



Effective Staff Student Consultative Committees: Policy and Practice

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This session will explore practices and barriers in making the most of Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs), to aid staff and students working in partnership on making education better at UCL. SSCCs should be a pivotal point in demonstrating this partnership approach. It is not a data gathering exercise on what issues students have but about constructive dialogue and making change. We will draw on your experiences and feed into the review of policies and guidance around SSCCs.

Overview of session



1. Introductions
2. What are SSCCs for?
3. Reflecting on current practice
4. How does this compare with others?
5. How can I make my SSCC more effective?



What one thing would you change about Staff Student Consultative Committees in their current form?



What are Staff Student Consultative Committees for?

UCL Academic Manual



1. Ensure that SSCC agendas and minutes are produced and circulated to a standard, time-frame (it is recommended that a two week time-frame for production of the minutes from the date of the meeting is a reasonable expectation).
2. Ensure that SSCC agendas include a standing item “ matters arising from the minutes”, to ensure that feedback on action points raised at previous meetings is reported.
3. Record in minutes of each meeting of the SSCC the names of those in attendance, giving titles and, for student members, year of study.
4. Record in the minutes any action to be taken and by whom.
5. Ensure that minutes are signed by at least one student member of SSCC.
6. Ensure that minutes are displayed within the Department and are available to the students on-line.
7. Submit minutes of the SSCC to Departmental Teaching Committee (DTC) meetings for consideration and where necessary, further action.
8. Ensure an appropriate level of administrative support from Departments to SSCCs to ensure that they operate to a consistent level and standard.



What is the role of a StAR?

StAR Role Description



- ➔ Play an **active role** in the **development and enhancement** of the programme.
- ➔ Take up students' **complaints and grievances** about the programme to the programme leader.
- ➔ Communicate information about **students' rights** provided by UCLU.
- ➔ Raise **difficulties** students encounter about the access to equipment and facilities with the appropriate staff and departments.
- ➔ Help **negotiate changes** in the timetable for students whose circumstances require it.
- ➔ Be a **point of contact** for UCLU on changes and developments within the department and faculty.
- ➔ Advise students that they can get assistance from UCLU if they wish to **appeal against an assessment or examination** result.
- ➔ Ensure that the programme is being pursued in accordance with UCL's policies on **equality**.
- ➔ Promote the **value of UCLU** to other students on the programme.

StARs 2020 Vision



Vision

Our vision is for **students to be partners** in their education; through Student Academic Representatives (StARs) all students will be able to drive change to transform the academic experience at UCL.

Priority 5

Reforming formal committees such as Staff Student Consultative Committees to be **transformational spaces**, which provide an accessible platform for **staff and students to co-create and effect change** to enhance the student experience.

Partnership



Consultation

Opportunities are provided for students to express individual opinions, perspectives, experiences, ideas and concerns.

Involvement

Opportunities are provided for students as individuals to take a more active role.

Participation

Decisions are taken by students to take part or take a more active role in a defined activity.

Partnership

There is collaboration between an institution/faculty/department and student. Involving joint ownership and decision-making over both the process and outcome.

First steps

Developing

Developed

Refining

Outstanding

How are course reps selected or elected?	How do you contact the newly elected course reps?	Training for course reps.	What guidance is provided for course reps and how are they supported?	What impact do course reps have?
Students are not aware of who course reps are or what they do. Course reps are just selected by the institution.	Not all departments forward the course rep contact details to the students' union. The students' union is aware that there are gaps in information and it is very difficult to fill them.	Training is provided but few course reps attend. It is often after the first meeting that the course rep is supposed to attend.	The students' union has a course rep handbook available in paper version and/or online. The students' union holds training. Students' union contact details are given but it's left to the reps to contact the students' union if they have any problems or queries.	There are few places for students in departmental and faculty boards. Course reps only speak when they are called upon and are more likely to raise 'complaints' eg lecturers not turning up on time.
Course reps are chosen by who puts their hands up at the beginning of the first lecture of term, with little awareness of what their role is.	Course reps' contact details are collected by the institution and passed onto the students' union. This is not done in a timely and consistent manner and there are often gaps in the information.	Training is provided but only about 30 per cent of course reps attend. There are clear job descriptions for course reps of what they are expected to do in their role.	The students' union contacts course reps two or three times a year. The students' union holds the occasional meeting, which few course reps attend. The students' union emails course reps but receives little feedback.	The course reps attend the relevant meetings. Course reps occasionally speak on items on the agenda and will contribute to discussions on teaching and learning.
There is some publicity about the elections and awareness of what course reps do. Where there are elections they are fair and democratic but it is usually just one candidate standing and a few people voting. Where there is selection the process is seen as fair and transparent.	Most contact details are collected but there are some gaps. Course reps are just contacted by email prior to the first training event.	Training is provided jointly by the students' union and the institution which is attended by most course reps. The training focuses on the role of course reps including how to ensure that they are representative, use available research, how to put papers on the agenda.	The students' union contacts course reps by email, at least monthly, and offers skills training sessions during the year. The students' union holds training twice a year, or runs a course rep conference halfway through the year. Course reps receive regular emails/newsletters from the students' union.	The course reps attend meetings and regularly contribute usefully to meeting bringing the views of students.
Students are broadly aware of what the role of course rep is and what is expected of them. There are usually contested elections.	The information is collected systematically; it is submitted to the institution and the students' union. Other useful information is gathered that is necessary to ensure support and training meets their needs. This could include, for example, how long the student has been a course rep and what training they have attended. Course reps are contacted as soon as they are elected.	The students' union offers skills and follow-up training sessions during the year. The training is focused on supporting the course reps to make improvements to their course and learning experience and is evaluated each year to ensure the ongoing effectiveness and relevance. There is a handover from the previous rep to facilitate continuity.	The students' union has significant online resources for course reps including handbooks, forum/chat room ability and details of HE issues, which support the training sessions. Faculty reps/school reps (or their equivalent) are used to liaise with course reps on behalf of the union. There are regular meetings with course reps that are fairly well attended.	Course reps regularly raise items on the agenda and put items on the agenda. Course reps are able to identify areas where they have made changes which have improved the experiences of students.
Students are well aware of what course reps do, what the key issues are and what improvements to their learning experience there have been as a result of the activity of course reps in the previous year. There are elections across the course/department/faculty so that all students can participate, with several candidates standing and many students voting.	The information is collected systematically through a form that reps submit to the institution and/or the students' union. Each year individuals from the students' union speak to departmental staff so the system will work. A member of staff in the schools/faculties is responsible for ensuring every course and year group has a course rep within the first three to four weeks of the start of the course.	The training is designed on the basis of a needs assessment of the course reps. Course reps are contacted after a few months to evaluate the effectiveness of the training that they received and improvements are made as a result. There are additional training events for second year course reps and advanced level training provided throughout the year.	The students' union is in regular communication with course reps about HE issues, institution-wide issues, and information about the students' union. The students' union also has drop-in times for face-to-face support and briefing sessions to course reps.	Students are aware of the impact that course reps have on improving their teaching and learning experiences and the students' union is able to measure the impact and demonstrate this to their institution.

First steps

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Ensuring the representativity of course reps.	How do course reps feed back to students?	Who has ownership over the course representative system?	How effective is your rep system?	Rewarding and recognising course reps.
The course rep comes to the meeting but just speaks from their own experience.	The course rep puts a copy of the minutes from the meeting on the notice board for those students that are interested or the department is responsible for putting up minutes, electronically or in paper on notice boards, but this does not always happen and they are not easy to find. Course reps are simply expected to attend the meetings. Many students don't know who their course reps are.	It is not clear who has ownership of the system.	We have a diagram which shows how all the different parts of the course representative system connect together. However, the students' union is not sure if this is adhered to. There is no communication between different levels of course reps or course reps from different parts of the structure. There is no way of knowing what issues are being raised at grass roots level.	Course reps aren't formally recognised for the work that they undertake.
Course reps know who they are representing but have difficulty getting feedback from all groups of students. The union advises the rep on how to contact students. Students know who their course rep is and how to contact them.	Course reps are expected to give students feedback from the meetings they attend, but have no help in arranging this. The department publishes minutes.	The students' union has ownership over the system OR The institution has ownership over the system.	Generally speaking the system is adhered to and course representatives are in place but the students' union doesn't have all of the contact details and has difficulty speaking with them. Faculty/school representation is hard to organise; it's difficult to elect faculty reps and we're not sure how many meetings they turn up to.	Course reps are thanked at the end of the year by their department/faculty and the students' union.
Course reps regularly take steps to contact students to get their views this could include meetings, focus groups and emails.	The course rep feeds back key issues to those students that attended the focus group and others that expressed an interest through emails, lecture announcements or any other appropriate method.	Ownership of the system is shared between the institution and the students' union although it is a little unclear about precise roles and responsibilities.	The system is up and running and recognised by the institution as a useful part of the quality enhancement process. The institution engages with reps because it wants to – not because it has to.	Students' unions ensure effective recognition of course reps through a variety of mechanisms which could include course rep awards, certificates, recognition on transcript.
In addition to regularly contacting students the course reps use a variety of other mechanisms to gather the feedback of students, including virtual forums to get feedback from harder to reach students.	Alongside feeding back to fellow students through a variety of methods the reps also relay outcomes of meetings to faculty reps/the students' union, especially if their issues are not being dealt with at departmental level.	Ownership of the system is shared between the institution and the students' union, however, it is only at the most senior level that staff are clear about precise roles and responsibilities. There is a commitment to resourcing the system from either or both the students' union and institution.	The course rep system has a clear mission, vision and values that is embedded within the overall students' union mission and strategic plan. The effectiveness of course rep system is regularly reviewed.	The activity of course reps is regularly featured in the student newspaper and on the students' union's website.
A large number of course reps regularly use evidence for their contributions including NSS /other national research results and focus groups which are representative of all the students on their course.	The students' union supports course reps to feedback to students through the students' union website, publications and showcasing any 'wins'. Students attend meetings with their course reps and hold them to account. Course reps are respected within their department and their opinion is valued and actively sought by staff.	The course representative system works because it is a partnership between the students' union and the institution where roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined in a code of practice or similar document.	The students' union regularly measures the effectiveness and impact of their course rep system as well as reviews and improves the system. The students' union is able to demonstrate the impact that the course rep system has on improving the learning experience. The students' union benchmarks its system against itself over several years and against other students' unions.	The activity of course reps is recognised by students as well as by the students' union and university.

	How do you contact the newly elected StARs?	What training is provided for StARs?	How effective is your Representation system?	What guidance is provided for StARs and how are they supported?	Who has ownership of Student Representation?	Rewarding and recognising StARs
First Steps	Not all Departments forward StARs' contact details to their Faculty. There are gaps in information and it is very difficult to fill them.	Training is provided but few StARs attend, or training may take place after the first meeting that the StAR is supposed to attend.	There is a diagram showing how all the different parts of the representation system connect; however, UCLU & UCL are not sure if this is adhered to. There is little communication between different levels of StARs or those from different parts of the structure, and/or no way of knowing what issues are being raised at a local level.	There is a StARs Handbook available in a paper version and/or online. UCLU holds training. Contact details are provided, but it's left to the StAR to contact UCLU if they have any problems or queries.	It is not clear who has ownership of the system.	StARs aren't formally recognised for the work that they undertake.
Developing	StARs' contact details are collected and available to the Faculty and UCLU. This is not done in a timely and consistent manner and there are often gaps in the information.	Training is provided but only about 30% of StARs attend. There are clear job descriptions for StARs outlining what is expected of them in their role.	Generally speaking the system is followed and StARs are in place, but UCLU doesn't have all of their contact details and has difficulty communicating with them. Departmental representation is hard to organise.	UCLU contacts StARs two or three times a year. UCLU hold the occasional meeting, which few StARs attend. UCLU email StARs but receive little feedback.	UCLU has ownership over the system or UCL has ownership over the system.	StARs are thanked at the end of the year by their Department or Faculty and UCLU.
Developed	Most contact details are collected but there are some gaps. StARs are contacted by email prior to training events.	Training is provided jointly by UCLU & UCL which is attended by most StARs. Departments actively encourage StARs to attend as part of their role. Training focuses on the role of StARs, including how to ensure that they are representative, use available research, how to put items on meeting agendas.	The system is up and running and recognised by UCL as a useful part of the quality enhancement process. UCL engages with StARs because it wants to – not because it has to.	UCLU contacts StARs by email, at least monthly, and offers skills training sessions during the year. UCLU holds training twice a year, or runs a StARs conference halfway through the year. StARs receive regular emails or newsletters from UCLU.	Ownership of the system is shared between UCL & UCLU although precise roles and responsibilities are unclear.	UCLU & UCL ensure effective recognition of StARs through a variety of mechanisms which could include StARs awards, certificates, and recognition on degree transcripts.
Refining	The information is collected systematically and submitted to the Faculty and to UCLU. Other useful information is gathered as necessary to ensure support and training meets their needs, e.g. previous StARs' experience and prior training attended. StARs are contacted as soon as they are appointed.	UCLU offer skills and follow-up training sessions during the year. The training is focused on supporting the StARs to make improvements to their course and learning experience and is evaluated each year to ensure its ongoing effectiveness and relevance. There is a handover from the previous StAR to facilitate continuity.	The StARs system has a clear mission, vision and values embedded within UCLU and UCL's mission and strategic plan. The effectiveness of the StARs system is regularly reviewed.	UCLU, in partnership with UCL, has significant online resources for StARs including handbooks, forum/chat room ability and details of HE issues, which support the training sessions. There are regular meetings with StARs that are fairly well attended.	Ownership of the system is shared between UCL & UCLU; however, it is only at the most senior level that staff are clear about precise roles and responsibilities. There is commitment to resourcing the system from either or both UCLU & UCL.	The activity of StARs is regularly featured in Departmental newsletters, student media and the UCLU website.
Outstanding	Information is collected systematically through a form submitted to UCLU. Each year individuals from UCLU speak with Departmental staff to ensure the system works effectively. A Departmental or Faculty staff member works with UCLU to ensure every year group has a StAR within the first three weeks of the start of the academic session.	Training is designed on the basis of a needs assessment of the role. StARs are contacted after a few months to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and improvements are made as a result. Additional training events for second year StARs and advanced level training is provided throughout the year.	UCLU, in partnership with UCL, regularly measures the effectiveness and impact of the StARs system as well as reviewing and improving it. UCLU is able to demonstrate the impact of the StARs system on improving the learning experience. UCLU benchmarks the system against itself and against other students' unions.	UCLU is in regular communication with StARs about national HE issues, UCL-wide issues, and information about UCLU. UCLU also has drop-in times for face-to-face support and briefing sessions to StARs. UCLU provides access to the StARs network to staff in UCL as requested.	The StARs system works as a partnership between UCLU & UCL where roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined in a code of practice or similar document. Resource has been committed by both parties.	The activity of StARs is recognised, shared, and celebrated by the student body as well as by UCLU & UCL.

	How successful are StARs elections?	What impact do StARs have?	How do students and staff work constructively together?	Ensuring the representativity of StARs	How do StARs feed back to students?	How is the diversity of StARs ensured?
First Steps	Students are not aware of who StARs are or what they do. StARs are just selected by their department.	StARs only speak when they are called upon and are only likely to raise 'complaints', e.g. lecturers not turning up on time.	StARs are invited to Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) meetings. Some StARs speak up, but others do not feel comfortable enough to speak. The content of meetings is often backwards looking, negative, and tends to simply list students' issues.	StARs attend the SSCC meeting but usually just speak from their own experience.	StARs or staff in the department puts minutes of SSCC meetings on a notice board, or the Department publishes the minutes, but this does not always happen and they are not easy to find. StARs are simply expected to attend the meetings. Many students don't know who their StARs are.	Departments elect StARs, but those elected may not fully reflect the student body.
Developing	StARs are chosen by who puts their hands up at the beginning of the first lecture of term, with little awareness of what their role is. Most students are not aware of who their StAR is.	StARs occasionally speak on items on the Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) agenda and will contribute to discussions on teaching and learning.	StARs are invited to SSCC meetings and feel they can provide feedback. Meaningful discussion takes place but this is often awkward or stilted.	StARs know who they are representing but have difficulty getting feedback from all groups of students. UCLU advises on how to contact students. Students know who their StARs are and how to contact them.	StARs are expected to give students feedback from the meetings they attend, but have no help in arranging this. The Department publishes minutes, but these are sometimes late.	Departments think through how to ensure information on StARs elections is provided and promoted to different groups of students, and rely on this to produce a representative set of StARs.
Developed	There is some publicity about elections and awareness of the StARs role. Elections are fair and democratic but there is often just one candidate standing and an actual election may not be required. Where there is selection rather than election, the process is fair and transparent.	StARs attend both SSCCs and other departmental meetings and regularly contribute usefully to meetings, bringing the views of students.	SSCC meetings are chaired jointly by a student and a member of staff and everyone in attendance feels able to contribute freely. Staff see their role as providing students with information which enables them to meaningfully contribute to policy enhancement and new developments in partnership.	StARs regularly take steps to contact students to get their views; this could include meetings, focus groups and emails.	The StARs feed back key issues to students that expressed an interest through emails, lecture announcements or any other appropriate method.	There is some awareness of which groups of students are under-represented, and efforts are made to encourage students from these groups to stand and vote in elections.
Refining	Students are broadly aware of the role of StARs and what is expected of them. There are usually contested elections. Staff and others encourage students to vote throughout the voting period and turnout is reasonable.	StARs regularly raise items on the SSCC agenda. StARs are able to identify areas where they have made changes which have improved the experiences of students.	Staff, students, and StARs see the SSCC meeting as having influence over the direction of the Department or Faculty. StARs sit on some other Department or Faculty meetings, but cannot meaningfully engage with most items, and do not have mechanisms for feeding back to the student body on items discussed.	In addition to regularly contacting students, StARs use a variety of other mechanisms to gather the feedback of students, including virtual forums to get feedback from harder to reach students.	Alongside feeding back to fellow students through a variety of methods, StARs also relay outcomes of meetings to Faculty StARs and UCLU, especially if their issues cannot be resolved at the departmental level.	The composition of SSCCs is monitored locally and targets set for improvement. Efforts are taken to ensure meetings are more representative through appealing to specific student groups during the election process, and through the invitation and/or co-opting of students from groups which are under-represented.
Outstanding	Students are well aware of what StARs do and what improvements to their learning experience there have been as a result of StARs activity. Contested elections with high turnout are the norm, and there is a strong culture of engagement via elected representatives.	StARs are an integral part of the governance of their departments, and all students are aware of the impact that StARs have on improving their teaching and learning experiences.	Student representation on Department/faculty meetings is pervasive, and StARs feel they can freely contribute to meetings which are designed for the needs of both students and staff. StARs and staff bring items they are discussing in other forums back to the SSCC, which forms the hub of student-staff partnership in the Department or Faculty and has meaningful influence over its direction.	A large number of StARs regularly use evidence for their contributions including NSS, other student surveys, national research results and focus groups which are representative of all the students on their programme.	Students attend meetings with their StARs and hold them to account. StARs are respected within their department and their opinion is valued and actively sought by staff and students. StARs feed back to students regularly, including through the UCL and UCLU websites and publications to showcase the impact of their work.	A systematic approach to monitoring the representativeness of StARs is taken, and a variety of mechanisms for tackling this exist, including co-option, creation of roles with specific responsibilities, and quotas or protected places. Research is undertaken into barriers to engagement that different groups of students face, and changes made to practice to facilitate greater engagement from these students.

Benchmarking Tool



- ➔ How successful are StARs elections?
- ➔ What impact do StARs have?
- ➔ How do students and staff work constructively together?
- ➔ Ensuring the representativity of StARs
- ➔ How do StARs feed back to students?
- ➔ How is the diversity of StARs ensured?



Questions?



Thank you

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