STUDENT REPRESENTATION POLICY

Introduction
Newcastle University’s Student Representation Policy is a partnership between Newcastle University, its students and the Newcastle University Students’ Union. The aim of the policy is to ensure that every Newcastle University student is represented in the University’s decision making processes and that every student can contribute to the enhancement of their programme and learning experience.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Staff-Student Committee Terms of Reference (page 6) and the School Representative Role Description (page 8).

Purpose
“Our aim is to ensure that students are at the centre of the learning experience, and that their feedback on that experience lies at the heart of our future strategy.”
Newcastle University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy 2007-2012

1. This policy sets out the joint commitment of the University and Student’s Union to run an effective system of student representation and is built on a shared interest in promoting good practice in representation.

2. The policy will be used by the University and the Students’ Union to guide the operation of student representation mechanisms.

3. The policy, and associated documents addressing the operational aspects of the programme, will be made available to all student representatives.

Key Principles

1. Newcastle, as a civic university, aspires to play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England. Students are at the heart of this mission and the University provides its students with “knowledge for life”; knowledge which will last a lifetime, but which is also engaged with the wider world of nature and society. Student representation builds on this philosophy through providing all students with opportunities to contribute to, and enhance, their programmes and their own learning experiences, and to thus develop the skills and attitudes of educational citizenship.

2. The University is committed to responding to student feedback, at all levels, in order to monitor and enhance the quality of the student learning experience. However, student
representation is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as those formal processes and structures which (i) allow the student voice to be effectively represented at all levels of the University for the purposes of enhancing programmes of study and improving the student learning experience, and which (ii) provide a mechanism for feeding back the outcomes of this representation.

3. Student representation requires a collaborative culture in which the University, its students and the Students’ Union have a shared responsibility for promoting an environment which empowers the student/learner voice.

4. In meeting this responsibility, the University and the Students’ Union recognise that the role of student representative is a responsible and prestigious one, and that it provides individual representatives with opportunities for personal development and the acquisition of valuable graduate skills. Training will be provided for all such representatives.

5. In meeting this responsibility, the University and the Students’ Union recognise that a successful Student Representation Programme will be student-led. Student representatives will be expected to attend training provided, to take responsibility for ensuring that issues and concerns of the students that they represent are addressed appropriately, and that actions and subsequent outcomes are communicated to the wider student body.

6. In meeting this responsibility, a staff facilitator will provide the student-led committee with support and advice, particularly on matters relating to University policy and procedure.

The Student Representation System

1. There will be student representatives on every programme, in each School and at University level as follows:

   a. Programme level – Course Representatives on Staff-Student Committee(s) (SSC; as many as appropriate). See Terms of Reference at on page 6.

   b. School level (taught students) – Taught School Representatives (one per School). See Role Description on page 8.

   c. School level (research students) – Research School Representatives (one per School). See Role Description on page 8.

   d. University level – Education Officer on Education Executive Committee and University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee (UTLSEC).

2. Each of these representatives will seek the views of their student constituency on all relevant matters.
3. Staff-Student Committees will pass items for action to Boards of Studies or other relevant bodies via the student representatives. If a Staff-Student Committee identifies issues which cannot be addressed at Programme level, these items will be reported to the relevant Faculty Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee (FTLSEC) or Graduate School Committee (GSC) via the relevant School Representative.

4. All School Representatives from each Faculty will meet prior to FTLSEC/GSC meetings to identify issues to be raised based on feedback from Staff-Student Committees and to consider the agenda. If School Representatives identify issues which cannot be addressed at Faculty level, these will be reported to the Education Officer at Education Executive Committee.

5. Education Executive Committee will pass items for action to UTLSEC via the Education Officer and Postgraduate Representative, who will be UTLSEC members.

6. All student representatives will ensure that actions taken and their outcomes are reported back to the students that they represent.

7. Staff-Student Committee members will be elected by the student community that they represent.

8. Chairs (and Secretaries, where applicable) of Staff-Student Committees will be elected by the student members of those committees. Wherever possible, elections will take place at the final meeting of the academic year for the following year.

9. All bodies will have a student chair and a student majority. Staff-Student Committees should also elect a student secretary where there is interest in this position. Chairs and secretaries will be supported in Staff-Student Committees by a named staff facilitator appointed by the Head of School.

10. All student representatives must participate in training provided by the Students’ Union to help them fulfil their role. Schools and other academic units will provide the Students’ Union with names of student representatives by the first working day in November and will encourage student representatives to attend training. Schools are encouraged to supply names of representatives as soon as possible to ensure time for all to be trained before the first meeting of the year.

11. Student Opinion Steering Group will oversee delivery of the principles of this policy on behalf of UTLSEC and will assist in the monitoring and evaluation of the representation structure.
Figure 1. Newcastle University Student Representation
Policy/Document last modified by QuILT, December 2011

| Intended for use by:          | Heads of School                  |
|                              | Staff Facilitators               |
|                              | Student Representatives          |
|                              | Heads of Teaching and Learning   |

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|                              | E: gilly.box @ncl.ac.uk          |
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Staff-Student Committees

To be read in conjunction with the University’s Student Representation Policy

CONSTITUTION

1) A student chairperson, elected by Staff-Student Committee members at the final meeting of each year for the following year, or at the first meeting of the year in the case of one year programmes.

2) A secretary; either a student or a staff member at the discretion of the individual SSC.

3) A named staff facilitator appointed by the Head of School.

4) Elected student representatives, as appropriate, from all programmes covered by the SSC and from as many stages as is practical. Student representatives should make up the majority of the committee.

5) Members of academic staff, as appropriate, to cover all relevant programmes. Staff members to be appointed by the Head of School.

6) Representatives from the Library, ISS and, Careers Service and any other central University services to be invited as appropriate.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1) To meet at least four times per academic year.*

2) To consider any business relating to the student learning experience** including matters raised by student representatives and matters on which the academic unit wishes to seek student views including:

- teaching, learning and assessment (including feedback on assessed work)
- student support and guidance (academic and pastoral)
- career development (graduate skills & employability)
- teaching and learning resources (e.g. IT, teaching space/estates)
- the development of new programmes and review of existing modules and programmes (e.g. Internal Subject Review)
• accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
• issues arising from student surveys and other feedback mechanisms
• any matters referred to the SSC by the relevant Board of Studies

3) To consider any other matter referred by the School Representatives, Students’ Union Education Officer, Head of School, Deans of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and PVC Learning and Teaching.

4) To receive, for information, relevant external examiner reports and Board of Studies’ responses.

5) To identify and disseminate examples of good practice relating to the student learning experience.

6) To report to the relevant Boards of Studies, and other appropriate School committees.

7) To report to the relevant School Representative via the Chair.

8) To submit an annual report of business to the Students’ Union and to the relevant Boards of Studies, and to all other appropriate committees. A template is provided by the Students’ Union.

* Where this is difficult to accommodate, the first meeting of the year may be either an informal introductory meeting or an online introduction. For students following flexible, part-time, distance learning, collaborative or overseas programmes, consideration should be given to the ways in which those students can have access to mechanisms for providing feedback, for example, through virtual SSCs or web forum.

**The committee must not discuss personal matters relating to individual students or members of staff.

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School Representatives: Roles and Responsibilities

School Representatives will be expected to:

- attend all training provided by the Students’ Union;
- be familiar with the outputs of all Staff-Student Committees within their School, maintaining regular contact with all Chairs;
- support the Students’ Union in providing training to Course Representatives in their School;
- chair School Forums which will consist of the Chair from each SSC in the relevant School;
- meet at least once a term with the Head of School or Head of Teaching and Learning to discuss matters arising;
- attend FTLSEC pre-meetings each month alongside other School Representatives from their Faculty to discuss the papers and appoint a delegation of at least two and no more than four to attend the FTLSEC meeting;
- attend FTLSEC on a rotating basis in the manner most appropriate for that committee, ensuring some continuity of attendance is maintained while allowing all School Representatives the opportunity to contribute;
- submit feedback by email to FTLSECs in the event that no School Representative can attend due to vacations or exam periods;
- submit a termly update to the Education Officer, either via email or at an informal face to face meeting, to keep the Students’ Union informed on issues within the School;
- assist in the planning, organisation and delivery of course rep events as required, in particular the annual course rep conference;
- develop and conduct a handover to the incoming School Representative to begin in June at the end of their year in post.

The Students’ Union will be expected to:

- advertise the role of School Representative via a variety of methods including the President’s Email to all students and the Representation Newsletter;
- shortlist those students who apply for the role of School Representative;
organise and assist Schools in conducting interviews with students;
train and support School Representatives throughout the academic year;
train School Representatives to deliver Course Representative training – this also gives them the opportunity to meet representatives from other Schools and share good practice;
attend pre-FTLSEC meetings when necessary in order to support School Representatives and ensure that a delegation of at least two and no more than four is selected to attend the following FTLSEC;
keep in touch with School Representatives throughout the year and meet them as required to ensure that there are no problems with the representation system;
keep a record of attendance at the various meetings.

The Academic Schools will be expected to:
advertise the role of School Representative to all students who are eligible for the role;
select delegates (preferably the Head of School or Head of Teaching and Learning as well as a Staff Facilitator) to sit on the interview panel;
facilitate a meeting at least once per term between the Head of School or Director of Learning and Teaching and the School Representative;
communicate the names of School Representatives to FTLSEC and GSC Secretaries so that they can be included on circulation lists for papers prior to each meeting.

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