STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Introduction and Scope

1. Student engagement has a number of definitions. For the purpose of this section of the Quality Manual, the definition included in QAA's UKQC advice and guidance has been adopted:

   > The participation of students in influencing and improving their educational experience. This is related to the participation of students in quality assurance and enhancement processes, which includes, but is not restricted to, representation of the student view though formal representation mechanisms.

2. The UKQC notes that a holistic approach will include students engaging in their own learning as active partners in the learning process. This involves improving the motivation and investment of students to engage in learning and to learn independently. This is covered in the St George's, University of London education and student strategy and the operational plans that underpin the strategy.

Students as Partners in Student Engagement

3. It is St George's policy:
   - to engage students fully as partners in the development of all policies and procedures relating to the quality of its programmes of study
   - to actively seek student feedback on all aspects of their experience of learning, teaching and assessment and in using that feedback to enhance the experience of current and future students

Student engagement processes

4. St George's engages with students in a number of ways and at a number of levels. This section of the Quality Manual focuses on the student engagement processes that all programmes are required to adopt, support and implement. These are:

   - Student Representation System (paragraphs 9-13)
   - Student Enhancement Leads (SELs) (paragraphs 16-17)
   - Course Committees (paragraphs 18-20)
   - Student Staff Liaison Groups and Student-Staff Committees (paragraph 21-24)
   - Student Online Teaching Survey (SOLTS) (paragraphs 25-28)
   - Unitu (paragraphs 29-31)
   - The National Student Survey (32-38)

- The Student Experience Survey (paragraphs 39-40)
- the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (paragraphs 41)

5. Additional processes and/or one-off initiatives may be used to allow St George's to learn more about the individual or collective student experience. As a point of principle, approaches to obtaining student opinion should be systematic and strategic. They should be designed to allow St George's to plan targeted action to improve the student experience. Where initiatives are planned, they should be authorised in advance by the Course Director/Course Committee to ensure that the purpose is consistent with the guiding principle and that the outcomes of the innovation can be disseminated via the Course Committee, through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), the Student Experience Action Group (SEAG) or through any other appropriate forum.

6. The expectations of this section of the Quality Manual apply equally to students enrolled on St George's programmes offered by collaborative partners. The views of students on collaborative programmes will be sought, individually and collectively, on learning, teaching and assessment. Students will also be involved in decision-making committees and groups. The means by which these expectations are achieved may vary depending on the nature of the collaboration (see section E of this Manual on Collaborative Provision).

7. Other engagement activities, including extracurricular activities, include student ambassadorships, peer assisted learning and volunteering. These activities do not fall within the scope of the Quality Manual.

8. Governance arrangements through the Student Experience Action Group, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and the Education & Students Strategy Committee are outlined in paragraphs 42-44.

Student Representation System

9. Student Representatives play a central role in promoting the student voice at St George's. They do this by providing a link with staff by representing the views of the students on any aspect of the student learning experience. Representatives actively seek out student views and work with staff to resolve any programme-related issues identified by students. They do this informally and formally, primarily by representing students at the Course Committee meetings.

10. The Representation System is run by the Students' Union (SGSU) with the support of St George's**.** Representatives on most programmes are elected through the Students' Union and the SGSU-elected reps put forward the views of their cohort in the Course Committee meetings organised by the University.

11. The Students' Union may not organise elections for Representatives on postgraduate and Continuing Personal and Professional Development programmes. If there are no SGSU-elected reps, the responsibility for ensuring that students are able to participate effectively in Course Committee meetings rests with the teaching teams. In these instances, the teaching team will need to encourage students to elect or select those students that they

would wish to represent them. Where this is the case, the names of the student/year representatives may be made available to the Students' Union for information on request.

12. Representatives on part-time programmes might find it difficult to find time to commit to the role. Students can be consulted about the arrangements that they might find helpful, such as flexibility in the timing and conduct of meetings. Typically, Course Committee meetings will be held on the day on which teaching takes place so that students are able to attend.

13. It may not be feasible for distance learning programmes to arrange Course Committees where students and staff are present. This type of programme should define and publish arrangements, based for example on the use of discussion boards and other electronic media.

Preparation of student representatives

14. Induction and training, coordinated by the Assistant Registrar (Student Services) and the Dean for Students, is offered to Students' Union sabbatical officers. If possible, induction and training events will be timed so that outgoing sabbatical officers can contribute to the preparation of their successors.

15. In addition to the sabbatical officer training, the Students' Union runs training programmes for all officers of the Union and Year Representatives. The training programmes prepare students for their roles (in terms of canvassing the views of other students; their role in Course Committee meetings; and reporting back to their peers). Year representatives can be provided with an overview of current issues by senior staff as part of their Students' Union training. St George's staff attend the Students' Union Senate on request or when views on a specific issue are sought. The Assistant Registrar (Student Services) is St George's point of contact available to work with the Students Union in the preparation of SU officers and Year Representatives.

Student Enhancement Leads

16. Student Enhancement Leads (SELs) are students who are recruited to work on specific projects at St George's and are paid an hourly rate for the tasks and activities that they are involved in. They work closely with staff and other students to create and implement meaningful change within programmes and the University at large. Academic leadership for SELs rests with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and with operational support provided by the Centre for Innovation and Development in Education (CIDE). A recent example of a project that has included significant input from SELs has been the assessment and feedback enhancement project.

17. The appointed Student Enhancement Leads are expected to complete a certain number of tasks and activities to ensure progression of the project that they have been assigned to and these may fall under the following categories:
    - Initial training and participation in workshops
    - Canvassing students' views and conveying change and innovation to them
    - Commenting on draft documents

- Help with the organisation of student-staff events

Course committees

18. Each programme is responsible for setting up a Course Committee. The Course Committee is a forum in which staff and students are able to discuss issues about the general health of a programme and share ideas about ways in which the programme might be improved. Depending on the structure of the programme, there may also be sub-committees for subsidiary parts of the programme such as a module or year. A description of the way in which the Course Committee system operates should be included in each programme handbook. QAEC has issued a policy statement on course committees that is available for inclusion in programme handbooks (Appendix H1: Student Involvement in Course Committees).

19. Course Committees hold formal meetings. They are chaired by a senior member of staff, agendas are published, supporting papers are distributed in advance of meetings and minutes are kept. Each programme can decide:
    - the level at which the Course Committee meetings will be held (e.g. module, year of study, whole programme);
    - how students are (s)elected (see paragraphs 10-11);
    - who has responsibility for setting up meetings, for distributing agenda papers and for follow-up work (including the authorship, approval and distribution of minutes);
    - the timing and frequency of meetings;
    - the role of course committees in programme monitoring.

20. There may be instances where representatives are asked to withdraw from a meeting, for example when the progress of individuals or the topics of examination papers are to be discussed. These sessions will be presented as reserved business on the agenda papers and in the minutes.

Student Staff Liaison Groups and Student-Staff Committees

21. Student Staff Liaison Groups (SSLGs) are usually held on an annual basis with each meeting taking place early in the autumn term. Their primary purpose is to help St George's to better understand the NSS / SES to inform effective programme level action planning. The Associate Dean for Student Experience is responsible for policy in relation to SSLGs including the timing and purpose of meetings.

22. The SSLG is convened by the Course Director (or nominee) with a wide range of attendees. Attendees should normally include representation from the course team and professional services, Information Services and Estates. All students, with the exception of new entrants to the programme, must be invited to the SSLG.

23. SSLGs are a student-led discussion forum within which students are asked to consider why feedback was provided. Students are asked to to prioritise areas for enhancement or change with outcomes RAG-rated and included in the SSLG Template for action-planning purposes. The template is also used for annual programme monitoring (see section B of the quality manual).

24. From 2022/23, St George's will pilot Student-Staff Committees on a number of courses. These Committees are intended to replace SSLGs. They will be chaired by a nominated student representative who will work with a staff sub-Chair.

Student Online Teaching Survey (SOLTS)

25. The Student Online Teaching Survey (SOLTS) is a requirement for all programmes. The Survey has been designed to gather feedback from students on every aspect of the module. The Associate Dean for Student Experience is responsible for the coverage of the survey which will usually comprise 10 standard questions (and two optional questions) using a standard Likert scale.

26. For those programmes that do not have a conventional modular structure, the Course Director will be responsible for identifying the level at which student feedback about teaching quality will be sought. The Associate Dean for Student Experience will, if appropriate, advise on the adaptation of SOLTS for non-modular programmes.

Administration of the Student Online Teaching Survey

27. The Student Online Teaching Survey will be administered as follows.
   - Students complete the survey via a link sent to their University email account or via Canvas.
   - Module report and feedback for all teachers is sent to the module leader. The module leader sends a reflection of the feedback and proposed actions to all students via the EvaMetrics portal.
   - Teachers receive their own feedback and the core module questions. Module leaders will be responsible for providing a response to students and for generating module action plans.
   - Course Directors will have sight of all module surveys for their programme and will be responsible for generating actions at a programme level. These will be reviewed by the Student Experience Action Group (SEAG) when completed.
   - Course Directors will also flag good practice to a teacher's line manager - this is to support any case for promotion and teaching awards. They will also flag developmental needs for staff. If the teacher is external and their line manager is unknown good practice or developmental needs for a teacher will be referred to the Centre Head / Head of School.
   - Centre Heads, Head of School and Senior Staff will monitor the results of all relevant modules via a RAG rated dashboard.

Student Online Teaching Survey (SOLTS)
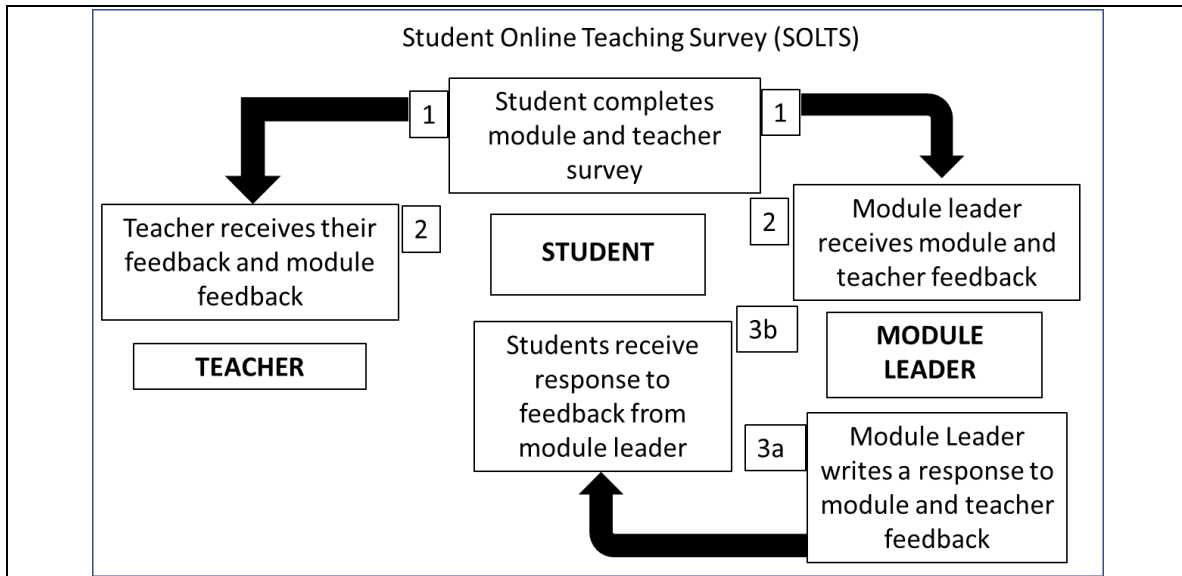
28. The Chair of SEAG will provide a report for the Education & Students Strategy Committee (ESSC) on completion rates, areas of good practice and actions that require strategic intervention each semester or as determined by the urgency of the action required.

The Unitu online student voice platform

29. Unitu is an online platform that enables individual students, student representatives and staff to raise issues, suggest ideas and open a discussion about any programme -related and university-wide matter.

30. The Unitu platform enables individual students to post messages on a private message board that is accessible to others on the student's programme and similar programmes. If the content of the message receives traction amongst the student online communities, the student representative will migrate the message to a public board for staff to pick up and respond to as appropriate. The Unitu platform therefore allows issues that matter to students to be raised in a transparent way and for a real-time solution to be developed following consultation between staff and students.

31. Academic leadership for Unitu rests with the Associate Dean for the Student Experience and with operational support provided by the Student Engagement Officer. All students must be able to access Unitu and programme teams are expected to work with the Associate Dean and the Student Engagement Officer to facilitate access to the platform.

The National Student Survey (NSS)

32. All final year undergraduate students are invited to complete the National Student Survey. The NSS is conducted annually between February and April and the results are made available to participating Institutions in the following July. The NSS is conducted by Ipsos MORI, an independent market research company. Results are disseminated by Texuna Technologies Ltd.

33. The Director of Planning (or nominee) will undertake the initial detailed analysis of the findings of the NSS. The results and the supporting analysis are distributed by the Director of Planning to the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Associate Dean for the Student Experience, Directors of Professional Surveys, the Academic Registrar, Heads of Department, Institute or Centre, Course Directors and other St George's staff with course management responsibilities.

34. The results and the supporting analysis are also distributed by the Planning Office to Executive Board, the Education and Student Strategy Committee and the Student Experience Action Group.

35. ESSC takes an overview of the aggregated NSS findings. To this end, the Committee receives the NSS results for the Institution as a whole and for each subject area and the detailed analysis carried out by the Director of Planning (or nominee) when it meets in the autumn term. Executive Board (or its chair) will determine whether any ad hoc working groups (e.g. NSS summits) will be convened to develop an immediate institution-level response to the NSS results for that year. Thereafter the Student Experience Action Group is responsible for monitoring all NSS follow-up work.

36. Responsibility for addressing the subject-level NSS findings rests with the teaching teams that deliver the programmes covered by the NSS. These teaching teams are expected to convene a Student Staff Liaison Group to explore the meaning of the results and formulate the outcomes of that analysis into a RAG-rated Action Plan.

37. Professional support service directorates that offer services that impact on the student experience are also expected to formulate Action Plans.

38. All Action Plans are monitored by SEAG. Actions taken in response to the NSS must also be included in the Annual Programme Monitoring Report.

The Student Experience Survey (SES) and departmental surveys

39. The SES is administered by the Student Experience Coordinator with the form, coverage and timing of the Survey reviewed by SEAG. It is conducted annually in February (alongside the NSS). Students completing the NSS are not required to complete the SES. The SES results are analysed and distributed by the Director of Planning (or nominee) in the same way as for the NSS (see paragraphs 32-38).

40. Most professional support service directorates run user satisfaction surveys and use the results of these surveys to plan the delivery of the service. In many instances, the SES can be used to capture student views about service provision. Where this is not practical, responsibility for the administration of supplementary surveys rests with the Director of Service. This responsibility includes the timing and frequency of the survey, survey design and the arrangements for processing the survey results and disseminating outcomes and actions to staff and students.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

41. St George's participates in the biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). These surveys are administered by Advance HE. The Deputy Head of the Graduate School (Taught Postgraduate Courses) will have oversight responsibility for all stages of St George's participation in PTES including the distribution of survey outcomes and the initiation of follow up Action Plans. The Deputy Head of the Graduate School (Research Degrees) has the equivalent responsibility in relation to PRES.

Governance - Student Experience Action Group, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and the Education & Students Strategy Committee

42. Student Engagement and all aspects of the Student Voice are overseen, monitored and delivered under the aegis of the Student Experience Action Group (SEAG), chaired by the Associate Dean for Student Experience. Centre and Faculty Leads are accountable to the SEAG for completing agreed actions based on student feedback.

43. SEAG is responsible for advising on strategic direction, resourcing, reputational and policy matters related to student experience and engagement institution-wide. It coordinates and evaluates student experience interventions and student engagement across all institutes, departments and faculties.

44. SEAG is a key advisory, monitoring and action planning group that reports into the Education & Students Strategy Committee (ESSC), to which it is accountable. SEAG is responsible for development, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the quality assurance processes that underpin effective student engagement. In this regard, SEAG is accountable to QAEC.

Forms and guidance notes

45. The following guidance notes are available from the Quality and Partnerships Directorate:

Appendix H1: Student Involvement in Course Committee

Flowchart

46. The following flowchart illustrates the sequence of events in relation to encouraging student engagement and obtaining student feedback:

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│ National Student Survey │          │          │ SOLTS (Module feedback) │
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