

University Centre Colchester Student Engagement Policy

2024/25

Details			
Owner	Head of UCC Academic Services		
CE Sponsor	Principal and Chief Executive Officer		
Date created this year	May 2024		
Version:	Approved by:	Date approved:	To be reviewed:
1.0	College Executive	18/06/2024	September 2027
1.0	Curriculum and Quality Committee	27/06/2024	September 2027

Version Control	
Version Number	Changes from previous 12 months policy

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

Name of Policy: UCC Student Engagement Policy

		Yes/No	Comments
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	Race or ethnicity	No	
	Disability	No	
	Gender	No	
	Religion or belief	No	
	Sexual orientation	No	
	Age	No	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
	Maternity and Pregnancy	No	
	Gender Reassignment	No	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	N/A	
4	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5	If so, can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
6	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
7	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 University Centre Colchester (UCC) is committed to encouraging the active involvement and engagement of the student community with its programmes and the wider institution.
- 1.2 This policy considers student engagement in two areas: whilst being enrolled on a course at University Centre Colchester, and after graduation from the institution. The former includes the roles of the Student Council, Student Experience meetings, module evaluation surveys, the NSS and student participation in, and contribution to, programme validation events. The latter includes the Graduate Outcome Survey and UCC's alumni and employer networks.

2 The UCC Student Council

- 2.1 The UCC Student Council is the primary representation of the student voice at University Centre Colchester. It is comprised of student representatives from every UCC course, and where possible each cohort of each course.
- 2.2 The UCC Student Council meets no fewer than two times in every academic year, and provides an open forum regarding the student experience at both course and at institutional level.
- 2.3 The Council is designed to provide student views and awareness of institutional student feedback measures (see sections 3 - 5) and provides input on institutional initiatives to improve the student experience.
- 2.4 The UCC Student Council is a formal meeting, and its minutes and outcomes are built into the wider UCC meeting structure. Terms of reference and a standing agenda for the Student Council can be found in **Appendix D**.
- 2.5 **Selection of a Student Council member** - Students on all UCC programmes are asked to nominate a Student Council member from each cohort of their programme. The nominated Student Council member will also become that cohort's Student Representative. Where no Student Council member is appointed due to a lack of volunteers, students will be required to communicate all feedback via a Student Council Member of an alternative course (membership of the Student Council will be published on the UCC Moodle site) or directly to UCC Academic Services. Selection of Student Council members is an annual process.
- 2.6 **Role of a Student Council member** – The core responsibility of a Student Council member is to ensure that the student voice is heard in the institution. Student Council members represent both the views of their course cohort, but also that of the wider student experience. Student Council members feedback directly to University Centre Colchester staff at Student Council meetings on academic and non-academic issues.
- 2.7 Student Council members are also invited to represent their cohort or the wider UCC community's experience at a variety of other meetings throughout the year, to ensure University Centre Colchester maintains its commitment to the assurance and enhancement of the academic programmes and student welfare. These meeting include, but are not limited to:
- School Quality Meetings;
 - UCC Learning and Teaching Committee;
 - UCC Academic Board;

- Joint Board of Studies Meetings (JBOS) with the University of East Anglia;
- Validation and Re-Validation meetings with awarding bodies;
- Institutional Validation or accreditation meeting with awarding bodies

Due to attendance restrictions at the above meetings attendance is by invitation only.

2.8 **Guiding Principles of Student Council members** - Student Council members are representatives of their peers and are required to:

- **Be Accountable** – Student Council members are responsible to the students they are chosen to represent;
- **Consult** – Student Council members are asked to put aside their own views and gather collective views, by talking and listening to other students, and to avoid any assumptions about the student experience;
- **Communicate** – Student Council members need to feed back information to the student body. They must let their peers know what actions and outcomes have resulted from their feedback. They must do this by using efficient communication channels; this can be done in person, via social media, or any other appropriate means of communication;
- **Engage** – Student Council members should act as a link between the student body and University Centre Colchester. It is important that Student Council members are fully engaged with opportunities to represent the student community;
- **Signpost** – Student Council members might be the first point of contact for students with any issues, concerns or general enquiries. As such, they should be familiar with the structure of University Centre Colchester in order to signpost students to appropriate staff and/or services.

2.9 **Roles and Responsibilities of a Student Council member**

Students should appreciate, when formally expressing an interest in the role, the importance and time needed to undertake the role properly. Anyone interested in becoming a Student Council member should consult the information published on the UCC Academic Services Moodle site and Appendix A of this policy.

2.10 Students should attend all training sessions so they are appropriately prepared for the role. A *Guide to being a Student Council member* can be found in appendix B.

2.11 Students should prepare for meetings by collecting student feedback relevant to the agenda items of the meeting.

2.12 Students should endeavour to attend all meetings they have committed to attend. If a student is unable to attend, they should inform UCC Academic Services and either provide a written summary of their comments or pass their comments on to a fellow Student Council member.

2.13 If a student feels they can no longer fulfil the role, they must make their Course Leader and UCC Academic Services aware, so a replacement can be found. If a Student Council member fails to meet the requirements of the role, they may be removed from the post or a replacement sought.

2.14 **Commitments of University Centre Colchester** – University Centre Colchester will support Student Council member through:

- **Planning** – UCC Academic Services should allow time for Student Council members to review meeting agendas and collect appropriate feedback from the student body. This should be done by giving Student Council members a minimum of one week notice of meetings.
- **Action and Feedback** – UCC will be approachable and receptive of the feedback from the Student Council members. It is also the duty of UCC that appropriate action should be taken in response to feedback.
- **Training** – Student Council members will receive guidance and advice from the UCC on what is expected of them in their role, including different methods of collecting feedback and presenting this feedback to UCC.
- **Support** – If at any time during their role as a Student Council member a student feels there are difficulties with the role, they can expect support from their Course Leader and UCC Academic Services

3 **UCC Module Evaluations and Student Experience Meetings**

3.1 All University Centre Colchester students are given the opportunity to feedback formally on their individual experiences through the Module Evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire is completed at the end of each semester.

3.2 Although module evaluations can be completed remotely, it is anticipated that time will be found within the timetabled programme delivery to facilitate students undertaking the survey.

3.3 Module evaluations are considered at programme, and institutional level and feed into the annual reporting and action planning of University Centre Colchester.

3.4 The current list of questions in the Module Evaluation Survey can be found in appendix D.

3.5 Student Experience meetings, between a representative of UCC and individual student cohorts, are aimed to take place mid-semester to identify any early concerns that can then be proactively responded to.

3.6 Feedback received from Student Experience meetings and Module Evaluations are considered at School Quality Meetings and within Programmer Monitoring Reports (PMRs). For more information, please refer to the UCC Quality Assurance policy.

4 The National Student Survey

- 4.1 All eligible students are contacted by a national external organisation that collects data responses from final year undergraduate students on a set number of questions. This usually happens between January and April. All student responses are anonymous. The survey results are usually published at the beginning of the next academic year.
- 4.2 The student responses (percentages only, not qualitative feedback) are published annually, and are made available to all Higher Education Institutions in the UK. Qualitative responses by individuals are also anonymised before being shared with the institution they apply to.
- 4.3 UCC regards the National Student Survey as one of the key performance indicators for student feedback and encourages students' engagement with the survey through internal promotion and an annual prize draw for participants.

5 The Graduate Outcomes Survey

- 5.1 The Graduate Outcome Survey, describes itself as 'the biggest UK annual social survey and captures the perspectives and current status of recent graduates. All graduates who completed a course will be asked to take part in the survey 15 months after they finish their studies. The survey aims to help current and future students gain an insight into career destinations and development'. (www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk)
- 5.2 The Office for Students explains the purpose of, and outcomes from, the survey as follows:

'HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) publishes Graduate Outcomes official statistics annually, which provides high level findings and characteristics of graduate outcomes at a national and provider level.

Universities and colleges can use these to help evaluate and promote their courses.

The responses also help the Office for Students, the government, charities, journalists, researchers and others to understand the higher education sector and the state of the graduate labour market'.

www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/graduate-outcomes-survey/

6 Participation in Programme Oversight and Development

- 6.1 In addition to the Student Council, University Centre Colchester actively wishes to involve students in the development of its programmes.
- 6.2 All programme development initiatives are required to consult with the student community and seek their support for any changes to existing programmes.
- 6.3 Students must also be involved in the development of new courses.
- 6.4 Students who are not members of the Student Council are equally valued and will also be considered for roles within validation, accreditation, or course variation activities where

appropriate.

7 Alumni and Employer Networks

- 7.1 UCC values the ongoing feedback from its alumni and employer (many of whom are also alumni) networks, who contribute to academic programme development, offer placements or hire graduates.
- 7.2 At present, there is no centralised database or oversight for these networks. Instead, most of them have grown out of Schools or disciplines with a particularly distinct subject identity. For example, the School of Visual and Performing Arts has a closed Facebook group of over 900 alumni and past and present staff. In contrast, Construction & Engineering at UCC maintain their industry contacts through a predominantly part-time student community that works in companies within commuting distance of UCC.
- 7.3 All Schools at UCC hold formal employer/industry meetings, usually one per Semester, to ensure that UCC's understanding of the respective employment sectors remains current.

Appendix A - UCC Student Council Member Job Description

Summary of the role

The core responsibility of a Student Council member is to ensure that the student voice is heard within the institution. Student Council members represent both the views of their course cohort, but also that of the wider student experience. Student Council members feedback directly to University Centre Colchester staff at Student Council meetings on academic and non-academic issues.

Student Council members are also invited to represent their class or the wider UCC experience at a variety of other meetings throughout the year, to ensure University Centre Colchester maintains its commitment to the assurance and enhancement of the academic programmes and student welfare.

Student Council members are their cohort's Student Representative and should be available to receive feedback from other courses or cohorts where a Student Council member has not been able to be appointed.

Student Representatives are vitally important to UCC, because we want to ensure that our students have the best possible learning experience. This would be difficult to achieve without student feedback. Feedback from Student Representatives allows the issues affecting other students to be raised, discussed and, where possible, resolved. Working as a Student Representative is also an invaluable personal experience, helping you to gain new skills in communication, negotiation, and leadership experience.

Duties & Responsibilities

- gathering feedback, opinions, and ideas from fellow students in order to present these at meetings with members of staff including Course Leaders and Heads of School;
- providing feedback on any issues and good practice at Student Council meetings, School Quality Meetings, and any other appropriate UCC meetings;
- working together as part of the UCC community to resolve issues;
- helping to ensure that students feel they really are valued and listened to, and celebrating successes among the UCC community;
- attending all training sessions so that you are appropriately prepared;
- attending all meetings that you are expected to attend;
- reporting back to peers on relevant issues arising at the meetings;
- attending promotional events such as open days and UCAS fairs when asked to do so.

Key Qualities for the Role

- **Accountability**
Candidates must be fully committed and should appreciate the time needed to meet the requirements of the role, since they are elected by and asked to represent their fellow students;
- **Consultation**
Candidates are expected to relay feedback on behalf of their peers and should therefore be open to the views of other students, avoiding any assumptions about the student experience and always ready to listen to different viewpoints;
- **Communication**
Candidates should regularly communicate the actions and outcomes of meetings to the students they represent, as well as notifying them well in advance of opportunities to give feedback, effectively acting as a bridge between the student body and their lecturers & Course Leaders;
- **Engagement**
Candidates should be enthusiastic about representing their fellow students and recognise the important contributions they are making to help improve the UCC student experience;
- **Signposting**
Candidates will be familiar with the structure of University Centre Colchester as an organisation, so that they can signpost students to the relevant departments and staff when approached as the first point of contact;
- **Confidentiality**
Candidates should treat information offered by fellow students in confidence with the discretion appropriate for the information shared.

Commitment of UCC to its Student Reps

University Centre Colchester makes the following commitments to its Student Council members while they are in the role:

- **Planning:** Student Council members will be given time to meet and consult their students to collect feedback before meetings, and will be notified of meeting dates at least a week in advance by UCC Academic Services;
- **Action & Feedback:** University Centre Colchester will be approachable and receptive to feedback, and ensure that appropriate action is taken in response;
- **Training:** Student Council members will receive guidance and advice on what is expected of them in their role, including different methods of collecting feedback and presenting this feedback to UCC;
- **Support:** Student Council members can expect support from their Course Leader and the UCC Academic Services should they encounter any difficulties whilst undertaking the role.

Appendix B - A Guide for Student Council Members

What is a Student Council member?

A Student Council member is a student who acts as a key contact between the students on their course and UCC. They are responsible for gathering feedback, opinions and ideas from their classmates, voicing them to their tutors and during meetings, and working together to resolve issues. This is achieved through Student Council meetings, course meetings, and Student Experience meetings.

Why are Student Council members important?

We want to ensure that our students have the best possible learning experience, but this would be difficult to achieve without student feedback. Student feedback helps us to monitor and improve the quality of the education and services we provide. The feedback from the UCC Student Council and from yourself acting as a student representative allows the issues affecting other students to be raised, discussed and, where possible, resolved.

In your role as a Student Council member, you will be helping to ensure that students understand that they are valued and listened to. You will also be important in helping to celebrate our successes, whether it is recognising good teaching, relevant resources, or new opportunities.

Being a Student Council member is also an opportunity to gain invaluable experience and learn new skills in communication, negotiation, and leadership experience. It gives students an insight into institutional practices, and is therefore a transferable skill.

What do I need to do?

Your role is to:

- identify issues affecting students;
- attend meetings to communicate these issues on behalf of your peers;
- report back to your peers on relevant issues arising at the meetings.

What next?

Once we have your details, we will contact you directly about meetings and events that you are expected to attend. You will be given at least one week's notice for meetings, and the minutes from meetings will be distributed no later than a week after the meeting.

Student Council Meetings

Student Council meetings are an ideal opportunity to collect feedback from your peers about all matters regarding UCC. During the meetings, feel free to discuss and debate issues, take notes, and remember to feedback to your peers. Student Council members can submit information in writing, if preferred.

Student Experience Meetings

Student Experience meetings allow students to speak freely about anything that is related to their specific programme of study or overall UCC experience. Student Council members should present their own concerns and comments along with those from their cohort, but should distinguish between both. These may include concerns such as timings of coffee

breaks, teaching methods, classroom layout etc.

Awarding Organisation Meetings

The content of these meetings will vary greatly each time, as it depends on the topics that the university wishes to bring up. These meetings may be to do with how they feel we're doing as a partner institution, to look at our academic content, or how our students feel as members of a learning community. Of course, there are other matters outside these, and you will be invited to attend meetings when necessary

Appendix C – Module Evaluation Survey Questions (2024/25)

1. Teaching on the Module

- How good are teaching staff at explaining things?
- How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?

2. Assessment and Feedback

- How clear was the marking criteria used to assess your work?
- How often does feedback help you to improve your work?

3. Academic Support

- How easy was it to contact teaching staff when you needed to?
- How well have teaching staff supported your learning?

4. Learning Resources

- How well have the IT resources and facilities supported your learning?
- How well have the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?
- How appropriate to learning was the classrooms/learning spaces used for the module?

5. Student Voice

- To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?
- To what extent are student" opinions about the course valued by staff?

6. Course Organisation

- How well organised was the module?

7. Overall

- Overall the module has been a positive experience

8. General (Open Text) Comments Box

Appendix D – UCC Student Council Indicative Agenda

The following standing agenda provides a summary of all items that should be considered at UCC Student Council meetings during the academic year. The agenda is designed to ensure that each meeting of the UCC Student Council pays due regard to its terms of reference in a timely fashion but should not restrict or dictate practice.

- 1 Welcome**
- 2 Apologies for Absence**
- 3 Minutes of last meeting**
- 4 Updates from UCC Academic Services**
Key updates from UCC Academic Services which may include regulatory updates, validating body updates and upcoming events.
- 5 Student Council Activities**
Activities undertaken by Student Council members for UCC
- 6 Understanding Institutional Student Feedback**
 - Review of NSS Feedback and Action Plan
 - Review of Key Themes from Module Evaluation Feedback and Action Plans
 - Review of Key Themes from Student Experience Minutes and Action Plans
- 7 Students Open Forum**
- 8 Any Other Business**

Membership:

- UCC Student Council Members (Student Representatives)
- Principal and Chief Executive
- Head of UCC Academic Services
- Senior UCC Academic Services Officer
- UCC Lecturer in Learning Technologies
- Representative from Learning Resources
- Representative from ILT

Format: Hybrid meetings to allow high participation and engagement with students.

Quorum: Head of UCC Academic Services or Senior UCC Academic Services Officer
2 x Student Representatives