

The Institution of
StructuralEngineers

Student Liaison Officer: The complete guide

Inspire the structural engineers of tomorrow

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Supporting the careers of structural engineers



Student Liaison Officer: The **complete** guide

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“Over the years, I know that being an IStructE SLO has helped me transform good engineers into great engineers.”

Colin Caprani, Monash University

Introduction to IStructE

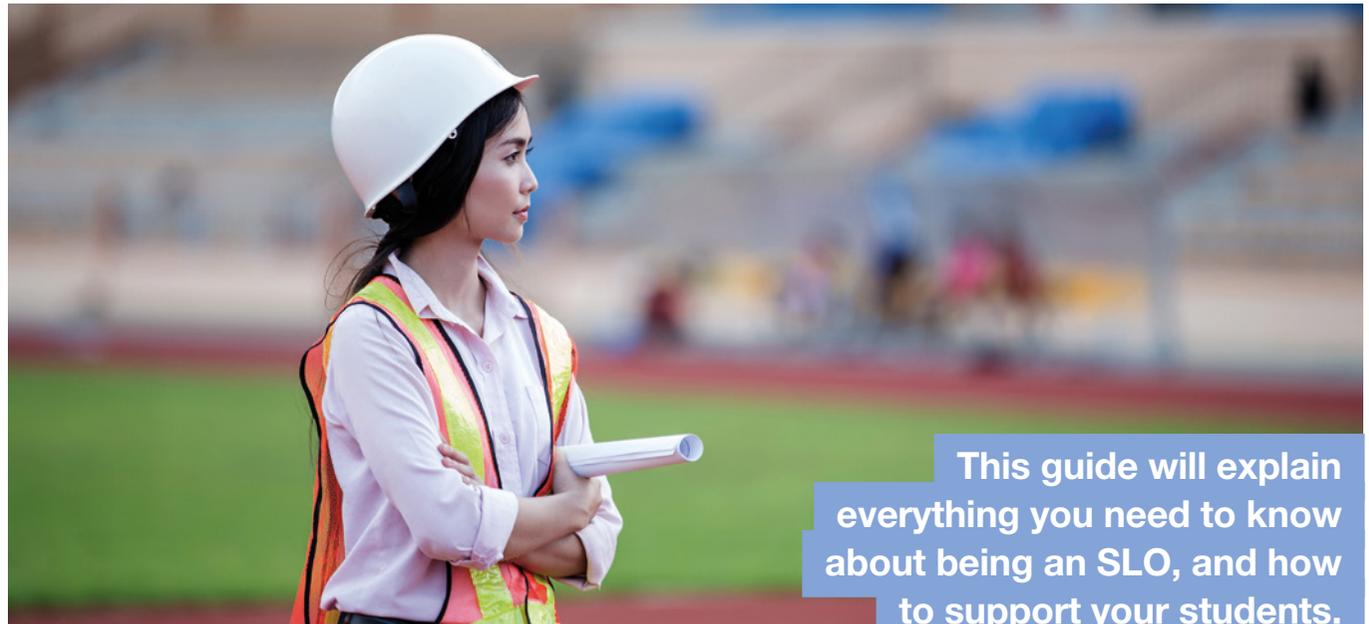
Together, we'll secure a **safe** built environment for all

The Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) is the world's largest membership organisation dedicated to structural engineering. We drive higher standards and share knowledge because our members' work is vital to public safety and meeting the challenges of the future.

As a Student Liaison Officer (SLO), you'll provide **vital support** to developing engineers at the beginning of their lifelong quest to make the built environment better for all. You'll recruit Student Members to IStructE, and signpost them to knowledge, resources and representation that will help them grow into professionals who'll shape what our world looks like for generations to come.

Why membership is important

Student Membership helps students take their first step towards a career of design, problem-solving and professional excellence. It's an entryway to the latest ideas and techniques within the profession, and the start of an exciting journey to becoming a professionally-registered engineer. Professional membership of IStructE is one of the leading global benchmarks of competence and technical excellence, and a passport to practice worldwide.



This guide will explain everything you need to know about being an SLO, and how to support your students. Read on for tips and advice on how to get started.

Importance of the SLO role

Being a Student Liaison Officer matters

We're thrilled that your passion for nurturing the next generation of structural engineers led you here – and we can't thank you enough.



What is an SLO?

SLOs work in universities and other higher education institutions to represent IStructE, promote Student Membership and support students as they take their first step towards a career in structural engineering.

Your primary task is to **recruit Student Members** and signpost them to a range of free learning materials and resources offered by IStructE.

The SLO role is voluntary. The majority of work is needed at the beginning of the academic year, when you'll talk to students about IStructE and get them to sign up for Student Membership. There are lots of activities to keep students engaged throughout the year – find out more on page 11.

Who can be an SLO?

Most SLOs are teaching staff within engineering departments. But anyone working in a higher education institution can be an SLO, eg librarian, post-doctoral researcher, careers adviser.

The main **job requirement is passion**. We need your enthusiasm, expertise and creativity to help to inspire the structural engineers of tomorrow and encourage students to join IStructE.

Why be an SLO?

As an SLO, you're not just promoting membership to young people, you're encouraging them to pursue a career in which they can **make a real difference** to the world we live in. With all manner of economic and climate-related challenges on the horizon, the advice and support you offer your students matters now more than ever.

What's more, you're connecting them to an organisation that can support the very best start in this competitive field. A conversation with you may just be the spark for all they go on to achieve in their professional lives.

Benefits of the SLO role

What you'll get from **your** role

It's not just your students who benefit from you working with us. There are a host of advantages for you too.

Students and colleagues will recognise you as a key link to IStructE. Helping to guide students on the right path to a fulfilling career is rewarding in itself, but this voluntary role is rewarding in a whole range of ways.

Access the latest ideas and professional expertise

As an SLO, you'll automatically join IStructE's **Academic Community**. You'll enjoy easy access to the latest teaching and research resources from IStructE.

What's more, you'll get free access to two invaluable resources we offer our members – the **Essential Knowledge Series** and the **Structural Behaviour Course**. These provide fresh perspectives on a range of up-to-the-minute professional challenges in civil and structural engineering. You can read more about them on the following pages.

Your role will also give you demonstrable credentials in volunteering, which is a valuable form of **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**.

Build your network and promote your achievements

As part of our Academic Community, you'll enjoy scope to engage with fellow academics on common issues. For example, our annual **Academics Conference** is an excellent opportunity to network with peers. And our **Young Researchers Conference**, which shines a spotlight on current PhD projects, gives you scope to engage with lecturers and practising engineers, to discuss what new research the industry needs.

That's not all. We promote prizes for teaching excellence, which could see you recognised for everything you do in your daily role. And we encourage you to take part in our annual **Excellence in Structural Engineering Education Award**. You could win a £1,000 prize, and have your paper published in *The Structural Engineer* for all our members to discover.



Boost your department's reputation and capabilities

Our annual Academics Conference on built environment higher education is an unmissable event. High profile speakers from academia and industry could inspire you with new ideas, and you can get your voice heard on matters that may affect the future landscape of engineering education. Plus, share ideas and best practice with your peers.

There's also potential for your whole department to forge links with members in your nearest **Regional Group**. This creates an excellent opportunity to build dialogue between academia, industry and practice. For more about Regional Groups, see p13.

► **Find out more about our Academic Community at www.istructe.org/slo**

Summary of Student Membership and its benefits

The advantages of Student Membership

We need you to encourage students with an interest in innovation, creativity and structural engineering to become Student Members of IStructE. Here's why.

Student Membership is the first step towards a career in design, problem-solving and professional excellence.

Student Members have access to a range of great **free learning resources** designed by IStructE. These help them to excel in their studies and make the right career choice.

Student Members can access around £1,000 worth of benefits – completely free.

Excellent resources for development

Every Student Member can access a host of valuable resources online, at no cost:

- *The Structural Engineer* is our flagship magazine. Each edition is packed with **technical and professional guidance**, equipping young readers with advanced professional insights. Project case studies give an in-depth look at the kind of challenges and opportunities they can look forward to in their career. Reading the magazine is also a great way to get a handle on the latest debates around issues that matter. Student Members get online access to the latest editions, plus the entire archive.
- *Essential Knowledge Series* is IStructE's own series of study texts. Each one **breaks down core principles** of structural design, analysis and mechanics. Titles range from *Introduction to structural materials* to *Historical development of structural form*, and from *Designing a meaningful structure* through to *Lessons from failures*. Although they're designed for working professionals,



the concise and accessible style make them perfect for students who want to broaden their knowledge beyond the degree syllabus. Student Members can graduate with a real appreciation of good practice.

- *Structural Behaviour Course* is a unique, 200-question quiz that we've designed so aspiring structural engineers can learn safely from experience – and from mistakes. The quiz offers a valuable opportunity to explore a variety of engineering problems, with no real-world impact if the Student Member gets things wrong. In fact, the feedback they'll receive transforms every incorrect solution into a learning opportunity. Getting to grips with challenges in this way can really **boost career prospects**.

[Continue](#)

Summary of Student Membership and its benefits (continued)

Building a professional network

Student Membership offers access to industry events where Student Members can meet engineers who are in the early stages of their careers, and get a clear picture of what steps they could take next. Local Young Member social events are a great way to get to know peers and forge friendships that can last throughout a future career.

Crucially, the right to attend meetings of the nearest **Regional Group** and **Young Members Group** creates opportunities to connect with professional structural engineers – an unrivalled chance to ask all kinds of burning questions.

Going to group events also means students can introduce themselves to potential employers – perhaps getting a head start in securing an exciting work placement, or that rewarding first job.

Boosting employability

When it's time to think about specialising in their future career, Student Members have a big advantage. Conversations with graduates and experienced structural engineers alike can shine a light on the right way forward, or clarify the options available.

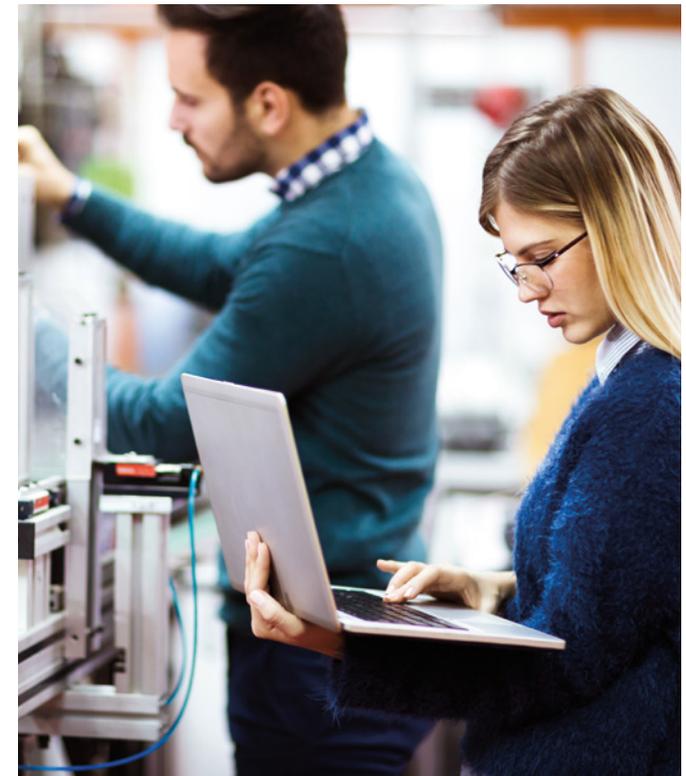
Simply being a Student Member can make a young person more employable – both because of all the extra knowledge they'll acquire beyond their degree course, and due to the signals it sends. Quite simply, the industry **recognises and values** dedication.

Student Membership is just the start. Even students who are approaching graduation should be encouraged to join as a Student Member. If they have an appropriate degree in civil or structural engineering, they'll automatically transfer to Graduate Membership at no charge for their first year.

Student Membership is not just for those who are at the start of their studies – it is relevant and beneficial to all students, even those who are nearing graduation. It is really important that, as an SLO, you **continue to encourage students to sign up** throughout their studies.

Any Student Member who graduates in an eligible subject area will automatically transfer to **Graduate Membership** of IStructE when they complete their studies. This transfer is free, and there is no subscription fee charged for the first full calendar year of membership.

Anyone who has passed the **Certificate in Structural Behaviour** will receive a second year of free Graduate Membership, and their third year will be half price. The certificate shows employers a candidate has the skills, knowledge and passion they're looking for.



Top tip: incorporating these resources into teaching can really add value.

How students become members – including cohort sign-up

How students **join** IStructE and how you can make a big difference

Student Membership is open to students of subjects that can be applied in the built environment.

Civil or structural engineering courses are obvious choices, but membership may also appeal to those studying other engineering or STEM-related degrees.

You can awaken their curiosity, spark their enthusiasm and answer their questions. It's important to point out just how **easy it is to join** us as a Student Member. They should take advantage of membership as early as possible in their studies – and you can help.

Five reasons why you should sign students up as a cohort

You can access a cohort application form online, which enables you to sign up a group of students in one go. Doing this makes the process easier for everyone.

1. It's quicker and easier to coordinate the admin around membership
2. You'll be able to see exactly which students have joined
3. You can send one email to every new arrival, letting them know about the benefits of membership, your role and how easy it is to join – you can build this message around a template we provide, which also offers students the choice to opt out
4. When submitting the cohort form, you can liaise with our Education Officer to sort out any issues
5. We'll have a clearer picture of interest in your department – which means we can keep improving our recruitment and engagement strategy, and give you any extra support you might need



Remember: you must gain students' permission to be signed up as part of a cohort.

[Continue](#)

How students become members – including cohort sign-up (continued)

How to sign students up as a cohort

First, download a cohort form at www.istructe.org/slo

Next, send the form to relevant staff in your department. They'll need to complete key information about each student:

- First and last name
- Gender (for diversity and inclusion monitoring, but not mandatory)
- Date of birth (for web access)
- Email address (preferably personal, for ongoing membership)
- Course title, plus start and end dates

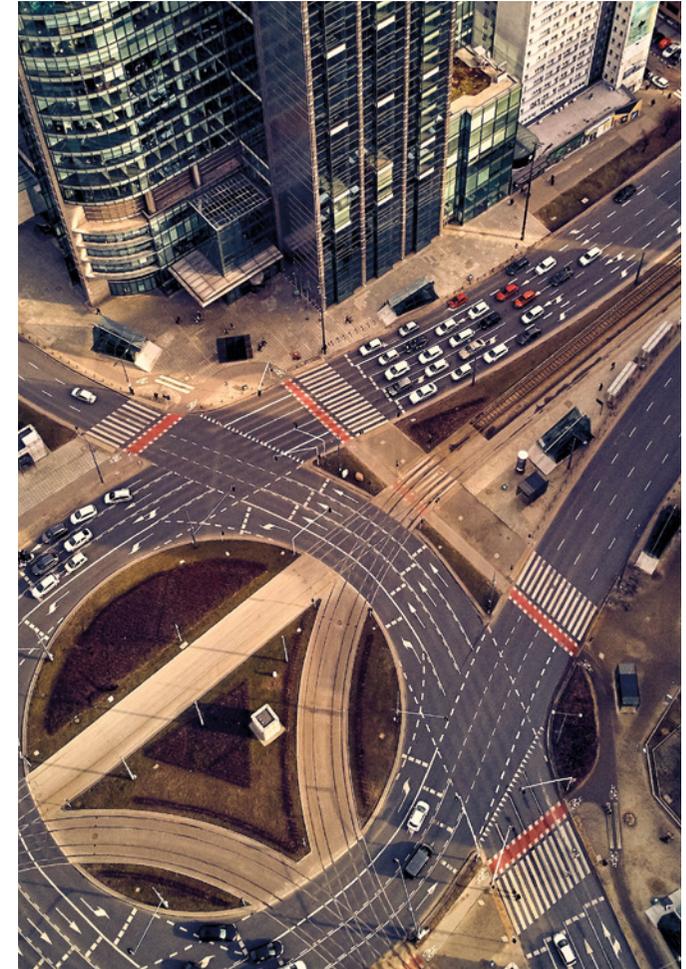
To comply with GDPR, a member of the department must authorise the release of this data to us. We'll arrange for them to send it securely via Mimecast – contact the Education Officer and they'll send you a link.

Once we've got a completed cohort form, we aim to process it within two weeks. We'll let you know if there are any issues. Otherwise, students can expect to get an email about their new membership as soon as the process is finished.

If a student prefers to apply for their own membership, they can:

- Visit www.istructe.org
- Search 'student member' on our site
- Click 'apply online' on the Student Member page
- Provide details including a contact email address, plus college/university and course, with start and end dates

► **[Any questions? Email education@istructe.org](mailto:education@istructe.org)**
[and we'll be happy to help](#)



Advice on being a successful SLO

Top tips for inspiring your students

Capture students' attention early with a great activity. Here are a few ideas:

- Organise a stand in Freshers' Week promoting Student Membership – you could use the resources in your toolkit, or visit www.istructe.org/slo for more
- Introduce the idea of joining IStructE during a session about professional institutions, or at a first lecture
- Tell students about IStructE during a talk about career paths

Ask us for help making sessions memorable

Our Membership Team can provide all kinds of useful resources to support presentations:

- Local graduates who can speak about their professional experiences
- PowerPoint slides explaining the benefits of Student Membership and beyond
- A range of printed materials about careers and membership
- Find more information and resources online

► [To discover more, or make a request, email education@istructe.org](mailto:education@istructe.org)



[Continue](#)

Advice on being a successful SLO (continued)

Make the most of membership materials

Whether you're teaching sessions or arranging extra-curricular support on the subject of future careers, you can get plenty of mileage out of our membership materials.

As a member of our Academic Community, you can access the free *Essential Knowledge Series*. The core content about structural engineering could really enrich conversations.

As students progress, the free *Structural Behaviour Course* may prove a great fit with modules they study. You could encourage colleagues to incorporate the course into their teaching or study guidelines.

IStructE's *Technical Guidance Notes* are an integral part of the £1,000-worth of benefits Student Members enjoy. This completely free resource provides the foundation of a structural engineering technical library. Not just of interest to students, they also serve as valuable notes for recent graduates, and a refresher text for more experienced engineers.

Be creative to inspire tomorrow's young professionals

You or a colleague might arrange a visit to a construction site, to demonstrate structural engineering coming to life. Booking a guest lecture might inspire your students to pursue a particular specialism. They may meet a future employer through a work placement or networking event facilitated by IStructE. They might even get a confidence boost from winning a competition organised through your department.

Be ready with advice at every step of the way

From day one, you can be having conversations about structural engineering as a possible career path. As students progress in their studies, these conversations can be more specific to potential specialisms and professional routes into a career. Make sure Student Members know they can access IStructE's *Technical Guidance Notes* at no charge – which will be a great help as they explore different specialist areas. And encourage students to discuss their options with other people, including university careers advisers.



Remember to let final year students know if they're eligible to auto-transfer from Student Membership to Graduate Membership, with a year or more of continued free benefits.

Making the most of groups in the area

About Regional Groups – and how to get the **best** from them

Both you and your students can get a great deal from visiting IStructE Groups – from sharing the latest ideas, to building a valuable network.

There are two types: Regional Groups and Young Members Groups. Here, we explain what they are and why it's important to engage closely with any near you.

Regional Groups

We have a comprehensive network of Regional Groups across the world. If there's one near you, we strongly encourage you and your students to get involved with its meetings and events. You can:

- Get up-to-date insights on structural engineering matters – from technical developments, to legal questions, health and safety issues, and project news
- Build links with members of all ages and levels of experience, including recent graduates, and potential employers and mentors
- Develop strong channels of communication between your department and practising structural engineers
- Pool ideas with departments at other universities or colleges, to enhance education and research related to structural engineering
- Boost career and professional development for Student Members – for example, by opening doors to work placements or job opportunities
- Discover scope to connect with similar groups from other professional bodies, thanks to links your Regional Group has established
- Work with your Group to jointly arrange educational activities with local schools, in which your students could take part



[Continue](#)

Making the most of groups in the area (continued)

Young Members Groups

Many Regional Groups have a dedicated Young Members Group. They're aimed at those under the age of 35 – so they're perfect for your students. You can:

- Arrange for a local Young Members Group to visit and present to your students on the benefits of membership or different career pathways
- Connect your students with opportunities to take part in technical and social events organised by the Group
- Encourage your students to make the most of networking opportunities arranged by the Group – for example, to build contacts with local businesses or other members
- Get your Student Members to join the Young Members Group Committee, where they can help organise events and other activities



► **Want to find your nearest Group?**
Visit www.istructe.org

Outlining available tools, resources and support

More resources and support for you

This guide isn't the only resource we've produced to help you be the best Student Liaison Officer you can be. Here's a checklist of the materials we've mentioned in the guide, plus other resources to help you inspire tomorrow's young professionals.

Get access to all these resources at www.istructe.org/slo

Posters

We've created 4 editable posters you can use to advertise events, tools and IStructE. Pin up around your department.

Flyers

We've created 2 editable flyers you can use to advertise events, tools and IStructE. Share with students at events and lectures.

Essential Knowledge Series

Study texts from IStructE that break down core principles of structural design. Free for Student Members.

Structural Behaviour Course

A 200-question quiz where students can explore a variety of engineering problems. Free for Student Members. And great practice for the Certificate in Structural Behaviour exam.

The Structural Engineer

Our flagship publication. Free online access to the latest edition and the archive.

Technical Guidance Notes

The foundation of a personal technical reference library. Free for Student Members.

Online lectures

Technical lectures and presentations from IStructE and industry experts. Free for all.

Library

Our E-library is an expanding online resource offering you the titles you want wherever you are in the world. Free access for Student Members.

Career profiles

Explore career profiles to discover the amazing range of people and places involved in structural engineering. Free for all.

Regional Groups and Young Members Groups

Get involved with IStructE activities near you.

Graduate Membership

Tell students about the benefits of Graduate Membership towards the end of their studies. Plus, how they can get 2.5 years of free Graduate Membership.

Certificate in Structural Behaviour

The certificate shows employers a candidate has the skills, knowledge and passion they're looking for. Plus, opportunities for another 1.5 years of free membership for Graduate Members.

Academic Community

Enjoy access to the latest teaching and research resources from IStructE. Join automatically when you become an SLO.

Academics Conference

Network with your peers, hear from high profile speakers, and get your voice heard on the future of engineering education.

Excellence in Structural Engineering Education Award

This international award celebrates outstanding and innovative teaching techniques in structural engineering.

SLO online area

Visit www.istructe.org/slo to access the cohort form, PowerPoint, suggested email text, editable posters and flyers, and more.

► [If you have any questions or suggestions, contact education@istructe.org](mailto:education@istructe.org)

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