

Policy Coversheet

Name of Policy:	Course Committee Policy Statement
Purpose of Policy:	To outline the University's expectations in terms of Course Committee meetings.
Intended audience(s):	Staff/External Parties
Approval for this policy given by:	
Last Review Date:	06/07/2016 Minor changes to reflect revised academic structure – January 2017 Major changes to reflect student feedback June 2017
Review Due Date: (3 years from last review)	08/06/2020
Individual responsible for review:	Director of Quality Enhancement and Standards
Authorising department:	Academic Development Unit

Course Committees - Policy Statement

1. Introduction and Statement of Policy

This document outlines the University's expectations in terms of Course Committees on campus and at partners.

The University expects that each course or cluster of courses (for quality purposes) will have a designated Course Committee (CC) or equivalent at partners - a body with defined responsibilities for course management. Through constructive student and staff partnership, CCs will ensure the effective operation, administration, monitoring, review and development of courses, supporting the University's vision to deliver a high quality academic experience with a focus on the continuous improvement of the student experience.

Minutes and Action plans from CCs will feed into the Annual Monitoring process, enabling oversight and identification of recurring themes/issues across the course/s, School, partner (if applicable) and the University.

In addition to Course Committees, staff and Student Academic Representatives may gather student feedback via any informal mechanism deemed appropriate.

Staffordshire University has many students studying at various collaborative partners in the UK and around the world. Partners should ideally replicate this mechanism for course quality management (employing the same operational model, nomenclature, documentation and student roles), however the University recognises that this is not always feasible and will accept equivalent procedure and practice, providing it aligns with the purpose and ethos of this policy outlined herein, i.e. to maintain oversight of the operational management and quality enhancement of courses, with input from both students and staff.

For distance learning courses the University recognises that physical Course Committee meetings cannot be held, however it would still expect an appropriate virtual mechanism to be employed; involving staff and students in the operational management and quality enhancement of courses. A record of discussion and a resulting list of actions should be produced, which can feed into Annual Monitoring.

2. Purpose and Operating Model

Course Committees (CCs) are the formal means by which the operational management and quality enhancement of courses are reviewed across the University by both students and staff. CCs are expected to identify and take action (which could be at course, department, school or university level) in response to issues raised by students and/or staff. They are also responsible for identifying and facilitating the sharing of good practice in course delivery and student experience.

The Committee will be co-managed by Student Academic Representatives and Course Leaders and scheduled locally. Membership of Course Committees includes student representatives and academic staff. Members are expected to attend all Committees but in the event of absence of some members, Committees should still go ahead.

Each course/course quality cluster will hold a Course Committee at least twice per academic year. Formal minutes and the action plans for CCs should be produced and received as part of the Annual Monitoring process. Partners should share minutes and action plans from their Committees with the Programme Advisor, who will then ensure they are received as part of the Annual Monitoring process.

Agenda items include matters relating to student experience, course content and delivery, quality management (e.g. review of course annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports), as well as the sharing and celebrating of good practice and success.

Where issues or actions cannot be resolved at Course Committee level then they should be raised at the School Academic Committee (or relevant person/s) or partner equivalent.

Students may also raise issues or provide feedback on their academic experience via any other suitable informal mechanism, with the express intention of it being raised (if necessary) at the appropriate Course Committee or partner equivalent.

3. Terms of Reference and Membership and of Course Committees

Terms of reference

a) Student Experience

- To consider matters raised by students, tutors and staff and provide formal feedback on the resolution of those issues;
- To consider matters relating to equality and diversity, and academic/personal support and guidance;
- To consider plans for activities to enhance the student experience at the course level including student survey campaigns, welcome week organisation and social belonging and retention events planning;

b) Student Course/s and Employability

- To consider matters relating to teaching, assessment, feedback, course structure and workload and provide formal feedback on the resolution of any issues raised;
- To consider matters relating to work experience and real-world skills development opportunities (i.e. placements, internships, volunteering etc.) and careers support.
- To review the operational running and delivery of the course(s) to ensure that academic standards are maintained and enhanced during the current academic year;
- To review and consider the inclusive nature of course design, delivery and assessment to meet the diverse range of needs of students on the course(s);
- To review and discuss proposals for course structure modification and new modules;

c) Resources and Facilities

- To consider the availability of relevant teaching and learning materials/equipment, buildings, library and IT provision;

d) Course Quality Management and Enhancement

- To review the results from any methods of course feedback from students, including, where appropriate, National Student Survey (NSS), Student Viewfinder

Survey (SVS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and respond as necessary to any issues raised;

- To receive module monitoring reports and discuss matters raised and appropriate action/s required;
- To formally receive external examiner(s) comments, annual monitoring report(s) and action plan(s) and to review progress in addressing the actions;
- To review and consider planning for and documentation related to course periodic review, new course approval and relevant other external review processes e.g. accreditation by a professional body, where applicable;

e) Celebrating Student and Staff Success

- To identify aspects of good practice in course delivery and to facilitate sharing that with course teams;
- To formally celebrate student and staff success.

Membership

Although membership at these Committees can be flexible, the following list represents the expected core membership. Partners should have an equivalent appropriate membership.

- Head of Department, Course Leader or Nominee (Chair)
- Administrator (Secretary)
- All available elected Student Academic Representative (s) for each of the course quality clusters. (The Student Academic Representatives may vary at each Committee; however there should ideally be at least 1 Student Academic Representative present per course.)
- All Course Leaders
- Technician, Library and Learning Support Services representatives (if appropriate)
- Dean of School or Associate Dean - Students (ex Officio)
- Staff that make a significant teaching contribution to the course (where appropriate)

4. Frequency and Setting of Committee Dates and Agendas

Course Committees are expected to take place at least twice per academic year. Committee dates should be provisionally set, ideally before or at the commencement of the new academic year and members advised of this. Dates should be finalised at the start of each semester (once timetables have been confirmed). Members (including Student Academic Representatives) should be updated if the date/s change and should be reminded 2 weeks prior to the Committee to ensure adequate time to collect student feedback. Agenda items should also be requested from members (including Student Academic Representatives) at this point.

The following timescales are advised. Partners should ensure an appropriate equivalent frequency:

- Prior to semester 1 commencing (usually August/September) – Provisional committee dates set
- By commencement of semester 1 teaching – Committee date confirmed and due to take place before the end of November

- By commencement of semester 2 teaching – Committee date confirmed and due to take place before the end of March

These are the usual timescales for courses running September to June. For non-standard academic calendars CCs should be held twice a year as appropriate.

Additional CCs may be arranged at the Student Academic Representative's written request, with the expectation that this supplementary Committee will be held within 2 weeks of the request being made.

5. Agendas, Minutes and Action Plans

The Course Committee Agenda Template should be used to provide the agenda for the Committee. The items noted are indicative and may not be necessary at every Committee, but should include any items (deemed appropriate by the Chair) which have been put forward in advance by members.

A record of the Committees' discussion and associated actions should be kept using the Course Committee Minutes and Action Plan Template. This template is a hybrid of a standard set of minutes and an action plan. It is intended that the contents of the action plan be carried forward (from the first Committee or the last meeting of the previous academic year) and amended / added to for each subsequent Committee during the academic year so that a clear record of the actions (and outcomes) over the year can be maintained.

6. Student and Staff Access to Papers, Minutes and Actions Plans

The minutes and action plan should be accessible to all students within the course/course quality cluster. (See 'Course Committees - A Guide for Secretaries and Chairs' for further guidance.)

Partners should employ a suitable mechanism to ensure student accessibility to documentation. Partners should share minutes and action plans from Committees with their Programme Advisor.

Where an action has been completed or requires an update in-between Committees, the action 'owner' should inform the secretary so that the action plan can be updated and made available to students. Students should be alerted to any developments by the secretary.

7. Associated Documentation

- [Course Committees Agenda Template](#)
- [Course Committees Minutes and Action Plan Template](#)
- [Student Engagement in Learning & Teaching – Staff Handbook](#)
- [Student Academic Representation Policy](#)

Further guidance for secretaries and chairs of Course Committees is appended.

June 2017 - Major revisions to reflect revised academic structure and student feedback



Appendix 1

Course Committees - A Guide for Secretaries and Chairs

Introduction

Course Committees (CCs) are the formal means by which students and staff jointly review the student experience, operational management and quality enhancement of courses across the University. Each course/course quality cluster will hold a Course Committee at least twice per year/once a semester to review the delivery and management of the course(s). Committees follow a specific agenda and include items relating to student experience, course content and delivery, quality management (e.g. review of course annual monitoring reports and external examiner reports), as well as the sharing and celebrating of good practice and success.

Items noted in the agenda are indicative and may not be necessary at every Committee, but should include any items (deemed appropriate by the Chair) which have been put forward in advance by members. (See below for links to templates.)

CCs are expected to meet at least once a semester (with the following timescales advised below in 'guidance for CC secretaries').

Please note that members are expected to attend all Committees but that in the event of member absence (including students), Committees should still go ahead.

Guidance for CC Secretaries

Timing and Dates

Course Leaders and Secretaries should liaise to schedule CC meetings for the forthcoming academic year.

Committee dates should be provisionally set, ideally before or at the commencement of the new academic year and members advised of this (so it can be booked well in advance in their dairies).

Dates should be finalised at the start of each semester (once timetables have been confirmed).

The following timescales are advised:

- Prior to semester 1 commencing (usually August/September) – Provisional committee dates set
- By commencement of semester 1 teaching – Committee date confirmed and due to take place before the end of November
- By commencement of semester 2 teaching – Committee date confirmed and due to take place before the end of March

These are the usual timescales for courses running September to June. For non-standard academic calendars CCs should be held twice a year as appropriate.

Members (including Student Academic Representatives) should be updated if the date/s change and should be reminded 2 weeks prior to the Committee to ensure adequate time to collect student feedback.

Agendas and Papers

Agenda items should also be requested from members (including Student Academic Representatives) 2 weeks prior to the Committee. The Course Committee Agenda Template is available in the CC Template Folder. Items noted on the agenda template are indicative and may not be necessary at every meeting.

Secretaries should circulate the CC agenda and papers to members via email at least 7 days prior to each Committee. Agendas and papers should also be saved in the appropriate School Folder on the University's Quality Documents Drive: [Course Committees](#).

Where possible, agendas and papers (including AM and EE Reports) should also be made available on Blackboard by Course Leaders for courses within the course quality cluster.

A membership list can be found in the CC Policy statement. A list of student academic representative email addresses can be found in the appropriate School folder here, under student academic representatives: [Course Committees](#).

The committee secretary's role is to:

- Offer members (including Student Academic Representatives) the opportunity to propose agenda items 2 weeks prior to the committee meeting.
- Ensure all members have access to relevant agenda and committee papers.
- Record attendance, noting absences and apologies.
- Record accurate discussion notes (in the minutes section) and action points (in the action plan section) from the Committee (in the prescribed template) and save these on the University's Quality Documents Drive: [Course Committees](#) (and Blackboard where possible).

Minutes / Action Plans

Minutes/action plans should be completed within 7 working days and sent to the Chair (to check for accuracy). If the Chair has not confirmed the minutes/actions within a further 7 days then they are deemed accurate. Minutes/actions should be sent to all members (via email) and saved on the University's Quality Documents Drive (and Blackboard where possible).

The Course Committee Minutes and Action Plan Template is a hybrid of a standard set of minutes and an action plan. It is intended that the contents of the action plan be carried forward (from the first Committee) and amended / added to for each subsequent Committee during the academic year, so that a clear record of the actions (and outcomes) over the year can be maintained. Therefore, the action plan developed as part of the first Committee (or any actions carried over from the previous year that are still ongoing/incomplete) should be copied and appended to each subsequent Committee's minutes.

Within the template document an example of the format required for the 'Action Number' has been provided. This is based on the Committee date and then the number of the action e.g. Committee took place on the 13.02.17, so for action 1 the action number reference would be: 13.02.17-1.

It is important to employ this format so that actions from the action plan (when considered later or in subsequent years) can be tracked back to the relevant set of minutes and discussion.

Updating of Action Plans

Where an action has been completed or requires an update in-between Committees, the action 'owner' should inform the secretary so that the action plan can be updated and made available to students.

The secretary should alert students, via email, to any notable developments in relation to the action plan, where a meeting is not due to take place within the next 1-2 weeks.

Templates

Templates for the agenda and the minutes can be found at: [CC Templates](#).

Guidance for Chairs

The Chair or their nominated representative should try to meet with the Student Academic Representatives prior to the CC.

Chairs should make sure that the Student Academic Representatives:

- Feel welcome and comfortable;
- Are aware of how the Committee will be conducted and understand what can or cannot be discussed under the Committee's terms of reference;
- Have been supplied with all the information and documentation they require;
- Are familiar with the names and roles of all the other members of the CC; and
- Are able to express their views freely and without unnecessary interruption.

Chairs should also ensure that:

- All necessary agenda items are covered and each item is given a sufficient amount for time for discussion.
- The agenda is covered in no more than 2 hours.
- The minutes from the previous Committee are checked and all actions are completed or carried forward;
- The Committee is conducted amicably and fairly;
- That issues voiced are representative of a group/cohort rather than any one individual;
- They facilitate and encourage discussion (e.g., if a level 4 student raises an issue, what do the other representatives think about it? Did the level 5/6 students encounter similar issues? How were these dealt with?);
- All actions are recorded in terms of what will be done, who will do it, and when the actions will be completed, with a view to ensuring that specific actions can be delivered and will not become 'ongoing';
- Technical, administrative and support staff are properly consulted where issues concern them;
- All actions are referred to the proper persons or relevant departments of the university;

- Issues concerning equality and diversity are properly addressed;
- All members have the information that they need in order to have an informed discussion of the issues raised (NB where this information is unavailable the discussion should take place outside of the Committee or at the next Committee); and
- Examples of enhancement, good practice and student and staff success are shared across the School.