



Student Representation Policy

1.0 Introduction and background

1.1 The University of Northampton Student Representation Policy has been formed in partnership between the University, students and the Students' Union. The aim of the policy is to ensure that every student is represented in all University decision making processes and that every student can contribute to the enhancement of their academic experience.

2.0 Purpose and scope

2.1 This policy sets out the joint commitment of the University and the Students' Union to operate an effective system of student representation and build on a shared interest in promoting good practice in effective representation.

2.2 The policy will be used as a guide by the University and the Students' Union towards student representation operations.

2.3 This policy, and associated guidance document addressing the operational aspects of the representation system, will be made available to all staff and students.

2.4 In the first instance this policy will refer to students on taught programmes with the intention of incorporating research students in due course.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 'Representation' refers to the formal structures which allow the student voice to be effectively heard at all levels of the University to improve the experience of students and to allow changes to be communicated.

3.2 'Course Representatives' refers to those students elected to represent students at the programme level.

3.3 'Faculty Representatives' refers to those students elected to represent Students at the Faculty level.

3.4 'Sabbatical Officers' refers to the four elected positions in the Students' Union.

3.5 All of the above will be referred to as 'Student Representatives'.

3.6 'Students' Union' refers to staff or elected Officers who work within the organisation.

4.0 Key principles

4.1 Students' feedback on their University experience is central to improving quality in higher education institutions. The University and the Students' Union are committed to providing effective structures for student feedback and representation. Both parties will work jointly in ensuring these systems provide for the assurance and enhancement of quality.

4.2 The central purpose of student representation is to ensure that every student on all programmes of study at every level has the opportunity to contribute to their academic experience.

4.3 Student representation requires a culture where the University, its students and the Students' Union have a shared responsibility for promoting an environment which allows the student voice to be heard.

4.4 The student voice should be evident at all levels of the University decision making process as follows:

- a. Programme level – Course Representatives will sit on and chair Student Voice Committee(s) (SVC).
- b. Faculty level – Faculty and/or Course Representatives (three per Faculty) will sit on the Faculty Academic Committee. See Role Description.
- c. University level – the President and the Vice President Education will sit on the Board of Governors and on Senate; the President and/or other Sabbatical Officers will sit on all Senate committees with Sabbatical Officers or other Student Representatives on sub-committees as appropriate.

4.5 Each of these representatives will ensure they gather views of the student constituency on all relevant matters and ensure students are informed of outcomes of meetings.

5.0 Key responsibilities

5.1 Course Representatives will be elected by the students in the year group of the course they represent; this will be done fairly and democratically with guidance distributed before the start of the academic year.

- 5.2 The Students' Union will share appropriate promotional materials with Programme Leaders before the start of the academic year, with the purpose for this to be shared in welcome week lectures, or other introductory lectures, to make students aware of the role before an election takes place.
- 5.3 The Students' Union will be responsible for creating an online booking system for Programme Leaders to request assistance from a Student Union representative with the promotion of elections. This booking system will be made live and distributed to Programme Leaders by the first working day of September. These bookings are subject to Union staff availability and will be on a first-come-first serve basis.
- 5.4 Course Representatives will attend Student Voice Committees and relevant actions will be considered as part of the annual review of programme. and/or forwarded to relevant groups/individuals for action. If a Student Voice Committee cannot resolve issues at programme level, the Faculty Representative will be asked to take these to the appropriate Faculty level meetings.
- 5.5 At the first meeting of each academic year the SVC will elect a Course Representative to be the Chair of the committee for the academic year. where a student chair is absent from a meeting a student vice chair is to be elected in the interim.
- 5.6 A Staff Facilitator (normally the Subject or Programme Leader) should be assigned to each SSLC to provide support for the group.
- 5.7 All Faculty Representatives will organise Faculty Forums with students from their Faculty, to discuss feedback from SVCs, to consider the rest of the forum's agenda for this all to be raised at Faculty Academic Committee meetings. Faculty Forums should pass feedback which is wider than their Faculty to the Students' Union Vice President Education, who attends the Students' Union Education Committee where Faculty Representatives are present.
- 5.8 The Students' Union Education Committee will forward items for action to the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee or the Student Experience Committee where the Vice President Education will represent the student voice.
- 5.9 All student representatives will ensure that actions taken and their outcomes are clearly communicated back to the students they represent.
- 5.10 All student representatives detailed above will need to attend training provided by the Students' Union to help them fulfil their role.
- 5.11 The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, evaluated and amended as necessary at the Student Experience Forum.
- 5.12 It is the responsibility of both the Students' Union and Faculties to make every effort to promote the opportunity to become a Course Representative to all students

including; part-time, postgraduate, international, mature, collaborative provision students, and other underrepresented groups.

6.0 Election of Course Representatives

- 6.1 Course Representatives will be elected in line with points 5.1
- 6.2 Students who are interested in becoming a Course Representative must go through the democratic election process. See Course Representative Election Guidance for more information.
- 6.3 Previous Course Representatives should not be automatically reappointed in the role in the new academic year, but should go through the democratic election process.
- 6.4 If the number of nominees for student representative places is less than or equal to the number of places available, all nominees will automatically become Course Representatives.
- 6.5 Course Representative positions which are not filled during the election period should be filled by a subsequent election process determined by the Students' Union.

7.0 Training of Course Representatives

- 7.1 The Students' Union will provide all student representatives with a handbook for guidance. The handbook will explain the Student Representation System, the role of Course Representatives, the structure, mechanisms for feeding back and useful contacts. Every Course Representative will be invited to attend face-to-face training or to complete online training provided by the Students' Union prior to beginning the role.
- 7.2 Programmes and Subjects will be asked to provide administrative support for Student Voice Committees (SVC). This support will normally be requested from Programme Leaders. Programme Leaders are welcome to get in touch with the Student Voice Coordinators for any additional guidance and training.
- 7.3 Training will be run at all UK partner colleges for Course Representatives representing Higher Education students.
- 7.4 If, for any reason, Course Representatives are unable to attend initial training the Students' Union will provide training in an online format.
- 7.5 The Students' Union will also run additional training and coaching throughout the year to enhance skills of Course Representatives.

8.0 Student Voice Committee Committee (SVC)

- 8.1 Every Programme/Subject must create a SVC. In the case of small programmes, a SVC may cover a Subject area. All variations to establish staff-student committees at levels other than the Programme/Subject area must be notified to the Faculty-specific Student Voice Coordinator before the start of the academic year.
 - 8.2 Each Programme or Subject area must identify a member of staff, known as the 'Staff Facilitator', to support the operation of the SVC, and for liaising with the Students' Union. The name and contact details must be passed to the Faculty-specific Student Voice Coordinator by the beginning of the Academic year so that training can be arranged.
 - 8.3 The main memberships of the SVC are Course Representatives, not 'Student Representatives', which is consistent with the terminology used in the Representation Policy. Additional Student Representatives may attend at the invitation of the Chair.
 - 8.4 Each Programme must have a clear representative structure.
 - 8.5 Where programmes share core modules Course Representatives names can also be shared; this must be made clear to the students concerned and also to the Students' Union that this is the case.
 - 8.6 The staff membership of SVCs should be representative of the students the committee covers and would usually include the Programme Leader. Course Representatives should comprise the majority and members of University services should be encouraged to attend where possible.
 - 8.7 Composition of SVCs must be approved by the relevant Deputy Dean of the Faculty and be notified to the Students' Union prior to the start of the academic year.
- 9.0 Conduct of SVCs**
- 9.1 Student Staff Liaison committees must meet a minimum of once per term. More meetings may be arranged if deemed necessary.
 - 9.2 The dates of SVC meetings will be decided by the Staff Facilitator at the beginning of the academic year, with consideration of the students' timetable, and shared with the Course Representatives and the Students' Union Student Voice Coordinators.
 - 9.3 Wherever possible, the Chair should be a student elected by the committee at the first meeting of the academic year. The Chair may be rotated or shared between a number of Course Representatives; however where there is no student willing to chair, a staff member may take this role. An SVC meeting should not take place where there is no student present.

- 9.4 SVC agendas, minutes and papers must be sent to Course Representatives at least seven days prior to the meeting. These will be sent by Programme Leaders, as they have access to students' emails. The minutes will be taken by the Staff Facilitator who will be responsible for circulation. Approval of the previous minutes will always be on the agenda.
- 9.5 Minutes from SVCs need to note only the main discussion items and actions and responsibilities.
- 9.6 Agenda, papers and minutes should be shared with the students represented by the SVC, and the Students' Union Student Voice Coordinators for them to identify where support may be required.
- 9.7 At the first meeting of an academic year the committee should reflect on the previous end of year report and address any unresolved business
- 9.8 For details of matters of business see the SVC terms of reference.

10.0 Course Representative Facilities

- 10.1 Course Representatives will need access to certain facilities in order to advertise their role, ask for student opinion and provide feedback. A Course Representative Directory will be available for all Faculties, where the name of the Course Representative under each course will be listed and a student can thereby get in contact with their representative without any personal contact information being shared.

11.0 Reporting Mechanisms

- 11.1 The SVC outcomes feed into University quality assurance and enhancement processes including annual review and PSR.
- 11.2 After each SVC meeting, Course Representatives will need to submit a Rep Feedback form, found online on the Students' Union website, detailing any feedback that they raised, how many students they have spoken to, and any support they require from the Students' Union.
- 11.3 The Students' Union will then produce an Academic Review which will be presented to the University Student Experience Forum.

12.0 Removal of Course Representatives

12.1 Programmes should not remove or replace Course Representative from a SVC without consultation from the Faculty-specific Student Voice Coordinator. Concerns about non-attendance or any other issues of behaviour of Course Representatives should be raised with the Student Voice Coordinator. If a student decides to step down from the position the Student Voice Coordinator must be notified by e-mail of this change.

13.0 Faculty Representatives

13.1 Each Faculty will have three Faculty Representatives elected by an all student ballot during the Students' Union election period who will start their roles on 1st April. The nomination and election process is run by the Students' Union and all students in the faculty will have the opportunity to stand. Following the elections, the Student Voice Coordinators will ensure names are sent to the Quality Unit and the Deputy Deans.

13.2 The role of the Faculty Rep is to communicate regularly with Course Representatives and represent the views of all students in the Faculty. Faculty Representatives represent students on the Faculty Academic Committee and report to the VP Education through the Students' Union Education Committee.

13.3 To ensure that Faculty Representatives are reflecting student opinion, they will hold and Chair a Faculty Forum prior to each Faculty-level meeting in order to gather feedback and consult on agenda items. Course Representatives from the Faculty will be invited, but the meetings will be open for all students to attend.

13.4 Each Faculty Representative must attend initial training at the start of the year before attending their first Faculty committee.

13.5 More information on the role of a Faculty Representative can be found in the role description.

Date of last annual update July 2023

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