Annex N: Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

1. Introduction

This Annex sets out an overview of the University’s arrangements for ensuring that students are fully represented in all aspects of their learning experience and have a range of opportunities to engage actively in the University’s quality assurance and enhancement processes at all levels. The University recognises that student engagement with quality assurance is vital to the continuing enhancement of the student experience at Kent. The processes set out in this Annex are intended to establish a culture and environment that encourages effective engagement by students, both collectively and individually. Responsibility for the implementation of these processes resides with the bodies designated below. Where the detail of the implementation of some of these processes is set out in another annex of the Code of Practice, this is indicated in the appropriate section.

2. Overview

The University’s processes for securing effective student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement include the gathering of individual and collective feedback from students, the deployment of elected student Faculty and programme representatives, an ongoing programme of induction and support for students and staff appropriate to their quality assurance roles, and a commitment to the monitoring, review and enhancement the effectiveness of these policies and processes for engaging students. The University maintains a Student Charter in partnership with Kent Union, which presents the mutual expectations and obligations of staff and students for supporting and improving the educational experience of the student body.

3. Collection of Feedback from Students

3.1 The University holds a responsibility to obtain and respond to student feedback in a systematic manner and does this by a variety of methods, including module evaluation, the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)\(^1\) individual and student group meetings, student participation in the School’s Periodic Review\(^2\), and through student representation on Boards of Studies, Staff-Student Liaison Committees and on all of the University’s main committees.

3.2 Surveys

3.2.1 Module Evaluation

Schools must seek the views of students on each of the modules they have taken. Module feedback is collected from students by means of in-module evaluations and an end of module online evaluation questionnaire (see Annex M section 3\(^3\)).

3.2.2 Feedback on Placements and Years/Terms Abroad

Feedback must be collected by Schools from students returning from work-based learning or a placement. Any review or enhancement undertaken as a result of that feedback should be formally recorded through Boards of Studies and the Annual Monitoring process (see Annex Q section 7.2\(^4\)).

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2 [Annex F](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexf.html)
3 [http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexm.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexm.html)
4 [https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexq.html](https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexq.html)
3.2.3 Institutional Surveys

Schools must consider students’ programme feedback obtained via the questionnaires administered centrally by the University, the internal Undergraduate Survey (UGS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the National Student Survey (NSS). Directors of Studies should summarise in their annual reports the feedback on their programmes obtained via these means (see Annex M section 4).5

3.2.4 Kent Union Surveys

As a student-led organisation Kent Union is obliged by its democratic constitution to seek the views of its constituency on any topics or campaigns that it is running and may do so by undertaking student surveys. Results of such surveys may then be used to inform or support recommendations to the University or awareness-raising of student concerns.

3.2.5 Actions Resulting from Surveys

The results of surveys and feedback should support the development of performance indicators as a tool for the measurement of student satisfaction. Where action plans arise from the collection of student feedback through any means, the appropriate body (e.g. committee, School, Faculty, Kent Union) should obtain student input into the development of the action plan. This is to make transparent that the student voice is heard and to ensure that the actions have the most appropriate focus to maintain enhancement of the student experience.

3.3 Student Participation

3.3.1 Staff-Student Liaison Committee

Students have an opportunity to raise issues via their Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). (See Annex M section 5 for full details of the requirements for SSLCs). This feedback is considered by Schools as part of the annual monitoring process (see Annex E). Each School should have at least two SSLCs, one for Taught and one for Research students.

3.3.1.1 The SSLC meetings are important channels of communication between School staff and students and shall, as far as possible, be scheduled for times and dates when the student representatives are able to attend. (This may, for example, be on Wednesday lunchtimes, when timetables are often clear.)

3.3.1.2 Prior to the Staff-Student Liaison Committee meeting an agenda-setting meeting should take place between the SSLC Chair and the student representatives. The agenda-setting meeting should include an opportunity for the student representatives to bring to the attention of the Chair any matters that they wish to raise at the SSLC. This will ensure such matters are included in the agenda and allow them to be properly addressed at the SSLC.

3.3.1.3 SSLC agendas shall include a standing item for the School to feed back to students (for example in response to surveys or previous action points). The feedback will be formally minuted and carried forward to a future meeting, as necessary.

3.3.1.4 Specific agenda items to be discussed by SSLCs include:

- Matters raised by student representatives;
- NSS and other internal survey results;

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5 http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexm.html
6 http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexe.html
Recommendations from External Examiners (see Annex K section 13.17);

Proposed programme specifications (both new and major revisions to existing specifications) prior to the specifications being submitted for Faculty approval.

Students are encouraged to comment on new programmes of study as part of the programme design process.

3.3.2 Elected Student Representatives

3.3.2.1 Student representatives are elected by their peers on a yearly basis to represent the student voice and give feedback in respect of their programme of study, School and Faculty. Student representatives and elections are managed by Kent Union8. Programme, School and Faculty representatives report to the KU Vice-President (Education).

3.3.2.2 Each year Kent Union will request Schools to complete a ‘School Information Form’, which includes named members of School staff responsible for student representatives in that School and the number of student representatives to be elected. Kent Union will also circulate its Service Level Agreement to Schools, which sets out the key responsibilities of KU and the University in respect of the student representatives.

3.3.2.3 Schools and Faculties are required to be proactive in encouraging students to put themselves forward for election and in working with student representatives to ensure that they are able to engage with the role and with the students they represent throughout the academic year.

3.3.2.4 Schools and Faculties must ensure that students recognise that the role requires commitment throughout the academic year, including attending SSLC meetings and liaising with staff, fellow students and Kent Union. Students should only put themselves forward for election if they are willing to meet that commitment.

3.3.2.5 Kent Union and Schools are required to put in place a procedure to monitor student engagement with the election process, to include numbers and demographics of students both running and voting in the election. Analysis of resulting data should be used to identify variations and trends, to inform future election strategy and support the sharing of good practice across Schools. This will include ensuring that the student representative system appropriately represents the diversity of the student body at Kent and putting in place measures where necessary to address any shortfalls.

3.3.2.6 As with 3.2.4 above, Kent Union will actively gather the views of students to inform future policy and institutional strategy, in this case via these representative structures. Kent Union will report to the appropriate board or committee on outcomes and recommendations that arise. The board/committee will consider the report and act on it as appropriate.

3.3.2.7 Student representatives will gather feedback from their student group and will bring this to the attention of the relevant committee (see section 3.3.3) and to report back to students the outcomes of those meetings.

3.3.3 Student Representation on Committees and Boards

3.3.3.1 As part of the University’s commitment to enabling student engagement with quality assurance Schools and Faculties must ensure that they have adequate formal student representation on their:

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7 https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexk.html
8 http://www.kentunion.co.uk/representation/
School Education Committee (undergraduate) (Annex H section 2.2);
Board of Studies for each programme or cognate group of programmes (Annex H section 3.4);
Faculty Education Committee (undergraduate) (Annex I section 2.2);
School Graduate Studies Committee (taught postgraduate) (Annex T section 2.2);
Faculty Graduate Studies Committee (taught postgraduate) (Annex U section 2.2).

These meetings shall, as far as possible, be scheduled for times and dates when the student representatives are able to attend.

3.3.3.2 Each School will have a mechanism in place to ensure that the student representatives are able to effectively disseminate discussions from the committee or board to the student cohort. It is recognised that the format for this may vary between disciplines.

3.3.3.3 It is required that all matters raised by student representatives at the relevant committee must be given proper consideration and duly minuted. Where an action cannot be implemented, the grounds should be explained and minuted.

3.3.3.4 The University recognises that it can be challenging for students to speak out in formal committees, particularly in the early stages. Schools and Faculties are required to work with student representatives to ensure that they feel included and able to participate. This might include an informal pre-meeting with the Chair with discussion of the Terms of Reference, proceedings and typical agenda before the first committee meeting.

3.3.3.5 At University-level there is student representation via Kent Union Sabbatical Officers and, in some cases, additionally by Faculty representatives on central University committees and boards, including:

- Academic Audit Committee
- Education Board
- Graduate School Board
- Finance and Resource Committee
- Health, Safety and Environment Consultative Committee
- Environment Advisory Group
- Student Experience Committee
- Financial Hardship Sub-Committee
- Working Group on Regulations and Conventions
- Senate

3.3.3.6 Postgraduate students are also represented via the Kent Graduate Student Association. The KGSA works closely with the Graduate School, Kent Union and Woolf College Master to improve the welfare and education for all postgraduate students. It also provides a range of both academic and non-academic events to ensure the best student experience at Kent.

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9 https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexh.html
10 https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexi.html
11 https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annext.html
12 https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexu.html

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4. Induction and Ongoing Support Arrangements for Elected Student Representatives

4.1 Kent Union is responsible for delivering effective training for student representatives, including initial induction training and ongoing development and support. This includes provision of weblinks to student representative resources\(^\text{13}\) and production of a Student Representative Handbook.

4.2 Kent Union will ensure that the student representative training includes developing an understanding of the importance of representatives engaging with their fellow students, so that they are equipped to gather views and comments from the student cohort and to present views at meetings that may differ from their personal opinions.

4.3 Schools, Faculties and the Secretaries of University committees will have in place mechanisms (which may take the form of a range of media, such as display screens, Moodle, email) to communicate and raise awareness of the representative role and its responsibilities in the context of their respective areas of work and will highlight the importance of the student voice in that work. This is best undertaken regularly throughout the academic year. Schools should agree their SSLC and other relevant committee meeting dates and times as soon as the student representatives have been elected, so that the students can schedule their diaries accordingly. It is recommended that Schools also send advance reminders of forthcoming committee meetings to the representatives.

4.4 Where student representatives participate in University quality assurance processes such as programme approval and periodic review, the Quality Assurance office will implement appropriate briefing and induction for such participants in order to prepare them for their role.

4.5 All arrangements for induction, training and support are expected to take into account, so far as is possible, students’ backgrounds, whether they are part-time students, and any disability needs.

4.6 At the end of the student’s tenure as representative, the School, Faculty or University committee secretary (as appropriate to the representative post) will arrange a handover between outgoing and incoming student representatives and one or more University staff member as appropriate (for example School; Faculty; committee chair). This should also be seen as an opportunity to thank the outgoing student for his/her efforts in the representative role. Such handovers may be conducted electronically where a physical handover between successive representatives is not possible.

4.7 Kent Union will review and monitor the student representative process on an annual basis and will submit a written report to the University’s Education Board and Graduate School Board, to be received in the Autumn Term.

5. Engagement with Quality Assurance Processes

5.1 External Examiner Reports

External Examiners are invited to make recommendations to the School and University in their annual programme reports (see Annex K). External Examiners play a key role in bringing a different perspective to the programme of study and can make recommendations that directly relate to the student experience.

\(^{13}\) [https://www.kentunion.co.uk/representation/reps/resources/](https://www.kentunion.co.uk/representation/reps/resources/)
5.1.1 Full reports, including recommendations and responses are made available to all registered students of the University via the University webpage established for this purpose\textsuperscript{14}.

5.1.2 Reports will also be formally discussed at Staff-Student Liaison Committees and Education Committees. It might be that an External Examiner will make a recommendation that he/she intends to be to the students’ advantage, but is regarded negatively by students. In such cases discussion between students and staff (e.g. lecturer, School, Faculty) is important and may eventually feed in to the School response to the External Examiner.

5.2 Periodic Programme Review

The Periodic Programme Review (PPR) procedure (see Annex F\textsuperscript{15}) reviews how individual Schools deliver and manage teaching and learning and it provides a range of opportunities for student engagement:

- The inclusion of a student representative on the Review Panel. The student is a full member of the Panel (Annex F section 4d);
- The inclusion of student feedback (for example, NSS data) as part of the documentation provided to the Review Panel (Annex F sections 7 and 8);
- A panel meeting with a range of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students of the School under Review (Annex F section 11.2).

As noted at 4.4 above, student representative panel members will receive an induction into the requirements of the Periodic Review from the Quality Assurance Office ahead of their participation in a Periodic Review event.

It is the responsibility of the student panel member to:

- attend the briefing session arranged by the QA Office;
- review the documentation ahead of the PPR;
- attend the PPR event as arranged;
- engage with the review process and contribute to the discussions with the School or Centre under review;
- read the draft PPR report after the event and provide feedback as might be appropriate.

5.3 The Student Charter

The Student Charter\textsuperscript{16} is subject to annual review by both Council Secretariat and Kent Union with implementation from 1 August each year. The Charter is designed as an overview of the mutual expectations of the University’s staff and students and refers to the obligations staff and students have to one another.

\textsuperscript{14} https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/extexaminers/eers/

\textsuperscript{15} http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/taught/annexf.html

\textsuperscript{16}https://www.kent.ac.uk/student/charter/