

# **ACADEMIC REP HANDBOOK**

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**A GUIDE FOR ACADEMIC REPS**

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# HELLO FROM SHREY

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**Hey, I'm Shrey,  
your Vice President Education  
at the Students' Union!**

A prodigious adventure awaits you, welcome to being the vocal cords of students. Academic representation is essentially climatic to improving every student's experience by delivering them thoughtfully tailored educational experiences.

All of us will have the opportunity to make tangible impact on teaching and learning at Royal Holloway. Past achievements of reps have included extending coursework deadlines, changing assessment methods and organising lectures from external academics. Student feedback has never been more important as we transition back into an in-person university experience and I will ensure we put student voices at the centre of decisive discussions.

As rewarding as actively representing your peers will be, becoming an academic rep also presents a great opportunity for your own professional development. We have exciting activities upcoming as part of our Rep Development Programme; we'll cover topics such as what to expect from a typical formal meeting, current Higher Education news and careers/employability support.

I'd love to converse about your journey and share my ideas and plans for the year with you. If you have any thoughts on how to improve students' education at Royal Holloway, just get in touch via email ([VPEducation@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:VPEducation@su.rhul.ac.uk)) and follow me on Instagram for updates ([@RHSUEducation](https://www.instagram.com/RHSUEducation)). If you ever have any questions, the Students' Union is always here to support you. I'm super excited to work alongside you all this year!

**Shrijeet Shrey**  
**VP EDUCATION**

# AN INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

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Academic representation happens in lots of places. Whether it's attending meetings, listening and engaging in student-run academic seminars, or chatting informally with a member of staff, this all influences and shapes your education. As an academic rep, you'll be at the forefront of a lot of change, so we want to prepare you as best we can to ensure you, and by proxy your classmates, get a lot out of the role.

This handbook will take you through the basics of each role, give you some tips to help you secure the changes you want and introduce you to a range of different spaces where you can exert your influence. But this isn't the only place for you to learn about your role - we have a whole host of additional content available online, and you can also pop in and see the team if you have any specific questions.

## >> YOUR SLICE OF THE INTERNET

Head to the academic rep hub on our website, which we'll be updating with resources, briefings, training and much more throughout the year, as well as the monthly Academic Rep Newsletter.

It's also where you can tell us what you've been up to as a rep so we can shout about it and just maybe, award you Rep of the Month! Just head to the link below to check it out.

**[su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps](https://su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps)**

## >> WANT TO GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Want to drive change and make a difference by being the voice of students on campus? Anyone can stand to be elected for one of our full-time, paid sabbatical officer roles, including you. We also elect part-time volunteer roles too!

Elections will be opening up in January with voting taking place in Spring Term – keep an eye out for more info, or pop in to have a chat with any of our current officers.

**[su.rhul.ac.uk/elections](https://su.rhul.ac.uk/elections)**

## >> RHSU KEY CONTACTS

**Shrijeet Shrey (VP Education)** [vpeducation@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:vpeducation@su.rhul.ac.uk)

**Lauryn Fleming (Academic Communities Coordinator)** [lauryn.fleming@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:lauryn.fleming@su.rhul.ac.uk)

**Phillip Dowler (Student Voice Manager)** [phillip.dowler@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:phillip.dowler@su.rhul.ac.uk)

# ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY

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## It's going to be another big year, and we can't wait to get started!

Although last year presented some major challenges for us all, it was still a really great year for academic representation and we are working to ensure that we continue to provide you with the best experience possible in 2022/23.

This academic year, we're bringing back our fun online training and fantastic communications platform through Microsoft Teams to make communication with staff and students easier than ever before. We're also making some improvements to our Academic Representation system by introducing specialisms. These are our way of empowering students from diverse backgrounds to give a different perspective through their lived experience which will help to create positive change. Students will also be able to become a joint honours rep and we are working closely with the University to make sure joint honours students' experience is the best it can be.

For staff, we are continuing to tighten our communications through regular contact and updates from the Students' Union, as well as holding semi-regular networking sessions which gives our key contacts the chance to meet and share best practice.

We've got big plans for things this year and we know that together, we'll make it a huge success. Working collectively, we will ensure that all students' academic interests are represented effectively as we look to achieve our wider aim of making student life better at Royal Holloway.

## Our Partnership Agreement

Academic representation is governed by a Partnership Agreement, signed by both the Students' Union and College, which sits within the Memorandum of Cooperation (that basically, allows the SU to do the stuff it does).

The Partnership Agreement, which can be found on the rep hub on our website, aims to ensure a strong understanding between the Students' Union and the University regarding the expected roles of both parties within academic representation. The agreement also includes proposed roles and responsibilities for all levels of academic representatives.

It is highly recommended that you read through the agreement before you engage in the system at the start of the term, and it will be included in the first Staff-Student Committee (SSC) of the year.

# WHAT IS ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION?

## It's pretty simple, really.

The definition we've agreed with the College, which nicely aligns with the new UK Code for Quality Assurance, is as follows:

**“The purpose of academic representation is to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students at Royal Holloway University and engages students as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their learning.”**

We've also got a set of principles that sit underneath our definition to ensure that academic representation can add value above and beyond the other forms of student feedback seen at Royal Holloway.

Representatives are engaged as partners in the co-creation of developments and solutions to problems. The relationship should be transformational rather than transactional, which will lead to greater buy-in from the student body.

Representatives are involved in an ongoing dialogue about opportunities (and challenges) that provide the chance to educate and build understanding about competing interests, multiple demands on resources and/or the complexity of particular issues.

Representatives are utilised to foster and build that understanding among the wider student body.

Representatives are willing and able to build pressure and enhance accountability where problems aren't resolved effectively – using all of their influence and access to power structures to create change that will benefit their peers.

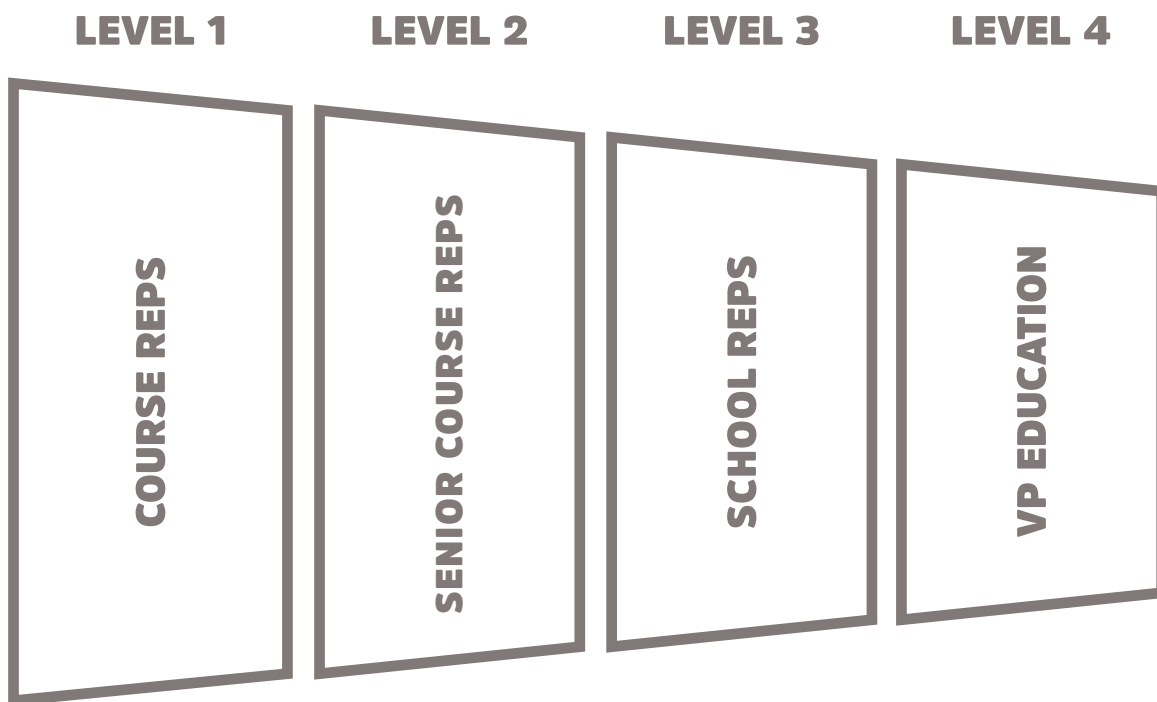
Representatives are able to provide context surrounding issues and problems, helping to establish the depth of feelings about certain issues. Sometimes it's right to prioritise the issue that affects a small number of peers deeply rather than one that affects the majority to a lesser extent.

Representative roles provide outstanding leadership and development opportunities. For some students, this will be their first opportunity to engage in formal meetings, read agendas and minutes, and to seek to influence policy decisions. These positions can help to develop leadership and communication skills as well as encourage active citizenship.

You'll see later on how everyone has a part to play to ensure that these principles are met.

# THE ROLES

**Academic representation has four levels: Course Reps, Senior Course Reps, School Reps and the VP Education. Each level feeds into the one above it, and vice versa, to ensure a constant flow of information from one end of campus to the other. It works a little bit like this:**



## >> COURSE REPS

Course reps are the backbone of academic representation - we just couldn't do anything without them! As the largest group of reps, they're tasked with gathering feedback from students, doing the on-the-ground investigative work to make change at a module/programme level. In previous years, reps have done all sorts, from getting assessment due dates moved to having more staff resources put into a module so everyone interested could take it - and this just scratches the surface.

### **Course reps should have:**

- Excellent communication skills and an ability to listen and represent views effectively.
- A willingness to learn and build a good understanding of education policy issues.
- A commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion and willingness to proactively seek out voices that may be underrepresented.

Course reps should regularly be reaching out to all the students they represent, and engage with underrepresented groups to ensure their voices are heard. Preparation for Staff-Student Committees (more on that later) is crucial to the effectiveness of course reps and ensures that you'll head into the meeting with a well-developed and balanced argument for change. Course reps should also be checking in with their senior course reps regularly to ensure information is kept up to date.

## >> SENIOR COURSE REPS

Overseeing the course reps within a department, senior course reps regularly meet with and gather feedback from course reps. They exercise influence at a department level, contributing to Periodic Departmental Reviews and the Annual Reviews. They are also the Chair of the SSC (at their level of study i.e. undergraduate or postgraduate), working with key contacts to develop agendas and papers, and ensuring that meetings are constructive and effective.

### Senior course reps should have:

- Excellent communication skills and an ability to listen and represent views effectively.
- A basic understanding of education policy issues and willingness to learn more.
- A commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion, and willingness to proactively seek out voices that may be underrepresented.
- Experience of leading others, either at Royal Holloway or elsewhere.

**Senior course reps should be engaging with their course reps at least once a fortnight and, in turn, meeting with their school rep once a month, ensuring consistent information flow across all levels of representation.**

## >> SCHOOL REPS

School reps are the highest level of voluntary posts within the academic representation structure. There is one post per school, and they are tasked with ensuring the views of the students are represented at school level meetings. They work closely with senior course reps within their school and report up to the VP Education.

### School reps should have:

- Excellent communication skills and an ability to listen and represent views effectively.
- A basic understanding of education policy issues and willingness to learn more.
- A commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion, and willingness to proactively seek out voices that are underrepresented.
- Experience of leading others, either at Royal

Holloway or elsewhere.

- Ability to motivate and inspire other reps and support them to thrive.

School reps should be engaging with the VP Education weekly and meeting with their senior course reps at least once a fortnight, ensuring consistent information flow across all levels of representation.

## >> VP EDUCATION

The VP Education is the highest level of academic representation and operates at College level.

**Elected by the student body in our annual sabbatical officer elections, the responsibilities of the VP Education are outlined in the Union's constitution as:**

- Being overall responsible for matters relating to education, teaching quality and the learner experience.
- Being responsible for developing the College's academic representation structure, embedding it within the Students' Union's own democratic structures.
- Attending Academic Board and, as appropriate, other academic committees of the College.

This ultimately means that they are the person ensuring that your department is using the academic representation system effectively. They are who you should go to if you want to discuss anything related to your education at Royal Holloway.

You can see the role descriptions for each representative level by checking out the rep hub on our website.

[su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps](https://su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps)



## >> COLLECTIVES

Making sure that students feel valued and represented during their time at Royal Holloway is one of our top priorities, which is where our Collectives come in. They help to give underrepresented groups a platform to have their voices heard on campus and beyond.

As well as organising activities, events and campaigns, Collectives work with the SU to secure the general interests and rights of students. Joining any of our Collectives is completely free and even if you don't define into the group you can register as a supporter to take part in their activities.

- LGBT
- International
- Women
- Commuting
- BAME
- Disabled
- Postgraduate Research (PGR)

### How does this work with academic representation?

The PGR Collective contributes to the academic representation of their cohort on a School level and on a College level. The Collective convenors accompany both the VP Education and President to some College Committees.

The Collectives can also provide valuable insight into some areas that may arise within academic representation, such as academic issues affecting commuting students. Therefore, they are also there to work alongside you as academic reps in order to represent the student body.

Head to our website to check out what they're up to and get involved!

[su.rhul.ac.uk/collectives](https://su.rhul.ac.uk/collectives)

# VOICE, FEEDBACK, DIALOGUE

**What's the difference? You'll hear the terms voice, feedback and dialogue quite often – it's becoming regular “student engagement” jargon. But what do they actually mean, and how do they apply to academic representation?**

## >> VOICE

We talk about student voice a lot. To us, voice simply means the views of the students as a collective. Sometimes these might be contradictory, but it's our job (and yours) to represent them to the decision makers to allow them to make the best decisions possible.

## >> FEEDBACK

Feedback is a term you'll probably know a lot about. According to the College's feedback policy, feedback can take various forms (be it written, verbal, audio, in person etc.), should be clear about performance and should be constructive in nature. This means that any bit of information you receive that is, related to the academic experience, should be considered feedback which, in itself, contributes to the student voice.

## >> DIALOGUE

Dialogue is the conversation. This could be chatting to students and gathering feedback, it could be keeping lecturers and/or key contacts in the loop with your ideas, and it could even be letting the Students' Union know how you're going about making change in your department through Your Impact.

These actions are pretty good individually, but they are at their most effective when added together.

# HOW TO CREATE CHANGE

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## Power and influence, gathering feedback, reporting structures.

As an academic representative, there is an expectation that you're going to be creating change, whether it be big or small.

In the past, reps have:

- Sent emails to remind lecturers to put slides and/or lecture notes on Moodle, helping fellow classmates revise, write essays and/or prepare for the next set of lectures or seminars.
- Lobbied their department to put more resource into a module so everyone who was interested was able to take it.
- Updated resources within a computer lab, ensuring they are able to complete their work with working resources.
- Worked with the Students' Union and academic staff to build a new feedback policy that sets out exactly what students should be getting, and also lets students know what they should do with feedback.
- Proposed, and had accepted, a new coversheet for assessments which will help students know how to improve in relation to the marking scheme.

But how did they do this? What is the process of creating change? The honest answer is this: it totally depends on the situation. Sometimes, you could tell your key contact that students are finding the coversheet for essays confusing and they'll change it without any discussion. Or, you could say that you want a more diverse offering of modules, which will need evidence, ideas and teamwork to make happen.

However, there are some things that will always help when you're trying to create change, and they aren't just applicable within an academic setting - they can be used anywhere.



## 1. IDEAS

**It all starts with an idea. Maybe you've noticed something working really well in a lecture, or there's someone in the department who gives the best feedback, and you want it to occur more often. It could be that a group of students want something done about assignment hand-in processes, and you get together to come up with a new process.**

Numbers aren't important. You could be moving a seminar time for the three commuting students who can't make a lecture at 9am because the M25 has become a car park, meaning that they don't drop out of that course or, worse, university altogether. So don't be put off by ideas with seemingly minimal impact; changing the experience of three students is just as important as changing the experience for an entire cohort.

If in doubt, ask yourself: why have I had this idea? If the answer is "because it is the right thing for this group of students," then you're definitely doing it for the right reasons!

## 2. EVIDENCE

**Once you get an idea, you'll need to test it to ensure that it would be a good change for those affected.**

This doesn't necessarily mean you need to know all the details – sometimes it's good to have a rough idea and build the detail with feedback from the relevant stakeholders.

Evidence is key to ensuring change can happen. Walking into a room with hard facts is always better than the standard "some people think...". Being able to list off how many people agree, disagree or want change will make anyone sit up and listen.



### >> GATHERING EVIDENCE

There are tons of ways to gather evidence, and they all have their pros and cons. Here are the main ones that you can get your hands on easily:

	PROS	CONS
<b>SURVEYS</b>	Can hold information from a lot of people; open text comments give great insight.	Timing is key – avoid using surveys in Spring Term as there is the possibility of overload.
<b>POLLS</b>	Easy for people to fill in; great for a single question; open text comments on some platforms; quick way to gather feedback.	Not good for a complex issue; might not be able to include an open text comment.
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Most people have it, so it's a sure-fire way to get in contact with the people you represent; create videos, take photos, post polls.	Not everyone has it, so it's best to always supplement your social media stuff with a good old-fashioned email.
<b>FEEDBACK BOX</b>	People can drop information in it whenever they want; can be moved to key points dependent on where traffic is.	If anonymous, you won't be able to let the specific person know what you've done.
<b>TALKING TO PEOPLE</b>	You'll hopefully talk to people regularly anyway; getting a small groups of students together in a room to discuss a common or collective issue or idea will give you detailed feedback. You'll also be able to further probe comments easily.	You may need to ask probing questions, such as "how did you find that lecture?" or "did you get X essay back?" to get a good response.
<b>GET CREATIVE</b>	Give out free stuff; organise a conversation with one of the student media outlets; get as creative as you want!	Remember, some stuff will cost money, so get in touch with your key contact and/or the SU before you plan on splashing the cash!

## 3. PLAN

**The final and most important stage of creating change: planning. Yes, it's not glamorous but it's crucial to the success of any stage. You should ask yourself the following questions:**

### **What is my idea?**

You should know exactly what your idea is, and what you want to do to get there.

### **Why am I actioning this idea?**

Just as important as knowing what your idea is, being able to answer why will make your campaign even stronger.

### **Who does it affect?**

Is it commuting students? Mature students? Knowing your audience is crucial.

### **When do I want to do it?**

Timing is key. Do you want to run a survey when the University are running one? Will the impact be felt in time?

### **Who do I want to get involved?**

Who will be helping you to make the change? The other reps in your department? The school rep? A staff member?

### **Who is going to be doing the resulting work?**

Will your department have to make big changes to a course? Or is it something that the Students' Union needs to do?

### **Is there a cost?**

Cost doesn't just mean money. What resources do you need? How much time does anyone involved need to put into the project?

If in doubt, contact Lauryn Fleming, our Academic Communities Coordinator, who will be able to help.

## **DON'T FORGET TO TELL US!**

We love hearing about what you get up to, and there's a simple process to letting us know:

- 1. Head to the academic rep hub on our website.**
- 2. Hit the 'Your Impact' button.**
- 3. Fill out the form.**
- 4. Celebrate doing some great stuff!**

We want to hear about everything! Whether that's about the email you sent to a lecturer, a quick conversation in a corridor, or the start of a long-term conversation – anything you get on the agenda is important, and you should be recognised for it! We'll collate these and write regular Rep Impact Updates for the website to let students know how great you are, and we may even feature some in the Academic Rep Newsletter.

## **CLOSING THE FEEDBACK LOOP**

Within your role, communication is key, especially once you've done something great. This is called closing the feedback loop, and you can think of it as a nice little cycle.

By doing this once, the cycle will continue to go round, as the more you do, the more people will want to talk to you! How do you ensure students see the end result of their feedback?

You can work with your department to do this. They might be able to send out emails on your behalf, letting students know what you've done, or they might be able to put it on their social media (you can use your own too, if you wish).

And, most importantly, you should let us know so we can tell as many people as possible via our website and social media!

# PLATFORMS FOR REPRESENTATION

**Want to make change? There are several places you can turn to.**

## >> SSC GUIDANCE

Staff-Student Committees (SSC) are just one platform aimed at achieving positive change, which improves the educational experience for you and your peers. They also seek to engage you as course reps in the development, assurance and enhancement of your learning. To ensure that there is consistency and efficacy across all departments, a new Terms of Reference for the committee has been created:

- 1.0 To close the feedback loop within departments.**
- 1.1 To review actions from previous meetings and escalating any outstanding actions as necessary.**
- 1.2 To track the development of actions in the department's Annual Review.**
- 2.0 To facilitate effective communications.**
- 2.1 To receive a verbal update from the department which reflects on previous weeks as well as looking ahead to forthcoming weeks. It may include updates on resources, assessment and feedback, learning and teaching methods, activity updates, opportunities, and any wider College information.**
- 2.2 To receive a verbal update collated by the senior course reps. It may include positive feedback on what is working well, resource issues, assessment and feedback, learning and teaching methods.**
- 3.0 To secure positive change.**
- 3.1 To provide an explicit opportunity for staff and students to make suggestions for improvement to departmental life.**

Chaired by the senior course reps (for their level of study), the meeting should have all course reps and several key members of staff in the room. Reps will have the opportunity to provide a report of the good parts and areas for improvement across the degree programmes, and departments will be able to update you on any developments that have been happening behind the scenes. This meeting is also the place to look at more strategic elements like curriculum building or career development opportunities, and should look at creating lasting impact through opportunities for both sets of members to collaborate.

One word of advice on SSCs: please try to avoid using them as a dumping ground for small gripes as it risks losing its platform as a place of influence. Remember that these meetings provide great opportunities for you to provide positive feedback, as well as enabling you to think big about suggestions for change and improvement.

## >> EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

Education Executive forms part of our democratic structure. Alongside the Wellbeing, Community and Diversity, and Societies, Sports & Opportunities Executives, it is designed for students to raise thoughts and ideas related to the remit of each Executive, through its elected representatives.

The Executives are chaired by a sabbatical officer and consist of student leaders from various areas. For example, the Education Executive is chaired by the VP Education, and is comprised of the President and VP Wellbeing and Diversity, one representative from each School, the PGR Collective, the Commuting Collective, and the postgraduate taught (PGT) community. Membership of Education Executive is part of these student leaders' roles. If you'd like to get involved in setting the agenda, you can talk to your school rep, and look out for updates on the SU website.

Education Executive provides a brilliant opportunity for student representatives to network, talk about key themes within higher education, create actions and, ultimately, change.

### In previous years, we have:

- Helped the library to create 120 more study spaces, increasing the signage in the silent study space, and re-recruiting the Study Space Assistant to ensure bags weren't being left for longer than 45 minutes.
- Had direct input into the Academic Representation Review to better the provision for reps.
- Approved new role descriptions for course and senior course representatives.

## >> ACADEMIC SOCIETIES

Academic societies are a great network to meet likeminded people and have some fun while you're at it! From organising debates and guest speakers, to some having a place on your SSC, societies open

up many opportunities for you to engage with a wider spread of people within your department.

Work with the academic society within your department to see whether there is a space where you can ask their members questions about their experiences during their degree. Or maybe you could collaborate with them to run an event?

As a Union, we're also going to be working on the relationship between academic societies and academic representation to strengthen the role societies play within the system. If you're interested, drop [voice@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:voice@su.rhul.ac.uk) a line and we'll get back to you!

## >> CURRICULUM CONSULTANTS

This voluntary position puts reps on the final validation panel before a new course/module or degree programme is put out into the big, wide world. Your VP Education will be in touch when a validation panel is coming up.

## >> PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS

Periodic Departmental Reviews, or PDRs for short, happen every year and can either be done in specific departments or across the institution, focusing on a specific theme (like assessment and feedback). They involve reading through all of the paperwork produced throughout the period of time since the previous PDR, and deciding areas for improvement, places for commendation and action plans for the coming years. They'll be scrutinised by a panel of internal and external members, including the VP Education.

The senior course rep will be asked to write a report for the panel, with input from course reps as a student submission, and reps should also be invited to have a chat with the panel too.

# EXPECTATIONS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**The expectations for each level of academic representation are clearly outlined in the role descriptions (Appendix A) that you should have seen when you signed up or were elected.**

They are also available on the academic rep hub on our website. You should refer to the 'Responsibilities and Duties' section for the elements we expect you to undertake.

In return, it's only right that you should have expectations of the Students' Union. As part of undertaking the role of an academic rep, you'll gain a myriad of different skills that will prepare you for various elements of life post-graduation by just doing the bare minimum that we require. But we want to provide you with even more opportunities to boost your skills, and create some change while you're at it! So we're developing a year-round plan full of training activities that you can attend in order to build up your skills.

## OCTOBER

**Academic Representation and navigating a typical meeting.**

This year, we have made some changes to Academic Representation at Royal Holloway. In this session, we will explain the reasons behind the changes and how this might impact you in your role this year. While this session is open to all academic reps, it will be tailored towards senior course reps to prepare you for the chairing responsibilities of meetings throughout the year and how to navigate a typical meeting.

## NOVEMBER

**Mental Health Awareness.**

Join us for a discussion around mental wellbeing, common signs and symptoms of mental illness, and how to help your friends who may be struggling. This training will give you practical skills and confidence to have open conversations about mental health, and set boundaries while supporting others. Please note this training includes discussion of specific mental health diagnoses and symptoms but we have an open-door policy so you can leave at any time with no questions asked.

## DECEMBER

**Making the most of student feedback.**

More information on this session to follow in due course.

## JANUARY

**Current news in Higher Education.**

This workshop will give you a chance to explore some of the current policies and headlines in Higher Education. You will have the chance to start up conversations about how these might impact you as reps and consider possible solutions to tackle them in future.

## FEBRUARY

**Understanding your academic rights at RHUL.**

The Students' Union is here to represent your academic interests and improve your education. A key part of this relies on you, as students, being aware of your rights and what you should expect from your academic experience. Join this session with our Advice Centre to hear more and understand your academic rights as students at Royal Holloway.

## APRIL/MAY

**Careers and Employability workshop.**

This session will encourage you to reflect on the skills you gained as a rep and how they will help you when looking for work opportunities. You will learn more about the strategies you can use to increase your chances of securing a job through covering topics such as LinkedIn, networking and reaching out to employers directly.

### Let us know!

If you have any suggestions for other workshops that may be beneficial to you, we'd love to hear from you.

# RECOGNITION

## We know you do great things and now, you're going to get rewarded for it!

We know you do great stuff as a rep and we want to make sure we shout about it! Every month we will be publishing the Academic Rep Newsletter on the rep hub, where we'll highlight the amazing stuff you've told us through You're Impact that you're doing! We also collate these to write termly Rep Impact Updates so the whole student body can see how amazing you are.

[su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps](http://su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps)

If you've done something really fab, we'll even award you Rep of the Month! You'll receive a special certificate, an exclusive interview featured on the website and, of course, bragging rights for your CV. You'll also receive a certificate at the end of the year recognising your hard work as recognition for all the effort you've put in to making student life better.

Keep an eye on the Academic Rep Newsletter for details on how to sign up, or email [voice@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:voice@su.rhul.ac.uk).

### REWARDS

### REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. Rep of the Month

Submit the stuff you're doing to Your Impact and your sabbatical officers will choose the winner based on who has best displayed the SU values!

#### 2. Rep Impact Update

We'll shout about the things you're up to to the whole student body! Submit your stuff to Your Impact so we can let everybody know how amazing you are.

## You're Valued Awards

We know staff right across the College are doing great things and now the Students' Union is providing a system where you can recognise this whenever you want! The member of staff can work anywhere across campus, from Estates, to The Hub, to your seminar leader – they can all be recognised for their great work. There is only one criteria:

#### Amazing! What do I need to do?

- All you have to do is fill out the nomination form on our website. Give us as much detail as possible - little things really add up!
- Make sure your submission gives us plenty of information on how the nominee demonstrates the Students' Union's values:
  - Trustworthy
  - Brave
  - High Quality
  - Student Focused
  - Inclusive

#### What happens next?

- Once a nomination has been submitted, the awarding panel, consisting of the VP Education and one other sabbatical officer, will check it over. If you selected that you'd like to deliver the award yourself, we'll get in touch about this with you.
- If the nomination doesn't meet the criteria, we'll email you to get more information or to let you know why it wasn't successful.



# UNION RESPONSIBILITIES

**Alongside the College, the Students' Union has oversight of the entire system which means we are able to help you at any point with any aspect of academic representation (and wider educational issues).**

## >> SUPPORT

With members of staff solely dedicated to academic representation, there are others within the Students' Union who support the systems at various levels.

### **Academic Communities Coordinator**

Our Academic Communities Coordinator has overall responsibility for the delivery of Academic Representation. They should be the key contact for queries surrounding the Academic representation system within your department. They will be responsible for the delivery of elections and training reps.

### **Representation and Democracy Coordinator.**

The Representation and Democracy Coordinator oversees the Representation and Democracy Coordinator. They will be supporting the school reps with their campaigns. They also support Student Collectives and Executives which support each of the Vice Presidents, including the VP Education. They are responsible for delivery of elections and training.

### **Student Voice Manager**

The Student Voice Manager is responsible for the delivery of elections across the union, including Academic Rep Elections in October. They will focus more on the creation and development of policy. This role has oversight of all democratic practices and campaigns.

## **Supporting reps**

### **We will:**

- Ensure you are fairly elected through either our volunteer form or online elections.
- Effectively prepare you for your duties and empower you to work with your department to make positive changes.
- Provide a year-round programme of training and development, which includes one-to-one support and career development opportunities to increase your chances of getting that dream job once you graduate.
- Give you the tools you need to create real change around campus.
- Record all achievements, successes and changes, and shout about them as loud as possible.

### **Deputy Head of Membership Support & Engagement**

The Deputy Head of Membership Support and Engagement has oversight of all the student-facing activities run by the Students' Union. This includes academic representation, clubs and societies, and the Advice Centre. Working closely with the VP Education, this role engages at a University level.

# SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

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**There should be at least two different staff members involved in academic representation – academic staff and school managers or other admin staff – which means there are two different roles to understand.**

## >> ACADEMIC STAFF

Academic staff are responsible for actioning and developing the delivery of the Academic Representation system within their department. Working closely with department managers and the Students' Union, they should:

**Ensure that every student** on every programme within the department has access to a named course rep, in conjunction with the department manager.

**Encourage students to participate** in rep elections, and provide the time/space to do so (where possible).

**Actively facilitate opportunities** and tools for course and senior course reps to communicate with the students that they represent.

**Use the Students' Union system** to log examples of positive changes that have resulted from students' feedback and/or the work of academic reps (guidance will be published on our website).

**Support and develop** academic representation within the department and foster an environment whereby reps are valued, supported and encouraged to submit feedback.

**Help raise the profile** of the Academic Representation system overall, and course and senior course reps within the department.

**Proactively communicate** with their course and senior course reps about relevant information from the department, such as any issues, developments, meeting dates etc.

**Maintain effective communication** with the Students' Union, ensuring key messages are cascaded within departments and the SU as appropriate.

## >> SCHOOL MANAGERS

School managers are responsible for the operational and administrative delivery of the Academic Representation system within the department. Working with department administrators, school managers should:

**Ensure that SSC meetings** are organised in a timely manner and that the meetings are conducted effectively, with minutes circulated and outcomes communicated as soon as possible.

**Ensure that every student** on every programme within the department has access to a named course rep, in conjunction with the academic lead.

**Maintain a record of course reps** within the department and liaise with the Students' Union if they become aware of any changes or inaccuracies.

**Support and develop** academic representation within the department and foster an environment whereby reps are valued, supported and encouraged to submit feedback.

**Help raise the profile** of the Academic Representation system overall, and course and senior course reps within the department.

**Maintain effective communication** with the Students' Union ensuring key messages are cascaded within the department and the SU as appropriate.

It is appreciated that administrators will be secretaries to SSC meetings in most cases but school managers will, in line with the managing responsibilities, be responsible for the work of administrators within this system.

## >> HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Heads of department and heads of school also play a part in the process. They are ultimately accountable for the delivery of the Academic Representation system and should play a large role in the promotion and cultural investment within the system. As a part of this, they should also cascade information to both academic and administrative staff.

# JARGON BUSTER

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## Agenda

This is a list of items due to be covered at a meeting, in the order they are going to be discussed. You should receive this around one week before the meeting is due to take place.

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## Apologies

Any member who is unable to attend a meeting sends apologies to the committee secretary in advance. The apologies are usually read out or noted at the start of the meeting. If you cannot attend for any reason you should always send your apologies.

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## Chair of the meeting

The chair of a meeting is responsible for ensuring that the whole thing runs smoothly. They keep the meeting to the agenda and ensure that everyone has a chance to speak by facilitating equal and open discussion.

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## Hard to reach students

A term used by the sector to indicate students who, for many reasons, may not be able to partake in the full university experience. This includes, but is not limited to, commuting students, mature students and student parents.

## Matter arising

This is used for updates on progress of actions from previous meetings and is your opportunity to discuss where things are up to, and how to solve any further problems that may have occurred.

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## Minutes

The minutes of a meeting should be an accurate record of what was discussed, actions that were agreed and who is responsible for completing them. The minutes of a previous meeting will be checked at the start of the next meeting and any errors will be corrected. Minutes are a useful tool for following up on actions that might not have been completed.

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## National Union of Students (NUS)

The National Union of Students is a confederation of all the students' unions throughout the United Kingdom. It is the central organisation for all of the affiliated unions.

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## Sabbatical Officers

Your sabbatical officers are a team of five full-time elected officers who lead the direction of the Union. They sit on the highest decision making meetings in College, ensuring that student voice is represented. They also campaign and lobby for the changes you want to see in their respective areas.

# SKILLS GLOSSARY

You'll acquire a lot of skills within this role that will be beneficial for your career goals.

When completing job applications, potential employers will be looking for the skills you've gained from this role, and how they relate to the post you'll be applying for.

Here are some of the key areas that you can include in your covering letters and CV to help you on the pathway to that dream career.



## Teamwork

The ability to work effectively in a group or team to achieve goals.

## Leadership

To show initiative and show good leadership skills.

## Organisation / time management

To manage and prioritise your workload and time effectively.

## Listening

Are you a good listener? Do you concentrate fully on what is being said rather than just hearing the message of the speaker?

## Written communication

The ability to write accurately, clearly and concisely in a variety of styles.

## Research and analytical skills

The ability to gather, interpret and analyse information.

## Strategic thinking

You have a vision of where you want to be and are working to achieve it.

## Decision making

The ability to make good decisions that support any goals you are hoping to achieve.

## Problem solving

You can identify a problem, work out how to solve it and make a decision on the implementation of a fix.

## Delegation skills

You are confident in delegating responsibility to others members of a team to give them a taste of leadership and keep them motivated.

# APPENDIX A: ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

## COURSE REP

<b>Title</b>	Course Rep
<b>Selection</b>	Self sign-up.
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>To effectively represent students' academic interests at programme level.</p> <p>To create change at programme level that improves the academic experience of students.</p> <p>To escalate any issues that exist beyond your programme.</p>

### Accountabilities

The Course Rep position plays a key role in improving students' academic experience. You'll be accountable for:

- a) Proactively and effectively gathering feedback from students that you represent – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved.
- b) Exercising influence through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students you represent.
- c) Communicating progress and the outcomes of feedback to students – to ensure they understand what has, and will, happen as a result of their feedback.
- d) Escalating issues that affect students beyond your programme.
- e) Acting as a positive ambassador for the Students' Union and academic reps.

### Responsibilities and Duties:

In order to fulfil these accountabilities, you will be expected to:

- a) Ensure that you connect with all students that you represent and present a balanced view.
- b) Engage with underrepresented and hard to reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them.
- c) Attend Staff-Student Committee (SSC) meetings and prepare effectively for those meetings by reading agendas, minutes and papers, and putting important items on the agenda.
- d) Maintain strong ongoing relationships with your programme leader/manager/head, and provide regular input about what is working well and what could be improved.
- e) Work in partnership with staff within your programme and department to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students.

f) Where applicable, work with the senior course reps to actively engage with, and participate in, Periodic Departmental Reviews.

g) Work together with students, university staff and the Students' Union to ensure the success of the Academic Representative system.

<b>Skills, Experience and Qualities</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Excellent communication skills – ability to listen and represent views effectively.	✓	
Willingness to learn and build a good understanding of education policy issues.	✓	
Commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion along with a willingness to proactively seek out voices that are underrepresented.	✓	
Ability to use technology and social media to network effectively with other students.		✓
Willingness to get involved and represent students' academic interests.	✓	

# APPENDIX B: ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

## SENIOR COURSE REP

<b>Title</b>	Senior Course Rep
<b>Selection</b>	Self sign-up.
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>To effectively represent students' academic interests at department level.</p> <p>To create change at department level that improves the academic experience of students.</p> <p>To engage course reps within your department, support them and identify where issues are department-wide.</p> <p>To escalate any issues that exist beyond your department.</p>

### Accountabilities

The Senior Course Rep position plays a key role in improving students' academic experience. You will be accountable for:

- a) Proactively and effectively gathering feedback from course reps – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved across your department.
- b) Exercising influence at department level through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students you represent.
- c) Communicating progress and the outcomes of feedback to course reps and students in your department – to ensure they understand what has, and will, happen as a result of their feedback.
- d) Escalating issues that affect students beyond your department.
- e) Acting as a positive ambassador for the Students' Union and academic reps.

### Responsibilities and Duties:

In order to fulfil these accountabilities, you will be expected to:

- a) Ensure that you connect with, and regularly meet, course reps within your department and present a balanced view based on their feedback.
- b) Engage with underrepresented and hard to reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them.
- c) Chair Staff-Student Committee (SSC) meetings and prepare effectively for those meetings by working with key University contacts to develop agendas and papers, and ensure that agendas reflect key issues.
- d) Contribute to Periodic Departmental Reviews, where applicable, ensuring engagement and attendance of course reps in order for them to present a comprehensive and balanced view.



e) Undertake the role of Curriculum Consultant, working with departments and the College to provide feedback on, and validate, new courses.

f) Work in partnership with staff within your department to ensure the outcomes of annual reviews are implemented and ensure its inclusion in the SSC agenda.

g) Attend other department level meetings as appropriate.

h) Maintain strong ongoing relationships with your head of department, department manager and other key university contacts, and provide regular input about what is working well and what could be improved.

i) Work in partnership with staff within your department to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students.

j) Provide feedback and share best practice with other senior course reps, course reps and school reps.

k) Work together with students, University staff and the Students' Union to ensure the success of the Academic Representative system.

Skills, Experience and Qualities	Essential	Desirable
Excellent communication skills – ability to listen and represent views effectively.	✓	
Basic understanding of education policy issues and willingness to learn more.	✓	
Commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion along with a willingness to proactively seek out voices that are underrepresented.	✓	
Ability to use technology and social media to network effectively with other students.		✓
Experience of leading others, either at Royal Holloway or elsewhere.		✓
Ability to motivate and inspire other reps and support them to thrive.		✓
Willingness to get involved and represent students' academic interests.	✓	

# APPENDIX C: ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

## SCHOOL REP

<b>Title</b>	School Rep
<b>Selection</b>	Elected by students within your school.
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>To effectively represent students' academic interests at school level.</p> <p>To create change at school level that improves the academic experience of students.</p> <p>To engage senior course reps within your school, support them and identify where issues are school-wide.</p> <p>To escalate any issues that exist beyond your school.</p>

### Accountabilities

The School Rep post plays a key role in improving students' academic experience. You'll be accountable for:

- a) Proactively and effectively gathering feedback from senior course reps – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved across your school.
- b) Exercising influence at school level through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students you represent.
- c) Communicating progress and the outcomes of feedback to senior course reps, course reps and students in your school – to ensure they understand what has, and will, happen as a result of their feedback.
- d) Escalating issues that affect students beyond your school.
- e) Acting as a positive ambassador for the Students' Union and academic reps.

### Responsibilities and Duties:

In order to fulfil these accountabilities, you will be expected to:

- a) Ensure that you connect with, and regularly meet, senior course reps within your school and present a balanced view based on their feedback.
- b) Ensure that you support senior course reps in engaging with, and contributing to, departmental level initiatives, such as Annual Reviews.
- c) Engage with underrepresented and hard-to-reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them.
- d) Attend school level meetings, such as School Education Committee and School Board.
- e) Maintain strong ongoing relationships with your head of school and other key University contacts, and provide regular input about what is working well and what could be improved.

f) Work in partnership with staff within your school to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students.

g) Attend and provide feedback at Education Executive to share best practice with other school reps.

h) Ensure that positive changes are logged, recognised and celebrated.

i) Work together with students, university staff and the Students' Union to ensure the success of the Academic Representative system.

<b>Skills, Experience and Qualities</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Excellent communication skills – ability to listen and represent views effectively.	✓	
Good understanding of education policy issues and willingness to learn more.	✓	
Strong ability to influence others and create change on behalf of others.	✓	
Commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion along with a willingness to proactively seek out voices that are underrepresented.	✓	
Ability to use technology and social media to network effectively with students.		✓
Experience of the Academic Representation system at Royal Holloway or elsewhere.	✓	
Ability to motivate and inspire other reps and support them to thrive.	✓	
Willingness to get involved and represent students' academic interests.	✓	



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Registered charity no: 1141998  
The Students' Union  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Egham Hill, Egham, TW20 OEX

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