

## **Student Council**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The establishment of student councils play an integral and important role in the student community. Student councils provide a representative structure through which students can debate issues of concern and undertake initiatives of benefit to the college and the wider community

Students have a voice and a contribution to make to their college. It is important that they be given the opportunity to express their views on issues of concern to them in the college. It is equally important that they are listened to and encouraged to take an active part in promoting the aims and objectives of the college.

The guidelines mentioned in this manual are intended to provide practical guidance to student council members in the establishment and operation of the student council.

### **What is a Student Council?**

A Student Council is a representative structure through which students in the college can become involved in the affairs of the college, working in partnership with the management, staff and students for the benefit of the college and its students.

### **Why have a Student Council?**

The Student Council is an increasingly common feature in many colleges and have worked to the benefit of the institutes. Students have a valuable contribution to make to the betterment of their college and their involvement in the operation of the college is itself a valuable part of the education process for the students. A Student Council provides an opportunity for students to engage in a structured partnership with teachers, students and management in the operation of their college. Research indicates that Student Councils can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in colleges. Student Councils can create a sense of ownership of the college and its activities among the student population.

The establishment of a Student Council gives students an opportunity to acquire the sort of communication, planning and organisational skills which will be of benefit to them in their future lives. It enables students to take responsibility for projects, and to demonstrate that they can manage and bring such projects to successful conclusion. Moreover, the contribution made by a Student Council to the development of college policy in a number of areas can have significant benefits for students and the college. College policies are far more likely to be successful where they are clearly understood and accepted by all partners within the community. At the end of the day, a Student Council will thrive only if students themselves are committed to the concept and to making it work.

## **Chapter 2: The role of the Student Council**

A Student Council will set its own objectives. Some general objectives could include:

- To enhance communication between students, management and staff
- To promote an environment conducive to educational and personal development
- To promote friendship and respect among pupils
- To support the management and staff in the development of the college
- To represent the views of the students on matters of general concern to them

A Student Council will identify activities that it would like to be involved in organising, although the final decision on the activities of a Student Council should be agreed with college management. A Student Council should not through its activities interfere with, or detract from, the authority of college management or the teaching staff of the college. It is therefore not a function of a Student Council to discuss or comment on matters relating to the employment or professional affairs of the Principal, teachers and other staff of the college, or to become involved in any issues that fall within their professional competence.

### **The Student Council and the Management**

- The college shall establish and maintain procedures for the purpose of informing about the activities in the college.
- The college shall encourage and help students to set up a Student Council and shall assist a Student Council when established.
- The college shall draw up rules for the establishment of a Student Council which shall provide for the selection of members and the dissolution of a Council.
- The college will have a role in considering the rules governing meetings of the Student Council, and the conduct of its affairs.

The Management will give active support to the student council. This could involve designating a student advisor in the college to communicate with the Council on an on-going basis, as well as assisting the Council in drawing up a constitution and in planning and organising its activities.

## **The Student Council and the Principal**

The role of the Principal is of central importance in the establishment and operation of a Student Council. In assisting the Management in the development of college policy, and inworking with teachers and to implement it at day-to-day level, the Principal is centrally placed in all aspects of the college's operations.

In the initial stages, the Principal, together with the other teachers, will assist in the development of a Student Council in several ways, for example, by discussing with students the role of a Student Council and the role of individual representatives on the Council and by advising on an appropriate constitution or statement of objectives. As the Council develops and begins to expand its role, the Principal will assist in guiding the Council's development, so as to allow for a constructive and purposeful Council. More generally, the Principal can promote a college culture which recognises the potentially valuable input that students can make, through a Student Council, into the development of the college.

## **The Student Council and Teachers**

Developing a spirit of partnership and co-operation between a Student Council and teachers has benefits for both. The Student Council can play an important role in recognising and supporting the work of teachers. Similarly the interest and support of teachers will be of great value to a Student Council, particularly during the early stages of its development.

It is generally desirable for a member of the teaching staff to attend meetings of the Council. The support and guidance offered by a teacher will be very useful to a Council when planning its activities, and providing for a teacher to attend Council meetings will help to build a co-operative and good working relationship between students and staff of the college.

## **Chapter 3: Key functions of Student Council:**

The functions and activities of a Student Council should support the aims and objectives of the Council and promote the development of the college and the welfare of its students. In planning and undertaking activities during the course of the college year, the Council should:

- Work closely with the management, teachers and students,
- Consult regularly with students in the college, and
- Involve as many students as possible in the activities of the Council. There is a wide range of activities of benefit to the college community which a Student Council may wish to undertake, some of which are outlined below:

### **Representing the views of the student body to the college management**

This should be one of the fundamental aims of every Council. It involves talking and listening to the student body, considering their views and concerns, and discussing these with the college management on behalf of the students.

### **Promoting good communications within the college**

Improving communication within the college community is a shared responsibility and a Student Council can contribute to this process. Making presentations at staff meetings to keep staff informed of activities, keeping a Student Council notice-board or organising a regular newsletter are just some ways the Council can communicate with the students and staff.

### **Supporting the educational development and progress of students**

The Student Council can contribute to the learning environment for students in the college by, for example, setting up study groups for students in exam classes or homework clubs, or organising lunch time activities such as language clubs.

### **Assisting with induction and/or mentoring for new first year students**

Starting college life is a challenging new experience for 1st Year students. During the mentoring programme senior students help new students to find their feet and can help their integration into the college community.

### **Contributing to the development of college policy**

The Student Council can actively contribute to the development of college policy in a wide range of areas such as bullying, uniform requirements, behaviour code and extra-curricular activities. The Council could form sub-committees to consider individual policy issues.

### **Assisting in college sporting and cultural activities**

Student Councils can assist in organising and developing sports and cultural activities within the college, including, for example, sports days and drama or musical events.

### **Assisting with or organising fund-raising events for charity**

Student Councils can organise events both within the college and involving the wider community, for the purposes of raising money for designated charities.

### **Bridging with Student Councils in other colleges**

It may be useful for a Student Council to bridge with Student Councils in other colleges, particularly in the organisation of sporting and cultural activities and when

fund-raising for charity. An existing Student Council could have a useful role in helping and advising a newly formed Student Council in another college.

#### **Chapter 4: Guidelines for establishment and dissolution of Student Councils**

The college after consultation with teachers draw up rules for the establishment of a Student Council, having regard to the following basic principles:

- The Student Council shall promote the interests of the college and the involvement of students in the affairs of the college, in co-operation with the college and teachers
- The Council should, as far as is practicable, be representative of the student community
- The college shall at all times retain the right to dissolve a Council or remove a Council member, in accordance with these guidelines.

#### **Establishing a Student Council**

The college should provide them, in a timely manner, with a copy of the rules it has drawn up in accordance with these guidelines.

#### **Size and Composition of a Student Council**

The size and composition of a Student Council shall be determined by the college having regard both to the need for the Council to be representative of all students in the college and the need for it to function effectively. It may not always be appropriate for each class to have a representative on the Council. Appropriate gender balance on the Council should be given priority.

#### **Nominations**

The Principal should set a date for the selection of representative(s) to the Student Council and its formation.

#### **First Meeting**

The Principal or a designated member of staff should convene the first meeting of each newly formed Council. The first meeting of a newly formed Council should take place early in the academic year.

#### **Constitution**

The Student Council may make rules governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, but it shall consult with the advisor before doing so.

## **Dissolution of a Student Council**

Normally a Student Council shall stand dissolved when the term of office of the members expires. Management may dissolve the Student Council before the expiry of its term in accordance with the rules and procedures governing dissolution. This will only happen in exceptional circumstances after consultation with all concerned. Where Management intends dissolving the Council, it will give the Council adequate notice of the proposal, and the reasons therefore. The Council will be allowed to appeal the dissolution to the Management or Principal of the college here the Student Council is dissolved another Council may be formed following the procedures outlined earlier. Where a Council is dissolved less than 6 weeks before the end of the college year, the appointment of a new Council may reasonably be left until the following academic year. Circumstances that may require the early dissolution of a Student Council include:

- Where a significant number of members of the Council have been involved in a serious breach of the college's code of behaviour
- Where serious irregularities have occurred in the functioning of the Council
- Where the activities of the Council have endangered the welfare of staff or students of the college
- Where serious financial irregularities have occurred

It will not be appropriate to dissolve a Council where only a few of its members have been involved in a breach of the college. In those circumstances, the college should only consider removal of those students concerned.

## **Removing a member or members of the Council**

Sometimes it may be more appropriate to remove an individual member (or members) of the Council rather than dissolve the Council as a whole. This may happen in two ways:

The Student Council may remove any member or officer of the Council for a continuing failure to attend meetings of the Council, or for a lack of commitment to the purposes of the Council, or for stated misconduct (including significant breaches of the college's code of behaviour). Such a decision should be taken on a majority vote of the Council, and the member should be given adequate notice of the proposal, the reasons therefor, and the opportunity to present his/her case.

The Management, on the advice of the Principal or on its own initiative, may remove a member of the Council in accordance with the rules and procedures in this regard. Both the member concerned and the Council should be given adequate notice of the proposal, the reasons therefor and the opportunity to appeal the removal to the Management or Principal of the college.

## **Filling a vacancy on the Council**

Where a member is removed or resigns from office, the resulting vacancy should be filled in accordance with the procedures.

## **Chapter 5: Getting started**

When students wish to start a Council in their college they should approach the Principal and ask for a copy of the rules for the establishment of a Student Council. Students should pay careful attention to the rules they are given and should not hesitate to ask the Principal if they don't understand some part of the rules or need advice in general. At this stage regular communication with the Principal and teaching staff is necessary as it is important that everyone works together and that trust is built up between the students involved and the staff.

### **The composition of a Student Council includes**

1. President	-	1
2. Vice-Presidents	-	2
3. Secretary	-	1
4. Joint-Secretaries	-	2
5. Treasurer	-	1
6. Executive Members	-	4

### **Staff Advisors:**

- *Principal*
- *Student advisor*
- *Cultural advisor*
- *Sports advisor*
- *Finance advisor*
- *Literary advisor*

### **The First Meeting of the Student Council**

The first meeting of the Student Council will generally be convened by the principal. The Principal or one of the teachers acting on behalf of the Principal may address the first meeting of the Council and this will be an opportunity for the student members of the Council to raise any particular issues or concerns in relation to their role and the role of the Council.

There are significant benefits in having teachers involved in the activities of the Student Council. Involving a teacher s in the early stages of a new Council can be particularly helpful. Making provision for teachers to attend Council meetings over the course of the year also has significant benefits for the Council, as it means that there is a source of on-going advice and support available. Where a teachers are involved from year to year it also ensures some continuity in the activities of the Council.

## **Chapter 6: The work of the Student Council**

The Student Council as a whole has responsibility for:

- Working with the staff, Management and fellow students
- Communicating and consulting with all of the students in the college
- Involving as many students as possible in the activities of the Council
- Planning and managing the Council's programme of activities for the year
- Managing and accounting for any funds raised by the Council

### **Planning and Managing the Work**

While the Student Council members all have a part to play in the activities of the Council, not all can or need to be involved in organising the work. It is for this reason that the Council should appoint officers. It may also decide to establish subcommittees.

### **Officers**

Every Student Council should appoint the necessary office bearers as listed above.

### **Subcommittees**

Rather than trying to plan and organise every activity during the year, a Student Council may find that it is more effective to use subcommittees to plan and oversee specific Council activities. Subcommittees should be required to submit their plan to the Council for approval and should report back to the Council on their activities. One area where a subcommittee might be useful is a fund raising subcommittee. It is a matter for the Council to decide how many members of the Council will sit on a subcommittee and the Council may choose to dissolve a subcommittee at any time.

### **The role of the Officers**

#### **President:**

The President is responsible for presiding over meetings of the Council. The President, with the Secretary, prepares the agenda for each meeting and, where necessary, signs the minutes once they have been agreed by the Council. The President may also be designated to represent the Council at meetings with management.

### **Vice-Presidents:**

The Vice-Presidents are responsible for assisting the President, and when the President is absent from a meeting s/he assumes the role of the President for that meeting.

### **Secretary:**

The Secretary, with the President, prepares the agenda for each meeting and the Secretary then circulates it to all the members of the Council either in advance of the meeting or at the start of the meeting. This will involve consulting with the other Council officers in order to decide what will be included on the agenda. All agendas should include a provision for 'Any other business'; this allows Council members to raise a matter for discussion in the event that it has not been included on the agenda.

The Secretary also keeps a record of Council meetings and any decisions taken by the Council (the minutes). If necessary these minutes can be circulated to all members of the Council either with the agenda for the next meeting or at the start of the next meeting. The Council can be given the opportunity to make any changes to the minutes before they are signed by the President.

The Cultural secretary along with Joint cultural secretary will be responsible for planning and conducting cultural events. The Sports secretary and Joint sports secretary will be responsible for all sports activities. The literary and joint literary secretary will be responsible for organising literary events. The fine arts secretary and joint fine art secretary will be responsible for organising fine art event. The Editor and the joint editor will be responsible for bringing out the college magazine. It is the responsibility of the secretaries to give detailed reports regarding their work progress.

All secretaries should coordinate with the staff advisors whenever necessary.

### **Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for managing any funds raised by the Student Council and should keep a complete account of all income and expenditure of the Council. Advice and assistance in this regard may be provided by management or a teacher acting on its behalf. The Treasurer should provide the Council with a complete financial report at the end of the college year. Given the responsibility of the post, a Student Council may reasonably require the Treasurer to be a senior student. It is the responsibility of the treasurer to obtain and maintain all documents from the outgoing treasure. As a general rule any payments made by the Treasurer should be countersigned or endorsed by another member of the Council or a teacher designated for this purpose.

### **Chapter 7: Communication:**

Regular, effective communication is the key to success for any Student Council. This doesn't happen by itself and it is a good idea to develop ways of keeping the college

community informed of and involved in the various activities planned by the Student Council. Some examples include:

- Producing a student newsletter
- Providing updates to the Management, Principal and staff on the Student Council's activities and plans
- Keeping a student notice-board in the college where information on the Council's activities is posted
- Announcing upcoming events
- Providing an end of year report to the Management

The Council may also appoint a Public Relations Officer to take on these responsibilities.

### **Communication between the Council and students:**

The Student Council represents all students in the college. It is very important that students receive regular information on the plans and activities of the Student Council and that as many students as possible participate in events organised by the Council. Each member of the Council has a special responsibility and should ensure that their views are brought to the attention of the Council and that they remain fully informed of the Council's activities.

Procedures should be put in place to ensure that all students are fully informed about Council activities. One way of ensuring this would be to provide for regular meetings between individual members of the Student Council. The Council could also carry out a survey of student views on particular issues, or on the role of the Council itself.

### **Communication between the Council and the college Community:**

Regular communication between the Student Council and management, Principal and staff provides the basis for building a good and lasting relationship, based on trust and respect, between students and the rest of the college community. Much can be achieved where all members of the college community work together towards common goals, and good communication is vital if a common understanding is to be reached on what those goals are, and how best to achieve them.

Good communication doesn't simply mean keeping everyone informed of planned activities; it also involves seeking their views and suggestions. It means consulting with, and sharing ideas with the management, Principal and staff members and listening to their suggestions and making sure that all sections of the college community understand the purpose and goals of the Student Council.

Having a teacher attend meetings of the Council on a regular basis also helps to improve communications. Also, the Principal may wish to address the Council from time to time on key issues affecting the college community.

## **Chapter 8: A guide to organising better Student Council Meetings**

### **Be prepared!**

Read any information sent out before the meeting, such as the Agenda or the Minutes of the last meeting. Prepare any points you want to raise.

### **Listen!**

Listen carefully to what others have to say, and be open to other people's opinions. One of the purposes of meetings is to exchange ideas and information and to learn from each other.

### **Participate!**

It is much more constructive to raise matters of concern to you at the meeting, rather than afterwards.

### **Act!**

If you undertake to follow up on a task, then do so, and be ready to report back at the next meeting.

### **Tips for the President:**

- Be prepared for each meeting and try to ensure that the other members of the group have a written agenda before hand, if possible, so that they can also be prepared for the meeting. It may be useful to meet with the Secretary to agree an agenda in advance of a meeting, and an agenda should always include a provision for 'Any other businesses.
- Start and close each meeting punctually.
- At the beginning of any meeting allow some opportunity for group members to put matters on the agenda under 'Any Other Business'. Then, keep to the agenda/items for discussion.
- It may be necessary to review and approve the minutes of the previous meeting at the beginning of a meeting and to sign the approved minutes.
- Present each item for discussion, ensuring that everyone who wishes to do so gets an opportunity to speak, and that each person is listened to.

- Give direction to meetings making sure that there is adequate time to deal with each item on the agenda.
- Try to keep the meeting focused on the agenda.
- Call the meeting to order, if necessary (for example, if more than one person speaks at the same time or if an argument breaks out).
- Help the process of decision making by asking people to clarify what they are saying if it is not easily understood, by summing up what someone has said and by stating clearly the decision that is being taken before it is noted in the minutes.
- In some instances, it may be necessary to hold a vote (for example, by a show of hands) on a particular issue.
- At the end of each meeting, make sure to arrange a date/time venue/possible agenda items for the next meeting.

### **Tips for the Secretary**

- Bring any correspondence received to the attention of the President before the agenda is drawn up. Perhaps some element of correspondence needs inclusion on the agenda for discussion/response.
- If necessary read the minutes of the previous meeting at the beginning of each meeting and make any necessary corrections before the minutes are signed by the President.
- Record as accurately and as fairly as possible the minutes of each meeting.
- Remember to record attendance, excuses, apologies and the time, date and venue of each meeting.
- Remember also to give a brief account of correspondence received/sent since the last meeting.
- Remember that you also have a right to participate in discussions....don't allow your role to stop you from contributing to the discussion of the various matters on the agenda.
- Remember to record decisions made, who is to implement them and when.
- Use the same book at each meeting for the taking of the minutes.
- Write up the minutes as soon as possible after each meeting.

## **Chapter 9: Fundraising and the Student Council:**

A Student Council may wish to hold fundraising events. The Treasurer has responsibility for ensuring that any money raised by the Council is used for the purposes for which it was collected. A financial report should be provided to the Council at the end of the year by the treasurer.

### **When planning fundraising activities:**

- Be clear about why the money is needed and what will be done with it
- Get as many ideas as possible for activities
- Make sure your planned activity will suit your college and is practical
- Try to make sure that your event doesn't clash with another
- Make sure all students in the college are told about the event well in advance, and know what the Student Council plans to use the money for some examples of fundraising activities include art exhibition, food festival, sponsored activities etc. Management should be consulted about activities planned by a Student Council, as some activities may require adult supervision.
- Photocopies of check, D.D, bills and all necessary documents related to income and expenditure must be attached as evidence with financial statement to complete the document .It is the responsibility of the treasurer to submit a copy of the financial statement to his/her successor.

### **Sample Format for writing Minutes of the meeting:**

The following is a sample format when creating minutes of a meeting. The minutes are usually completed by the Secretary, but can be assigned to someone else by the President.

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>PARTICULARS</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>
1	Purpose of the meeting	(list the purpose)
2	Date	
3	Time	
4	Venue	
5	Members present	(list all members that attended meeting)
6	Members Apologies	(list members that did not attend the meeting)
7	Guests	(list any guests that attended such as speakers, or any potential new members)
8	Agenda Item #1	Discussion : (summarize the discussion at the meeting)  Action: (list any action to be taken by whom and by when)
9	Agenda Item #2  Advisor's Report	Discussion: (summarize the discussion at the meeting)  Action: (list any action to be taken by whom and by when)
10	Agenda Item #3  Committee Reports  (create separate agenda items for each committee report)	Discussion: (summarize the discussion at the meeting)  Action: (list any action to be taken by whom and by when)
11	Agenda Item #4: Old Business (create separate agenda item for each unfinished Business	Discussion: (summarize the discussion at the meeting)  Action: (list any action to be taken by whom and by when)

	item)	
12	Agenda Item #5: New Business (create separate agenda item for each new business item)	Discussion: (summarize the discussion at the meeting)  Action: (list any action to be taken by whom and by when)
13	Announcements:	(list any announcements made)
14	Future Agenda Items:	(list any suggested agenda items that are to be tabled for the next meeting)
15	Next Meeting:	(list Date/Time/Location of the next meeting)
16	Minutes prepared by	

- Minutes of meetings should be written up and emailed to all members for review within one week of the meeting.

Copies must be preserved and handed over to the secretary of the next student council at the end of the term.