

# **ACADEMIC REP HANDBOOK**

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**A GUIDE FOR ACADEMIC REPS**

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# HELLO FROM SHARANYA



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

Hi! I'm Sharanya and I'm your Vice President Education for 2023/24!

I also hope to work alongside the University's Careers Service. Thank you so much for volunteering your time as academic reps, we have an exciting year ahead.

Your roles are crucial in ensuring that the experience of yourself and your peers is the best it can possibly be. You're a vital aspect in improving teaching and learning at Royal Holloway as you help us implement student feedback within academic processes at the University. Previous reps have been instrumental in extending coursework deadlines, changing assessment methods and organising lectures from external academics. Hopefully, this year we can introduce further means of supporting student experience at Royal Holloway.

My manifesto aims for this year include adopting a 'hyflex' approach to learning and ensuring the equipment used within these lectures is reflective of the investment you put into your education. I also hope to work alongside the university's Careers Service to utilise our connection with the University of London - holding LinkedIn events with other London Universities that help you network and build connections within the working world.

These are just a couple of my goals but of course, I'm sure you will bring many things to my attention that need to be addressed. If you have any thoughts on these topics - or would like to contribute other bright ideas - 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)).

As always, the incredible team at the SU and I are here to support you. Don't hesitate to reach out!

I'm so excited to work alongside you this year! <3

**Sharanya Sivarajah**  
**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.

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

**Sharanya Sivarajah (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)

**Laura Black (Student Voice Manager)** [laura.black@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:laura.black@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 2023/24.

This academic year, we're bringing back our in person 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 a new model which will be implemented across all six schools and each level of study.

The academic rep training and Rep Hub on the Students' Union website will tell you everything you need to know but if you have any questions, just drop our Student Voice team an email at [voice@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:voice@su.rhul.ac.uk) and they'll be happy to help!

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 Action Meeting (SSAM) of the year.

# WHAT IS ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION?

## It's pretty simple, really.

The definition we've agreed with the University, 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.

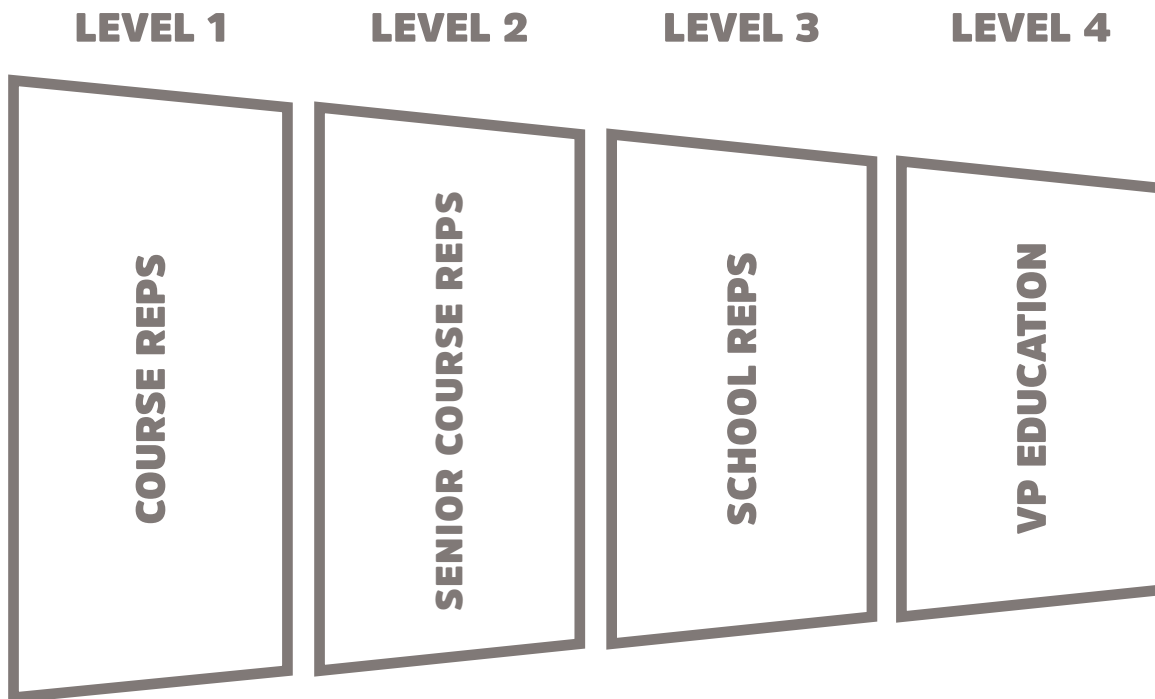
Representatives are able to provide context surrounding issues and problems, helping to establish the depth of feelings about certain issues. Sometimes it's right to prioritise the issue that affects a small number of peers deeply rather than one that affects the majority to a lesser extent.

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 Action Meeting (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 Staff-Student Action Meeting (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 University 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)**



## >> COMMUNITY OFFICERS

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

Our new Student Communities will be autonomous bodies that are responsible for working with the Union to secure the general interests and collective rights of the students that define into the relevant group. There will be two categories of communities, one for inclusion-based communities and one for academic-based communities.

They will also coordinate activities, events, and campaigns relevant to their agenda, which may include supporting and working across different student groups. On the right, we've listed the new 'Inclusion' and 'Academic' Communities.

### The Inclusion Communities

- Women Students
- LGBT + Students
- Disabled Students
- Black & Global Majority Students
- International Students
- Students of Faith
- Mature, Parent & Carer Students

### The Academic Communities

- Postgraduate Research Students
- Postgraduate Taught Students
- Commuting Students

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

# 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 University'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.

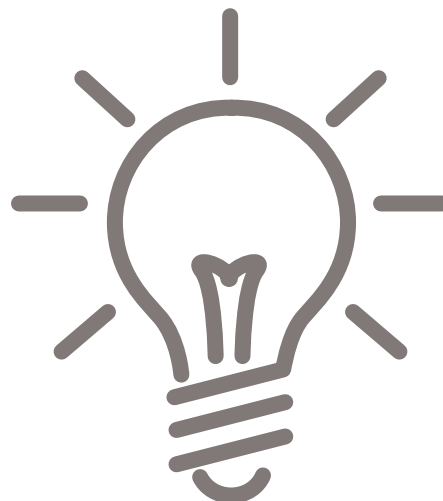
As an academic representative, there is an expectation that you're going to be creating change, whether it be big or small.

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

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**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.**

## >> SSAM GUIDANCE

Staff-Student Action Meetings (SSAM) 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.**

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- 1.1 To review actions from previous meetings and escalating any outstanding actions as necessary.**

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- 1.2 To track the development of actions in the department's Annual Review.**

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- 2.0 To facilitate effective communications.**

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- 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.**

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- 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.**

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- 3.0 To secure positive change.**

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- 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, other senior course reps and several 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 SSAM: 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, VP Wellbeing & Diversity, 6x School Reps, 3x Academic Community Officers (PGT, PGR, Commuting) and up to 2 co-opted members approved on an annual basis. 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 SSAM, 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

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**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. By volunteering as an academic rep, it goes without saying that you'll gain a myriad of skills that will prepare you for various stages of your life post-graduation. But, we want to provide you with even more opportunities to level up your CV, and create some change while you're at it! So, look out. We're developing a year-round plan full of training activities just for you.

## 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 via email to all academic reps, where we'll highlight the amazing stuff you've told us through Your Impact that you're doing! We also collate these to write termly Your 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 University 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 University, 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 supports 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 & Democracy Coordinator**

The Representation and Democracy Coordinator oversees and supports the Community Officers, including Academic Community Officers (PGT, PGR and Commuting) as well as the Executives, including Education Executive, which support each of the Vice Presidents.

### **Student Voice Manager**

The Student Voice Manager is responsible for the delivery of elections across the Union. 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.

### **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 SSAM 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 Staff-Student Action 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.

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## **Leadership**

To show initiative and show good leadership skills.

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## **Organisation / time management**

To manage and prioritise your workload and time effectively.

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## **Listening**

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

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## **Written communication**

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

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## **Research and analytical skills**

The ability to gather, interpret and analyse information.

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## **Strategic thinking**

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

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## **Decision making**

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

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## **Problem solving**

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

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## **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>	To effectively represent students' academic interests at programme level. To create change at programme level that improves the academic experience of students. To escalate any issues that exist beyond your programme.

### 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 Action Meetings (SSAM) 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.

Skills, Experience and Qualities	Essential	Desirable
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 Action Meetings (SSAM) 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 SSAM agenda.
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- 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.
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<b>Skills, Experience and Qualities</b>	<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
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.

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

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

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

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Skills, Experience and Qualities	Essential	Desirable
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.	✓	



**[SU.RHUL.AC.UK/ACADEMICREPS](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/academicreps)**

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