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2.1 Building an SRC team

Just being elected by a vote of students or selected at an interview does not make student representatives into a group that operates well together. This section provides some ideas about ways that you can build your representatives into an SRC team.



At the start of the year everyone is fresh and full of energy! Well, we hope so; if they're not then these activities should help. But it's amazing how quickly enthusiasm can run down after a couple of meetings if the group hasn't properly bonded. If you give some time and energy to team-building at the start of the year, you'll notice the benefits throughout the year.



Reflect on what you've seen in past SRCs. Did everyone pull their weight? Or was most of the work done by just a few students? Did you find that you argued over who had the right to make decisions? Use SRC time at the start of the year to get to know each other and to agree how to work together. This will help everyone participate as a team. If you already know how to do this, you can help the new members settle in – more experienced SRC students can be allocated to new SRC representatives as 'mentors' to provide guidance. Or you can just sit back and enjoy the fun of SRC training activities!

GOOD PRACTICE

Your school may have a lot of younger students who are participating in the SRC for the first time. To make sure that they settle in well and feel comfortable in their new role, it's helpful to provide them with a mentor (a more experienced SRC student who they can speak to if they have any questions about the SRC). Or you could hold a training day specifically for new and/or junior students on your SRC.

Further information about mentoring younger students is available in the **'R3: Ten Big Ideas'** resource online at www.vicsrc.org.au (see Part 6).

Team-building purposes

Once all the SRC representatives have been selected, it's important to begin by allocating time and training for the group to learn to work together. The ideal way to do this is by holding an SRC training day or camp. This might enable your SRC to get away from the school environment and take some time to:

- get to know each other
- decide on how you want to work together
- set some key goals for the year (see the following section)
- develop a sense of group identity.

A strong group identity will help your SRC to achieve its most ambitious objectives and enable it to overcome any group or individual challenges you might face along the way.

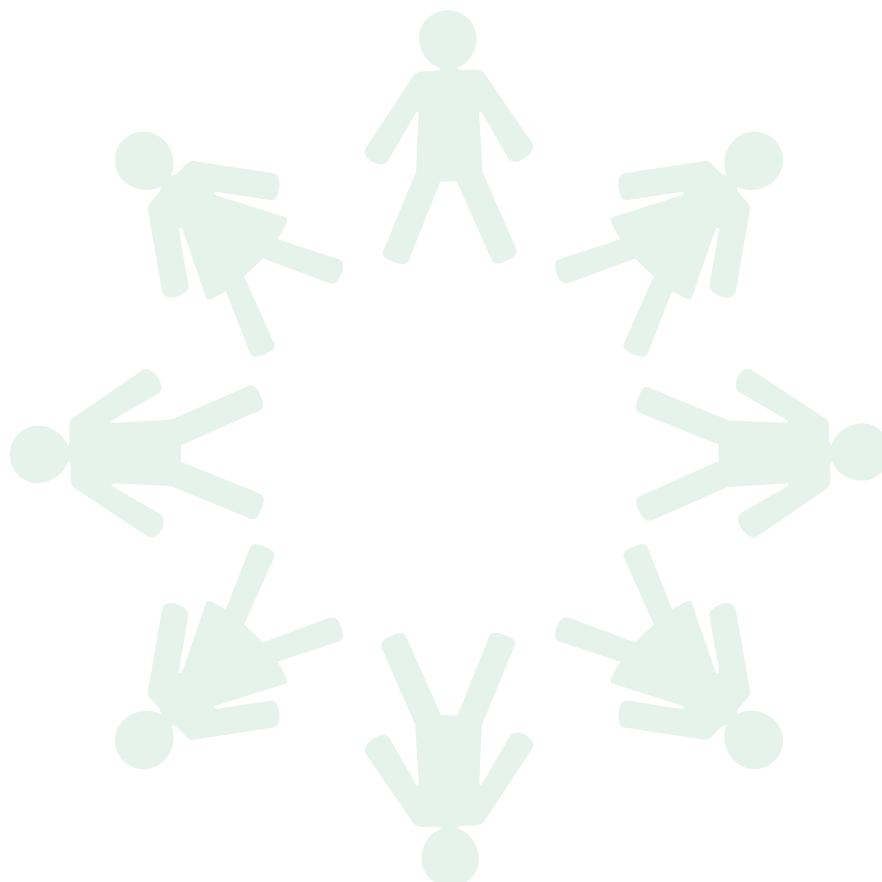


GOOD PRACTICE

Each year, the new SRC has a training day. The group tries to get out of the school and uses the local youth centre. The day is organised by some SRC students from last year, the support teacher and the school's student wellbeing coordinator. They also ask a local youth worker to help facilitate the day. The school supports the day by providing time, lunch and hire of the facilities, and the principal attends the first session to tell the SRC how important it is to the school.

A group of the new SRC members meet before the day to talk about the program and to say what skills they need to learn.

Even if you can't organise a training day or camp, there are some important and simple things you can do in your first meeting that will help the group to start off on the right track.



Getting to know you



The obvious thing to do first is to make sure everyone knows everyone else's name. Go around the group and get everyone to say their name and something about themselves. It might be something wacky, a reason they joined the SRC, or a particular skill they bring. Anything simple and non-threatening that all can share and that tells something about themselves will help the group to begin working together. Follow this with a quick game to start things off on a fun note. Even a two-minute game of knots played in small mixed groups can help to create a great feeling, or a five-minute game of bomb squad can raise the energy of the group. (These exercises are explained below.)

Team-building activities



Lead a discussion on what teamwork is and why it's important. You can introduce this before you start the exercises – but it's important to talk about what was learnt after the exercises to gain the maximum benefit from reflecting on them. Run one or more of the suggested exercises (or invent one of your own). After each, get the participants to say what they understand from the exercise about teamwork.



See the exercises on the next page for ideas.

Activity: Teamwork exercises

Choose from these teamwork exercises or make up your own.



Exercise 1: Knots

Smaller groups (an 8–12 person team is best) stand in a circle, facing inwards. Each person puts one hand into the circle and grasps another hand: one hand to one hand. Then each person puts their other hand in and grasps another hand. The group must then untangle themselves (the knot) into a circle. If this is done easily, a variation is to challenge a group to untangle themselves without talking. At the end, discuss how the group solved the untangling, and what strategies were or could have been adopted.

Exercise 2: Counting to 10

This is a very simple exercise to encourage listening to each other, non-verbal communication and cooperation. The students sit in a circle. Tell them that they have to count to ten in order. Anyone can start; anyone can follow. If two people say a number at the same time, the group has to start again. At the end, discuss what strategies were used.

Variation: When you manage to get to 10, the group can then count backwards.

Exercise 3: Bomb squad

NB: Prevent students from doing anything unsafe.

Show the students a circular area on the floor at least three metres across. Use chairs or something to define the borders. This is the danger zone! Inside the circle is electrified (or make up whatever story you like: the point is they cannot enter the circle and nothing they use can touch the floor inside the circle).

Place an object in the centre of the circle, such as a can or a soft toy. Explain to the students that this item contains a bomb that must be defused by them, the bomb squad. In order to get to the bomb they must get it out of the circle. However, if the bomb tips over it will explode. They can use any materials they can find in the room that you approve of for them to use (safely).

Exercise 4: Lunar landing

Give the students the following list of items they find in the wreckage of their crashed spaceship on the moon (they are already wearing environmental protection suits):

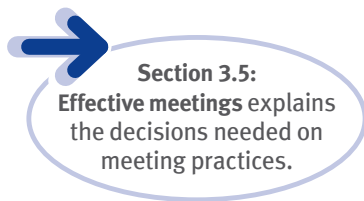
- compass
- food
- knife
- oxygen
- radio transmitter
- rope
- tent
- weapons
- water
- space blanket

In teams, the students must rank the items according to the priority they place on each. The whole team must agree on the final order. During the discussion that follows the activity, remember to focus on how they came to agreement and worked as a team and not on why they chose the order they did. (There is a definite answer to this exercise. The solution is given on page 57.)

Group agreements

It is important that any new group agrees on how it wants to work together. This includes agreeing on:

- basic principles: how people should behave with each other
- decision-making process: how people should behave in meetings
- practical details: when, where and how often the SRC will meet.



Agreement: basic principles

This is about establishing an agreed code of behaviour for how SRC members operate together, both within meetings and at other events. This is particularly important for SRCs as it can be the first time students have participated in this sort of group. Everyone (particularly new and younger students) should understand the process and feel safe in SRC meetings.

It is best for the group to come up with its own ideas and group agreements using a simple brainstorming exercise. Simply call for ideas and record them on a piece of butcher's paper or a whiteboard. Hold off on objections and discussion until you think you've collected all the ideas. Then allow students to raise concerns and refine the ideas as needed. Make sure you have everybody's agreement before finalising them, so that everybody can be held to the agreements later if needed.

A sample group agreement:

We will:

- be on time
- take a positive and friendly attitude
- do what we say we will do
- encourage others to join in
- prepare well and take pride in what we do
- help students find their own solutions
- respect differences between students

We won't:

- put other students down
- tell personal stories

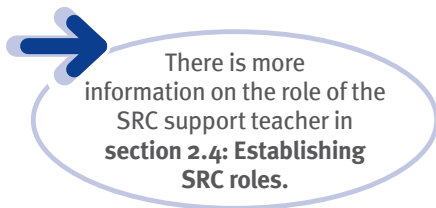


Agreement: SRC support teacher(s)

Within its agreements, the SRC should discuss the role of the SRC support teacher(s). There can be lots of different expectations about what an SRC support teacher should and shouldn't do. These might change each year as student members become more confident and are able to take on more responsibilities. If students and teachers are not used to students negotiating the roles of teachers, this can be a sensitive process.

Start by hearing ideas from all the students about what support they would like from the teacher. As much as possible, these should be expressed in the positive: 'The SRC support teacher will ...'. It can also be useful to include some key boundaries, with statements such as: 'The SRC support teacher will not ...'.

When students have put their ideas forward, it's also important to hear from the SRC support teacher with any other ideas or concerns. The support teacher must be willing and able to carry out the roles that are being discussed. Make sure everybody understands what is being agreed on, but remember that if something doesn't work you can review the agreements later.



Once you've finalised all the agreements, have someone take them away and write them up clearly so that you can put them on the wall at all SRC meetings as a reminder. You might spend some time working out your agreements in detail, or a draft might be agreed quickly and revised later in the year.



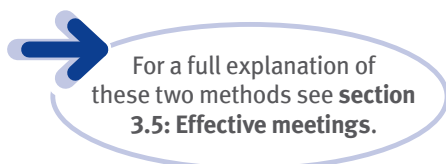
GOOD PRACTICE

After some clashes in an SRC meeting that left a couple of students very upset, the SRC decided that it needed to set up some rules about how they would work together. They put aside one session to talk about this and try to reach agreement.

Assisted by the school's student wellbeing coordinator, they discussed how they would like to be treated in meetings. Some students remembered 'circle time' in primary school, in which there were three main rules: 'No put-downs', 'One person speaks at a time' and 'Anyone can pass'. They decided they liked these, but also wanted to add that people in the SRC 'respect the differences between people', 'always speak positively' and 'will do what we say we'll do'. Everyone agreed that these were the important points to help work together and make better decisions.

Agreement: Decision-making process

You need to agree on how decisions will be made in the group. Traditionally, most groups use a simple majority vote – which is fairly straightforward, but has the potential to divide people. The alternative that is becoming more popular is consensus decision-making – where you try to find an outcome that everyone can agree to or at least live with. This can result in better decisions being made because all points of view are included in the decision and then everyone can unite in trying to achieve the desired outcome.



You might also want to consider what kind of decisions can be made by individuals or by groups outside formal SRC meetings. For example, can the publicity team publish newsletter articles without approval? Can the SRC president make up a policy without consulting others? Can the SRC treasurer or the SRC support teacher spend small amounts of money without approval in emergencies? There are many situations that might arise and you can't cover them all, but it's useful to discuss these issues in general so that there is a common understanding of how to proceed.

Using template T2: Group agreement



This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to help you draw up your group agreement. Start by getting every member of the SRC to write down some personal commitment: for example, what happens if they're unable to complete something or continue on the SRC; what they think positive group behaviours should be; and things they think the SRC members should and shouldn't do.

Then compare these and draw up a list of all the suggested points. You can discuss these and make a decision about which ones you want in your group agreement. There are five headings suggested to help you decide on what should be in this agreement, but you might want to make up some other headings of your own.



Answer to Exercise 4: Lunar landing

NASA lists these items in the following order of priority:

1. oxygen
2. tent
3. radio transmitter
4. space blanket
5. water
6. rope
7. knife
8. food
9. weapons
10. compass

The ranking is based on the most immediate threats or needs. You can last up to three minutes without oxygen, but you can last three to four days without water and two to three weeks without food. Oh ... and a compass wouldn't work on the moon.

2.2 Finding common SRC purposes

The main purpose of the SRC is to represent the interests of students. However, this can mean many different things. There are often more ideas suggested than you can take on in a single year. It's important that, early in the life of your SRC, you decide as a group what it is you want to achieve during your term of office (for the purposes of this kit we'll assume that's a school year).

This section will help you to develop a plan for the year to achieve your key ambitions. It will also suggest a way of checking that you're not limiting yourselves to a few activities.

Basic principles

Think broadly: Don't let your SRC get stuck in a rut, doing the same things every year, or being restricted by someone's view that 'the SRC only works on this ...'

Include everyone: Make sure all SRC members get to have a say; getting ideas from other students, from teachers and the principal can be useful too.

Generate enthusiasm: What you agree to work on needs to be something that fires everybody up; you will need everyone working together to make your SRC a success.

Take long enough but not too long: Take time to consider all the options and, where possible, seek feedback from other students. However, don't spend all your time deciding what to do – you want to keep some energy for doing things!



It is too easy for an SRC to just go from meeting to meeting, discussing whatever is topical in that week. Make some decisions about what your SRC wants to achieve in the year ahead; this will give you a clear sense of purpose. This is also important in cementing the SRC as a team with a common goal and identity.



You might have a clear concept of what you want the SRC to achieve this year, but does this match with everyone else's ideas? You might also need to help new students and staff understand the context that the SRC works in: what support it has, what is achievable, and what you did last year. Put forward your ideas but also be open to new ones. If you want the SRC to unite behind a common cause then everyone needs to feel involved in the process and have their say.

And perhaps, with a well-established SRC, it's now time to review what you've worked on in the past and challenge yourselves to consider a broader range of possibilities.

Brainstorming ideas

Start by brainstorming ideas about what the SRC could achieve. Think as broadly as possible. Don't be limited to things that are small and achievable, because now is the time to dream up big crazy schemes. You can worry about what is achievable later when you sort them out. For inspiration, you might like to consider the following:

Election proposals

If members had to stand for election or apply in writing, what promises or ideas did they commit to doing? Now is the time to put these on the SRC's agenda for the year.

Opportunities this year

Are there any major projects or changes being planned in the school this year? There might be a review of the Year 9 curriculum, or a new building being added to the school. The SRC could collect and provide student ideas and opinions about these changes, and take part in the planning. The SRC support teacher might be a good source of information, or you might need to ask the principal before the SRC meeting to find out what's going on in your school.

Different types of activities

There are lots of different activities that SRCs can work on – and that have worked in other schools. As you brainstorm, make sure you have at least one idea of something you could do in each of the following areas. You can also look back at what the SRC did last year. Did they cover all the categories? Which areas had no action? Should you make a point of addressing these areas this year? Consider:

- representing students' needs (advocating or standing up for individuals or groups of students)
- curriculum (subjects, school organisation, learning and teaching approaches)
- rules (student input to school or classroom rules)
- school culture (student relations and wellbeing)
- community action on issues outside the school (e.g. safety or racism)
- physical infrastructure (this could include improving school facilities or the local environment)
- fundraising
- social activities
- inter-school SRC networking



You might like to fit your brainstorm into a table (e.g. on a whiteboard) like the template provided in **T3: Brainstorm of SRC activities** (see Part 5). The left-hand column of this table could be filled in before the meeting (steps 1 to 5 in the activity that follows) to save time and keep the focus on the year ahead, or the first part could be done in a training activity that reviews what has been done in the past.

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GOOD PRACTICE

At the end of last year, the SRC held a day to look at what they had achieved. They realised that they had spent a lot of time on a few activities – mainly social events. Some students challenged the SRC as to whether those were the important things that it should be doing.

The new SRC at the start of this year brainstormed what it wanted to achieve. Most of the ideas were about improvements within the school that students had been talking about for several years. They also heard from the principal that the Year 9 curriculum was going to be reviewed, and suggested that they could be part of that review to provide information about what Year 9 – and other – students thought.

The SRC decided to make these areas a priority for action.

Using template T₃: Brainstorm of SRC activities



This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template in a training activity to help you brainstorm your SRC activities.

- Step 1:** Introduce the activity and its purpose. Draw the Brainstorm table on the whiteboard or hand out copies to all SRC members.
- Step 2:** Break the group up into small teams (it might be the SRC or perhaps students who were on last year's SRC).
- Step 3:** Give each team an A4 sheet of paper. Ask each team to write a list of all the things the SRC worked on last year.
- Step 4:** A whole sheet of paper represents everything the SRC did last year. Ask the group to cut up the piece of A4 paper to show approximately how much of the year was spent on each topic. For example, if you spent half your time and energy organising lunchtime activities and social activities, then that should be about half A4. If you spent five minutes talking about whether to have French taught in Year 7, then maybe that's a tiny scrap of paper. (But try to be really definite and simple about what you did. Break up an area like 'Social activities' into exactly what you did – and how much time you spent on each activity.) Write the name of each activity on the bits of paper.
- Step 5:** Now stick the bits of paper against each row in the table to build up a rough graph of the areas you worked on as an SRC. Summarise the results in the left-hand column of the table.
- Step 6:** Ask: What do we notice? Why did we spend this amount of time and energy on this and not on this? Write down your reflections.
- Step 7:** Add into the table any commitments to do things that members of the SRC have made for this year – this is the middle column.
- Step 8:** Add any other opportunities or ideas that you know about (e.g. invitations from the principal for the SRC to respond to school planning).

Narrowing down our ideas

Conduct the brainstorm within a strict time-limit (otherwise it can go on forever) and begin comparing the different ideas:

- What inspires students most?
- What is the biggest area of need?
- What is achievable for us this year?

It's a good idea to keep in mind the situation of the SRC:

- What sort of reputation, support and capacity have you inherited from last year's SRC?
- In what sort of position do you want to leave your SRC for the next year?



For more about the long-term phases that SRCs go through and how to assess where you are in this cycle, refer to **section 2.3: Long-term thinking: SRC phases**.

The aim of the discussion at this point should be to prioritise or narrow the ideas down to about two or three major objectives or projects for the year. If you think the SRC is up to it, you could add some other ‘second level’ priorities. These priorities might not emerge naturally from your group discussion or you might not all agree easily. However, you should be able to eliminate some ideas and narrow the list down to less than 10 favourites. Then you can take a poll of the room using one of these two methods:

- **Voting:** Everyone is given three votes. Run through each of the options and ask students to vote up to three times. Tally the number of votes for each option.
- **Sticky dots:** Have a roll of coloured sticky dots available and give three dots to each SRC member. Put each remaining idea on a separate piece of paper and put these on the wall. Give everyone a few minutes to place their three dots next to the ideas they like the most. This can allow for small group discussion to occur while students place their dots. This approach can also allow students to put two or three dots on one idea – if they feel really strongly in favour of it. Count the dots given to each idea.
- Depending on the time available, you might just take the top two or three ideas decided on. Alternatively, you might want to have more discussion about including some that just missed the cut-off point – perhaps as a second set of priorities. Don’t let this take too long. The important thing is that you end up with clear agreement on your **key objectives** for the year ahead.

Follow-up

Promote your intentions

Once you’ve agreed on your key objectives for the year, you will need to communicate them to your stakeholders: other students, staff and the principal. Stakeholders are the key people or groups you relate to in your work as an SRC. These can be people you want to help (e.g. students), people you need something from (e.g. principal, school council), or anyone affected by decisions you make or actions you take (e.g. teachers, parents or local businesses).



For more on stakeholders, check out [sections 3.9: Links to school decision-making](#) and [3.10: Links to the wider school community](#).

Your follow-up lets them know you’re on the job. Good communication here can also prepare the ground for future actions and requests. If other groups know what your plans are, this can also mean you are more accountable: at the end of the year, you will all be able to compare your plans with what you actually achieved. Use this as a motivating factor to help you achieve your goals. It can also encourage you to be realistic and to only promote the key objectives you think your SRC has a strong chance of achieving. There can be some internal SRC objectives that are more appropriate to keep within the SRC – but, in general, there is no harm in signposting your intentions to all your stakeholders.

2.3: Long-term thinking: SRC phases

3 Consolidation phase »

2 Growth phase

The second SRC has been around for a couple of years. It's working reasonably well, but has the potential to do a lot more. You now have a mix of some experienced members and several new members with fresh energy and ideas.

In this phase, it's time to think bigger and 'outside of the square'. It might be time to let go of some smaller projects and transform them into something bigger. Or you might set up a subcommittee of more experienced SRC students and students from outside the SRC to keep these important projects going in ways that don't take up all the core energy of the whole group. If you're not sure where to direct your new energy, you might like to seek ideas from the student body,

SRCs from other schools, or ask your principal about any opportunities for student involvement and consultation. Being realistic is always important, but now is the time to be ambitious and challenge yourselves.

If you are realistic, a failure or two won't matter and these can be great learning opportunities.

You don't know what the SRC is capable of until you try!

1 Establishment phase

The first SRC is new. It's either being formed this year or last year, and there is no established tradition or expectations of it. This can be an exciting time; it's up to you to shape your SRC and its future.

In this phase it might be important to pick just one or two small-to-medium-sized key projects or changes – and make sure you do them well. This will help to shape the SRC's reputation for success, and this will be invaluable when you want to take on bigger projects or advocate for substantial changes.

It will also be important for the group to focus on establishing its internal processes, such as holding effective meetings, and establishing clear lines of communication both within the SRC and with key stakeholders. Keep an eye on the energy and commitment within the group; sometimes this can peak high and early – and slip away very quickly. Focusing your action on achieving small but quick successes can be important in transforming the group's initial energy into ongoing momentum – and this helps you grow your successes.

As well as thinking about specific objectives for the year ahead, it's also useful to think about how you want your SRC to develop in the future. This involves thinking about how the SRC has operated in the past and what you are like now.

Here are some possible situations based on examples of SRCs at different stages in their development. These SRCs thought about what they could do and what their priorities were at each stage. Their responses might fit your SRC.

The third SRC has achieved great things in the past year or two, and needs to build on these. If you still have lots of fresh energy and new ideas, then keep growing and take on new projects.

But maybe you have had a significant change in SRC members or an unexpected change in the SRC support teacher. In that case, it can be important to simply aim for about the same level of activity as last year – or even a bit below that to give you a chance to consolidate again. In any group there are natural cycles of growth, consolidation and decline; so recognising this means that you are less likely to be surprised and feel like giving up. Planning for this phase is as important as any other.

A key focus should be on maintaining and spreading the SRC's knowledge and skills within the group. You could ask previous members to run a training or handover session at the start of the year, or you could 'return to the basics' by organising a consultative forum to find out about students' needs and concerns. You can also look back to the core work that got the SRC established for clues on how to operate effectively with reduced capacity.

Once you've established your expectations for the year ahead, it would be a good idea to communicate this to others to avoid possible disappointment. You can do this with a positive spin that 'talks-up' last year's amazing achievements. This is also the time to set up mentoring or other systems so that you are training next year's key leaders now. The most important thing in a consolidation year is that you leave next year's SRC with a better start than you had.

4 Rejuvenation phase

After some great years in the past, the fourth SRC hasn't quite met everyone's high expectations from last year. Maybe the number of students wanting to join the SRC has dropped off – so you might need to alter your recruitment process or just see if you can find more volunteers to help with specific projects. On the other hand, you might have some fresh new faces ready and willing to help out.

You need to evaluate why the SRC's momentum has stalled and consider:

- Was there a failure to train young members to take over from departing Year 12s?
- Did the SRC 'bite off more than it could chew', resulting in a large failure?
- Is there a lack of support from the school administration?
- Is the SRC out of touch with the student body?

There could be lots of reasons, often working in combination. It might be worth asking previous SRC members for their insights. However, don't spend too long trying to agree on the reasons; it's probably complicated and understanding the main points might be all that's needed. The most important thing is to agree on the plan from here and build enthusiasm for it.

Whatever happened, you now need to plan for some small and uncontroversial successes that will remind everyone about how good an effective SRC can be.

If you understand the reasons for the decline, you can plan deliberate strategies to:

- reconnect with the student body
- build relationships with the school administration, or
- develop a program to train up younger members of the SRC before the experienced ones depart.



Remember:
With fresh energy and the right strategy, there's no reason why your SRC can't return to its former glory!

2.4 Establishing SRC roles

You need to decide on the roles you want to have on your SRC. For example, you can have a regular president, who is usually the chairperson of meetings; or you can rotate the role of chairing a meeting, so all members get to learn these skills. But there are lots of other specific roles too. If everyone on the SRC has some particular job for which they are responsible – and important for the SRC’s success – they are more likely to be an active contributor to the team. This section outlines two ways you could allocate roles on your SRC – but you can also adapt these or do it another way to suit your SRC.

Model 1: SRC executive roles

The traditional model used by many SRCs is to appoint an executive team of key student leaders. These often include the **president, vice president, treasurer, secretary** and the **publicity officer**. Brief role statements for these are outlined on the next page. Sometimes, it’s expected that these executive roles will only be available for senior students; in that case, junior students can take on **assistant** roles to learn what is involved. In other SRCs, any student can take on these roles if they have an interest and are competent in that area. There are also roles for other class representatives.

Advantages

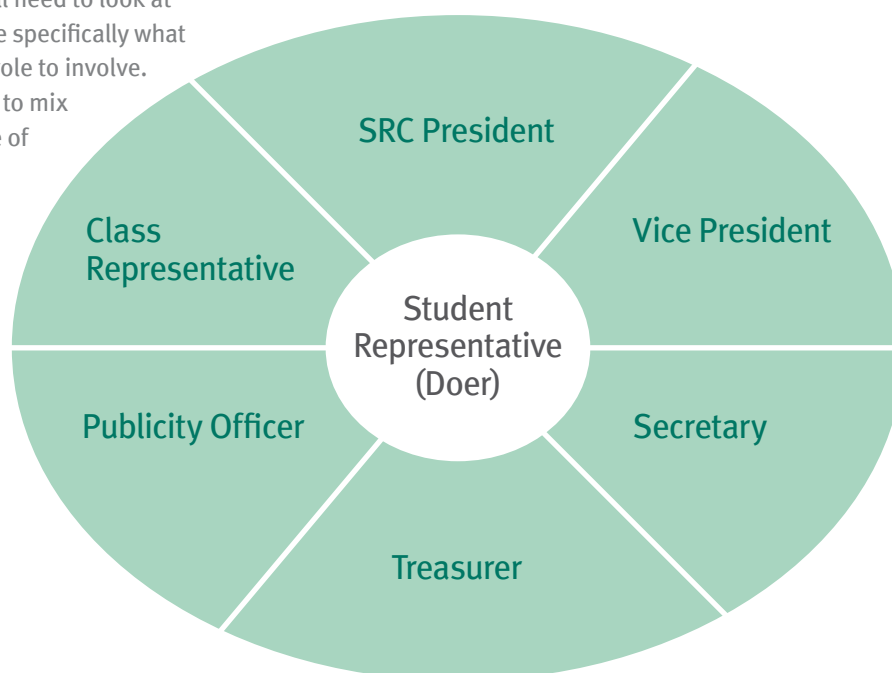
- There is a clearly identified leader of the SRC.
- This empowers a small group or even one person to make decisions between meetings when necessary.

Disadvantages

- It places a lot of responsibility and pressure on one or two key people.
- It doesn’t empower everyone to feel they have an important role.
- It can create an elite group within the SRC.

Model 1: SRC executive roles

These role descriptions are fairly general. You will need to look at them and decide specifically what you want each role to involve. You might want to mix or change some of these jobs.



Role	Responsibility
SRC President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • represents the SRC (and the school) at official functions – on behalf of students • chairs SRC meetings • coordinates SRC actions and has an ‘overview’ of what the SRC is doing • has a leadership role within the SRC, making sure everyone is involved and working as a team • talks with the school’s leadership team and with teachers, as appropriate, about issues discussed and decided by the SRC • attends school council or board meetings where appropriate
Vice President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the president as required • chairs meetings if the president is absent • mentors new and younger SRC members and helps the president to involve everyone
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lets members know when and where a meeting is to be held • prepares an agenda for the meeting, in consultation with others • keeps records of SRC meetings: the minutes • makes sure each representative gets a copy of the agenda and minutes • handles all correspondence to and from the SRC
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handles all the financial dealings of the SRC • prepares a budget for SRC finances • keeps a record of money received, money paid, and bills received • investigates cost of items or activities • presents financial reports and recommendations to meetings • liaises with the school business manager
Publicity Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinates all the publicity and promotion of the SRC • makes sure that articles about the SRC are in the school newsletters and other appropriate publications • makes sure that the SRC website is up to date • manages the SRC noticeboard
Class Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate between the SRC and students • attend all SRC meetings • present student ideas, concerns and suggestions to SRC meetings • provide regular opportunities for students to present and discuss their ideas and opinions

Model 2: Portfolios

An alternative approach is to give every SRC member one or more portfolios. These are areas of responsibility. The SRC can decide on and define these each year to fit the jobs that need doing and according to the skills of SRC members.

Some of these can be continuing jobs to do with helping the SRC to operate through the year. Other portfolios can be around some specific issue or action that the SRC is working on. Some of these portfolios might last for a short time, while others can keep going for longer – it just depends on the nature and amount of work to be done.

If you have responsibility for a portfolio, you don't have to do all the work in that area, but you do have to be responsible for making sure it gets done. You also need to communicate well with those in other portfolios who might rely on you. Some portfolios can require a group of students to assist, in which case the portfolio manager becomes the coordinator of that group.

Alternatively, you could have a system where everyone has the lead responsibility on one portfolio and then acts as a back-up to someone else in another portfolio. In that way, each portfolio has two students who can work together.

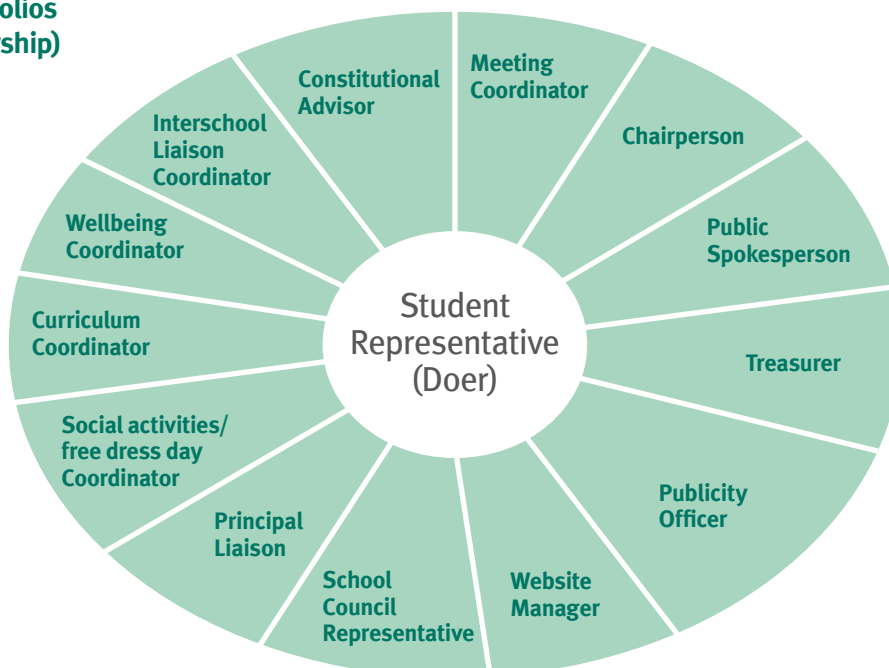
Advantages

- It spreads out the responsibilities and includes everyone.
- It enables roles to be adapted to individual student skillsets.
- It creates and builds a sense of teamwork.

Disadvantages

- This system can break down if good communication between portfolios isn't maintained.
- It can result in unclear or overlapping responsibilities.
- It can overlook some area of work that needs to be done.

Model 2: Portfolios (shared leadership)



Role	Responsibility
Meeting Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lets members know when and where a meeting is to be held prepares and circulates the agendas and minutes sets up the room and organises food for the meetings
Chairperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conducts SRC meetings using agreed meeting rules keeps the meeting on track, following the agenda and making decisions makes sure everyone has a chance to speak and is heard remains impartial in matters being discussed
Public Spokesperson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the public face of the SRC — addresses school assemblies and makes other speeches as required
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> role as described on page 65
Publicity Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> role as described on page 65
Website Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintains the online presence of the SRC regularly updates online material encourages students to engage with the SRC online
School Council Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> represents students on the school council reports to the SRC about what the school council is doing <p>Note: This could also relate to SRC representatives on other school committees, e.g. Buildings and Grounds.</p>
Principal Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> builds a positive relationship with the principal and maintains good communication between the principal and the SRC
Social activities / free dress day Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coordinates the running of different social activities for students coordinates dates, themes, and money collection collects donations for free dress days
Curriculum Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> represents students on the school's Curriculum Committee reports back to the SRC about curriculum issues
Wellbeing Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> represents students on the school's Student Welfare or Wellbeing Committee manages and responds to requests for advocacy from students in need of SRC support
Interschool Liaison Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> represents the SRC on interschool networks liaises with the VicSRC coordinates registration for events like regional conferences and the VicSRC Congress
Constitutional Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is responsible for making sure that the SRC operates within the rules of its constitution advises the SRC if processes or authority is disputed could coordinate the writing of a constitution if the SRC doesn't have one

Role of the SRC support teacher

At the same time as you decide on the role of the SRC students, the SRC representatives and the SRC support teacher(s) should discuss exactly what role the teacher(s) will play.



Section 1.6 outlines the broad role of the SRC support teacher(s) but the details of this might need to change each year in response to the needs and capacities of the students on the SRC.

Once students have their roles defined, they should discuss what sort of support they would like from the SRC support teacher. This might vary from student to student or throughout the course of the year as students become capable of doing more themselves.

Possible levels of support that teachers might provide

Level of support	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active (high level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plays an active role in meetings, helping to keep the SRC on track and to ensure that good decisions are made
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advises and assists (mid level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides advice in the meeting only when necessary and lets students manage the process and make decisions themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remains in the background (low level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remains silent in meetings unless given permission to speak between meetings is there as a back-up for students or to do tasks students can't do, e.g. driving to shops for emergency supplies or leaving notes in staffroom pigeon holes



The teacher gives students an adult/teacher perspective so that students can understand better the processes that are in place in a school. The teacher also offers opinions when asked and can put things on the SRC agenda – as can students. Home group teachers from each year level also take on the role of SRC convenor. These convenors report to year level coordinators' meetings about SRC work.

Secondary College SRC



In **section 1.6**, there is an activity for developing a 'Wanted' poster about the role of the SRC support teacher. You could do this activity here too.

The following activity supports the SRC to audit who takes responsibility for various tasks and aspects within the SRC and looks at the balance between student and teacher responsibility for running the SRC.



Activity: Audit of student and teacher responsibilities

The roles that students and teachers play in the SRC vary from time to time, but also can be seen differently by different people. This audit activity aims to start a discussion between SRC representatives and SRC support teachers about who is doing what, in order to seek opportunities for greater levels of student leadership. It can take place at any time once students and teachers have settled into their roles. Ideally, it would be undertaken as part of the SRC's half-year evaluation.



See **section 2.5: Planning the year ahead** for more on this.

Ask students and teachers to complete the simple quiz presented in the following table by circling the scores that are closest to the way that the SRC actually operates (not how they think it should operate). Add up and then average the scores and enter these in the 'Totals' section below. Present the results to an SRC meeting for discussion and write in some possible actions based on that discussion.

Scoring quiz for deciding who in the SRC leads particular areas or function

No.	Leadership area or function	Teachers only	Mainly teachers with some student input	Teachers and students together	Mainly students with some teacher input	Students only
A	Organising SRC meetings: e.g. setting date, time, place, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
B	Setting the SRC agenda: e.g. deciding what is to be discussed	1	2	3	4	5
C	Chairing the meeting	1	2	3	4	5
D	Taking minutes and recording decisions	1	2	3	4	5
E	Providing background information to the meeting	1	2	3	4	5
F	Contributing ideas and views to the discussions	1	2	3	4	5
G	Voting and making the decisions	1	2	3	4	5
H	Implementing the agreed actions	1	2	3	4	5
I	Making sure that others complete their action commitments	1	2	3	4	5
J	Reporting and representing SRC decisions to the principal and staff	1	2	3	4	5

Totals											
Area	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
Average score by students											
Average score by teachers											

Possible actions to make the SRC more student-run:

1.

2.

3.

4.

2.5 Planning the year ahead

The school year is already packed full of days for this and weeks for that. If you want to get your SRC priorities on the school agenda you need to plan ahead. Use this section to help you to set up an annual calendar and then to slot some key SRC events into it to make sure they happen on time.



In February, November can seem a long way away. However, if you're not careful the school year will disappear before you know it – and without the SRC achieving much. If you're new to SRCs, you might feel all your energy has to go into setting up the SRC, but you will also want to achieve things this year. So it's important to plan ahead to make sure you can fit everything in. This section will help you make sure you give enough time to achieve your main goals.



Maybe you're established and planning ahead well but are finding that you can't adjust quickly when the situation changes. Or perhaps the SRC is getting to be so successful that the events it wants to organise are becoming more frequent and complex – and clashing with other school events. Where is there time for the SRC? Check out the evaluation approaches suggested here and build them into your plan.

Year-long thinking



You can use **template T4: SRC year planner** to help with this (see Part 5).

The SRC should think and plan for what it can do across a whole school year. To help you do this, you need to find or draw up a calendar for the year.

Break the year into the school terms. Mark in the school holidays, public holidays, exam periods, interschool SRC events, sports carnivals, musicals, parent–teacher interviews and any other major dates that affect the whole school or are major year-level events. Now you can mark on the calendar what you want to achieve and when you want it finished by. But there are some limits on when you should plan these things:

In *Term 1* everyone is settling into the new year. If you can get something happening towards the end of term, then everyone feels the SRC is off to a good start. In fact, this is a good time to establish your SRC as an active group and to begin its first activity.

Term 2 has a short exam period towards the end. Remember that it might be a longer or shorter term depending on where the Easter holidays fall, but this is also a good time for starting activities.

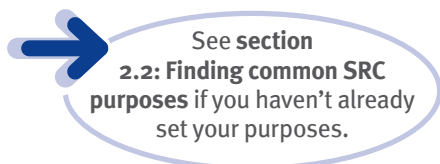
Term 3 can be busy with assessment in the middle or at the end of the term. If you have a school musical or drama production, this is often when it's on. However, there is usually room somewhere for a major event or project.

In *Term 4* everyone is focused on exams and finishing the year's work requirements, so don't plan anything big at this time. Your main focus for *Term 4* should be on selecting next year's SRC and ideally having some sort of handover session. This can take a lot of energy to do well, so you might not plan much else for *Term 4*. Mark them in on your calendar.

Take your key goals for the year and think about how much lead-up time they need and where achieving them might fit in the year.

January

February



Backward planning

For each individual goal, it's useful to work backwards from the end of the year to the start – from achieving your goals to setting out each step required to get there. If you work backwards from what you want to have achieved by the end of the year, that will also help you work out when you need to start things. Mark your project beginning and end times on your calendar. When you plan ahead, think about the level of energy among students, staff and parents at different times of the year.

Put the completion dates for your projects, and the completion deadlines or timelines for significant planning steps into your calendar. Try and spread these out or at least make sure that different people are sharing the load if things have to be completed at the same time.



GOOD PRACTICE

An SRC wanted to organise a carnival day. It needed to book special food vendors and the entertainment a few months ahead. This meant that it needed to have a confirmed date and permission from the school – and that took a month to get. So the SRC used a year planner to organise its plans – when the carnival day would be, the amount of time each step would take, when permission had to be asked for, etc. They realised that they needed to start their planning from the beginning of the year.

SRC meeting dates

Don't forget to put your SRC meetings and the meetings of any subgroups that meet regularly onto your calendar. Planning all the meeting dates now makes the year run much more smoothly. It also saves time – you don't need to spend time at every meeting working out when the next one will be.



ATTENTION: It's important to leave some blank areas in your planner so that you can respond to new issues as they come up.



Evaluation

As the year goes by, it's easy to forget where you started or what you are learning. It can be really useful to take some regular time to look back and reflect. Book this on your calendar as well.

Half-year evaluation

An ideal time for a half-year evaluation is that little gap after exams at the end of Term 2. Everyone is 'coming up for a breath' and beginning to look forward to the last part of the year. An evaluation at this time doesn't need to take long, but reviewing a few simple things can help you get the best from the rest of the year:

- **Group agreements:** How is the group getting on together? Are you keeping to the commitments you made? Do these need to be altered or reaffirmed?
- **Year plan:** Hopefully, you have this planner at every meeting, checking that you are keeping to schedule or adjusting your schedule in response to events. Have you got to where you wanted to be? Look ahead: is the remaining time on the planner still realistic or does it need to be tweaked?
- **Open space:** Open the discussion to any comments students might have – maybe they don't get time to raise these in a busy meeting. Does everyone feel part of the team and able to have a say? Are there any new issues bubbling up from the student body that the SRC should be responding to?



For more questions to consider, see the resource document on the VicSRC website – '**R1 Criteria for effective student councils**'. This document is also referred to in **section 1.7** and **Part 6**. There is also an activity in **section 2.4: Establishing SRC roles**, which would be useful for this half-year evaluation. It supports the SRC to audit who is taking responsibility for various aspects and tasks within the SRC and looks at the balance in student–teacher responsibility for running the SRC.

End-of-year evaluation

This evaluation could be more structured. It could be run as part of an end-of-year celebration or handover session, after exams, when everything is finished and people are not so pressed for time. The purpose of this is to celebrate your successes and learn from your mistakes. What you learn will be useful for next year's SRC and also for individuals moving on to their next personal challenges. Start by listing the highlights and lowlights of the year and what was good and bad about each one. (One person's highlight might be another person's lowlight – for entirely different reasons.)



GOOD PRACTICE



One SRC's mid-year evaluation led it to realise that it had too few active students to do all the jobs it wanted to do. It restructured the SRC to involve more students who were enthusiastic to help.

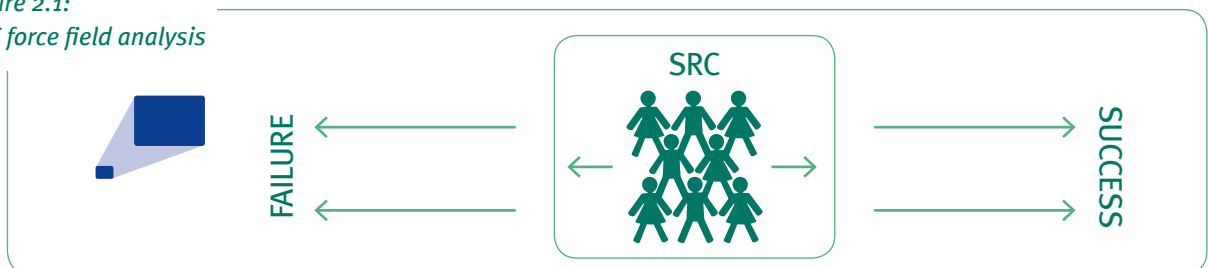


Force field analysis

A force field analysis is a useful way of mapping the different pressures acting on the SRC. You will need to use a whiteboard or a large sheet of butcher’s paper. Write ‘SRC’ in the middle of the page and draw a box around it (see the following diagram). Write ‘failure’ down the left-hand side of the page and ‘success’ down the right-hand side. Then draw arrows both inside and outside the box pointing from the SRC to both success and failure (see Figure 2.1 below). Label these arrows with the forces you think contributed to your success. The arrows outside the box represent external forces that pulled the SRC to either success or failure. They might be a supportive principal, an apathetic student body, or a local community disaster (note these could all lead to success or failure depending on how the SRC responds). The arrows inside the box represent internal factors within the SRC that pushed you towards success or failure, e.g. internal competition, a lack of ideas, or poor inter-year-level relations. You can see these factors as promoting forces (forces that point to success) or blocking forces (forces that point to failure).

Look back over the year and think about what contributed to or affected your highlights and lowlights. Once you’ve finished you should have a diagram about your context. This can inform you about whether you need to work on your internal relationships or on improving your links with other groups in the school. Try to identify three-to-five key lessons or areas for improvement for next year’s SRC. How can you build on the promoting forces? How can you overcome or restrict the blocking forces?

Figure 2.1:
SRC force field analysis



Using template T4: SRC year planner



This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use the blank template T4 in Part 5 to help you draw up your SRC year planner. Start by adjusting it for the current year – check the length of each term and change the number of weeks if necessary. Check when holidays and other events fall. These have been put into the planners on the next page as an example for you, note that these events will vary from year to year.

For each of the four terms mark in the school holidays, public holidays, exam periods, interschool SRC events, sports carnivals, musicals, parent–teacher interviews and any other dates that affect the whole school or are major events. There are reminders about these in the template, but you will need to change them for your school.

Then add in the dates of your SRC events: meetings, committees, conferences, training days, etc. This planner has an SRC meeting every two weeks, but you will need to decide what suits you.

Keep using this planner as the SRC develops its goals and projects. You can add in events or deadlines. Work backwards from what you want to have achieved by the end of the year – that will help you work out when you need to start things. When you plan ahead, think about energy levels of students, staff and parents at different times of the year.



Example T4. SRC year planner

TERM 1

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.	Australia Day	Teachers only	Teachers only	Teachers only	Students start
2.				SRC meeting	
3. Yr 7 SRC Elections		Swimming sports			
4.				SRC committees	
5.					Student forum
6.			Athletics day	SRC meeting	
7.			Free dress day		
8.	Labour Day			SRC committees	
9.		Parent—teacher interviews			
10.				SRC meeting	
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 2

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC committees	
2.		ANZAC Day			
3.				SRC meeting	
4.	NAPLAN TEST DAYS				
5.			VicSRC regional conference		Free dress day
6.				SRC committees	
7.					
8.	VCE EXAM WEEK				
9.				SRC meeting	
10.					
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 3

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC committees	
2.					<i>School musical</i>
3.				SRC meeting	
4.		Free dress day			VicSRC congress
5.				SRC committees	
6.					
7.				SRC meeting	
8.		Carnival day			
9.				SRC committees	
10.					
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 4

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC meeting	
2. (Yr 11 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 12)				Free dress day	
3.					<i>VCE exams start</i>
4. (Yr 10 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 11)		Melb Cup Day			
5.					
6. (Yr 9 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 10)					
7. (Yr 8 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 9)					
8. (Yr 7 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 8)				SRC meeting	
9.					
10.					