Student Representative Manual 2018

Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC)

RMIT | Careers and Employability
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What is a Student–Staff Consultative Committee?

If you have opened this manual, you have probably just been elected as a student representative on your program’s Student–Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC). Welcome!

RMIT University is committed to working with students to improve the quality of the learning and teaching experience. We get feedback from students in various ways, including through the SSCCs.

The committees empower students to give feedback and have real input on how their study program is taught and managed. This includes:

— reviewing whether the program plan has been implemented effectively
— contributing to the quality of the program
— ensuring that the learning environment is student-focused and complete.

SSCCs can deal with program-related issues, including:

— course and program structure
— workload
— teaching methods
— access to resources and facilities
— timetabling
— classes

SSCCs do not deal with formal complaints, grievances or student rights issues, such as appeals. For more information, please read page 16.

Summary of the SSCC terms of reference

How the SSCC operates

The committee:

a. highlights examples of good practice
b. monitors the delivery of the program against the program plan
c. monitors the delivery of courses against course guides
d. monitors the total student workload
e. monitors the general satisfaction of students with the program
f. considers suggestions for modification and improvement to the program
g. considers and seeks to resolve problems that are of concern to students undertaking the program
h. makes recommendations to appropriate managers on matters requiring action that the committee cannot resolve directly.

Other useful information

Committee membership is for one calendar year.

The committee should meet at least twice each semester, with seven working days’ notice given to all members, including the time, place, agenda and papers for the meeting. If appropriate, you can ‘meet’ online in a forum instead of on campus.

Two members of academic/teaching staff and half of the student members are required for a meeting.
What do you think?

Rank the items listed above from (a) to (h) in order of their importance to you as a student representative.

Then convert your first and second points into actions you could pursue. What would you need to know and do?

Use this information when you promote the SSCC for your study program.

Student feedback and surveys

The University has a number of mechanisms through which the students’ views are sought – SSCCs, student representation on academic committees, student surveys and focus groups arranged to consult on specific issues. Together these allow the University to capture students’ views about their courses, programs and the services offered on all campuses. The student feedback mechanisms are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - Student feedback mechanisms
Student feedback and surveys

Student feedback mechanisms
- Students in Governance
- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Complaints Process
- Unstructured feedback

Communications of Results and Outcomes
- Students
- Council (in summary via biannual Business Plan reports and occasional papers)
- Vice-Chancellor’s Executive
- Colleges and Schools
- Service Portfolios and Groups
- Academic Board and sub-committees
- Education Committee and the Vocational Education and Training Committee

Analysis of Feedback
Feedback is aggregated at various levels. (e.g. Program, School and Service areas)

University policies & processes

Plans
Feedback informs:
- Strategic Plan (5 year duration)
- Academic Plan (5 year duration)
- Research and Innovation Plan (5 year duration)
- Business Plan (1 year duration)
- College, School and Group operational plans (1 year duration)
- Individual Workplans
- Program review and annual profile development processes

Dissemination of Feedback
Feedback is disseminated to those responsible for improving the student experience.
Student feedback improves the student experience.

It informs:

— improvements to the design, quality, relevance and viability of programs and courses
— improvements in teaching practice supported by relevant professional development
— the University’s approach to reward and recognition including the academic promotion process
— improvements to learning resources, learning technologies and student support services
— enhancements to campus environments and facilities.

Student feedback also informs the development of the strategic and operational plans of the University:

— The Strategic Plan (five-year duration)
— The Academic Plan (five-year duration)
— The Research and Innovation Plan (five-year duration)
— The University Scorecard (including the student load profile and budget)
— annual college, school and group operational plans
— individual workplans.

The key findings from student feedback are disseminated to:

— students via teaching staff, SSCCs and the RMIT website at www.rmit.edu.au/ssc
— council (in summary via biannual Business Plan reports and through occasional papers)
— Vice-Chancellor’s Executive
— colleges and schools
— service portfolios and groups
— Academic Board and its standing committees.

How survey feedback is collected and used

Course Experience Survey (CES)
The CES is the University-wide survey of students’ views on their learning experience within individual courses. Student feedback through the CES helps the University understand the issues important to students arising from their day-to-day learning and teaching experiences. CES outcomes contribute to course improvement initiatives, as well as staff promotion and teaching award applications.

The CES is administered by RMIT to all students in a course each semester. The CES covers all coursework activities across Vocational Educational (VE) and Higher Education (HE) programs. The survey consists of a standard core of eight quantitative questions that include the Good Teaching Scale (GTS) and Overall Satisfaction Index (OSI). Up to eight additional quantitative questions derived from the University’s approved question bank may also be included. There are also two qualitative questions that provide the opportunity for students to identify the best aspect of the course and the aspect requiring improvement.

Results are distributed to individual academics, course coordinators, colleges, schools and central groups involved in improving teaching and the curriculum.

Aggregate reports are provided at the University-wide level. These reports are available via the Survey Services Centre website at www.rmit.edu.au/ssc

Student Experience Survey (SES)

In 2015, the Federal Government introduced the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) including the Student Experience Survey (SES) for commencing and completing onshore undergraduate students. The QILT SES replaced the RMIT SES for onshore undergraduate students.

The QILT surveys are administered by the Social Research Centre (SRC) under contract from the Federal Government.

The QILT SES focuses on measureable aspects of students’ higher education experiences linked to student support, learning resources, learner engagement, teaching and development outcomes. The QILT SES includes a GTS, OSI, Generic Skills Scale, and Clear Goals and Standards Scale. The SES survey population includes commencing and final year onshore undergraduate HE students. Please note that while the commencing and completing students are invited to complete the SES as administered by the SRC, all other HE RMIT students (intervening years, Research, onshore and offshore (Vietnam)) are invited to complete the same survey, but it is administered by RMIT. RMIT SES instruments are administered to Higher Degree by Research students.

The QILT website (www.qilt.edu.au) aims to provide prospective and current students with a tool to compare the quality of teaching and learning in HE institutions and study areas around Australia. The website focuses on the experience of current undergraduates and newly qualified undergraduates.

Managers, schools, colleges and central groups are involved in improving teaching, the curriculum and service groups. Aggregate reports are provided at a
University-wide level. Major themes are tracked across years and results reported to VCE and Academic Board to identify University-wide responses. Results are available via the Survey Services Centre website at www.rmit.edu.au/ssc

Learner Questionnaire (LQ)
Quality Indicator data is used by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to undertake continuous improvement and by national, state and territory registering bodies to inform the public. Each is measured through the annual Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) collection.

The LQ is administered annually to current VE students by RMIT using a standard national instrument. Mandated as a part of RTO compliance under the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), the LQ provides detail on students’ satisfaction with the teaching quality and work relevance of their program. Results are distributed to schools, colleges, and central groups involved in improving teaching and the curriculum.

QLT Graduate Outcomes Survey (QLT GOS) and Graduate Outcomes Survey Longitudinal (GOS-L)
The QILT GOS replaced the Australian Graduate Survey in 2015. The GOS is a Federal-Government-mandated survey administered by the Social Research Centre. The survey includes questions about students’ university experiences and graduate destinations, such as further study or employment, and is administered to undergraduate and postgraduate onshore HE graduates who have completed the requirements of an HE-accredited qualification. The survey is administered in May and November each year.

The GOS-L is the longitudinal component of the GOS commencing in 2016. It is envisaged that the GOS-L will have similar items to the GOS and will follow up graduates who have completed the initial GOS every year for three years after graduation.

Student Outcomes Survey (SOS)
The SOS is administered by the National Council for Vocational and Educational Research (NCVER) four months after graduation. The SOS covers all VE programs and includes the GTS, the OSI and qualitative comments. Results are distributed to schools, colleges and central groups involved in improving teaching and the curriculum.

Aggregate reports are provided at the University-wide level and are reported to VCE and Academic Board to identify University-wide responses. Results are available from NCVER at www.ncver.edu.au

The three Rs: representation, response, recognition

Representation
Acting as a student representative on an SSCC provides you with great opportunities to:

— provide feedback on behalf of your fellow students to RMIT academic staff about the program you are studying
— contribute to the improvement of your study program and give positive feedback on aspects of the program that students particularly value
— increase your appreciation of the role of the student
— voice in education
— gain greater understanding of how an educational organisation like RMIT operates
— develop new skills in communication, consultation, problem solving, teamwork and meeting procedures, or extend your existing skills
— expand your leadership potential that, in turn, will help prepare you for future employment and community involvement when you graduate.

The experience and confidence you gain on an SSCC may also encourage you to nominate for student representative positions on other RMIT committees and boards.
Response

The University’s Program and course life-cycle policy (www.rmit.edu.au/policies/program/lifecycle) requires the establishment of SSCCs and that students have the opportunity to provide feedback. The policy also requires student feedback to be used as a central component in program and course review, and as part of the process to ensure the effectiveness of teaching.

A new program and course policy is in the process of being approved, and will continue to require that all coursework programs have a SSCC.

Recognition

You can have your role as a student representative on an SSCC formally recognised by the University. You will be eligible to receive an RMIT LEAD certificate signed by the Vice-Chancellor, accompanied by a brief statement outlining your role as a student representative and a reference on your academic transcript. All you have to do is complete:

— the three-hour training session
— a minimum of seven hours of activities directly related to the work of your SSCC.

The activities can include:

— attending and actively participating in your program’s SSCC meetings during your year as a student representative
— contributing to the committee’s work by consulting with other students in your program, identifying areas of concern and suggestions for action, and providing them with a voice in meetings
— preparing for committee meetings
— other initiatives that contribute to the effective operation of your program’s SSCC.

Being a student representative on the SSCC will provide you with:

— the skills to prepare and participate in meetings
— experience in negotiation and collecting student feedback
— presentation of issues and making a difference.

These are important life and work skills. For more information go to the program and course life-cycle policy (www.rmit.edu.au/policies). Consider the benefits of improving your program!

What do you think?

Can the SSCC make a significant difference to the learning experience at RMIT? What can you do to make that difference?
What do you think?

To help you focus on the benefits of being a student representative, use thinking tools such as Positive Minus Interesting (PMI) or Pros Cons Questions (PCQ). The ‘Interesting’ and ‘Questions’ columns should uncover some unexpected outcomes.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Minus</th>
<th>Interesting - What is a “far out” possible outcome?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Questions - What if? I wonder...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meetings

One of the most important aspects of your role as an SSCC representative is taking an active part in meetings.

Meetings can be either formal or informal. The chairperson determines this, as well as whether a particular set of procedures are set down for the group. Guidelines for the SSCC’s operation are included in the Appendix (see page 20) and can be used as a reference.

The following basic principles will ensure that your meetings are efficient and effective.

Preparing for meetings
Meetings work better if all the participants are well prepared:

— Everyone should know the time, location and agenda of the meeting.
— The meeting should be held in a place without distractions and at a time suitable for most members to attend.
— As a student representative, you should always prepare yourself before a meeting. Think about the discussions from the last meeting and read the minutes, the agenda and any papers forwarded for consideration and discussion.
— Preparing comments and suggestions to raise at meetings is easier if you have effective ways of communicating with the students in your cohort (e.g. VE, undergraduate etc.).

Taking part in meetings
Regardless of whether a meeting is formal or informal, or what the subject matter is, there are three common features:

— chairing
— agenda
— minutes.

Some features include:

— motions
— reports and discussion papers.

All meetings require:

— being punctual and courteous
— active participation from everyone.

Chairing
It is easy to lose direction and run out of time without reaching any decisions. Therefore, it is the role of the chairperson to maintain productive and meaningful discussion, and to make sure everyone has a fair say – but not to control or manipulate the discussion.

Covering all items on the agenda
The chairperson must keep an eye on the time, and summarise the discussion so that participants in the meeting are clear on items of agreement and items of debate. The chairperson should normally restrict their input to the discussion and concentrate on monitoring the state of the meeting. If time runs out, some items will be held over to the next meeting. Ensuring everyone has a chance to speak. It is essential that all participants feel part of the group and have something to contribute. People who are introverted sometimes need to be asked for their opinion. People who interrupt others should be told to wait for their turn. If several people wish to speak at once, the chairperson needs to direct people to speak accordingly.

Using a sequence of speakers
Some chairpersons use a ‘speaking list’ as it helps identify who wants to speak and prioritises those entering the discussion for the first time. Maintaining a speaking list might be the role of a deputy chairperson if the committee has one. If the minute-taker is also a member of the committee, they should go to the top of any speaking list. It recognises that they are doing a valuable job in the committee and may not get a chance to speak while taking minutes.

Negotiating differences of opinion
Differences of opinion need to be identified, talked about openly and discussed, and resolutions sought. If the participants have made an effort to find a resolution and still cannot reach an agreement, the chairperson should hold the item over, and move on to the next item of discussion.

Allocating tasks
The chairperson should allocate tasks to a person or a group to avoid members over-committing themselves. It is good practice for the chairperson to ensure that any new members are offered a task, e.g. bringing specific information to the next meeting. An action sheet can be circulated, including tasks allocated to people, completion date/report and a time when members are to be updated on the item.

Recording attendance
The chairperson should create a system for recording attendance in the minutes. Some meetings use an attendance book as a chronological record of who
attended each meeting, which can then be used to identify absences over the full year. The attendance book can also have space for members to indicate changes to their contact details. This is an important factor to ensure that papers for meetings reach the members efficiently.

Setting up the date, time and place for the next meeting

If possible, the details of the next meeting should be decided before the meeting closes. This allows everyone involved to plan ahead. If you are unable to attend the next meeting, and the committee’s procedures allow members to have a proxy (a temporary replacement) represent you, it is important to inform that proxy and allow them to prepare for the meeting and inform the committee secretary in a timely fashion. The secretary will then ensure that the proxy is appropriate, receives all subsequent papers and advises the chairperson of the proxy in attendance.

Agenda

All meetings should have an agenda (a list of items to be discussed); without it there is no clear direction. An agenda (also showing date, time and place for the next meeting) should be sent out to committee members by a specified number of days before the meeting, together with any background information or reports they will need to adequately prepare for discussions.

Agendas should be put together so that each item flows on to the next. It is best to put the most important issues first, with issues of lesser importance further down the list. The order can be changed through ‘starring’ and ‘double starring’ items, which brings them to the beginning of the meeting. If possible, a specified time should be allocated to each item.

The advantage of having the agenda before the meeting is that members can write down what they would like to say, or research a particular issue that will be raised.

Sometimes urgent matters arise that require attention and a decision. These matters would usually be raised under ‘Other Business’ on the agenda.

If a paper or report relating to the item could not be provided to members prior to the meeting, it should be tabled through the chairperson for approval. The chairperson would distribute copies at the relevant point in the meeting then allow the discussion to take place – or defer the discussion to a subsequent meeting if it could not be dealt with adequately.

Minutes

Minutes are an account of what took place at the meeting. The minutes are normally the responsibility of the committee’s secretary – although sometimes the role is shared among members.

Minutes of the meeting should always be kept, no matter how informal the meeting, otherwise the meeting’s achievements may be forgotten and no action taken. They should include:

- who was at the meeting
- important points raised during discussion around agenda items
- any decisions made
- a listing of any tasks allocated
- details of the next meeting (if finalised).

As soon as possible after the meeting the minutes should be typed up and sent (e.g. via email) to all those in the group. Normally, any inaccuracies in the minutes need to be raised with the minute-taker (if a draft set of minutes is provided for the purpose) before or at the next meeting. This will ensure that there is an accurate record of the proceedings.

It is normal practice to discuss items that arise from the minutes early in a meeting. It allows the group to report on action that has been taken since the last meeting and for any further discussion or action required. The chairperson may then ask the group to formally accept the minutes as an accurate record of what took place in the previous meeting.

Motions

In situations where decisions need to be taken about issues, it is common to use motions to spell out what action is being put forward. A motion should contain just one idea and be clear and easy to understand.

Please note: some committees operate informally and would only use formal rules of debate, write motions or call for a record mover and seconder if it is identified that it is needed, e.g. for a contentious matter.

Reports and discussion papers

Reports can be used to provide information and act as an accountability mechanism for a committee, board or team. As mentioned, in the case of written reports it is best if they are circulated beforehand, particularly those that require consideration at that meeting. However, a chairperson can allocate reading time to a short paper if it is not possible for it to be circulated before the meeting, e.g. where a matter requiring urgent attention has just arisen.
Not only is it courteous to read other people’s written reports, and listen when reports are presented verbally at the meeting, but it means members are better informed and able to contribute to any discussion of the contents. The same approach applies to discussion papers provided to stimulate members’ consideration of specific issues.

Both reports and discussion papers should be clear, concise and well presented to ensure everyone understands the subject matter. The author of the report or discussion paper should have identified points for attention and any actions they would like to propose.

Reports should be recorded in the minutes. In formal meetings they may be adopted or accepted by means of a motion. A report can also be formally accepted (or received) but not necessarily endorsed by the members.

**Being punctual and other courtesies**

It is important for those attending the meeting to be there at the appointed time. If this is standard practice, meetings will start on time and may even finish earlier.

Punctuality expresses courtesy to others. If members are going to be late for a meeting, they should let someone know (e.g. the secretary). That way, representation will be more effective – people will not miss out on debates nor have their contribution overlooked. Some groups record when a member arrives late, to indicate who has not participated in items already discussed.

It can be difficult for everyone to participate in the discussion if:

— members interject with comments when someone else is speaking

— two people carry on a private conversation while someone else is speaking to the group

— speakers mumble or speak too quietly, which can make it difficult for those who do not have perfect hearing to understand.

Similarly, if visual presentations (e.g. slides) are used to discuss an item, they should be designed to allow for people who do not have perfect vision or are slower in their reading speed. It is good practice to use a fairly large typeface, not too much material on each slide, and avoid very fast shifts between slides. It shows consideration towards other members.

**The importance of participating**

The important point to remember about meetings is that they work well when everyone is prepared to actively participate, share and acknowledge the ideas and views of others, and to contribute to positive outcomes. The procedures for meetings are there as a framework to help achieve those outcomes.

Also remember that you are representing other students at RMIT. If you do not participate, others in the committee may not get to hear other students’ views and concerns.

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**What do you think?**

Consider the characteristics of formal and informal meetings. Evaluate which type leads to better outcomes for the students you represent.
Course guides

Know your course guide

As outlined in the summary of the terms of reference (page 4), the committee monitors the delivery of courses against course guides. When course guide information is not adhered to, students may complain. If this happens, it is likely that you will be involved. It is a good idea to become more familiar than most students are with your program’s course guides.

According to the University’s Course Design Procedure course guides must be published no later than the first day of the relevant teaching period. The information in the course guide may be supplemented by detailed information on course requirements provided via the RMIT University learning management system.

What should be in the guide?

The importance of a comprehensive course guide cannot be overstated. You must know from the first class exactly what will be expected of you. The course guide should contain:

— course title and code
— course learning outcomes
— total learning hours for the course — prerequisites and co-requisites
— credit points or (in VE courses) student contact hours
— assessment requirements e.g. assessment task type, weighting allocated to each form of assessment
— grading system and requirements for the satisfactory completion of the course
— name and contact details of staff responsible for the course and their consultation time(s), and details of tutors and technicians where appropriate
— duration and mode of delivery e.g. online, face-to-face, on campus
— Work Integrated Learning information.

Changes to assessment

If changes to assessment are proposed after classes commence for the semester, they can happen only after consulting students in that program. At least 70 percent of the enrolled students must agree to the change. Written notification of the changes must then be given to all students – see section 1.1.11 of the Assessment: conduct of assessment and appeals procedure (www.rmit.edu.au/policies/assessment/conduct). Lecturers and heads of departments and schools are responsible for ensuring the guides are available and accurate for all courses.

Evaluate your program

Evaluating your study program allows you and others to highlight examples of good practice and consider suggestions for modification and improvement to the program. A SWOT analysis is an effective tool for evaluation.

For example, for Program ‘X’, determine its:

— strengths — what is good about the program’s delivery?
— weaknesses — what aspects about the program’s delivery could be improved?
— opportunities — what are the opportunities to improve the program’s delivery?
— threats — what are the threats to what is good about the program’s delivery?

You can use the SWOT diagram on page 15 for your program evaluation.
Get connected to other students

Publicise your involvement

Keep other students in your program aware of your SSCC, its function, your role as their representative, as well as the discussions and actions being taken. Do that at least once per semester. Write informative and concise texts to introduce yourself and your position on the SSCC through bulk emails, lecture talks, Blackboard and Facebook.

Collect feedback

Collecting feedback about your program is an important part of your role as a student representative. Consider the most effective ways of obtaining feedback on an ongoing basis. Use feedback when you get it.

Ensure that a significant number of students are experiencing an issue with the program before bringing it to the committee. If an SSCC meeting is about to be convened, you might not have enough time to raise the issue then and there. Consider seeking a solution before the next meeting using the SWOT analysis.

Give feedback about what you have done whenever appropriate. Feedback about what the SSCC has been considering should occur regularly. Use the same channels to collect feedback.

What do you think?

Lecture talk or email

What would constitute a good, snappy text that announces who you are, what you do, and when and where you are available? Consider the first section in the summary of the SSCC terms and conditions (pages 4–5).

Survey

Can you think of questions for a survey where students can express a range of opinions? The responses must be easily collated.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats
Connect with other student representatives

There are student representatives on SSCCs throughout your college, other advisory and governance committees, and boards around the University, such as:

— **Academic Board and its committees** are authorised by RMIT Council to recommend new programs, academic policies and procedures for VE and HE.

— **Student Experience Advisory Committee** provides advice to the Dean of Students on the overall student experience and satisfaction at RMIT, including priorities for use of the Student Services and Amenities Fee revenue. It also acts as a reference for initiatives affecting student experience, and accepts items within its scope from the Academic Board, college committees, RUSU, RMIT Link and SSCC.

— **College Boards** are involved in the planning, monitoring and review of academic programs in the individual college.

Many of the committees are listed on [www.rmit.edu.au/governance/committees](http://www.rmit.edu.au/governance/committees)

Networking with other student representatives can be a way to gain support, ideas and information based on their experiences as fellow representatives. It can also help you seek solutions to issues within your own SSCC.

### Is it an SSCC issue or a complaint?

Sometimes SSCC representatives must decide whether to pursue an issue themselves or to suggest another process when helping a fellow student. It is important to distinguish issues that can be dealt with by an SSCC from those that should be dealt with through RMIT’s complaints processes.

**An SSCC issue**

Generally speaking, an SSCC representative should pursue an issue when it is raised by a number of students and when its resolution results in an improvement in the delivery and/or content of the academic program. The process is consultative and non-adversarial.

You should seek solutions to the problems before you report to the SSCC meeting. Since SSCC is expected to meet at least four times per year, there is not much time to resolve complex issues. Preparing beforehand can help speed up the discussions.

**A complaint**

A complaint is often raised by an individual and may not be program-related. For example, a student may complain against the way he or she has been treated.

For concerns on the delivery of academic, administrative or support services, students should speak initially with the staff member responsible for the relevant area or issue (e.g. lecturer, course coordinator, program director). This can be done informally in person or in writing. Issues are often resolved quickly at this stage. Students can also use the Student Complaints Form or contact the designated Student Complaints Liaison Officer (SCLO) in their school or college for assistance. For a complete listing of SCLO contacts, see [www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints/contacts](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints/contacts)

If you are unsure where to direct your complaint, contact Student Complaints in the Academic Registrar’s Group at complaints@rmit.edu.au for advice and assistance.

1. **Talk to the staff member**

The first step is to talk to the staff member responsible for the area the student has a complaint about. If the student is unable to do this, or if it is inappropriate to talk directly to the person involved in the complaint, the student should talk to their supervisor or the SCLO for that area.

2. **Student Complaint Liaison Officers (SCLOs)**

SCLOs are staff responsible for handling student complaints in each academic college, school or group. To see contact details for SCLOs, go to [www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints/contacts](http://www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints/contacts)

For unresolved complaints, see the steps in the Student Complaints flow chart.

3. **Academic Registrar’s Office**

High-risk complaints – including those on allegations of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination – should be directed to Student Complaints in the Academic Registrar’s Group. These complaints will normally not be dealt with at the local level. Student Complaints will manage high-risk complaints in consultation with parties to the complaint.

The RMIT Student Complaints process is student driven. Students may withdraw their complaint at anytime. They must take an active role in presenting their case and providing any documentary evidence that may assist with the resolution of their complaint. They can also seek advice from a Student Rights Officer in the RMIT Student Union or contact Student Complaints in the Academic Registrar’s Group for advice and assistance.
The steps are set out in the Student Complaints flow chart:

4. RMIT Ombuds

If the student has taken these steps and is unhappy with the decision, or they are concerned about the process, the matter can be referred to the RMIT Ombuds for review: www.rmit.edu.au/ombuds tel. +61 3 9925 2930.

The RMIT Ombuds will investigate whether policies and procedures have been properly followed, if the complaint has been handled fairly and principles of natural justice have been followed. The RMIT Ombuds cannot change a decision but can make recommendations for resolution directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

5. Victorian Ombudsman

If the student is still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may take it to the Victorian Ombudsman for review: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au

These steps are set out in the following flowchart:
What do you think?

Read the following scenario.

Think about the reasons this is an SSCC issue (rather than a complaint) and the steps that might lead to a solution.

For this example, each step does not work. It inevitably comes to the SSCC for a suitable motion. The key thing is to remember that resolving issues is partially a fact-collection exercise. These facts can be used to support a proposal or motion at the SSCC meeting.

Scenario

There are not enough computer labs within the school; however, most of the programs required to complete assignments are only accessible in the labs. The school is reluctant to purchase software or to get licensing approval for students because the costs are high.

Ascertain the facts. How many students need the programs? When is the demand high? See the lab administrator. Perhaps a solution can be worked out then and there, for example, a booking system is implemented to ensure everyone gets to use the programs.

Inform your lecturers that you have been asked to act on behalf of the students. Ask for advice. Perhaps alternative computer programs might be available at lower costs. Collect the data, specify possible consequences of the problem, and see the head of school.

Prepare a motion for consideration at the next SSCC meeting. It may simply be: 'I move that the school purchases the required software, so that it is available to students by (insert date)'.

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Student rights and responsibilities

RMIT Student Charter

The RMIT Student Charter (www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-education/supporting-learning-and-teaching/student-charter) sets out the responsibilities of students and the University, and reflects RMIT’s core values.

RMIT Student Union (RUSU)

RUSU provides students with a free advisory service through group information sessions and individual consultations with Student Rights Officers. Students experiencing difficulties with the University in relation to their studies can get information on student rights and access to assistance at www.su.rmit.edu.au/help. Students can also direct their complaints to www.su.rmit.edu.au/help/complaints.

As an active, student-controlled body, RUSU has a long history of serving the best interests of students across RMIT and the wider community. It empowers students through various areas, including:

— advocacy and campaigns
— professional development
— volunteering
— information, support and referrals
— campus life
— services for students.

RUSU’s departments and collectives work together in various public forums, resources student representatives on boards and committees at RMIT, and helps organise campaigns and social events to improve campus life through positive changes. RUSU offices are located at all campuses. For more information, visit www.su.rmit.edu.au/about.

Student Conduct

All members of the rich and diverse community that is RMIT University are expected to act in a way which ensures a safe and effective learning and working environment. The Student conduct regulations authorise ‘senior officers’ to take action when there is reasonable evidence that a student may have breached academic integrity or behaved contrary to the values of the University. Further information is available at: www.rmit.edu.au/students/responsibilities/statement.

To-do list

— Introduce yourself to your Program Coordinator.
— Get the contact details of your SSCC’s Secretary.
— Get the contact details of your SCLO.
— Introduce yourself to your school’s Student Feedback Coordinator and talk about the Course Experience Survey.
— Introduce yourself to a RUSU’s Student Rights Officer.
— Write snappy text to introduce yourself to other students in your program through lecture talks, emails or other electronic communications.
Appendix

Guidelines for the operation of SSCCs

1. Membership

1.1 The composition of the Student–Staff Consultative Committee membership is to be recorded by the appropriate college board.

1.2 The head of school or program coordinator in the school that controls the program (i.e. the home school) should be a member of the committee.

1.3 Colleges or schools may arrange the membership of the Student–Staff Consultative Committee to suit their particular needs.

1.4 For small programs, it may be practical to include all year levels of the program. If this model is adopted, the membership of the committee must still include a staff member from each course.

1.5 Alternatively, there may be a separate Student–Staff Consultative Committee for each year level of the program and a staff membership comprising a representative of each course in the year level.

1.6 For programs where there are multiple discipline streams, the Student–Staff Consultative Committee membership may be constructed around the streams.

1.7 In all cases, ‘courses’ mean all compulsory courses provided by both home and service schools.

1.8 Student representatives are to be elected by and from the students in the program or year level as appropriate. Elected representatives may nominate another student enrolled in the same program or year level as their proxy.

1.9 Consideration should be given to gender balance and the mix of student representation, e.g. international and domestic students, part-time and full-time students, mature-age students. In the event that such representation does not result from the electoral process, the chairperson may co-opt additional students to achieve the required representation.

1.10 Any student enrolled in the program may attend meetings of the committee as an observer and may seek leave to speak. Any staff member teaching in the program may attend meetings of the committee as an observer and may seek leave to speak. Students and staff wishing to exercise these rights should notify the secretary in advance in order to ensure the venue is large enough.

1.11 The Student–Staff Consultative Committee Procedure should be publicised to students during the enrolment period, orientation period and the first week of scheduled classes.

2. Chairing

2.1 The chairperson should:

(a) be the program leader/coordinator or head of school or, at their discretion, may be elected by and from the membership of the committee

(b) ensure that the business of the meeting is conducted expeditiously and constructively

(c) be responsible for ensuring that the objectives of this policy are adhered to and that all members of the committee are encouraged to participate in its deliberations

(d) ensure that meetings are not adversarial in nature.

3. Deputies

3.1 A deputy chair should be appointed at the first meeting of the committee.

4. Training

4.1 The RMIT LEAD program (www.rmit.edu.au/lead) will provide training and/or training resources for student representatives to enhance their effectiveness as advocates and active participants in the committee’s deliberations.

4.2 The training and/or training resources should be provided prior to the first meeting of the committee, wherever possible.

5. Secretary

5.1 The secretary of the committee should be appointed by the chairperson and need not be a member of the committee.

5.2 The secretary is responsible for collating and distributing the agenda and minutes, as well as taking minutes in the meeting. Unconfirmed minutes of SSCC meetings should be made available to all students and staff in the program/stream within two weeks of the meeting.

5.3 It is the secretary’s responsibility to ensure that staff who are not members of the committee are advised of agenda items which may have an impact upon them and of their right to attend as observers.
Student representatives should provide the secretary with the names of students who are not members but are particularly affected by an item so that they can be invited to attend as observers. Items that are raised at the meeting which affect staff who are not present are to be deferred to a subsequent meeting and the staff member apprised of the issue.

6. Quorum

6.1 The attendance of two members of academic staff and a minimum of half of the student members of the committee will constitute a quorum. The minutes will record the attendance.

Where quorum is not reached, the committee may meet informally and the minutes ratified at a subsequent meeting. The chairperson should try to find out the reasons why quorum was not reached and work in conjunction with the secretary and other members to ensure that meetings take place at times when all members can attend.

If reaching quorum is a continuing problem in a program, students, staff, heads of school and associate PVCs Learning and Teaching, and the Student Union should be made aware of the problem so that reasons can be ascertained and solutions sought.

7. Elections

7.1 Should an election of student representatives be necessary, it must be completed by the end of the second week of semester to allow time for training of student representatives before the first meeting of the committee.

7.2 Elections should be conducted in the timeliest way possible given the time constraints. They could be held at orientation meetings, at the first week of semester or at a special meeting.

7.3 At the meeting, any nominations should be listed and a request made for other interested students to nominate themselves or others. If the number of nominations is less than or equal to the number of student vacancies on the committee, then those students nominating should be accepted on the committee. If the number of nominations exceeds the number of student vacancies on the committee, then a process of negotiation may occur subject to the agreement of the nominees and students.

7.4 If elections are required, then voting may be by show of hand or a more formal process if required. If the latter, then the head of school/program coordinator or nominee should act as returning officer.

7.5 The method of elections will be first past the post.

8. Meetings

8.1 Meetings of the committee should be held at least twice in each semester, with the first meeting being held no later than the end of the fourth week of each semester. More frequent brief meetings, rather than infrequent long meetings, should be considered.

8.2 Meetings should have a fixed duration and must be closed on or prior to the appointed time. Alternatively, meetings may be via an online forum where appropriate.

8.3 Meetings may be convened by the chairperson at their discretion or at the request of the head of school or a minimum of half the student representatives on the committee.

8.4 The secretary should give the notice of meeting at least seven clear days prior to the meeting date. Special meetings may be held at shorter notice if authorised by the chairperson.

8.5 All members should be made aware upon election of the committee of any and all forms of meeting procedure that may be followed. Procedures of which members have not been apprised should not be used. All members of the committee should agree to a change of meeting procedures, e.g. from formal to informal.

9. Agenda

9.1 Agenda items may be forwarded to the secretary by members at any time. The secretary may email members requesting agenda items at least 10 days prior to the meeting date. These items will form a draft agenda, which the chairperson will authorise for circulation prior to the next scheduled meeting.

9.2 The agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and any relevant papers should be distributed to all members of the committee.

9.3 The agenda should also be placed on relevant school or program noticeboards, should they exist next to the minutes, so interested parties who are not on the committee are aware of issues coming up. This is in addition to the requirement that students and staff who are affected by an item should be individually invited to attend as observers.

9.4 Standing agenda items should include:

(a) attendance

(b) confirmation of the agenda – additional items

(c) confirmation of the minutes of previous meeting
(d) matters arising from the minutes – follow up on actions

(e) reports from students and staff

(f) general business

(g) other business.

10. Minutes of meetings

10.1 Minutes of meetings should be kept by the secretary and circulated to members of the committee. Minutes should be made available to all students enrolled in the program.

10.2 It is important that all affected parties have the opportunity to be aware of what transpires at committee meetings. Distribution of minutes is an important method of ensuring this. It is recommended that confirmed and unconfirmed minutes be made available to affected students and staff through posting noticeboards, via email, on intranets etc. Alternatively, the secretary may produce a ‘newsletter’ or edited version of the minutes containing only a list of items discussed and decisions made, which would be posted next to the minutes in order to keep students up to date until confirmed minutes are available.

10.3 If minutes are posted on school or program websites, then care should be taken to ensure that they are accessible only to authorised persons, and not available to the general public.

11. Recommendations

11.1 The committee may make recommendations.

11.2 Recommendations made by the committee should be accompanied by an action component whereby the person/s responsible and the proposed action are recorded.

11.3 The committee should make recommendations that may result in action being taken by:

(a) the program team

(b) the program leader/coordinator or head of school controlling the program, and/or

(c) the associate PVC Learning and Teaching, or nominee.