

## Student Complaints Protocol

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### 1. PURPOSE

This protocol is aimed at providing guidelines to students regarding academic and non-academic complaints so that problems, whether of an academic nature or otherwise, can be addressed effectively.

The objectives of the protocol are to:

- Streamline the protocol for students to follow with regard to academic and non-academic complaints.
- Clarify the communication channels to be followed for resolving student problems with regard to both academic and non-academic matters.
- Increase the awareness of lecturers, administrative staff and students of the complaints protocol.
- Increase the efficiency of the class representative system.
- Utilise the class representative system to solve problems.
- Strengthen the link between the class representative system, faculty houses, the Student Parliament (SP) and the Student Representative Council (SRC) so as to ensure efficiency and coordination with regard to student governance issues.

### 2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

The protocol is applicable to all registered students. These serve as guidelines of a general nature. A faculty may, however, within the broader guidelines and institutional rules, establish a system to deal with student complaints that is more suited to the unique needs of such faculty.

In general, the University of Pretoria follows an open-door policy with regard to dealing with student complaints.

### 3. PROTOCOL

- 3.1 The University of Pretoria (UP) aims to provide effective communication channels or routes for resolving student problems, whether of an academic or non-academic nature. The basic principle is that a problem should be solved at the lowest level possible.

All registered students should know what procedures to follow when they have academic and/or non-academic complaints.

All academic and administrative staff should also be aware of these procedures.



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3.2 To achieve these objectives the University will:

- Communicate the complaints protocol to all stakeholders.
- Ensure implementation University-wide.
- Monitor the progress of the class representative system.
- Offer training and support to class representatives to develop their leadership skills and refine the on-line registration system for class representatives.
- Garner support from academic staff to strengthen the class representative system.
- Treat students' problems with the appropriate sensitivity and measure of seriousness and endeavour to solve problems as quickly as possible.

3.3 Students are strongly discouraged from making use of the channels provided by the complaints protocol to escalate personal grievances to group grievances.

## 4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

### 4.1 Governing documents

- Strategic Plan of the University of Pretoria.
- Constitution for Student Governance (latest version)

### 4.2 Related documents

- Policy on Organised Student Life (*Rt 456/10 (amended)*)
- Policy on Day Houses (*Rt 457/10 (amended)*)
- Policy on Faculty Houses (*Rt 458/10 (amended)*)
- Policy on Societies (*Rt 459/10 (amended)*)
- Policy on Service Providers (*Rt 460/10 (amended)*)
- Policy on Student Leadership Development and Training (*Rt 461/10 (amended)*)

### 4.3 Relevant documents (Appendices)

- Resolving Student Problems: Communication Channels (Appendix A)
- Class Representative System (Appendix B)
- On-line Registration Process for Class Representatives (Appendix C)

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 The Dean of Students,<sup>1</sup> who may task the Coordinator: Student Daily Life (or another appropriate staff member) with the responsibility for implementing the protocol as well as creating greater awareness of its existence.

5.2 The deans and/or deputy deans will be responsible for the implementation of this protocol in the faculties as well as creating greater awareness of its existence among both staff and students.

## 6. REVIEW

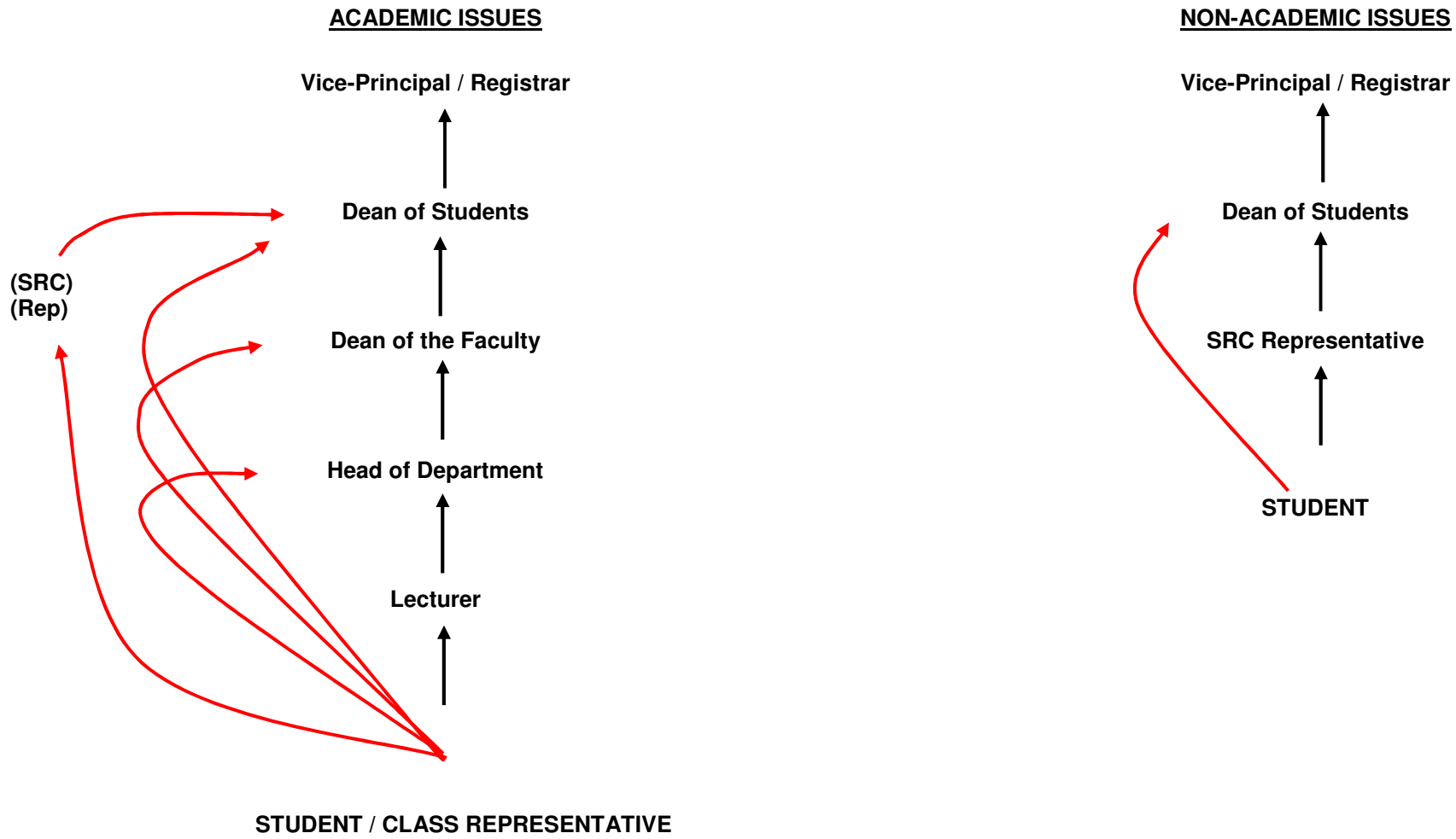
The protocol may be reviewed every two years or as the need arises.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document and its appendices the reference to Dean of Students could also apply to the Director: Student Affairs as designated by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

## 7. DOCUMENT METADATA

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## **CLASS REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

This document serves as a general guideline for the functioning of the class representative system. Each faculty is unique and therefore the class representative system should be adjusted according to the needs of the faculty and the structure of the various courses. The class representative system forms part of the communication channel for dealing with any academic issue/problem that a student may encounter.

A student is, however, also entitled to approach a lecturer directly regarding an academic issue and, should there be cogent reasons why a problem cannot be resolved at the lower level, such student may make a representation to a higher level of authority. However, should that person be of the opinion that the reasons for a direct representation are not sound, the student may be referred back to the relevant faculty or lecturer.

Regarding academic exclusions due to unsatisfactory performance, the University has a specific procedure in place which students are required to follow.

### **2. ROLE OF THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE**

2.1 The primary function of the Class Representative is to serve as a two-way communication channel between the class and the lecturer.

2.1.1 Liaising with the class

- It is the duty of the class representative to ensure that the class is **aware** of the *Resolving Student Problems: Communication Channels* (see the graphic representation in Appendix A).
- The class representative **considers** requests/complaints/suggestions received from the class or individual students and **discusses** these with the relevant lecturer.
- If this is not effective, the requests/complaints/suggestions are taken up with the **following link/s** in the communication channel until the situation is **resolved**.
- In the case of requests/complaints/suggestions pertaining to the **whole class**, the class representative should consult the class first before approaching the lecturer.

2.1.2 Liaising with the lecturer

- The class representative should **inform the class** of requests/complaints/suggestions brought to his/her attention by the lecturer and he/she should, in deliberation with the relevant lecturer, **lead a discussion** on this matter.
- It is the responsibility of the class representative to **give feedback** to the relevant lecturer with regard to the opinions that were expressed during such a discussion.
- The class representative should meet with the lecturer on a **regular basis** to address any requests/complaints suggestions in a pro-active and amicable way.

2.2 The class representative also serves as a link between the class and the faculty, the faculty house, the Student Parliament (SP), the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the Department of Student Affairs (DSA).

2.2.1 Liaising with the faculty house

- The class representative should have regular contact with the **Faculty House Committee (Academic Portfolio)** and should update his/her class on the activities of the faculty house in an effort to **increase awareness and participation**.

2.2.2 Liaising with the Student Parliament (SP)

- The Class Representative should be familiar with the faculty's representatives on the Student Parliament.

2.2.3 Liaising with the SRC

- The class representative should be in regular contact with the SRC member whose portfolio includes Academic Affairs.

### 2.3 Dissemination of information

The class representatives should be ready to **disseminate information** on behalf of the Faculty, Faculty House, Student Parliament, SRC or the Department of Student Affairs as and when needed.

### 2.4 Meetings and Training

The class representative should attend all relevant meetings and training sessions as convened by the Faculty, Faculty House, Student Parliament, SRC or the Department of Student Affairs.

## 3. IMPORTANT PROCEDURAL ASPECTS

3.1 The class representative should always **consult the lecturer first**, before reporting an issue at a higher level. Most problems can be solved in this way.

3.2 The class representative should also be the channel for **good news and positive feedback**.

3.3 The key to success as a class representative is to build **sound relationships** based on mutual respect and open communication.

3.4 Keep in mind that great leaders **lead by example**. Therefore, class representatives are expected to attend class regularly, to submit assignments on time and to set a standard of academic excellence.

## ON-LINE REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

### 1. BACKGROUND

In an effort to improve the class representative system, the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) implemented an on-line registration system in 2010.

### 2. PROCEDURE

2.1 All newly elected class representatives must register their contact details via **Student Web** by clicking on the “Class Representative” banner:



2.2 Class representatives are informed about **leadership training events** that are hosted by the Department of Student Affairs throughout the year.

2.3 The following **data fields** are included in the on-line form:

- Name
- Surname
- Email address
- Mobile (Cell) Number
- Faculty
- Department/School (leave blank if not applicable)
- Module/Course Code  
(If you are the class representative of more than one class, please complete one form only and include all the course codes)
- Group i.e. year group / language group (leave blank if not applicable)
- Term of subject (module) (quarter / semester / year)
- Lecturer's surname and name