

**AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION  
NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY**

**Student Engagement Policy**

Approved by the resolution of the Academic Council of  
the autonomous organization of education "Nazarbayev University"  
Minutes # 24 of 25.02 2015



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2015

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## 1. Introduction

1. This Student Engagement Policy (the 'Policy') of the autonomous organization of education 'Nazarbayev University' ('NU') is derived from the Academic Quality Framework<sup>1</sup>. The Policy is developed within the context of the Bologna Process, which emphasizes that 'students are full partners in higher education governance'.<sup>2</sup> The Policy assures and enhances, intended not only to improve the current student educational experience, but to inform the building of a long-term strategy of academic quality enhancement.

2. The effective modes of student engagement currently existing in NU Schools in academic quality enhancement are integrated within this policy document. It establishes appropriate mechanisms for effective university-wide student involvement in quality enhancement procedures, and develops strategies to place student engagement at the core of academic processes. The Policy applies to all NU Schools (including Nazarbayev University Foundation Year Programme). Guided by the Policy, NU Schools can modify and contextualize its principles to meet students' needs, and are encouraged to develop student engagement initiatives within their Schools and disseminate best practices amongst other Schools.

## 2. Aims of the Student Engagement Policy

3. The Policy aims to:

- 1) identify opportunities for student engagement in academic quality enhancement processes and promote consistency across the Schools;
- 2) strengthen the system of student representation in academic decision-making bodies at all University levels;
- 3) foster a student-centered academic culture.

## 3. Definitions

4. For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

- 1) **Student engagement** - student involvement in quality enhancement processes. The University encourages students to take a leading role in shaping their learning experience.

<sup>1</sup> Academic Council. (05/03/2014). *Academic Quality Framework of the Autonomous Organization of Education 'Nazarbayev University'*. Resolution. Minutes #82.

<sup>2</sup> Bologna Process. Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education (19/09/2003). *Realizing the European Higher Education Area*. Communiqué. Berlin, p.5.

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2) **Student representation** - a formal way to ensure that the University addresses students' opinions and concerns. Representatives may be affiliated with the Student Government of Nazarbayev University and/or the School Committee.

3) **Student feedback** - students' judgments and perspectives on their experience at the University, as expressed through formal mechanisms such as course evaluation surveys and student-staff meetings, or informal mechanisms such as focus groups and face-to-face communication.

#### 4. Scope of the Policy

5. The scope of the Policy is outlined by the Academic Quality Framework and includes student engagement in the areas of program and course design and approval, program delivery and organization, curriculum development, teaching and learning methods, learning resources, and opportunities. These areas are the main foci of the student feedback obtained through the course evaluation surveys, the system of student representation and student engagement in annual program monitoring and periodic review.

#### 5. Student Feedback

6. Student feedback is essential to help faculty to enhance their teaching, promote active student learning, and identify best practices and areas for improvement. Each School is encouraged to develop its own internal regulations, establish appropriate administrative procedures, assign process administrators responsible for student feedback and develop a consistent approach to the following stages of the feedback process:

- 1) feedback collection;
- 2) analysis and application of student feedback;
- 3) dissemination of the actions taken on student feedback;
- 4) monitoring the effectiveness of student feedback.

7. Student Feedback procedures should adhere to the principles of confidentiality and professional ethics. The Policy recommends that Schools employ a range of methods to gain student feedback without overreliance on one. These strategies include, but are not limited to the methods illustrated in the table below.

Table 1

Formal Methods	Informal Methods
1. Course feedback surveys 2. Student representation	1. Focus groups 2. Online student forum discussions 3. Face-to-face meetings with faculty and Deans 4. Suggestion box or book of complaints

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### 5.1. Course Feedback Surveys

8. The use of a university-wide standard questionnaire is recommended in order to enable comparative data analysis. Course feedback surveys should embrace questions on course design, teaching methods and learning resources. While keeping the core questions of the survey intact, NU Schools may adapt the feedback survey template by applying the web-based survey software of the University to reflect the uniqueness of a specific program. This can be achieved by including supplementary questions. In arranging formal feedback surveys and processing the data, Schools should apply 'Guidelines on Student Feedback Procedures' ('the Guidelines'), developed to complement the Policy.

### 5.2. Student Representation System

9. The system of student representation helps NU students to express their views on course design and delivery and where appropriate initiate changes to better reflect their needs. The aim of the Student Representation System is to ensure that students' views on academic processes at NU are communicated through their representation at:

- 1) Academic Council;
- 2) The NU Learning and Teaching Committee;
- 3) Academic Quality Committee;
- 4) Instructional Technology Sub-Committee;
- 5) School Learning and Teaching Committees or equivalent bodies;
- 6) School Student Committees or equivalent bodies.

10. NU Student Government serves as a liaison between the university level bodies and School Student Committees. The system is grounded on the principles of transparency and democracy, inclusiveness, annual re-election and rewards for participation. NU Schools may introduce incentives for active student representatives, and intensify their involvement in academic quality enhancement through the use of reward mechanisms. Each School is encouraged to establish a well-defined system of student representation via a Student Committee (or equivalent) that is regulated by an appropriate School policy.

11. The table below illustrates the remit of each component of the student representation system.

Table 2

School Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. develops student representation mechanisms and associated School policies on the operation of School Student Committees (or equivalent bodies);</li> <li>2. delivers effective training and consulting support to enable representatives to competently perform their duties;</li> <li>3. carries the primary responsibility for completing the feedback loop and communicating the results and follow-up actions;</li> <li>4. designs a reward system for active student involvement in academic quality enhancement.</li> </ol>
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School Student Committee (or equivalent)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. operates according to School policies regulating the operation of School Student Committees (or equivalent);</li> <li>2. meets at least once each semester to facilitate better student input;</li> <li>3. discusses the main concerns raised by the student community;</li> <li>4. records and disseminates minutes of School Student Committees to other students.</li> </ol>
Student Representatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. interact with students and staff to determine issues and suggestions that should be raised;</li> <li>2. uphold students' interests and offer constructive feedback on the teaching-learning process;</li> <li>3. report back to students on how their concerns are being addressed;</li> <li>4. establishes clear communication with the student electorate.</li> </ol>

**6. Student Engagement as Part of the Program Approval, Annual Program Monitoring and Periodic Review**

12. The academic quality enhancement processes of program approval, annual program monitoring and periodic review are driven in part by students' aspirations to improve their learning experiences. Students are involved in the process of program approval through their representation at program committees, Academic Quality Committee and Academic Council where they are given opportunities to review, discuss and provide recommendations for new program proposals. The program approval process enables the curriculum to be responsive to and reflective of students' needs and interests. Program and course monitoring reports, the constituents of the annual program monitoring process, incorporate student feedback analyses and the responses of program teams to these. These reports inform the annual program monitoring report for the next iteration of the program. Schools should archive student feedback relating to annual analysis and monitoring for a minimum of five years to support periodic review.

**7. Monitoring the Effectiveness of Student Engagement**

13. To confirm that the system of student engagement in Schools is functioning appropriately, it will be reviewed against the following quality performance indicators:

- 1) application of a variety of methods to obtain student feedback;
- 2) clear mechanisms for analyzing and considering their input;
- 3) consistency in reflecting on and responding to issues raised by students;
- 4) a transparent and fair student representation system;
- 5) education and support provision for student representatives.

14. Regular monitoring of the effectiveness of student engagement mechanisms will help guide adjustments where needed. Schools' partners may be involved in suggesting additional mechanisms of student engagement in academic quality assurance and enhancement.

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### 8. Review of the Policy

15. The Office of the Provost will coordinate a review of this Policy by NU constituents on a regular basis to ensure that it operates effectively and that student engagement is comprehensively interwoven into NU academic quality enhancement processes.

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