

S9 - STUDENT REPRESENTATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a statement of commitment to the representation of students within BBI – The Australian Institute of Theological Education (BBI-TAITE).

2 BACKGROUND

BBI-TAITE is committed to ensuring all students are represented and have a 'voice' within the Institute, where relevant to students – academically and/or pastorally.

3 SCOPE

This policy applies to all higher education students enrolled with BBI-TAITE.

4 DEFINITIONS

Returning Officer – BBI-TAITE staff member nominated by the Executive Team responsible for overseeing the election process and announcing the results.

5 POLICY

BBI-TAITE recognises the need for a high level of student involvement in matters that are of interest or concern to the student body. It is BBI-TAITE's goal to ensure that students are provided with a strong voice in contributing to the governance of the Institute. As such, BBI-TAITE is committed to student representation and participation through:

- a. the establishment of Student Representative Bodies;
- b. the participation of students in matters affecting their interests;
- c. the establishment of recognised means of communication between students and the academic and administrative arms of the Institute; and
- d. ensuring processes are in place that encourage and promote equity and fairness to all students of the Institute in decision-making regardless of the category of student, mode of study or study location within the Institute.

This policy aims to maximise the channels by which students are able to be actively involved in the life of the Institute and to promote fairness and equality in the BBI-TAITE community.

There are several ways in which students can be involved in the life of the Institute:

- Academic Board representative/s – BBI-TAITE requires one to two student representatives to sit on BBI-TAITE's Academic Board in order to ensure that BBI-

TAITE's student body is represented at the faculty level of decision making for the Institute;

- Social Media – students are encouraged to engage with one another and with BBI-TAITE via the Institute's social media pages;
- Surveys – students are encouraged to participate in online surveys seeking opinion on important student related matters;
- Blackboard groups – If Social Media forums are deemed insufficient to meet the community needs of BBI-TAITE's student body there is provision for the creation of Blackboard groups for the discussion of certain topics relating to student life at BBI-TAITE. These groups may also be used for the facilitation of sharing of resources and discussion of academic matters (for example, students will be encouraged to discuss theological topics and to broaden the scope of their knowledge through sharing outside of their allotted unit materials/topics).

Elections – Elections for democratic student representative positions will be conducted by online poll. Students wishing to stand for election must meet the minimum eligibility requirements and be nominated by a fellow peer or by themselves and their nomination seconded by a fellow peer. Elections for representatives to the Academic Board will be held at least every two years. By-elections will be held in the event that a representative graduates and wishes to step down from their position, or their circumstances become such that they are unable to continue to be actively involved in the governance of the Institute.

Although under no obligation to maintain their representative position, BBI alumni who were actively studying at the time of election but have since graduated are eligible to maintain their representative position until such time as their term expires, if they choose to do so.

Eligibility of student representatives – A nominee for student representative must have completed at least one unit of their enrolled award or course and be currently enrolled at close of nominations. The Returning Officer chooses the method through which nominees are identified. Student representatives must be able to represent the general needs of students without promoting personal agenda, bias, or political party views, and agree to confidentiality relating to discussions and decisions.

6 PROCEDURE

a. Nominations:

Nominees can be self-nominated or nominated by others (with the nominees approval). There will be a call for nominations in advance of the election period via both email and electronic student notice boards. In the event that no students are nominated or come forward as nominees, BBI-TAITE may approach students to become nominees from the student body and a ballot will be held in this instance.

A call for nominations will be made by the Returning Officer no later than six (6) weeks in advance of the date set for elections. Nominees will have two (2) weeks to respond and will be required to submit their details, candidate statement and photograph through the relevant online or hard copy nomination form.

b. Elections:

Term will be for two years and elections will be held at least every two years.

If more nominations are received than there are positions available, then a ballot will need to take place. If the number of nominations received is equal to or less than the

number of positions available, then the nominee/s will be declared as elected to the position/s. An announcement introducing the nominees, including the online availability of candidate statements, will be made to BBI's student body no later than four (4) weeks in advance of elections if a ballot is required.

Any required ballot will be held via online poll and will be confidential and anonymous. The results of elections will be made known to the student body as soon as possible following the online poll, but no later than two weeks after the election date.

In the event of a tie a further ballot will be held with tied nominees.

For elections to councils / boards that have more than one member, nominees will be taken to ensure that all available positions will be appropriately filled and elections will be conducted with the aim that this goal is met. The exact format of the election will be at the discretion of the Returning Officer.

c. Withdrawal of participation:

In the event that a nominated or elected student representative wishes to withdraw their nomination or resign from their position they must provide formal notification in writing to the Returning Officer as soon as practically possible. It is anticipated that this notification be received allowing for enough time for the organisation of a bi-election or selection of an alternative nominee where applicable. Guidelines for these timeframes are as follows:

For elected representatives: No later than two months in advance of the next scheduled meeting of the Academic Board.

For nominees for election: No later than six weeks in advance of the scheduled election date.

d. Arbitration:

In the event of discovery of misconduct or corruption by any member of the BBI-TAITE community (including, but not limited to, staff, students, and the nominees for office and/or office holders) during nominations, elections, or whilst holding an elected position provision exists for disciplinary action to be undertaken by BBI-TAITE at the discretion of the Executive Team and/or CEO. All members of the BBI-TAITE community are subject to the guidelines set out in BBI-TAITE's Code of Conduct and must abide by that Code of Conduct at all times.

Any complaints and/or disputes are to be referred as soon as practicable to the Director Student Services and Operations for resolution in accordance with BBI-TAITE's Student Grievance Policy – Non-Academic.

e. Liability:

In so far as all elected members of the BBI-TAITE student body act in good faith and in accordance with the guidelines set out in this policy and in BBI-TAITE's Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures, they shall not be considered personally liable for any course of action pursued or omitted by the Institute or committees thereof.

Student representatives must not make any public comment for or on behalf of BBI-TAITE without the express consent of BBI-TAITE's Executive Team. Student representatives are expected at all times to uphold the Catholic values and ethos of BBI-TAITE. Student representatives are reminded that all Social Media posts and contributions constitute public comment and should be treated as such at all times.

In accordance with section 19.37 of the Higher Education Support Act 2003, nothing in this policy and procedures shall:

- a. require a person to be or to become a member of an organisation of students, or of students and other persons; or
- b. require a person enrolled with, or seeking to enrol with, the provider to pay to the provider or any other entity an amount in respect of an organisation of students, or of students and other persons;

unless the person has chosen to be or to become a member of the organisation.

6 KEY RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures
- Student Grievance Policy – Non-Academic.
- Academic Board Terms of Reference

7 NOTES

Contact Officer	Director Student Services and Operations
Implementation Officer/s	Returning Officer, Academic Dean
Approval Authority / Authorities	Executive Team/ Academic Board
Date Approved	05/06/2017
Date of Commencement	05/06/2017
Date for Review	24 MONTHS FROM DATE OF COMMENCEMENT
Amendment History	REVIEWED 04/06/2019 04/06/2019 – updated to reflect current BBI-TAITE structure; removal of reference to Student Representative Council (SRC)
Key Stakeholders	Faculty & Sessional Academics / Students