

## QUICK GUIDE ON HOSTING ONLINE STAFF-STUDENT COMMITTEES

### Supporting Student Engagement during the Covid-19 Crisis

*This Guide is part of a series of resources published to support formal student engagement practices during the shutdown of face-to-face activity in Irish higher education as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.*

*With such uncertainty and lots of change at the moment in higher education, it is likely that running a Staff-Student Committee (SSC) will attract a lot of attendees who will wish to contribute - all the more reason to provide these opportunities for engagement!*

*Facilitating an SSC online will come with particular challenges, but these challenges are not insurmountable and are best overcome in partnership with student representatives. Further guidance on hosting formalised and effective SSCs is detailed in the NStEP Quick Guide on Effective Staff-Student Committees. Please also see the Insight Report on Institutional Approaches to Student Engagement during Covid-19 which details on these committees can play an integral role in maintaining and strengthening student engagement.*

## HOSTING AND ATTENDING

- Remember that some students and staff may not be able easily participate due to issues of internet connectivity. There are a multitude of reasons why this may be the case. When organising a meeting make sure to provide options for individuals to take part as practically as possible, including calling in off a phone and typing up questions or comments instead of audio.
- Put your device on a flat surface and ensure you are seated in a comfortable position - this might not always be possible if attendees are living in cramped conditions or using their mobile, so be mindful and respectful of others.
- Use a headset if you have access to one - test it out in advance with a friend or family member.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking and avoid moving around or putting your hand near your mouth when speaking.
- Connect to the meeting on Wifi if possible for better audio and video.
- If you are experiencing connectivity issues, including a delay in audio or video freezing, close your video signal.
- Use screen-sharing for the agenda and other documents.

## SECRETARY/NOTETAKER

- Make sure someone is assigned as a notetaker if the group hasn't already got a Secretary. Could a second notetaker be assigned to typing real time notes, posting into a group chat for those individuals with poor connectivity?
- Record the call for writing up the minutes afterwards. You must have everyone's permission to do so. It is best to indicate that the recording will be deleted once the minutes have been circulated, amended and agreed.
- Have your notes on another screen if possible, or use a notepad so you don't need to keep going between the call and your notes.
- Don't be afraid to ask people to clarify their point for the benefit of the minutes

## BREAK-OUT GROUPS

- If you have a particularly large group, it may be useful to split the SSC up to handle aspects of the agenda - these could include discipline/programme specific topics such as gathering issues on assessment during the pandemic, or it could be helpful when considering the best ways to improve student-staff communication in the absence of face-to-face opportunities.
- Assign facilitators to break-out groups - this will ensure chairing responsibilities are shared and people are kept on track.
- Break-out groups will ensure that every member of the SSC can contribute, while also providing a chance for staff-student collaboration in the less daunting setting of a smaller group.
- Workshop style brainstorming and design thinking will allow people to contribute to decision-making while also fulfilling the core function of the SSC as part of the decision-making process.