

Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 11 Student Voice Partnership (Taught Programmes): Code of Good Practice

[Partner Institutions: All partner institutions delivering programmes validated by the University of Exeter are required to observe this code of good practice]

1. Introduction and principles

- 1.1. Each Faculty must provide opportunities for students on taught programmes to contribute to the development of their academic experience through Student Voice Partnership.
- 1.2. Student Voice Partnership refers to the engagement of students as active participants in shaping their education and student experience, ensuring that issues and suggestions are considered by staff in partnership with the student community. This should be achieved through a range of student voice activity, student representation, and the compilation and ongoing review of a Student Voice Action Plan.
- 1.3. Research degree programmes are covered by the equivalent Code of Good Practice in the Postgraduate Research section of the TQA manual.
- 1.4. This chapter refers to an Academic Representation “Toolkit”. The Toolkit is a collection of ways to engage students in the management and review of our educational provision beyond traditional meeting processes, both through formal and informal means. These ways are collectively referred to as student voice activity. The Toolkit, published by the Students’ Guild and Students’ Union, provides some examples, including but not limited to: informal lecture shout-outs, rep drop-ins, small thematic focus groups, formal town hall forums, large thematic meetings, feedback forms, and surveys.

2. Aims and objectives of Student Voice Partnership

- 2.1. To enable students and staff to jointly participate in the composition, management and review of Department and Faculty provision with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- 2.2. To disseminate praise and examples of good practice and to identify and address areas of concern to students and staff.
- 2.3. To facilitate communication between students and staff within a Faculty, Department, discipline or programme regarding actions taken and outcomes reached in response to concerns, ideas and praise received from students.
- 2.4. To facilitate student contributions at all levels of decision-making concerning unreserved business within the Department, Faculty and University.
- 2.5. To provide documentary evidence of the participation of students in the quality assurance and development of the programmes delivered by the Faculty.
- 2.6. To facilitate the inclusion of all new and existing students into the academic community and the development of belonging in that community.

3. Faculty process

- 3.1. The Faculty **should** ensure that there are clear and effective reporting mechanisms from Departments into the wider Faculty processes.
- 3.2. The Student Voice Action Plan for each Department should be made available for review by the Faculty's Education and Student Experience Strategy Committee. It is good practice for the Committee to review Department Action Plans once per term. Student representatives should be invited to these discussions as much as possible.
- 3.3. The Director of Education and Student Experience for a Department, or their equivalent, is responsible for leading on the Department's activities in relation to this Code of Good Practice.

4. Department process

- 4.1. Departments **should** provide a variety of student voice activity, as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit, to facilitate contribution from a diversity of student groups and support all students to share their perspectives through accessible and diverse channels.
- 4.2. Each Department shall produce as many Student Voice Action Plans for each academic year as is appropriate to effectively represent the interests of their students, subject to

the recommendations of the Students' Guild or Students' Union. This **must** be at least one Action Plan per Department.

- 4.3. A Student Voice Action Plan **should** be used to record outputs and agreed actions that emerge from discussions with and feedback from students about their academic experience. They should include relevant context and details of student voice activity carried out.
- 4.4. The Student Voice Action Plan **should** be made available to all students and staff through an appropriate online medium from the beginning of Term 1 each academic year.
- 4.6. In the spirit of ongoing partnership and dialogue, students and staff **should** aim to identify and resolve matters as they arise outside of designated student voice activity. Outcomes of such discussions should be recorded appropriately in the relevant Student Voice Action Plan.
- 4.7. Over the course of an academic year, the Student Voice Action Plan **should** include details of discussions with students and any resulting actions on the following themes:
 - a. Teaching and learning (including the dissemination of good practice, programme and module evaluation).
 - b. Assessment and feedback.
 - c. Academic support and personal tutoring.
 - d. Organisation and management (including timetabling and Faculty administrative processes).
 - e. Learning resources (including library, IT and other teaching/learning resources).
 - f. Student voice (including student-led projects and events, the effectiveness of student representation and the actions of the Department, Faculty and Students' Guild or Students' Union in response to students' views and opinions).
 - g. Employability, careers support and personal development.
 - h. Barriers to access or learning (including diversity and inclusion related issues affecting particular groups within the cohort).
 - i. Outcomes of student evaluations (e.g. Accelerate, NSS, PTES) and any actions arising from these.
 - j. New and revised programme developments (including programme and module changes).

- k. Reports from external examiners and/or professional statutory regulatory bodies (PSRBs), relating to any relevant systems of accountability and Department/Faculty responses to recommendations.
- 4.8. Where student representatives and the Director of Education and Student Experience (or equivalent) agree, discussion points may be adapted to suit the particular needs of a specific course or cohort, including postgraduate programmes, interdisciplinary programmes and combined honours.
- 4.9. Where possible, Departments **should** take full advantage of online meeting technology available to ensure that all student cohorts within its remit can be included and represented in student voice activity, such as for distance learning programmes and degree apprenticeships.
- 4.10. Students **should** be invited to consult on specific matters, for example to discuss departmental policy changes, the subject's Teaching Excellence Action Plan (TEAP), or issues relating to a specific student group/cohort, such as individual programmes or taught postgraduates.
- 4.11. Each Department **should** hold a meeting of staff and student representatives at least once per term to review the Student Voice Action Plan. This meeting ensures that matters arising from student voice activity and agreed actions are evaluated on an ongoing basis and student representatives are involved in decision-making. Directors of Education and Student Experience or their equivalent **must** be involved in this review process.
- 4.12. Each review meeting **must**, as a minimum, include the following standard items:
- 4.12.1. Report from the Director of Education and Student Experience (or equivalent) and/or senior student representatives on student voice activities undertaken (as outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit) since the previous meeting.
- 4.12.2. Examination of outputs and agreed actions captured in the Student Voice Action Plan, with student representatives acting in partnership with Department staff in the decision-making process.
- 4.12.3. Report from the Director of Education and Student Experience on any departmental developments affecting the student community.
- 4.13. Department staff attendance at a Student Voice Action Plan review meeting **should** aim to not be in the majority.

- 4.14. Senior student reps and the Director of Education and Student Experience, or equivalent, **should** aim to jointly ratify decisions and actions and agree on chairing responsibilities for any formal meeting that takes place under this Code (such as that outlined in 4.4). Where a student representative does not wish to chair a meeting, the DESE or equivalent should assume this role.

5. Administrative process

- 5.1. The Student Voice and Change Team will provide a member of staff responsible for administering each Department's Student Voice Action Plan. Where this is not possible or alternative arrangements are agreed, the Faculty will provide a member of administrative support for this process.
- 5.2. The role of the Administrator **should** include providing administrative support for meetings which discuss the Student Voice Action Plan, and managing the dissemination of the Action Plan. They should also support the Director of Education and Student Experience in identifying items for discussion as required by the thematic topics listed in 4.7, such as external examiners' reports/responses, programme approval documentation and material arising from the Quality Review and Enhancement Framework (e.g. student evaluations, Teaching Excellence Action Plans, etc.).
- 5.3. The Administrator **should** support the Director of Education and Student Experience in recording and updating the Student Voice Action Plan and **should** be responsible for the general administration of any formal meeting. The Student Voice Action Plan **should** clearly indicate who attended each meeting and their role.
- 5.4. The Administrator **should** support the Director of Education and Student Experience in closing the feedback loop, i.e. demonstrating to students how their feedback has been responded to and explaining rationale for actions taken or not taken.
- 5.5. Outcomes from Student Voice Action Plan review meetings, as well as each Department's Action Plan should be forwarded to the Students' Guild or Students' Union, and to the nominated Faculty Education Partner who will supply them to the Faculty's Education and Student Experience Committee as appropriate.

6. Student representation

- 6.1. Any enrolled student is eligible to volunteer as a student representative by applying to the Students' Guild or Students' Union in accordance with the process outlined in 6.2. Following appointment, the Students' Guild or Students' Union will provide nominated University colleagues (as outlined in this Code) with a full list of student representatives.
- 6.2. The Students' Guild and the Students' Union are responsible for determining the recruitment and selection process of student representatives in their respective jurisdictions. The Faculties and the Students' Guild or Students' Union are jointly responsible for promoting and supporting the recruitment process.
- 6.3. The Students' Guild and the Students' Union are responsible for managing the role descriptions of any student representative positions.
- 6.4. Recruitment of senior student representative positions should, where possible, take place in Term 2 or Term 3 to ensure continuity of representation over the summer. The Academic Representation Operations Network (ARON) will agree the necessary timeline, processes and procedures to support this process.
- 6.5. The Students' Guild and the Students' Union are responsible for the organisation and running of training sessions for student representatives, supported as appropriate by Departments, Faculties and/or administrative teams.
- 6.6. Where it is beneficial to both students and the University and only following discussion and approval with the Students' Guild or Students' Union, student representatives may be invited to take on additional responsibilities. This may include invitations to sit on a University Working Group and Faculty-level Education meetings, acting as representatives on University service offerings, or organising academic events.
- 6.7. Where there is a corresponding academic society for a Department, the society committee, or a designated member, should be invited to meet with the Department leadership. This may be alongside or separately from meeting appointed student representatives. The appropriate Administrator should facilitate this process.
- 6.8. Any student may attend a formal meeting of staff and student representatives as a non-participating observer if they are being represented at that meeting. Members of the Students' Guild or Students' Union staff may attend student voice activity or a meeting to review Student Voice Action Plans as a non-participating observer, to provide information or rep support.

7. Partner institutions

- 7.1. The University's partner institutions should incorporate equivalent Student Voice Partnership procedures into their quality assurance systems.