

## 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 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.
- 1.2. Staff-Student Committees 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) and postgraduate (PG) student should have access to a Staff-Student Committee which will represent their interests. It is recognised that some departments may have one Staff-Student Committee (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. 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. 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.
- 1.6. Annually, the Imperial College Union should provide the Faculty Education Managers with a list of SSC Co-Chairs. The Union and the Faculty Education Managers will work together to maintain this list informing each other when changes to personnel are made.

- 1.7. 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. The following topics should be included on the agenda and discussed at Staff-Student Committee meetings:

- 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.
- Academic policy affecting students.
- 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.

- 2.3. Topics which can usefully be discussed at meetings include:

- Quality assurance arrangements, for example annual monitoring reports.
- Any other matters relating to the students' experience, such as problems with individual courses/lecturers, pastoral care and social facilities and provisions.
- Summary reports from the relevant Faculty Education Committee (FEC) and the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee as well as summary reports from departmental Teaching Committees.

### **3. Student Membership**

- 3.1. Undergraduate and postgraduate 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 to develop and enhance training for postgraduate 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 coordinator ([n.cheema@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:n.cheema@imperial.ac.uk)).
- 3.2. As a minimum, each year of each undergraduate and Master's programme of study should be represented by at least one student on Staff-Student Committees.
- 3.3. The representation of postgraduate (PGR) research 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), Representation Coordinator, Graduate Students' Union President, and the relevant Faculty Rep should be informed of all Staff-Student Committee 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 Staff-Student Committee 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 Reps must also attend ICU/Constituent Union representation committees, such as the Education and Representation Board or Faculty Representation Committees.

### **4. Staff membership**

- 4.1. Staff representation on Staff-Student Committees should be the minimum to ensure the inclusion of the senior key figures responsible for the programme of study:
  - 4.1.1. For undergraduate committees this is the Head of Department,<sup>1</sup> Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUGS) and Senior Tutor. 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.

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

- 4.1.2. For postgraduate committees this is the Head of Department<sup>2</sup>, Director(s) of Postgraduate Studies (DPS), Postgraduate Tutor(s) and Programme Directors/Organiser(s).
- 4.1.3. It is recognised that some departments have a single postgraduate Staff-Student Committee that deals with both PG Master's level (PGT) and PG research degree student (PGR) matters. If this is the case, the agenda should clearly state which matters concern PGT students and which concern PGR students, and ensure both groups are adequately heard.
- 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 committee should elect a Chair each year, which could be either a member of staff or a student. If the Chair is a member of staff, the Deputy Chair should be a student, and vice versa. Departments should encourage students to chair meetings, or sections of meetings, where this is appropriate to the matter under consideration.
- 4.4. Each Staff-Student Committee should be supported by a secretary, who is a member of staff. The Secretary will take responsibility for writing the minutes 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.
- 4.5. The secretary should encourage Departmental Reps to upload the minutes and papers of the meetings to eActivities. How to do this is explained in Rep Training, but if Reps are unsure of how to do this they should contact the Representation Coordinator [n.cheema@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:n.cheema@imperial.ac.uk). The Representation Coordinator will provide a summary report of all PG SSCs to the summer meeting of the Working Party for PG SSCs.

## **5. Frequency of Meetings**

- 5.1. Departments should advertise the times and dates of meetings well in advance.
- 5.2. Undergraduate Staff-Student Committees should meet at least two times in each of the autumn and spring terms and at least once during the summer term. The Head of Department should be responsible for ensuring that meetings are held.
- 5.3. Postgraduate Staff-Student Committees should meet at least once a term. The Head of Department should be responsible for ensuring that meetings are held.

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

- 5.4. Additional 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.
- 5.5. Dates of Staff-Student Committee meetings should be arranged in consultation with both staff and student representatives and publicised throughout the department by an appropriate means. The Union Deputy President (Education), 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, DUGS and/or DPS(s) to meet with student representatives prior to each 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 Staff-Student Committee 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 (easy to read) summary of the meetings shortly after the meeting has been held which can be posted.
- 6.4. Minutes should usually be prepared within ten working days of the committee 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 uploaded to the eActivities website by the Departmental Rep.
- 6.5. Action taken in response to Staff-Student Committee 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 Staff-Student Committees 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. Staff-Student Committees should report to other departmental meetings, as appropriate.
- 6.7. Departments should review the format and conduct of their committee 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 Union Deputy President (Education) – [dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk) and to the Registry – [l.heming@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:l.heming@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 Staff-Student Committee.

Approved by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee  
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