# University Code of Practice

# Students as Partners

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| **Contacts**: | Academic Quality and Learning Manager |
| **Applications for exemptions to**: | Academic Quality and Standards Committee |
| **Report Exemptions to**: | Academic Board |

**Summary/ Description**:

This Code sets out the University's commitment to working with students as partners in monitoring and enhancing their learning experience, through providing opportunities for students to express their views and ideas individually and collectively. Part of this commitment involves seeking to establish a culture and environment in which students feel confident to give their views knowing that they will be listened to and that either the University will take action or will explain the reasons for not taking action. Partnership is based on providing students with information so that they can make informed contributions and through two way dialogue through which students are consulted on the University's ideas and proposals for improvements as well as being able to give their own ideas. The University's approach reflects practice in UK universities and the Expectations and sound practice set out in the UK Quality Code (2014) chapter B5.

Chapter I focuses on the University's arrangements for Student-Staff Liaison Committees drawn from staff and student representatives elected from the student body. Each programme must have a

Student-Staff Liaison Committee enabling discussion about all aspects of the learning experience (including University facilities and services) to be discussed. Student-Staff Liaison Committees will maintain a focus on the Programme Review and Enhancement Plans (see the Code on Programme Monitoring and Review (QH:C12)) so that proposed actions and their completion are monitored. The University will provide training for student representatives to support them in their role, and provide support to help them liaise with all students on their programme, so that views and ideas are communicated to the committee, and the discussions of the committee are reported back to students.

The University also provides for student representation on the Board of Governors and Academic Board. Student representatives for these committees will be elected from the pool of current SSLC members and will be provided with training and support for the role, including the role of the relevant University committee and the issues it addresses. Representatives elected to a University committee are either full members or, pending election as full members, approved student representatives, entitled in both scenarios to the same access to papers and minutes as staff members (with the exception of reserved business) and entitled to express the ideas of the student community during meetings.

Chapter I also sets out the University's arrangements for recognising and celebrating the work of student representatives though an annual event and through certification designed to enable student representatives to use their role, and the skills developed through it, as part of their career development, including applying for jobs/further study.

Chapter II sets out arrangements for obtaining the views and ideas of all students, primarily through student surveys conducted institution-wide (by the Student Experience Office) at key points of the student journey, and through programme and module surveys conducted by Programme Coordinators and tutors.   The University also provides for students to be members of panels established for particular given purposes. As with student representatives, the University will provide reward and recognition to student panel members through payment of a fee, certification of panel members' work, and an invitation to the annual student representatives' event.

**Further Guidance**
See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:
- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Authority

1    The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice as it relates to students on taught programmes, and Research and Research Degrees Committee as it relates to students on research degrees. Where there are differences in the way the Code relates to students on taught programmes and those on research degrees, this is made explicit in the text; otherwise the word 'programme' relates to both taught programmes and research degrees.

## Scope of the Code

2    This Code applies to all provision which leads to the award of the University's higher education qualifications.

## Application to collaborative provision

3    Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 2 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

# PRINCIPLES

4    The University places the highest value on the ideas and opinions of its students, and is firmly committed to working with students as partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the learning experience of current and future students. By working with students as partners the University means partners at all levels of the University, from the admission and induction process, to the delivery of each module within the programme to the Board of Governors. Partnership involves both engaging with students individually and collectively, including through representatives elected by students.

5    The University considers that an effective partnership must be based on a positive culture and an environment in which students feel confident to participate. These conditions can be achieved through:

- the proper sharing of information enabling informed conversations between staff and students
- a genuine two-way dialogue between staff and students based on respect for each other's views and mutual trust
- providing reasons for decisions, especially where student views will not or cannot be acted upon
- a commitment by students to give their time, their ideas and opinions even where changes will not directly benefit them
- a commitment by the University to develop and support students in representative roles, and to provide recognition which will be valued externally, for example by future employers.

6    The University believes that all students should have an equal opportunity to be involved in assuring and enhancing the quality of the learning experience irrespective of the length of their programme, mode or location of study, and irrespective of their individual needs (such as a disability).

7    This Code, and the effectiveness of its implementation, will be reviewed annually by Academic Board based on the ideas and opinions of students and staff.

# CHAPTER I: STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

8    This chapter sets out the way in which the University enables students to work in partnership with staff through a system of student representatives who are entitled to engage in, and have the opportunity to influence, the management of their programmes and the University's management of its quality system through University committees and the Board of Governors.

9    All students have the right to nominate and elect representatives to speak on their behalf in each of the fora set out below:

## Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)

10   For each programme (taught and research) leading to the award of a higher education qualification a Student-Staff Liaison Committee **must** be established conforming to the following criteria:

### Membership

11   Each committee **must** comprise:

(a)  the Programme Coordinator (as Chair)
(b)  at least one student representative from each year of the programme, elected by students on the programme and among whom, there is at least one part-time and one full-time student;
(c)  one further member of academic staff involved in the teaching and/or assessment of the programme (nominated by the Programme Coordinator)
(d)  one member of the Student Experience Office (nominated by the Student Experience Manager).

12   The Chair will appoint a member of the administrative staff associated with the programmes as secretary.  The secretary is responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting and coordinating the follow up of actions.

13   The committee may invite non-members to attend a meeting for example to discuss a specific item of business.

### Elections

14   Early in the academic year the Student Experience Office, working with each Programme Coordinator, **must** facilitate the holding of elections for each programme, and for each year within each programme.

15      All students on the programme are entitled to nominate themselves or another student (provided that student is willing to be nominated) and all nominations must be seconded. A deadline, of no fewer than seven working days, must be given for nominations to be submitted to the Student Experience Office, using the approved nomination form. Each nominee should provide a concise statement of why they wish to be nominated and the attributes they believe they bring to the role.

16      Once elected representatives serve for one academic year but may stand for re-election.

17      For continuing students each committee **may** agree that elections be held before the end of the academic year to apply to the following year.

18      The Student Experience Office **must** maintain a record of elected student representatives and ensure that all students are informed of the outcome of the elections, and the names and contact details of the elected representatives.

## Training and support

19      The University, through the Student Experience Office, **must** provide appropriate training and support for all new student representatives as soon as possible after elections have been held. Training **must** also include addressing the role and responsibilities of the chair and the secretary. Arrangements for training and support **should** be devised in partnership with current and/or former student representatives and be evaluated by SSLCs.

20      Training **should** include:

(a)  the role and working of the committee system
(b)  how to address challenges that might be encountered as a student representative
(c)  different ways of engaging students, including those who might be reticent about giving their views or ideas, and recognising cultural sensitivities
(d)  awareness of the University's quality assurance and enhancement system
(e)  where there might be limitations on introducing changes (for example, where the written agreement of all students might be required for changes)
(f)  where to get further advice and support.

21      The Student Experience Office and Programme Coordinators will provide support for student representatives for example in enabling them to maintain effective liaison with all students on the programme, including making available appropriate sections on Canvas and, where appropriate, providing time before, during or after classes. Support, including reasonable adjustments, will also be provided for those student representatives with specific needs (for example as a result of a disability).

## Terms of reference

22      The role of each Student-Staff Liaison Committee is to provide a means through which student representatives and staff can raise and discuss any aspect of the design or delivery of the programme or its constituent modules, and including the facilities and resources which enable students to study the programme, subject to the limitations set out below. Discussion should enable any difficulties or concerns about the programme or students' experience on the

programme, to be expressed, opportunities for improvements to be considered, and examples of effective or innovative practice (that might be shared with other programmes) to be identified.

23    Discussion may include students' experience of:

(a) admission and induction to the programme and University, and transition through the programme
(b) teaching (delivery, supporting materials, including supervision for research students)
(c) programme design (range of modules, curriculum content, development of knowledge and skills)
(d) assessment (arrangements for formative and summative assessment, clarity of requirements, timing of deadlines, value of feedback)
(e) placements (including allocation, supervision on placement, value within the programme)
(f) organisation of the programme (such as timetabling and administrative arrangements)
(g) information (about applying to the University, about the programme, in the programme handbook and other sources, including its accessibility and reliability)
(h) learning resources (including classrooms, library, online resources, other teaching/learning resources, Canvas)
(i) advice and guidance (academic and non-academic matters).

24    Discussion may also include:

(a) ideas or proposals for new modules or programmes (in the same subject area)
(b) new methods of learning, teaching or assessment
(c) reviews or existing arrangements and/or proposals for changes (for example by the University: of admissions processes, the progression rules applicable to the award, the provision or learning resources and campus facilities, other mechanisms for working with students or gaining student feedback).

**Standing items**

25    At each meeting the committee:

(a) **must** approve the minutes of the previous meeting
(b) **must** report on matters arising from the previous meeting (if not addressed elsewhere on the agenda)
(c) **should** be provided with an update on any relevant University developments.

26    During the academic year, each committee **must** consider the following items (where applicable):

(a) students' experience of the recruitment, selection, admission and induction process (normally at the first meeting of the academic year)
(b) the most recent Programme Review and Enhancement Plan, including consideration of the external examiner's report (normally at the first or second meeting of the year)
(c) the arrangements for the election of student representatives and for their training and support needs (normally at the first meeting of the year)
(d) the effectiveness of the committee (normally at the final meeting of the year)

(e) the outcomes of any surveys or questionnaires conducted at module, programme or university level

(f) the Mid-cycle Review or Periodic Review of the programme.

**Limitations**

27 Committees must not discuss:

(a) individual students or staff

(b) personal complaints or grievances.

28 Where a student, or a student representative, has a personal complaint or grievance they should be reminded of the availability of the University's procedures for appeals and complaints.

29 Where proposed changes to a module or programme would require University approval (for example as set out in the Code on Programme Approval (QH:C2)) this **must** be explained to the committee by the Programme Coordinator, including indicating the likely timescale for approval.

## Student representative role description

30 Student representatives commit to:

(a) attending and engaging with the training provided

(b) liaising effectively with the students they represent including consulting students before/between meetings about issues of interest or concern (whether issues raised the students or by staff), and including identifying possible agenda items

(c) informing students of the discussions which took place at each meeting, including any decisions made

(d) attending, and engaging in, all meetings of the committee or notifying the chair in advance if unable to attend for good reason

(e) engaging in constructive dialogue with students and committee members, respecting the views and dignity of others

(f) acting as an ambassador of the student representative system, including encouraging other students to consider standing for election in the future

(g) contributing to the training of new representatives where possible

(h) assisting staff in promoting other mechanisms for student engagement and feedback (including those set out in chapter II below).

## Meetings

31 Each committee **should** meet at least once each semester. For Master's and Research Degree programmes, at least one meeting must also take place during the Summer period. Committees may agree to hold additional meetings as they consider appropriate.

32 Members **must** be given 14 working days' notice in writing (via their University email address and through the committee module on Canvas) of the date and time of any meeting. Meetings **should** be held at times which take into account the commitments of members, including those of part-time students. Meetings will be held on campus in rooms provided by the

University. Where a member is unable to attend in person (for example due to being on placement), the University will facilitate participation via video-conferencing.

33    The Chair is responsible for guiding the conduct of the meeting, including giving all members fair opportunity to express their views in an appropriate manner. Where appropriate, staff members should be willing to provide advice or support to the chair.

34    The Secretary is responsible, in consultation with the Chair, for agreeing the Agenda for each meeting, including taking into account suggestions made by student and staff members (and the list of standing items, above). Where the chair is unable to attend, a stand-in chair **must** be nominated from the committee membership.

35    Members wishing to raise items of 'other business' not included on the agenda, **should** identify the item when invited to do so at the start of the meeting.

36    The Secretary is responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting in sufficient detail to show: the issue discussed, any action agreed by the committee, with supporting reasons, the date by which the action is to be taken, and the person(s) responsible for taking the action. Minutes should not attribute comments, ideas or suggestions to individual committee members unless the comment (etc) was made as a result of that person's specific role (such as the Programme Coordinator if it related to explaining a University procedure).

37    Unapproved minutes of the meeting should be circulated to members within 14 working days of the meeting and be made available to all students on the programme via Canvas. Students will also have access to previous years' minutes on Canvas.

38    Templates for both agenda and minutes will be provided by the Student Experience Office and be discussed during the training.

39    The Chair is responsible for ensuring that matters which need to be referred to another forum, such as a University committee or the University's Executive Management Team, are forwarded, and reported back on at the next meeting.

40    The Programme Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the Programme Review and Enhancement Plan is updated in the light of the meeting, for example adding actions agreed upon.

## Annual reports

41    Chairs and secretaries of each committee **should** produce an end of year report which provides a concise account of:

**Substantive issues**
(a)  the issues discussed
(b)  actions taken as a result of discussions at the committee and any which remain outstanding
(c)  any examples of effective or innovative practice relating to the programme which the committee has identified

**The workings of the committee**
(d) the effectiveness of the committee and the arrangements for supporting the work of the committee
(e) any difficulties experienced and any lessons learned
(f) examples of good practice in the workings of the committee.

42 The purpose of the report is:

(a) to provide new members of the committee in the following year with a concise summary of the previous year, including any lessons learned, to reduce the likelihood of duplication (e.g. raising issues already raised) and to ensure that outstanding issues continue to be monitored
(b) to provide the appropriate University committee (Academic Quality and Standards Committee for taught programmes, Research and Research Degrees Committee for research degrees) with the information to enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of the student representation system at programme level and to consider improvements to the system.

43 Copies of the report will be made available to all students via Canvas.

## Student representation on University committees

44 Students are entitled to be represented on the following University committees:

(a) the Board of Governors- one enrolled degree-seeking student
(b) Academic Board - one elected student representative.

45 Representatives must be elected, by all eligible students, from the pool of current Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) student representatives (as set out in chapter I). The University, through the Student Experience Office, will ensure that elections are held towards the end of the academic year to elect representatives for each Board for the following academic year.

46 The Student Experience Office will provide training to each representative prior to attending their first committee meeting, focusing on the role, terms of reference and key issues addressed by the relevant committee. Where practicable newly elected members will attend the final meeting of the year as observers, alongside the (outgoing) representative.

47 Student representative members of university Committees have a responsibility to represent the interests of all students eligible to elect them as far as practicable and to have regard to diverse views. Their involvement in the Committee must be on the basis of effective liaison with the wider student body including representative members of the SSLCs. The University will facilitate such liaison, including through dedicated sections on Canvas.

48 Student representative members are entitled to be treated as full members of the Committee, including receiving agenda, papers and minutes (including access to previous years' papers and minutes), raising items for inclusion on the agenda and being entitled to speak during meetings.

49     Student members are not permitted to attend, or receive the papers or minutes of, items declared by the Chair of the Committee to be 'reserved business' as set in the University's governance arrangements. Such declaration **must** be made, after careful consideration has been given by the Chair, to the justification for placing the item as reserved business.

## Recognition of the work of Student Representatives

50     The University will develop, in consultation with students, appropriate ways to recognise and reward the contribution to the University made by student representatives. This might include an annual event bringing staff and student representatives (SSLC and University committee representatives) together to:

(a)  recognise and celebrate the work and commitment of student representatives
(b)  provide a forum for the discussion of cross-programme and cross-University issues
(c)  share examples of good practice and discuss challenges faced and how they might be overcome.

51     The University will provide student representatives with certification of their role for purposes of their future career development including certification of the knowledge and skills developed through the role.

### Benefits of being a student representative

52     In addition to valuing the work of student representatives in helping to continuously improve the student learning experience, being a student representative provides significant benefits for individual students which will aid them in their career development and management. For example in the development of the kind of skills valued by employers and in the understanding of how a complex organisation such as a University works both internally and in its engagement with regulatory bodies, employers and other stakeholders. Examples of skills valued by employers include:

(a)  oral and written communication with a range of students and staff from diverse backgrounds and cultures
(b)  communication with senior staff
(c)  consultation and research
(d)  negotiation and influencing
(e)  tact and diplomacy
(f)  team work
(g)  time management and prioritisation
(h)  problem-solving and generating ideas
(i)  verbal reasoning
(j)  chairing or supporting meetings.

## Membership on university panels

(a)  The University is committed to involving students as partners through including students as members of panels. Students appointed to a panel **must** at all times be regarded as full and equal members of the panel and accorded equal opportunities to participate, including through being provided with the full set of papers and evidence, asking

questions, and giving their opinion in the drawing of conclusions and determining outcomes.

### Training

(a) The University, through the Student Experience Office, **must** provide training for the role of student panel members and on the role and responsibilities of the relevant panel.

### Reward and recognition of student panel members

53    The University will pay a fee for each panel of which the student is a member according to a published scale.

54    The University will also provide certification to confirm that the student has participated in whichever panels. Student panel members will also be invited to events organised to recognise the work of student representatives (chapter I).

# CHAPTER II: THE FEEDBACK LOOP

55    This chapter sets out the way in which the University enables students to work in partnership with staff through a system of seeking the views of all students on their learning experience at different stages of their student career, from admission and induction through to the completion of their programme. It reflects the commitment of the University to listen to, and carefully consider, the ideas and views of all students and to provide feedback to students on action taken or, where action is not or cannot be taken, explaining the reasons why (for example through 'You Said, We Did' posters/presentations made available via Canvas and SSLC meetings).

56    The choice of approach **must** take account of the needs of a diverse range of students (in addition to the individual needs of students, for example as a result of a disability).

## Student surveys

57    The University will use a variety of institution-wide and programme specific surveys to obtain feedback from its students. Although surveys are a tried and tested method of obtaining student feedback, the University recognises that response rates can be low, and is committed to minimise this wherever possible. Reasons for low response rates include:

(a) students suffer 'survey fatigue' i.e. a lack of proportionality and an excess of surveys, and the possibility that the same or similar questions are being asked of the same students more than once, leading to falling response rates

(b) questionnaires are poorly designed, with poorly worded questions, unlikely to produce good quality information

(c) surveys produce results which are invisible to anyone except the initiators of the survey

(d) it is not always clear that a survey is the best method of capturing student opinion

(e) any evidence of feedback to the students about what was found and what actions will follow, is patchy.

## University-wide surveys

58    The following table is an indicative schedule of the University-wide surveys administered by the Student Experience Office.

| Month | Survey | Frequency | Eligible students | Administered by |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| October to December | New to UoG Survey | Annual | All new students | Student Experience Office |
| February to March | Postgraduate Research Experience Survey | Annual | All postgraduate research students | Student Experience Office |
| May to June | Student Experience Survey | Annual | All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. | Student Experience Office |
| Six months post-graduation | Destination of Leavers from UoG Survey | Annual | All recently graduated students (UG; PGT; PGR) | Student Experience Office |

## Principles

59    The University will:

(a)  ensure that all internal surveys follow the requirements of this Code

(b)  communicate the purpose of each survey, publish the results, produce clear action plans and report on outcomes, all in a timely manner; this will include sharing results with all relevant people within the institution

(c)  work together with students to encourage participation and engagement with each survey

(d)  handle data responsibly with an emphasis on ensuring confidentiality

(e)  make clear to students whether the survey is anonymous and/or confidential.

60    Data collected through student surveys will be:

(a)  designed to contribute to reflection and continuous improvement by the University

(b)  timely and relevant

(c)  based on a streamlined approach in which every question has a purpose

(d)  put to best use

(e)  based on consistent questions to ensure that progress can be tracked

(f)  collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions

(g)  designed to enable internal and external benchmarking.

## Format

61    The University uses Survey Monkey as its sole platform for surveys and aims to follow the a standard question format and scaling convention wherever possible; for example responses should be – from left to right –

'Definitely Agree, Mostly Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Definitely Disagree, Not applicable.'

## Opportunities at programme level

62    All students will be provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience at various points in the programme in ways appropriate to the programme including direct dialogue with the Programme Coordinator and teaching staff.

63    Opportunities **should** be provided at the following points:

(a) interim or mid-module e.g through Start, Stop and Continue' surveys;
(b) end of module evaluation questionnaires;
(c) end of year evaluation questionnaires and/or end (or near end) of programme evaluation questionnaires

## Other opportunities to provide feedback

64    The process for the ongoing monitoring and enhancement of modules and programmes is designed to involve students fully, including through discussion at SSLCs (see chapter I).Programme periodic review panels will meet with a representative sample of students (see the Code on Periodic Review (QH:C13)).

65    The University will also from time to time adopt additional methods of involving and/or consulting students, for example:

(a) online discussions on specific topics
(b) consultation sessions on a specific topics
(c) inviting student membership of project/working groups established to develop or manage a particular University project
(d) informal conversations whether face-to-face or virtual.

66    The above are in addition to careful consideration being given to applicant and student complaints and appeals and ensuring that appropriate lessons are learned and improvements put in place where applicable.