



University
of Glasgow



Guidance on the Operation of Staff-Student Liaison Committees

September 2012

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1. Introduction

The Code of Practice on Student Representation¹ was developed jointly by the University and the University of Glasgow Students' Representative Council (GUSRC) and approved by Senate in June 2006. In May 2010 Senate approved updates to the Code of Practice to reflect University restructuring and the wider aspects of Student Representation. In September 2011 GUSRC and Senate Office agreed updates to include PGR Representatives and their role. The following guidelines on the operation of Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) are intended to supplement the Code of Practice. GUSRC and the University have worked together to produce a Class/PGR Representative Handbook² to support Class and PGR Representatives and to provide Subjects, Schools and Colleges with further insight into the Class/PGR Representative role.

Throughout the document 'Class Representative' is used as a generic term to describe those representing their class, course or programme at Subject, School, Graduate School or College committees.

2. Principles of the Code of Practice on Student Representation

The Code of Practice and this guidance are based on the following principles:

- 1 The University of Glasgow is committed to receiving and responding to student feedback in order to monitor and enhance the quality of the student experience within the institution.
- 2 It is important that a positive culture exists in which the School or Graduate School makes explicit its commitment to receiving and responding to students' views and to discussing current learning, teaching and research issues with them.
- 3 For the purpose of this Code of Practice, the phrase "Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC)" is used to describe the various School and Graduate School committees which provide a formal opportunity for Class and PGR Representatives to give feedback to their School/subject(s).
- 4 The SSLC exists to provide an effective and coherent system for communication between staff and students.
- 5 All students have the right to representation at the SSLC.
- 6 The training of Class and PGR Representatives is key to the successful operation of SSLCs and responsibility for providing this lies with GUSRC, with input from the University.
- 7 The University will recognise and record on the student's transcript periods undertaken as a Class or PGR Representative, subject to confirmation of training having been completed and confirmation from the relevant School or Graduate School that the term of office as a Class or PGR Representative has been completed.

¹ Available at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/studentrepresentation/>

² Available at <http://www.glasgowstudent.net/about/classreps/resources/>

3. Role of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee

The SSLC provides a forum for staff and students to discuss matters of mutual interest. It is important because:

- It allows staff and students to discuss ideas and to solve problems
- It forms the basis for the representation of students' views within the Subject, School or Graduate School and identifies concerns which require consideration beyond the Subject, School or Graduate School
- It is a formal, qualitative means of consulting students and gauging their opinion on academic matters and soliciting suggestions for improvements/enhancements
- It provides a mechanism for obtaining student feedback and communicating action taken in response to feedback

SSLCs do not work the same way in all Schools and Schools should opt for what works best for them and their students. Some examples of practice in the University are as follows:

- A separate SSLC for each course
- A separate SSLC for each Subject
- A combined SSLC for a range of courses at the same level
- A combined SSLC for all levels of study within a particular programme
- A combined SSLC for all courses and/or programmes offered by the School
- An SSLC for each Graduate School

Although PGR students do not attend classes as such, each Graduate School should elect two or more PGR Representatives to attend relevant School committees and represent the views of the PGR students within the Graduate School.

The successful operation of an SSLC is dependent on attendance by its members. The importance of maximum attendance cannot be overemphasised.

4. School and Graduate School Responsibilities

4.1 General

Each School or Graduate School should identify a contact person to liaise with Course Leaders/Course Convenors, the GUSRC and the Senate Office in relation to Class and PGR Representation.

Course Leaders/Course Convenors should familiarise themselves with the Code of Practice on Student Representation.³

As stated in the principles above, it is important that a positive culture exists in which a school and its constituent subjects make explicit its commitment to receiving and responding to students' views.

Students should be advised of the principles of student representation, and the role of Class or PGR Representatives should be explained to them during School or Graduate School induction events or equivalent (see Appendix 1 – Information on the

³ Available at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gae/studentrepresentation/>

Role of the Class Representative). Schools are expected to provide students with a copy of Appendix 1 either in paper format or by directing them to the document on the web.

To promote the role of the Class or PGR Representative and to explain what it involves, Schools and Graduate Schools are strongly recommended to invite former or more senior Representatives to speak to new students at the beginning of the academic year. Schools who have used this method previously, have found it to be effective. Representatives from GUSRC speak to first year students about class representation at School/College induction events and they are also willing to come along and speak to students in class or at PGR induction events. The GUSRC Vice-President for Learning & Development can be contacted on 0141 339 8541 or at vp-learning@src.gla.ac.uk

4.2 Class or PGR Representative Elections

Where possible, Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools should hold an election for Class and PGR Representatives. It is recommended that the Head of School delegate responsibility for this to Course Leaders, Course Conveners or Programme Directors as appropriate.

Depending on student numbers, it would be appropriate to elect or appoint representatives as follows: up to 50 students – 1 or 2; 51-150 students – 2; over 150 students – 3 or 4. For PGR Representatives it would be expected to elect or appoint at minimum 2 representatives per School based on student numbers and geographical locations.

In the first week of the relevant semester, Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools should invite students to consider standing for election as a representative on their Staff-Student Liaison Committees. Since a range of different SSLC structures may apply across the University, it should be made clear to students whether the SSLC relates to a particular course, all courses offered by the School, a year group or a degree programme.

Provision should also be made through GUSRC for student representation on College Learning and Teaching Committees and College Research Committees.

Since the GUSRC Class Representative training sessions normally take place in weeks 5, 6 and 7 of each semester, it is important for elections to be completed **by the end of week 3**. A specific time for holding elections in week 2 or week 3 should be built into the timetable where possible and advertised to students.

Schools should ensure that all candidates are invited to present their case for election to their peers, by electronic means or by means of a School noticeboard.

Where there are insufficient candidates to merit an election, volunteers may be appointed to the role of Class or PGR Representative with the agreement of the group of students that they will represent.

Where appropriate, elections for continuing students following a prescribed programme of study (eg undergraduate Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine) may be held towards the end of each academic year.

4.3 Training of Class and PGR Representatives and Communications with Glasgow University Students' Representative Council (GUSRC)

Schools and Graduate Schools are responsible for recording the elected/appointed Class or PGR Representatives and the area they represent in Student Voice by the beginning of Week 4 of each semester. Attending the training is not mandatory but it is recommended and is one of the requisites for recording periods undertaken and completed as a Class or PGR Representative on the student's transcript. If further Class or PGR Representatives are elected at any time in the year their details should be added to Student Voice as soon as possible.

GUSRC will publicise the dates of training sessions. This information will also be provided on the GUSRC website. Schools and Graduate Schools are expected to promote the GUSRC training sessions to elected/appointed Class and PGR Representatives to ensure that participation is as wide as possible. A short PowerPoint presentation (*Becoming a Class or PGR Representative*) is available.⁴ Schools and Graduate Schools are encouraged to make use of this presentation either in class or by directing students to the web resources. Schools should also encourage Class and PGR Representatives to sign up for their training at the online sign-up function on the GUSRC website at www.glasgowstudent.net/about/classreps/signup/. The online system will then send out an automated confirmation of training date, time and venue.

Students who have completed the Class Representative training since 2008⁵, and who act as Representatives in subsequent sessions, will not be expected to attend training again unless they particularly wish to do so.

Exemption from training will be recorded for each Class or PGR Representative who has already fulfilled this requirement. All subsequent completed terms of office as a Class or PGR Representative will be recorded in the student's transcript. Training undertaken more than four years previously is not eligible for exemption.

There is discrete training provision for PGR students, which is more tailored to the research student experience than the generic UG/PGT training session.

4.4 Equal Opportunities for All Students

Comparable Class and PGR Representation opportunities should be available to all categories of students and although it may not always be possible to reflect the diversity of the student population within the membership of the Committee, Class and PGR Representatives should reflect the views of all categories of students that they represent.

Busy schedules of students studying on campus and the geographical dispersion of students on some courses can challenge SSLCs in upholding the staff-student liaison principles of meeting regularly and enabling students to provide on-going feedback. In some cases, it may be necessary to make special arrangements to meet the needs of a particular student population, eg:

⁴ Available at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gae/studentrepresentation/>

⁵ Expectation that if training was undertaken more than 4 years ago student representatives would benefit from re-attending training.

- A virtual Staff-Student Liaison Committee may be set up on the School VLE to facilitate interactive discussion about the student learning experience for Distance Education and Flexible Learning students.
- Student Voice will give all students the opportunity to post comments, contact representatives to 'raise issues' and track the progress of issues
- Individuals with a disability may require agendas and minutes in a particular format or for meetings to be held in an easily accessible room.

The virtual process can also be used as a supplement between meetings but should not replace face-to-face contact unless students never meet as a group (eg Distance Education).

Informal mechanisms for encouraging students to comment can also be beneficial. These mechanisms might include:

- Focus groups
- Feedback on 'announcements' or 'issues' on Student Voice
- Facilities for commenting informally and (if necessary) anonymously via a comments box or book

4.5 Provision for Class and PGR Representatives

Schools and Graduate Schools should provide Class and PGR Representatives with the following:

- Reasonable access to School or Graduate School photocopying facilities to produce materials for SSLC business at no personal cost.
- Opportunity to make a short presentation in lectures or seminars about items to be discussed at SSLC, consult on any issues to be raised and feedback any outcomes of issues raised previously.

4.6 Confirmation of Completion of Training and Term of Office as a Class or PGR Representative

School or Graduate School contacts are responsible for confirming that individuals have completed their term of office as a Class or PGR Representative to the satisfaction of the School. Schools and Graduate Schools will be asked to update the records on Student Voice by the end of April,

5. Remit and Membership of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee

5.1 Remit

Each SSLC should have a formal written remit, which should be reviewed annually to ensure that it provides the opportunity for the discussion of current learning, teaching and research issues.

Schools and Graduate Schools are encouraged to publish the remit of the SSLC in Student Handbooks and on the Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools websites.

The SSLC may discuss any business relating to the overall student learning or research experience including matters raised by students and matters on which the Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools wishes to seek student views. The following topics are typical of items that can appear on the agenda of an SSLC:

- The development of new or review of existing courses/programmes
- The outcomes of student evaluation of courses and Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools responses to any issues raised
- Annual Monitoring Reports and the responses from the School/College and the University in relation to identified issues
- The appropriateness of the overall balance of assessment activities and the overall workload of the course/programme
- Assessment criteria, assessment deadlines and the adequacy of feedback
- Curriculum content
- The adequacy of learning resources (eg learning accommodation, timetables, reading lists, library resources etc)
- Quality of teaching
- Learning and teaching methods
- Student handbooks
- Project work
- Student placements/year abroad arrangements
- Student support and guidance procedures
- The research student experience
- Employability and transferable skills development
- The appointment of student members to the Subject/School Committee or Teaching Committee and relevant College committees
- Internal reviews of the subject (e.g. Periodic Subject Reviews, Graduate School Reviews)
- Accreditation visits by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
- Suggested student-driven questions for inclusion in the School or Subject's Student Feedback Questionnaire
- Issues raised by Class or PGR Representatives on Student Voice
- Topics of 'discussion' from Student Voice

The SSLC should not discuss personal matters relating to individual students or members of staff. However, members of the committee should be reminded of alternative mechanisms through which such matters can be raised.

5.2 Membership

Students should normally make up the majority of the Committee since it can be intimidating for students if they are outnumbered by staff.

Students should be consulted annually on whether they wish to assume responsibility for chairing the SSLC and on the method of appointing/electing the Chair. An identified member of staff should support a student Chair and may act as Vice-Chair.

The Chair and other office bearers should be elected or agreed by the SSLC at the first meeting of each academic year.

The Class or PGR Representatives should be published on Student Voice. Representative details may additionally be published on student noticeboards, and Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools websites to facilitate student interaction with those who represent them. Contact details and photographs should be included, subject to the permission of the relevant parties.

The staff membership should include members of staff with specific remits for Learning and Teaching and Student Support. Representatives from the Library, Careers Service, Learning & Teaching Centre, Research & Enterprise and other Student Services should be invited to attend meetings as appropriate.

6. Frequency of Staff-Student Liaison Committee Meetings

Schools and Graduate Schools should determine the frequency of meetings in consultation with Class and PGR Representatives. A minimum of one meeting per semester is expected.

Where the School opts to have separate Subject SSLCs, these should always meet before the overarching School SSLC since the minute of each Subject SSLC should be provided to the School SSLC.

The frequency of SSLCs may vary according to the nature and duration of a course or programme. There will also be certain times when additional meetings of the SSLC may be beneficial to both staff and students, for example when:

- planning or introducing a new course or programme
- planning or introducing major course or programme changes
- preparing for the review of the Periodic Subject Review or Graduate School Review
- preparing for an accreditation visit by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body

Meetings should take place at a mutually convenient time to allow for maximum attendance and should not coincide with timetabled learning commitments of Class Representatives or teaching commitments of PGR Representatives.

The first SSLC meeting should normally take place no earlier than Week 7 to allow Class and PGR Representatives the opportunity to consolidate their training.

Dates, times and venues of meetings should be published at the beginning of the academic session.

7. Agenda, Papers and Minutes of the Meetings

7.1 Agenda

The SSLC should agree who is responsible for the production of the agenda and circulation of papers (whether the SSLC Secretary or another person, eg the Subject, School or Graduate School secretary). This role should not be undertaken by a student.

The person responsible for the production of the agenda should send a timely reminder about the forthcoming SSLC to members of the committee together with a note of the deadline for the receipt of agenda items.

It is good practice to alert all students to the forthcoming meeting via Student Voice, the Subject, Schools or Graduate Schools website, relevant Subject, School or Graduate School noticeboards and remind them that they should advise the relevant Class or PGR Representative of any issues for discussion at the meeting.

For typical examples of topics that can appear on the agenda of an SSLC please see **Section 5.1**. Minor 'housekeeping' matters can normally be resolved without referral to the SSLC.

The agenda and papers (including minutes of the previous meeting) should be made available to all Class or PGR Representatives at least 5 days before the meeting is held. The agenda should include the date, time and location of the meeting.

Where electronic circulation is used, paper copies should be available on request.

7.2 Minutes

Minutes should be taken at each meeting and the committee is encouraged, where possible, to appoint a minute-taker who is not a member of the committee, as it is recognised that minute-taking can inhibit opportunities to engage with discussion. The SSLC should identify agreed action points and assign them to specific individuals, with stated time lines/limits.

In the text of minutes it is good practice to refer to individuals, where possible, by their role (eg Level 2 Class Representative; Honours Convener) since individuals' names may mean little to the wider audience that might consult the minutes both immediately and in the future.

Minutes should be approved by the SSLC at the following meeting and agreed amendments should be recorded. Minutes should be made available as soon as possible. Before minutes have been approved they should be marked 'DRAFT'.

Approved minutes should be made available to all members of staff and all members of the relevant student body via Student Voice. Minutes may additionally be published on a dedicated noticeboard and the Subject, School or Graduate School website. Minutes of Subject SSLCs should be considered at the overarching School SSLC.

Schools and Graduate Schools are encouraged to provide incoming Class or PGR Representatives with the minutes from the previous year's SSLC meetings in advance of the first SSLC meeting to give a flavour of how courses and programmes and issues raised have progressed. Schools are also encouraged to provide an archive of minutes of previous years' SSLC meetings for Class or PGR Representatives to consult. This may be by directing students to the SSLC minutes posted on Student Voice.

7.3 Papers

In some cases, an agenda item may require an accompanying paper. It is recommended that papers be circulated with the agenda to allow the committee adequate time to digest the information. Tabling papers should generally be avoided.

8. Conduct of the Meeting

Although Class and PGR Representatives may have been trained by GUSRC, many will have no experience of serving on a committee. Consequently Subjects, Schools and Graduate Schools are encouraged to provide a short, supplementary induction, providing a brief explanation of the committee's remit, how the committee operates, the Class or PGR Representative's role on the committee, and introducing all members to their roles.

Staff should be aware that students might not be familiar with some of the commonly used jargon and acronyms and should try to avoid these where possible. Often a glossary of terms specific to the subject area can be helpful.

All members of the committee should be encouraged to ask questions about anything that they do not understand.

Meetings should be conducted in such a way as to give all members a reasonable opportunity to present their views.

A GUSRC School Representative, GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor will be entitled to attend SSLCs within their area. Where necessary, Class and PGR Representatives may request a GUSRC School Representative, or GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor to attend a meeting of the SSLC for a specific agenda item. As a matter of courtesy, Class and PGR Representatives should advise the Head of School or chair of the SSLC meeting of this invitation, and the reason for it, prior to the meeting. Where a GUSRC School Representative, GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor has been in attendance at a meeting, a copy of the minutes of that meeting should be provided to him/her.

It is good practice to place items requiring the attendance of a GUSRC School Representative, GUSRC College Convenor, GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor or a member of a service department at the beginning of the agenda so that invited colleagues can leave the meeting after the relevant item has been addressed.

The Committee should agree action in response to issues raised, who will take it and by when, and receive reports on action taken at the next meeting. It is important to provide feedback to SSLCs and Class and PGR Representatives on action taken, and also on why it may not have been possible to progress an issue. In doing so, Schools and Graduate Schools can demonstrate that they are committed to the process and take students' issues seriously.

Actions and outcomes should be clearly posted on Student Voice as an 'Announcement' or as a resolution to an 'issue' which a Class or PGR Representative has raised (amending the status to 'complete').

Where an issue is 'complete' but no action is taken, this should also be announced on Student Voice with the reasons for no action clearly stated.

If an academic or Subject concern cannot be resolved at the SSLC, it should be referred to the School and/or College Learning and Teaching Committee or Graduate Studies Committee. In addition, unresolved issues which require the attention of the College or the wider University should be highlighted in the Annual Monitoring Report for the relevant course, courses or programme. Class and PGR Representatives may also raise their concerns with the appropriate GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor if they feel that an issue is not being dealt with appropriately or quickly enough.

If Class or PGR Representatives have concerns about the nature or conduct of the SSLC, which they do not feel able to raise with their Subject, School or Graduate School, then the matter should be referred, in the first instance, to the appropriate GUSRC School Representative, GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate

Convenor. Please consult the GUSRC website for a list of GUSRC Representatives, (<http://www.glasgowstudent.net/about/council/convenors>).

Meetings should be minuted and the agreed minutes should be published in a form accessible to all staff and students of the school.

The relevant section from the minute should be sent to those who have been invited to attend the meeting for a specific purpose.

9. Information for Students

Information for students on the role of the Class and PGR Representative is available in Appendix 1 at the end of this guide.

10. Comments from Schools and Students

At the end of each academic session, Class and PGR Representatives who have undertaken Class Representative training and completed the role of Class or PGR Representative will be invited by the Clerk of Senate and the GUSRC Vice President (Learning and Development) to provide feedback on what has worked well in their SSLC and what they think can be improved. The feedback will be co-ordinated by the Senate Office and forwarded to relevant Schools in an anonymised form.

The Senate Office welcomes comments from Subjects, Schools, Graduate Schools and from students on the usefulness of these guidelines. Additional suggestions for inclusion in the guidelines are also welcomed. Comments should be sent to Gavin Lee (Gavin.Lee@glasgow.ac.uk).

Acknowledgements

The documentation available on the websites of the Universities of Edinburgh, Hull, Keele and Warwick has greatly assisted the preparation of these guidelines.

APPENDIX 1

Information for Students on the Role of the Class or PGR Representative

1. Introduction

As a Class or PGR Representative you are an official representative for your class, year group or programme at Subject, School, Graduate School or College committees. You have a positive role to play, by facilitating communication and constructive change within your course and/or programme. Members of staff in your Subject, School or Graduate School and the wider University value your input which contributes to ongoing development and improvement throughout the University and future students will benefit from the positive changes that have occurred as a result of the active involvement of their predecessors. Previous experience is not required.

The following information has been compiled in conjunction with GUSRC and is also available from the GUSRC website (<http://www.glasgowstudent.net/>)

2. Why would you want to become a Class or PGR Representative?

- To represent the views of others
- To enhance your personal development
- To develop valuable transferable skills such as:
 - * Communication
 - * Organisation
 - * Team work
 - * Negotiation skills and conflict management
 - * Time management
 - * Speaking in public
 - * Confidence

3. What will you get out of it?

- Training, which will benefit you in other areas of your academic life and beyond
- The opportunity to develop and promote skills sought by employers
- Valuable experience which can be highlighted in your CV, and can be attractive to employers
- Important experience of formal meetings
- Knowledge of your institution and current issues in higher education
- The chance to make a real difference to the lives of students at the University of Glasgow
- Recognition of your work as a Class or PGR Representative on your Academic Transcript

4. Provision for Class and PGR Representatives

Training for Class and PGR Representatives is available through Glasgow University Students' Representative Council (GUSRC) who work closely with a variety of partners to provide a quality training programme. Training will normally be offered in Weeks 5, 6 and 7 of each semester.

GUSRC will provide support to facilitate online communication opportunities. See www.glasgowstudent.net for further details and links.

Schools or Graduate Schools will provide Class or PGR Representatives with the following:

- Adequate and accessible noticeboard space and web space
- Student Voice to allow students to see which course, year, programme you represent and facilitate discussion
- Reasonable access to Subject, School or Graduate School photocopying facilities to produce materials for SSLC business at no personal cost
- Access to lectures/tutorials/laboratories to make a short presentation about items to be discussed at SSLC, consult on any issues to be raised and feedback any outcomes of issues raised previously.
- To make a short presentation about items to be discussed by the SSLC and to consult on any other issues to be raised

The University will record on the Academic Transcript periods undertaken as a Class or PGR Representative, subject to confirmation of training having been completed and confirmation from the relevant School or Graduate School that the term of office as a Class or PGR Representative has been completed to the satisfaction of the School.

5. How to be an Effective Class or PGR Representative

To be an effective Class Representative you should:

- Be enthusiastic
- Be committed to helping others
- Be able to manage your time effectively (juggling lectures, studies, part-time work, class or PGR representative duties and social and recreational activities)
- Be visible - make yourself known to your classmates and peers and to the relevant staff in the Subject, School or Graduate School
- Advise your classmates and peers of how to contact you
- Attend the training provided by GUSRC at the beginning of your term of office
- Collect the views of your classmates and peers and present them clearly and in a non-prejudicial way at SSLC meetings and beyond, when required
- Put forward agenda items for SSLC meetings
- Prepare for SSLC meetings by reading the relevant documents and requesting previous minutes from the relevant Subject, School or Graduate School staff member
- Report agreed action back to your classmates and peers using the Subject, School or Graduate School Student Voice. noticeboard or website
- Follow up on actions allocated to you
- Liaise with and alert your GUSRC School Representative, GUSRC College Convenor or GUSRC Postgraduate Convenor to any issues which are out with your remit or which you would like assistance in tackling
- Keep up to date with issues and developments at www.glasgowstudent.net