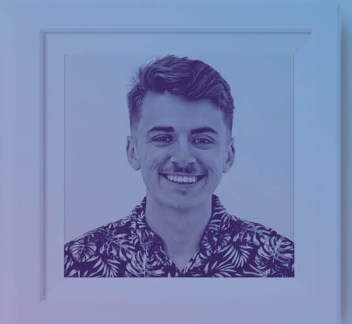


Student Council and the Subcommittees

Student Guide
2020-21



Student Council and the Subcommittees

What is Student Council?

Student Council tells the Students' Union what to do.

Student Council does this by passing policies that the Executive officers must stick to, and passing actions which the Executive Officers must do.

Student Council is made up of 50 Part-Time Officers, and it is also attended by the Students' Union Executive Officers (though they don't get to vote). It meets at least four times per academic year.

Normally, the meetings take place as in-person meetings, but due to the coronavirus outbreak, meetings are currently taking place online.

Following a motion to Student Council last academic year, we now have policy that means that the meetings will be streamed, so all students can watch the meetings online. If we go back to in-person meetings, the policy means that the meetings will continue to be streamed online.

If there's an issue you think the Students' Union should be working on or something you would like the Students' Union to have a stance on, you can bring a motion to Student Council. Any student can propose or second a motion, and any student can attend and speak in Student Council. The only thing not all students can do is vote: voting is a right only given to the part-time officers (excluding non-rep roles).

What happens in Student Council?

The Student Council Meetings are chaired by the Student Council Chair (who is an elected student), and the meetings follow the agenda which is circulated before each meeting.

The agenda for the Student Council meetings will be set by the Chair but must include:

- Ratification of minutes from the last meeting
- Minutes from the Board of Trustees to note
- Minutes from the sub-committees to note
- Policies passed by the sub-committees to note
- Minutes of the Scrutiny Panel and its recommendations to be voted on
- Policy proposals and amendments
- Amendments or ratifications to the Bye-Laws
- Policy renewal with recommendations from the Executive Officers

For each agenda item, the Student Council Chair will introduce the agenda item. The duration of discussions depends on the agenda item. Some items may be noted without discussion, and other items may require extensive debate. If you would like to make a contribution to the debate, you can raise your (virtual) hand, and the Student Council Chair will invite you to speak when it is your turn. For some parts of the debate, there is a time limit on each contribution. If this is the case, the Student Council Chair will announce this before you start speaking, so you know how much time you have. The Chair will also tell you when your time is up.

What is a Student Council policy?

Policies are documents that outline the Students' Union's position on a particular issue. A policy can also include actions for specific Officers or the Students' Union more generally. For example, a policy could action one of the Executive Officers to lobby the university to change the opening hours of one of the library.

Once a policy passes in Student Council, any actions it sets out must be carried out by the Students' Union as soon as possible.

A note on bye-law amendments

Sometimes, Student Council also debates and votes on bye-law amendments. [The bye-laws](#) are our governing documents, and changes to the bye-laws are brought to Student Council to ensure you have a say on any changes to our governance.

When bye-laws come to Student Council, they look like a normal motion, but their title will clearly indicate that it is a motion to change a bye-law.

How can I submit a policy?

If you submit a policy to Student Council, it needs to cover three points:

- What do you want?
- Why do you want it?
- What impact will this have?

What do you want? is where you write what you want to change or do.

Why do you want it? is your reasoning behind this.

What impact will this have? is where you describe how students' lives will be improved by this policy passing.

A policy needs a proposer and a seconder, who both support the policy and are willing to speak in support of it in the Student Council meeting where it is discussed.

If you want to write a policy but don't know where to start, we're happy to guide you through the process - all you need to do is email us on su-representation@qmul.ac.uk. Please make sure to contact us well in advance of the meeting you want to submit your policy to, so we have enough time to help you before the deadline for submitting policies.

What happens next?

Once the policy is written and submitted, the next step is to debate it in Council. The proposer will have three minutes at the start of the debate to argue for the policy. After this, a speech in opposition to the policy may be given by anyone in the room; then the seconder of the policy has two minutes to argue for the policy. Then, the chair will moderate a debate on the policy, at the end of which the proposer will be able to make a two-minute summary speech.

If you've submitted a policy to Student Council, it's a good idea to prepare a couple of points before the meeting, so you feel prepared to explain why Student Council should vote for your policy.

After this, the policy is voted on. If more people vote against it than for it, then it fails. If more people vote for it than against it, it becomes policy.

Don't worry if this all seems a bit confusing! The Chair will guide you through the meeting and invite you to speak when your motion is up for debate.

What can I expect if my policy passes?

The Students' Union will give your policy an Executive Officer lead who is responsible for implementing the policy. We'll also list it on the page of active policies.

After two years, Student Council will decide whether to renew the policy, lapse it or embed it. Renewing the policy means it continues to be active policy for two more years; lapsing it means it will cease to be active policy (either because it is complete or because it has not been possible to complete it due to factors outside of the Students' Union's control); and embedding it means that it will be put on a list of operational policies which QMSU keeps, which does not require renewing.

Please note that some policies may be referred to the Students' Union Trustee Board for further consideration. This would normally happen if a policy could harm the Students' Union's reputation or have serious financial implications. The Trustee Board has the power to overturn a policy, but in the past, the Trustee Board has rarely used this power.

What about Student Council subcommittees?

Following a review of our democratic structures, the Students' Union has recently created a number of subcommittees which will be able to pass policies which affect their areas of work. The subcommittees will all be chaired by a member of the Executive Team, and each student council member is a member of a number of subcommittees.

The subcommittees are:

- Union Development Board
- Societies Board
- Club Sport Board
- Volunteering Board
- Student Media Board
- Welfare Board
- Communities Board
- Education Board
- Humanities and Social Sciences Board
- Science and Engineering Board
- Barts and The London Students' Association Board
- Sustainability Board

We're also implementing a new Postgraduate Board and an International Board, but the full implementation of these is likely to take place in term 2. The Communities Board has postgraduate students and international students in its remit, so motions and discussions relating to postgrads and internationals should be addressed by Communities Board until further notice.

What do subcommittees do?

Subcommittees are able to pass policies that are of particular relevance for the students they represent. For example, the Science and Engineering Board can pass policy about lab provision for Science and Engineering students. But the Science and Engineering Board wouldn't be able to pass policy about provision of study spaces for Law students. If a policy has been brought to a subcommittee but the policy affects a wider range of students, the Chair can decide that the policy should be referred to Student Council for consideration. Student Council is able to override subcommittees' policy decisions, but we're working with the Chairs of the Subcommittees to minimise the need for this. Subcommittees can also discuss issues that are relevant for their remit.

The exact remits and memberships of the subcommittees are outlined in the Terms of References. The Terms of References will be reviewed and approved at the first meeting of Student Council.

What happens in a subcommittee meeting?

Subcommittee meetings have a lot in common with Student Council, but the meetings are smaller; the subcommittees have between 6 and 26 members. Similarly to Student Council, the subcommittees can discuss issues and pass policies. Some of the subcommittees are also responsible for affiliating new student groups and allocating funding to student groups.

Until further notice, all subcommittee meetings will take place online.

Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel is a new panel that has been created to hold the Executive Officers and the Part-Time Officers accountable. In the past, officers were required to submit reports to Student Council, and a big part of the Student Council meetings was taken up by the reports.

Instead of submitting reports to Student Council, the officers now submit them to Scrutiny Panel. The Panel will then review all the reports outside of the Student Council meetings, and give a short general report at Student Council. Scrutiny Panel can also make recommendations which are voted on in Student Council. The intention is that this will free up time in Student Council to focus on discussions and motions.