

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Scope

This code is underpinned by a number of principles and covers non-negotiable aspects of the approach to representation systems. Implementation of these principles is essential in ensuring that the system is robust and that there is appropriate parity of experience across the University. It also covers good practice within Schools and the University.

Date approved/re-approved

September 2020

Date for review

To be reviewed on a periodic basis, with allowance for minor annual updates of roles and responsibilities by Educational Quality Committee, as required by changes in law or in operational practices.

To be read in conjunction with the Student Feedback Policy

Code of practice for student representation

The University and Students' Union are jointly committed to operating and supporting an effective system of student representation throughout all levels of University governance, ensuring that student input on quality and enhancement is heard at City, University of London.

In the 2018/19 academic year, a student representation review was completed. The purpose of the review, led by City, Students' Union and Student Voice on behalf of City, University of London, was to assess the performance of current representation structures and ensure that the mechanisms in place empower students to effectively engage in decision-making about their academic programmes.

As part of the review, it was recommended that the Code of Practice be reviewed and updated to create a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of the University, the Union and student representatives. The updates made to the document below reflect these purposes.

This code is underpinned by a number of principles. We take these principles as axiomatic, which is to say that they form the non-negotiable conditions of our approach to representation systems. These principles define the essential qualities of a robust, diverse, University-wide representation system.

In addition, and as before, this code of practice expands upon the principles and designates good practice based on their implementation. This code's good practice guidelines build on evidence of effective practice from within the University and the wider HE sector. The various duties that representatives undertake are outlined at the end of this document.

This code of practice will apply to partnership provision unless equivalent alternative arrangements have been specifically agreed between City and the partner institution.

Equality and Diversity Statement

City, University of London is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all its activities, processes, and culture, under its Public Sector Equality Duties and the Equality Act 2010. This includes promoting equality and diversity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic, working pattern, family circumstance, socio-economic background, political belief or other irrelevant distinction.

Where relevant to the policy, decision-making panels will ensure a reasonable gender balance (with at least one man and one woman) and will actively consider representation of other protected groups.

Principles

- For each programme of study, a committee or equivalent forum should exist to discuss the student academic experience (Student and Staff Liaison Committees) (SSLC).

- For each School, a committee or equivalent forum should exist to provide an opportunity for students to participate in school-wide discussions about the student experience. These forums (Student Experience Committees (SEC)) should have significant student representation and will report to Education and Student Committee.
- Student committees (or equivalents) must be anchored to formal decision-making structures within the Schools. The direct relationship between student committees and decision-making structures assures the formal recognition of the student voice and transparent channels of accountability for actions arising from committees and structures for escalation.
- Representatives must be elected by their peers to represent the interests of their fellow students, or where election is not possible the Students' Union must be made aware. Special consideration should be given to ensure the capture of under-represented student groups including research students, part-time students, and those students on combined / joint / multi-disciplinary programmes.
- Representatives must ensure they represent the interests of their peers by communicating effectively to gather information.
- The election of programme representatives will be timely, democratic and be conducted according to Students' Union guidance.
- Mechanisms must exist to record and track student input and respond to and track actions taken, or not taken. A written record is vital to maintain continuity on improvements year-to-year, to track responses and progress on actions arising from committees, and to afford incoming representatives' insight into ongoing work and issues discussed in previous years.
- Student representatives must be supported in gathering relevant information and in the dissemination of information to the wider student body.
- Student representatives should be encouraged to take an active role in all meetings and where they cannot attend, they should be invited to submit a written report for the meeting.
- Students will be recognised, valued, and rewarded for undertaking representative roles. Schools should work together to agree the level of reward in the forthcoming academic year. The SU and Student Voice team will facilitate meetings with Schools to agree the level of reward in advance of the academic year.
- The Students' Union should be provided with the names and contact details of all student representatives and the Schools should actively encourage engagement of the representatives with the Students' Union.

Good Practice Guidelines

School/Department Level

It is recommended that Schools/Departments:

- Brief all students on the role of student representative and offer the opportunity to stand for election no later than the first three weeks of the academic year.
- Provide details of the elected representatives, including names and contact details, to the Students' Union no later than the fourth week of the academic year.
- Ensure appropriate committees are in place and elected student representatives, including representatives as defined in the Students' Union Constitution - i.e. programme representatives and the School Representation Officer (SRO) - are invited to attend these meetings.

- Invite SROs and Programme Representatives to the Student-Staff Liaison committees and Student Experience committees, as appropriate.
- Work alongside the Students' Union in promoting training for representatives and the use of the student representatives Handbook.
- Ensure that the views of student representatives are recorded, reported and acted on as necessary, and to proactively offer feedback and progress reports on actions taken.
- Identify a member of staff to act as a student representative liaison for both student representatives and the Students' Union.
- Assist the student representatives in contacting the student body so that they may, as part of their representative and democratic function, request information from students on issues relating to the University and the student experience.
- Assist representatives with disseminating information to the wider student body.
- Support and encourage representatives to actively participate in meetings by:
- Ensuring meetings are, as far as possible, at times that are suitable to the representatives.
- Briefing students on the purpose of the committees and distributing in advance the committee terms of reference and minutes of previous meetings of the committees.
- Giving the representatives the opportunity to submit papers/agenda items and clearly identifying dates and times for the submission of agenda items.
- Circulating agendas and papers 7 calendar days before the meeting.
- Providing briefings on any complex issues or issues of particular importance to students.
- Providing the representatives with the contact details of a member of staff who may be approached for support in relation to their role (i.e. the committee Chair and/or Secretary).

University Level

The University should:

- Maintain policies and frameworks which support student input and make resources available to support representation systems.
- Work with the Students' Union in identifying an appropriate incentives scheme for SROs and programme representatives.
- Work with the Students' Union to support the production of a handbook for student representatives.
- Work with the Students' Union to promote the participation of student representatives in committees by affording representatives the opportunity to submit verbal and written reports.
- Encourage chairs and secretaries of committees to be available for students to discuss any issues in advance of meetings to ensure they understand the necessary information.
- Ensure that the views of students are recorded, reported and acted upon as necessary.
- Work in partnership with the Students' Union and maintain oversight for and development of arrangements for student representation throughout the University.
- Monitor governance arrangements to ensure the involvement of students is facilitated at all levels.

- Work with programme teams, Schools, and the Students' Union to circulate information to the wider student body.

Students' Union

The Students' Union should:

- In partnership with the University, maintain oversight for and development of arrangements for student representation.
- Produce a handbook for student representatives with support from the University.
- Provide training for student representatives.
- Provide on-going support and guidance to student representatives.
- Report annually to the University on the experience of student representatives and identify any issues of concern.
- Work with Schools in providing adequate support for their student representatives.

Students

Rep responsibilities:

- Speak for the students that they represent – actively seek out the views and feedback of those students.
- Attend meetings highlighted in rep training.
- Undertake training provided by the Students' Union.
- Update the Students' Union and University with feedback on their experience and information about their activity in the role.

Recommendations for students:

- Students are encouraged to communicate with reps as a channel to raise issues.
- If students raise issues, where possible, discuss potential solutions which reps can raise at committees.
- Students should contact their School if they would like more information on who their Reps are.

Policy Details Table

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