

DEPARTMENTAL STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION

1. Academic departments or a collaborative partner should establish a Staff-Student Committee. It is recommended that, where there are sufficient student numbers, separate committees should be set up for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Terms of Reference

Role of Committee

2. The role of the committee is to provide a forum where matters of concern to staff and students can be considered through open dialogue. The committee therefore provides a formal mechanism for students to raise issues on behalf of the study body they represent as well as an opportunity for staff to seek the views of students, for example on proposals to amend the curriculum or to change a mode of assessment.

Conduct of meetings

3. Discussions should not be artificially restricted, although the focus should be on the student experience in relation to the academic provision and employability. If issues arise in relation to an individual staff member, these should be directed to the Head of Department or the appropriate equivalent in the collaborative partner in the first instance. The issues themselves should be recorded in the notes resulting from the meeting, as appropriate, but care must be taken not to mention anyone, staff or student, by name.

Frequency of meetings

4. The committee should meet at least three times a year, with at least one meeting in the Autumn Term and one in the Spring Term (with the third held at the end of the Spring Term or during the Summer Term). Dates should be advertised to students and staff at least three weeks in advance of the first meeting of the academic year.

In the case of collaborative partnerships where a programme of study may be delivered over longer or shorter periods than a 12 month academic year, the committee should meet at least once per block of academic teaching in each academic cycle. Dates should be advertised to students and staff as early as practicable prior to or at the start of each block of teaching, but a minimum of three weeks in advance of the first meeting.

Membership

5. The committee should include a student representative from each stage of the programmes of study offered by the department. It will not always be possible for each programme to be represented, for example, for joint honours programmes at undergraduate level. However, where students are studying joint honours programmes, at least one representative should be allocated to represent the views of students on these programmes. Furthermore, there should be at least one overseas student representative on the committee unless the department has very few students at that level. Where a department has part-time students, every effort should be made to include them in the meetings, by phone link if necessary. Care should also be taken to ensure that the membership is representative of the student body. It is preferable to hold a separate meeting for research students, though this will be dependent on student numbers.

In the case of a collaborative partnership, the partner should ensure that the committee includes a student representative from each stage of the programme(s) of study offered, each mode of study (full-time and part-time) and from other representative groups as appropriate.

6. Elections to appoint student representatives should be held annually at the start of the academic year (or at an appropriate time for programmes which begin part way through an academic year). Student representatives will be elected by their peer group. The department should ensure that elections take place in time for the names and contact details of the student representatives to be passed on by the department to the Students' Union by the end of Week 3 of the Autumn Term. This allows the Students' Union to provide training for the student representatives.

In the case of a collaborative partnership elections should take place in time for any planned training or briefing of student representatives before their first meeting. Where a collaborative partnership programme has a rolling intake student representatives may be elected to the committee during the academic cycle and may serve as long as they remain registered students.

7. The staff members will be determined by the Head of Department or equivalent in the case of a collaborative partner. There should be at least two members of staff and, normally, this will include the Academic Co-ordinator (or equivalent role, particularly in a collaborative partnership), and where postgraduate students are represented, a Programme Director and the Director of Graduate Studies. In the case of a collaborative partnership where academic members of staff of the College are teaching on the programme, they must be represented on the committee as must Visiting Tutors/ lecturers.

8. The full membership should be published (normally via email to students and staff).

9. The committee should normally be chaired by one of the student representatives and a member of the administrative staff should service the committee.

Agenda Setting

10. In addition to specific items brought forward by members, the following business should be routinely covered at appropriate meetings. In the case of collaborative partnerships, the asterisked items may need to be covered at each meeting while other items such as the consideration of Annual Review reports and those of Visiting/ External Examiners will have to be scheduled when these become available:

Autumn Term First Meeting: (first and second meetings of the academic cycle in the case of a collaborative partnership)

- (i) election of a Chair from the student body;*
- (ii) confirmation of who will represent the views of joint honours students, if appropriate;*
- (iii) receipt of a copy of the College terms of reference for staff-student committees and, in particular, noting the role and conduct of meetings;*
- (iv) note of the dates of forthcoming meetings;*
- (v) confirm how liaison with the SU will be maintained (in addition to sending a copy of the minutes to the SU VP for Education & Welfare) or in the case of a collaborative partnership, how liaison with the equivalent student group in the partner will be maintained, where appropriate;*
- (vi) review of the undergraduate departmental Annual Review report for the previous academic year including the reports from the visiting/ external examiners;
- (vii) review of the departmental report of the Annual Review of postgraduate research provision for the previous academic year, where relevant.

Late Spring or Summer Term Meeting: (final meeting of the academic cycle in the case of a collaborative partnership)

- (i) consideration of summary of the key issues which have arisen during the year and any action which has been taken (or in the case of a collaborative partnership during the academic cycle);
- (ii) review of the departmental report(s) of the Annual Review of postgraduate taught programmes including the reports from the visiting/external examiners, where relevant.

Any Term (following a Periodic Departmental Review)

- (i) consideration of the report of the Periodic Departmental Review (Periodic Review in the case of a collaborative partnership) and Action Plan once approved by Academic Board

11. Each department should set up a departmental Staff-Student Committee mail box which representatives can access. The secretary to the committee should ensure that the students and staff are invited to submit agenda items to this mail box and that the draft agenda is discussed with the Chair and Head of Department (or his/her nominee) or equivalent in the case of a collaborative partner.

Minutes of meetings

12. The minutes should avoid naming individual students or staff (apart from the list of the attendees which should indicate staff roles and the cohort each student represents). An action list should accompany the minutes which include who is responsible and the deadline for completion. The action list should be reviewed at each meeting. This can then be used to provide a summary of issues to be considered at the final meeting of the academic year or on an annual basis at the end of the academic cycle in the case of a collaborative partnership.

13. Minutes should be posted on a Moodle page, specially set up for this purpose and an email sent to all students and staff informing them of this within 2 weeks of the meeting having taken place. Care should be taken not to mention any staff or student by name in the minutes. A copy should also be sent to the Students' Union Vice-President (Education & Welfare). In the case of a collaborative partnership, a copy of the minutes should be made available on Moodle or on the partner's VLE as appropriate and should be sent to any student group which represents students' interests in the partner institution.

Reporting

14. The minutes of meetings of the Staff-Student Committee should be submitted to the Departmental Learning & Teaching Committee or equivalent in the case of a collaborative partner. The report of the meetings of the Departmental Learning & Teaching Committee should then be considered by the Departmental Board or equivalent in the case of a collaborative partner.

Departmental support or support from the collaborative partner for the operation of the committee:

15. Departments or the collaborative partner should provide the following support:

- facilitate elections of student representatives and provide names of representatives to the Students' Union by week 3 of the Autumn Term (so that the SU can provide training for student representatives) or in the case of a collaborative partner elections should take place in time for any planned training or briefing of student representatives before the first meeting in each teaching block.
- set the dates for the meetings and book the rooms;
- advertise the dates, times and venues for the meetings in advance (at least 3 weeks in advance of the first meeting of academic year or in the case of a collaborative partnership dates should be advertised to students and staff as early as practicable prior to or in the teaching block, but a minimum of three weeks in advance of the first meeting.
- publicise the membership;
- encourage the Chair (once appointed) to attend the RHUL SU Academic Affairs Senate (where appropriate);
- service the meetings.