IRISH SECOND-LEVEL STUDENTS' UNION

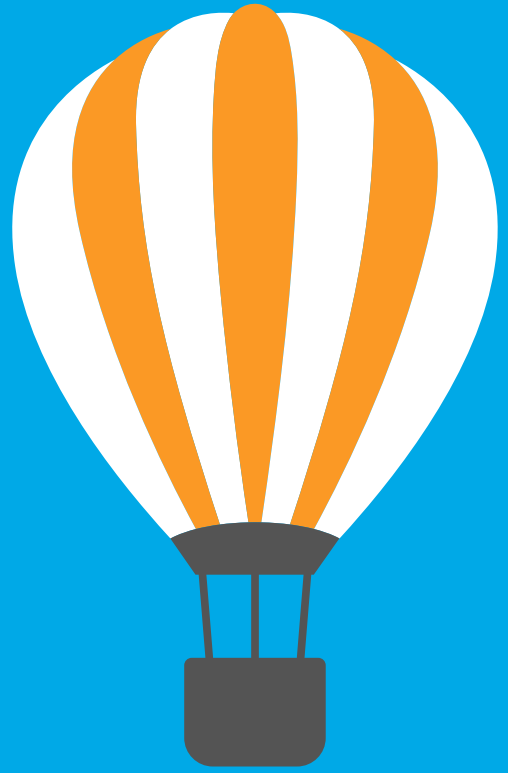**ISSU**
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL STUDENTS' UNION

ISSU STUDENT COUNCIL HANDBOOK

AN A-Z ON ALL THINGS STUDENT COUNCIL

DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS, BY STUDENTS.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

WELCOME & BACKGROUND

This document has been created to meet the needs of student councils at all levels - from those starting from scratch, to those who wish to just improve their functioning, and those who have a proven track record of affecting change in their school community.

Created by students, we hope this is a useful resource for your student council and helps you to further student voice in your school community. Further resources, including action plans on specific issues, "off-the-shelf" campaigns and student resources are available on the ISSU website.

ISSU.IE

WHAT IS THE ISSU?

The ISSU is the national representative body for second-level students in the Republic of Ireland. Membership is based on the student council model - when a student council decides to join, the entire student body are then considered members. The ISSU aims to provide support, training and assistance to member student councils.

Through this support, the ISSU aims to foster a stronger student voice at all levels of the education system. Second-level students should be involved in all matters that directly affect them, and this means having a seat at the decision-making table and being respected as an equal stakeholder.

Founded in 2008, the ISSU now has over 500 member student councils as of the publication of this handbook.

The ISSU Represents, Uplifts, and Defends Student Voice

THE CORE AIMS OF THE ISSU ARE

- To provide a transparent, democratic and reliable organisation.
- To provide a collective voice for second-level students and represent second-level students as stakeholders in their education and in society, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to continually develop a transparent, fair and modern education system.
- To promote equal access to education and to strive for the end of all discrimination and injustice within the Irish education system.
- To empower student councils to be democratic and effective representative bodies within their school communities.

- To work to end the disparity in student services based on socio-economic backgrounds.
- To fight for a fair education system that values each individual and allows them to reach their full potential.
- To actively support and empower individual students and student councils to take action.
- To actively address the challenges and worries faced by students on a local, regional, national and international level.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

"Students should be involved in all matters that affect them"

While this is a common statement in activism, it is important that it is fulfilled. Thankfully, there are many international and national policies to support the aims of student representation.

The right to participate is enshrined in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, enacted by UN member states in 1948. While not a legally-binding document, the Declaration does outline the values and principles shared by the international community, and what its signatories aim to achieve. The document outlines the right to participate in government and free elections, the right for freedom of thought and expression, the right to peaceful assembly and association and the right to education.

A more legally-binding document of use for enacting student rights is the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**. This document applies to all those under 18 years of age, and recognises the right to freedom of expression and the importance of children having a say in all matters that affect them.

Section 27 of the **Education Act (1998)** outlines the role of a student council in the school, and the right for students to form such a body. It also encourages the Board of Management to aid in establishing a student council, however it stops short in making a student council mandatory in all schools.

The **Education (Student & Parent Charter) Bill 2019** also outlines the importance of including student voice in the school community, and mandates all schools to create their own Student & Parent Charter to ensure these voices are heard in school decisions. The Bill also suggests amending the Education Act (1998), to change the requirement on a student council from one of promoting the interest of the school to a requirement to promote the interests of the students of the school.

STUDENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS

The above policies outline the importance of student representation. There are many ways students input can be gathered by schools and the Department of Education, these may include;

- Surveys
- Anonymous Suggestion Boxes
- Consultations
- School Assemblies
- Feedback Forms

All of these can feed into a "structured dialogue" process, which ensures student views are being included regularly on different issues. The agenda, however, is still being set by school or other bodies. How can **WE** as students inform the agenda?

ORGANISE!

Having a representative, democratically-elected and accountable student council is the answer to this! A student council can also engage in structured dialogue, but it alone is the most powerful tool you can have as a student body in order to set the agenda and bring forward your issues to management or other stakeholders in the school community.

Students need to have a voice at the decision-making table. To ensure this, a long-term aim for your student council should be to have a student representative as an advisory member on the **Board of Management**. In this role, the member would not have a vote, but would be able to speak and input at meetings with a student perspective. This is particularly important regarding new school policy, which often affects students most in its implementation. This can also ensure effective communication between the student council, school staff and the Board of Management.

An effective student council can stand up for students and their issues, give ownership of some school issues back to students, and ensure that student voices are heard at all levels.

LADDER OF PARTICIPATION *

Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation was developed in the early 1990s, and can be used as a tool to determine the degree to which young people are included in decision making / decisions that affect them.

Think about the following:

- **Where are you as an individual student?**

- **Where are student councils in the school system?**

- **Where are students on the national level?**

- **Where is the ISSU?**

DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

8. YOUTH & ADULT SHARED DECISIONS

7. YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES

6. ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS

5. CONSULTED & INFORMED

4. ASSIGNED & INFORMED

NON-PARTICIPATION

3. TOKENISM

2. DECORATION

1. MANIPULATION
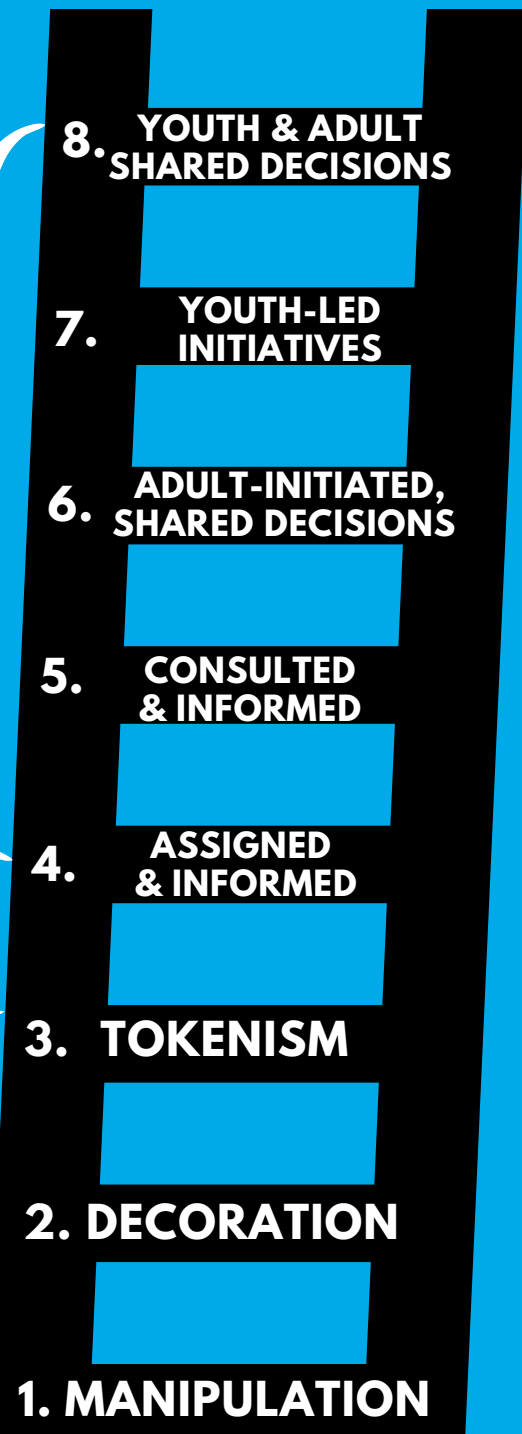
CREATING A STUDENT COUNCIL

This section of the handbook will explore how to set up a student council from scratch.

STUDENT COUNCIL ROLE

The main purpose of the student council in schools is to promote the interests and the involvement of students in the daily running of the school and decisions which affect them. The student council is a body which should aim to work in conjunction with the Board of management, staff and students.

The student council can also work as a line of communication between school decision makers and students.

A student council should set up its own objectives, which will vary depending on the school.

MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE

Sometimes it can be difficult to motivate students to be a part of, or even vote in student council elections.

This may be because of their previous experience with a student council, which may not have been effective in creating positive change or been tokenistic. Creating a proactive, engaged student council can therefore be a challenge in a school environment where there has not been one previously, but it is not impossible!

Empower students to run and engage with the student council by showing:

- You can be a part of a positive change.
- You can learn key skills which will aid you in other subjects and outside of school.
- There are cool opportunities that come with being a student council member, including attending external events.
- You will meet students from other year groups.
- It places you as a role model in your school.
- They can develop leadership skills and represent their classmates.

It is important, however, that the value of having an effective student council is emphasised to the entire student body. This can be done by showing previous successes achieved (if possible), or just by speaking with students about issues which affect them. A student council, due to its representativeness and status, is much more likely to be able to make a positive change than an individual in a school.

Student council elections can also be an exciting time to promote the work of the student council. Make sure that the elections are efficient, timely and transparent and that students understand the importance and seriousness of their vote (see Student Council Elections below).

STUDENT COUNCIL LIAISON TEACHER & SCHOOL SUPPORT

It is important to develop a good to develop a good relationship with the **Student Council Liaison Teacher.** Schools will often appoint this person as part of their division of portfolios, and there may be more than one teacher sharing the "student voice" portfolio.

It is important that this teacher or staff member is a *liaison* and not a *leader* on the student council - that is they can give friendly advice and carry your message forward to the school management, but decisions need to be taken independently and by the students only. Liaison teachers may be obligated to attend Student Council meeting for Child Protection reasons.

In general, the Student Council Liaison Teacher is your ally, so make sure to work with them and use their power to your full advantage!

Schools should offer support to student councils and their development. This should include a day for training during the year (from the ISSU!), opportunities to go to student council events, and potentially even a small budget or other resources to help run events / activities. It is important to note that schools are currently not obliged to provide any resources, therefore a strong relationship with the school management is important to build towards.

STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Elections to form a student council should take place at regular intervals. Most schools will elect representatives annually.

Students should only vote in the elections for those who will be representing them e.g. second year students should only vote in elections for second year students.

The method and structure of student councils can vary by school, with different options of term lengths and date of elections. The number of representatives per class / year group can also vary. The following tables explore the pros and cons of these options, make sure choose one that works for your student body!

TERM LENGTH

Term Length	Pros	Cons
1 year term	Democratic, representative, elected rep is held accountable	Loss of experience within student council,
2 year term	Experience and knowledge kept within the student council	Elected rep not held accountable as easily, long commitment
3 year term	Gathering and sharing experience throughout their term	Elected rep not held accountable as easily, long commitment

ELECTION TIMES

Election Times	Pros	Cons
Elections at end of year	Time for outgoing and incoming members to review and discuss work done during the previous term	No incoming first years' input
Elections at start of school year	All students included	Can be set up too late

NUMBER OF REPS

No. of Representatives	Pros	Cons
One representative per class	Simple, representative, useful for larger schools	Potential lack of gender diversity
Two representatives per class	More diversity of opinion	Can create too large of a student council in larger schools
XX representatives per year	Wider pool of candidates to choose from	Potential for some classes / groups to have no close representative.
Senior and junior representatives	Smaller student council	May not have a rep from each year/class group, lack of engagement between the council and the students

It is the job of the students to elect their chosen representative(s). Students should be reminded that they are voting for someone who will be representing them and who will be involved in making decisions which will benefit them. Therefore, it is important to stress the seriousness of the election and the potential results.

You may ask the student body to ask themselves the following questions before they make their decision:

- Does this person deserve this vote?
- Will they work hard for those whom they represent?
- Are they open minded and approachable?
- Are they the best possible candidate for the role?

STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTION METHOD

It is vital that the student council is democratically elected. All students should be given the chance to vote, and to run for a position themselves if they so wish.

The fairest and most democratic method of electing candidates to the student council is by using proportional representation, single-transferable voting system. This is a lot more straightforward than it sounds, and is the voting system we use here in Ireland for all local and national elections.

A ballot may look like this

Candidate Name	Rank
Kelly	
Lambe	
Murray	

It is important that candidates are given an opportunity to present themselves to their classmates and to explain why they are running. Without doing this, students are less interested in voting, and more likely to vote passively (e.g. for their friend or someone who is popular). The exact requirements of candidates in an election can be decided by the student council - some schools have a designated election period, hustings and full-on campaigns!

Voters are asked to rank candidates from favourite to least favourite, with 1 being their favorite. Voters do not have to put a number or vote for all the candidates. The quota is the amount of votes needed to be elected. Some schools may elect multiple students in the same race, so a different number of seats may be available. The quota can be found by using the following formula.

$$QUOTA = \left[\frac{TOTAL\ VOTES}{NO.\ OF\ SEATS + 1} \right] + 1$$

EXAMPLE

If there are 24 people in your class and you are electing 1 representative, the quota is:

$$QUOTA = \left[\frac{24}{1 + 1} \right] + 1 = 13$$

This may seem confusing at first but will become easier with practice.

If no one reaches that quota the candidate with the lowest number of 1st preference votes is eliminated and their 2nd votes are given to other candidates remaining. This continues until someone has passed the quota, and all seats are filled.

EXAMPLE

The first count has taken place in the student council election. Based of first-preference votes, the results are as follows;

Candidate Name	Count 1
Kelly	11
Lambe	10
Murray	3

Since Murray has the lowest number of votes (3), they are **eliminated.**

The ballots which voted for Murray looked as follows;

Candidate Name	Rank
Kelly	3
Lambe	2
Murray	1

Candidate Name	Rank
Kelly	2
Lambe	3
Murray	1

Candidate Name	Rank
Kelly	2
Lambe	3
Murray	1

The second preference votes (No. 2s) are counted and transferred to the other 2 candidates as follows:

Candidate Name	Count 1	Count 2	
Kelly	11	+2	13
Lambe	10	+1	11
Murray	3	-3	/

Kelly reaches the quota (13) and is elected as the student council representative.

If you are electing more than one candidate then you may also need to use the 'surplus votes' (extra) from elected candidates. In this situation, where the surplus is more than the difference between the two bottom-ranked candidates (who would be eliminated next), then the surplus needs to be allocated. This is done by counting all the next preference votes of the already elected candidate, and allocating the surplus votes proportionally.

Confused?

Don't worry, there are many videos online explaining proportional representation, single transferable vote to guide you in running your student council elections.

RUNNING A STUDENT COUNCIL

This section of the handbook will explore how to run a student council, and how to continue growing!
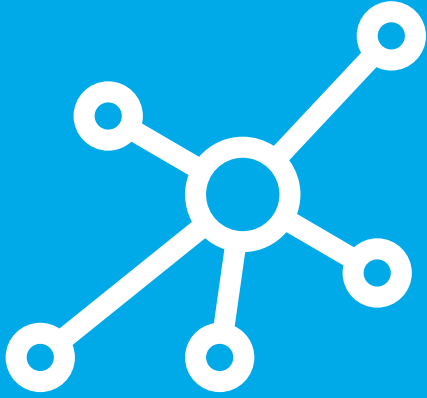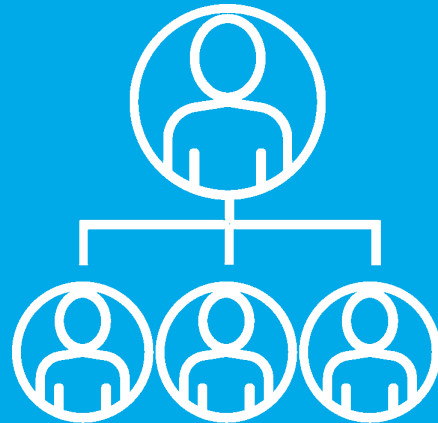
STRUCTURE
ROLES

The structure of a student council will differ from one school to the next. These variations will occur due to the way in which the school itself is structured or run. It may depend on the size of the school, whether it's a single-gender school or potentially the ethos of the school. However, there are a number of things kept constant in the way in which a student council works.

There are a few things to keep in mind when organising the structure of the student council. Some questions which may be asked when creating a student council would be:

- Who should be on the student council?
- What officer roles would suit the student body most and what problems would these officers tackle?
- How many student council members will there be and how will they be divided across year groups? (See previous section on the pros and cons of these different options)

Every student council should consist of student representatives. The amount of representatives should be decided on before running the elections, check out the potential student council structures in "Student Council Elections" for more information (Page 7 & 8).

A student council can choose to have as many roles on their student council as they see fit. Each school may have different issues that may be of concern to students, in this case a role may be created for the purpose of addressing said issue. Some common examples of roles a student council may have include:

- President / Chairperson
- Vice President / Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- ISSU School Representative
- Irish language Officer
- Public Relations Officer
- Communications Officer
- Equality Officer

RESPONSIBILITIES

Being a member of your school's student council comes with various responsibilities. Every member, regardless of their role on the student council, should be held accountable for their actions and promises they may have made during the election period. Essentially, every student should fulfil a number of responsibilities which should be outlined in the student council's constitution. Some basic responsibilities may include:

- Attending all meetings of the student council
- Voting on any issues that may arise in meetings of the student council
- Making proposals on behalf of the students they represent to the student council
- Actively representing the interests of their peers
- Reporting to the students which they represent on any updates or events from the student council.

In the event that a member of the council is failing to uphold their responsibilities, we encourage the student council to contact the ISSU for guidance and advice on how to approach the situation

CONSTITUTION

Every student council should write their own constitution. A student council constitution is a document designed to outline the structure of the student council, its rules, procedures, and more. It is vital that the student council has a constitution to ensure that every member of the council is doing their part and to provide members with clarity on their responsibilities as well as actions they should be taking. A student council constitution is essentially a guide to how the student council works.

A Student Council Constitution template can be found in the annex of this handbook (Page 25-34)

INTERNAL ELECTIONS & VOTING

Internal elections and voting may also take place between elected student council members. Voting can occur when electing positions or voting on decisions or motions. There are two types of voting procedure in student councils;

1. **Vote by show of hand**
2. **Secret ballot**

Vote by show of hand should be used when making smaller decisions within a council. If the Chairperson is not using their vote they should count the hands for the vote.

Secret ballot voting is used when electing someone to a position or voting on a decision of significant importance. For elections, these should also be run by proportional representation, single-transferable vote. For voting on motions or decisions, these can be counted by the Chairperson and Student Council Liaison Teacher. For further instruction on how secret ballot elections work, please read the section under "Student Council Election Method" (Page 8).

The elected Chairperson should not vote in an internal election unless there is a split decision in which the chairperson takes in all information into account and makes the final decision. There should be an odd number in voters when possible to avoid a split decision. Each member has one vote in elections and must be present at the election/vote to cast their ballot/vote.

It is important that for a decision to be taken, a meeting should be quorate. That means, a pre-agreed proportion of the student council is present to ensure any decisions taken are valid. Quorum should be outlined in the Student Council Constitution.

BUDGET

Although having funding for the student council can be beneficial and allow them to do more, it is not a necessity for running the student council.

It is vital that all money that is handled by the student council is kept track of and an account of all transactions is recorded in a physical form (ie. a finance book or spreadsheet). All financial aspects of a student council should be overseen by the treasurer and chairperson in conjunction with the student council liaison teacher/school leadership. It is understandable that members of the student council might feel that they are inexperienced in financial management so it can be helpful to reach out to ask for help from staff (i.e. accounting teacher).

In a basic sense a budget is an account of income and expenditure over a certain period of time.

Examples of income for a student council could include;
- Parents' Association donation
- Board of Management budget for Student Council
- Fundraiser donations
- Non-uniform day
- Cake sale
- Vending machine commission
- Stationery shop profits

Examples of expenditure might include;
- Fundraising events setup costs
- Cake sale setup costs
- Meeting refreshments
- Equipment and supplies,
- Travel for off campus events
- Student events

It can be helpful to make a budget at the beginning of the year, outlining where the council plans to spend any money during the term, especially if they are requesting money from the Board of Management. Following from that, to keep organised the council should keep the budget up to date by amending it when necessary. A financial report can be drawn up after events that take place as well as at the end of the year. These are important documents that account for all monetary transactions that happened throughout the year.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In general, all student councils have the same purpose that is outlined in the **Education Act** (**1998**), which is to promote student voice, consult with management on decisions that affect students and to promote an inclusive school environment.

Student councils should constantly be looking for ways to improve student life in school and they should continuously engage with students to determine what the student body wants.

After identifying all possible issues for the student body, it is important that the student council discuss and debate the various issues and decide which ones they will focus on during their term, this will serve as a work plan for the student council and it should be noted that this may change and the student council may need to adapt as the year progresses. These can be your aims and objectives.

The council's aims and objectives should be outlined at the start of the year and should include all the activities they plan to do throughout the year as well as the projected outcomes. It's important that they have a basic plan at the beginning of the year but the aims and objectives can be changed throughout the year.

PLANNING

For a student council to be successful and achieve any of its goals they need to have a plan for the activities and actions they will take during the year. Activities can be added or removed from the plan during the year, but it is important that a basic plan is in place. Ideally a comprehensive plan should then be made for each activity/event that is undertaken.

It is important that before the student council starts planning the event, they should define the purpose/goal of the event and who the target audience is, which will most likely be the student body. It is important that they involve as many students as possible.

The event plan should never be too detailed as this can be restrictive but it should be descriptive enough so that you don't run into issues and get knocked off track! The plan should be comprehensive with the flexibility to allow for inevitable changes. It is helpful for the plan to be step by step so that it can be easily followed. Once you have a plan together, it's best to allocate certain roles and responsibilities to different members of the team in order to make the execution of your plan more efficient. They maybe even want to create a **subcommittee** who will be in charge of planning the specific event. During this stage, you should also take the time to identify any materials and resources that might be needed.

Once you have a plan together, it's best to allocate certain roles and responsibilities to different members of the team in order to make the execution of your plan more efficient. You maybe even want to create a subcommittee in charge of planning the specific event. During this stage, you should also take the time to identify any materials and resources that might be needed.

When planning a particular activity, the student council should take time to discuss and analyse it and identify what challenges may be faced.

A **SWOTT** analysis is one of the most effective ways to do this. This is an acronym of the following words:

Strengths
What is/was good about this method?

Weaknesses
What is/was bad about this method?

Opportunities
Could we collaborate with other groups in the school / is their a possibility for funding

Threats
What obstacles are/were in the way of achieving the goals?

*__Training__ (**Optional**)
What help do/did we need?

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Map out your SWOTT analysis like the example above, and then make your plan!

A work plan template is included in the annex of this document (Page 36). The student council plan should be evaluated at the end of the year as well using this method.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is vital in running a successful student council. Good communication means everyone feels included, motivated and that their voice is making a difference. This will not happen overnight, so it is important to find ways of keeping transparency between the student council and your fellow students.

Examples of how to do this include; a **newsletter**, **update meetings** (with Board of Management, Parents' Association, staff and Principal), student council **noticeboard** or **announcements** (on intercom or at assemblies).

A Public Relations Officer (PRO) or Public Relations Team may be appointed to look after these responsibilities as well as staying in touch with education partners such as other student councils. This way your fellow students will be informed of any event or consultation which might be coming up.

As the representative body for students it is important to let them know what you are planning and discussing on their behalf. Student council members should give updates to their class after meetings, where relevant.

During meetings it is important that the Chairperson asks the student council for their opinions and those of their classmates when discussing issues. It's also the responsibility of the Secretary to keep clear minutes and action points so they can be easily understood by those who read them. It is recommended that the chairperson and secretary meet after student council meetings to evaluate how well the student council communicated and to discuss how they might improve communication if necessary.

MINUTES & TASKS

Minutes are the written or typed source of information explaining the decisions and discussions made by the student council at meetings. This information is useful to have if anyone is unsure or needs reminding of what was discussed and decided on.

Minute taking can be a difficult task for your student councils secretary. Below we have devised some tips to help your secretary write minutes as efficiently and effectively as possible

The student council should decide whether they want the minutes to be private or public. The advantage of having them public is that those outside the council can see what work is being done and become interested in the student council, but you may want to keep some things private as they may be confidential to the council.

REMEMBER
LESS IS MORE*
*(SOMETIMES)

If you would like the student body to become more engaged with the student council and the work being done, we recommend that you issue a shorter version of the minutes, preferably just a page long to keep peoples attention. The original, longer version of the minutes should be stored in the student council records

TASKS

Tasks are simply the action points of the meeting. They can also be called **Action Items**, where an action needs to be taken by a person after the meeting. Tasks should be displayed at the bottom of the minutes to briefly explain what needs to be done, by who and a due date for the task. This can be seen in the minutes template in this book (Page 36).

CHECK OUT OUR GUIDE TO WRITING MINUTES ON THE NEXT PAGE

ISSU GUIDE TO MINUTE TAKING

1

PREPARATION
Before the meeting, get the structure or layout of the minutes ready. This can be done on handwritten notes or typed documents, and is generally in the same order as the agenda.

2

IN THE MEETING
The secretary should record notes during the meeting.

The main discussion points along with any conflicting viewpoints and decisions that are taken should be noted in the minutes. When writing during the meeting, it can be useful to write quick notes that you can elaborate on later when editing

Note: if the Secretary wishes to speak on something or make a presentation, they may ask someone else at the meeting to record minutes for that section.

3

EDITING
Your student council should collectively agree on a deadline for the secretary to circulate minutes after the meeting (e.g. one week after the meeting takes place). This deadline is important to allow enough time for the secretary to type, edit and circulate the minutes for the other student council members to read before the next meeting. A summarised version of the minutes may also be published for the student body. This summarised versions should be in bullet point form outlining key discussion items and decisions made. It should be no more than one A4 page.

4

SHARING WITH THE CHAIRPERSON (OPTIONAL)
It is advisable to circulate the minutes of the student council meeting to the chairperson before sharing them. This is beneficial to ensure all of the information is accurate and to catch any spelling or grammatical errors. The chairperson should also have a deadline to read over the minutes.

5

CIRCULATION TO STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS
Once approved the minutes should be circulated to the members of the student council and to the Student Council Liaison Teacher.

6

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
The minutes of the previous meeting should be read at the beginning of the following meeting. The minutes may be 'taken as read' if they have been circulated in advance of the meeting and if the student council is happy with skipping reading the minutes aloud. Once the minutes have been read, or taken as read, the chairperson must ask if anyone has any objections to the minutes. If not, the student council can approve the minutes. To do this, two members who attended the previous meeting must propose and second the minutes to approve them. The minutes can then be signed by the chairperson and taken as approved.

IMPORTANT: In the event that there are objections to the minutes, these objections must be discussed until the student council resolves the issue. Once an agreement is made the secretary must change the minutes to reflect what was agreed on. At this point, the minutes need to be approved. If no one proposes or seconds the minutes, the minutes will need to be altered again until the student council are satisfied with them so that they can be proposed, seconded and approved. This can be the most difficult part of minute taking, but it is extremely important.
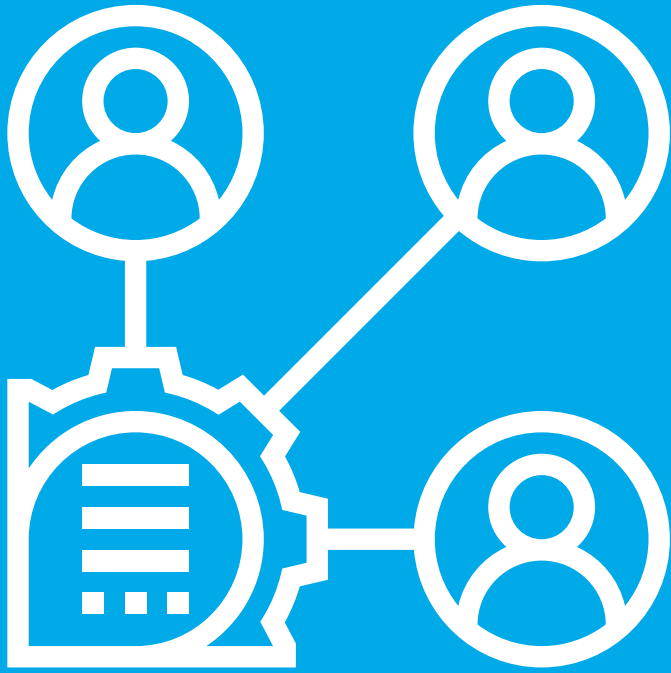
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PUBLICATION OF MINUTES
Once the minutes have been proposed, seconded and approved they may be saved in the student councils records and shared, in a summarised version with the student body.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

This section of the handbook will explore how to work with other school stakeholders, and ensure the student council is included in all decisions.

SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS

A school stakeholder is someone who is involved in the welfare and success of a school and its students.

Stakeholders usually include:
- Students
- Teachers
- Staff members
- Student Council Representatives
- Parents
- Family members
- Trustees
- Governing Bodies
- Members of the local community
- Local business owners
- Members of the Board of Management
- Parents' Association
- Local County Councillors

They are viewed as stakeholders because of their personal, financial or professional "stake" in the school and it's students. Stakeholders are generally represented on the school Board of Management, working on school-reform concepts and strategies that aim to work for all members of the school community and generally improve the school's organisation, operation, and academics.

The student council can work with each or any of these stakeholders on a case-by-case basis. A natural ally in the school community is the parents' association, who usually have quite a large influence on school Boards of Management.

Students and the student council have not always been seen as key stakeholders in the school community, to the same extent as parents and teachers for example. However, in recent years the role of students in decision-making has become more prominent. It is a core aim of the ISSU to ensure that a student representative sits as an advisory member on school Boards of Management.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External communication is a vital component of any team. A student council should be able to work with institutions, organisations and partners both within and outside of the school.

Contact should be encouraged and maintained with other stakeholders e.g. the Parents' Association.

The PRO or the ISSU School Rep should strive to engage with the ISSU in order to work with and learn from other student councils and to ensure the student council is aware of upcoming events and opportunities.

External communication opens up opportunities for involvement with other schools in your region and helps in getting ideas as well as advice from other student council members across many different schools.

If your student council is carrying out a cool project in your school or local community, we encourage you to liaise with local media such as newspapers and radio stations to communicate your message or campaign to the wider community.

NEGOTIATION SKILLS

As a student council, it is important to ensure that you are working efficiently, productively and communicating well as a team. Just remember TEA!

TOGETHER
EVERYONE
ACHIEVES

Working together is important in order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to express their ideas and voice their opinions. Each representative on the student council has a valuable opinion and a unique perspective to bring to the table, so it is important to respect each others views and to take each other's ideas and opinions on board.

As there is such a wide range of students on the student council, it is crucial that all members practice good listening skills and having an open mindset in order to ensure that all voices are heard and respected. Team work makes the dream work!

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The student council should keep in mind that it is important to reach out and to discover the opinions of the wider student body in order to ensure a democratic student council.

The voices of students' who are not on the student council are just as important and valuable when the student council are making decisions. That said, it may be difficult at first to ensure every single students' voice is heard, and so the student council should brainstorm to come up with some events/activities that will enhance the participation of students to ensure that as many voices in the school as possible are heard.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Events and activities are a valuable way of engaging students and raising awareness of issues your student council is looking at and also a way for you to increase the visibility of your student council. By having events, activities, consultations, focus groups, surveys and forums you can actively engage and seek the opinion of the student body and also increase your own visibility and therefore your effectiveness.

This ties into the planning process of an event and identifying your target audience; you must think about every type of student and how they can get involved in an event/activity when planning it! It is also worth engaging with students in an informal way so that you maintain your presence in a school environment and keep the attention of your student body.

Ways of informal communication can be setting up a **social media account**, **student radio station** or **school magazine** and also organising **fun events** like quizzes and karaoke!

When the student body is aware of the work of the student council, they will be more likely to engage and interact with the student council on issues they may face.

SCHOOL POLICY

In order to make effective change in your school, the student council may need to engage with **school policies**. Reading your schools policies and understanding them can be advantageous for your school's student council, particularly when lobbying to change school rules. It also shows professionalism when students take an active role in engaging with school policy.

Schools should have all their policies available on the school website - review them as a student council and propose changes from there!

Some policies that most schools will have include;
- Anti Bullying
- Child Protection
- Data Protection
- Guidance Plan
- Internet Safety: Acceptable Use Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Student Council
- Substance Use
- Homework
- Uniform & Self Expression
- Behaviour

Some of these policies exist as a requirement from the Department of Education & Skills, and others are up to your school if they wish to have them.

If you wish to change any rules in your school it is important to check if the rule is written down in school policy. If it is written down you should work as a student council to lobby other stakeholders in the school to amend the policy in question.

STUDENTS AS ADVISORY MEMBERS ON THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

In **Realising Our Voice,** a publication created by the ISSU in 2010, the ISSU outlined its vision for how student voice can be included meaningfully in both schools and the education system. In schools, it is a long-term aim of the ISSU to have a student sit on the Board of Management as an **Advisory Member**. This means that they might not necessarily have a vote on the Board of Management (similar to the Principal), but they would be present for discussions and decisions being made about the school budget and policy. This is meaningful engagement with students, guaranteeing that student perspectives are present at the decision-making table, and it is already taking place in many schools across the country and is proving extremely stressful.

While the ISSU is working to get this legislated, your student council should aim to initiate contact with the Board of Management and maybe even try to **hold a meeting** or **make a presentation** to them. If we want a seat at the table, show them we are ready to take it!

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

This section of the handbook will explore ways in which you can ensure your student council continues to improve over time and ensure that you achieve your long-term goals.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management is the maintenance of information from one student council to the next. Knowledge management is very important within the student council as the members change regularly. It is the shared responsibility of the student council to ensure that all knowledge, training, projects and tips you gained throughout your term are documented and available for future student councils. Ideally there should be a handover between the outgoing and incoming student council.

FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION

- **Minutes:** At every student council meeting the secretary records the minutes of the meeting. These minutes should be shared by email, physical copy, or in a shared online folder. (See minute template on Page 35 in the **Annex**).

- **Information gathered:** If your student council decides to carry out a survey/questionnaire the information gathered should be recorded and made available and easily accessible to the current and future student councils.

- Similiarly, if the student council organises an event, all of the plans such as agendas, relevant contacts, resources, budgets and SWOT analyses should be recorded so that future student councils can learn from what worked well and can avoid repeating the same mistakes that may have been made.

- **Projects and Campaigns:** A copy of all posters, newsletters etc. that the student council designs should be kept, as campaigns/projects started may fade over time and be forgotten. Future student councils can continue to build on the work of the campaign/project and complete it over time.

MAINTAINING & IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT

The student council should continuously strive to create strong relationships with all stakeholders in the school community including Principals, Teachers, Student Council Liaison Teacher(s), Parents' Association, the Board of Management and most importantly the student body. These relationships should be maintained and handed down from one student council to the next during the handover process, and introductions made where necessary.
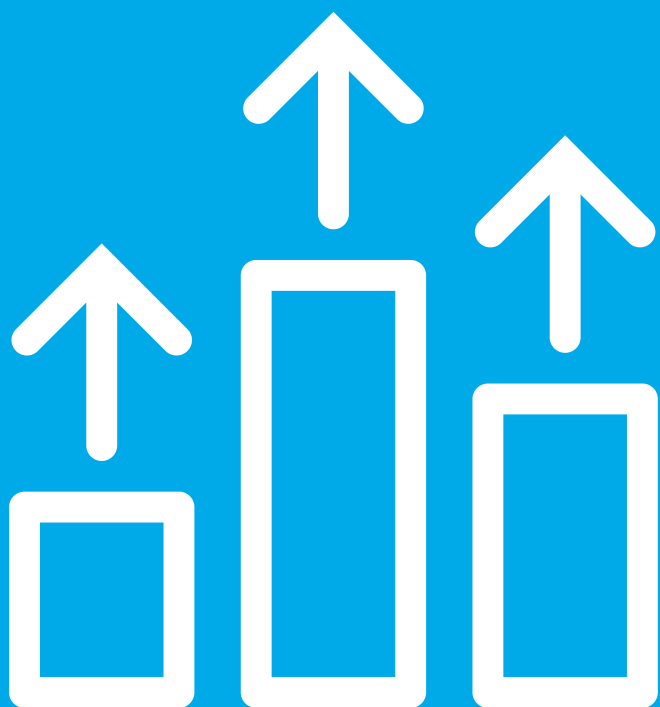
It is important that the student council meets with these stakeholders in the school regularly to discuss projects and campaigns that the student council is working on or have carried out. If possible, the student council should work with relevant stakeholders to achieve their aims and objectives. These stakeholders will likely remember the cooperation of the student council and bring forward that good will to future student councils.

As a student council you should always have strong engagement with your students.

How can we keep students engaged and improve this in the future? Check out our suggestions here.

SOCIAL MEDIA
If you have social media accounts, make sure to use them! These accounts must also be passed down from year to year.

PRESENTATIONS
The student council could set up a presentation / video of pictures and a short description of each project worked on throughout the term, which can be put on display during the next student council elections or at your school's end of year ceremony. Let them know your achievements!

LISTENING
Listening to students is a simple but effective way for the students to gain trust and confidence in their student council. Take some time in a class to listen to people's thoughts and suggestions for the student council - this can reduce apathy around student council elections and ensure people vote for those who they think will do a good job in the future- not just for their friend. Another option could be to distribute a feedback form through student mail.

EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

Evaluation and feedback are ways in which your council can learn from everything you do and try to improve it.

Feedback can be gathered in many different ways, including;
- **A survey (online is best to evaluate data)**
- **Open Conversation in Class**
- **Suggestion Box**
- **Having a student council email address**

Check out our Questions for Student Council Evaluation & Feedback in the Annex (Page 38) for inspiration on questions which you can ask to improve your student council.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Some issues in schools may not be solved in your current academic year, but you can learn from previous efforts to make a change and try to plan more strategically to get the result you want in the future. It is important you lay out the problem and take into account all factors, before making any plans.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM
First you will need to identify **why**, **when** and **how** the problem exists? Once these questions have been answered, the elements that do not work will be highlighted and the solution may become clear.
- The beginning aim may not always be to get an exact solution but may be just to generally *improve* the situation, until a clear plan to solve the problem is decided.

STEP 2: DISCUSS & BRAINSTORM
The next step is to discuss possible actions with the student council. Allow people to share any thoughts they have, and ensure they know that at this stage, no idea is too silly. Write down or draw all inputs to this part of the conversation.

STEP 3: MAKE THE PLAN
A concrete plan will need to be decided before any other action is taken. Dedicating specific task(s) will avoid confusion and will ensure all members are on the same page and know exactly what their tasks are. Ensure the workload is shared evenly and that no member(s) is left feeling under pressure and stressed. Assign tasks to members that are comfortable with completing them (never be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone!)

NOTE: It will not always be possible to follow the plan of action 100% and that's okay. There will always be challenges and obstacles in the way of achieving your goals. The key is to be able to adjust the plan to suit your situation, while consulting the rest of the council of course!

BEING AN INCLUSIVE STUDENT COUNCIL

The student council represents all the students in the school, regardless of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or membership of the Travelling community, and therefore the council has to act as such. It is vital that the council informs students of this so that all can feel valued, respected and welcomed. Students can often avoid engaging with student councils as they feel the council is biased and/or does not respect everyone's opinion, this is exactly what you want to avoid.

It is key to ensure that all members of the student council are included and that all members feel confident in voicing their opinions with the council. Bonding/team exercises and activities can be done at the start of your term to ensure that the student council trusts each other. The student council will be working closely together for the term and without trust and friendships this will be difficult.

Actions you can take to include all students

- Celebrate the religious holidays of the students in the school.
- Have vegan / vegetarian / Halal options in the school canteen.

- When making decisions ensure the council knows it is not based on personal opinions, it is based on the opinions of those whom you represent. However, it is not always possible to please everyone.
- When making decisions of which the council is not sure of the students' opinions, use surveys, questionnaires etc. to help the council form an opinion that will represent the students accurately
- Run in-school campaigns to ensure that all students feel valued, respected and welcomed in the school.
- Have no tolerance for bullying in or outside of the student council.
- Ensure that minority students are represented in the student council.
- Respect everyone's opinion, no matter if you personally agree or disagree.

ISSU STUDENT COUNCIL SCALE

The ISSU developed the Student Council Scale which is a self evaluation tool that allows student councils to determine the 'level' they are at and the steps they may need to take to improve and to 'level up' on the scale.

The scale has **5 levels**. The first level requires the basic foundations for a student council and the aim is that the student council would strive to reach level 5, allowing the student council to continually improve and strengthen their student representation ensuring they are ready to tackle any challenges they may face throughout their term.

The **Student Council Scale** and this **Student Council Handbook** together should set up the student council for their term and allow them to build strong foundations for future student councils.

The scale asks yes/no questions that the student council should collectively answer one by one in order to determine their current level and to then discuss and plan the steps they need to take to progress to the next level.

This plan and relevant tasks should be delegated amongst all student council members.

The ISSU Student Council Scale is a self-evaluation tool, and a copy of it can be found in the **Annex** (**Page 40**) of the Handbook.

CAPACITY BUILDING & TRAINING WITH THE ISSU

As a member student council of the ISSU, you are eligible to receive free bespoke **student council training** which allows your student council to upskill and progress no matter what level you are at.

More info on this can be found on our website (**www.issu.ie**)

As a member student council of the ISSU you receive many other benefits like a copy of this ISSU Student Council Handbook and of course access to ISSU events. The ISSU Annual Assembly and ISSU Regional Councils are statutory events which members schools are encouraged to send delegates to. The ISSU also hold other events throughout the year such as the ISSU Skills Academy and Student Council Chairperson Training. You can find upcoming ISSU events and more details about our statutory meetings on the ISSU website.

Only delegates from ISSU member student councils have the right to vote at the Annual Assembly. This event is essentially the AGM of the ISSU. Students vote on policies, constitutional amendments and elect the National Student Executive at Annual Assembly, along with having the opportunity to network with other student councils.

Only member student councils of the ISSU can nominate students as candidates in ISSU annual elections.

Member students can run for positions on the **Coiste Gnó (NSE)** - elected at Annual Assembly - and the **Regional Officer Body (ROB)** - elected at Regional Councils. These events serve as fantastic opportunities and great platforms to allow students to enact change on a regional and national level. Students can also meet and connect with like-minded people at these events and make friends for life!

CONCLUSION

We hope you have enjoyed reading this handbook and that you have learned some tips and tricks on how to help your students council reach its full potential. Ensuring strong student voice in schools that is respected is vital, and fulfilling this starts with you, the student council. We have no doubt that your student council is on the road to success! Make sure that you keep this handbook safe and that you come back to it for reference. Finally, if you have any other questions, queries or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us here at the ISSU

Email: studentvoice@issu.ie
Number: 01 443 4461
Address: ISSU 9th Floor Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin 1.

This handbook was created *by students, for students.*

With special thanks to;
- **Tara Toye**
- **Kacper Bogalecki**
- **Adam Lambe**
- **Quinton Kelly**
- **India Kennedy**
- **Rob O'Donnell** - ISSU Secretariat

ANNEX

STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION TEMPLATE

- One of the most important ways to structure a student council is the creation of a constitution. The constitution sets the objectives, functions and rules to be governed by the council. When developing a constitution the student council must, as required under the Education Act, consult with the Board of Management to provide useful advice and guidance in setting the foundations for a strong constitution. This is also important as the Board of Management may have their own policy on the student council and how they liaise with it, and it is important that this is also updated and that the two documents do not contradict each other.

- The constitution can be changed. If the student council feels the need to change a rule or add more content that they feel would improve the constitution, they can do so. Keep in mind, however, constitutions are written to be in place for long periods of time with only small changes along the way to suit the councils' needs.

- Try to section the constitution into numbered articles with sub articles. This makes it easier to identify the location of what you are speaking about and shows a level of formality and professionality in the council to those on the Board of Management.
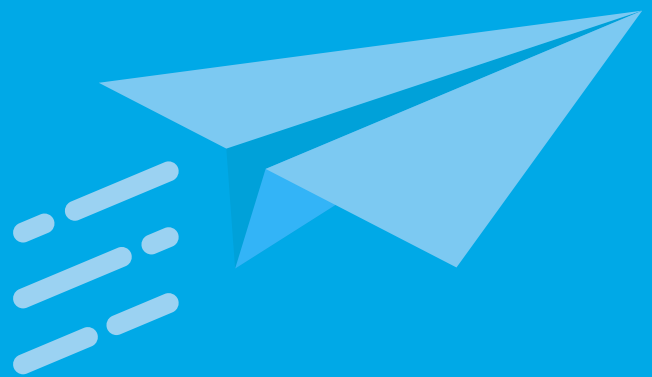
Please note, this is only a template and can be changed/amended to suit your Student Council's needs. For an example of a Constitution, please see www.issu.ie/documents

CONSTITUTION TEMPLATE

Page one should be a cover page simply stating the schools name and that this document is the Student Council Constitution. This page can be designed to your own preference and can include your schools crest, images or your student council symbol or logo if you have one.

Page two should be the list of articles with numbers with the titles as seen below:

1 **ARTICLE 1.0 AIMS OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL**

1.1 REPRESENTATION
To represent the students at the school fairly.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT
To further the development of the school.

1.3 HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
To attempt to improve and maintain a healthy school environment.

1.4 RELATIONSHIPS
To ensure a healthy relationship between students, staff, parents and management.

2 A**RTICLE 2.0 ROLES OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL**

2.1 POLICY
To give students the input on the development of school policy and to ensure the student council has a contribution in making school policy.

2.2 STUDENT VOICE
Seek to hear the voice of every student in the school.

3 **ARTICLE 3.0 MEMBERSHIP**

3.1 TERM OF OFFICE
Elected members will have a term of one school year. Members will then need to be re-elected in the next annual student council election to continue membership.

3.2 ARRAY OF STUDENTS
The student council should be made up of a wide array of students from the school. An equal number of students from each year should be elected whenever possible. A Student Council may also decide to elect representative members from extra-curricular activities as well.

3.3 MANDATORY OFFICERS
Mandatory officers are required roles to be filled at the beginning of the school year, elected by the newly elected council members. These roles would include a Chairperson, Secretary, PRO/Communications Officer, ISSU Officer.

Non-mandatory officers are not required to be filled by a council. The newly elected council should decide which officers they would like to include in the coming school year before electing any position. If the council feels they need to appoint a new officer position, create an officer position or even remove an officer position they can do so. See "article 7.2" on the removal of a member if removing an officer position mid-term. The number of officers can vary year by year. Non-mandatory roles include Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer, Irish Language Officer, Assistant Secretary, Social Justice Officer and much more.

4 **ARTICLE 4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

4.1 COUNCIL MEMBER

A council member must be a democratically elected student at the school. It is the responsibility of each council member to contribute (regardless of their role on the council) and they should be held accountable for their actions. This means that every student is expected to carry out a number of functions, these responsibilities include:

- Attending all meetings where possible of the council,
- Voting on any issues that may arise in meetings of the council,
- Making proposals and being the voice on behalf of the students they represent to the council,
- Actively representing the interests of their peers,
- Reporting to their represented body on any updates or events from the student council.

4.2 OFFICER POSITIONS

Mandatory officer positions must be filled by an elected student council member only. Non-mandatory officer positions that the council decides are required in their council must also be filled by an elected student council member only. No council member can take up two officer positions, they may run for multiple positions in an election but if elected in one position they must step down from election in the other roles. Officers must report to the council on the work they are doing as part of their role, attend all officer meetings where possible, work to continuously improve and hear the voice of each student regarding their roles description.

*Depending on your council you can decide which council members can run fairly for different positions based on year groups, options would include (A) any year, (B) a senior student ('4th to 6th'), (C) a junior student ('1st to 3rd'), (D) 6th year (when possible), (E) 3rd year (when possible). *

4.3 CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. It is the responsibility of the Chairperson to make sure that the running of the meeting is at a satisfactory level, when decisions come to an impasse the chairperson takes all information into consideration and makes the final decision, it is also the responsibility of the chairperson to overlook minutes and documents make sure the council is running to the standards and goals we set. The minutes to be confirmed within a day of receiving them from the Secretary.

4.4 SECRETARY

The Secretary can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to keep an accurate account of the proceedings of each meeting and record the decisions of the council. The Secretary is to record the meeting minutes by written source such as a minutes template or secretary book and on an online source that can be sent through email. These are to be checked between both the chairperson of that meeting and the Secretary before being sent out via email to the rest of the members of the council. It is also their responsibility to arrange the venue and times of meetings. Council members must notify the Secretary if they wish to add items to the agenda. Agendas and meeting info is to be sent to the student council and liaison teacher at least 3 days before the next meeting begins. The secretary must read aloud the minutes of the previous meeting at the beginning of every meeting. The Secretary also has the responsibility of making sure all council forms and documents are organised and if there are any problems with these forms of documentation, they must inform the Chairperson and Liaison Teacher.

4.5 ISSU OFFICER

The ISSU Officer can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. It is their responsibility to keep in contact with the ISSU through social media, email and to let the council know of any upcoming events, campaigns or released information about the ISSU or ISSU-led training. It is also the responsibility of the ISSU Officer to raise awareness and help the school to further understand the work of the ISSU, and they should be registered as the ISSU Officer on the ISSU's website and be in contact with their local Regional Officer.

4.6 PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The PRO can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. It is the responsibility of the PRO to relay and publicise information about the council to the public and school community using all forms of media and communication. The PRO deals with enquiries from the public. It is the responsibility of the PRO to make sure that the council is fairly represented in the local media and the school. It is there a job to find ways to improve the communication between the council and the public as well as internal communication. It is also their responsibility to improve social media presence and improve advertising methods within the school such as notice boards, intercom or assembly announcements or in the local school paper or podcasts. The PRO also has the job to find new ways to communicate with fellow students such as an online enquiry system, a student council letter box or a suggestion box.

4.7 TREASURER

The Treasurer can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. It is the responsibility of the Treasurer to look after the finances of the student council. They keep an accurate and updated account of all money raised in the name of the student council. At the last meeting of the year, the treasurer will present an annual report. The Chairperson may be asked at any time during the year for a current account report and they must provide it within a given deadline. The Treasurer should also set a budget for the council with any money available to the council. They should present this to the Board of Management and other councils such as the Parents Association when required.

4.8 VICE CHAIRPERSON

The Vice-Chairperson can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. The role of the Vice-Chairperson is to continue the Chairperson's duties if the Chairperson is absent. The Vice-Chairperson may also help to review the progress of meetings alongside the Chairperson. When taking on the Chairperson's duties they will report to them on the work they did in their name. Depending on your council they may have more duties to carry out.

4.9 ASSISTANT SECRETARY

The Assistant Secretary can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. The role of the Assistant Secretary is to continue the Secretary's duties if the Secretary is absent or the Secretary requests them to do so. If the Assistant Secretary is taking minutes or putting together the agenda in the place of the Secretary, they must get them approved by the Chairperson of that meeting. Depending on your council they may have more duties to carry out.

4.10 IRISH LANGUAGE OFFICER

The Irish Language Officer can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. The role of the Irish language officer is to translate documentation into the Irish language or Gaeilge, it being the native language of Ireland or Éire. The purpose of this is to make sure there is accurate representation of both our native and primary languages. The Irish language officer is also responsible for the promotion and representation of the Irish language and culture in the school on behalf of the student council. If the Irish Language Officer is requested to translate documentation, they must consult with both the Chairperson and Secretary to access the files needed to be translated

4.11 EQUALITY OFFICER

The Equality Officer can be from... They will hold their position for their one-year council term unless removed from office. The responsibility of the Equality Officer is to improve the personal and social development of every student in the school equally. This includes representing the student level outside of learning and teaching. They do this by liaising with different groups outside of the school. They must make sure that every student of a minority group including those in the LGBTQ+ Community, Traveller Community, those from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds, disabled students and those affected by racism, religious discrimination or bullying are being addressed in the work of the student council. The Equality Officer should make sure all of these students are represented equally and that the student council is actively working to make the school a welcome place for all. Therefore, it is also their responsibility for the defence and promotion of equality on a student level and to inform the council of any upcoming events, campaigns or other information regarding student equality.

4.12 LIAISON TEACHER

The Liaison Teacher is to be present at meetings. They may stay for the whole meeting or just the commencement and completion, this is to be decided by the majority of the council. They are to be the active link between the student council and staff. They have a voice but may not vote in the student council. They are a source of information for the council. The Liaison Teacher may appoint a temporary substitute in their place

5

Article 5.0 Elections

5.1 ELECTION PROCEDURES

The election procedure is the voting process between the elected council members. These elections occur when electing positions or voting on decisions/motion. There are usually two types of elections in councils.

5.2 VOTING

The elected Chairperson should not vote in an internal election unless there is a split decision in which the chairperson takes in all information into account and makes the final decision. There should be an odd number in voters when possible to avoid a split decision. Each member has one vote in elections and must be present at the election/vote to cast their ballot/vote.

5.3 'VOTE BY SHOW OF HAND'

'Vote by show of hand' should be used when making smaller decisions within a council. If the Chairperson is not using their vote, they should count the hands for the vote.

5.4 'SECRET BALLOT'

'Secret ballot' elections are used when electing someone to a position or voting on a decision of significant importance. These elections are more complex. This way you rank the candidates from favourite to least, 1 being your favourite. You do not have to put a number or vote for all the candidates at all; it is your own choice.
The quota is the number of votes needed to be elected. There is a detailed example and description in this handbook under 'internal elections'.

6

ARTICLE 6.0 INTERNAL ORGANISATION

6.1 MEETINGS

Meetings should be held at least twice a month and have half of the council members present to go ahead. The Chairperson or Vice/Deputy is the only member allowed to officially call a meeting. The Chairperson then must notify the Secretary, who will organise the meetings location, date and time with the input of the Chairperson. This information is then to be shared with the rest of the student council at least 5 days before the arranged meeting takes place. The Secretary should inform the council members and the Liaison teacher with this information through online communication that works for the council e.g., email.

6.2 DATE & TIME OF MEETINGS
When should council meetings take place, maybe a set day and either during lunch break or a set time during school hours. Aim to have a council meeting of 30 to 60 minutes (Depending on your agenda).

6.3 SUB-COMMITTEES
The student council reserves the right to create sub-committees at any time. A sub-committee will be made up of at least two student council members ideally one from junior cycle (1st, 2nd, 3rd year) and one from senior cycle (4th, 5th, 6th year). These sub-committees would aim to have a maximum of 10 people and made of a variety of council members and fellow students. The planned activities and ideas of the subcommittee must be submitted to the council for review and approval. Sub-committees must report regularly on their progress to the council.

6.4 FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING
The Treasurer will keep an accurate and up to date account of all money in the council's name including money they raised. The Treasurer will provide an annual report to the council at the end of the year. They will consult with staff, parents and management when planning fundraising events.

6.5 COMMUNICATIONS
Good communication means everyone feels included, motivated and feels that their voice is making a difference. Keeping transparency between the student council and our fellow students is vital. A Public Relations Officer (PRO) or Public Relations Team may be appointed to look after these responsibilities. They may use forms of communication such as social media, notice board, announcements and much more. They will continuously report to the council on their progress at each meeting.
As the representative body for students, it is important to let them know what you are planning and discussing on behalf of them. It is everyone's responsibility to communicate in the council and use their voice to represent others. The Chairperson is to overview the communication within the council and try to improve it where possible.

6.6 OFFICER MEETINGS
Officer meetings should take place at least once a month and should require ⅓ of the officers present to proceed. Ideally you would have an officers meeting after each meeting to discuss what is working and what can be improved on in the council. It is important to remember that the officers are not above any other council member, it is just that these people have more responsibilities and jobs.

6.7 EVENT PLANNING
When planning an event, the council will consult with the Principal and liaison teacher as well as the Parent's council and the Board of Management. It is important to consult with the student council treasurer to allocate a budget for the event. The student council or PRO should get in contact with the student body and run surveys about how the students would like an event to be run and find an agreeable option between the student body and use this information to set the foundations for their event.

6

6.8 INVITED MEETING GUESTS

All invited guests need to be approved by the Chairperson to allow them to sit in at a meeting and possibly present to the council. These people will not have any vote in student council elections and must adhere to student council rules and their constitution. They may be asked to leave at any time by the Chairperson.

6.9 CAMPAIGNS

The council may set up campaigns or share campaigns once the council agrees. They may be run by the appropriate officer or sub-committee. They can share this through communication sources with the PRO.

6.10 MEETING WITH THE PARENTS COUNCIL OR STAFF

Meeting with other bodies in the school is a vital part of maintaining a strong student council with an effective voice for change. The student council should meet with these bodies whenever possible to build connections and maintain a good working relationship. Organise times and dates to meet and invite parents or staff to your meetings and try to attend theirs as well. Plan what you are going to discuss and present to these bodies and be prepared for questioning.

6.11 MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Similar to meeting with the Parents or staff, having a strong relationship with the Board of Management is a vital part of having a say in the school. This Board has a huge say in what the council can do in the school and it is important to try and meet them to negotiate issues, funding, event planning and much more.

7

ARTICLE 7.0 STANDING ORDERS

7.1 DECISION MAKING

For decisions of significant importance, as deemed by the chairperson, to be made there must be ⅔ of members present.

7.2 REMOVING MEMBERS

Reasoning:
The council has the right to remove a member, however, there must be a 'just cause' such as lack of attendance without valid reasoning, not committed to the aims of the student council, breach of code of conduct, if a student leaves the school or breaches school policy. The member must be given a week's notice of the vote and may address the council in their defence.

Procedures:
The liaison teacher must receive a number of complaints from individual council members. A warning may be given. If serious violations or continued breaches occur, they will be asked to resign once the council has been made aware of the issue.

7

The council member in question has the right to defend themselves which may lead to a continued reviewed membership until the Officers and Liaison teacher are satisfied with the outcome. A vote requiring ⅔ of council members to be present will take place, the outcome of this vote will determine the membership of the council member.

If the Board of Management informs the council that a member has seriously breached school ruling without valid reasoning, they will consult with the Liaison teacher, Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson in the removal of a member. This may lead to expulsion immediately. This may occur when legality is in question, in which case, only officer members over 18 years of age and the liaison teacher are to be in discussion on the member, where they will try and fairly represent the views of the council.

7.3 REMOVING OFFICERS

If the council feels an Officer is not fulfilling their role's responsibilities and there is a lack of confidence in their position, the council will propose to remove their title and they will be given a week's notice to address the council in their defence. If this person is removed from their position, they are still a member of the council. For information on removing members from the council, see procedure point 7.2.

If the majority of the council feels a non-mandatory position is no longer necessary on the council, we feel that the council should try to find ways in which to improve the role and bring new responsibilities to the position. At the end of the year the council can review the position and write a report for the new council in the coming school year so they can decide if they want to keep that position for another school year.

7.4 FILLING VACANCIES

To fill vacancies the council may decide to hold a by-election or to Co-opt. the next candidate who received the highest votes at the last election which was held.

7.5 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The council may vote to change its constitution at any time provided that any proposed change at a meeting is then circulated to all of its members at least 7 days in advance of the commencement of the vote, which needs to be done at an official council meeting where 2/3 of the members must be present. Any changes made to the constitution must be submitted to the Board of Management.

7.6 CODE OF CONDUCT

Council members will attend all council meetings whenever possible. They will be active in engagement with student council activities. They will set a good example to others. Members will represent their fellow students to the best of their ability. They will support the decisions made by the council. They will maintain good relationships with staff, parents' council, students and Board of Management. Support fellow council members and abide by the school rules. They will respect fellow council members and give them a fair chance to speak and use their voice respectively.

7

7.7 DEMOCRACY
All decisions and elections made by the student council are to be made democratically.

7.8 EQUALITY
Every student is given an equal say on the council and in decision making. It is the responsibility of the Chairperson and Equality Officer to make sure that each council member is equally heard and listened to.

7.9 STUDENT COUNCIL TRAINING
Official student council training should take place once a year.

7.10 EXCLUSION FROM DISCUSSIONS
The council are not to discuss; any uncomplimentary mention of a member of staff, management or student by name or implication, individual grievances between staff and student, ongoing disciplinary matters involving a student or group of students.

7.11 'NULL AND VOID' DECISIONS
Any decisions made by a council member without the majority vote of the student council will be made 'null and void' and will be addressed accordingly.

STUDENT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES TEMPLATE

- Title/type of meeting:
- Location of meeting:
- Date of meeting:
- Names of members present:
- Names of staff/visitors present:
- Apologies for absence/excused:
- Other absences:

Minutes of the last meeting:
1. Were they read aloud or proposed as read aloud?
2. Who proposed them:
3. Who seconded them:
4. Matters arising from previous meeting:

AGENDA:
1. Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
DISCUSSION:
Action taken on item:
2. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
DISCUSSION:
Action taken on item:
3. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
4. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
5. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
6. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
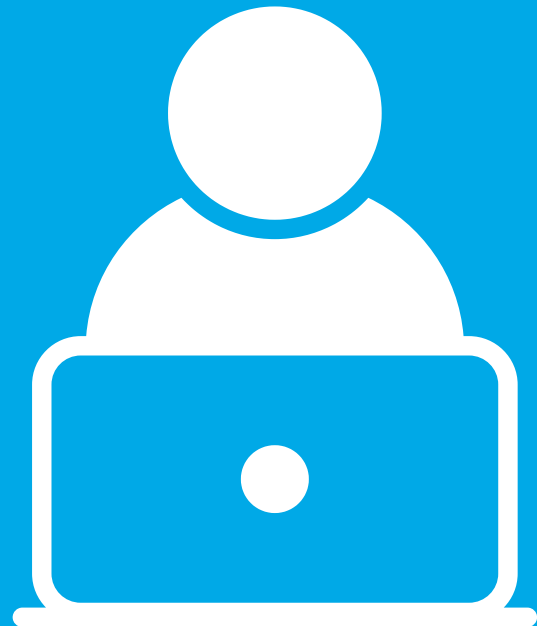7. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
8. *Item name* proposed by *proposer name*
Discussion:
Action taken on item:
9. A.O.B. (Any other business):

WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

It is beneficial to all members of the student council to fill out a **work plan** at the start of their term so they can reflect throughout their term and remember why they wanted the position and what they want to achieve while in the position while they have the platform to do so. These work plans should be kept for future student councils to use as a resource, so they can understand the issues you faced, how you planned to fix them and in the end what worked and what did not.

Change this work plan to suit your student council if needs be!

NAME:
DATE:
POSITION (IF ANY):
STUDENTS YOU REPRESENT:

PERSONAL GOALS
It is important that you know exactly what you want to achieve when you start your term on the student council, these should be the same reasons you nominated yourself for the position. It may not be exactly clear how you are going to achieve your goals, but you will always have the backing and support of the student council.

PLAN OF ACTION SKETCH
While you may not have a clear plan of action from the start, it is important that you have a rough idea in your head of how you want to achieve your goals. This is when you get those ideas on paper.

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FOR EACH PROJECT;
- Project name
- Strategy to complete this project:
- When will you start this project?
- How long will this project take?
- Who will help you with this project?
- Will you need money to complete this project?
- How will you get the money?
- Why does this project need to be undertaken?
- How is this project going to benefit the students you represent?
- What could potentially stop you from completing this project?
- How are you going to overcome these obstacles?

NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR NEWSLETTER:
- How often will you release a newsletter?Weekly/bi-weekly/monthly?
- What do you want to achieve? Do you want to spread awareness of events, get more people involved in the council or simply update those who might be interested?
- A newsletter can be a valuable resource for your student council to build momentum within the student body. Who do you want to target with your newsletter? Is there a particular school year you'd like to target, i.e. 6th years?
- How will you distribute our newsletter? Via email, social media or via physical copies?

NEWSLETTER EXAMPLE

Welcome to our newsletter!

The Student Council has been very busy in the past few months, and we have many exciting events coming up. Want to get involved? Email us at studentcouncil@issu.ie.

Check out our upcoming events below. For more information on any of our events, see the notice board outside Assembly Hall 1. Have an idea for an event? We would love to hear it!

JANUARY
January 1st - Students Council Meeting and elections Assembly Hall 2 at 1pm**.**
January 5th -Bakesale for charity Room 201
January 12th -Monthly Open-door meeting. Tell us what has been going on for you and any issues you would like us to raise nationally. Meeting in Room 103 from 1-2pm.
January 20th - Puppy room! Stressed about exams? We have partnered with Dogs Trust this year to host a puppy room for some animal therapy. Donate what you can. More details at facebook.com//example. Event will be in Room Assembly Hall 2 from 1-2pm.

FEBRUARY
4th February – Meeting with teachers regarding school lunch options from 4-5pm.
7th February- Meditation workshop. Assembly Hall 1 from 1-2pm.
12th February – Valentine's Day fundraiser for St Martin's Hospice. Room 201 from 1-2pm.
19th February – Update on leaving certificate in Assembly Hall 2 from 4-5pm.
22nd February-Yoga class for destressing. Beginners welcome. Just wear comfortable clothes! Assembly Hall 1 from 5-6pm.

We look forward to welcoming you to some of these events in the coming weeks. As always, please reach out to us here or through the student council member in your class if you have any questions.

Warm Regards,
John Smith
Student Council Secretary

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT COUNCIL EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT COUNCIL
- Is there a student council liaison teacher and does everyone know who they are?
- Is the role of the student council liaison teacher clear and is the student council liaison teacher an effective link between students, teachers and management?
- Do the student council members understand their role?
- Can student council members meet teachers and other staff for advice and support on issues and are the teachers supportive of the student council?
- Is the Principal and the Board of Management supportive of the student council?
- Is training provided for all members of the student council?
- Is training provided for all officers of the student council?
- Is training provided for the student council liaison teacher?
- Has the student council got a budget?
- Has the student council got access to resources, e.g. computers, photocopiers, etc.?

ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS
- Is the role of the student council clear to students?
- Do students know who their representive(s) on the student council are and do teachers know that there is a student council and what it does?
- Is it easy for a student to get in contact with a student council member to discuss issues?
- Is there a student council suggestions box?
- Is there a student council noticeboard?
- Is there a student council newsletter or website?
- Are students supportive of their student council?
- Can students give suggestions/ideas/problems to the student council and are they looked at and given an answer?

ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
- Is the role of the student council clear to staff and management?
- Is the student council considered an important part of the school by everyone?
- Is the student council consulted on issues which affect students and is the student council involved in important decision-making?
- Are the views of the student council taken seriously?
- When the student council puts forward a proposal or asks for something, is the matter given proper consideration, and was valid reasoning given?
- Does the Principal/Parents' Association/Board of Management know what the student council does?
- Are students, staff and management aware of the achievements of the student council?
- Does the student council liaison teacher update other teachers about the student council?
- Do members of the student council address staff meetings to update teachers on issues?

38

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT COUNCIL EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

- Does the student council meet the Principal regularly to provide updates on its activities and to discuss issues?
- Can the student council put issues on the agenda for meetings of the school's board of management and are these issues discussed fairly?
- Does the student council provide updates to the Board of Management on its activities and plans on a regular basis?
- Does the Board of Management provide information to the student council on issues which affect students?
- Does the student council ever invite the Principal and members of the board of management to attend meetings?
- Do the student council and parents' association meet regularly to update each other on their activities and plans?

INTERNAL RUNNING OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL

- Is voting by secret ballot and the voting of the votes carried out in a clear and transparent manner?
- Is the system for nominating students for election fair?
- Does the student council have a Constitution that is easy to use?
- Are the posts of the student council officers filled, e.g. Chairperson, Secretary, etc and are they clear to understand?
- Are the posts of the student council officers filled in a democratic manner?
- Are there effective sub-committees?
- Does the student council work well together as a team?
- Are student council meetings held regularly and is there a good attendance at the meetings? Are there ground rules for meetings and are they adhered to?
- Do student council members get adequate notice of meetings?
- Is an agenda given in advance to all student council members and are all the items on the agenda discussed at the meeting?
- Does everyone get a chance to speak at the meeting?
- Is there a fair process for reaching decisions?
- Are minutes taken at each meeting and do they reflect the discussion and decisions taken?
- Are the minutes circulated to all members of the student council and agreed at the next meeting?
- Did the student council set out what it wanted to achieve during the year or has the student council achieved its aims in the past year?

STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

- Is the student council representative of all students equally in the school and is the student council made up of students only?
- Is an election held to elect the student council members and is this a democratic election?
- Can only students vote in the election and does every student in the school have one vote only? Is the election procedure agreed in advance and are all students aware of how and where voting will take place?
- Do any teachers influence students' votes in the elections?

ISSU STUDENT COUNCIL SCALE

ISSU STUDENT COUNCIL SCALE

The ISSU Student Council Scale is a tool which you can use to benchmark your own student council and identify improvements you can make.

The updated scale looks at 3 different categories in which you can compare your student council

STRUCTURE & WORK
How is your student council set up, and how much work is it doing?

CAMPAIGNS & COOPERATION
How is your student council fighting to better students' rights, and how are you working with management?

ISSU MEMBERSHIP
How should you be interacting with ISSU, and how can ISSU help you?

Start at Level 0 and read upwards to see where your student council is in each category!

|	STRUCTURE & WORK	CAMPAIGNS & COOPERATION	ISSU MEMBERSHIP
LEVEL 5	• Does your school recognise the student council as a fully autonomous, representative body of students? • Is your student council capable and willing to work on multiple projects / campaigns?	• Advisory member of Board of Management • Do you meet with Board of Management representatives or the Parents Council when appropriate?	• Do you nominate students to run for election for the National Student's Executive (NSE)?
LEVEL 4	• Does your student council lead campaigns in your school? • Does your student council have subgroups or specific officers to run campaigns and projects?	• Has your student council ever initiated a meeting or made a presentation to the Board of Management with an idea? • Do you propose amendments to school policies to the Board of Management?	• Do you nominate students to sit on ISSU working groups? • Do you propose motions at Annual Assembly? • Do you nominate students to run for Regional Officer
LEVEL 3	• Does your school recognise the student council as stakeholder that should be consulted and worked with?	• Has your student council ever met the Board of Management?	• Do you actively communicate with your local ISSU Regional Officers or the NSE, and input to their work and consultations?
LEVEL 2	• Does your student council meet regularly (at least once a month, ideally every 2 weeks)? • Are you actively consulting students in all classes, using different methods?	• Have you ever input to a school policy review? • Do you communicate with your school principal? • Do you have meetings with the school principal?	• Has your student council been represented at one ISSU event in the past year? • Do you register delegates to attend Annual Assembly and Regional Council?
LEVEL 1	• Are your student council members democratically - elected? • Is there equal representation for each year on your SC? • Is there a Chairperson, Secretary and other roles on your student council?	• Does your student council know the structure and make up of the Board of Management? • Does your student council read and understand the school policies?	• Have you joined the ISSU? • Have you elected an ISSU School Rep? • Does your School Rep attend meetings with their Regional Officers? • Do you apply for and receive ISSU student council training?
LEVEL 0	• Does your school have a student council? • Does your student council have a student council liaison teacher? • Does your student council have a constitution?	At Level 0, there is generally little or no campaigns being carried out or communication with other stakeholders in the school taking place	At Level 0, student councils are generally not eligible for ISSU membership. We can of course help your to develop though! Contact studentvoice@issu.ie for help and advice

OTHER RESOURCES
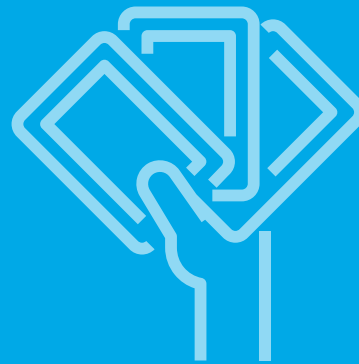
PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

Procedural motions and correspondence may be presented by a student council member using the 'Procedural motion card system' for proposals at a council meeting, including proposed agenda items. That member may propose in writing their action/plan/idea etc. and the Chairperson of that meeting will ask the student council to voice their opinions on the proposal. If you wish to voice your opinion, you raise your 'Procedural Motion Card' and the Chairperson will ask you to speak. At any time (with the exception of while someone else is speaking) any student council member can propose a 'Procedural Motion' (As listed on each 'Procedural Motion Card'). The Chairperson will immediately ask the council to vote by 'show of hand' if they feel the proposal (listed A to E) should be put forward.

If 'A' is passed, the proposal is put forward to management. If a majority vote has failed, the council will continue to listen to its members opinions before a final vote can be taken. Another procedural motion can be proposed in this time if it is not 'A' again.

If 'B' is passed, the proposal is not to be put forward to management. If a majority vote has failed, the student council will continue to listen to its members opinions before a final vote can be taken. Another procedural motion can be proposed in this time, if it is not 'B' again.

If 'C' is passed, the proposal is to be taken in parts or altered by whoever proposed 'C' and is to be put in writing, the student council will then vote on this new proposal. If a majority vote has failed, the council will continue to listen to its members opinions on the original proposal before a final vote can be taken. Another procedural motion can be proposed at this time. However, if passed the new proposal will overwrite the original proposal and the council will discuss the new proposal. Another procedural motion can be proposed at this time.

If 'D' is passed, the proposal is to be postponed. The member proposing 'D' will set a time for re-discussion and the council will vote on this set time/date. If proposed time failed the majority vote, the council would continue to listen to its members opinions on the proposal. Another procedural motion can be proposed at this time. If proposed time passed the majority vote, the original proposal will be postponed to that voted time/date. If motion 'D' fails in the initial vote, the council will continue to listen to its members' opinions before a final vote can be taken. Another procedural motion can be proposed at this time.

If 'E' is proposed, the member proposing 'E' will state the reasoning for withdrawal of the original proposal, referring to documentation and/or policy. If a proposal goes against school policy, student council policy and/or documentation (including constitution) and/or other policy the council and/or school follow, the proposal will be withdrawn without a majority vote. The exception to this is when a proposal to alter/remove/add to current policy and/or documentation is proposed within reason.

'PROCEDURAL MOTION CARDS' ARE TO BE GIVEN OUT TO THE COUNCIL AT THE BEGINNING OF A COUNCIL MEETING.