

# **COURSE REP**

*Quick guide to your role*

**LISTEN**

**REPRESENT**

**COMMUNICATE**

Empowering student opinion  
at Ulster University



**STUDENT  
VOICE**

# FACULTIES & SCHOOLS

## WHERE DO 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 Communication and Media*

### 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 Medicine*
- *School of Nursing and Paramedic Science*
- *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 Engagement Unit*



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# Welcome to #TeamUUSU

## Congratulations, you have been elected to represent the views of you and your classmates!

I would like to take the time to welcome you to Ulster University Students' Union! You are now part of an important network dedicated to promoting inclusion, advocating for change and boosting the sense of belonging.

As a course rep, you represent the collective Student Voice, your role creates a bridge of communication between academic staff, the union and your fellow classmates; this communication creates a strong partnership which ultimately enhances the overall student experience at Ulster.

I personally began my journey at UUSU as a Course Rep in first year of my undergraduate degree, representing Health and Social Care Policy, such aspiration led me to becoming the School Rep for the School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences in both second and third year.

I was met with endless opportunities to meet and engage with different academics throughout the University, but more importantly I got to bring my concepts and ideas to life. It was great to see over the years how engagement amongst my peers improved, as students felt they were not only listened to but understood. I was supported in leading the first ever student led induction within my school and the first ever student led exploration day at Ulster University. This journey played a pivotal role in me running for Vice President of Education!

This handbook will assist you in becoming familiar with your role, providing you with insight on how to advocate for the students on your course as well as providing an overview on how you will not only personally benefit from this role, but professionally too. The Student Voice team and your Student Officers are ready to support you in your role, but this handbook is a significant resource to understand how to navigate any issue which may arise.

If you have any ideas throughout the year, don't hesitate to contact the team, we are more than happy to help turn your ideas into reality!



**Emily Roberts**  
VP Education

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 get involved with our online Students' Union training events and participate in our meetings! This will help you find out about what you are meant to be doing and how to go about it.

Your online 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 how to access our online training sessions. Check your inbox for our emails and bi-weekly news letter with important updates and information on supplementary skill-based training sessions we offer during the year.

TASK

2



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## TASK TWO

IDENTIFY YOURSELF TO  
THE GROUP OF STUDENTS  
YOU REPRESENT

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### 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

3



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## TASK THREE

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

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### 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.

TASK

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## TASK FOUR

IDENTIFY STUDENT  
ISSUES AND NEEDS

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### 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

### 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

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 forum is led by the Academic Rep Coordinator and Faculty 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

# 8



## STUDENT VOICE

# TASK EIGHT

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

### WHY?

There are potentially 800+ 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, [uusuu.org](http://uusuu.org) to network with other reps.

## TASK

# 9



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## TASK NINE

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

### 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 the Advice Bureau who will do so on your behalf.

Visit our website

[www.uusu.org/advice/](http://www.uusu.org/advice/)

TASK

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## TASK TEN

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

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### WHY?

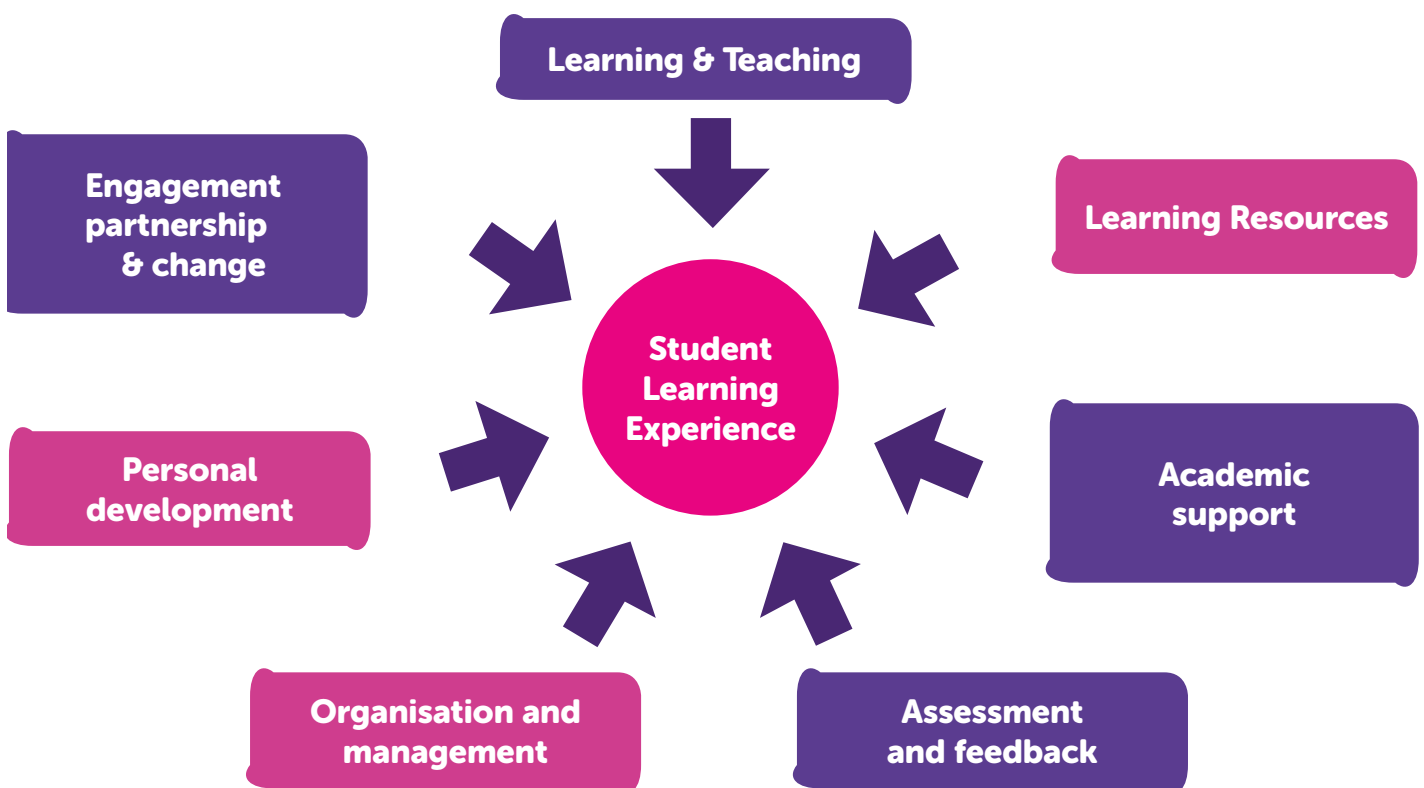
So that you can check that class colleagues are happy with the outcomes of the meeting. If they are not then you can go back to the Faculty, or members of the academic staff, and sort out the confusion. Reporting back also means that your colleagues will see the value of the Course Representative system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

**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**

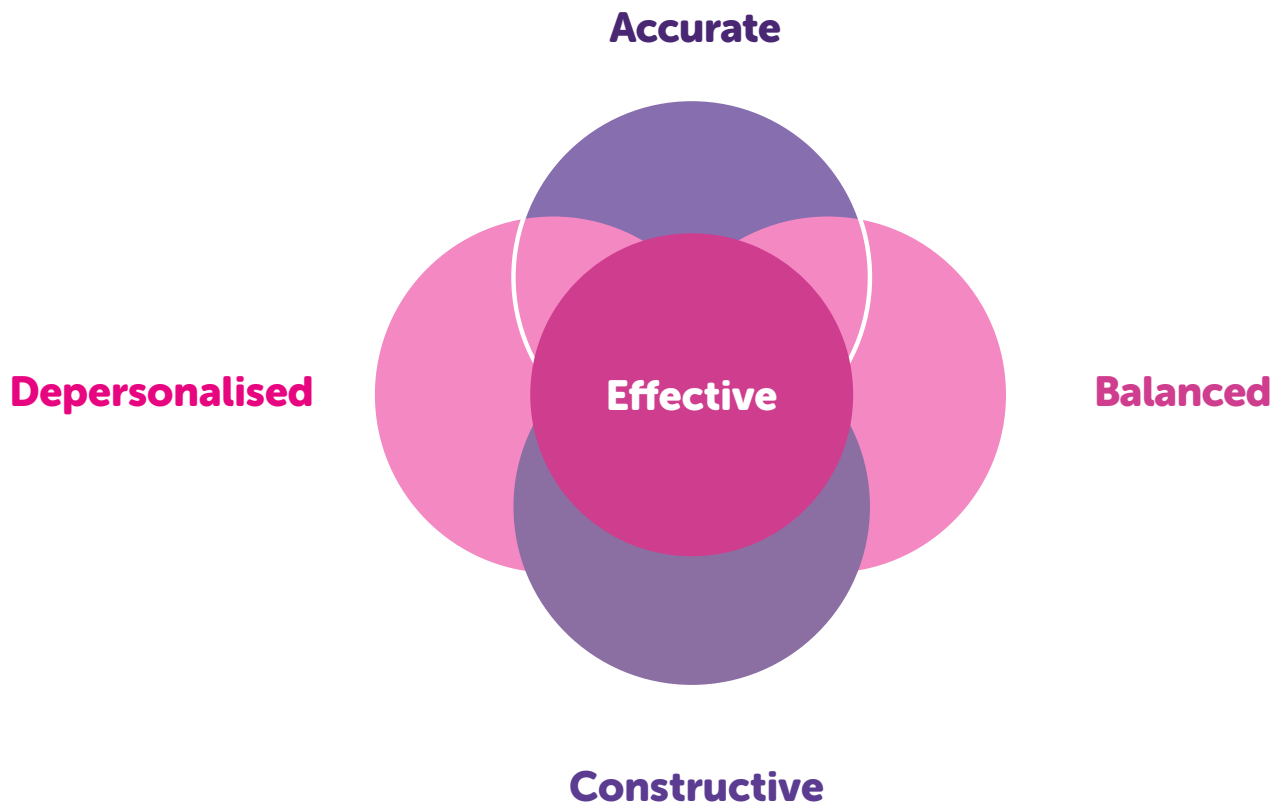
**Learning Resources**

**Assessment & Feedback**

**Organisation & Management**

**Personal Development**

**Engagement, partnership & 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?

# TRAINING EXERCISE



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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:**

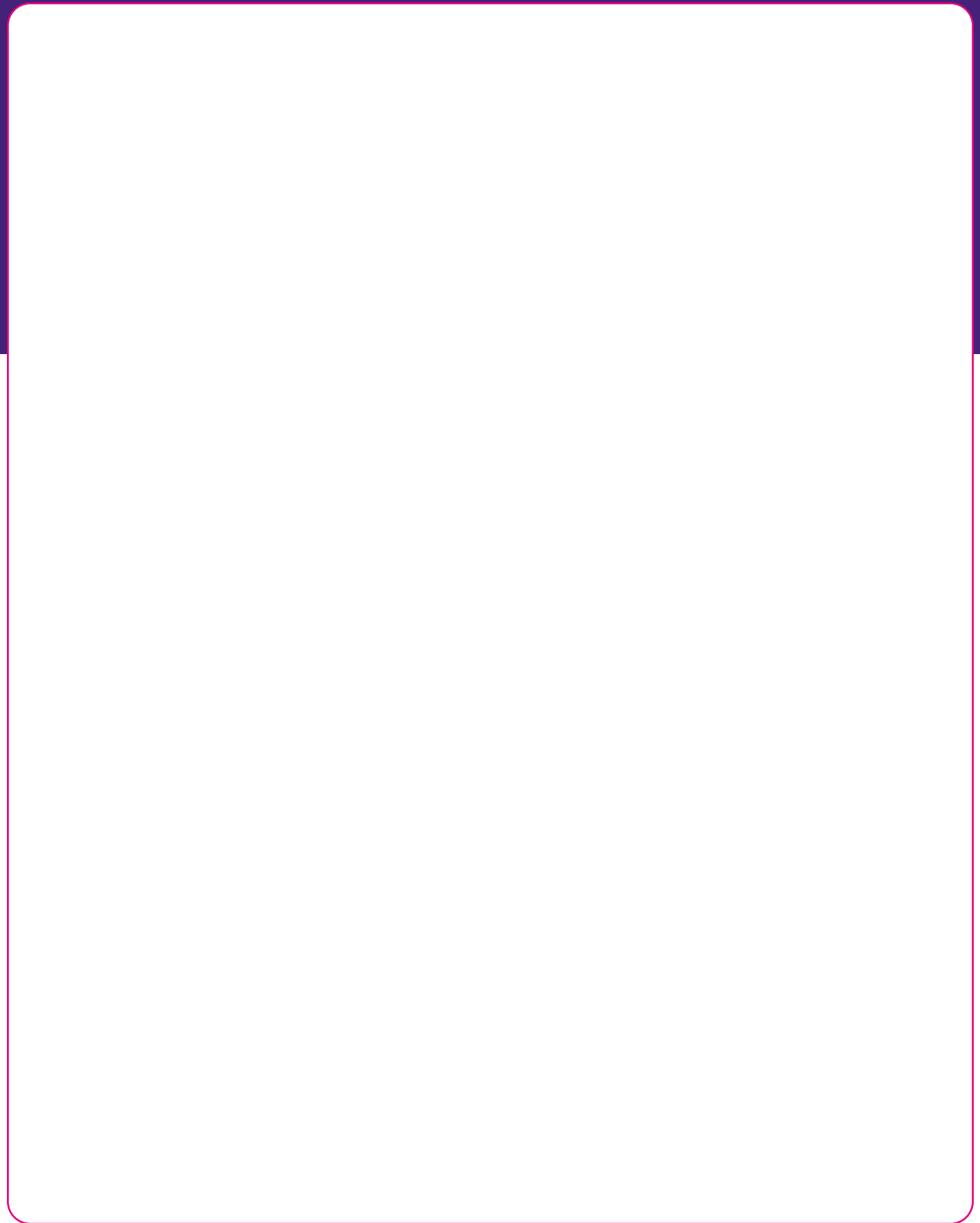
**What resources the staff have access to.**

- 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.**

# COMMUNICATIONS

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

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

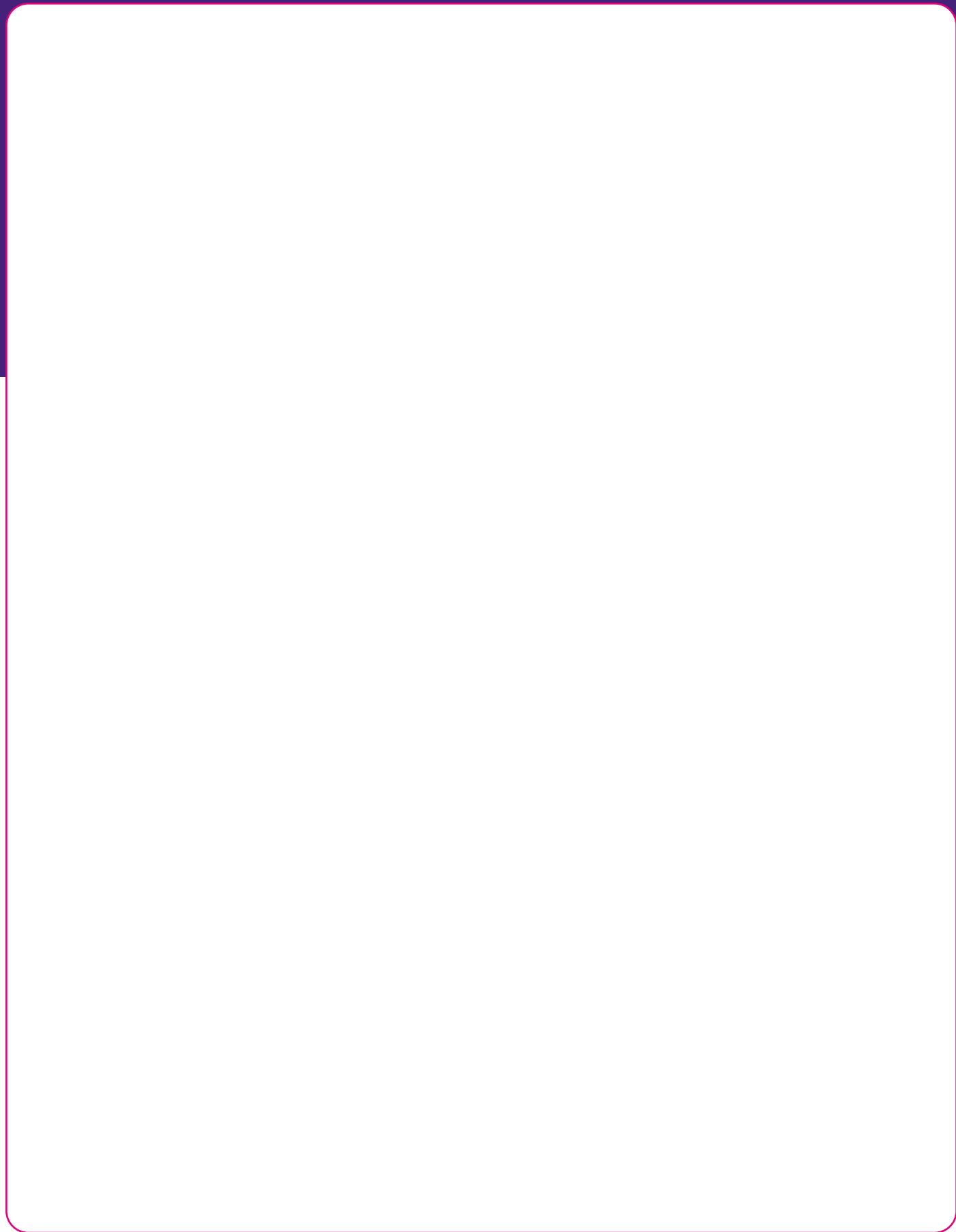
**Before:**

**During:**

**After:**

# NOTES

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



# CONTACTS

## FROM TEAM UUSU

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