**Annex N: Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

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Note: Where the text states ‘School’ this should be understood to refer to ‘School’ or ’Department’ at the sub-divisional level, as appropriate.

# 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.

# 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 student 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 of 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.

# Collection of Feedback from Students

## Responsibility

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](https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/) (NSS) and the [Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)](https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/graduateschoolnews/research-pres/) individual and student group meetings, student participation in Periodic Review (see Annex F), and through student representation on Boards of Studies, Student Voice Forum and on all of the University’s main committees.

## Surveys

1. Divisions 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).
2. Feedback must be collected by Divisions 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).
3. Divisions must consider students’ course 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 courses obtained via these means (*see* Annex M sections 3 and 4).
4. 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.
5. 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, Division, 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.

## Student Participation

### **Student Voice Forum**

Students have an opportunity to raise issues via their Student Voice Forum (SVF). (See Annex M section 5 for full details.) This feedback is considered by Divisions as part of the annual monitoring process (see Annex E). Each Division will establish SVFs, with separate SVFs for taught and research students.

1. Student Voice Forum meetings are important channels of communication between Divisional staff and students and shall, as far as possible, be scheduled for times and dates when the student representatives and the majority of relevant students are able to attend. (This may, for example, be on Wednesday lunchtimes, when timetables are often clear.)
2. Prior to the SVF meeting an agenda-setting meeting may take place between the 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 meeting. This will ensure such matters are included in the agenda and allow them to be properly addressed.
3. SVF agendas shall include a standing item for the Division 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.
4. Specific agenda items to be discussed include:
* Matters raised by student representatives.
* NSS and other internal survey results.
* Recommendations from External Examiners (see Annex K).
* Proposed course specifications (both new and major revisions to existing specifications) prior to the specifications being submitted for Division-level approval.
* Assessment and feedback matters.
* The Division feedback return rates (see the Credit Framework Annex 6: *Marking*).
* Assessment deadlines for the coming academic year.

Students are encouraged to comment on new courses of study as part of the course design process.

### **Student Representatives**

1. Student representatives are appointed on a yearly basis to represent the student voice and give feedback in respect of their course of study and their School. Student representatives and their appointment are managed by [Kent Union](https://kentunion.co.uk/studentvoice) and the representatives report to the relevant KU Vice-President (i.e. for either Academic Experience or Postgraduate Experience).
2. Each year Kent Union will request Schools or Divisions to complete an information form, which includes named members of School or Division staff responsible for student representatives. Kent Union will also circulate its Service Level Agreement to Schools/Divisions, which sets out the key responsibilities of KU and the University in respect of the student representatives.
3. Schools and Divisions are required to be proactive in encouraging students to put themselves forward for student representative positions 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.
4. Schools and Divisions must ensure that students recognise that the role requires commitment throughout the academic year, including attending relevant meetings and liaising with staff, fellow students and Kent Union. Students should only put themselves forward for student representative positions if they are willing to meet that commitment.
5. Kent Union and Schools/Divisions are required to put in place a procedure to monitor student engagement with the appointment process, to include numbers and demographics of students appointed as student representatives. Analysis of resulting data should be used to identify variations and trends, to inform future recruitment strategy and support the sharing of good practice across Schools/Divisions. 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.
6. As with section 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.
7. Student representatives will gather feedback from their student group and will bring this to the attention of a relevant staff member or the relevant committee (see section 3.3.3) and to report back to students on the outcome, where appropriate.

### Student Representation on Committees and Boards:

1. As part of the University’s commitment to enabling student engagement with quality assurance Divisions and Schools must ensure that they have adequate formal student representation on their:
* Education and Student Experience Committee (undergraduate) (Annex H).
* Board of Studies for each course or cognate group of courses (Annex H).
* Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committee (taught postgraduate) (Annex I).

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

1. Each Division and School will have mechanisms in place to ensure that discussions from committees/boards are effectively disseminated to the student cohort. It is recognised that the format for this may vary between disciplines.
2. 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. The University recognises that it can be challenging for students to speak out in formal committees, particularly in the early stages. Divisions and Schools are required to work with student representatives to ensure that they feel included and able to participate. This should include an informal pre-meeting with the Chair with discussion of the Terms of Reference, proceedings and typical agenda before the first committee meeting.
4. At University-level there is student representation via Kent Union full-time officers and, in some cases, additionally by student representatives on central University committees and boards, including:
* Education and Student Experience Board.
* Graduate and Researcher College Board.
* Finance and Resource Committee.
* Health, Safety and Environment Consultative Committee.
* Environment Advisory Group.
* Student Experience Committee.
* Financial Hardship Sub-Committee.
* Senate.

# Induction and Ongoing Support Arrangements for Student Representatives

## Training Responsibilities

Kent Union is responsible for delivering effective training for student representatives in partnership with Schools/Divisions, including initial induction training and ongoing development and support. This includes provision of weblinks to [student representative resources](https://kentunion.co.uk/student-voice/student-reps) and production of a Student Representative Handbook.

## Engaging with Fellow Students

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.

## Raising Awareness of the Representative Role

Schools/Divisions and the Secretaries of University committees will have mechanisms in place (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. Divisions should agree relevant committee meeting dates and times as soon as the student representatives have been appointed, so that the students can schedule their diaries accordingly. It is recommended that Divisions also send advance reminders of forthcoming committee meetings to the representatives.

## Quality Assurance Training

Where student representatives participate in University quality assurance processes such as periodic review, the Divisional Quality Assurance Officer (or equivalent) will implement appropriate briefing and induction for such participants in order to prepare them for their role.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Considerations

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.

## Handover Process

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

## Review and Monitoring Process

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 and Researcher College Board, to be received in the Autumn Term.

# Engagement with Quality Assurance Processes

## External Examiner Recommendations

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

Full reports, including recommendations and responses are made available to all registered students of the University via the University webpage established for this purpose.

Reports will also be formally discussed at Student Voice Forums and Education and Student Experience Committees/Graduate Studies and Student Experience Committees. It might be that an External Examiner will make a recommendation that is intended to be to the students’ advantage, but is regarded negatively by students. In such cases discussion between students and staff (e.g. lecturer, Director of Education and Student Experience) is important and may eventually feed in to the School/ Divisional response to the External Examiner.

## Participation in Periodic Review Event

The Periodic Review procedure (see Annex F) reviews how Divisions deliver and manage teaching and learning and it provides a range of opportunities for student engagement.

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

It is the responsibility of the student panel member to:

* attend the briefing session.
* review the documentation ahead of the Periodic Review.
* attend the Periodic Review event as arranged.
* engage with the review process and contribute to the discussions.
* read the draft Periodic Review report after the event and provide feedback as might be appropriate.

## The Student Charter

[The Student Charter](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/student-charter) 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.