Code of practice for student voice

Academic year 2026/27

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Introduction

1. High levels of student engagement are supportive of positive educational outcomes for students. Students are not expected to be passive recipients of the delivery of their education, rather they are encouraged to become active in shaping their own experience and those of others. The *Code* has been informed by the Expectation and Core and Common practices in the QAA *Quality Code*.

2. For the purposes of this *Code of practice,* there is a distinction made between the engagement of students in their academic studies and student engagement with the mechanisms in place to ensure students are partners in the quality assurance/enhancement of their programme. Please see *C7: Procedure for Attendance and Engagement* that outlines how the University supports students to engage fully with their studies, what type of systems are used to record students' attendance, and other evidence of academic engagement and how the University manages students who, after support, fail to engage with their programme.

3. The *Code* has been produced as part of the University's Quality Framework and will be reviewed and updated periodically by the University Education Committee.

Applicability of the *Code*

4. The *Code* applies to all students studying at the University campus and at a distance for University awards. It does not apply to students studying on University validated programmes at the Associated and Accredited Institutions (AIs), although AIs are encouraged to use this *Code* to inform their own policies and practices for student engagement.

Principles of student engagement

5. Using the Manifesto as a foundation, the following principles underpin the University's ethos of student engagement and are reflected in the processes described in this document:

   (i) Students are expected to proactively engage in the educational experience offered by the University;

   (ii) Students are partners in their educational experience;

   (iii) All students have the right and the opportunity for their voice to be heard in the delivery of their education;

   (iv) Students have the right to have a say in who represents them in elected, representative positions;

   (v) The student voice is valued;

   (vi) All students have the opportunity to engage and provide feedback via the Students' Union as their representative body;

   (vii) Students are assured that their constructive feedback is provided without detriment to their individual academic progress;

   (viii) The University will facilitate opportunities for formal and informal student engagement;

   (ix) Students are represented at all levels of the University's academic governance structure;

   (x) Student engagement processes take account of the differing needs of a diverse student body;

(xi) Students who take on particular roles as reps and panel members are trained to do so and provided with ongoing support in these roles;

(xii) The University will provide feedback to students on the outcomes and actions taken in response to their feedback, for example resulting from the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

Student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement

6. The Student Staff Partnership Manifesto sets out the ways in which students may provide feedback on their experiences, either individually or via elected student representatives.

7. The University utilises a range of mechanisms to engage students. These operate at institutional, Faculty, School, programme, and module level, and are a combination of formal and informal activities. The following table provides an overview of the various types of engagement at each level which are discussed in more detail under thematic headings below.

Level	Type of activity
Institutional	• SU representation on academic governance committees • Regular engagement between senior management and SU elected Sabbatical and Part-time Officers • SU representation on panels convened under the regulatory framework • Student panel members for validation and review • SU Student Voice Forum • SU Student Equality Networks • National Student Survey (NSS) • Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) • Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) • Membership of ad hoc working groups • Engagement with professional service areas • Informal feedback in discussions with senior management, including the Vice-Chancellor
Faculty	• SU representation on Faculty Education Committees • Elected representation on Faculty Research Degrees Committees • Informal feedback in discussions with Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty
School	• Student Academic Partnership Forums (if not at programme level) • Student representatives on Boards of Studies (if not at programme level) • SU Course Rep Feedback Platform • PGR Student Engagement Forum • Informal feedback in discussions with Head of School

	• Head Reps
Programme	• Course Rep system • Student Academic Partnership Forums (if not at School level) • Student representatives on Boards of Studies (if not at School level) • Student views input to Continuous Enhancement Review considered at Board of Studies • Discussion regarding major and minor modifications to programmes • Meetings with periodic review panels • Meetings with PSRBs and Industry Advisory Panels • Informal feedback in discussions with Programme Leader
Module	• Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) • Discussion regarding major and minor modifications to modules • Informal feedback in discussions with Module Leader

Academic governance structure

8. Formal opportunities for student voice operate via the academic governance structure (see diagram on the following page). In addition, the Students' Union has representation on Council. Students are members of all academic governance committees from Senate down to Student Academic Partnership Forums (with the exception of Boards of Examiners, the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee (APESC), and the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE)). Representation at University level committees, sub-committees, and Faculty Education Committees is through Students' Union Sabbatical Officers. For other committees, representation is via elected student representatives. There are student representatives on the following committees within the academic governance structure:

Senate and its Sub-committees

- University Education Committee (UEC)
- University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC)

UEC Sub-committees

- Quality Enhancement Sub-committee (QESC)
- Student Experience Sub-committee (SESC)

URIC Sub-committees[1]

- Doctoral College Board

Faculty committees

- Faculty Education Committees (FECs)
- Faculty Extraordinary Board of Studies
- Faculty Research Degrees Committees (FRDCs)

[1] The Research Integrity and Governance Committee (and its sub-committees) also reports to URIC; however, this is not concerned with student matters and so is not included in the scope of this *Code of practice*.

School committees

- Boards of Studies (BoS)
- Student Academic Partnership Forums (SAPFs)
- Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Fora (PGRSEF)

9. The Senate flowchart and Terms of reference for its committees and sub-committees can be found in *Senate Governance*.

10. Chairs of committees will manage the items of business so that there are sufficient opportunities for students to make their views heard.

Students as Panel members

11. In addition to the formal governance structure, students also participate in processes that arise out of the regulatory and quality assurance framework. These are as Panel members on appeals, complaints, disciplinary Panels, Fitness to Practise, Support to Study, and panels for validations and periodic reviews.

12. The presence of students on Panels is enshrined in the *Regulations* and *Codes of practice*. Students are equal members of the Panel upon which they sit and are given the opportunity to participate fully in all Panel discussions. Further details of the composition of regulatory-related Panels can be found in the *Procedures for hearings by Panels.* The role description for the student panel member for validations and periodic enhancement events can be found in the Roles and responsibilities section of the *Code of practice for programme lifecycle processes*.

The Course Representative System

13. The University and the Students' Union work in partnership on the Course Representation system, following the principles listed under paragraph 5 in this *Code of practice*. The Voice Zone of the Students' Union remains responsible for Course Reps and the development of the system, led by the Vice-President Voice. The University is responsible for promoting Course Rep elections, and organising SAPFs and Boards of Studies, where Course Reps are the official student representatives. The Students' Union is responsible for arranging Course Rep elections, training opportunities, providing support to Reps over the academic year, and producing and disseminating Course Rep promotion and recruitment materials. While these responsibilities are distinct, there is a shared responsibility between the Union and University to collaborate in areas where necessary, such as advertising of elections and success of the program, in order to promote the importance of the student voice.

14. Course Rep elections take place twice each academic year (in weeks 1 – 3 of semester 1 for new students and in weeks 9 – 11 of semester 2 for returning students). To ensure Reps can attend training with the Union before attending SAPFs, elections must follow this timetable in each School. Elections are organised by the Students' Union, with support from University staff, and are to be conducted online in accordance with the agreed process. Any exceptions are to be agreed with the Students' Union. Elections must follow a consistent, transparent, and democratic process. There is at least one member of staff in the University with responsibility for liaising between Faculty staff and the Students' Union. This member of staff communicates regularly with the Students' Union and is responsible for ensuring that the register of Course Reps (held in full by the Students' Union) for each Faculty remains up to date and for disseminating relevant promotional materials. See Appendix 1 for the role description for a Course Rep.

15. To ensure good communication between Course Reps, the Vice-President Voice, and senior educational leadership within the University, the Union also trains and

supports students who take on a Head Rep position to provide an intermediate level of the student representation system. Head Reps will facilitate the effective representation of the student voice by providing guidance and support to Course Reps within their department. This role is advertised to those who have already gained experience as a Course Rep, as the Head Rep will operate at a more senior level. Head Reps will also be given the opportunity to co-chair SAPF meetings as they will take on a senior leadership role amongst their fellow Course Reps. See Appendix 1 for the role description of the Head Rep role.

16. The Vice-President Voice is the Students' Union representative responsible for Course Reps, supported by full-time staff and part-time elected Union Officers. The Union produces promotional materials to encourage students to become Course Reps, runs training sessions following elections to enable Reps to be effective in their roles, and communicates with Reps throughout the year. The Union is also responsible for responding to concerns about ineffective representatives via the *Course Rep Removal policy*. The Union makes a commitment to supporting and recognising the efforts of Course Reps and therefore ensures the Voice Zone and the wider Students' Union are representing the issues brought forward by Reps and championing their successes. The Students' Union also processes individual Reps' applications to be recognised on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and maintains the criteria for this award through the University Education Committee (see Appendix 3).

The Students' Union Student Voice Forum

17. The Students' Union holds a minimum of three Student Voice Forums a year. Student Voice Forums offer an opportunity for students to meet and discuss issues across the student body. Senior members of University management invited by the Students' Union are expected to attend Student Voice Forums, which are chaired by the Students' Union Vice-President Voice. The Students' Union keeps a record of these meetings and works in partnership with the University to ensure that Reps are aware of outcomes. Course Rep attendance at the Student Voice Forum is an essential part of the criteria for inclusion in the HEAR.

18. Utilising the Voice Forum format, the Students' Union will also hold targeted Forums for distinct groups of the student population or focused on specific topics where necessary.

Course Rep Feedback Platform

19. The University and Students' Union work in partnership to facilitate the student voice through the Course Rep Feedback Platform, hosted on the Union website. Students can raise feedback privately for the attention of Course Reps and Students' Union Officers, and following Course Rep moderation, feedback can be published for other students to share their support. Course Reps, Head Reps, and the Students' Union Voice Zone will be responsible for ensuring student feedback raised via the Course Rep Feedback Platform is shared with relevant University staff, primarily through SAPFs. The University commits to responding to student feedback and taking action to resolve issues when possible. The Students' Union works with Course Reps to effectively moderate and promote the sharing of student feedback.

Informal opportunities

20. Students also have many informal opportunities to engage with staff. There are regular meetings between University senior managers and Officers of the Students' Union. At Faculty level, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Executive Deans of Faculty

usually hold meetings with student representatives once per semester to gauge student opinion on a range of topics. Schools also provide similar opportunities.

21. In recognition of the need for student engagement processes which take account of the differing needs of a diverse student body, the Students' Union also provides the Student Equality Networks project. Feedback shared on quality assurance and enhancement issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion will be escalated from these Networks to the Union's elected Officers, and shared with University staff where relevant.

Student surveys

22. The student voice is heard anonymously through the opportunity to participate in a number of surveys. These are national surveys such as the NSS, PTES and PRES, and at an institutional level via the Student Life Pulse survey run by the Students' Union in collaboration with the University. Internally, students are asked to feed back on their experience at modular level via Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

23. It is University policy that Schools do not survey students in addition to the above surveys in order to avoid "survey fatigue". Student views outside formal surveys can be sought via the academic governance structures, through ad hoc focus groups, and via the Students' Union who may conduct their own surveys in order to provide student insight-informed representation to students.

24. The outcomes of surveys are relayed back to students in a number of ways. NSS and PTES results and action plans are considered at Boards of Studies and FECs, as are MEQ results. Students are able to view examples of improvements the University has made in direct response to student feedback through webpages and various student communication channels.

25. The results of PRES are shared with postgraduate research students and have the opportunity to contribute to the development of action plans emerging from the survey. The results are shared with students primarily through the Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Fora or other dedicated meetings. The results are also discussed at the FRDCs and the University Research Degrees Committee, all of which have student representation.

26. Appendix 3 indicates the periods when annual student surveys are live and when survey results are expected to be received.

Appendix 1 – Role description for Course Rep roles

SURREY STUDENTS' UNION

Course Rep Job Description

Zone	**Voice Zone**
Reports to	**Student Voice Coordinator**
Hours	**Commitment of approximately 15 hours per semester**

Purpose of the job

Surrey Students' Union is the sole representative body for University of Surrey students. We represent over 17,000 students at every level of their university experience, led by a team of elected student representatives and a dynamic staff team. The Union's Voice Zone is responsible for delivering the Union's shared responsibilities under the Course Rep scheme so all students can have their feedback about their academic experience heard, leading to the changes they want to see.

As a Course Rep (UG, PGT, or PGR), you serve as the foundational link between your student cohort, the Department/School, and the Students' Union. Course Reps gather and represent student views to improve the academic experience, address concerns directly to University leadership, and ensure positive changes are communicated back to peers.

Key Responsibilities

Student Voice and Representation

- Complete online Course Rep training delivered by the Students' Union (USSU).
- Research student and PGR opinions on issues relating to your course/discipline.
- Represent student feedback to the University at formal meetings (e.g., SAPFS, Boards of Studies, PGR Engagement Forums, Student Voice Forums) and informal staff interactions.
- Show and promote active engagement on the Rep Feedback Platform, moderating and escalating feedback to staff.
- Report meeting outcomes and progress back to your peer cohort.

Leadership and Rep Development

- Share ideas, issues, and best practices with fellow Reps.
- Keep in regular contact with the Students' Union and the VP Voice.
- Share achievements and positive outcomes via the Course Rep Wins form.
- Complete the Course Rep end-of-year experience survey.
- Commit around 15 hours each term to the role (for UG and PGT Reps).

As a Rep, you can expect your Department to:

- Help you to advertise your position as a Course Rep to your cohort

- Facilitate representation within your School/Department (e.g. giving you adequate notice of upcoming meetings

As a Rep, you can expect your Union to:

- Contact you in semester one regarding training dates
- Offer advice and guidance to enable you to represent your cohort effectively
- Ensure that contact details are available for you to contact your VP Voice with any queries or problems
- Facilitate Student Voice Forums to allow you address issues directly to the University's Senior Management team
- Promote the work of Course Reps throughout the year
- Identify issues that require involvement of senior members of University staff

Skills and experience you can expect to gain from this role:

- Leadership skills
- Communication
- Team-working
- Organisation skills
- Persuasion
- Collaboration
- Meeting skills
- Time management

SURREY STUDENTS' UNION

Head Rep Job Description

Zone	**Voice Zone**
Reports to	**Student Voice Coordinator**
Hours	**Maximum 2 hours per week during semester**

Purpose of the job

Surrey Students' Union is the sole representative body for University of Surrey students. We represent over 17,000 students at every level of their university experience, led by a team of elected student representatives and a dynamic staff team. The Union's Voice Zone is responsible for delivering the Union's shared responsibilities under the Course Rep scheme so all students can have their feedback about their academic experience heard, leading to the changes they want to see.

With over 550 Course Reps across the University, Head Reps provide the next platform of student representation. Head Reps advocate for student voices at a higher level across their School or

discipline. After already gaining experience as a Course Rep in previous years, Head Reps represent the student voice at a more senior level, holding greater levels of responsibility. Head Reps also hold an important role in building relationships with key members of academic staff, co-chairing SAPFs, and in ensuring the Union is up-to-date on issues of importance to students.

Key Responsibilities

Student Voice and Representation

- Promote and maintain effective student feedback channels, encouraging engagement with platforms such as Course Rep Feedback Platform.
- Gather, collate, and analyse student feedback from across the School/Discipline, identifying key themes and priorities, and desired outcomes.
- Produce and present reports for SAPF discussions, including recommended actions.
- Communicate feedback outcomes, action progress, and impact to students and Course Reps.

Leadership and Rep Development

- Lead and coordinate your Course Rep network, ensuring Reps are informed, engaged, and supported.
- Provide guidance and one-to-one support to Course Reps who are new to the role or require additional assistance.
- Promote effective feedback gathering, including signposting to Union resources and templates.
- Support Course Rep socials and the recruitment of Course Reps by promoting Course Rep elections.
- Provide representation for programmes or levels with Course Rep vacancies.

Partnership and Academic Governance

- Build and maintain effective working relationships with academic staff, including regular engagement with the relevant SAPF academic co-chair.
- Prepare for, attend, and co-chair SAPF meetings.
- Escalate issues to relevant School/discipline academic staff, senior University leadership, and Students' Union Officers where appropriate.
- Assist with the maintenance of SAPF action trackers and liaise with SAPF academic co-chair to communicate outcomes to Course Reps.
- Complete and follow up on agreed actions arising from SAPF meetings.
- Submit regular updates to the Students' Union, including submitting Course Rep wins.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable	Tested at Interview	Tested at Application
Experience				

Experience as a Course Rep at the University of Surrey	X			X
Knowledge				
Knowledge of the purpose of the Course Rep scheme	X		X	X
Skills				
Excellent administration and organisation abilities with strong attention to detail	X			X
Able to manage own workload, time and priorities to deliver tasks to agreed deadlines	X		X	
Excellent written, interpersonal, and verbal communication skills	X		X	X
Ability to effectively research student feedback to produce reports		X		X
Values, attitudes and personal style				
Confident and open style of communication with people from all backgrounds		X	X	
Flexibility and an adaptable approach to work	X			X
Enthusiastic about student voice initiatives	X		X	X
Highly organised and self-motivated individual	X			X

Appendix 2 – Criteria for inclusion of activity in the HEAR

Course Reps exist to represent the views of all students across all courses and at all levels. It is crucial for students' prospects that active student leaders who take on volunteer roles during their time at Surrey are able to verify and articulate the skills they have developed. To commend their hard work in improving the student experience across the University, the Students' Union recognises the role of Course Rep on a student's HEAR.

To ensure that Rep contribution is monitored and scrutinised by the Union, and that the benefits of the Course Rep system are felt in terms of quality and standards across the University, specific criteria must be met in order for a Rep to have their role included on their HEAR.

Criteria:

1. Be elected by a majority

To attain Course Rep status on the HEAR you must be an elected representative voted for in a fair and balanced election by the members of the student community which you represent.

Evidence required: Correspondence from Faculty Course Rep contact confirming an election took place.

2. Attend Course Rep training

There will be training sessions for new and continuing Course Reps in the early weeks of Semester 1. This may also be fulfilled by completing online training.

Evidence required: The Students' Union will take attendance at training; the Course Rep is responsible for filling in the attendance form or sending apologies before the training unless in exceptional circumstances. For online Course Rep Training: successful completion of the online training material.

3. Attend all Student Voice Fora

This may also be fulfilled with acceptable and pre-submitted apologies.

Evidence required: The Students' Union will take attendance at the Forum; also fulfilled by pre-submitted apologies being received.

4. For Head Reps – Above criteria plus completion of 30 hours per semester

Head Reps will be invited to complete a form at the end of each semester to track their activities and achievements. 30 recorded hours completed per semester will fulfil these criteria.

Evidence required – The Students' Union will process Head Rep activity forms to verify completion of these hours.

Review process

In order to be considered for recognition on the HEAR, Reps must meet all of these criteria. The Students' Union will monitor which Reps have successfully met these criteria over the academic year and will collate a list of Reps who will receive recognition of their role on the HEAR.

Appendix 3 – Survey live periods and results

Student surveys: survey live periods												
	SEP	**OCT**	**NOV**	**DEC**	**JAN**	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**
Student Life Pulse Survey												
MEQs (non-standard)												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 1												
NSS												
PRES												
PTES												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 2												

Student surveys: results												
	SEP	**OCT**	**NOV**	**DEC**	**JAN**	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**
Student Life Pulse Survey												
MEQs (non-standard)												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 1												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 2												
NSS - data												
NSS - free text comments and analysis												
PRES - data												
PRES - free text comments												
PTES - data												
PTES - free text comments												