Student-Staff Liaison Committees

1. **Purpose**
   The purpose of student-staff committees is to ensure that there is an effective channel for formal communication between students and staff in each school or institute, through which students can reflect and give feedback on their programme of study as an integral part of QMUL’s systems and procedures for assuring academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.

2. **Scope**
   This procedure covers all students, part time and full time, undergraduate and postgraduate, taught and research. It does not cover non-award-bearing continuing education.

3. **Associated documents**
   Associated documents can be accessed from the Academic Registry and Council Secretariat (ARCS) web page:  [http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality/student-feedback/index.html](http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/quality/student-feedback/index.html)
   - Agenda template
   - Minutes and action plan template

   Students can also access comprehensive information, guidance and advice about the course representative system on the Students’ Union web page at [http://www.qmsu.org/coursereps](http://www.qmsu.org/coursereps)

   The Students’ Union will provide newly appointed reps with a comprehensive handbook and training session at the start of the academic year.

4. **Terms of reference**
   The Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) is constitutionally advisory to the Head of School/Institute or, in the case of the MBBS to the Dean (Education) and in the case of the BDS to the Head of the Institute of Dentistry.

   SSLCs should have a clear remit. Senate recommends the following Terms of Reference:

   To consider and discuss matters relating to:
   - The content and organisation of programmes of study and any proposed changes;
   - The provision of academic facilities and general School/Institute/Queen Mary facilities;
   - School/Institute social activities;
   - Provision for student welfare including the operation of the personal tutor system;
   - Arrangements for induction and study skills provision;
   - Local monitoring of academic standards through, for example, consideration of the School’s Taught Programmes Action Plan (TPAP) for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and discussion of student commentary ([https://webapps2.is.qmul.ac.uk/apr](https://webapps2.is.qmul.ac.uk/apr)), external examiners’ reports, first destination statistics and results of student evaluation questionnaires;
• Initial consideration of the commendations and recommendations of Periodic Review reports, followed by regular reports on action taken in response.

• Any other matters on which the SSLC wishes to express a view.

Where detailed discussion of the teaching of a particular module takes place, some SSLCs choose to exclude the identity of the teacher concerned from the minutes.

5. Membership

5.1 Student representation

There should be a majority of student members. QMUL recommends that the minimum student representation on an SSLC should be as follows:

5.1.1 Non-medical

• at least one, and normally two, undergraduate students from each year; two should be the norm for any school with an intake of more than 20 undergraduates per year;

• at least one postgraduate taught student, where applicable, per programme;

• at least one postgraduate research student, where applicable;

• where there are distinct academic groupings within a school, e.g. Environmental Sciences in Geography, provision should be made to ensure that they are represented;

• Joint honours students should be represented within their host School through one of the following mechanisms:
  
  • A dedicated course representative for each year of every Joint Honours programme with more than 10 students enrolled;
  
  • One dedicated Joint Honours course representative for each year in Schools with small joint honours provision;
  
  • Representatives organised by subject area where there is a large amount of joint honours activity within the School (e.g. within SLLF).

  Additionally, Joint Honours representatives should be invited to meetings of the SSLC in their partner School or to give their feedback via email.

5.1.2 School of Medicine and Dentistry

SSLCs are organised for undergraduate medicine (including intercalated programmes) and for undergraduate dentistry (including intercalated programmes). Separate SSLCs operate for postgraduate provision administered by, and located in, SMD Institutes.

• undergraduate SSLCs will have at least one, and normally two, student representatives from each year of a programme;

• postgraduate SSLCs will have at least one postgraduate taught student per programme;
postgraduate SSLCs will have at least one postgraduate research student where appropriate.

Institutes may also organise separate PGT and PGR SSLCs.

An SSLC can determine whether its meetings should be open to all those wishing to attend.

5.2 Staff membership
The Head of School / Institute or nominee should be a member, and the Director of Taught Programmes (or equivalent) should be an ex-officio member; the membership of other staff should be a matter for each school/programme area to establish, e.g. via a staff meeting or, in some areas, via nomination by the students. Some SSLCs may agree that members of academic support services, e.g. a Library representative can attend all or specific meetings.

5.3 Chair of the SSLC
It is for each SSLC to determine who should chair the committee. Consideration should be given to electing a student member as co-Chair. The Students’ Union can give student representatives training to enable them to fulfil this role.

5.4 Secretary
It is for each SSLC to determine who should act as secretary to the committee. Formal minutes and action plan are required for each SSLC meeting. The action plan should be used to record progress towards addressing issues raised. It should be circulated with the minutes at the following meeting and publicised to all students, for example through the School/Institute OLE.

5.5 Election of student members
Student members of an SSLC should be elected by the particular student constituency. Elections are organised by the Students Union; more information can be provided by the Students’ Union’s Education Zone Co-ordinator.

5.6 Briefing of student members
For SSLCs to be effective their role must be made known and their members must feel able to participate fully in meetings. The Head of School or delegated person should ensure that student representatives are provided with written and oral briefings; these briefings could involve participation by experienced student representatives. Details of the SSLC, including a description of the student representatives’ role, should be included in locally produced student handbooks and reference should be made to the SSLC during student induction.

Training is also organised by the Students’ Union; more information can be provided by the Students’ Union’s Education Zone Co-ordinator.

6. Organisation of meetings

6.1 Frequency and timing of meetings
SSLCS should meet at least once each semester with provision for further meetings if requested by members. Some SSLCs arrange their meetings to take place over a buffet lunch in order to encourage attendance and this practice, where possible, is commended.

Dates of meetings should be agreed by the SSLC and publicised widely in advance – normally by the Head of School and/or the Secretary to the SSLC.
6.2 Agendas
An agenda should be distributed by the Secretary to all members in advance of the meeting and displayed to all staff and students, e.g. via the School notice board or web pages. Agenda and minutes/action plan templates can be found on the ARCS web page: http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/ga/student_feedback/index.html

6.3 Canvassing student opinion
Elected student representatives should be given the opportunity to address their colleagues at the beginning or end of a teaching session, both to elicit their opinions prior to a meeting of the Committee, and to report back on the outcome.

Schools / Institutes should support student representatives to contact their student body via email. The preferred method is to set up a mailing list by year of study. This allows representatives to communicate with students whilst keeping individual email addresses confidential.

7. Follow-up
The Chair should submit oral and written reports of the SSLC to the school staff meeting or, in the SMD, to the appropriate Committee, so that the SSLC's recommendations can be acted upon promptly.

The minutes of SSLC meetings are not deemed to be confidential. However where sensitive or confidential information need to be recorded these specific items may be marked as confidential. In this case a non-confidential version of the minutes of the meeting should be published.

The SSLC Secretary should display minutes and the action plan of an SSLC meeting on school notice boards, on the OLE, on the School / Institute website or the minutes could be emailed to all students together with a record of the formal response to the SSLC's recommendations. Responses to issues raised by students may also be displayed on a dedicated “you said … we did" web page. Faculty Deans for Taught Programmes will also monitor issues arising from SSLCs and their resolution, reporting back as necessary to the regular open sessions that they hold with students from their faculty.

The SSLC Secretary should send copies of SSLC minutes and action plan to the ARCS within four weeks of the meeting date, so that their overall functioning can be monitored and examples of good practice identified. Minutes should also be copied to the President of the Students' Union, or in the SMD to the President of the Students' Union.

At the end of the academic year each SSLC should produce a short annual report of its work. This should highlight the key actions taken and any unresolved issues. The purpose of the report is to encourage greater reflection by the SSLC of its own effectiveness and to share good practice with the rest of Queen Mary.

The Students' Union will produce an annual report providing an overview of the issues raised by course representatives in the previous year, examples of good practice, and track trends. This will be considered at the University and Faculty advisory groups with responsibility for Teaching, Learning and the student experience. Following this, ARCS in conjunction with the Students' Union, will produce a summary report of key issues and examples of good practice for consideration at Senate.