

COURSE REP

Quick guide to your role

LISTEN

REPRESENT

COMMUNICATE

Representing the
educational voice at Ulster

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FACULTIES & SCHOOLS

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

Four faculties, one university

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

- *Belfast School of Art*
- *School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences*
- *School of Arts and Humanities*
- *School of Education*
- *School of Law*
- *School of Media and Communication*
- *School of Social Sciences*

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

- *School of Computing*
- *School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems*
- *School of Engineering*
- *School of Architecture and the Built Environment*

Faculty of Life & Health Sciences

- *School of Biomedical Sciences*
- *School of Geography and Environmental Science*
- *School of Health Sciences*
- *School of Nursing*
- *School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science*
- *School of Psychology*
- *School of Sport*

Ulster University Business School

- *Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics*
- *Department of Global Business and Enterprise*
- *Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management*
- *Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing*
- *Business Institute*

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Welcome to *TeamUUSU

Congratulations on being elected as a course rep!

You're now part of a network of hundreds of reps, elected to work in partnership with their academic staff to enhance the learning & teaching experience of students at Ulster.

As a course rep, your role is to represent the Student Voice – this is an opportunity for you to advocate for change within your course, your campus, and the wider University. As a student, no one knows what the learning experience is like better than you. This is the time to use your experience to make change!

This handbook will help you get to grips with your new role and offers practical advice on how to be an effective advocate for your course. The Student Voice team and your Student Officers are always on hand to offer support and to help bring collective issues forward, but this book is your first resource.

As well as shaping the experience of your course, you can set the direction of your

Union by attending your campus Student Voice Forum each semester. Here you can meet other representatives and your Student Officers, find out what's going on in the University and the Union, and raise any unresolved issues. Use this opportunity to get to know your team!

Covid-19 has changed the way we learn. In this time of new teaching approaches, the Student Voice needs to be amplified to ensure your learning experience is the best it can be.

You've already taken a big step by putting yourself forward for elections, and that is no easy task (speaking from experience.) You should be proud of what you have achieved, and take confidence from the people who voted you in. Never doubt your ability, because you are capable of so much. Who knows, you may be writing this message to newly elected course reps someday!

If you have any ideas or issues throughout the year, don't be afraid to get in contact with any of the team. We're always happy to help. Most importantly enjoy your year. We can't wait to see you influence positive change!



Owen McCloskey
President



Grace Boyle
VP Education

WELCOME

Hi everyone and a warm welcome to your Course Rep induction session.

My name is Laura, I'm the Academic Representation Coordinator here with UUSU.

I have responsibility for supporting our team of over **900 Course Reps, School/Department reps** and **Faculty Reps** across our four campuses and ensuring the student voice is represented and valued on each course, which is a key priority for UUSU. By volunteering your time you will play a crucial role in making sure this happens.

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Today we aim to prepare you for the role and give you a better understanding of what's involved.

After today's session remember to keep in contact; communication between us all is important. Get in touch if there is an issue you can't resolve and even more importantly tell us about your successes!

All the very best for a great year ahead!



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ACADEMIC REP CO-ORDINATOR
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TASK

1

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TASK ONE

COMPLETE YOUR INDUCTION AND
PREPARED FOR THE ROLE!

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WHY?

Firstly familiarise yourself with your course rep handbook and Student Voice guidelines. Then come along to Students' Union training events and get involved with our meetings! This will help you find out about what you are meant to be doing and how to go about it.

Your induction will provide more information about the student learning experience and your role in ensuring it comes up to the expectations of your class. Check the UUSU website for more details on dates and times and how to access our online training if you miss out on your campus sessions. Look in your inbox for our emails with updates and information on supplementary skill-based training sessions we offer during the year.

TASK

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TASK TWO

IDENTIFY YOURSELF TO
THE GROUP OF STUDENTS
YOU REPRESENT

WHY?

So that students are aware that there is a Course Representative system, that you are their representative and if they have issues (positive and negative) they should give their feedback to you.

HOW?

As Course Reps should be elected, by their course colleagues, most people will know who you are. In any event it does no harm to introduce yourself in lectures as the Course Rep just in case someone was absent. Make use of posters, notice boards, emails, and chatting at coffee breaks to get the word out!

TASK

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TASK THREE

TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE
STATED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
OF YOUR COURSE

WHY?

To ensure that you and your course colleagues receive quality teaching and that the stated aims and objectives of your course are being addressed.

HOW?

Ask your course colleagues to provide you with feedback which you should then communicate to your Course Director. This can be done either informally if an issue is urgent or through your Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). They will be grateful to learn if teaching and the course is meeting expectations, and if not - how this can be addressed.

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TASK FOUR

IDENTIFY STUDENT ISSUES AND NEEDS

WHY?

The role of the Course Rep is to provide your Course Team and Faculty with information that is representative of the entire student body on your course, not merely individual opinions. As a Course Rep you must identify the issues and needs of your course colleagues.

HOW?

A series of suggestions entitled “Effective Communication with your course colleagues” can be found in your course rep handbook. It gives helpful tips as to how you might identify the issues and needs of students on your course.

It’s all about communication! Remember the sooner you start communicating with class colleagues the more information you will gather.

TASK

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TASK FIVE

REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF
CLASS COLLEAGUES TO HELP
ENSURE THAT THE STUDENT
PERSPECTIVE IS CONSIDERED
IN ALL DECISIONS

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WHY?

Remember as a student you are the expert on the student experience on your course or in your Faculty, so consult with your course colleagues and give feedback to the academic staff.

In life we may find ourselves in minorities - some of us more than others. When representing the views of the entire course cohort it is likely that on some issues you will be in a minority. It's your job to represent your course colleagues views even if you don't necessarily agree with them.

HOW?

If a major decision is being taken in which you feel that there should be greater student involvement in, don't be afraid to say so and ask the Faculty what it can do to ensure consultation with more students. Equally, if you feel you should be involved in decisions, which you are currently not, then don't be afraid to suggest this.

TASK

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TASK SIX

ATTEND AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COURSE/PROGRAMME STAFF- STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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WHY?

Without Course Reps attending and participating in Staff-Student Consultative Committee meetings there is no point in having them. The harsh reality is that academic staff have many other demands on their time - so making the meeting worth their while will be appreciated! Plus why waste your time - students have time constraints too.

HOW?

Try and find out as soon as possible when the meetings are scheduled (Your Course Director or School Office will have details) and keep that time free. It's important any issues or concerns are officially noted during the meeting. SSCC minutes are advanced to other higher level School/ Department Committees and quality assurance processes such as course revalidation.

If it really is impossible for you to attend then speak to the chair beforehand about getting the agenda and papers early so you can provide written comment on them.

TASK

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TASK SEVEN

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**LIAISE WITH YOUR STUDENTS'
UNION AND ATTEND YOUR
STUDENT VOICE FORUM**

WHY?

Your Students' Union can only identify challenges or suggest enhancements around the student learning experience through your feedback. Tell us about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

HOW?

Your Student Voice Forum takes place each semester. This meeting brings together all academic reps to network and discuss current developments around learning and teaching. The Student Voice fora is led by the campus VP and School/Department Reps. Issues raised will then be actioned by the relevant representative with University staff. Outside of this keep in contact with your School/Department as much as possible online or through meet-ups. Your full time officers and Academic Representation Coordinator are also there to support you during the year.

TASK

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TASK EIGHT

**WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
OTHER REPRESENTATIVES ON
ISSUES OF JOINT CONCERN**

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WHY?

There are potentially 900+ Course Reps and 30 School/Department Reps based across all the campuses at the Ulster University. Working with the other reps will allow you to make your case more effectively - remember if there is an issue you have in common the more individuals pressing for change means it is more likely to happen.

HOW?

Arrange to meet other Course Reps on a regular basis, if this is not possible then perhaps meet in the hour before the Staff-Student Consultative Committee to discuss the major issues you wish to raise.

Keep in touch with the School/Department Reps responsible for your School/Department and use our feedback form to keep them updated after SSCC's on the issues being raised or to share what has been working well.

You can use the online discussion forum within the representation area of Blackboard Learn which all reps will have access to, or use the find your rep tool on our website, uus.org to network with other reps.

TASK

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TASK NINE

REFER MAJOR ISSUES AND
INDIVIDUAL CASES TO YOUR
STUDENTS' UNION OFFICERS

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WHY?

As a Course Rep there are some issues (namely, personal , disciplinary, disputes & appeal matters) that you should not become involved with, because you have a limited amount of time and there are other services available that have a core duty to provide guidance, support and advice.

HOW?

If you are approached with such an issue please refer the person to the appropriate service. If you are in doubt about making a referral please contact your VP Academic & Student Affairs who will do so on your behalf.



Visit our website

<https://www.uusu.org/student-voice/your-reps/>

TASK 10

TASK NINE

PROVIDE FEEDBACK
TO YOUR COURSE/
SUBJECT COLLEAGUES
ON THE OUTCOMES OF
MEETINGS YOU ATTEND

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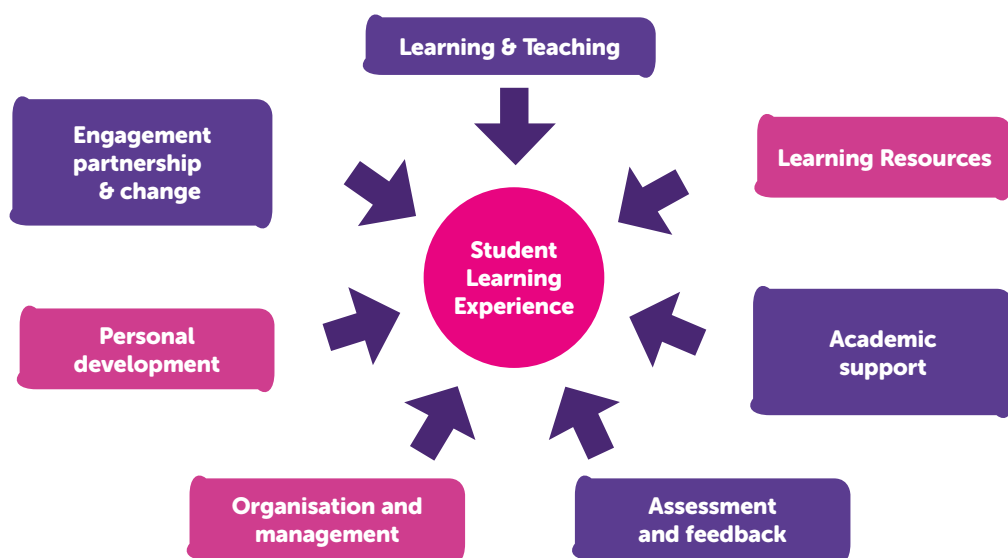
WHY?

So that you can check that class colleagues are happy with the outcomes of the meeting. If they are not then you can go back to the Faculty, or members of the academic staff, and sort out the confusion. Reporting back also means that your colleagues will see the value of the Course Representative system and see that it really can improve the student learning experience.

HOW?

A number of suggested methods of communicating with course colleagues are detailed in the Course Rep Handbook.

Everything around your day to day learning experience will fall into one of these areas:



REMEMBER

Remember students are the experts when it comes to their learning experience

TRAINING EXERCISE

THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Note below things to consider or improvements that could be made in each area of the student learning experience in your course:

Learning & Teaching

Academic Support

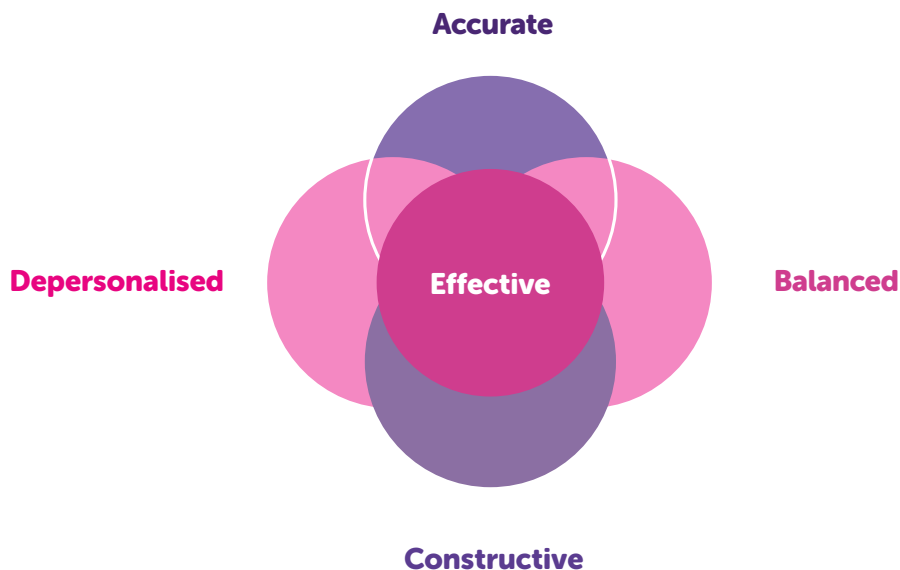
Learning Resources

Assessment & Feedback

Organisation and Management

Personal Development

Engagement, partnership and change



Providing feedback is an essential part of being a course rep but how do you provide it effectively? The A,B,C,D of effective feedback to help you do so. Below we explain each element and how they contribute to providing effective feedback.

Accurate: When commenting on the learning experience, be specific, and provide evidence for what you are saying. Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language. If you have a survey that tells you 67% of people don't like the feedback they receive, don't tell staff that 97% don't like it.

Balanced: Don't just pass on negative comments to staff, even if that is mostly what you are hearing from students. Say positive things too. This helps soften the blow and makes you look more professional.

Constructive: You are not just here to identify the problems, you are also here to help find a solution too. If you raise an issue, make a suggestion at the same time- this also helps you to look professional.

Depersonalised: Even if students think that a member of staff has done something wrong, it's always hard to make or receive personal comments. Try not to mention anyone by name in meetings, talk about the class and the impact on the learning experience. You may want to arrange a specific meeting with other staff to raise issues like this.

TRAINING EXERCISE

YOUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

In this exercise we want to hear about your experience as a student so far this year. Use the boxes below to note down what's been working well, what you would change.

What's working well?

What would you change?

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DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

Using the element you would most like to change develop a solution to this issue.

You will need to think about:

What resources the staff have access to.

- How realistic your solution is.
- How creative your solution is.
- How you plan on getting your solution implemented.
- What is the time frame for implementation?
- Who are you going to speak to?
- How are you going to use the A,B,C,D?

There is space below for your notes.

COMMUNICATION

Look back to Exercise 1 and, in groups, pick one of the elements you like most about your course and one you would like to change. Now think about how you would find out whether or not your fellow classmates agree. There is space below for notes.

ATTENDING STUDENT-STAFF MEETINGS

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Now think what you would do before, during and after your meetings:

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Before:

During:

After:

NOTES

Record the details of people you have met today, or dates that you might need to remember:

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