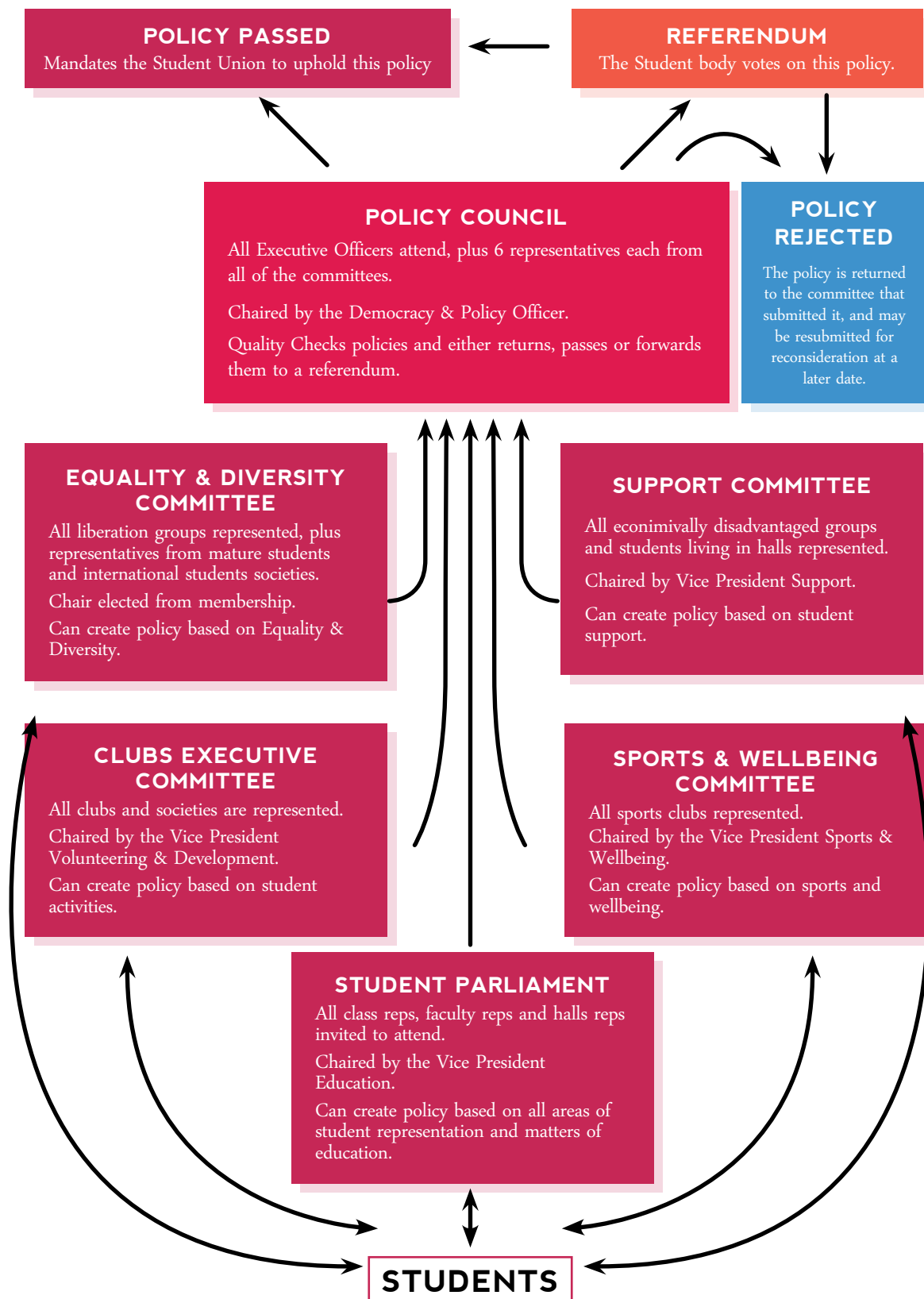


# STUDENT DEMOCRACY AT STRATHCLYDE





# STUDENT DEMOCRACY @ STRATHCLYDE



# INTRODUCTION

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All Student Unions originally came into existence as a way for students to voice their concerns about the quality of their education, and the University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA) is no different. It sometimes might be hard to imagine, but long before the bars and big events there were discussions and negotiations between students and faculty staff about how best to improve our courses and our University. It didn't take long for these discussions to start encompassing other issues out of students' direct control, such as: cost of living, the range and quality of services provided by the University to students, and political issues affecting the wider world that students felt strongly about. All of this was eventually embedded into a structure of representatives which we now know as the Students' Union: an institution run by students for students, fully committed to ensuring that the voice of students is heard by the University, and by wider society.

Year on year our Students' Union upholds the democratic structures that Strathclyde students established in the past. We train and support student reps using the experience gained by reps in previous years, provide them with a space to discuss the issues that they are facing individually and collectively, and prepare resources to create and fund lobbies and campaigns that reps need to tackle the problems that students face.

This is why it is very important for all students to recognise the structure of their representation. Students' awareness of who to contact with different issues does not just greatly assist the student reps in their jobs, it provides students with familiarity of the representative system, encouraging everybody to become involved however they are able.

The purpose of this guide is to inform you, the Strathclyde student, of the pathways available to you to begin your discussion with others. You can be a part of your representative system through discussions with your reps – or through becoming a rep yourself. Both are equally important in ensuring students voices are heard, and ultimately ensuring that we get the best education and experience during our time at University.



# EDUCATION STUDENT PARLIAMENT

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## STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION REPRESENTATION

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The education reps are concerned principally with maintaining and improving the quality of our courses. There are three tiers of education reps:

### ■ CLASS REPS

who are chosen by their class in a democratic process at the start of semester 1 or 2, and represent in a part-time capacity either a particular class or (depending on department) the entire course during the year. Their main duties include representing their classmates at Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings. These meetings occur at least once per semester, and allow class reps to meet with department managers to provide feedback on course quality. Class reps are also encouraged to keep in regular contact with their lecturers with regard to feedback on the materials and the delivery of the course.

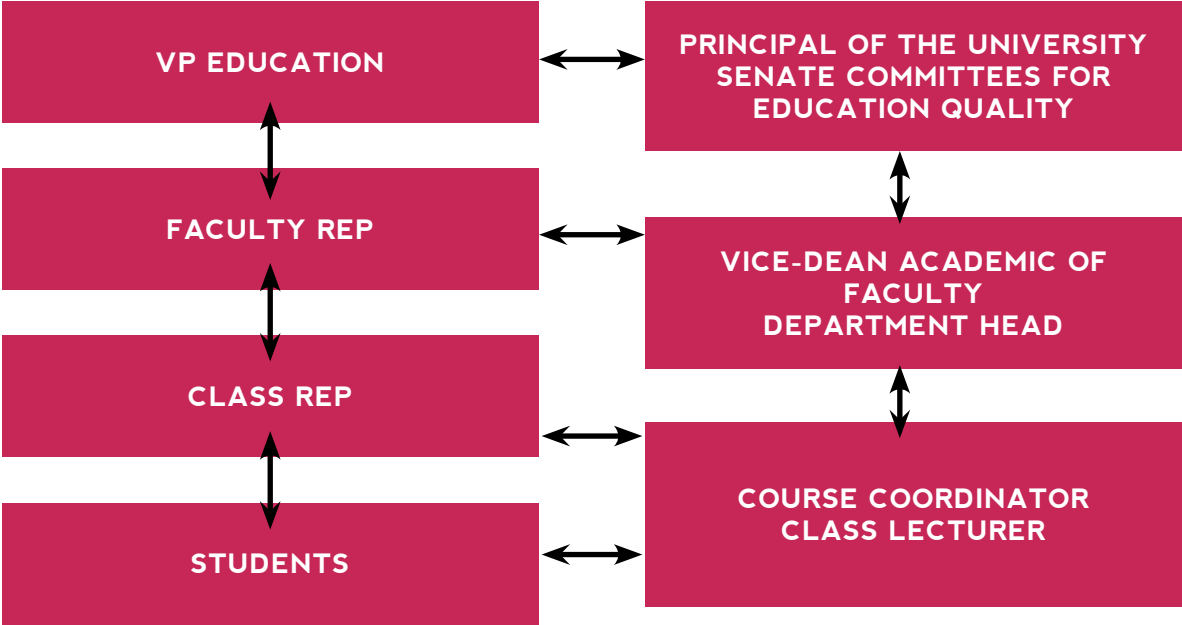
### ■ FACULTY REPS

who are elected once a year in March by students in the same faculty. They represent the students throughout the whole faculty, and sit on meetings with faculty managers to discuss high level developments impacting student learning. There are 4 faculty reps per faculty (2 undergraduate, 2 postgraduate). Faculty reps work closely with the Vice President Education in supporting the class reps, and are the first point of contact for any reps struggling to talk to their department. You can find out more about your faculty reps by visiting <http://strathstudents.com/studentreps/facultyreps>

### ■ VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION

@ USSA, who is elected once a year in March by all students in the University. The VPE is the representative in charge of lobbying the University on education matters that affect all Strathclyde students, but can also be involved in particularly difficult problems between class reps and their department if so requested by the affected reps. You can get in contact with the VPE by email: [ussa.vpe@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ussa.vpe@strath.ac.uk), or through Facebook/Twitter as listed on <http://strathstudents.com/executive>.

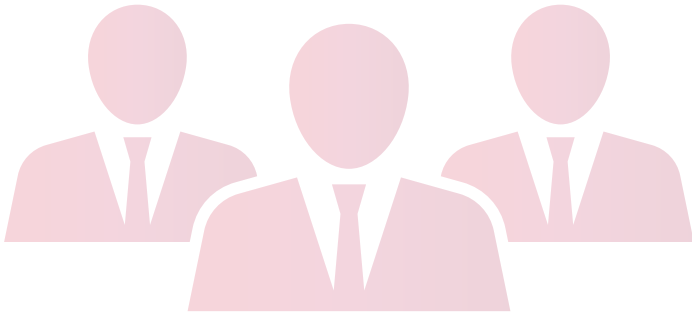
The class reps, faculty reps and VPE gather together once a month in Student Parliament to propose and discuss policy aimed at mandating the Union to act in line with the needs of student members. To find out more about the structure of passing policy, see the Student Association section of this guide.



(Arrows indicate direction of feedback and representation.)

## STUDENT PARLIAMENT

Student Parliament is your opportunity to meet other reps, discuss education issues in the University and hear from senior figures in the University speak about new projects, plans and developments. All class reps are invited to attend and can propose policies or ideas for improvements to education on campus. In previous years class reps have made change in the University on big issues such as moving exams from January to December to smaller issues like getting microwaves and kettles in departmental common rooms.

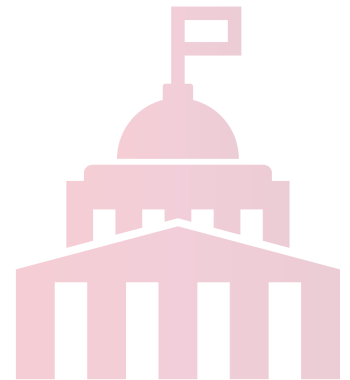


## WHAT CAN I EXPECT AT STUDENT PARLIAMENT?

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Student Parliament meets monthly and will last two hours. The first section will include a speaker from University management; the next section will be an opportunity for you to ask your Vice President Education about their work, and what they are doing to represent student's views and interests in University decision-making. You will also get the chance to discuss issues you have been hearing from students and debate policy proposals.

All students are welcome to attend, contribute ideas and ask questions but only class reps can vote on motions. You can find out more on our website (<http://strathstudents.com/StudentParliament>) or come to chat to our Vice President Education on level 7 of the Union.



## STUDENT SUPPORT SUPPORT COMMITTEE

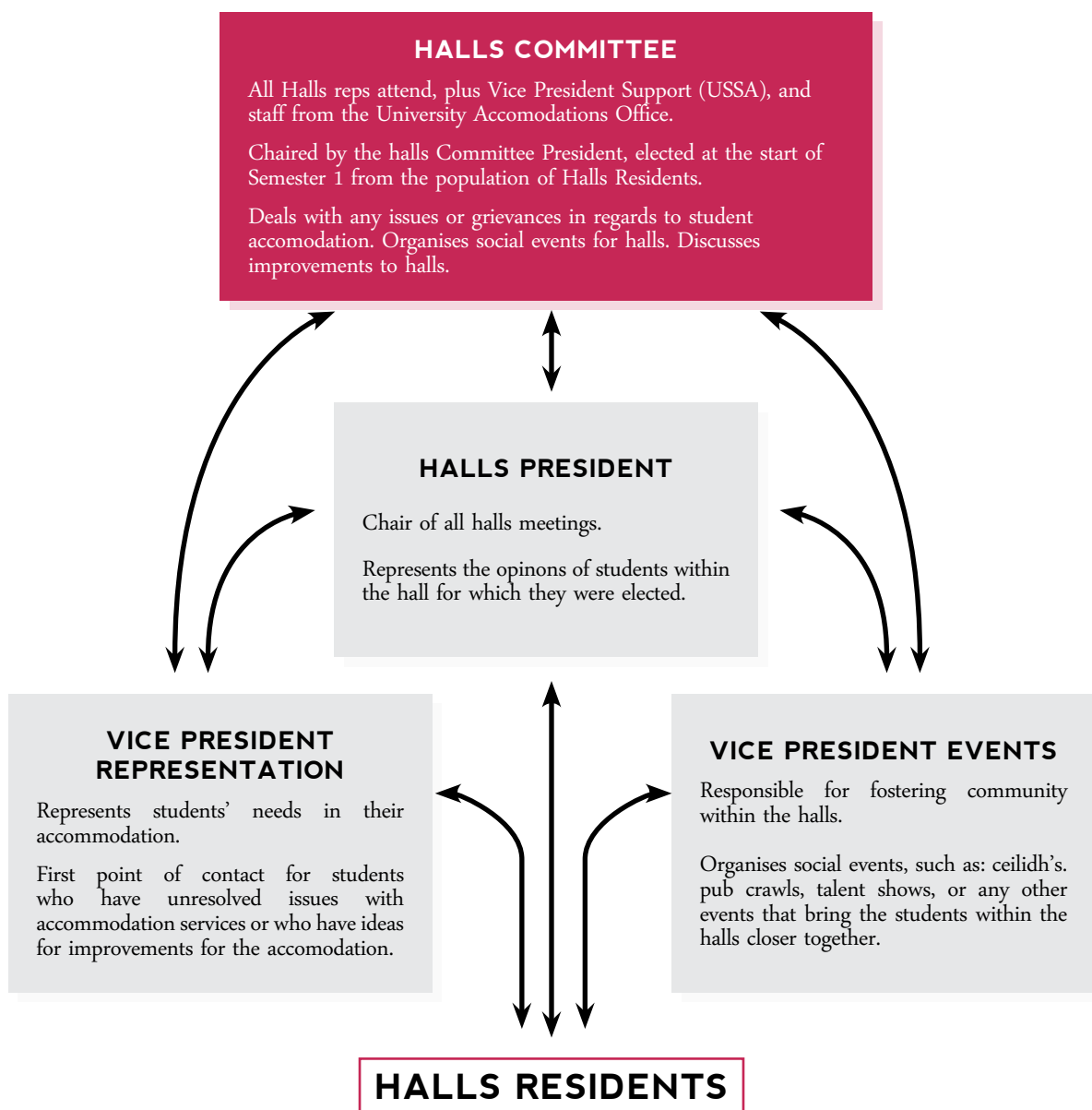
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The Union is constitutionally committed to supporting and representing the most vulnerable students to realise their rights and ensure their welfare. Student support is represented by the Vice President Support, who also convenes the Support Committee, where support reps meet and discuss issues, and agree to take action. You can read more about the remit of the VPS and the Support Committee on <http://strathstudents.com/supportcommittee> or contact the VPS through email on: [ussa.vps@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ussa.vps@strath.ac.uk).

## STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

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Every year the University provides a large number of students with on campus accommodation for the duration of the academic year. Rent for the accommodation is paid for by the student to the University, which means that the University is responsible for ensuring the quality of the housing that they offer. This is why there is a structure of representation for students in halls.



Halls Welcome Meetings are carried out at the start of each academic year to welcome the new students into the campus halls, inform them about what support and advice is available and to elect three halls reps per building, the VP Representation, VP Events, and Hall President.

These elected halls reps attend meetings of the Halls Committee, which are also attended by the Vice President Support, Halls Committee President and Vice President, and staff from the University Accommodation Office, where any issues or suggestions in regards to student halls can be raised. The Halls Committee is convened once a month. You can find out more on: [http:// strathstudents.com/hallsreps](http://strathstudents.com/hallsreps)



# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY - E&D COMMITTEE

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Our students come from many diverse backgrounds, all of which need representation that caters to their specific needs. The Union recognises that there exist several groups on campus who are underrepresented or otherwise disadvantaged, and seeks to address these inequalities by supporting self-organised liberation and diversity groups.

To ensure representation, the Vice President Diversity is elected annually to organise campaigns, represent these student groups to the University and organise the Equality and Diversity Committee. The committee is made up of representatives of particular student groups, and is responsible for creating and submitting policy on issues of Equality and Diversity. To find out more visit <http://www.strathstudents.com/EDCommittee>, or contact the VPD through [ussa.vpd@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ussa.vpd@strath.ac.uk).

## POLICY COUNCIL

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The union has a representative structure (outlined on the cover of this document), but also a process of policy making that students can use to mandate the Students' Association to uphold a specific position or action on various issues affecting students.

The process of policy making begins at the committee relevant to the policy being discussed, where interested students and members of that committee will be in charge of writing up the content of the policy. If the committee votes to support the policy, it is passed onto the Policy Council where it is voted on as Union Policy. Policy Council is composed of all members of the Executive and representatives from each of the committees, elected by the committees themselves. Policy Council will discuss the policy and will decide on one of the three outcomes:

1. Pass the policy as policy of the Association
2. Refer the policy back to the submitting committee
3. Refer the policy to an all student online vote (referendum).

The Executive will work to implement any policies passed and feed back to students on what has been achieved.

## REFERENDA

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The Executive will be working on their objectives and aims for the year, and make decisions based on feedback from students and the ideas they had in their manifesto. Policy Council discuss and decide on Association policy but if an issue affects all students, the proposed policy will be put to an online all student vote.

In addition to policy that is passed to referendum by Policy Council, individual students can collect 200 student signatures to put a proposal or idea to referendum. There is a referendum period in each semester, with one week of online voting on <http://strathelections.com>.

If you have an idea that affects all students that you would like to put to referendum check out: <http://strathstudents.com/referendum> or email the Democracy and Representation Coordinator on [andrew.ashe@strath.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.ashe@strath.ac.uk).

## BIG STUDENT ELECTIONS

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The Big Student Elections are held annually to elect the new Student Executive, Democracy and Policy Officer and Faculty Reps for the following academic year. All students are able to stand for a position, you don't have to have been involved in the Union's activities, just have ideas and passion to improve student's lives on campus.

If you are interested in running for a position, some of the things you will need to do before and during the election will include:

- Writing a manifesto of things you would like to work on
- Getting some friends together to help campaign for you
- Getting your nomination form in before the deadline (24th Feb)
- Coming to the candidates briefing to find out the election rules

Voting is open to all students online for 3 days in March at:

<http://strathelections.com> and nominations for the elections open in December but it's never too early to think about running. We

understand it can be a daunting prospect, especially if you are from an

underrepresented group, but the staff in the Student Union are here to advise and support you, so if you have any questions come and have a chat with us on level 7 of the Union.



# HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

There are many ways to get involved in the representative structures of USSA, and here are only some of them:

## BECOME A CLASS REP

You can become a class rep through elections at the start of each semester. For more information contact your department or [ussa.studentrep@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ussa.studentrep@strath.ac.uk)

## ATTEND THE STUDENT PARLIAMENT

Student Parliament meets every month and lasts around 2 hours. You can find out more on <http://strathstudents.com/studentparliament>

## JOIN ONE OF THE COMMITTEES

You can read more about the committees in the Student Representation section of this guide, or find out more on <http://strathstudents.com/representation>

## BECOME PART OF THE POLICY COUNCIL

If you are part of one of the democratic committees, you can put yourself forward as a Policy Council rep. Find out more in the Policy Council section of this guide.

## PUT YOUR NAME UP FOR ELECTIONS!

Become an Executive Officer and drive the change that you want to see! More information on upcoming elections on <http://strathstudents.com/elections>

