this guidance in all Departments and partner institutions, as described.
  2. Academic leadership for staff student liaison to be clearly designated
  3. A minimum of 2 SSLC meetings to be held per term
  4. Attendance at SSLC meetings to be monitored
  5. To ensure appropriate and timely consideration of matters arising from Student Representation activities, reports on key issues to be considered as a Standing Agenda Item at Departmental meetings, the NoH EAOC and RDSC.
  6. FQLT to receive information on key Faculty wide matters arising from SSLCs to identify trends and themes.



# **Guidance on the Operation of Staff-Student Liaison Committees**

Draft considered by LTC 4/3/15. Endorsed with minor amendments  
Final version includes closer reference to arrangements in Partner institutions.

## **1. Introduction**

Liverpool Hope University is committed to engaging and involving students both collectively and individually in assuring and enhancing the student experience. A central component of the University's 'Student Voice' framework is the Course Representation system and the associated Staff:Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) structures within Departments and Schools<sup>1</sup>.

The following guidelines outline the role of Course Reps and detail the operation of SSLCs.

## **2. Principles**

This guidance is based on the following principles:

- a) The University is committed to receiving and responding to student feedback in order to monitor and enhance the quality of the student experience.
- b) It is important that a positive culture is established across the University which makes explicit the commitment to receiving and responding to students' views and to discussing matters relating to learning, teaching and research. Departments should be fully engaged in student representation with clear leadership, formal processes and engagement with the Students' Union.
- c) The SSLC framework should provide an effective and coherent system for communication between staff and students.
- d) All students have the right to representation, normally through a SSLC.
- e) The training of Student Representatives is key to the successful operation of SSLCs and responsibility for providing this lies with Liverpool Hope Students' Union, with input from the University.
- f) The University will recognise and record on the student's HEAR periods undertaken as a Course Rep or Student Representative. This is subject to confirmation of training/induction having been completed and confirmation from the relevant Department Lead, Faculty or Committee Chair that the term of office as a Course Rep or Student Representative has been completed to their satisfaction.

## **3. Role of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee**

The SSLC provides a forum for staff and students to discuss matters of mutual interest. It is important because:

- i. It allows staff and students to discuss ideas, to share information and to solve problems
- ii. It forms the basis for the representation of students' views within the Subject / Department / Partner Organisation and identifies concerns which may require

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<sup>1</sup> For the remainder of this document, the term Department is used to refer to both Departments and Schools

- action at local level and/or consideration outwith the Department.
- iii. It is a formal, qualitative means of consulting students and gauging their opinion on academic matters and soliciting suggestions for improvements/enhancements
  - iv. It provides a mechanism for obtaining student feedback and communicating action taken in response to feedback

#### **4. Staff-Student Liaison Committee Models**

All students have the right to representation at a SSLC. However, given the nature of academic provision within and across Departments and locations, SSLCs may not operate the same way in all cases and the model adopted for SSLC is for local determination. When considering which model to adopt, the following should be taken into account:

- a. The potential workload for the student representatives.
- b. Students' ability to know who their representative is and contact them.
- c. How easy it will be for representatives and students to contact each other (including issues such as the geographical distribution of the student body and programme or discipline identity).

Some illustrative examples of SSLCs are given below:

- A combined SSLC for all awards offered within a Department. Here Course Reps may be elected by Programme and Level<sup>2</sup>.
- A combined SSLC for a range of awards at the same level (for example, Course Reps drawn from the suite of MA/MEd programmes within the Faculty of Education)
- A combined SSLC for all awards offered at a particular location (this may be the preferred model for some provision delivered in partnership, and is the model used for Network of Hope provision).
- A separate SSLC for each award, with Course Reps elected by Level. This may be particularly appropriate for programmes with large cohorts (for example BA Primary Teaching (QTS)).

Given that PGR students do not attend classes as such and the numbers within some Departments may be modest, each Faculty should elect two or more PGR Representatives to represent the views of the PGR students within the Faculty. PGR Faculty Reps should liaise with the PGR cohort across a Faculty, feed key matters into the Faculty Research Committee and also work closely with the PGR Student Rep on Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

The successful operation of an SSLC is dependent on attendance by its members.

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<sup>2</sup> It is anticipated that this may be the preferred model for many Departments across the University

The importance of maximum attendance cannot be overemphasised and this is monitored via a Key Performance Indicator.

## **5 Departmental Responsibilities**

### **5.1 General**

Each Department should identify a member of academic staff to provide leadership and advocacy for the SSLC activities within the Department and oversee the operation of the SSLC arrangements in the Department. They will need to liaise with the Head of Department, Programme Leads and the LHUSU in relation to Course and PGR Representation. Departments must also identify which member of staff will be their representative on Network of Hope SSLCs where applicable.

All members of staff should familiarise themselves with the Student Voice and Guidance on SSLCs and promote the Course Rep / SSLC framework. As stated in the principles above, it is important that a positive culture exists in which a Department and its constituent subjects make explicit its commitment to receiving and responding to students' views.

Students should be advised of the principles of student representation, and the role of Course or PGR Representatives should be explained to them during induction events or equivalent (see Appendix 1 – Information on the Role of the Course Representative). Departments are expected to provide students with a copy of Appendix 1 either in paper format or by directing them to the document on the web.

To promote the role of the Course or PGR Representative and to explain what it involves, Departments are strongly recommended to invite former or more senior Representatives to speak to new students at the beginning of the academic year. Departments who have used this method previously, have found it to be effective. Representatives from LHUSU also promote the Course Rep framework at induction/welcome week events and they are also willing to come along and speak to students in class or at PGR induction events. The LHUSU Vice-President for Education can be contacted on [add in]

Departments are expected to consider matters raised via Student Voice activities within the routine business of the Department (as a Standing Agenda Item within Departmental meetings), to evidence discussion of issues and to demonstrate how specific matters have been actioned.

### **5.2 Course Representative Elections**

Where possible, Departments should hold an election for Course or PGR Representatives. It is recommended that the Head of Department delegate responsibility for this to Programme / Subject Leads as appropriate. (For the Network of Hope, the elections are organised by the appropriate College.)

Depending on student numbers, it would be appropriate to elect or appoint representatives as follows: up to 50 students – 1 or 2; 51-150 students – 2; over 150 students – 3 or 4. For PGR Representatives it would be expected to elect or appoint at minimum 2 representatives per Faculty based on student numbers and geographical locations.

In the first week of the relevant term, students should be invited to consider standing for election as a representative on their Staff-Student Liaison Committees. Since a range of different SSLC structures may apply across the University, it should be made clear to students whether the SSLC relates to a particular programme, all programmes offered by the Department, a year group, a degree programme or a location.

Since the Course Rep training sessions normally take place in weeks 5, 6 and 7 of the academic year, it is important for elections to be completed **by the end of week 3**. A specific time for holding elections should be built into the timetable where possible and advertised to students.

Where there are insufficient candidates to merit an election, volunteers may be appointed to the role of Course Representative with the agreement of the group of students that they will represent.

### **5.3 Training of Course Reps with Liverpool Hope Students' Union (LHUSU)**

This section explains the procedures which should be adopted at Hope Park and the Creative Campus. Within partner organisations, equivalent procedures must be established, in line with the relevant legal agreements.

Departments are responsible for advising LHUSU of the names/contact details of Course Reps by the end of Week 4 of the relevant term. Attending training is not mandatory but it is recommended and is one of the requisites for recording periods undertaken and completed as a Course or PGR Representative on the student's transcript. If further Course or PGR Representatives are elected at any time in the year their details should be provided to the LHUSU Vice President (Education) as soon as possible.

LHUSU will publicise the dates of training sessions and also advise Heads of Department. This information will also be provided on the LHUSU website. Departments are expected to promote the LHUSU training sessions to elected/appointed Course and PGR Representatives to ensure that participation is as wide as possible. A short PowerPoint presentation (*Becoming a Course Representative*) is available. Departments are encouraged to make use of this presentation either in lectures/seminars or by directing students to the web resources. Departments should also encourage Course and PGR Representatives to sign up for their training via the LHUSU website.

Students who have completed the LHUSU Course Rep training previously and who

act as Representatives in subsequent sessions, will not be expected to attend training again unless they particularly wish to do so.

Exemption from training will be recorded for each Course or PGR Representative who has already fulfilled this requirement. All subsequent completed terms of office as a Course or PGR Representative will be recorded in the student's HEAR. Training undertaken more than three years previously is not eligible for exemption.

There is discrete training provision for PGR students, which is more tailored to the research student experience than the generic UG/PGT training session.

#### **5.4 Equal Opportunities for All Students**

Comparable Course and PGR Representation opportunities should be available to all categories of students and although it may not always be possible to reflect the diversity of the student population within the membership of the Committee, Course and PGR Representatives should reflect the views of all categories of students that they represent.

Busy schedules of students studying on campus and the geographical dispersion of students on some courses can challenge SSLCs in upholding the staff-student liaison principles of meeting regularly and enabling students to provide on-going feedback. In some cases, it may be necessary to make special arrangements to meet the needs of a particular student population, eg:

- A virtual Staff-Student Liaison Committee may be set via the Programme / Level Moodle to facilitate interactive discussion about the student learning experience for Distance Education students.
- Individuals with a disability may require agendas and minutes in a particular format or for meetings to be held in an easily accessible room.

The virtual process can also be used as a supplement between meetings but should not replace face-to-face contact unless students never meet as a group.

Informal mechanisms for encouraging students to comment can also be beneficial. These mechanisms might include:

- Focus groups
- Feedback on 'announcements' or 'issues'
- Facilities for commenting informally and (if necessary) anonymously via a comments box or book

#### **5.5 Provision for Course and PGR Representatives**

Departments (or partner institutions, as appropriate) should provide Course and PGR Representatives with the following:

- Reasonable access to photocopying facilities to produce materials for SSLC business at no personal cost.
- Opportunity to make a short presentation in lectures or seminars about items

to be discussed at SSLC, consult on any issues to be raised and feedback any outcomes of issues raised previously.

### **5.6 Confirmation of Completion of Training and Term of Office as a Course or PGR Representative**

The University will recognise and record on the student's HEAR periods undertaken as a Course Rep or Student Representative. This is subject to confirmation of training/induction having been completed and confirmation from the relevant Department Lead, Faculty or Committee Chair that the term of office as a Course Rep or Student Representative has been completed to their satisfaction

## **6. Remit and Membership of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee**

### **6.1 Remit**

Each SSLC should have a formal written remit, which should be reviewed annually to ensure that it provides the opportunity for the discussion of current learning, teaching and research issues.

The remit of the SSLC and wider information about Student Representation should be provided within Student Handbooks and on the relevant Moodle/s. A suggested remit is provided in Appendix 2

The SSLC may discuss any business relating to the overall student learning or research experience including matters raised by students and matters on which the staff wish to seek student views. The following topics are typical of items that may be discussed within SSLCs:

- The development of new or review of existing courses/programmes
- The outcomes of student evaluation of courses and Subject Team/Departmental/College responses to any issues raised
- External Examiner Reports and the responses from the Department and the University in relation to identified issues
- The appropriateness of the overall balance of assessment activities and the overall workload of the programme
- Assessment criteria, assessment deadlines and the adequacy of feedback
- Curriculum content
- The adequacy of learning resources (e.g. learning accommodation, timetables, reading lists, library resources etc.)
- Quality of teaching
- Learning and teaching methods
- Student handbooks
- Project work
- Student placements/year abroad arrangements
- Student support and guidance procedures
- The research student experience

- Employability and transferable skills development
- The appointment of student members to Faculty Committees and relevant University committees
- Internal reviews of the subject (e.g. Departmental Reviews)
- Accreditation visits by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
- Suggested student-driven questions for inclusion in the Internal programme of student evaluations
- Issues raised by Course Reps
- Matters about which the University wishes to consult

The SSLC should not discuss personal matters relating to individual students or members of staff. However, members of the committee should be reminded of alternative mechanisms through which such matters can be raised.

## **6.2 Membership**

Students should normally make up the majority of the Committee since it can be intimidating for students if they are outnumbered by staff.

The Chair and other roles should be agreed by the SSLC at the first meeting of each academic year. Liverpool Hope expects that the SSLCs will normally be Chaired by a member of staff with a Student Vice-Chair.

The Course Rep details may additionally be published on student noticeboards, and Departmental websites and relevant Moodles to facilitate student interaction with those who represent them. Contact details and photographs should be included, subject to the permission of the relevant parties. The staff membership should include members of staff with specific remits for Learning and Teaching and Student Support. Representatives from the Library, Careers Service, IT services and other Student Services may be invited to attend meetings as appropriate.

## **7. Frequency of Staff-Student Liaison Committee Meetings**

**A minimum of 2 meetings per term is expected.** SSLCs should always be scheduled so that matters arising can be discussed by the relevant Department (or, where such arrangements exist, other committee) in a timely manner.

There may be certain times when additional meetings of the SSLC may be beneficial to both staff and students, for example when:

- planning or introducing a new course or programme
- planning or introducing major programme changes
- preparing for a Departmental Review
- preparing for an accreditation visit by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body

Meetings should take place at a mutually convenient time to allow for maximum

attendance and should not coincide with timetabled learning commitments of Course Representatives.

The first SSLC meeting should normally take place no earlier than Week 6 to allow Course Representatives the opportunity to consolidate their training.

Dates, times and venues of meetings should be published at the beginning of the academic session.

## **8. Agenda, Papers and Minutes of the Meetings**

### **8.1 Agenda**

The SSLC should agree who is responsible for the production of the agenda and circulation of papers (whether the SSLC Secretary or another person).

The person responsible for the production of the agenda should send a timely reminder about the forthcoming SSLC to members of the committee together with a note of the deadline for the receipt of agenda items.

It is good practice to alert all students via their University email to the forthcoming meeting (and also via relevant noticeboards and other media) to remind them that they should advise the relevant Course Representative of any issues for discussion at the meeting.

The agenda and papers (including minutes of the previous meeting) should be made available to all Course Reps at least 3 days before the meeting is held. The agenda should include the date, time and location of the meeting. A suggested Template is provided in Appendix 2.

Where electronic circulation is used, paper copies should be available on request.

### **8.2 Papers**

In some cases, an agenda item may require an accompanying paper. It is recommended that papers be circulated with the agenda to allow the committee adequate time to digest the information. Tabling papers should generally be avoided.

### **8.3 Minutes**

Minutes should be taken at each meeting and the committee is encouraged, where possible, to appoint a minute-taker who is not a member of the committee, as it is recognised that minute-taking can inhibit opportunities to engage with discussion. The SSLC should identify agreed action points and assign them to specific individuals, with stated time lines/limits or refer them for discussion and action to the next Departmental meeting.

In the text of minutes it is good practice to refer to individuals, where possible, by their role (e.g. Psychology Level H Course Rep) since individuals' names may mean little to the wider audience that might consult the minutes both immediately and in the future.

Minutes should be approved by the SSLC at the following meeting and agreed amendments should be recorded. Minutes should be made available as soon as possible. Before minutes have been approved they should be marked 'DRAFT'.

Approved minutes should be made available to all members of staff and all members of the relevant student body via the appropriate Moodle/s.

The designated member of staff with responsibility for SSLCs should provide incoming Course Representatives with the minutes from the previous year's SSLC meetings in advance of the first SSLC meeting to give a flavour of how programmes and issues raised have progressed.

## **9. Conduct of the Meeting**

Although Course Representatives may have been trained by LHUSU, many may have no experience of serving on a committee. Consequently Departments are encouraged to provide a short, supplementary induction, providing a brief explanation of the committee's remit, how the committee operates, the Course Representative's role on the committee, and introducing all members to their roles.

Staff should be aware that students might not be familiar with some of the commonly used jargon and acronyms and should try to avoid these where possible. Often a glossary of terms specific to the subject area can be helpful.

All members of the committee should be encouraged to ask questions about anything that they do not understand.

Meetings should be conducted in such a way as to give all members a reasonable opportunity to present their views.

A LHUSU Representative will be entitled to attend SSLCs.

The Committee should agree action in response to issues raised, who will take it and by when, and receive reports on action taken at the next meeting. It is important to provide feedback to SSLCs and Course Representatives on action taken, and also on why it may not have been possible to progress an issue. In doing so, Departments can demonstrate that they are committed to the process and take students' issues seriously.

If a concern cannot be resolved at the SSLC, it should be referred to the Departmental or other relevant Committee for consideration and action. In the case of the Network of Hope, general issues are referred to the University's Experience and

Academic Oversight Committee. In addition, Departments should be alert to matters raised via SSLCs which have been actioned and closed. Unresolved issues which require the attention of the Faculty or the wider University should be highlighted in the Annual Review and Enhancement Report for the relevant programme (or to Faculty Board or LTC sooner if the matter is a serious concern). Course Representatives may also raise their concerns with the appropriate LHUSU officer if they feel that an issue is not being dealt with appropriately or quickly enough.

Meetings should be minuted and the agreed minutes should be published in a form accessible to all staff and students of the school.

The relevant section from the minute should be sent to those who have been invited to attend the meeting for a specific purpose.

## **9. Information for Students**

Information for students on the role of the Class and PGR Representative is available in Appendix 1 at the end of this guide.

## **10. Comments from Schools and Students**

At the end of each academic session, Class and PGR Representatives who have undertaken Course Rep training and completed the role of Course or PGR Representative will be invited by the LHUSU Vice President (Education) to provide feedback on what has worked well in their SSLC and what they think can be improved. The feedback will be co-ordinated by the LHUSU Vice President and forwarded to the Dean of Students and Senior Academic Quality Advisor in an anonymised form.

## ***Acknowledgements***

The documentation available on the websites of the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Hull, Keele, Manchester and Warwick has greatly assisted the preparation of these guidelines.

## APPENDIX 1

### Information for Students on the Role of the Class or PGR Representative

The following information has been compiled in conjunction with LHUSU.

#### 1. Introduction

As a Course or PGR Representative you are an official representative for your cohort, year group or programme. You have a positive role to play, by facilitating communication and constructive change within your course and/or programme. Members of staff in your Department and the wider University value your input which contributes to ongoing development and improvement throughout the University and future students will benefit from the positive changes that have occurred as a result of the active involvement of their predecessors. Previous experience is not required.

#### 2. Why would you want to become a Class or PGR Representative?

To represent the views of others

To enhance your personal development

To develop valuable transferable skills such as:

Communication

Organisation

Team work

Negotiation skills and conflict management

Time management

Speaking in public

Confidence

#### 3. What will you get out of it?

- Training, which will benefit you in other areas of your academic life and beyond
- The opportunity to develop and promote skills sought by employers
- Valuable experience which can be highlighted in your CV, and can be attractive to employers
- Important experience of formal meetings
- Knowledge of your institution and current issues in higher education
- The chance to make a real difference to the experience of students
- Recognition of your work as a Course Representative on your Academic Transcript (HEAR)

#### 4. Provision for Class and PGR Representatives

Training for Course Representatives is available through LHUSU who work closely with the University to develop and deliver training. Core training<sup>3</sup> will normally be offered in Weeks 5, 6 and 7 of the Advent Term, with additional sessions offered throughout the year.

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<sup>3</sup> Attendance at a Core Training session is one of the elements that must be evidenced for inclusion of the Course Rep role in the HEAR

Course Reps should be provided with the following:

- Reasonable access to photocopying facilities to produce materials for SSLC business at no personal cost
- Access to lectures/tutorials/seminars to make a short presentation about items to be discussed at SSLC, consult on any issues to be raised and feedback any outcomes of issues raised previously.
- To make a short presentation about items to be discussed by the SSLC and to consult on any other issues to be raised

The University will include details within students' HEAR for those Course Reps who (i) undergo training and (ii) whose SSLC Leads confirm to the University Registrar that individuals have completed their term of office as a Course or PGR Representative to their satisfaction.

## **5. How to be an Effective Class or PGR Representative**

To be an effective Course Rep you should:

- Be enthusiastic
- Be committed to helping others
- Be able to manage your time effectively (juggling lectures, studies, part-time work, class or PGR representative duties and social and recreational activities)
- Be visible - make yourself known to your classmates and peers and to the relevant staff in the Department
- Advise your classmates and peers of how to contact you
- Attend the core training session at the beginning of your term of office
- Collect the views of your classmates and peers and present them clearly and in a non-prejudicial way at SSLC meetings and beyond, when required
- Put forward agenda items for SSLC meetings
- Prepare for SSLC meetings by reading the relevant documents and requesting previous minutes
- Report agreed action back to your classmates and peers
- Follow up on actions allocated to you
- Alert the LHUSU Vice President / member of staff with responsibility for SSLC matters to issues which are out with your remit or which you would like assistance in tackling

**APPENDIX 2**

**SUGGESTED SSLC AGENDA**  
**for the Staff Student Liaison Meeting on XXXXXX**

- 1 Record of those Present
- 2 Welcome and Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on XXXXX  
*(to be agreed or modified and agreed as necessary.)*
- 4 Progress against Actions from the Meeting on XXXXXX
- 5 Feedback from Students

Student representatives are asked to identify:

- positive aspects of the student experience;
- areas of concern;
- suggestions for improvements.

At this meeting, we are particularly interested in students' comments about XXXXX.

However, students are welcome to raise any other topics as well.

- 6 Information from the University or College for Students
- 7 AOB
- 8 Summary of Agreed Actions, and Key Matters to be Raised at the Next Meeting of the XXXX which will be held on XXXXX