

Stellenbosch University  
Engineering Faculty  
**Class Representative System**

19 February 2016<sup>1</sup>

**Table of Contents**

1	Background .....	1
2	Overview .....	1
3	Who are class representatives and how to become one? .....	1
4	The roles of class representatives .....	2
4.1	To obtain the students' inputs on issues that concern them .....	2
4.2	To act as spokesperson for the students.....	2
4.3	To give feedback to the students .....	2
4.4	To participate in the relevant activities of the Engineering Student Council.....	3
4.5	To support other class representatives .....	3
4.6	To perform other miscellaneous duties, where needed .....	3
5	Liaison staff members .....	3
6	What class representatives do not do.....	4
7	Support for class representatives.....	4
8	Recognition for class representatives .....	5

---

<sup>1</sup> Approved by the Faculty Board on 19 February 2016

## **1. Background**

This document describes the Engineering Faculty's system of class representatives. It serves as a guideline for the class representatives, students and staff regarding the roles of class representatives.

## **2. Overview**

In the Engineering Faculty all students are welcome to engage individually with their lecturers regarding issues, problems or concerns related to the module that the particular lecturer teaches. In addition to this, the Faculty relies on class representatives to bring matters that concern the students to the attention of the Faculty's staff. They are an important link between lecturers and the students in each class.

Class representatives are responsible for listening and talking to the students in their class, representing their opinions and issues in a balanced and reasonable way to the staff, and giving feedback to their classmates. The class representatives can raise issues with the lecturer involved, the relevant liaison staff member, the departmental chairperson of the module's home department and/or the chairperson of the relevant programme's home department. If the issue could not be resolved by the departmental chairpersons, then the class representatives can also raise the issue with the vice-dean (teaching) or the dean of the Faculty, or refer the issue to the Engineering Student Council's (ESC) representative on the Academic Affairs Council (ABR).

From the Faculty's perspective, class representatives allow the staff to understand student issues and problems quickly and effectively, and to improve staff-student communication. Class representatives provide constructive feedback to academic staff and departmental managers regarding the quality of teaching and assessment, module content and facilities. They are also an important point of consultation when changes need to be made or are being proposed.

Being a class representative is a positive experience and an excellent entry in a student's CV.

## **3. Who are class representatives and how to become one?**

Class representatives are students from a first year class group or, for senior years, a particular programme's year group that were elected as class representatives by the students of the group.

Class representatives are elected at the beginning of each year, through a process arranged by the ESC's representative on the Academic Affairs Council (ABR), with the support of staff members from each department. It is important that these elections occur as early in the first term as possible, ideally within the first two weeks. While some classes may be happy with the performance of the class representatives from

the previous year and be inclined to vote for the same people, it is crucial that the opportunity to participate be given to all students on an annual basis.

After the elections, the ESC member that arranges the elections should provide a list of all the class representatives and their contact details to each department's chairperson, as well as to the faculty officer.

## **4. The roles of class representatives**

### **To obtain the students' inputs on issues that concern them**

- To engage actively and openly with class mates, to identify issues and concerns that affect the class as a whole or a number of students within the class.
- To gauge the views of the students in the class and give students the chance to give both positive and negative feedback on their modules to the relevant lecturers.

### **To act as spokesperson for the students**

- To share the students' problems, concerns, suggestions and feedback (positive or negative) with the staff involved, by arranging meetings at the class representative's own initiative with the following persons (to resolve the issues as quickly as possible, these meetings should ideally be arranged as soon as the need arises and preferably in the following order):
  - the lecturers of the module concerned;
  - the relevant liaison staff member, if the matters could not be resolved directly with the lecturer;
  - the departmental chairperson, if the matters could not be resolved in the preceding meetings;
  - the vice-dean (teaching) or the dean, if the matters could not be resolved in the preceding meetings.
- If the issue cannot be settled by the above meetings, to fill out an ABR complaint form, which can be found in the ESC office in Plakkies over lunch every weekday.
- In addition to the above meetings arranged at the Class Representative's initiative, to raise the students' concerns at the regular meetings between the class representatives and the class group's liaison staff member; these meetings are arranged by the liaisons.

### **To give feedback to the students**

- To give feedback from meetings where the students' concerns were raised with staff.
- To provide information to the class from individual lecturers about specific class issues or exercises, when requested by the lectures.
- To communicate any issues that the Faculty or Department may want to convey to the students in the class.

### **To participate in the relevant activities of the Engineering Student Council**

- To attend the quarterly faculty-wide class representative meeting, organised by the ESC's representative on the ABR.
- To attend all meetings or training sessions as requested by the ABR.

### **To support other class representatives**

- To work alongside the second Class representative to share the responsibilities of reporting and communication as far as possible.
- To liaise with other class representatives to support each other, learn from each other and share thoughts and ideas.
- To assist class representatives from other years who may have less experience, or where there is an issue or event that involves more than one year.

### **To perform other miscellaneous duties, where needed**

- To assist the staff in collecting the regular student feedback forms (to help preserve the anonymity of the respondents and the integrity of the feedback).
- To assist the lecturers with specific in-class tasks, such as sign-ups for industry visits.

## **5. Liaison staff members**

Every class group is assigned a liaison staff member. For the first year class groups, the faculty officer in the Dean's Division and the Dean himself are the liaison staff members. For the other year groups, the liaison staff member is either the chairperson of the students' programme's host department or someone appointed by the chairperson.

The duties of the liaison staff member are:

- To arrange the regular meetings with the class representatives. These meetings typically are held at least once per semester, more or less midway through the semester. All the class representatives of the particular year group and, for senior students, of the particular programme, meet the liaison staff member at the same time. Liaisons may arrange more frequent (e.g. once per term) meetings, if appropriate.
- To convey the concerns of the students raised by the class representatives to the lecturers involved, the departmental chairperson or the dean, where appropriate.
- To act as mediator to resolve the concerns, if appropriate.
- To give feedback to the class representatives about concerns that were raised on behalf of the students at previous meetings.
- To give feedback to the class representatives about the Faculty's plans and upcoming events.

## 6. What class representatives do not do

It is not the responsibility of class representatives to deal with students' individual and personal issues, but class representatives should refer the students to the relevant member of staff, the class group's liaison staff member or the faculty officer. If appropriate, the faculty officer will refer the student to the Faculty's student support officer or the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (SSVO).

In the event of an individual student having a dispute with a module's lecturer, the student should attempt to resolve that directly with the lecturer in the first instance. Failing that the student can approach the liaison staff member for his/her class group. The class representative does not form a part of this process.

Class representatives also do not deal with students' questions around class schedules, marking, absence from assessments, etc., but should refer students to the Faculty's rules relating to these matters. The Faculty's rules are set out clearly in documents available on the SUNLearn pages of modules taught by the Faculty, in a block marked "General Information".

## 7. Support for class representatives

There are different levels of support for class representatives:

- **Class Representative Committee:** Each year all the class representatives for years 2 to 4 of a particular department function as a small committee on matters that affect all students in the department. They form a support group for each other and a forum for the sharing of ideas. The fourth year class representatives are encouraged to arrange for them to meet, when it is deemed necessary.
- **Engineering Student Council:** Student representatives meet regularly to discuss faculty-wide student and representation issues.
- **Faculty officer in the Dean's Division:** Matters relating to administration or management are best first raised with the faculty officer who will either provide the support required, or refer the class representative to the appropriate staff member.
- **Faculty lecturers:** The Faculty's lecturers are there because they are passionate about teaching students. Lecturers for each module will assist the class representatives by being available to them and responding to any concerns they raise.
- **Liaison staff members** are there to ensure that the concerns raised by the class representatives are addressed at the local level, and to provide assistance when necessary.
- **Departmental chairpersons**, unless the chairperson is also the liaison staff member, should preferably only be approached when the liaison staff member cannot provide the support required by the class representative.
- **Vice-dean (teaching) and dean** should preferably only be approached when the liaison staff member and the departmental chairperson cannot provide the support required by the class representative.

## **8. Recognition for class representatives**

In recognition of the important role that class representatives play, all class representatives receive a certificate from the Faculty, stating that they served as a representative for a specific class. The certificate is officiated by a university stamp and the signature of the Dean of the Faculty. Arrangements for the certificates are the responsibility of the ESC's representative on the ABR that was responsible for the specific calendar year's group of class representatives.

Further compensation and incentives for class representatives are decided by the Faculty's Management Committee.