**Student Board member support: Group exercise feedback**

Student members of college boards are offered the opportunity to attend NUS and sparqs training to help them develop into the role. At the most recent training session about 50% said that they had received some form of induction from the Board, and about 50% said that they received ongoing support in their role as board member.

The network explored the question of what more could be done to support student board members, and specifically what students’ association staffs’ roles might be. Key points from the discussion are summarised below.

Thoughts on the students’ association staff’s role

* The dividing line between the support offered to a student board member by the board as opposed to by the SA Staff is ambiguous.
* Students’ association staff find it difficult to support the board member role as they don’t have access to board papers, don’t sit on the board, and generally don’t have much knowledge about what student board members are expected to do. The network suggested that association staff should meet with the Chair of the Board to develop their understanding of the role, and to gain the knowledge that is needed to support the student board member. It would also be an opportunity to develop the Board’s understanding of the students’ association as well.
* Given the wide range of skills supporting a students’ association requires, students’ association staff would also benefit from a skills audit and targeted professional development.

During elections

* Support staff to meet with the Clerk or Chair of the Board to understand the expectations and role of the student board member
* Invite the Chair of the Board to speak at the candidate’s briefing to offer context to the role of the student board member and to explain the role of the board and expectations of its members
* Information in the President job description about their role on the board, emphasising the responsibility and time commitment that is involved
* Make training available for support staff in induction to ensure they are able to support the student board members in the terminology and role of the board and include training on this responsibility in the student officer’s induction
* Skills audit for the elected officers so that training can be tailored to develop the skills and knowledge that are needed

After elections and induction/training at the beginning of the year

* Deliver a specific session on the role of the Board and the expectations and responsibilities of the board and its members. Discuss where power lies and focus on networking and influencing skills
* Allow incoming student board members to attend the final meeting with the outgoing student members as observers so that they can experience the meeting and observe behaviours and meet other board members
* Allow support staff to attend the first board meeting with the new student members to observe and feedback after the meeting
* Arrange a meeting between the Chair/Clerk and the student board members after election and before their first board meeting to explain how the board works, how to read the papers etc
* If possible, receive permission from the Chair of the Board for support staff to receive board papers so that they can go through them with the student members before meetings
* Outgoing student officers to speak to incoming officers about their experience on the board and pass on hints and tips

Ongoing support

* Training for support staff in relevant tasks e.g. managing board papers, report writing etc
* Mid-term review and top-up training for student board members
* Arrange for a board member to act as mentor to the student board members
* Help deciphering jargon and acronyms – a jargon list