Using the student voice to drive the quality enhancement agenda through the production of Staff Student Liaison Committee Annual Reports

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Activity
The University of Bath works in partnership with the Students' Union (SU) to foster an environment where students are encouraged to provide open and honest feedback on all aspects of their student experience, and to undertake a role as peers and not as passive consumers. Two years ago the University worked with the SU (alongside academic departments) to revise its QA Code of Practice Statement for Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs). Distinctive features of the new statement include the appointment of student chairs and secretaries, the submission of an annual report on SSLC business by departments, and the dissemination of good practice from annual reports. In addition, templates are provided to SSLCs to help structure these annual reports.

This is the second year that SSLC annual reports have been submitted to the SU, to enable the Vice-President (Education) to submit an overview report identifying cross-institutional themes to the University Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. The SU Overview Report highlights a series of good practice examples and recommends a range of quality enhancements. These recommendations are then passed back to all academic departments and professional student support services for implementation.

Impact
The strengthening of the informed student voice through SSLC Annual Reports has initiated enhancements in a number of pedagogical areas such as, assessment and feedback, enhancing learning through technology, evaluation, and teaching and learning practices. Specific examples include:

- Introduction of departmental level Feedback Policies which have been developed in partnership between academic colleagues and students;
- An audit in 2010/11 of peer mentoring schemes at the University;
- Reviewing by SSLCs of the accuracy and usefulness of unit information provided to students selecting optional units.
Reflections

The introduction of the SSLC Annual Reports and the associated Overview Report written by the SU has impacted positively on the role and standing of SSLCs within the University. Although not all SSLCs have used the template provided for their Annual Report, the Overview Report produced by the Students’ Union has been able to draw attention to a range of student concerns and issues to which the University has been able to react. This approach helps to highlight to students that their comments are valued and listened to by the University, and emphasises the importance of the student voice and the determination of the University to ensure that students’ comments on their programme have been acted upon. One key indicator of the success of this approach can be seen in the NSS results where Question B6.3 places the University of Bath nine percentage points above the top quartile threshold.