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**Learning and Teaching Committee**

**Subject: Review of the Code of Practice for Staff-Student Liaison Committees**

**Origin: Rob Pearson, Programme Quality & Teaching Partnerships**

**Executive Summary:** Responses have been received from Schools and the Students’ Union to a series of consultation questions about the future content of the Code of Practice for Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs). These responses are summarised below and, where appropriate, have been incorporated into a revised Code of Practice.

**Action Required:**  The Committee is asked to consider amendments to the Code of Practice, with a view to approving a revised Code to be implemented with immediate effect.

1. **Introduction to the review**

The current Code of Practice on SSLCs was last updated in March 2009. At the meeting of Learning and Teaching Committee on 27 September 2012 it was agreed that a consultation would be undertaken with Schools and the Students’ Union with a view to reviewing the existing Code and bringing it up to date.

Responses were to be submitted to Rob Pearson by Friday 23 November 2012. The combined responses stretch to 15 pages in length and, for the sake of brevity and clarity, have been summarised below. However, the full responses are available on request.

1. **Summary of responses**

**2.1 Minimum expectations on Schools**

During the discussions surrounding the restructuring of the University in 2010/11, the following was agreed:

* Each School should have at least a UG and a PG SSLC which will report directly to the School LTC.
* Federal-model Schools may wish to have departmental-level SSLCs. In all cases the SSLCs should report directly to the School LTC and not to an integrated SSLC.

It is clear from the responses to the consultation that there is a strong desire for Departmental level SSLCs to remain. This is due to differences in the nature of provision between Departments and to ensure that the SSLCs remain a manageable size.

Many Schools/Departments have separate UG and PGT committees, but in some Schools/Depts the PGT provision is very small so there exist combined committees. It was felt that this should remain the case.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

It should be clarified that in Federal-model Schools, SSLCs can be held at Departmental-level.

There should be separate UG and PG SSLCs except where there is a limited amount of PG provision, in which case it is permissible to have a combined SSLC. The agenda for the meetings that combine UG and PG provision must allow for the discussion of PG issues.

**2.2 Schedule of meetings**

Current policy is for a minimum of 3 meetings of the committee to be held in each academic year. Most responses were happy to keep with this minimum, though it should be noted that there are a couple of instances where there are only two per year, and several which hold 4 or 5 per year.

The timing of the meetings also varies between Schools/Departments. Most meetings occur around the mid-term point, although some are held earlier to ‘iron out’ any teething problems.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

A minimum of 3 meetings of the Committee should be called in each academic year, at a time and date to be determined by each School.

However, for the meetings to be a success they should not be held until the reps have both been appointed and received training from the Students’ Union (carried out in week 5 and early in week 6 of semester one). Therefore the first meeting should not occur before the middle of week 6 in semester one.

**2.3 The election of programme reps**

There are some programmes for which nominations are so few that the reps are self-selecting, whereas for others there is more than one willing participant, in which case an election takes place. The expectation is that these elections are conducted following procedures agreed by the SSLCs. It appears that in practice these elections are in some instances facilitated by Schools/Departments, either by paper ballot or electronically by Learn, and in others by the students themselves.

One response suggested that the Students’ Union should be responsible for promoting and conducting the elections in order to ensure best possible representation.

The Students’ Union has requested that all elections should be completed by the end of week 4 in semester one, and the names forwarded to the VP Education so that they can be invited to training sessions which are to be held in week 5 and the beginning of week 6.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

It is proposed that, to ensure consistency across the University, Schools/Departments should take sole responsibility for the election of student representatives. They may want to consider whether the use of Learn as an election tool is an example of best practice.

Elections must be completed by the end of week 4 and names forwarded to the VP Education so that reps can receive training before their first meeting.

**2.4 Composition of the Committee**

The current guidelines for composition of the committee appear to work well and allow for local variation where appropriate. The only change of note is a recommendation that Programme Presidents should be ex-officio members of the committee.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

The Programme President(s) should be ex-officio members of the committee.

**2.5 Servicing the SSLC**

There was consensus that the SSLC should be chaired by a member of academic staff (the Dean of School or nominee).

There was also consensus that the secretary should be a member of administrative staff. The current policy allows for the secretary to be elected by members of the SSLC, but it is felt that this clause should be removed.

There was consensus for keeping the current timescales for producing the agenda (call for items two weeks in advance, followed by circulation of agenda one week in advance). There is currently no deadline for the circulation of minutes, but general consensus is that 10 working days is appropriate.

There were some recommendations about the format of the minutes, with a prompt suggested to remind chairs that the recording of actions and closing the loop at the next meeting should be standard practice.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

Current policy should be retained, with amendments to the appointment of the secretary and a 10 working day deadline for the circulation of minutes.

**2.6 The agenda**

There was agreement that there should there be a standard agenda for all SSLCs which should include standing items and the opportunity for staff and students to nominate agenda items.

There should also be guidance on items that should be considered at different times in the year, such as the NSS.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

The following should be a standard SSLC agenda. It does not preclude Schools/Departments including additional agenda items as and when appropriate:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Reports (may include reports from):

* Chair
* Teaching & Learning Co-ordinator
* Programme President(s)
* Academic Librarian
* University consultations

1. Reports to be considered at least once in the academic year:

* Outcomes from the NSS and actions taken in response
* Outcomes from Student Module Feedback Questionnaires and actions taken in response[[1]](#footnote-1)
* External Examiner reports and actions taken in response

1. Programme and module reports / issues by year group (undergraduate and/or postgraduate)
2. Any other business
3. Date of the next meeting

**2.7 Training**

There was consensus that the training provided by the Students’ Union worked well and that it was important that the SU continues to take the lead.

The Students’ Union has confirmed that this training takes place in week 5 and the beginning of week 6 of semester one. This takes the form of compulsory training which provides an overview the role and training in communicating with students, meeting skills, the NSS, support, boundaries of the role and confidentiality.

A programme of optional further training under the umbrella of Programme Rep Silver/ Gold award is also delivered by the Students’ Union.

**Recommended amendment to policy:**

The current policy should remain unchanged, with the Students’ Union being responsible for the training of programme representatives.

**2.8 Other comments**

**External Examiner reports**

It has been pointed out that it is an expectation of the Code of Practice on External Examining that external examiner reports and their responses should be shared with students via the SSLC. However, this is not currently included as an expectation in the SSLC Code. This will be rectified, with clarification being inserted into the SSLC Code that external examiner reports and responses should be submitted annually to the SSLC.

**Publication of agendas and minutes**

It has been suggested that the current expectation that the minutes should be displayed on a noticeboard in the Department is out of date. It is suggested that it would be preferable to make them available to all students on Learn.

**Title of the Committee**

The Code and various other University documentation refer to the committee on occasion as the Staff-Student Liaison Committee or the Staff-Student Committee. It is proposed to regularise the title as the Staff-Student Liaison Committee.

**3. Action for Learning and Teaching Committee**

The proposed revisions to the Code of Practice have been incorporated into the Code in Appendix 1.

Learning and Teaching Committee is asked to **approve** the revised Code with immediate effect, subject to alterations to the above recommendations and/or additional amendments agreed at the meeting.**Appendix 1**

**Code of Practice for Staff-Student Liaison Committees**

1. Each School shall have at least one formally constituted Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) where staff and students may meet together for discussion and consultation about the student's programmes of study and other matters relevant to the quality of students' academic experience.
2. 3. Students from each year of each undergraduate programme shall be represented on the SSLC, together with postgraduate programme and research students. Schools may prefer to operate with separate SSLCs for each Department, for each programme, and for undergraduate and postgraduate provision. In all cases the SSLCs should report directly to the School Learning and Teaching Committee.  Schools may wish to consider providing in addition representation on the SSLC for minority groups amongst the students such as mature students, part-time students or international students.

4. The Dean of School, Heads of Department, the Programme President and the Loughborough Students’ Department Committee Chair shall be members of the SSLC *ex-officio*.. Relevant Programme Directors or Tutors may be included in the membership. Schools may also wish to consider whether teaching staff of other Schools contributing to the School's programmes should be represented. It is recommended that there should be significantly more students than members of staff present at all SSLC meetings.

5. Student members shall be elected by the year groups they stand to represent on an annual basis. Elections will be coordinated by School staff with elections taking place no later than the end of week 4 of semester 1... Prior to the election of first year representatives the year group as a whole should be briefed on the role of the SSLC and the responsibilities involved. Information summarising this information will be provided by Loughborough Students' Union. As soon as elections are complete, names of all Programme Reps will be forwarded to the VP: Education in preparation for training which will take place beginning in week 5.

6. Student members of the SSLC will be expected to attend training sessions offered by LSU. This will be provided by the SU and be carried out in week 5 and the start of week 6.

7. Schools should make the following minimum information available to all student representatives: \*

• Departmental Handbooks

• Programme Handbooks

• Programme Regulations and access to the module database

• University Regulations for Awards and associated matters

• Past Departmental SSLC Minutes and papers

• Briefing on the role of the departmental SSLC and other academic decision-making bodies

\* If available on University web pages students should be made aware of appropriate links.8. The SSLC shall be chaired by the Dean of School or his /her nominee, normally a member of academic staff. The Dean of School or his/her nominee is responsible for any decisions reached by the committee and for ensuring that specific action points from meetings are carried out and reported on at the next meeting.

9. The secretary of the SSLC shall be an administrative member of School staff appointed by the Dean of School or nominee.

10. Reasonable and agreed expenses incurred by any member of the SSLC should be fully reimbursed by the School . Full access to relevant facilities (e.g. photocopier) should be available for members to ensure that they can keep the group that they represent informed of the decisions and actions of the SSLC.

11. A minimum of 3 meetings of the Committee should be called in each academic year. The first meeting will not occur before members have had an opportunity to attend training in weeks 5 and 6 of semester one. Meetings should be scheduled to allow full student participation. Meetings should be timetabled to avoid narrow time constraints where members do not have time to raise points deemed to be important. Mechanisms should be available to allow groups of members to have additional meetings called in case of need.

12. In the case where there are a large number of members on any SSLC there may be pre-meetings to determine a priority of discussion points. This may consist of the chair and any sub-committee deemed appropriate by the SSLC.

13. Contributions for the agenda should be called for two weeks prior to the meetings and an approved agenda should be circulated at least one week prior to the meeting. In the case where sub-committees are being used, the agenda should be viewed and agreed at pre-meetings prior to the main meeting of the SSLC. Every member of the SSLC shall have the right to submit items for inclusion on the agenda and to submit papers for discussion.

14. All SSLCs should have the following agenda as a minimum. This does not preclude Schools/Departments including additional agenda items as and when appropriate:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Reports (can include reports from):

* Chair
* Teaching & Learning Co-ordinator
* Programme President(s)
* Academic Librarian
* University consultations

1. Reports to be considered at least once in the academic year:

* Outcomes from the NSS and actions taken in response
* Outcomes from Student Module Feedback Questionnaires and actions taken in response[[2]](#footnote-2)
* External Examiner reports and actions taken in response[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Programme and module reports / issues by year group (undergraduate and/or postgraduate)
2. Any other business
3. Date of the next meeting

15. Full minutes shall be kept of each meeting. These minutes will clearly action all points raised; along with the initials of the member of staff responsible for ensuring the point is actioned and reporting back at the following SSLC. 16. The minutes shall be circulated within 10 working days of the meeting by email to every member of the SSLC and forwarded to the next School/Departmental Staff Meeting. A copy shall also be sent to the the Vice-President (Education) of the Students' Union. A copy should also be displayed on a notice board in the School for information, and put on Learn / the School intranet where they should remain accessible for five years. A copy should also be sent to appropriate staff in other Schools contributing to the School’s programmes of study. .

1. Deans of School/Heads of Department or their nominee will make a written report to the appropriate Staff-Student Liaison Committee on the quantitative outcome of questions 1-12, taking account of module tutor responses. As a minimum, this report should be submitted annually and will present the scores per module for questions 1–12 and any actions taken in response to low scores. Where no actions have been taken in response to student feedback, for example where the response rate is too low to be statistically meaningful, this should be made clear in the report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Deans of School/Heads of Department or their nominee will make a written report to the appropriate Staff-Student Liaison Committee on the quantitative outcome of questions 1-12, taking account of module tutor responses. As a minimum, this report should be submitted annually and will present the scores per module for questions 1–12 and any actions taken in response to low scores. Where no actions have been taken in response to student feedback, for example where the response rate is too low to be statistically meaningful, this should be made clear in the report. See Code of Practice on Student Module Feedback Questionnaires: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/ar/policy/aqp/appendix/13/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Code of Practice on External Examining: See Code of Practice on External Examining: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/ar/student/exams/cop/external/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)