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| Document:                                       | Cork ETB Youthreach Student Council Policy  |
| Procedure No:                                   | 20-01 (year and version number)   |
| Effective Date:                                 | August 2020   |
| Supersedes:                                     | Any previous policies   |
| Issued By:                                      | Cork ETB  |
| This policy should be read in conjunction with: | <p>Cork ETB Learner Charter (In progress)</p> <p><a href="#">Student Councils: A Voice for Students</a><br/>(Department of Education and Science, 2002)</p> <p><a href="#">Second-Level Student Councils Resource Pack</a></p> <p><a href="#">The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</a>,<br/>Article 12</p> <p><a href="#">The National Children's Strategy</a>, published in<br/>2000</p> |
| Due for Review:                                 | August 2022   |

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy to support the creation and running of an effective student council in all Cork ETB Youthreach centres, in agreement with the following:

- Section 27 of the Education Act, 1998 which says that *students of a post-primary centre may create a student council and that the board of management of the centre will encourage and assist the creation and running of student councils*
- Section 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives students *“the right to have their voice heard on issues which affect them”*.
- Goal 1 of the National Children Strategy (2000): *“Children and young people will be given a voice in matters which affect them”*

This policy will outline the supports available, general rules to be followed and how the student council will communicate with the centre, Cork ETB and others if necessary.

## Scope

1. This policy applies to all Cork ETB Youthreach Centres.
2. The policy will apply to the creation and running of the student council in all Cork ETB Youthreach Centres.
3. The policy will apply to students, teachers, Regional Board of Managements and others involved in any way with the student council.

Individual student complaints should be raised with the relevant staff member or Coordinator who will try to resolve your complaint or direct you to the best way to resolve your complaint. If you feel that your complaint has not been resolved following the above, you can send a formal complaint on the official complaint form to the Customer Care Section, Corporate Services, 21 Lavitt’s Quay, Cork or email to [customercare@corketb.ie](mailto:customercare@corketb.ie) in line with [Cork ETB Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).

## Roles and Responsibilities

The board of management will ensure that each Youthreach has a Student Council in place and that this policy is followed in all Youthreach Centres. The board of management will listen to concerns and feedback from the student councils and direct any issues that require follow up to the appropriate person.

The Coordinator is responsible for arranging all reasonable support for the student council and making sure this policy is working in their centre.

The roles and responsibilities of the student council members, including the student council liaison teacher, are outlined in **Appendix 2: Student Council Roles and Responsibilities**.

## **Section 1: The Role of the Student Council**

A student council is a representative group where students in Youthreach Centres can support the running of the centre, working in with Coordinator, staff and parents for the benefit of the centre and its students.

Students have a valuable contribution to make to the effectiveness of Youthreach centres and Cork ETB. Active and suitable involvement in the running of the centre is a valuable part of a student's educational experience. It provides preparation for citizenship and also promotes mature behaviour.

A student council provides an opportunity for students to engage in a structured partnership with teachers, parents and centre managers in supporting the running of their centre. Research indicates that student councils can improve academic standards and reduce dropout rates in centres. Student councils can create a sense of ownership of the centre and its activities among the student population.

The student council can do the following:

- Improve communication between students, management, staff and parents
- Promote an environment helpful to educational and personal development
- Promote friendship and respect among students
- Support management and staff in the development of the centre
- Represent the views of students on matters of concern to them

These are some activities that the student council might get involved in:

- Communicating with Coordinator and board of management on issues of concern to students.
- Communicating and supporting the running of the centre with centre staff.
- Supporting the running of the centre with management and staff on the development of centre rules.
- Involvement in centre planning.
- Having a say in centre policies, e.g. anti-bullying policy.
- Making suggestions about improving centre facilities, student award ceremonies, extra-curricular activities, social events, fund raising, recycling and the summer programme.
- Developing a centre newsletter/magazine.
- Developing links with other centres and the community e.g. helping the elderly, tidy towns, etc.
- Mentoring programmes for younger students.
- Carrying out surveys and organising petitions.

## Section 2: Support the creation and running of a student council

The board of management and Youthreach Coordinators will support students to create a student council and support student councils when they are set up by:

- Drawing up rules for a council (section 3 below).
- Providing information on the role and benefits of the student council.
- Providing a space and time for students to organise student council meetings.
- The appointment of a student council liaison teacher as a non-voting member of the student council to provide help to the council and to act as the link between the council and staff.
- Providing information and training to student council members.
- Providing information about the student council to other members of the centre community, including students not on the student council, teachers, coordinator, members of the board of management, Cork ETB and parents.
- Supporting the activities of the student council and facilitating regular communication between the student council and the centre community generally.
- Involving the student council in the development of centre policies (e.g. on bullying, substance use, relationships and sexuality education (RSE), internet safety, centre code of behaviour, etc.) and in the planning and organisation of centre activities and events (e.g. sporting events, concerts, mentoring programmes for younger students, centre newsletter/magazine, student award ceremonies, links with other centres etc.).
- Checking in with the student council and responding in a meaningful way to the concerns of the council.

## Section 3: Student Council Rules

In accordance with the Department of Education and Skills guidelines, the rules for the creation of a student council will take the following into account:

- The student council shall promote the interests of the centre and the involvement of students in the running of the centre, with the board of management, parents and teachers.
- The council should, as far as is possible, be representative of each class or year group in the centre.
- The board of management shall at all times retain the right to dissolve a council or remove a council member, in accordance with these guidelines.
- A student council should not through its activities interfere with, or take away from, the authority of centre management or the teaching staff of the centre. It is not a function of a student council to discuss or

comment on the employment or professional affairs of the coordinator, teachers and other staff of the centre, or to become involved in any issues of their professional competence.

The following rules apply to Cork ETB Youthreach Centres:

### 1. Creation of Student Council

Student councils should be created in accordance with this policy. See section 4 of [Second-Level Student Councils Resource Pack](#) for further information.

### 2. Size and composition of the student council:

- Only current students in the centre can be members of the student council.
- The student council must be representative of all students in the centre, but it should not be so big that it cannot operate effectively.
- The size and composition of the student council will depend on the individual centre and will be outlined in their makeup.

### 3. Roles

1. As well as class representatives, the student council should appoint officers to run an effective council: Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, and Public Relations/Communications Officer.
2. A liaison teacher will be appointed to assist the student council.
3. Roles and responsibilities are outlined in **Appendix 2: Student Council Roles and Responsibilities**. Additional support information is available in section 9 of [Second-Level Student Councils Resource Pack](#)

### 4. Nominations and Elections

Following an explanation of the role and purpose of the student council, you should look for nominations for any vacancies on the student council, or to create a student council. It is good practice that students who want to be elected to the student council should be proposed by at least two other students. Written nomination forms should be submitted before the election. All students should be informed well in advance that nominations are being asked for. Nomination forms should be freely available in the centre.

If the number of nomination exceed the number of vacancies and there is a contest for places on the council, an election should take place based on the following rules:

- a. The student council is equally representative of all students in the centre.
- b. Only students can be elected to the student council.
- c. Only students can vote in the election.
- d. Every student in the centre has one vote.
- e. The election system is agreed beforehand.
- f. All students are aware of how and where voting will take place.

- g. Time should be allocated for election, where possible.
- h. Voting is by secret ballot.
- i. Counting of votes is carried out by students under the supervision of a teacher or parent.

The Student Council Constitution should identify how the election will take place. The 'first past the post' method should be used, where each person votes for one candidate only and the candidate with the most votes is elected; the candidate with the second most votes is second, and so on.

See section 7 of [Second-Level Student Councils Resource Pack](#) for further information on nominations and elections.

## 5. Student Council Contract

All members are required to sign a student council contract. See template in Appendix 3: Student Council Contract Template.

## 6. Sub-Committees

If appropriate, sub-committees may be made to plan and run specific activities of the student council. They are usually made up of a small number of people from the main student council. They should be required to submit their plan to the council for approval and should report back to the council on their activities. An example of a sub-committee might be an anti-bullying sub-committee, which is working with management on creating and implementing an anti-bullying policy in the centre.

## 7. Constitution

Every student council should have a Constitution. The student council is required under the Education Act, 1998 to consult with the board of management when drawing up its Constitution. Each Student Council should create their own constitution to include the following:

- Aims, objectives and overall role of the student council. How does this relate to the centre mission and vision?
- Structure of the student council - number of members, term of office for the members (how long they will be on the council), Officers (e.g. Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary) and how these officers will be elected.
- The election process – for student representatives and officers
- How many times a year the council will meet and when. Who can call a meeting of the council and how much notice council members should be given of meetings?
- How decisions will be made (e.g. how many members must be present for a vote to be valid and what happens if the council is divided evenly on a decision).
- How to fill a vacancy on the council.
- How to change the Constitution, if changes are needed.
- If the council wants to remove a member, how is that done.

A sample constitution is available in Appendix 1: Sample Student Council Constitution. Other sample constitutions are included in [Student Councils: A Voice for Students](#) and the [Student Council Resource Pack](#).

## 8. Meetings

Each meeting should have an agenda and minutes (notes taken of what was agreed). See Appendix 4: Sample Agenda and Appendix 5: Sample Minutes.

## 9. Student Council Plan

The first activity that any student council is to draw up a plan for the year. See template in Appendix 6: Student Council Plan.

## 10. Removal of a Member from the Student Council

The student council can vote to remove a member if they do one or more of the following: continue to miss meetings, do not show commitment to the purposes of the council, or to do something wrong. The decision to remove a member should be taken on a majority vote of the council. The member to be removed should be told of this vote, the reasons why and how they can defend themselves within two weeks. They are also able to appeal their removal to the board of management.

## 11. Ending of the student council

Normally, a student council is finished when the term of office of its members ends. The board of management of the centre may finish the student council before the end of the term in accordance with the rules and procedures overseeing finishing of a student council. This will only happen in exceptional circumstances after talking with everyone concerned.

Circumstances that may require the early finishing of a student council can include:

- where a significant number of members of the council have been involved in a serious break of the centre's code of behaviour.
- where serious mistakes/wrong doings have happened in the election of the council.
- where the activities of the council have risked the welfare of staff or students of the centre.
- where serious financial irregularities have occurred.

## Section 4: Communication

Any issues raised by the student council will be brought to the centre Coordinator first to see if they can solve them. These issues can be brought by the PRO/Communications Officer (if there is one in place), the Chairperson or the Student Council Liaison Teacher.

### Communication with Board of Management

CETB has created three Boards of management that will be responsible for, and provide oversight and support for Youthreach Centres in the following areas:

#### 1. Cork City

- The Glen Youthreach
- Knocknaheeny Youthreach
- Mahon Youthreach
- Dean Street Youthreach
- Cork City Learning Support Service
- Ballincollig Youthreach

#### 2. North Cork

- Fermoy Youthreach
- Mallow Youthreach
- Youghal Youthreach

#### 3. South Cork

- Macroom Youthreach
- Bantry Youthreach
- Bandon Youthreach

The function of the boards of management is to:

- Help Cork ETB do what it is supposed to do.
- Develop employment related education in the communities served by Youthreach.
- Provide somewhere for stakeholders in Youthreach to communicate.
- Act as a link between the Youthreach centres, their communities and Cork ETB.
- Make recommendations to Cork ETB as appropriate.
- Advise on specific matters referred to it by Cork ETB.

The terms of reference for the Board of Management states: *“Student Representation and the learner voice is very important to ensuring provision meets learners needs. A student council report will be submitted for each board of management meeting.”* A template for this report is available in Appendix 7: Student Council Report to Board of Management. [Membership of the Boards of Management are available here.](#)

## Appendix 1: Sample Student Council Constitution

NOTE: The following Constitution is only a sample. It is important that you don't simply copy it but develop a Constitution that suits your own centre.

### Role of the student council

The role of the student council is to do the following:

1. Represent students' views to management and staff.
2. Inform students of new policies before they are implemented.
3. Contribute to developing policies in the centre.
4. Be a help, working with the management of the centre to improve the centre atmosphere, conditions and facilities.
5. Build good relations between students, staff and management.

### Work of the student council

The student council will undertake a programme of activities that will support students, parents and staff. In planning its activities, the student council will consult with the Coordinator, staff and board of management.

### Structure of the student council

At least one student will be elected from each class in the centre. A student council liaison teacher will help the student council do its work.

### Elections

Elections will take place in September each year. Each class will elect its representative in a secret ballot. Students will nominate themselves if they are interested in becoming members of the council. The students will vote for one of the nominated students and the student with the most votes will represent their class on the student council.

### Term of office

The term of office is for one academic year.

### Student council officers

The student council will appoint a Chairperson, Secretary and Communications Officer. Each will normally hold office for the year.

### Sub-committees

The student council has the right to form sub-committees. A sub-committee will have at least 3 members. The planned activities of a sub-committee must be sent to the council for approval.

Sub-committees must report regularly to the council on their progress.

### Meetings and decision-making

The student council will meet regularly. Meetings can be called by the Chairperson or by 3 or more members of the council. All council members must be given at least 5 days' notice of a meeting. At least one-third of council members have to attend for a decision to be taken. When making a decision, any member of the council may call for a vote to be held and, where the votes are divided evenly, the Chairperson will have the deciding vote.

### Communications

The Communications Officer will be responsible for communicating with students, staff and management. A sub-committee can be formed to make sure that good communication systems are put in place. Regular feedback will be provided to students and regular meetings between the student council and staff and management will be arranged.

### Removing members of the council and filling vacancies

The student council has the right to remove a member if that member fails to attend meetings or is not committed to the work or aims of the council. The member must be given at least one week's notice of the proposal and must be allowed to address the council in their defence. Where a member is to be removed, a vote must be held and at least two-thirds of the council must be present.

### Changes to the Constitution

A vote must be held regarding any changes to the Constitution. Proposed changes must be circulated to all members of the council at least one week in advance of the vote. At least two-thirds of the council must be present for the vote. Any changes to the Constitution must be discussed in advance with the board of management.

## Appendix 2: Student Council Roles and Responsibilities

### The responsibilities of the class representative

- As a class representative on the student council, your job is to listen to the views and ideas of your class and pass them on to the student council.
- You also have to let the class know what the student council is doing.

### Representing the views of your class

- During class or other meetings, the students decide what issues they want you to take to the student council.
- Individual students in the class should also be able to ask you to raise issues if they do not want to speak in front of the class.
- Make clear notes at class meetings and take them with you to the student council meeting or give them to the council's secretary before the meeting so that they can be put on the agenda.
- You must report back to the class, as soon as possible after the meeting, on the issues raised at the student council and the decisions taken.

### Reporting back to the class

- Read the notes of the meeting to the class and put them on the board for people to read.
- Answer questions from class members.

### Role of Chairperson

- is the chief spokesperson and officer of the student council;
- calls meetings;
- chairs meetings in a fair manner, ensuring that all have an equal say;
- signs any letters, notices, etc. that are issued by the student council;
- liaises with centre management;
- ensures that the student council is run effectively and efficiently;
- prepares the agenda for each meeting with the Secretary;
- signs the minutes from the previous meeting with the Secretary when the student council accepts them.

### Role of Deputy Chairperson

- takes over the responsibilities of the Chairperson when he/she is not available;
- assists the Chairperson in the organisation of the student council;
- accompanies the Chairperson to meetings when necessary.

### Role of Secretary

- prepares the agenda for each meeting with the Chairperson and in consultation with the other officers of the council;
- circulates the agenda to all members in advance of the meeting or at the start of the meeting;
- takes minutes at meetings and writes them up;
- distributes and reads out minutes from previous meeting and, on acceptance, signs them with the Chairperson;

- sends out letters and notice of meetings that will be held, stating time and place;
- ensures that everyone is aware that meetings are being held.

### **Role of Public Relations/Communications Officer**

- keeps students informed about the activities of the student council;
- keeps noticeboards updated;
- helps produce the student council newsletter if the centre has one;
- promotes good communications between the student council and students, teachers, centre management and parents.

### **Role and Responsibility of the Student Council Liaison Teacher**

The main role of the student council liaison teacher is:

- to promote the interests of the student council;
- to assist and advise the student council;
- to be the link between students and teachers and management.

The main responsibilities of the student council liaison teacher include:

- Attending student council meetings and providing guidance, advice and information if requested.
- Providing training and team development activities for the student council.
- Assisting the student council in liaising with management.
- Liaising between the student council and staff by putting student council issues on the agenda at staff meetings.
- Encouraging staff to invite members of the student council to attend staff meetings and encouraging the student council to invite staff members to its meetings.
- Helping to raise the profile of the student council.
- Helping to ensure the student council becomes part of the structure of the centre and that it is involved in all aspects of centre life.
- Ensuring that student council issues are on the agenda at board of management meetings.
- Monitoring and evaluating the development of the student council with student members.

### Appendix 3: Student Council Contract Template

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am willing to undertake the following duties:

- To attend a regular Student Council Meeting.
- To inform students in my Year group of the issues raised or dealt with by the student council.
- To represent my Year group responsibly and to fulfil any position I may be elected to do on the council to the best of my capability.
- I will be supportive to the other prefects throughout the year. I acknowledge that I am accountable to the other student council members and to the liaison teacher.
- I will abide by the centre rules.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Liaison Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 4: Sample Agenda**

Name of meeting

Date

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair.
2. Sign the attendance sheet and apologies for non-attendance.
3. Minutes from the last meeting.
4. Matters arising from the last meeting.
5. Officers' reports.
6. Correspondence sent and received.
7. Specific agenda items.
8. Any other business.
9. Date, time and venue of next meeting.

### Appendix 5: Sample Minutes

Name of Centre: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of the people present:

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Apologies for absence:

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|   | Action | By Whom |
|---|--------|---------|
| Minutes of the last meeting:<br>a) Are they agreed?<br>b) Matters arising from last meeting's minutes |        |         |
| Item 1  |        |         |
| Item 2  |        |         |
| Item 3  |        |         |
| Item 4  |        |         |
| Item 5  |        |         |
| Item 6  |        |         |
| Any other business  |        |         |
| Items for the next agenda   |        |         |
| Date of next meeting  |        |         |

### Appendix 6: Student Council Plan

The student council should identify the issues it wants to address during the year. For each activity/issue, answer each of the questions in the table below. This template will give the student council an idea of the work involved and the resources needed to implement each of the activities/issues.

The plan may need to be revised once this template is completed.

Remember, the Student Council Plan should always *be realistic and possible*.

| Activity/Issue | Who is to do it? | What resources will be required? | When is it to be done? | How is it to be done? | What costs will be involved? |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
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**Appendix 7: Student Council Report to Board of Management**

| <b>Student Council Report to Board of Management</b>   |
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| <b>Centre:</b>   |
| <b>Chairperson:</b>  |
| <b>Date of Board of Management Meeting:</b>  |
| <b>Dates of meeting since last report:</b>   |
| <b>What is working well in your centre:</b>  |
| <b>Are there any issues you would like to bring to the attention of the Board of Management:</b> |

Chairperson's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_