Guide to policy and procedures for teaching and learning
Section 4:
Student representation, evaluation and complaints

University of
Reading

Student Representation

Contents

Introduction

1.   Elected student representatives are responsible for representing the best interests of their peers, including the varying needs and perspectives of different students. To enable this, they gather feedback, both positive and negative, from their peers about their university experience. They share this feedback with staff and work in partnership with them to share good practice, explore issues and suggest solutions, and bring about positive change.

2.   Student representation enables students to make a meaningful contribution to quality assurance and to enhancing teaching and learning and the student experience.

3.   Student representation allows the voices of all students to be captured and heard, irrespective of where they are studying, how they are studying (e.g. flexible and distance learning programmes, apprenticeship programmes), their level of study and their discipline.

4.   Through student representation on decision-making bodies at central (University) and local levels, students can directly influence the design, delivery and evaluation of many aspects of their educational experience, including:

- admissions;

- curriculum design;

- programme delivery and organisation;

- programme evaluation and review;

- teaching and learning resources and facilities;

- assessment and feedback;

- student support and guidance.

5.   The Principles of Partnership underpin student representation at the University of Reading. Students and staff work collaboratively towards common goals and meaningful change, and they share ownership and responsibility for the processes and outcomes.

6.   Formal structures for collective student representation work alongside other mechanisms for gathering individual feedback from students, including module and programme evaluation, online/digital feedback tools, student surveys and more informal methods such as conversations outside of lectures.

Student Representation for Foundation, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students

7.   Student representation for Foundation, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students is coordinated by the Students' Union, working in partnership with the University.

8.   Where programmes are delivered at international branch campuses, student representation for those programmes is coordinated either by the local Heads of Section or by the local students' union/students' association, who oversee the elections process and training. As such, there may be local variations in the processes described below, and students can obtain information on these from their local student support centre or students' association.

9.   Students are elected by their peers as Undergraduate or Postgraduate Course Reps or Senior Reps; they are known collectively as Student Reps.

10.   Student Reps work in partnership with University staff and other Student Reps to facilitate positive changes to the student experience on their programme/within their School.

Roles and responsibilities

Course Reps

11.   Where possible, there are two Course Reps per year group, per programme and at least one Course Rep per forty students. Where the programme cohort is small, Course Reps may be elected to represent a group of programmes.

12.   Course Reps are members of Student-Staff Partnership Groups (SSP Groups), where they represent their peers at a programme level, relaying student feedback and reporting any actions taken as a result of this feedback to the student body.

13.   Course Reps attend termly Course Rep Consultations, which are organised and led by Senior Reps and supported by the Students' Union. The Course Reps raise issues and provide feedback to their Senior Reps and to the Students' Union (or to the local students' union/students' association in the case of programmes delivered at international branch campuses), as appropriate.

14.   Some Course Reps are members of Boards of Studies, where they provide a student perspective on the issues discussed and play an active role in quality assurance and enhancement and decision making at a programme level.

15.   Role descriptions for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Reps are available on the <u>Students' Union website</u>.

Senior Reps

16. Senior Reps (from the same school) work together to lead a team of Course Reps within their School. They convene and lead regular Course Rep Consultations and they act as a key liaison between students, the Course Reps, the Students' Union and their School.

17. There are 48 Senior Rep roles; 32 Undergraduate and 16 Postgraduate. Having two Senior UG Reps per School allows the Senior Reps to share the responsibilities of the role and to take a lead on specific areas if they wish to do so. For example, one Senior Rep might choose to focus on diversity and inclusion, and another might focus on sustainability.

18. Senior Reps will normally have prior experience as Course Reps, although this is not a requirement for the role.

19. Senior Reps work in partnership with their School Management Board and will meet with members of the School Management Board on a termly basis. They provide a student perspective on teaching and learning matters and play an active role in quality assurance and enhancement and decision making at a School level.

20. Senior Reps attend termly Senior Rep Consultations, organised by the Students' Union and chaired by the Education Officer of the Students' Union.

21. Role descriptions for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Senior Reps are available on the Students' Union website.

Students' Union and University staff

22. The Education Officer of the Students' Union, with support from the Representation Team within the Students' Union, works in partnership with School Directors of Teaching and Learning (SDTLs) (or their nominees) and other key University staff, to:
    - promote the student representation system and encourage students from the diverse student community to engage;
    - coordinate the elections process and promote the nomination and voting periods;
    - organise and promote training and development opportunities for Student Reps, and provide ongoing support to Student Reps;
    - foster the development of a community of Student Reps;
    - review the effectiveness of student representation;
    - facilitate effective communication between Course Reps, Senior Reps, the Student Officers of the Students' Union and key University stakeholders. This includes ensuring that relevant feedback and suggestions are shared between colleagues in the UK and international branch campuses, particularly in terms of programme development and delivery.

Election of Student Reps

23. Students nominate themselves on the Students' Union website.
24. Student Reps are democratically elected by their peers and hold office for one academic year, although they can run for re-election.
25. Elections for Undergraduate Course Reps, Postgraduate Course Reps and Postgraduate Senior Reps take place at the start of the autumn term. Successful candidates take up post immediately.
26. Elections for Undergraduate Senior Reps take place during the spring term. Successful candidates take up post at the start of the autumn term in the next academic year.
27. Where a position remains unfilled after the elections process, Schools/Departments should draw representatives from the student body as democratically as possible. Students and existing Student Reps should be invited to appoint Student Reps in-house. This could be by a raising of hands in a teaching session and is known as 'co-opting'.
28. The names of Course and Senior Reps are published on the RUSU website.

Training and development

29. The Students' Union coordinates and delivers training for all Student Reps, with input from the NUS and University staff. Where programmes are delivered at international branch campuses, the local students' union/students' association oversees training of Student Reps.
30. Introductory training includes: information on the Students' Union; the role and responsibilities of Student Reps; how to obtain student feedback; sustainability; the RUSU Rep Reward and Recognition scheme and Excellence awards; and University academic structures. Additional skills-based training, such as effective communication skills, campaigning skills and chairing meetings, will be offered throughout the academic year. The Students' Union also offers training to Student Reps who want to apply for the role of Student Panellist on Periodic Review Panels and New Programme Scrutiny Panels.
31. Where Student Reps are unable to attend training sessions in person (for example, students who study off-campus), sessions may be offered virtually.
32. Attendance at training will count towards hours for students enrolled on the RED Award scheme and is also recognised through the RUSU Rep Reward and Recognition scheme.

Student representation structures

33. Student representation operates at three levels: Programme level, School level and University level.
34. There is a direct flow of work and information in both directions across the three levels.

Level	Committee or Board	Other opportunities
University	Council	
	Senate	
	University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) and sub-committees	Various working groups, steering groups[1]
	Student Experience Committee	Equivalent branch campus boards/committees
	University-level student disciplinary and appeals committees	
School	School Management Boards (SMBs)	Branch Campus Academic Boards
		Periodic Review
		Scrutiny Panels
Programme	Boards of Studies	Branch Campus Programme Boards
	Student-Staff Partnership Groups (SSP Groups)	

Programme level

Student-Staff Partnership Groups (SSP Groups)

35. Every School (or Department where appropriate) must operate at least one SSP Group. Schools/Departments may decide, depending on their individual needs and existing structures, to operate more than one SSP Group; for example, a separate SSP Group for each programme or separate SSP Groups for UG and PGT students.

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[1] Working parties and steering groups are normally established to oversee a specific project or area of work and have a fixed timeframe.

36. Where programmes are delivered at an international branch campus, one or more SSP Groups must operate on that campus according to the needs of, and existing structures in, Academic Sections.

37. If a programme is delivered with a partner, an appropriate system should be put in place to ensure students have the opportunity to provide feedback and discuss their programme and experiences. This should feed into relevant structures at both institutions, and it might include a joint SSP Group.

38. Each SSP Group should normally meet at least three times each academic year. Schools/Departments can decide when to schedule these meetings. They should bear in mind the need to report upwards to Boards of Studies and/or other committees.

39. SSP Groups are jointly owned by students and staff. They consider how to make positive changes to the student experience.

40. The primary role of Course Reps on SSP Groups is to represent the views of their peers at a programme level. They relay student feedback (what works well, what could be improved and any ideas for change) and report any actions taken as a result of this feedback to the student body.

41. Topics for discussion will be driven largely by feedback from students. However, SSP Groups will receive and review the relevant External Examiners' Reports and Schools' responses to these Reports each year.

42. A member of staff from the relevant Support Centre/Henley Dean's Office is responsible for taking the Minutes of SSP Group meetings to ensure that a formal record is made and stored. This must include a list of agreed actions from each meeting.

43. Minutes will be sent to all SSP Group members within two weeks of each meeting, and should also be sent to the Representation Team in the Students' Union. They will also be made available to all students on the relevant programme(s) via Blackboard (or other relevant VLE). In addition, each SSP Group will decide how a short summary of the key outcomes of each meeting and progress on any actions agreed will be communicated to the wider student body.

44. SSP Groups report up to the relevant Board of Studies. This enables issues to be raised and discussed at the appropriate level, and common themes that emerge across different programmes to be identified and explored.

45. In the case of programmes delivered at an international branch campus, the SSP Group(s) report up to the relevant Branch Campus Programme Board. Relevant feedback and discussions, for example discussions relating to programme content, will also be reported back to the relevant Board of Studies in the UK.

46. Please refer to the Guidance on SSP Groups for more details about the operation of SSP Groups, including a suggested membership list, a list of suggested topics for discussion and some case studies illustrating good practice.

Boards of Studies (BoS)

47. All Boards of Studies (BoS) should have one or more Course Reps as members. In the case of programmes delivered at international branch campuses, Branch Campus Programme Boards will include two Student Reps as members.

48. Senior Reps have a 'standing invitation' to Boards of Studies but are not expected to attend meetings on a regular basis.

49. Student members provide a student perspective on the issues discussed, and they work in partnership with staff to contribute to the design, development and delivery of the curriculum. They contribute to the programme reflection process, which feeds into the School Teaching Enhancement Action Plan, and can provide immediate feedback from a student's perspective on ideas and suggestions under discussion by the Board. Student members can also raise student feedback that has already been raised elsewhere (for example, at the SSP Group) but has not been addressed.

50. Any discussions about, and actions taken as a result of, reports from SSP Groups will be reported back to the next SSP Group meeting (or directly to Course Reps where a swift response is appropriate).

51. Further details about the key responsibilities of BoS and of Branch Campus Programme Boards, including a suggested membership, are available in the <u>Quality management and enhancement processes at the University of Reading</u>.

School level

School Management Boards and School Action Planning Process

52. Undergraduate and Postgraduate Senior Reps work in partnership with School Management Boards to drive quality assurance and enhancement of teaching and learning within the School.

53. Senior Reps should meet with relevant senior School staff at least once per term. Schools can decide when to schedule these meetings and the format they will take, depending on their individual needs and existing structures. For example, an SDTL could meet for informal 'coffee and cake' meetings with Senior Reps, or Senior Reps might be invited to attend (part of) a School Management Board meeting once each term.

54. At these meetings, Senior Reps can provide immediate feedback from a student's perspective on ideas and suggestions. They can also raise student feedback that has already been raised elsewhere (for example, at the SSP Group and BoS) which requires further consideration at School level.

55. Any discussions in relation to, and any actions taken as a result of, reports from BoS and SSP Groups should be reported back to those groups as appropriate.

56. In addition to the termly meetings, towards the end of the Summer Term and/or during the Summer, Senior Reps should be encouraged to contribute to the School Teaching Enhancement Action Planning Process. Schools will facilitate

their contributions through a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings and asynchronous opportunities e.g. electronic discussion boards. In this way, Senior Reps can help to shape their Schools' Teaching and Learning and Student Experience priorities and supporting activities for the coming year.

57. Where programmes are delivered at an international branch campus, the Branch Campus Academic Board should include two Student Reps as members.

58. Details about the core functions and membership of Branch Campus Academic Boards can be found in the University's policy Quality management and enhancement processes at the University of Reading.

Periodic Review of Programmes and New Programme Scrutiny Panels

59. As part of the six-yearly Periodic Review process, Student Reps in the subject area under review are invited to consult with their peers and to prepare a Student Submission, which is considered by a Periodic Review Panel. Periodic Review Panels will also meet with a group of students and recent graduates from the subject area under review. Periodic Review Panels include a student member who is either a Student Rep from a different discipline or a Student Officer of the Students' Union. The involvement of a range of students ensures that the outcomes of Periodic Reviews are informed by the student voice and it encourages shared responsibility for the outcomes of the process. Further details about student participation in Periodic Review are included in the Requirements for the Periodic Review of Programmes.

60. Scrutiny Panels appointed to consider new programme proposals include a student member, who is either a Student Rep from outside the proposing School or a Student Officer of the Students' Union. The student member works in partnership with internal and external academic staff to shape the quality of the curriculum. Further details relating to student participation in Scrutiny Panels are included in the Programme Lifecycle Policies.

University level

61. Student Officers of the Students' Union are elected by a cross campus ballot annually in the Spring Term. Details of the roles and responsibilities of the Student Officers are available on the Students' Union website.

62. All of the Student Officers and five Senior Reps, one of whom must be a postgraduate student, are members of the University Senate. The Students' Union agrees with the elected Senior Reps who will sit on Senate.

63. Student Officers are members of a broad range of other University-level committees, including the Council, the Student Experience Committee, and UBTLSE and its Sub-Committees. They are included in the membership of all University-level student disciplinary and appeals committees.

64. Student Officers and Student Reps are also included, where appropriate, in a range of University working groups and steering groups which are established from time to time.

65. Further details of University-level committees are available in the Committee List, which is available on the Governance Zone webpage. Also available on this webpage is the Students' Union Code of Practice. The Students' Union Constitution is available at: https://www.rusu.co.uk/your-union/about-rusu/how-rusu-works/.

Postgraduate Research Student Representation

66. Student representation for postgraduate research (PGR) students is coordinated by the Graduate School. It is structured in a similar way to student representation at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level.

67. PGR students who take on a representative role are known as PGR Reps.

Level	Committee or Board	Other opportunities
University	University Board for Research & Innovation (UBRI)	Various working groups, steering groups
	Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies	
	Student Experience Committee	
	Research Ethics Committee	
Graduate School	PGR Representatives Forum	
School	School/Department PGR Committee Meetings	

School level

68.   Each School/Department has a PGR Rep who engages and communicates with all PGR students within their School/Department and acts as a point of contact for all PGR student issues.

69.   Schools/Departments are encouraged to ensure that PGR Reps are appointed in a fair and transparent way. Wherever possible, they should be elected by their peers.

70.   PGR Reps attend School/Department PGR Committee meetings. If these do not take place due to the structure of the School/Department, then they attend the School Research Committee and any other forum in which PGR student issues are under discussion.

71.   The Graduate School has developed guidance on the expectations that accompany the role, which is issued to all PGR Student Representatives.

University level

72.   PGR Reps are invited to attend the PGR Representatives Forum twice a year. The Forum serves as an important conduit for the student voice and a sounding board for PGR-related developments.

73.   The Postgraduate Research Students' Part-time Officer and/or other Student Officers (e.g. the Education Officer or Diversity Officer) of the Students' Union have a standing invitation to the Forum. They are then able to represent the PGR student voice at University level committees/boards.

74.   The PGR Representatives Forum reports to the Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies.

75.   There is PGR student representation on the Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies. The Students' Union is also asked to provide reports/updates to the Committee on PGR-related areas. A representative of the Students' Union is included in the membership of the University Board for Research & Innovation.

Version control

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