

## **Staff-Student Committee Good Practice Guidelines**

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### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

- 1.1. These guidelines bring together current good practice in the operation of Staff-Student Committees (SSCs) across the College. They are intended to be a reference document for departmental staff and student representatives and, as such, assist in the successful operation of these meetings. It is recognised that departments might wish to tailor these guidelines according to their individual needs, in collaboration with student representatives in the department.
- 1.2. SSCs strengthen understanding and improve the flow of communication between staff and students and, through open dialogue, promote high standards of education and training, in a cooperative and constructive atmosphere. Furthermore, they provide an interface between Imperial College Union/Constituent Unions and departments, allowing good practice to be shared amongst colleagues.
- 1.3. The meetings of the committee are an opportunity for students to express their views to departments about academic, pastoral and other issues relating both to their programme of study and to their broader experiences as a student in the College. Students should be encouraged both to express any concerns they may have and to highlight aspects they have enjoyed or other points which they consider to be of benefit to others. It is important for student reps to canvass views from the students they represent to ensure that the opinions represented at the meeting are representative and to report the outcomes of the meeting to the wider student community.
- 1.4. Each registered undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PGR) student should have access to an SSC which will represent their interests. It is recognised that some departments may have one SSC for all students, a UG/PGT SSC and a PGR SSC or a UG SSC and a single PG SSC combining PGT with PGR. Where groups of students are combined, departments should consider whether all student views and their issues are being adequately represented. Where appropriate, the agenda should clearly state where matters relate specifically to different levels of study. Departments should also determine whether it is appropriate for MRes programmes to be included within PGR or PGT SSCs, should these be separate meetings.
- 1.5. Some departments might choose to hold their UG Academic and Wellbeing meetings separately, while others may hold them jointly. Where the department runs a joint SSC, they should ensure that both Academic and Wellbeing issues are adequately represented.

- 1.6. These Good Practice Staff Student Committee Guidelines should be circulated by Faculty Education Managers annually, to members of academic staff who co-chair or who have responsibility for departmental SSCs. Academic staff members with responsibility for SSCs should ensure that these guidelines are discussed at the first meeting of SSCs each year.
- 1.7. Annually, the Imperial College Union should provide the Faculty Education Managers with a list of student representatives in departments. The Union and the Faculty Education Managers will work together to maintain this list informing each other when changes to personnel are made.
- 1.8. At Faculty Level, PG SSCs have been established which meet at least once a term. Faculties are free to decide whether this meeting combines PGT with PGR or whether it is more appropriate for two separate SSCs to be established.

## **2. Topics for Discussion**

- 2.1. At the first meeting of the year, it is recommended that these guidelines are circulated to committee members.
- 2.2. Topics which can usefully be discussed at meetings include:
  - The quality and timeliness of coursework and exam feedback
  - College, national and departmental survey outcomes and any changes which result through these. Surveys include (but are not restricted to): UG and PG SOLE, National Student Survey (NSS), PRES, PTES and the Student Experience Survey; with respect to NSS, PTES and PRES, SSCs must approve departmental action plans in response to issues raised by students in these surveys. For the PRES, PG SSCs should review departmental actions plans on a termly basis
  - For PGR meetings, GTA training provision and support
  - Academic policy affecting students
  - For PGR SSCs, the Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership should be discussed/highlighted at the first meeting of the Committee each year
  - For PGT SSCs, the Mutual Expectations for the Master's Project Student Supervisor Partnership should be discussed/highlighted at the first meeting of the Committee each year
  - The academic and personal tutoring system and any matters relating to pastoral care
  - External examiner reports (including departmental responses to them).
  - Academic business: identifying areas of good practice and issues which require further consideration; Discussion is likely to include: assessment; the quality of teaching and learning (including blended learning); curriculum design/changes; learning resources (library, IT); monitoring of Centres for Doctoral Training if applicable

- Panel reports from periodic reviews and reports from the subsequent follow up by the appropriate Faculty Education Committee (FEC) or Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)
- Communicating trends / developments within the department and what decisions have been made
- Issues affecting the wellbeing of students related to their course: e.g. workload, pastoral support in the department, mitigating circumstances policy
- Initiatives to increase the staff/student community in the department
- Matters related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Quality assurance arrangements, for example annual monitoring reports
- Any other matters relating to the students' experience, such as problems with individual modules, welfare and pastoral care and social facilities and provisions
- Summary reports from the relevant FEC and the PRQC as well as summary reports from Departmental Teaching Committees.

### **3. Student Membership**

- 3.1. UG and PG student representatives are to be elected in a democratic process by their cohort; Imperial College Union is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all students are represented, and that adequate training is provided to all student representatives. The Graduate School has worked with the Union and the Faculties to develop and enhance training for PG student representatives and a Postgraduate Student Representative Training Framework has been established. Where representatives are elected other than through the Imperial College Union, the names of representatives must be reported to the Union via e-mail to the Representation Team at [repstaff@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:repstaff@imperial.ac.uk).
- 3.2. As a minimum, each year of each UG and PGT programme of study should be represented by at least one student on SSCs.
- 3.3. The representation of PGR students should reflect the breadth of activity in the academic unit. For example, in a department with several research groups, representation from each of the groups might be appropriate.
- 3.4. The ICU Deputy President (Education), Deputy President (Welfare), Representation Coordinator, the relevant Faculty Rep, and Graduate Students' Union President (for PG SSCs only) should be informed of all SSC meetings and may attend these meetings by confirming their attendance with the Secretary.
- 3.5. It is advisable that departments invite their Departmental Society Chair/President to SSC meetings to give a brief overview of what is planned and contribute to the sharing of good practice.
- 3.6. It is strongly recommended that the Union and staff emphasise to student representatives that they have a responsibility to report back to the students

they represent, and that Academic and Wellbeing Reps must also attend ICU/Constituent Union representation committees, such as the Education and Representation Board, Community and Welfare Board, Academic Representation Forums or Faculty Representation Committees.

#### **4. Staff membership**

- 4.1. Staff representation on SSCs should be the minimum to ensure the inclusion of the senior key figures responsible for the programme of study:
  - 4.1.1. For UG SSCs this is the Head of Department<sup>1</sup>, Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUGS) and Senior Tutor (UG). Other staff such as year and academic tutors could be included, but care should be taken not to have too many staff on the committee as that may be considered intimidating by some students.
  - 4.1.2. For PG SSCs this is the Head of Department<sup>2</sup>, Director(s) of Postgraduate Studies (DPS), Senior Tutors (PGT and PGR), and Programme Directors/Organiser(s).
- 4.2. A list of the members of the committee should be publicised by one or more of the following means: departmental website, notice board or other appropriate medium.
- 4.3. The meeting Chair should normally be a student representative, usually the Departmental Rep or Faculty Rep, as appropriate. Where there are more student reps at the same level, e.g. an Academic and a Wellbeing Dep Rep, the meeting should either be chaired jointly, or the meeting Chair should alternate. The Chair is supported by a Deputy Chair, who is a member of staff.
- 4.4. Each SSC should be supported by a secretary, who is a member of staff. The Secretary will take responsibility for writing the minutes and confirming their accuracy with the Chair and Deputy Chair, and for ensuring that these are posted to a suitable online repository so that students can access them with ease. The Secretary should keep an action log which is regularly updated and posted to this site; the action log should be reviewed at each SSC meeting.
- 4.5. The secretary should also ensure that the minutes are shared with the ICU Representation Team (repstaff@imperial.ac.uk) who will upload them to the Union website.

#### **5. Frequency of Meetings**

- 5.1. Departments should advertise the times and dates of meetings well in advance.

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<sup>1</sup> For the Faculty of Medicine this may be the Deputy Principal and Director of Education or their nominee.

<sup>2</sup> For the Faculty of Medicine the term "Department" may also refer to Imperial College Schools, institutes or Divisions.

- 5.2. UG SSCs should meet at least once in each of the autumn and summer terms and at least twice during the spring term. The Head of Department<sup>3</sup> should be responsible for ensuring that meetings are held.
- 5.3. PG SSCs should meet at least once a term. The Head of Department<sup>4</sup> should be responsible for ensuring that meetings are held.
- 5.4. To resolve problems efficiently and timely, it is recommended that informal meetings between the relevant student representatives and the director of studies, senior tutor or year tutors take place in those months when an SSC meeting is not scheduled. Any problems brought up in those meetings and their resolutions should be reported on in the following SSC meeting.
- 5.5. Additional SSC meetings may be arranged as necessary. Both staff and student committee members should be able to request additional meetings. A reasonable period of notice should be given for any additional meetings.
- 5.6. Dates of SSC meetings should be arranged in consultation with both staff and student representatives and publicised throughout the department by an appropriate means. The ICU Deputy President (Education), Deputy President (Welfare), Representation Coordinator and relevant Faculty Rep should also be informed of meeting times, dates and locations.

## **6. Agendas and Minutes of the Meeting**

- 6.1. It is strongly recommended for the Chair and the Deputy Chair to meet prior to each SSC meeting to draw up and discuss potential agenda items together. A draft agenda, taking into consideration these discussions, should then be jointly prepared by the secretary and Chair of the committee and posted on the appropriate departmental notice board(s) normally at least ten working days in advance of the meeting, along with a request for additional items for the agenda. A model agenda can be found on the [Academic Governance website](#).
- 6.2. It is the responsibility of the student representatives on the Committee to collect items to be discussed from student year reps and other students and to submit them to the Chair of the committee. Items should be obtained from as wide a representative grouping of students as possible. The agenda should also be pre-circulated to all students within the constituency.
- 6.3. Meetings of the SSC should be minuted by the secretary to ensure that there is a record of actions agreed. Departments may also wish to make available an executive summary of the meetings shortly after the meeting has been held which can be posted.

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- 6.4. Minutes should usually be prepared within ten working days of the SSC meeting and made widely available to staff and students, by one or more of the following means: a dedicated notice board/s visible to staff and students; the departmental website or other appropriate medium. Any papers discussed at the meeting, or appropriate summaries, should also be made available. These documents should also be shared with the ICU Representation Team ([repstaff@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:repstaff@imperial.ac.uk)) who will upload them to the Union website.
- 6.5. Action taken in response to SSC business should be reported to members at the next meeting and recorded in the minutes. The Secretary will keep an action log. The Chair and Deputy Chair should work with the other student representatives on the committee to ensure that departmental responses to issues raised at SSC and through surveys are communicated to all students (for example, via cohort specific emails). The year representatives should also meet with the students to communicate the outcomes and discuss any issues the students might have.
- 6.6. SSCs should report to other departmental meetings, as appropriate.
- 6.7. Departments should review the format and conduct of their SSCs on an annual basis in consultation with student representatives, to see if they take account of these guidelines. Should departments wish to propose amendments to these guidelines then suggestions should be sent to the ICU Deputy President (Education) – [dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk)

## 7. Arbitration

- 7.1. Students may seek advice and representation from the Imperial College Union if they feel these guidelines have been unreasonably broken or if they are unable to resolve a problem through the SSC.

Approved by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee November 2020

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