

# STAFF GUIDE TO STUDENT REPRESENTATION AT BUCKINGHAMSHIRE NEW UNIVERSITY 2022-23



[bucksstudentsunion.org/representation](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/representation)



# Contents

<b>03</b>	<b>Introduction from the Vice Presidents Education and Welfare</b>
	Student Rep election dates for 2022-23
<b>04</b>	Student Rep Framework
<b>05</b>	Student Rep Structure
<b>06</b>	Supporting Your Student Reps
<b>08</b>	Breakdown of Responsibilities
<b>09</b>	Recruiting Student Reps
<b>10</b>	Representation Methods
<b>11</b>	Training and Development
<b>12</b>	Closing the Feedback Loop
<b>13</b>	Management of Student Reps
<b>14</b>	Contact information

# Introduction from the Vice Presidents Education and Welfare

Partnerships between staff and students are key for a thriving academic community, when the Student Rep system works well it is a massive benefit to everyone involved.

Reps provide feedback on the experiences of students on your course and in your School, which can offer insight and opinion with a fresh and innovative perspective.

Reps are there to work closely with University and Union staff to bring a positive, student-led change that will have an impact both for their cohort and for future students on the course.

This year we aim to build on our previous work and achievements, extend support and improve the representation system in all corners of the University; this will only be possible with ongoing support from a receptive and engaged academic team.

The ground level engagement with each and every student at BNU makes the student experience what it is. We are very much looking forward to working with you all towards what we know will be another successful year.

Please do not hesitate to get in contact if you have any questions.

Best Wishes,



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## Election dates for 2022-23

### Autumn term

Elected from all levels

Nominations open: Mon 19 Sept 22 at 10 am until Fri 7 Oct 22 at noon

Voting takes place online: Mon 10 Oct 22 at 10 am until Fri 14 Oct 22 at noon

### Spring term

All levels except final year students and Uxbridge students  
(electing for next academic year)

Nominations open: Mon 9 Jan 23 at 10 am to Fri 17 Feb 23 at noon

Voting takes place: Mon 6 Mar 23 at 10 am until Fri 10 Mar 23 at noon

# Student Rep Structure

## Student Reps

Student Reps are elected by their peers to form the first tier of our representation system and are the first point of contact for students with issues or concerns. Elections take place in March for students going into levels 5 and 6 in the next academic year and October for new level 4 students, all Uxbridge students, and any courses that do not have Reps. Reps must be re-elected each year.

Student Reps are trained and supported throughout the year by the Students' Union and are rewarded for their contribution to this scheme with a reward payment of up to £100 funded from the Big Deal. In order to receive the reward, Reps must comply with a series of requirements: completing Rep training, attending a Coffee Session with their Course Leader, partaking in Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) and providing feedback to their cohort and the Students' Union, and participating with the Students' Union Rep Conference.

## School Officers

School Officers are appointed through an interview process to work alongside the Vice Presidents Education and Welfare and Representation team to provide school-wide advocacy, support our campaigning work and promote the benefits of democratic engagement, representation and quality assurance to our diverse membership.

School Officers will be full members of the Students' Union's Education Forum. Heading up the representation system in their school, they are expected to liaise with Student Reps to ensure they have a sound understanding of issues across all courses and spreading good practice among Reps. They also serve as an enthusiastic and knowledgeable advocate of effective representation as well as monitor trends in student feedback, report back to the Union and School, and escalate issues and campaigns where applicable.

Extra support from the Students' Union and various national training programmes are provided as required. School Officers also receive an additional payment of up to £350 for their work during the academic year.

## Sabbatical Officers

Becoming one of our elected Sabbatical Officers offers a unique opportunity to be a part of the Students' Union leadership team, providing the strategic direction for the organisation.

Sabbatical Officers have the opportunity to shape and influence the academic and social life of students at Buckinghamshire New University in pursuing the Students' Union's mission of 'Making life better for students at Bucks'. Having been elected in a cross-campus ballot (held in the spring term each year), Sabbatical Officers are answerable to the student body. They act as principle representatives of students at the University, sitting on the highest decision-making bodies within the Students' Union and University. They also gain invaluable experience as Trustees of a charity whose role is to improve the education of students at Buckinghamshire New University. In the past, our Sabbatical Officers have gone on to secure great jobs such as advising major political parties and working in the television industry.

No prior knowledge or experience of the Students' Union is required, just a manifesto packed with new ideas that capture the imagination of the student body and a desire for change.

Students should contact the Deputy CEO for further details.

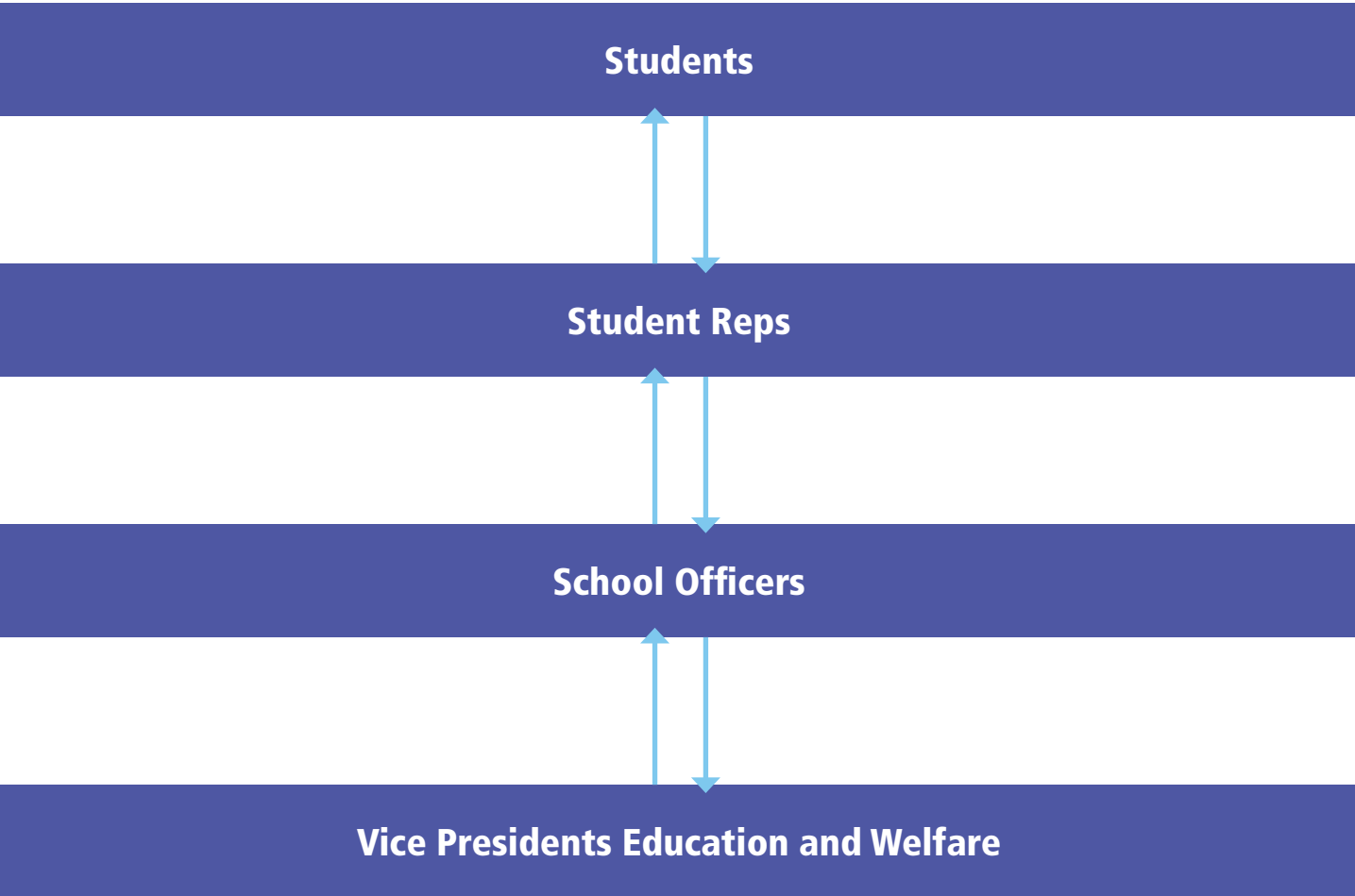
# Student Rep Structure

Student representation takes place at every level across the university, as shown below. First, we have students, who provide feedback on any issues and positive elements of their course experience to their Student Rep.

Next, Student Reps represent their classmates and present this feedback on their experiences to key members of the programme team. For any issues that are affecting more than one course, Student Reps work closely with our School Officers.

Our nine School Officers are student leaders who are responsible for representation within a whole school, for which there are seven. They work with the Representation Team to identify common trends and themes taking place across their school and the wider University, as well as representing the student voice at various meetings and feeding back to the Representation Team.

Finally, the two Vice Presidents Education and Welfare lead the representation system and work closely with the University on topics relating to the academic and wellbeing experience of all students, ensuring the student voice is always heard.



# Supporting your Student Reps

## Nominations

During this period we promote available Rep positions, visit classes to introduce the opportunity, outline the role and responsibilities (as well as the rewards) available. Interested students must complete and return a nomination form to the Students' Union before close of nominations.

Student representation is essential for your programmes to help gain crucial insights as to the experience of your students. Current research shows that engagement with our Student Reps can support retention, achievement and satisfaction.

Past evidence has shown that elections are much more likely to be contested after a member of the Students' Union team has addressed the class.

**What do you need to do?** Contact the Students' Union at [surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk) in order to arrange a five minute lecture shoutout.

Any interested students can email the following details to [SUrepresentation@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:SUrepresentation@bucks.ac.uk) to submit a nomination.

- Full name
- Student ID
- Course name
- Year of Study
- Preferred email address

## Online elections

To ensure a fairer democracy of Student Reps, the vast majority of Reps will be democratically elected through an online election hosted at [bucksstudentsunion.org/vote](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/vote). It is crucial that all students know about these elections and take the opportunity to vote and make their voice heard.

**What do you need to do?** Publicise the elections in class and, wherever possible, allow candidates an opportunity to speak to their voters during this time. Historically, Reps with the highest voter turnout receive much more feedback from their peers.

## Training

All Student Reps are contacted about a mandatory training session, which forms part of their Rep Reward. This session covers all of the basic information they require to make a confident start in post. At the end of every training event, students are asked to fill out a written feedback form; sessions are frequently adjusted to ensure that future Reps receive the most appropriate training. Generally the session will contain:

- An in-depth introduction to their role and responsibilities
- Introduction to University committees and wider student representation
- An exploration of methods for gathering and presenting feedback
- A discussion of NSS categories
- A guide to signposting students to other support services.

**What do you need to do?** Ask your elected Rep if they have heard about Rep training?

**Training will be held in person and online across Wed 19 - Fri 21 Oct 2022**

**Training for February Cohort Reps will be held on Wed 22 Mar 2023**

## Coffee sessions (Standard Pathway Reps only)

Coffee sessions are held from the end of October to early November and the end of January to early February and have been introduced as an opportunity for Course Leaders to sit down with their Student Reps outside of a Programme Committee Meeting.

The sessions will introduce you both to each other and talk about how the relationship will work between Student Reps and lecturers on your course for the upcoming year. This is an opportunity find out what your Reps expect from you and your colleagues, what you expect from your Reps, and discuss any outstanding issues from the previous PCM. Student Reps will be provided with a coffee voucher from the Representation Team and prompt questions to help the session run smoothly. It is recommended to hold Coffee Sessions with all Reps across each year group of your programme at the same time. This ensures your time is being used effectively and that feedback from the previous year's PCM can be discussed too.

**What do you need to do?** If your Student Reps have not contacted you by the first week of November/ February, please email the Reps on your programme and arrange a date to hold your Coffee Session. During the session, please answer the Reps questions and address any urgent concerns or queries.

## Your Voice form

The Your Voice form is designed to help Reps gather feedback and is broken down into 8 sections, all in line with the headings in the National Student Survey. The form also has prompt questions to aid Reps in asking their class for feedback.

Student Reps must submit this feedback at least two weeks before their Programme Committee Meeting so that it can be moderated by the Representation team and any issues can be triaged effectively ahead of the meeting. There is a 3 day cut off point for students and if they don't submit their feedback before this time, the feedback will not be circulated and the students will be required to discuss this at the meeting.

**What do you need to do?** Allow Reps to publicise themselves and collect feedback in class wherever possible. Read through the submitted feedback prior to the PCM and have pre-prepared responses to any relevant feedback points.

## Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs)

Programme Committee Meetings are held in December and March each academic year. Reps are expected to attend all PCMs held for their course. Reps are still expected to submit feedback and apologies form to the committee through the Students' Union if they are unable to attend.

**What do you need to do?** Ask your elected Rep if they are aware of when their Programme Committee Meeting is.

## Rep Conference

Our Rep Conference is held on a Wednesday afternoon in November each year. This year the conference is on Wednesday 23 November 2022. This is an opportunity for Student Reps to meet Reps from other courses and chat about their experiences this year. We also hold a range of sessions for them to learn more about the University, explore further opportunities within the Union, or boost their employability skills even more.

**What do you need to do?** Check with your Reps to see if they are attending Rep Conference.

# Student Reps: University staff, Students' Union and student responsibilities

## THE STUDENTS' UNION WILL:

- Set key dates and provide information to students and staff
- Hold at least one meeting per term giving all Reps the opportunity to discuss common issues
- Deliver training and any additional support required throughout the year
- Provide publicity materials for staff to use in class
- Provide continuing training opportunities online
- Gather and analyse online student feedback
- Provide regular newsletters for Student Reps
- Administer online elections.

## ACADEMIC AND PSE STAFF SHOULD:

- Familiarise themselves with information and guidance about the Student Rep system sent via email and available on the Union website
- Communicate the opportunity to students in class using Students' Union materials and actively encourage participation
- Direct students to nomination forms **[bucksstudentsunion.org/representation](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/representation)** or via email to **[surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk)**
- Invite the Students' Union into a class in the first three weeks of the academic year to talk about standing to be elected as a Student Rep and obtain nominations.

## STUDENT REPS SHOULD:

- Complete an online nominations form during the nominations period at **[bucksstudentsunion.org/vote](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/vote)** or via email
- Campaign to get students to vote for you during the Student Rep election period
- Complete Rep training
- Partake in two Coffee Sessions a year with their Course Leader
- Gather feedback from the students they represent before attending a Programme Committee Meeting (PCM) using the Your Voice form and submit online 2 weeks before the PCM
- Read regular Union e-newsletters to keep up-to-date with Students' Union campaigns
- Attend additional training where appropriate
- Communicate student feedback to committees and committee responses back to students, closing the feedback loop

The above demonstrates the relationship between University staff, students and the Students' Union.



# Recruiting Student Reps

The Big Deal funds almost 250 Student Reps across the University. Exact numbers of representatives will differ between Course/Department/School and methods of recruitment differ between courses and modes of study, as detailed further below. Students and staff alike can search our database of reps at [bucksstudentsunion.org/replist](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/replist). Please contact your local member of the Representation Team for any further information or to arrange a meeting.

## Undergraduates (UG)

The majority of Reps will be **democratically elected** from UG courses, generally with no more than one Student Rep to around fifty students in line with the principles laid down in the University's formal documents.

Past evidence has shown these positions are best taken up when promoted in class by a member of the Students' Union team who can provide interested students with a nomination form (also available online at [bucksstudentsunion.org/elections](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/elections)) nominations will be accepted for a period of at least 2 weeks.

**What do you need to do?** Promote nominations and elections amongst your students: contact your local member of our Representation Team to arrange a presentation during the nomination period.

Nominations can be submitted online at [bucksstudentsunion.org/elections](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/elections) this includes a short online form asking for the students name, ID number, course details, and contact information.

After nominations close all the nominees for vacant positions are input onto our website in an online election. This can be found at [bucksstudentsunion.org/vote](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/vote) - each election also includes Re-Open Nominations (RON) as a candidate ensuring that students have an option to vote for at least two candidates in each election. Elections are run using the Order of Preference voting system. In order to log in students will need to know their ID number and date of birth.

Once voting has closed all candidates are informed of the results of their election.

## Pre-Qualifying Nurses

Representatives will be **elected from both cohorts of all branches** of the Nursing course as with other Undergraduate courses. Training will be run at least twice in the year to accommodate both cohorts.

**What do you need to do?** Promote nominations and elections amongst your students: contact the Students' Union at [surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk) in order to arrange a five minute lecture shoutout.

The University will support students who want to swap shifts to be able to attend Student Rep meetings. In the event that this is unable to happen, Reps are able to complete an apologies form so that their feedback can be addressed on their behalf.

## Postgraduates (PG) & Post-Qualifying Nurses (PQN)

The majority of PG taught and PQN Reps will be democratically elected from their courses, but there are some courses that run in such small numbers they do not need a Rep as their feedback will be captured by other methods (see next page).

**What do you need to do?** If you run a PG or PQN course contact the Students' Union at [surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk](mailto:surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk) to arrange a short representation shout out for your students. If any students are interested they can find out more at [bucksstudentsunion.org/representation](https://bucksstudentsunion.org/representation).

# Representation Methods

At Bucks, we offer a Standard and Condensed Student Rep pathway, depending on the nature of the student's course.

## Standard Pathway Student Reps

Standard Pathway Reps are students who are on Full Time Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes in the following schools: Art, Design and Performance; Aviation and Security; Business and Law; Creative and Digital Industries; and Human and Social Sciences.

Once successfully elected as Student Rep by completing a nomination form obtained from the Students' Union, or nominating themselves online or via email, and running in an online election, Standard Pathway Reps will then complete the following work:

- Student Rep Training
- Two Coffee Sessions emailing confirmation of this session to **surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk** and their course leader
- Rep Conference
- Two Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) and providing online feedback before this meeting.

Depending on how many of these tasks the student completes, they are eligible for payment of up to £100.

## Condensed Pathway Student Reps

Condensed Pathway Reps are made up of four groups:

- Students on Part-Time programmes
- Distance learners
- Students on Foundation programmes
- Students who complete placements, including all programmes in the School of Health and Social Care Professions and Nursing and Midwifery.

Once successfully elected as Student Rep by completing a nomination form obtained from the Students' Union, or nominating themselves online or via email, and running in an online election, Condensed Pathway Reps will then complete the following work:

- Student Rep Training
- Rep Conference
- Two Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) and providing online feedback before this meeting.

Depending on how many of these tasks the student completes, they are eligible for payment of up to £100.

All students on programmes without a Student Rep will be sent an annual survey to deliver feedback, raising any issues and sharing positive practice.

# Training and Development

The Students' Union is committed to supporting our Student Reps, ensuring they are fully prepared for their role and throughout the year through a variety of initiatives.

## Additional skills training programme

The Students' Union's **extensive additional skills training programme provides Reps with an opportunity to enhance and develop their skills**. These sessions are open to, and draw together, all students who volunteer with the Students' Union, whatever their role.

The exact content of the Additional Skills Training Programme will vary year on year to reflect the current requirements of Student Reps and previous feedback received. Past sessions have included **Public Speaking, Effective Chairing, Negotiation Skills, Research Methods for Student Reps, and CV Writing**. Sessions are delivered by a mixture of Students' Union staff, University staff/departments and external training providers.

Reps are also encouraged to make the most of a range of opportunities to contribute to other University Committees and procedures such as Validation panels for which further training and support is provided.

## Leadership Academy

As one of the leading Students' Unions in the country, Bucks Students' Union has employed many BNU graduates on its management and wider staff team. One of our key strategic priorities for the coming years is 'Developing Work Ready Graduates' and to assist us in achieving this we have created The Leadership Academy to recognise the value of developing future leaders early on.

The Leadership Academy is a bespoke development programme for talented students to gain specific skills for routes through the Union into leadership roles. It's a series of training, courses and opportunities to enhance employability and build leadership traits - all free of charge courtesy of The Big Deal.

We recruit a cohort of future leaders at the beginning of the first term to start the programme at the end of October. Course teams have the opportunity to nominate students they believe would benefit and grow from the programme. Students may also nominate themselves for a place by sending an application form to **sutraining@bucks.ac.uk**

## Rep Recognition Scheme

The Rep Recognition Scheme was introduced in 2016 as an accreditation like system that allows Student Reps to track their progress throughout the representation programme during the course of the year; alongside keeping a record of their involvement in other avenues of the Students' Union's offer such as society or sports team, volunteering, campaigning or attending an additional skills training session. Points can also be achieved through their engagement with the wider community, such as registering to vote or raising money for charity.

The scheme consists of three levels of accreditation – Bronze, Silver, and Gold. Student Reps that achieve Gold accreditation will receive an invitation to our annual Union Awards event and be presented with a certificate by the Vice Chancellor as further recognition of their hard work they will have made on the student experience.

# Closing the Feedback Loop

So that we can get the highest possible turnout of Student Reps at Programme Committee Meetings please think about the following guidelines.

### Notification of meetings

PCMs should be held as set by Academic Planning Committee. The exact time and location of the meeting should be sent to **programme.committees@bucks.ac.uk** a minimum of 10 working days prior to the meeting and the details of the second meeting should be agreed and noted at the first meeting.

Student Reps are required to submit their PCM feedback on the Students' Union website using a Your Voice Form two weeks before the Programme Committee, in order for this to be circulated to the academics attending beforehand. Please include this in your email to remind the Reps of their responsibility. The link to submit this feedback is **bucksstudentsunion.org/representation/feedback**.

Notification of meeting dates and times of any other meetings requiring the attendance of a Student Rep or School Officer should be emailed to **surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk** with at least 15 working days' notice, except in exceptional circumstances. The relevant meeting papers should be sent to **surepresentation@bucks.ac.uk** a minimum of 10 working days in advance of the meeting to be circulated amongst the appropriate Student Reps.

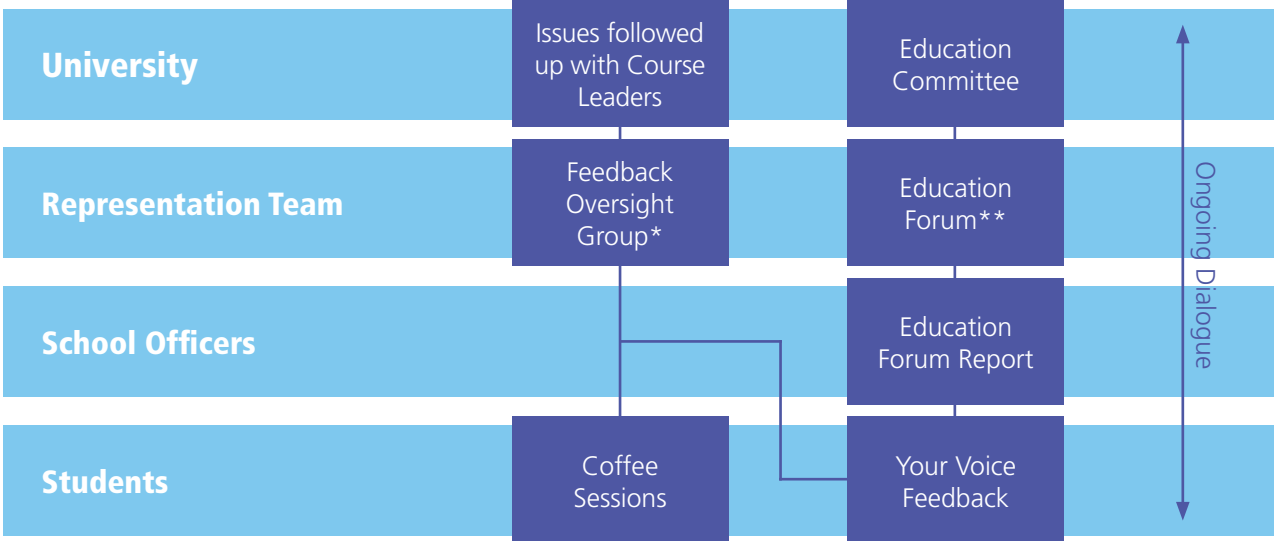
### Minutes/attendance records of meetings

As agreed with Academic Planning Committee the secretary of the PCM will:

- Prepare the action sheet, and the record of good practice, either during or directly after the meeting
- Allow the Chair two days to approve
- After this time upload to the Programme Committee Blackboard shell
- Notify committee members and the following when the action sheet has been uploaded:
  - Students' Union
  - Head of School if they were not present at the meeting
  - Any individual against whose name and action is recorded who is not a member of the Committee
  - Secretary to the appropriate School Committees.

Reps will be issued with a log sheet each year which displays a checklist of elements, requiring signatures from various University personnel to evidence attendance.

### Progression of Student Feedback



\*Feedback Oversight Group aims to resolve each issue brought forward by Student Reps in their Coffee Sessions or Programme Committee Meeting and looks to follow up these concerns with the relevant Rep and Academic Team to ensure they are actioned or resolved.

\*\*Education Forum is a termly meeting that allows School Officers to share any thematic issues and positive practice they have noted across their School through submitted Your Voice feedback, which helps to formulate the SU's report for the University's Education Committee.

# Management of Student Reps

For the representation system to be efficient and effective, the Union must guarantee consistent levels of representation are maintained for students. For this reason, we have split up the reward payment to relate to certain aspects of the role that are particularly crucial, as Student Reps are elected by their peers and as such are answerable to them.

## Remedial Phase

A) If two consecutive pieces of work are not completed (e.g., not attending Student Rep training and not attending a first Programme Committee Meeting without apologies), a member of the Representation Team will contact the Student Rep. We understand that Reps have several competing priorities during their time at University, and sometimes this can be difficult to manage. In the first instance, we will always look to encourage the Rep and help them to get back on track. Whether this means additional training or a one-to-one chat, we are here to support them in any way we can.

B) Students have the right to remove their Rep if they do not feel they are effectively representing them. If a group of students wish to start this process, they must complete the Student Rep Removal Form on our website, having 1 proposer and 4 seconders (5 signatures in total). On the very rare occasion this happens, a meeting should be held within 10 working days, with the five signatories, the relevant School Officer, and the Student Engagement Coordinators to discuss the reason for submission, investigate their concerns more closely and decide at this point if any further action needs to be taken. If they don't wish to meet, then it will be difficult to progress their complaint without more evidence. Should a complaint be made against a Student Rep, they will be given the chance to answer to the complaint and the Union will seek to mediate between the parties: quite often it is a simple case of misunderstanding that leads to such complaints. Following this, the initial review will be made.

## Initial Review

The Student Engagement Coordinators and two School Officers not connected to the case review the evidence available and decide to either dismiss the case, suggest more training and support, or take it higher. If the decision is to take it higher, it then goes to a formal review.

## Formal Review

The Formal Review is conducted by the Student Experience Manager and the VPEWs. The case would be reviewed, and the Rep can attend if they wish, accompanied by a supporter (not a legal representative). They decide to either dismiss the case, suggest more training and support, or remove the Rep. The Rep would have the right of appeal if the decision was removal.

## Appeal

The right of appeal would be to any two members of Students' Union Senior Management Team (CEO, Deputy CEO, HR Manager, Finance Manager, Comms Manager, President or VPSI).

# Contact Information



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