

STUDENT REPRESENTATION CODE OF PRACTICE

1. This code of practice has been compiled and agreed to set out for students and staff at the University of Suffolk the way in which student representative processes are expected to operate. Student representative systems work best when the institution and their Students' Union agree to work in partnership to develop and implement an effective approach. In preparing and publishing this code of practice, we aim to:

- i) set out the values and principles that underpin the University's student representative systems
- ii) make explicit the opportunities available for students to take on representative roles at the University of Suffolk on behalf of their peers
- iii) define the processes employed to enable students to take on representative roles, and the support provided to enable them to fulfil the roles effectively
- iv) clearly define the roles and responsibilities of those supporting and engaging with the representative systems.

PRINCIPLES

2. The collaborative partnership between the University of Suffolk and its students to develop and deliver a high quality student experience is integral to the University's values. The contributions of student representatives are viewed as essential to ongoing monitoring and enhancement processes at the University of Suffolk. Consequently, our student representative system is designed to ensure that:

- i) all students are informed about the purpose and benefits of the student representative system
- ii) all students are able and encouraged to engage with the student representative system, be it as a representative themselves or in partnership with their representatives
- iii) all student representatives' contributions are respected and valued
- iv) student representatives are able to contribute effectively to the development and enhancement of the University of Suffolk
- v) student representatives are selected by their cohort through transparent and fair processes
- vi) student representatives are enabled to fulfil their roles and responsibilities through:
 - the provision of appropriate training and support, and
 - through the sharing of information including the provision to them of relevant performance data and monitoring reports

- vii) student representatives are able to contribute without fear of reprisal or negative consequences
- viii) the work of student representatives, and the impact of this work, is appropriately recognised
- ix) the representative system is reviewed and enhanced in the light of experiences and feedback from student representatives, University staff and Students' Union staff and identified performance indicators.

3. The student representative system is only one of a range of ways in which the University gathers feedback and opinions from students. Other key opportunities for students to contribute include:

- module feedback surveys
- the annual National Student Survey (NSS)
- the annual University of Suffolk Student Survey
- the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey (DLHE).

4. Further information of each of these surveys is available to students on the Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) page on the University website. Further surveying and focus group activities are employed by faculties and operational departments in order to seek student feedback on provision or developmental plans, and some health related courses request students to complete external surveys exploring professional and placement experiences.

OPPORTUNITIES

5. Below we set out key student representative roles enshrined in University policies and processes. Further opportunities for representation may arise from established roles within the University of Suffolk Students' Union, one-off University events (such as course validation and re-approval) and other University, Students' Union and external activities.

Course representatives

6. As set out by the Management of Courses Policy, it is usual for there to be a student representative from each cohort of students on each course. These representatives are normally elected by their cohort of students (see below) and represent their cohort at course committee meetings and informally through meetings with the course leader. The Students' Union supports the course representative system by running the election process, providing training to student course representatives, and through ongoing support. All student course representatives are members of the Union Council.

Student Officers

7. There are three types of student officer:

- i) Department Officers represent their fellow students and are elected by the students within their department. Each academic department at the University of Suffolk has its own Department Officer.
- ii) Liberation Officers ensure the voices of under-represented students and interest groups are heard (including LGBT+, women, mature students, black, asian and minority ethnic students and students with disabilities)
- iii) Student Officers within the Learning Network represent their fellow students and are elected by the students within their college.

8. Department and Learning Network Student Officers are members of their local department or college Academic Committee.

Students' Union Sabbatical Officers

9. Two sabbatical officers are elected annually to lead the Students' Union. Union President and Union Vice-President are full-time posts with significant representative responsibility, both formally through University committee membership (see Appendix 1) and through informal consultations and partnership working with University staff.

University committees

10. In addition to the representative roles as set out above, student representatives are also members of a number of University committees as listed in Appendix 1.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

11. The election process for student course representatives is run by the Students' Union in partnership with course teams. Normally, each cohort of students will be visited by a Students' Union officer or staff member near to the start of the academic year to initiate a selective process. The standard process is that the initial visit allows the introduction of the role, the selection process, and an opportunity for questions to be asked. Following this, the Students' Union will enable the fair selection of the course representative(s) in liaison with the cohort. The result of the selection process is announced by the Students' Union, usually through their website.

12. Course teams will work with the Students' Union to identify appropriate sessions for these visits, seeking to identify sessions where all students should be present, and will be

supportive of the student representative system, promoting its value for course maintenance and enhancement. Whilst timing for selective processes will be set out to meet both University and Students' Union requirements, in principle the selection of representatives for new cohorts of students will be delayed as much as reasonable to allow them to get to know each other and the University environment before engaging with the representative processes.

13. Where elected student representatives resign from their role before the end of the academic year, the course team and the Students' Union will cooperate in seeking to enable effective representation of the cohort. This may, for example, involve further visits from Students' Union officers to seek volunteers, or agreement for individual students to share responsibilities on a one-off basis.

14. Election of Student and Sabbatical Officers is facilitated through a University-wide election process usually staged in March each year and operated by the Students' Union. Sabbatical Officers and Liberation Officers are elected by all students, whereas Student Officers may be elected by set 'constituencies' of students, e.g. only Arts and Humanities students would elect their Department Officer.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

15. Student representatives will be provided with opportunities for training and support from the Students' Union to enable them to fulfil their duties. For course representatives this may include:

- scheduled training sessions covering various aspects of the work
- online versions of the same sessions
- paper-based and online documentation including a 'Course Representatives Handbook'
- ongoing advice and support from Students' Union officers and staff.

16. Further support material exploring University processes and reporting data will be made available by the University, usually through the Student Voice area of MySuffolk. Course teams will enable course representatives to access course committee agendas, minutes, reports of key performance indicators, and external examiner reports in advance of the course committee meetings at which they will be discussed.

17. Student and Sabbatical Officers will receive further and more detailed training through the Students' Union in accordance with the responsibilities they are expected to take on.

RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION

18. In partnership with the University, the Students' Union operates an accreditation scheme to recognise the efforts made by course representatives. Through this scheme, students deemed to have met specific requirements in terms of their training, and contributions to, and attendance of, meetings are eligible to:

- receive a certificate from the University and the Students' Union recognising their achievement
- have a statement recognising their contribution included on their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)
- be invited to the Students' Union Awards Ceremony.

19. The role of student representatives will be promoted by the University to students within induction processes, through course handbooks and other student documentation, and through MySuffolk content, particularly within the Student Voice area. The work of student representatives will be shared and promoted:

- through the publication of course committee meeting minutes and the Student Experience Committee meeting minutes to students online
- through explicit note of enhancements and improvements resulting from student contributions within the Student Voice area of MySuffolk and elsewhere
- by the Students' Union through the Student Council, their student newspaper, and other appropriate mediums.

MONITORING AND ENHANCEMENT

20. The Student Experience Committee, on behalf of the University, monitors and reviews arrangements for the representation of students, and seeks to lead the enhancement of these systems. This is achieved through the receipt of reports on course representative recruitment from the Students' Union exploring the following KPIs:

- percentage of courses having course representatives for each cohort in place in time for the first course committee of the year
- percentage of student representatives attending course committee meetings
- percentage of student representatives engaging with course representative training
- number of academic departments and Learning Network partner colleges having officers in place at the commencement of the academic year
- percentage of officers attending those meetings they are invited to
- percentage of officers receiving relevant training.

21. In addition, the Higher Education Academic / National Union of Students' Student Engagement Toolkit benchmarking tool is employed to inform judgements on the adequacy and effectiveness of the student representative systems.

22. Furthermore, the Students' Union will employ their own processes and measures to enable them to monitor and enhance their operation of the processes set out within this code of practice.

SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

23. Below we make explicit the roles and responsibilities of the University, the Students' Union and student representatives in fulfilling this code of practice.

The University of Suffolk

24. To enable the effective implementation of the student course representative system, the University and its course teams will:

- i) inform students about student representative roles and their place within the University, and promote student engagement with, and involvement in, student representative opportunities
- ii) treat all student representatives with respect, recognising the value of their role in representing their fellow students and seeking to raise and resolve issues to the benefit of both students and the University
- iii) ensure the Students' Union is fully informed on the courses for which course representation is required
- iv) enable and support the Students' Union in their implementation of the course representative election processes
- v) ensure student representatives get ample notice of meetings, with agenda, and be afforded the opportunity to request the addition of further agenda items and to raise issues for discussion
- vi) provide student representatives with information and data reports in advance to enable them to take an effective role in discussions at committees, and provide training or support materials to enable them to fully understand and engage with their roles
- vii) promote the role student representatives take in the improvement and enhancement of the University and its provision
- viii) enable the formal recording of student representative achievement on their HEAR.

- ix) work in partnership with the Students' Union to monitor, review and enhance student representative systems.

The University of Suffolk Students' Union

25. In enabling student representatives, the Students' Union will:

- i) manage fair and open election processes for the selection of course representatives, student officers, and sabbatical officers
- ii) provide training and support opportunities that enable representatives to fulfil their responsibilities effectively
- iii) monitor and collate feedback and reports from representatives in order to inform campaigns and cross-university activities
- iv) nominate appropriate representatives to University committees, enabling them to take a full part in their role through appropriate training and support
- v) promote the role of student representatives in improving and enhancing the University and its provision
- vi) manage the accreditation scheme and communicate student achievement to the University to enable certification
- vii) work in partnership with the University to monitor, review and enhance student representative systems.

Student representatives

26. The Students' Union maintains a Course Rep Charter that is reviewed annually by each set of new student representatives. This sets out the Student Union's agreement with the students as to the roles and responsibilities that they have agreed to take on that year.

27. The Management of Courses policy sets out the following responsibilities for course representatives:

- i) preparation for course committee meetings through the collation of their fellow students' views and concerns in relation to the course
- ii) attendance of, and contribution to, course committee meetings. Where this proves impossible, student representatives should ensure feedback provided to them by their fellow students is passed on to the Course Leader or the Chair of the Course Committee in advance of the meeting
- iii) dissemination of course committee discussions and decisions to their fellow students

- iv) maintain regular contact with their fellow students in order to identify emerging issues, and communicate these to the Course Leader promptly
- v) maintain regular contact with the Course Leader to enable effective communication
- vi) contribute to course evaluation processes.

28. Being representative of all the students within their academic department or college, Student Officers are responsible for:

- i) collecting and monitoring feedback from course representatives and students in order to be aware of current and emergent issues
- ii) contributing to monitoring and enhancement activities within their department or college through attendance of Academic Committees and other committees as nominated by the Students' Union.

29. In addition, course representatives and Student Officers are expected to work with the Students' Union to ensure clear communication of emergent issues, to enable cross-university information gathering and dissemination, and to represent their students within the Students' Union Council and, for officers, Union Executive.

Appendix 1**STUDENT REPRESENTATION ON UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE**

| Committee | Membership |
|---|--|
| Course Committees | Course representatives |
| Departmental Academic Committee | Department Officer(s) |
| Equality and Diversity Committee | 1 Students' Union nomination |
| Faculty Board | Students' Union President or nominee; all Departmental Officers |
| Health and Safety Committee | 1 Students' Union nomination |
| International Partnerships Committee | 1 Students' Union nomination |
| Joint Academic Committee (transition only) | Students' Union President |
| Learning Network Academic Committees | 1 student representative per level of study |
| Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee | 2 Students' Union nominations |
| Partnership Quality Enhancement Group | 1 nominated student representative per partner college |
| Quality Committee | Students' Union President or nominee; 1 Students' Union nomination per Faculty |
| Safeguarding Committee | 1 Student's Union nomination |
| Senate | Students' Union President; 2 Students' Union nominations |
| Student Experience Committee | Students' Union President (Joint Chair), Vice-President; 2 nominated Departmental Officers from each Faculty; 1 nominated Liberation Officer [plus 4 Students' Union staff representatives] |
| University of Suffolk Board | Students' Union President |