UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Supporting Student Representatives on University Committees
Good Practice Guidance for Committee Chairs and Committee Support Staff

Introduction

The 2019 External Quality Review included among its recommendations the statement that:
UCD should review the partnership approach it aims to take in engaging with students, ensuring Students' Union representative structures are utilised, creativity and innovation in feedback is encouraged, and that training provided is adequate to enable students at all levels (from class representatives to sabbatical officers) to engage effectively. (4.41)

The University developed a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address the review recommendations. The QIP agreed a number of actions in relation to recommendation above, including an agreement to develop an effective handover strategy to ensure that incoming student representatives are informed of the work of their predecessors, ensuring that they are well prepared to contribute at the earliest opportunity.

A Student Representation Working Group was established in October 2020 to evaluate and make recommendations for the enhancement of the University's Student Representative structure and supports provided to student representatives. A number of proposed actions were endorsed by UMT SEG (April 2021) including the implementation of a comprehensive induction programme for incoming Student Union sabbatical officers, which took place in June 2021, and included orientation on university governance structures and guidance on effective participation in committees.

The working group has also identified some recommended actions that can be undertaken at an individual committee level to support student members in adapting to their new role. The following section is intended to be a resource for Committee Chairs and Committee Support Staff. It is envisaged that Chairs, in consultation with Committee Support Staff, may select from the suite of recommendations as appropriate. The recommendations included draw on gathered examples of existing good practice across the University.

Good Practice Recommendations

- Welcome and introduction e-mail from the Chair issued to new student member/s following nomination.

- Information e-mail from Committee Support Staff which may include:
  - Contact information for unit and staff member supporting the committee
  - Meeting dates and submission deadlines
  - Website link to the Committee (if applicable)
  - Committee Terms of Reference
  - Standing Orders (if applicable)
  - Guidance on how to access meeting papers
  - Information on the meeting process (e.g. how to make submissions)
  - Expectations of members (e.g. how to send apologies; how to address the Chair; how to raise issues)

- Committee Support Staff shares a folder including key information in relation to the Committee, which will act as a repository that student members can easily access as required. This may include contact details of Committee Support; Schedule of Meetings; Submission deadlines (if applicable); Committee Terms of Reference; Submission forms (if applicable); University Conflict of Interest Policy.

- Chair and the Committee Support meet with the new student member/s in advance of the first committee meeting.
  - To clarify any queries in relation to guidance information circulated
  - Clarify the role of the student member on the particular committee
  - Discuss past items of business (share Committee's Annual Report for preceding session if applicable)
  - Discuss the proposed workplan for the upcoming year where applicable/anticipated items of business
  - Discuss the types of submissions that are typically made to the committee, how they are discussed and where they typically need to be submitted as follow up

- Follow up e-mail from Chair issued to student member/s mid-way through the academic session to ensure ongoing clarity regarding student member participation.