Student-Staff Committee

Review Report

Leicester Students’ Union

November 2018

# **Executive Summary:**

This report presents an analysis of the Academic Representation System, a partnership between Leicester Students’ Union (SU) and the University of Leicester (UoL). It provides a detailed analysis of what has been included in the meeting minutes of the last academic year, as well as on what arose from the SU Academic Representation surveys. The key recommendations from the report including examples of best practice and an outline of the common issues identified as affecting students across departments are included below.

**Areas of Best Practice**

* Course representative from Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour and Law Departments have taken the approach of presenting outcomes from the SSC through presentations and core lectures shout-outs which have been facilitated by the staff in the departments.
* Course reps’ attendance and engagement is higher and extensive feedback is gathered within departments with a rep - cohort ratio smaller than the average. Furthermore, reps appear to be more engaged with the development of their student experience. (**American Studies, Education**).
* Department of **Law** explain to Reps what changes they are making based on wider student feedback, for instance NSS results and end of module feedback.
* Departments which schedule their SSCs at well-spaced intervals and have confirmed dates from early in the academic year have a better rate of attendance (**Engineering and Geography and Geology**). In departments where SSCs were cancelled because of industrial action, attendance rates remain low for the rest of the academic year.
* The department of **Geography and Geology** provide excellent minutes. Discussion and actions are clearly outlined, and a summary of actions (including who should complete and with what deadline) is provided at the end.
* **Informatics** has a website area dedicated to the work of SSC, with records of the minutes from the past years.

**Themes for Improvement**

* Timetable clashes, particularly concerning students who take modules in more than one department.
* Personal tutors are not visible, and often do not get in touch with students; it should not be the responsibility of the students to initiate contact with their tutor.
* Conflicting deadlines, coursework deadlines during the exam period, and deadlines succeeding a holiday period, when there is limited access to tutors.
* Availability of core texts in the library – students need to be informed on the processes to request more books in the library and communicated how to gain access to resources online.

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# **Overview:**

This report presents an analysis of the Academic Representation System, a partnership between Leicester Students’ Union (SU) and the University of Leicester (UoL), and focuses on:

* SSC satisfaction levels for the academic year 2017-2018
* Course Reps Attendance levels to SSC for the academic year 2017-2018
* Issues resolved, and areas to target for improvement from minutes

The Academic Representation System covers the recruitment, training, and support of the Course Representatives, within the works of Student Staff Committees (SSC), to ensure that Course Reps are providing the communication channel between students and staff on academic and student experience matters. Therefore, it allows departments to feed student-informed views into University committees, as well as providing students with the means of raising matters of concern.

This report presents the results of detailed analysis of what has been included in the meeting minutes of the last academic year, as well as on what arose from the SU surveys (Appendix A and B) of the SSC members, students and staff. Additionally, it is providing a summary of a previous two academic years’ work of the SSCs.

Where concerns have been raised or good practice identified, this report only highlights what has been recorded by the committees themselves and therefore may not be a full reflection of the meeting. We hope this report provides a helpful starting point for further discussion and working in partnership to improve the system.

Though the Code of Practice for the work of Student Staff Committees recommends the sharing of minutes from the SSC meeting with the Students’ Union and the University Quality Office, there are some instances where we have still not received complete sets of minutes from some Schools/Departments, leaving gaps in our analysis for this report.

In keeping with previous guidelines on the functioning of SSCs, the Code of Practice recognises the strength of diversity, and allows Departments to establish arrangements which best suit their needs and the needs of their students, including the frequency of meetings.

As the academic year 2017-2018 has been a year of industrial action, we acknowledge that the frequency of SSCs and the focus of a significant number of students and staff might have been impacted by these events.

Overall analysis showed that there is still some variety in the conduct of SSC meetings throughout the University, however; there has obviously been a concerted effort in many Schools/Departments to alter the way they run and to meet the SSC Code of Practice.

In the spring of 2018 the Students’ Union, in conjunction with the University, undertook a survey of current members of departmental Student - Staff Committees as a way of gathering information about:

* how the current system of student representation is working;
* whether there are examples of departmental good practice that could be rolled out across other areas of the University;
* those areas which require more focus to improve the student representation system.

Similar surveys were circulated in the springs of 2017 and 2016. The Course Reps' rate of response in the first year was 17%, with a decrease to 14% in 2017. For the spring of 2018 the rate of respondents increased to 43%, partly as a result of the survey been supported through engagement rewards. The response rate from the staff survey for this year was 16%. This report focuses on the results from the most recent, and highest response rate survey but does on occasions draw comparisons with previous years.

# 2018 Staff - Student Committee Survey – Summary of Findings

## Student Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall 67% of students who responded indicated that they are happy with the current academic representation system and 70% were satisfied with the running of the SSCs in their Department.
* 52% of respondents felt that their input had the effect of improving the delivery of their programme.
* 77% of respondents agreed that their departments provided appropriate support for their role as Course Reps. This was a significant increase in comparison with the results from the previous two academic years (Appendix A and Appendix B).
* 71% of respondents indicated that they felt that members of staff on the SSCs did take students’ views into consideration when making decisions. There is an increase in comparison with the previous two academic years and suggests good practice across departments.

However, the following quote shows an example of where students felt their views weren’t taken into account *“At the moment it seems like most of the suggestions are ignored or just regarded as not a constructive criticism”,* there is a risk of disengaging the students that have committed into representing their peers, as well as impacting on the Course Reps satisfaction with the representation system.

**Comments from Course Reps**

“*Effectively the system is as efficient and user/customer-friendly as possible and making any adjustments would mean drastic changes, ones that are unconfirmed whether they would work. “*

*“The representation structure currently performs the job admirably”*

*“I think the current system of student staff meetings are a great concept.”*

*“I believe that the training sessions provided by the student union, help the course representative to understand how to take specific actions in an effective way.”*

*“the Course Rep role is great. I enjoy it and feel my department are overly supportive and understanding!”*

However, through the survey there have been recommendations of improvement, either for the SU or for the University:

* Better means through which students can suggest or present their views anonymously to reps and the Union and through which feedback from SSC can be delivered to students, and through which reps can be known by or introduced to students
* To arrange SSCs and SU workshops to avoid clashing with teaching sessions, and increase frequency of meetings would be welcomed.
* Accreditation sessions that can discuss into depth how course reps can aim and work towards higher level of accreditation.

Recurrent feedback from course reps covers issues such as:

* Many respondents agreed that enhanced communication is the key to develop the student representation system, with improvements in all areas being needed, (i.e. between the SU and students; departments and students and the SU and departments). In addition, respondents indicated the need to improve opportunities for course reps to communicate directly with their peers.
* Respondents felt that there should be better promotion of the course rep system, both in terms of the election process and in terms of promoting the role of course reps to the wider student body.
* Numerous respondents commented on the need for changes to the current SSC system, such as the provision of training for staff engaged in SSCs.

## Staff Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall 62% of staff respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current SSC system, which represented a decrease of 10% in comparison with previous year (Appendix A).
* Whilst there is always room for improvement, a number of other measures indicate that the system is meeting its core objectives:-
  + 75% indicated that Course Reps actively represent the views of their peers.
  + For the third year in a row 87.5% reported that improvements to programme delivery had been made as a result of courses reps with 79% indicating that the SSC system was beneficial in engaging students.
  + 70% of staff respondents felt that course reps have constructively challenged the matters raised.
* Only 46% of the respondents agree that relevant information and updates from the department gets communicated to the SU

**Staff Comments**

*“The reps I have worked with and those I have seen chair SSCs have done a good job. “*

*“I find that it is a great way to meet with the students and retrieve feedback about their course.”*

In addition to the positive views, there are aspects that we have been requested to look at:

* Transparency on the processes through which reps are gathering feedback
* To review the content and structure of the training delivered by SU
* Respondents appear knowledgeable of the challenges course reps face with regards to closing the feedback loop, and the following could be promoted as good practice “Dissemination of outcomes is tricky for reps: This year we've ask our reps to work together to produce a couple of PowerPoint slides covering the main parts of the meeting that they then present in a core lecture.”

Recurring themes have been identified:

* As a means of encouraging more students to stand for election as Course Reps staff indicated a need for better publicity of Course Rep System, emphasising the benefits and the changes to course delivery that have resulted.
* Staff respondents indicated that they would like Course Reps to be more representative of their peers, by not just bringing individual issues. Staff would also like to see Course Reps getting more involved in bigger picture issues.
* Staff respondents indicated that improved Course Rep training could better prepare students for their role. They also felt that departments require training so that colleagues could better understand the value of the student representation system and the opportunity it provides for staff to engage with the student body.

Both Course Reps and staff indicate close rates of satisfaction with the current system. Whilst 52% of reps expressed that their input had the effect of improving the delivery of their programme, 88% staff respondents positively to the same question.

This can be an indicator that either Reps are underestimating the effectiveness of their role, or that the Departments are not communicating effectively the impact that reps have on the curriculum. Regarding the latter, frequent communication and higher transparency can have an impact not only on the rate of engagement and satisfaction with the system but also on student satisfaction at institution level, such as NSS.

# SSC Attendance - 2017/2018

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Department | No. of Course Reps | No. of SSCs Scheduled | Reps attending at least one SSC | Average Rate of attendance to SSCs |
| American Studies | 3 | 2 | 100% | 100% |
| Archaeology and Ancient History | 13 | 3 | 100% | 63% |
| Biological Sciences | 23 | 5 | 96% | 55% |
| Business | 50 | 4 | 44% | 49% |
| Cancer Studies | 2 | 3 | 50% | 100% |
| Chemistry | 14 | 4 | 86% | 55% |
| Criminology | 14 | 1UG & 2PGT | 79% | 100% & 55% |
| DRT | 4 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| Education | 7 | 2 | 86% | 92% |
| Engineering | 31 | 4 UG & 3PGT | 77% | 57% & 61% |
| English | 19 | 3 | 84% | 71% |
| Geography | 11 | 4 | 100% | 71% - 4 reps 100% |
| Geology | 13 | 4 | 100% | 79% |
| Health Sciences | 3 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| History | 13 | 2 | 54% | 64% |
| History of Art and Film | 7 | 2 | 86% | 67% |
| Informatics | 37 | 4 | 78% | 54% |
| Law | 25 | 4 | 79% | 36% |
| Mathematics | 12 | 3 | 82% | 52% |
| Medicine | 13 | 4 | 77% | 47.5% |
| Media and Communication | 12 | 1UG & 2PGT | 92% | 100% & 88% |
| Modern Languages | 9 | 2 | 89% | 69% |
| Museum Studies | 16 | 3 | 100% | 77% |
| Natural Sciences | 5 | 3 | 80% | 83% |
| Physics and Astronomy | 17 | 5 | 94% | 60% |
| Politics and IR | 10 | 3 | 50% | 53% |
| Psychology | 14 | 4 | 93% | 54% |
| Sociology | 5 | 1UG & 2PGT | 80% | 100% & 66% |

As previously indicated, within the academic year 2017-2018 there was disruption of learning and teaching due to the participation of a considerable proportion of both academic and professional services staff in the industrial action. We appreciate that this could have impacted the scheduling the recommended amount of the SSCs.

Overall, from 404 Course Reps- 309 attended at least one SSC, resulting with a rate of 76% of the reps attending SSCs. The above table indicates a prevalence of departments within the College of Social Sciences Arts and Humanities (CSSAH) where the number of scheduled SSCs is below the minimum recommended in the Code of Practice. Course Reps attendance appears to be lower in the CSSAH when compared with the other two Colleges.

Historically, students seem to disengage when there are larger gaps between their SSCs, and their interest and commitment decreases as the year goes on as a result of increased academic workload and imminent deadlines. Additionally, on an observational basis, department have on occasions scheduled SSCs around summer examinations, for which we do not have consistent records.

Whilst not confirmed, there seems to be a correlation between the number of reps per meeting and the rate of attendance to SSCs, as it can be seen for: Law, School of Business and Informatics. One could speculate that the rate of engagement decreases within large meetings as Reps feel that their voice is not being heard. One could also speculate that certain methods of recruitment, such as welcoming all volunteers without competition (practice within the Informatics Department) is not inducive to engagement.

Another speculation would be that Departments that have higher number of scheduled teaching sessions also have a higher rate of Reps engaging with both the Department and the SU, which could be related to availability on campus and engagement with their peers. However, this could be worthy of further investigation within future reviews.

# SSC Departments Analysis

## American Studies

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance to SSCs was high, with all Reps attending both SSCs. The department only scheduled two SSCs across the academic year, which will hopefully be improved under the new Code of Practice.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* The number of study abroad options was extended, following complaints from students
* Information on ‘how to become a mentor’ was circulated to students (2nd and 3rd years)

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Staff said that issues concerning the lack of submission receipts on Turnitin would be rectified by the 2018/9 academic year
* 2nd/3rd year students reported confusion over when different teaching events would take place during reading week

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Lecturers and staff members deliver engaging content and challenge students to succeed
  + The course offers opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics
  + Great opportunities to study abroad
  + Staff members are accessible
* **Negatives:**
  + Some modules are dated, and could be improved to be more relevant politically and socially
  + Marking and assessment is inconsistent, and it is unclear how student feedback is acted upon
  + More guidance regarding year abroad preparation would be appreciated

## Archaeology and Ancient History

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance to SSCs was average. Every Rep attended at least one SSC, and Reps attended 2 out of the 3 scheduled on average. The department only scheduled three SSCs across the academic year, which will hopefully be improved under the new Code of Practice.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Assessment deadlines were revised in line with rescheduled lectures, due to the impact of industrial strikes
* Breaks scheduled during two hour lectures, following complaints from multiple students
* 2nd year students had several timetabling issues, particularly concerning clashes with history modules; this has been resolved for the 2018/9 academic year

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Students reported that staff need more training on sensitivity and signposting, regarding mental health
* Students were able to sign up to modules without having completed prerequisite modules, and tutors were then unwilling to provide ‘catch-up’ sessions; has this been rectified?

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Staff are supportive, knowledgeable and easy to contact
  + The course provides opportunities to explore a variety of ideas or concepts in depth
  + Staff deliver engaging and cutting edge research
  + Informative and practical field trips
* **Negatives:**
  + Better support and communication for distance-learning and part-time students, including accessible contact with staff and other students.
  + Feedback can sometimes come across as unclear and inconsistent, surfacing a need for more explanation or rationale for the marks given for a piece of assessment.
  + Addressing issues with the personal tutoring system.
  + Availability of library resources ‐ often core and supplementary texts not available (especially print only resources ‐ 1 copy per 20 students)
  + Mitigating circumstances (fit to sit) and student support in lectures for accessibility requirements (e.g. dyslexia)

## Biological Sciences

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance to SSCs was average. Almost every Rep attended at least one SSC, but Reps only attended around 50% of SSCs on average. The department scheduled 5 SSCs across the academic year, which is fantastic.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Students were sent copies of external examiner reports and granted access to past papers
* Careers and time management workshops were organised on student request
* Assignment deadlines amended so that they are more evenly spaced
* Course timetable uploaded to blackboard for student access
* Issues with Panopto were rectified
* Separate SSCs organised for Medical Physiology and Genetics
* Assessment deadlines were revised in line with rescheduled lectures, due to the impact of industrial strikes

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Issues concerning lack of support in practicals, and practicals being scheduled before the relevant theory sessions
* Department Committee said they would consider the incorporation of a reading week for the 2018/9 academic year, following student feedback
* Students requested personal tutor training
* Students want exam preparation sessions
* Students requested a spreadsheet to calculate weighted module scores, so it could be worth checking if this has been done?
* Students requested faster and more consistent feedback
* Students requested more time in labs

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Course field trips
  + Supportive and available staff, including lecturers and personal tutors
  + High quality of teaching in labs and lectures
* **Negatives:**
  + Feedback inconsistent and sometimes vague
  + Lack of specific modules in first 2 years (especially for the neuroscience degree stream)
  + A lack of organisation in releasing key dates, including: timetabling, deadlines and exam schedules
  + Overlapping assessment deadlines, adding unnecessary pressure
  + Peer marking in some modules is perceived as unfair

## Business, School of (Accounting and Finance)

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance to SSCs was poor, with around 56% of Reps not attending even one SSC. School of Business generally abide by the Code of Practice and schedule a sufficient number of SSCs. Changes intended to increase attendance have been made this year, by dividing one larger ‘School of Business’ SSC into three: Accounting and Finance, Economics and Management. The department hope that this will allow Reps to feel that they have more of a chance to get their voice heard.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Breaks scheduled during two-hour lectures, following complaints from multiple students
* Improvement in the way feedback was received, with students being notified that feedback was available on Turnitin

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Students are unaware who their personal tutors are, and continue this way unless they make initial contact
* Students do not attend meetings with their dissertation supervisor, or meet draft deadlines, as policy around these is too informal

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + IT and Library resources support learning well
  + Lecture content and course materials are very good
  + Supportive staff, with regards to seminar leaders and tutors
* **Negatives:**
  + Lack of connection between lecture staff and students, which contributes to student disengagement
  + February strike was incredibly disruptive
  + More opportunities to apply teaching to real life scenarios would be welcomed
  + Unjustifiably high fees

## Business, School of (Management and Economics)

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance to SSCs was poor, with around 56% of Reps not attending even one SSC. School of Business generally abide by the Code of Practice and schedule a sufficient number of SSCs. Changes intended to increase attendance have been made this year, by dividing one larger ‘School of Business’ SSC into three: Accounting and Finance, Economics and Management. The department hope that this will allow Reps to feel that they have more of a chance to get their voice heard.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Students were notified who their personal tutors were, and meetings were organised for those students who had initially had no contact with their tutors
* Consistency of feedback has been improved (PG)
* Guidelines for ‘Acceptable Student Behaviour’ published after some sensitivity issues in lectures
* 3rd Yr. students granted access to 2nd Yr. assignment feedback, to aid them with their dissertation (Management)
* Timetable released earlier so that students could effectively plan their terms
* Assessment feedback turnaround time improved to 21 days

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* No breaks scheduled during 2 hour lectures; 90 minute sessions requested as a replacement; department agreed to look into this for the 2018/9 academic year – what change has been made?
* Students were not made aware that feedback was given through Turnitin
* Students want to be able to book library spaces more than a week in advance
* School of Business moving to Brookfield – please raise any issues with this!

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + IT and Library resources support learning well
  + Lecture content and course materials are very good
  + Supportive staff, with regards to seminar leaders and tutors
* **Negatives:**
  + Lack of connection between lecture staff and students, which contributes to student disengagement
  + February strike was incredibly disruptive
  + More opportunities to apply teaching to real life scenarios would be welcomed
  + Unjustifiably high fees

## Chemistry

Attendance to SSCs was average. 86% of Reps attended at least one SSC, but Reps only attended around half of their SSCs on average. The department scheduled four SSCs across the academic year, which is good.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Timetable posted weekly on GP computer room, following student request
* Additional problem sheets uploaded to Blackboard
* Turnaround time for feedback has been improved
* Opening hours for the computer labs have been extended

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Concerns over exam timetabling and multiple coinciding deadlines
* Students requested that assignment feedback is made available before exams – clarify whether this is possible due to moderation?

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Teaching staff listen to student feedback; staff are supportive and knowledgeable
  + Course interesting, diverse and challenging, with a range of different aspects (practical/lab time, biology modules, opportunity for placements)
* **Negatives:**
  + Access to software/resources outside of University hours
  + More up to date journal article resources
  + Dedicated study spaces for Chemistry students for use between labs
  + Clashes with exam and coursework deadlines.

## Criminology

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

Attendance at SSCs was fantastic at UG level but had room for improvement at PG level. Only one UG SSC and two PG SSCs were scheduled across the academic year, so there is great room for improvement from the department under the new Code of Practice.

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Reading list, tutorials and example assignments uploaded to Blackboard
* Summary slides added at the end of lecture PowerPoints
* Department kitchen space opened for students to work
* In-text references added to lecture slides
* Criminology Careers brochure and Careers Area added to Blackboard

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Ongoing issues over Panopto lecture recordings being added to Blackboard
* Careers session requested by students

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Staff, including personal tutors, are supportive, friendly and enthusiastic
  + Interesting and diverse modules with excellent teaching
* **Negatives:**
  + Improve standardisation of marking and feedback on coursework
  + More diverse assessment to include examinations
  + Modules in areas such as media or sociology sometimes don't seem relevant

## Education

SSCs in the School of Education were generally very well attended, with almost all Reps present. Only two SSCs were planned last year due to placements and strikes, although this has been improved under the new Code of Practice.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Wider variety and higher quantity of food options made available in Café North
* Looked into PGCE hoodies but decided against this due to price and lack of demand
* Clearer timetables and structure for phase 2 provided (PGCE)
* Access to freshwater tap, kitchen and disabled toilets granted
* Printers made available

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* International Education MA students complained over the lack of coursework and extra reading (distance-learning)
* Interactive Whiteboards – students want both training, and access outside of timetabled hours
* Have any changes been made regarding travel reimbursement for car drivers on placement?
* Issues with electronic sign in not registering – staff reported these will be fixed for 2018/9 academic year
* Majority of issues raised by Reps are minor, and quickly resolved (e.g. lecture slides need uploading, timetable changes)
* Many issues concerning induction – noted for this academic year
* All serious issues actioned

## Engineering

Attendance to SSCs was average, with Reps attending around 60% of their SSCs on average. The department scheduled a good number of SSCs, although there is room for improvement under the new Code of Practice.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* More core textbooks provided in the library (2nd Yr.)
* Reading lists and lecture slides updated on Blackboard
* Engineering PGT exam papers uploaded online in response to students asking for help with preparations for January exams
* Head of Department/Director of Learning and Teaching Report on ‘NSS Outcomes and Response’ – findings per year group made available to student
* Clearer information made available on Blackboard for specific modules
* Lecture time rescheduled, which improved issues of overcrowding
* Extra revision sessions scheduled on student request
* Exam mark schemes uploaded to Blackboard
* Lectures made more interactive, and time is better utilised
* MatLab Lecture capture implemented

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Issues with staff rushing through material and lectures finishing early – has this been rectified this year?
* Student concerns that seminars are intimidating and non-interactive
* Feedback on Engineering Society revision sessions was very positive, although staff would not get involved
* Vague feedback and inconsistent marking (1st/2nd Yr.)

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Open door policy for office hours
  + Career development support during the course
* **Negatives:**
  + Not enough opportunities for teamwork
  + Disorganised timetable/course structure
  + Sometimes difficult to get a response from lecturers via email

## Geography

Attendance to SSCs was good, with Reps attending 70% of their SSCs on average, and 40% of Reps attending every SSC. The department scheduled 4 SSCs across the academic year, and demonstrate good practice in conducting meetings and recording minutes.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Further information on GIS added to Blackboard; All years found this helpful, used as a refresher by staff
* Extra technological demonstrations provided
* Timetable issues resolved
* Feedback sessions introduced
* Late and missing feedback was chased up and rectified
* Field trip deadlines changed for next year to allow students more time and avoid overseas issues, such as poor Wi-Fi connection
* Field trip photos uploaded to dedicated online space
* Extra resources and test materials uploaded to Blackboard

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Ongoing issues with SEM
* Dissertation sessions (data collection, creating graphs, writing an abstract, editing) scheduled for 2018/19 Academic Year – has this been implemented?
* Harsh grading with limited feedback and little suggestion for improvement
* Handbook for the 2018/19 academic year should include all deadlines, so that issues can be flagged earlier – check this has gone ahead?
* Issue with staff-student partnerships and committees

**NSS Results**

* The majority of indicators, 7 of the 9, are above the University of Leicester average
* All indicators have declined since the previous academic year.
* Overall satisfaction is above the University of Leicester average, but has declined since the previous academic year.
* **Positives:**
  + Field trips and study abroad opportunities
  + Committed, enthusiastic and caring staff who go above and beyond
* **Negatives:**
  + Assessment feedback is often late and confusing, and can be limited and inconsistent.
  + Sometimes difficult to get hold of staff for feedback for project/ dissertation work, etc.
  + Could have more module choices, especially in the final year

## Geology

Attendance to SSCs was good, with Reps attending 79% of their SSCs on average. The department scheduled 4 SSCs across the academic year, and demonstrate good practice in conducting meetings and recording minutes.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Extra technological demonstrations provided
* Timetable issues resolved
* Feedback sessions introduced
* Late and missing feedback was chased up and rectified
* Extra resources and test materials uploaded to Blackboard

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Feedback is vague and inconsistent
* Ongoing issues with SEM
* Dissertation sessions (data collection, creating graphs, writing an abstract, editing) scheduled for 2018/19 Academic Year – has this been implemented?
* Harsh grading with limited feedback and little suggestion for improvement
* Handbook for the 2018/19 academic year should include all deadlines, so that issues can be flagged earlier – check this has gone ahead?
* Issue with staff-student partnerships and committees
* Ongoing debate over whether students should have access to view their flag percentage on Turnitin

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Fieldwork opportunities/opportunities abroad
  + Friendly and helpful lecturers
* **Negatives:**
  + Some students commented on the way they had been treated unfairly/experienced prejudice from other students and lecturers
  + More varied forms of assessment (e.g. not 80% exam)
  + Improved communication when situations change (e.g. lecture cancelled)

## History

The Academic Representation system is poorly managed in this department. Only two SSCs were scheduled across the academic year, and only around 60% of Reps attended. Little work was done to recruit Reps, and almost 50% did not attend a single meeting. The department underwent a big change at the beginning of the academic year, merging with Politics and IR, so hopefully improvements can be made this academic year.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Students reported issues accessing electronic materials via the library – It was found that the EDINA authentication needed updating and was fixed within a week
* Clear referencing guidelines uploaded online, following student confusion over the different referencing systems used in History and Politics/IR
* Dissertation lecture introduced – gave students an overview of the time timeline for their dissertation, explained how their supervisors were assigned etc.
* Dissertation guidance documents uploaded
* Introduction of essay skills workshops

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Little information in lectures or on Blackboard concerning literature reviews or historiography (PG)
* Presentation workshops need to be improved and scheduled earlier in the academic year (PG)
* Lack of communication between departments concerning timetabling (1st Yr.)
* Ongoing issues with Turnitin receipts, although the department is working to resolve this

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Good learning support from staff; easily accessible
  + Wide range of modules, and topics in varied, exciting areas
  + Library resources support learning well
* **Negatives:**
  + Marking is inconsistent
  + Lack of support regarding personal issues; could be better advertised as students are unaware this exists unless they seek it out
  + More contact hours would be appreciated
  + Students enjoy the discussion and critical thinking aspect of tutorials and would like to see more of this
  + Students would like more study skills guidance on how to reference and write effective essays (especially in first and second years)

## Informatics

The department scheduled 4 SSCs across the academic year, and demonstrate good practice in scheduling and organising their SSCs. Attendance was poor, with only 54% of Reps attending. Reps have commented that they feel their feedback is not acted upon, which may lead to disengagement.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* New marking guidelines distributed following complaint that no detailed mark schemes were available (3rd Yr., positively received by UG cohort)
* Problem sheets released earlier to allow students more time to digest the material
* Students gave good feedback that minor issues with certain modules were resolved quickly
* Issues with whiteboard visibility in Panopto and Visual Studio were resolved
* Issues with Blackboard, lab timetables and Linux packages were resolved quickly
* Microphones ordered after complaints of lecturers being hard to hear

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Some students had issues finding out who their personal tutors were
* Students enquired about seeing exam scripts after they had been marked, and were told the department would look into it
* Issues with access to STS left students unable to complete coursework
* Many issues outlined with individual modules, no real action present

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Computer labs are well equipped, and a good social learning space to interact with others
  + Helpful real‐life applications, including computer labs, year in industry opportunities and practical work
* **Negatives:**
  + Lectures could be more engaging/some concepts are not articulated clearly
  + Some material that is taught is outdated
  + Assessment and marking could be more timely, and more consistent

## Law

The department scheduled 4 SSCs across the academic year, and demonstrate good practice in scheduling and organising their SSCs. The average rate of attendance was poor at 36%, which could be a result of students not feeling their voice is heard due to the large number of Reps at each meeting.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Additional copies of core texts made available in the library
* Issue with website crashes when completing online applications, and with the online membership system were resolved

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Law careers workshops suggested (CV, Covering Letters, and Internships etc.)
* Law Society have requested an office or physical space
* Tool for students to check their own attendance has been suggested, as many employers request this data
* Law Students constantly request a reading week
* Your department had its first ‘Law Fair’ during Freshers Week this year, and would appreciate feedback on how this ran, and how it could be improved

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Quality of teaching
  + Tutorials/smaller learning groups are a useful aspect
  + Variety of modules
  + Good personal tutors
  + Organisation of the course
* **Negatives:**
  + Communication between departments on joint degree programmes
  + Very large lecture sizes
  + Turnaround time and quality of feedback can be slow and poor
  + Mitigating circumstances processes need to be made more clear
  + Greater careers support during and after the degree

## Mathematics

The department scheduled 3 SSCs across the academic year, which could be improved under the new Code of Practice. Attendance was poor, with only 52% of Reps attending on average. Reps have commented that they feel their feedback is not acted upon, which may lead to disengagement.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Careers Service ran a session following student feedback
* Reading week dates confirmed on student request
* Lecture theatre (BEM LT8) changed due to ongoing issues
* New whiteboards ordered for students
* Staff have been notified that they should write on slides which are then displayed during lectures so these a clearer on Panapto recordings
* Missing attendance and participation marks added to blackboard
* Students notified that they need to scan into lectures within the first 15 minutes to be registered as present

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Reading weeks should be confirmed earlier this year, as promised by the department
* Issue with a staff member intimidating students
* Information about the Leicester Award given too late in the academic year
* More collaboration necessary between lecturers who share modules
* Students partaking in peer mentoring schemes requested access to 1st Yr. Blackboard areas – has access been granted?

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Range of interesting modules and final year project topics
  + Course resources, such as module notes, library resources are readily available and of good quality
  + Staff were supportive and tried to make the course interesting
* **Negatives:**
  + Student knowledge is assumed to be at a certain standard ‐ suggestion to offer refresher or overview sessions
  + Timetable has large gaps between lectures
  + An increased analytical basis to assessment that focuses less on memorisation
  + Teaching content could be delivered in a more simple and accessible way to improve understanding

## Media and Communications

Only one UG and two PG SSCs were scheduled across the academic year, which has significant room for improvement under the new Code of Practice. Attendance was high, with 100% (UG) and 88% (PG) of Reps attending on average. Steps need to be taken to ensure that Reps stay engaged when the frequency of SSCs is improved.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Concerns raised over multiple deadlines at one time – staff and programme director have addressed this by staggering deadlines appropriately (PG)
* PowerPoint slides uploaded earlier to give students the chance to read over material before lectures
* Problems with processing of passports and VISAs rectified
* Clarification on time slots for swiping into lectures
* Key reading lists made available on blackboard
* Personal tutor meetings changed from group meetings to one-on-one

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Timetable clashes between joint degree and major/minor students – has this been improved for the 2018/19 academic year?

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Friendly and helpful lecturers
  + Good variety of module choices, especially if you enjoy theoretical media and communications learning
* **Negatives:**
  + Improve number of library resources
  + Improve the practical aspects of the course
  + Students need to get better at identifying and raising issues – NSS feedback is not positive, although few issues are raised at SSCs

## Medicine

Four SSCs were scheduled across the academic year. Attendance was poor, with only 47.5% of Reps attending on average. This could be because of placements and workload, with the department commenting that it is difficult to find a time when all Reps are available.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* New iPads purchased for 1st year students with higher storage capacity
* Article on how to maximise iPad space and safeguard your files was posted on the blackboard site, in the Tech Enhanced Learning Discussion Board
* Licence for ExamSoft extended
* Lecture slides and prep-work uploaded to Blackboard earlier so that students could go over them before classes
* Blackboard issues resolved
* Sessions rescheduled so that more students could attend
* Students allowed to use any seminar room as a silent study space, providing it is not in use

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Timetable is only released five days in advance; high priority, has this been rectified?
* Ongoing timetabling issues; My UoL is unreliable – should have been resolved for the 2018/19 academic year
* Extra sessions requested for students beginning or returning from placements – has this been implemented?
* Students have requested careers days, as opposed to guest lectures
* Students have requested mid group-work reviews with Clinical Teaching Fellows

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Sense that the medical school is making steps to improve student staff community, listening to student comments and acting upon them (Head of Department commended frequently)
  + Improved pastoral support for students
  + Much better communication between staff and students
  + Quality of teaching, specifically placements and wet practicals
* **Negatives:**
  + Organisation and administration of the course, including placements, could be better organised
  + Communication and feedback during transition between one curriculum and the new curriculum

## Museum Studies

The department of Museum Studies invites all students, not just Reps, to SSCs, so attendance is generally high. The department organised three SSCs last year, and have scheduled 6 for this academic year under the new Code of Practice.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Welcome packs made available on WordPress, for the benefit of students who didn’t receive them
* App glitches fixed
* Timetabling issues and confusion resolved
* Referencing guide improved to include unique sources, such as exhibition flyers

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Oversight in some students receiving their welcome packs, rectified for this academic year
* PGT students would like the PHD printer made available to them
* Students requested more time between feedback and next submission dates, to implement tutor suggestions
* Can PHD and MA students have a different type of membership for Museum Society

## Natural Sciences

Attendance to SSCs was high, with 83% of Reps attending each SSC. The department only scheduled three SSCs across the academic year, so there is room for improvement here under the new Code of Practice.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Additional revision sessions organised
* Missing PowerPoints for statistics were uploaded
* Seminar structure modified after a group of students complained that their tutor was unprepared

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Timetabling issues
* Mental Health/Wellbeing sessions are often requested
* Students have requested that personal tutor materials are organised by type of study (e.g. BSc, MSci), as these students are at different stages in their careers

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Course content is varied and interesting
  + Core teaching team dedicated, supportive and knowledgeable
  + Good sense of community
  + Broad range of transferable skills gained through varied opportunities
* **Negatives:**
  + Very high workload and number of deadlines coinciding
  + Workload can impact on extracurricular activities, and applying for jobs/PhDs
  + Timetable is inefficient; multiple clashes

## Physics and Astronomy

The department organised 5 SSCs across the academic year, which demonstrates good practice. Attendance to SSCs was average. 94% of Reps attended at least one SSC, although average attendance was just 60%, so work needs to be done to ensure that Reps stay engaged.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Less printouts after students complained that paper was being wasted (1st/2nd Yr.)
* Lecture issues (e.g. quiet lecturers, whiteboard unclear) were quickly resolved by lecturers
* Additional feedback sessions scheduled (Dynamical Systems – 4th Yr.)
* Derivations added to Blackboard following complaints about the difficulty of reading board-work
* Issues with vague or illegible feedback – departments informed students they need to contact tutors directly
* Extra resources made available online; resources uploaded week by week as opposed to at the module end
* Maths sessions reordered so that students learnt the content a week before they have to apply it in their physics modules
* Experiments improved for the 2017/18 academic year, after ‘lack of meaningful data’ was found in previous years (GRePs)

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Seminar questions and work exercises do not reflect the lecture examples (Statistical Physics)
* Electronics workshops difficult and lack clear application to the wider reading – hopefully improved for the 2018/19 academic year!
* Maths revision sessions need improvement; tutors giving these did not work well together
* Can an IT rep be assigned during practicals for any issues?
* Issue with international students requiring ATAS clearance
* Issue with students moving from BSc to MPhys not receiving the correct information

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Open door office hour policy is well received; staff are friendly, approachable
  + Great resources to support learning
  + Great study abroad opportunities
* **Negatives:**
  + Teaching in complex areas (e.g. programming) could be clearer and more concise
  + Students would like to see an improvement of organisation in lab sessions
  + Timetable could be released more promptly, with less changes

## Politics and International Relations

The Academic Representation system is poorly managed in this department, with only three scheduled SSCs and an average attendance rate of 53%. Little work was done to recruit Reps, and over 50% did not attend a single meeting. The department underwent a big change at the beginning of the academic year, merging with History, so hopefully improvements can be made this academic year.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Students reported issues accessing electronic materials via the library – It was found that the EDINA authentication needed updating and was fixed within a week
* Clear referencing guidelines uploaded online, following student confusion over the different referencing systems used in History and Politics/IR
* Dissertation lecture introduced – gave students an overview of the time timeline for their dissertation, explained how their supervisors were assigned etc.
* Dissertation guidance documents uploaded
* Introduction of essay skills workshops

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Little information in lectures or on Blackboard concerning literature reviews or historiography (PG)
* Presentation workshops need to be improved and scheduled earlier in the academic year (PG)
* Lack of communication between departments concerning timetabling (1st Yr.)
* Ongoing issues with Turnitin receipts, although the department is working to resolve this

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Course content is intellectually stimulating
  + Supportive staff members
  + Resources and facilities aided student learning
* **Negatives:**
  + Joint honours students felt that communication between their departments was disjointed, and that they had a lack of support because of this
  + Marking and feedback are vague; inconsistent marking between staff and PhD students
  + It is unclear how course feedback is acted upon
  + Few contact hours or physical resources for the cost of tuition

## Psychology

The department demonstrates good practice in scheduling meetings, completing actions and encouraging Reps to close the feedback loop with their peers. Reps were very engaged at the beginning of the year, but average attendance was just 54% by the end of the academic year. Reps appear to have disengaged and lost interest in the role as a result of industrial action.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* WhatsApp and Facebook groups created for students to send their feedback to reps (2nd Yr.)
* Course reps gave a presentation of SSC outcomes and action points in core lectures, to close the feedback loop with their peers
* Module changes so that less modules are 100% exam-based
* Sample exam questions modified to be more reflective of real exam questions; uploaded to Blackboard
* Timetable issues resolved
* Spreadsheet where students can calculate weighted module grades made available
* Departments have made external examiner feedback from the previous year available (2nd and 3rd years)

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Issue with the pacing of lectures – slow at the onset, followed by cramming information and not finishing on time (PS1004)
* Students have requested timed mock-exams to prepare students for assessments

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Experienced and knowledgeable lecturers, who offer good further support when necessary
  + Feedback is always timely
  + Timetabling is efficient
* **Negatives:**
  + Feedback can be vague, inconsistent and appear subjective, despite clear marking criteria
  + Students have no opportunity to apply some learning
  + Emphasis on memory-based examinations, which increases stress

## School of Arts (English)

Attendance in English is good, with the average attendance rate of SSCs standing at 71%. From the 2018/9 academic year, SSCs will take place for the School of Arts as a whole, which will hopefully increase engagement.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Issue over lack of dictionaries in exams was rectified
* Issues with correspondence for Joint Honours/Year Abroad students rectified
* It was advertised that students could speak to personal tutors about feedback and references
* Scheduled meetings with tutors introduced
* More resources from the reading list were made available in the library

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Ongoing IT issues which have not been resolved
* Students unhappy with vague feedback (English module EN0240)
* Some issues with staff being unavailable during their ‘open’ office hours

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Staff are engaging, supportive and respond to student feedback
  + Good Year Abroad opportunities
  + Good elective modules and course structure
* **Negatives:**
  + Better accessibility for disabled students (e.g. those with dyslexia)
  + Students request better library resources, and more free online texts
  + Curriculum is not very diverse; students have requested more BAME and LGBT+ authors
  + Inconsistent marking between lecturers
  + Long turnaround time on assessment and feedback

## School of Arts (History of Art and Film)

Attendance in History of Art and Film is average, with the average attendance rate of SSCs standing at 67%. From the 2018/9 academic year, SSCs will take place for the School of Arts as a whole, which will hopefully increase engagement.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Issues with correspondence for Joint Honours/Year Abroad students rectified
* It was advertised that students could speak to personal tutors about feedback and references
* Students were given more information on upcoming field trips following their request
* More resources from the reading list were made available in the library

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Ongoing IT issues which have not been resolved
* Some issues with staff being unavailable during their ‘open’ office hours

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Supportive, engaging staff
  + Library and course related resources support learning well
* **Negatives:**
  + Feedback can be slow and vague
  + Timetabling could be improved to reduce clashes
  + Little sense of ‘community’

## School of Arts (Modern Languages)

Attendance in Modern Languages is average, with the average attendance rate of SSCs standing at 69%. From the 2018/9 academic year, SSCs will take place for the School of Arts as a whole, which will hopefully increase engagement.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Issues with correspondence for Joint Honours/Year Abroad students rectified
* It was advertised that students could speak to personal tutors about feedback and references
* Students complained they were overwhelmed by an intensive 3rd term - schedule revised and compulsory teaching reduced so students can concentrate on dissertation, tutorials and job applications (TESOL)
* Extra test resources made available (TESOL)

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Ongoing IT issues which have not been resolved
* Some issues with staff being unavailable during their ‘open’ office hours
* Attendance low; issues with students not reading emails
* Issue with 1st years receiving penalties for not following assessment guidelines

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Staff are supportive and knowledgeable
  + Good summer school and study abroad options
  + Close knit community
  + Feedback is generally very positive across all areas
* **Negatives:**
  + Students would prefer more practical work, rather than book-work, during tutorials
  + Small size of cohort can limit the choice of modules available
  + Lack of communication between joint honours departments

## Sociology

Only one UG and two PG SSCs were scheduled across the academic year, which has significant room for improvement under the new Code of Practice. Attendance was good, with 100% (UG) and 66% (PG) of Reps attending on average. Steps need to be taken to ensure that Reps stay engaged when the frequency of SSCs is improved.

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* Concerns raised over multiple deadlines at one time – staff and programme director have addressed this by staggering deadlines appropriately (PG)
* PowerPoint slides uploaded earlier to give students the chance to read over material before lectures
* Problems with processing of passports and VISAs rectified
* Clarification on time slots for swiping into lectures
* Key reading lists made available on blackboard
* Personal tutor meetings changed from group meetings to one-on-one

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Timetable clashes between joint degree and major/minor students – has this been improved for the 2018/19 academic year?

**General Student Feedback**

* **Positives:**
  + Interesting, transferable topics
  + Learning focuses not only on content, but also on personal development
  + Staff are friendly and knowledgeable
  + Library resources support learning well
* **Negatives:**
  + Assessment is 100% essay base – could be diversified to include exams
  + Some aspects of the course are disorganised (transition to final year, timetabling, strike action)
  + Marking criteria unclear

## STEM (Foundation)

**Student-Staff Committee Actions**

**Here are a sample of the successes of this department’s course reps in the 2017/8 academic year:**

* IT issues with Panopto and Blackboard resolved
* Deadline extended where IT issues meant that students could not complete coursework (Foundation Course)
* Past coursework solutions and extra course materials uploaded to Blackboard
* Breaks added to two-hour lectures
* Math support classes offered on student request (although attendance was low)

**Here are a sample of the ongoing issues raised by students in this department:**

* Delays in coursework return
* Online test results not recorded, and students were asked to screenshot their results
* Issues with CLE not resuming after it had been paused – has this been fixed

# Our Comments:

Whilst the survey carried out in the spring of 2018 resulted with an increase in the Course Reps respondents turn out, the rate of staff respondents remained low. There is the possibility that the industrial action has impacted not only the scheduling and running of SSC, but also the staff engagement with the Academic Representation system outside the SSCs.

Ideally, we would like to see comparable rate of response from both Course Reps and SSC staff, to ensure the robustness of the data, as well as high levels of satisfaction from all members of the SSC and the student population.

It was obvious from the responses that there are still discrepancies in practice regarding how Student Rep elections are run across the University, as well as differences in the practice of running the SSC, the support available to course reps within their department and the adherence to the Code of Practice for the Work of Student Staff Committees.

The following comments were made by staff in relation to the work of SSC and the Academic Representation System:

*“For the most part, the system works very well. I would be surprised if any replacement was anywhere near as effective.”*

*“All student reps being as conscientious, constructive and helpful as the majority are. We were lucky in having 4 excellent reps this year, one of whom could never attend, but sent detailed feedback prior to each meeting.”*

*“the SSC / course rep system seems (to me) to be one of the few committee systems in the University which does its job extremely well, (and which is genuinely enjoyable to be involved in)”*

As a result of the feedback received from SSC members in 2016, where over 50% of respondents indicated that a dedicated online system for conducting student elections would make the process easier to understand, more democratic and more inclusive, even though the satisfaction with the election process of that time was reasonably high, changes were implemented in the following academic year.

Following student feedback, Course Rep training for this academic year took place online in the format of three modules and a short quiz. This was done to increase accessibility and ensure that students could utilise the information as a reference point on an ongoing basis. This year the training was much more comprehensive, and was designed with the student in mind, utilising feedback from previous reps regarding what they wish they had known going into the role. The rate of completion increased from 56% in the 2017/8 academic year to 90% in October 2018, meaning that the vast majority of Reps were trained to a high standard.

Within the trainings available to course reps we encourage them to provide evidence to support any issues that they raise at SSCs, as well as to bring forward potential solutions to issues. In addition to the online training which was undertook by 90% of reps, a record number of course representatives attended the Course Rep Welcome event held on Saturday 3rd November, which was at its 3rd Edition.

The November 2018 Course Rep Conference was designed based on feedback from previous Course Reps and included sessions on how to prepare for an SSC and how to gain course rep accreditation, enhance communication skills and how to undertake ’research’ to gather the views of peers. The rate of attendance was at its highest compared with previous years, and feedback was incredibly positive, with Reps rating the day 4.55 out of 5 on average.

Furthermore, this academic year all Course Reps were given a briefing ahead of their first SSC meeting. This was implemented to improve the effectiveness of the reps, by ensuring a full handover is in place between academic year. The briefings detailed both department related wins by previous reps, and ongoing student-identified issues within the department, as well as providing a summary of the department’s NSS results. The initiative was positively received by both department staff and Reps, who commented that they ‘felt a lot more prepared going into their first SSCs’.

We have also developed informational packages for staff on the purpose of the SSC system, promoting consistency and transparency of procedures across Departments regarding the role of the SSCs, the training provided to Course Representatives, and changes taking place as a result of the previous feedback received.

From year to year we aim to increase the active promotion of the concept of academic representation across the student body by providing improved marketing materials and stronger campaigns, including promotion of the feedback charter and the changes resulted from the work of course representatives.

In order to increase the frequency of SU contact with reps, to disseminate information and monitor current issues we promote both an open-door policy as well as deliver general ongoing briefings throughout the year as well as 1-2-1 catch ups with reps involved in delivering/following up action points. We also attend and support reps by attending SSC meetings ensuring relevant actions are followed through and actioned.

Conclusions

These themes were highlighted as areas for concern across all University departments in the 2017/18 Academic Year:

* Timetable clashes, particularly concerning students who take modules in more than one department.
* Personal tutors are not visible, and often do not get in touch with students; it should not be the responsibility of the students to initiate contact with their tutor.
* Conflicting deadlines, coursework deadlines during the exam period, and deadlines succeeding a holiday period, when there is limited access to tutors.
* Availability of core texts in the library – students need to be informed on the processes to request more books in the library and communicated how to gain access to resources online.
* Course Reps tend to lose interest in third term. It’s vital that we gather the feedback of your cohort as your academic years and modules draw to a close, so try to stay focussed.

We are aware that departments display a spectrum of practices into addressing the matters raised in accordance with the above themes, and we are confident that the University is in a better position to implement best practice across departments, such as Timetabling: post publication process, Personal Tutor System with small variations where necessary. However, we have made a small number of recommendations below, based on the observed good practice from the departments with which we had contact in past academic year and the feedback received from members of the SSC, both reps and staff.

# Recommendations

One of the recurring themes across the three academic years referred to the provision or facilitation of training for the SSC members of staff, on how departments can support the work of course representatives as well as how they can promote a positive attitude towards change and curriculum development. In this particular case, the University would be in a better position to address the Reps concerns, through staff development and continuous improvement projects. However, the SU would welcome a close collaboration with the University in order to address each department’s individual needs.

College of Science Engineering and College of Life Sciences have showed a plethora of good practices:

* At the end of each SSC, the department of **Psychology** set Course Reps an action to feedback to their peers through a lecture shout-out on what has been discussed and what action has been taken. This evidences to the cohort that their feedback is valued and encourages them to continue holding the department accountable.
* Departments which schedule their SSCs at well-spaced intervals and have confirmed dates from early in the academic year have a better rate of attendance (**Geography and Geology**). Reps stay engaged as they can plan their time more effectively and don’t lose contact with their department. In departments where SSCs were cancelled because of industrial action, attendance rates remain low for the rest of the academic year.
* The department of **Geography and Geology** provide excellent minutes. Discussion and actions are clearly outlined, and a summary of actions (including who should complete and with what deadline) is provided at the end.
* **Biological Sciences** always circulate SSC minutes quickly and efficiently.
* **Engineering and Informatics** schedule their SSCs well in advance, whilst the latter has a website area dedicated to the work of SSC, with records of the minutes from the past years.

Additionally, the good practice from departments such as Geography, Geology and Environmental Studies or Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour, with regards to the scheduling of SSCs, are an indicator that the timely and frequent meetings are not a rare occurrence and are inducive to student satisfaction and productive collaborations between Course Reps and staff.

Therefore, based on the good practice in the College of Science Engineering and College of Life Sciences, Students’ Union made recommendations, that were approved in August 2018, for changes to the Code of Practice for the work of Student Staff Committees (Appendix E), to promote the need to establish the schedule of SSC meetings at the start of the year, emphasising the need for a recommended 5 meetings annually with a good distribution across the academic year.

Further good practice can be found within the College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities:

* Course reps’ attendance is higher and extensive feedback is gathered within departments with a rep - cohort ratio smaller than the average. Furthermore, reps appear to be more engaged with the development of their student experience. This could be explained by Reps feeling more responsible and working more cohesively but would also lead to students knowing who their Reps are (see **American Studies, Education**).
* Department of **Law** explain to Reps what changes they are making based on wider student feedback, for instance NSS results and end of module feedback.

Course representative from both Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour and Law Departments have taken the approach of presenting outcomes from the SSC through presentations and core lectures shout-outs which have been facilitated by the staff in the departments. We would appreciate if more departments would welcome representatives to take on this approach, and we are aware that the value of the information delivered by reps through these means is dependent on the effective collaboration between course reps and staff. If these practices were widely implemented a then a greater proportion of the student community would be aware that Course Reps have an active role in delivering feedback which would open the opportunity of further feedback to be brought into SSC meetings.

Both course reps and staff are indicating that communication and circulation of SSC outcome could be improved and that there is a need for a centralised mechanism through which feedback and actions can be communicated to the wider cohort. Informatics Department, as one example, can be praised for creating their own centralised place for such records, whilst further work could be carried into engaging both the staff and the representatives with system.

This is not an exhaustive list of recommendations and we are working with individual departments into addressing matters pertinent to their cohorts.

# Appendix

Appendix A: 2017 Staff - Student Committee Survey – Summary of Findings

Student Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall the students who responded indicated that they are happy with the current SSC system (66%) and the support they receive from the Union with 75% of respondents indicating that they found the training provided to be adequate for their role.
* However, we registered an increase in the respondents felt that their input had had the effect of improving the delivery of their programme, reaching a rate of 75%, whilst 79% of respondents considered that the Student Rep system led to an improvement in the educational experience of students.
* 66% of respondents agreed that their departments provided appropriate support for their role as Student Reps, which presents an increase in comparison to the previous year (Appendix B).
* Over 50% of respondents indicated that a dedicated online system for conducting student elections would make the process easier to understand, more democratic and more inclusive. Despite this, satisfaction with the current election process was reasonably high.
* 67% respondents indicated that they felt that members of staff on the SSCs did take students’ views into consideration when making decisions, again an increase, which indicates a shift in perceptions and support.
* Unfortunately, 47% of respondents reported that the meeting schedule for SSC’s had not been arranged at beginning of the year, which is a negative increase that can lead to clashes between scheduled teaching (timetable) and the reps availability.
* Respondents indicated that around a third of SSCs were chaired by staff members, despite the Code of Practice indicating that, another third of the SSCs are co-chaired, the reminder having a combination of permanent and rotating student chair.

**Comments from Course Reps**

From the comments received from student respondents it is possible to establish some consistent themes that might identify areas of improvement that the SU and the University might work on jointly over the coming year to improve the student representation system, namely:

* Many respondents agreed that there is a need to improve communication between the Departments and the Students’ Union regarding the online voting system and between students and their representatives, as well as promoting to the wiser student population what representatives can do for them.
* Respondents agreed that an improvement of the training and accreditation system for the postgraduate representatives can result with an improved integration of the postgraduates in the SU affairs.
* There is a consensus that the timing and frequency of SSC meetings hinders the participation of student and staff. There should be much more unified work over the whole university system, where departments should have more transparent and better processes for tracking actions and improvements that have been acted upon and feed this back to the course reps.
* Once again respondents find that University staff would benefit from training and guidance from the SU, on how to support course reps and how to work towards delivering change, rather than discourage reps to raise matters relevant to their peers.

Staff Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall 63% of staff respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current SSC system, with 89% of staff respondents indicating that Course Reps actively represent the views of their peers.
* 93% of the staff respondents felt that the decisions reached during SSCs are mutually agreed [staff & students]
* 87.% reported that improvements to programme delivery had been made as a result of courses reps with the same number indicating that the SSC system was beneficial in engaging students.
* 43% of staff respondents felt that course reps presented evidence based issues, with only 41% of staff respondents indicated that course reps brought solutions rather than just issues.
* 32% of staff respondents reported that the schedule of SSC meetings are not set up at the start of the year.
* 23% of staff respondents indicated that Course Reps had not been invited to submit agenda items.
* 60% of staff respondents reported that the SSC had a student chair.
* Varying practice exists regarding to elections, with over 60% using email to elect/recruit course reps.
* From the staff involved in the process of elections, 70% found that the communication regarding elections was timely and clear.
* More than 70% of staff respondents agreed that a dedicated online system for elections would be beneficial.

**Staff Comments**

* Staff respondents indicated a need for prompt elections, better publicity of Course Rep System, emphasising the benefits and the changes to course delivery that have resulted as a means of encouraging more students to stand for election as Course Reps.
* Staff respondents indicated that they would like Course Reps to be more representative of their peers, not just bringing individual issues, also ideally to be involved in big picture issues, as well as requesting for means through which ineffective reps can be removed from the role and replaced with better equipped individuals and encourage accountability.
* Staff respondents indicated that they felt that Course Reps should communicate more with their peers. There was a lack of clarity about how they do that and it was felt that reps had unrealistic expectations
* Staff respondents indicated that Course Reps should be involved in a wider range of committees and processes within departments, such as course design, enhancements to delivery and assessment, and engage and bring wider themes for discussion.
* Staff respondents expressed the need for ITS representatives attending the SSC, as there are considerable IT matters raised during meetings and can be better addressed if an appropriate staff would be present.
* Staff respondents indicated that improved Student Rep training could better prepare students for their role, but they also felt that departments also needed training in the process so that staff colleagues could better understand the value of the student representation system and the opportunity it provides for staff to engage with the student body, to be more active in promoting the value of the system and to encourage students to use their voice in the process.
* Staff also agree that one of the main improvements needed would be in the mechanism for communicating to students. Minutes to be published and summaries of SSC feedback and actions to be given during term inductions but ideally better communication is necessary.

Appendix B: 2016 Staff - Student Committee Survey – Summary of Findings

Student Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall the students who responded indicated that they are happy with the current SSC system (82%) and the support they receive from the Union with 87% of respondents indicating that they found the training provided to be adequate for their role.
* 60% of respondents felt that their input had had the effect of improving the delivery of their programme, whilst 82% of respondents considered that the Student Rep system led to an improvement in the educational experience of students.
* 59% of respondents agreed that their departments provided appropriate support for their role as Student Reps.
* 58% of respondents indicated that they felt that members of staff on the SSCs did take students’ views into consideration when making decisions.
* 35% of respondents reported that the meeting schedule for SSC’s had not been arranged at beginning of the year.
* Respondents indicated that just over a third of SSCs were chaired by staff members, despite the Code of Practice indicating that, whenever possible, SSCs should be chaired by a student member, or at least co-chaired.

**Comments from Course Reps**

From the comments received from student respondents it is possible to establish some consistent themes that might identify areas of improvement that the SU and the University might work on jointly over the coming year to improve the student representation system, namely:

* Many respondents agreed that enhanced communication is the key to develop the student representation system, with improvements in all areas being needed, (i.e. between the SU and students; departments and students and the SU and departments). In addition, respondents indicated the need to improve opportunities for course reps to communicate directly with their peers.
* Respondents felt that there should be better promotion of the course rep system, both in terms of the election process and in terms of promoting the role of course reps to the wider student body.
* There was a desire for opportunities to build a sense of community amongst course reps within departments.
* It was felt that DL and PG students should be more integral to the student representation system, not just a bolt on.
* A few respondents commented on the need for changes to the current SSC system, such as the provision of training for staff engaged in SSCs.

Staff Responses

The responses can be summarised as follows:

* Overall 72.5% of staff respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the current SSC system, with 92.5 of staff respondents indicating that Course Reps actively represent the views of their peers.
* 80% of the staff respondents felt that the decisions reached during SSCs are mutually agreed [staff & students]
* 87.5% reported that improvements to programme delivery had been made as a result of courses reps with the same number indicating that the SSC system was beneficial in engaging students.
* 52.5% of staff respondents felt that course reps presented evidence-based issues, with only 48.5% of staff respondents indicated that course reps brought solutions rather than just issues.
* 28% of staff respondents reported that the schedule of SSCs meetings are not set up at the start of the year.
* 10% of staff respondents indicated that Course Reps had not been invited to submit agenda items.
* 20% of staff respondents reported that the SSC had a student chair.
* Varying practice exists regarding to elections, with over 60% using email to elect/recruit course reps.
* A sizable minority of staff respondents indicated a wish for better and timelier communication regarding elections from nominations to results.
* More than 50% of staff respondents felt that a dedicated online system for elections would be beneficial.

**Staff Comments**

* Staff respondents indicated a need for better publicity of Course Rep System, emphasising the benefits and the changes to course delivery that have resulted as a means of encouraging more students to stand for election as Course Reps.
* Staff respondents indicated that they would like to be aware of the information course reps receive during training.
* Staff respondents indicated that they would like Course Reps to be more representative of their peers, not just bringing individual issues, also ideally to be involved in big picture issues.
* Staff respondents indicated that they felt that Course Reps should communicate more with their peers. There was a lack of clarity about how they do that, and it was felt that reps had unrealistic expectations
* Staff respondents also indicated that they felt that DL’s and PG should be integral to the system of representation, not just a bolt on.
* Staff respondents indicated that Course Reps should be involved in a wider range of committees and processes within departments, such as course design, enhancements to delivery and assessment
* Staff respondents indicated that improved Student Rep training could better prepare students for their role, but they also felt that departments also needed training in the process so that staff colleagues could better understand the value of the student representation system and the opportunity it provides for staff to engage with the student body, to be more active in promoting the value of the system and to encourage students to use their voice in the process.

Appendix C: SSC Attendance - 2016/2017

Out of 417 Course Reps, 416 reps attended at least 1 SSC meeting = 99.8 %

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Department | No. of Course Reps | No. of SSCs Scheduled | Reps attending SSC | Rate of attendance to SSCs |
| American Studies | 5 | 2 | 100% | 80% |
| Archaeology and Ancient History | 10 | 3 | 100% | 87% |
| Biological Sciences | 22 | 3 | 77% | 47% |
| Business | 38 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| Chemistry | 16 | 4 | 100% | 70% |
| Criminology | 15 | 3 | 80% | 53% |
| Education | 14 | 3 | 64% | 67% |
| Engineering | 26 | 3 | 81% | 70% |
| English | 14 | 4 | 71% | 58% |
| Geography | 14 | 5 | 93% | 74% |
| Geology | 18 | 5 | 89% | 67% |
| History | 6 | 3 | 100% | 67% |
| History of Art and Film | 6 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| Informatics | 21 | 4 | 48% | 50% |
| Law | 29 | 3 | 79% | 58% |
| Mathematics | 19 | 3 | 47% | 70% |
| Medicine | 14 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| Media and Communication | 18 | 2 | 94% | 71% |
| Modern Languages | 8 | 2 | 62% | 90 |
| Museum Studies | 15 | 2 | 20% | 83% |
| Natural Sciences | 6 | 3 | 100% | 72% |
| Physics and Astronomy | 14 | 4 | 93% | 65% |
| Politics and IR | 17 | 3 | 47% | 71% |
| Psychology | 16 | 3 | 81% | 67% |
| Sociology | 11 | 2 | 82% | 67% |

Appendix D: SSC Attendance - 2015/2016

Out of 434 Course Reps- 285 reps attended SSC meeting = 65.6 % of the reps attended SSCs

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Department | No. of Course Reps | No. of SSCs Scheduled | Reps attending SSC | Rate of attendance to SSCs |
| American Studies | 6 | 1 | 67% | 100% |
| Archaeology and Ancient History | 6 | 2 | 100% | 67% |
| Biological Sciences | 20 | 2 | 85% | 70% |
| Business | 13 | 3 | 100% | 64% |
| Chemistry | 12 | 4 | 100% | 75% |
| Criminology | 7 | 2 | 86% | 71% |
| Education | 15 | 4 | 93% | 60% |
| Engineering | 20 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| English | 5 | 2 | 60% | 40% |
| Geography | 18 | 3 | 94% | 50% |
| Geology | 15 | 2 | 93% | 90% |
| History | 23 | 5 | 30% | 13% |
| History of Art and Film | 7 | 2 | 86% | 57% |
| Informatics | 34 | 3 | 79% | 53% |
| Law | 15 | 4 | 80% | 42% |
| Mathematics | 20 | 3 | 70% | 38% |
| Medicine | 11 | 2 | 82% | 59% |
| Media and Communication | 14 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |
| Modern Languages | 7 | 3 | 100% | 76% |
| Museum Studies | 4 | 4 | 100% | 81% |
| Natural Sciences | 3 | 4 | 100% | 83% |
| Physics and Astronomy | 13 | 4 | 92% | 81% |
| Politics and IR | 14 | 6 | 71% | 35% |
| Psychology | 9 | 3 | 89% | 81% |
| Sociology | 7 | Data not available | Data not available | Data not available |

## Appendix E: Cover Sheet- Changes for CoP for the work of SSC

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**15/05/2018**

[**CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE WORK OF STUDENT/STAFF COMMITTEES**](https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/quality/codes/documents/sscommittees.pdf) **- *updates***

**Purpose of this report**

To provide relevant updates as a result of the changes in terminology in the last five years, as well as making recommendations on increasing the frequency of Student Staff Committees meetings at both undergraduates and postgraduate level, and introducing where relevant, key aspects of Periodic Development Review and Departmental Strategic Plan.

**Background**

The University of Leicester in partnership with the Students’ Union developed the Code of Practice on the work of Student/Staff Committees in 2013. This contained the information relevant to the University and Students’ Union at that time.

**Key issues**

Whilst the principles contained are the same, minor changes have occurred, but have not been updated and publicised on the university website. This impacts the consistency of information provided to both staff and students, for the effective work of the Student Staff Committees.

In the last five years there have been changes regarding the structure of Students’ Union and the terminology of key stakeholders, such as:

-the Education Union (EdUnit) remit over the management of the Course Representative was reassigned to a new department, Academic Representation at the start of the academic year 2015-16;

-as a result of a review of the Executive Officers role, the Academic Affairs Officer became the Education Officer with effect from 2014;

-The Union Parliament was renamed as Union Council in 2013;

-As a result of a recent Union Council proposal, the roles of Departmental Representatives and College Representatives have been reviewed, resulting in the development of Lead Union Representatives role which will act as the liaison between Course Representatives, Departments, Students’ Union and the University.

Further updates, such as the introduction of the Periodic Developmental Review, extracts from Department Strategic Plan, where appropriate, are the result of the alignment of the SSC work with the Educational Excellence Programme.

**Timing implications**

Implementation of the updates at the start of the academic year 2018-2019 will enable the Academic Representation System and work of the Student Staff Committee to bring consistency across departments and facilitate the relevant developments vital for the TEF.

The SU wishes to organise meetings with the relevant Course Rep Convenors in early September 2018, to ensure that new requirements and updates mentioned in the Code of Practice are communicated and proceed to implementing them, as well as establishing a common understanding of the provision that can be expected from the SU and from the departments.

**Actions required of the committee**

Academic Policy Committee is asked to:

Approve the revised Code of Practice for the work of Student Staff Committees to take effect with the start of the academic year 2018-19

Elena – Daniela Boaru

Academic Representation, Students’ Union

18/06/2018