



ACADEMIC REP TRAINING



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What are your expectations of the
School Rep role?



What is Academic Representation?

RHSU definition:

“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.”

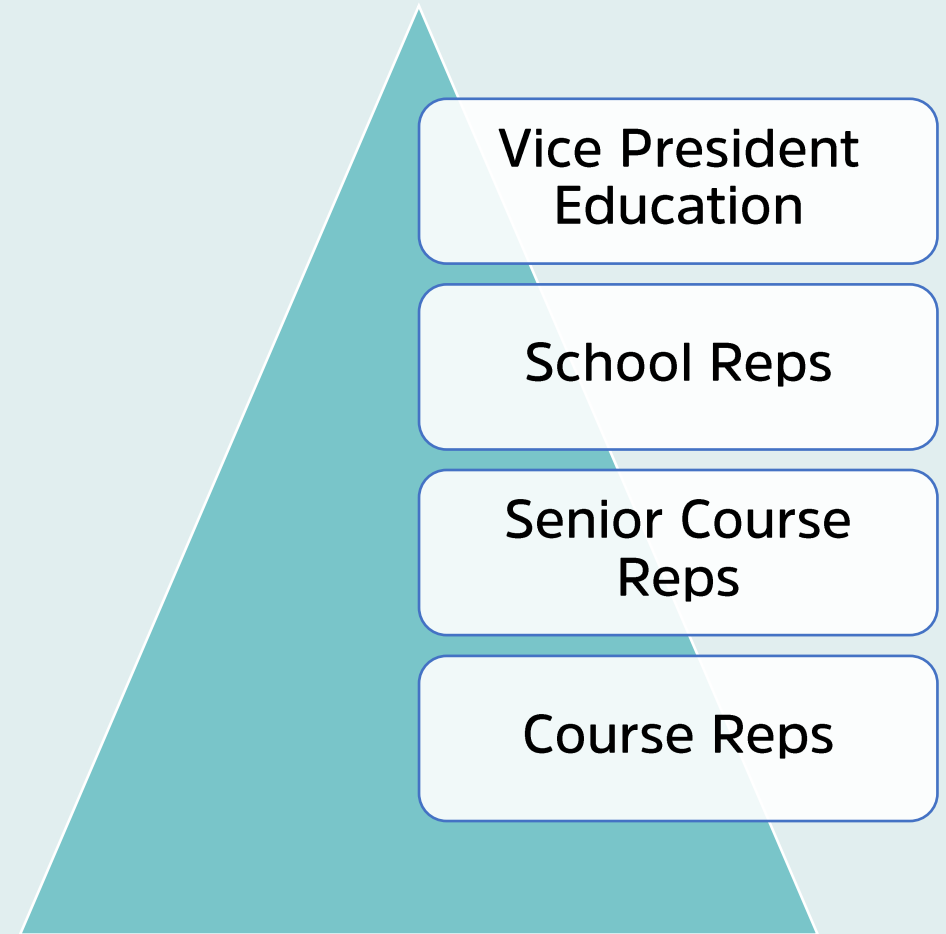
What is Academic Representation?

- Academic representation at Royal Holloway has four levels.
- Each level of representation has specific responsibilities and duties to make sure the system is as effective as it can be.
- 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.



Recent changes to the structure

- The Students' Union has been working towards improving the current academic representation structure which means changes are being implemented from this year.
- Last year, Senior Course Reps replaced the Department Rep role to bridge the gap between Course and School Reps and this will remain the same for 2023//24.
- Senior Course Reps are uncapped which means there can be more than one per department and level of study. This change aims to provide more points of contact for students, Course Reps and academic staff and allows reps to share responsibilities.



Your role as a School Rep & Key Skills

As a School Rep, you should have:

- ✓ Excellent communication skills
- ✓ An ability to listen and effectively represent students' views
- ✓ A basic understanding of education policy issues
- ✓ A commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion
- ✓ Strong relationships with students, University staff and the Students' Union

Some of the key skills you will develop:



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Some of the key skills you will develop:

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Strategic thinking
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Delegation

School Rep Responsibilities

- Be responsive to communications via email.
- Attend meetings, or send apologies if unavailable.
- Work with the Education Executive and support each other as School Reps.
- Keep in touch for any support and build a good relationship with the Sabbs and the staff.
- Maintain relationships with Senior Course Reps, VP Education and SU Students' Union Voice Team.
- Collect feedback from Senior Course Reps and escalate relevant issues to VP Education.
- Stay engaged in the role throughout the year.

Don't forget that you are not responsible for looking after students' wellbeing but you can help to support them and guide them in the direction of someone who is trained and qualified to give support and advice.



Education Executive

- The Education Executive is like a 'cabinet' for the Vice-President Education. It's made up of Academic Reps and Community Officers who can hold the VP Education to account, support the campaigns within their agenda and provide feedback on their work.
- It meets regularly to discuss issues related to teaching, assessment and resource provision, with the ultimate aim of improving the academic experience of students at Royal Holloway.
- As a School Rep you will sit on the Executive. It is a chance to update others on your work, raise any School issues you may have and to engage in conversations about education at the University and input into work Sharanya is doing as VP Education.
- There will be regular meetings throughout the year and one of your key roles here is to act as a critical friend to Sharanya, holding her accountable on her work but also providing support with initiatives and projects.

University Meetings

Validation Meetings	School Education Committee	School Boards
To consider proposals in respect of the rationale, structure, balance, level and content of courses and explore the validity of the stated aims and learning outcomes of courses.	Contributes to the development of a School UG/ PGT education/ learning and teaching strategy/ education plan and policies for excellence in teaching.	Meets three times a year and the School Rep is invited to attend.
To make recommendations on the approval or re-consideration of proposals to the School Education Committee.	Drives initiatives in teaching and learning in the School, which may emerge within the School or from university and liaising as appropriate with internal university services and external networks.	The School Board invite is to all staff in the school and discusses matters relating to teaching, research and other relevant activities in the School or university.
Academic Quality & Policy Office (AQPO) ask for a student representative and the relevant School Reps are the first to be invited.	The committee runs three times a year. The School Rep has a standing item on the School Education Committee:	School Reps may have the option to present or just attend, this might vary across the schools.
They take place on more of an ad-hoc basis and not a set amount of meetings in a year.	To consider any matters raised by the School Student Representative.	

Signposting

University Wellbeing - The team are not a crisis service but do provide mental healthcare to students who require support.

- Main contact- wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Term-time drop-ins available – see the student intranet for joining information
- Counselling service – counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Mental Health practitioners – mentalhealth@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Disability and Neurodiversity Support service- disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Financial Wellbeing team – moneymatters@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Multifaith Chaplaincy – chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk
- International Advice team- internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk
- Careers Service – careers@royalholloway.ac.uk

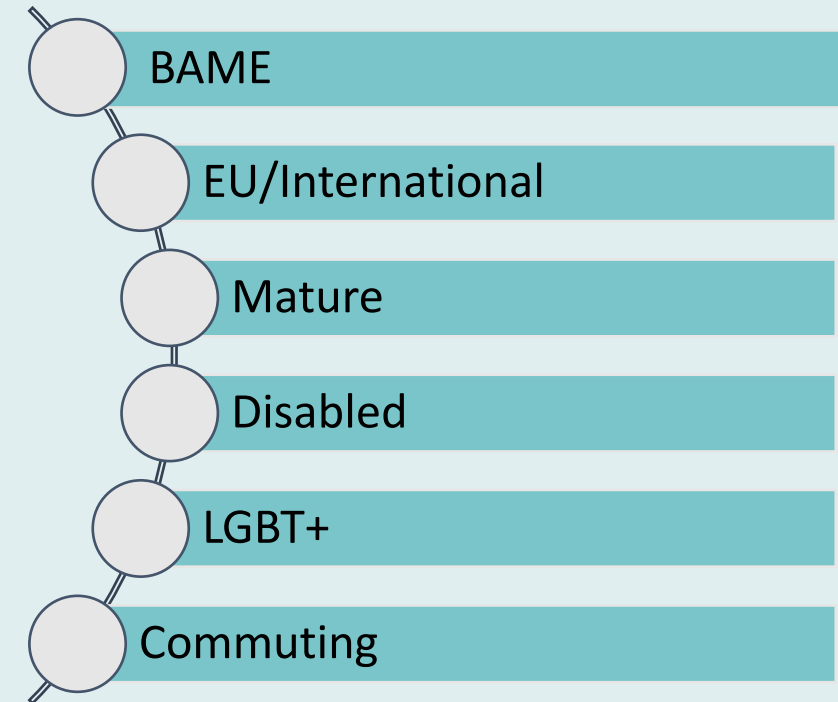
Students' Union Advice Centre

Email us at advice@su.rhul.ac.uk

See online advice at www.su.rhul.ac.uk/advice

Specialisms

- Specialisms were created in 2021 to help empower reps from diverse backgrounds to utilise their own experiences.
- The aim of specialisms is to enable these students to enact change and offer a specialist perspective due to their lived experience.
- This year, you will be able to specialise in one or more of the following areas of these student experiences.
- If a rep chooses specialisms, the SU will make staff in their academic department aware and of which one(s) they choose.
- If there are any projects that are taking place in the department then staff might contact you and invite you to share your perspective and feedback if you feel comfortable.
- This might be relevant for any equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) projects taking place.



Specialism expectations

- As a rep, it's important for you to gather feedback from students but you are also welcome to talk about your own personal experiences in departmental meetings.
- Just because you specialise, doesn't mean you can only talk about that area. You are still an academic rep so you can do the same work as reps who don't specialise as well!
- Don't forget that the Course Rep role is voluntary so make sure you set your expectations with your department about how much time you'd like to input to any specialism related work.



Collecting Feedback

There are several ways of collecting feedback and there are likely to be some that you prefer to use over others.

You could try:

- Talking informally to students and other course reps
- Hosting drop in sessions or focus groups
- Using social media groups
- Giving classmates 5 minutes at the start or end of class
- Creating a survey/poll and asking School admin to circulate
- Using a physical feedback box
- Feedback form provided by the Students' Union



Remember that effective representation should be accurate, constructive and depersonalised!

Google Forms



Untitled form ☆



Send



Questions

Responses

Settings

Untitled form

Form description



Untitled Question



Multiple choice ▾

Option 1

Add option or [add "Other"](#)



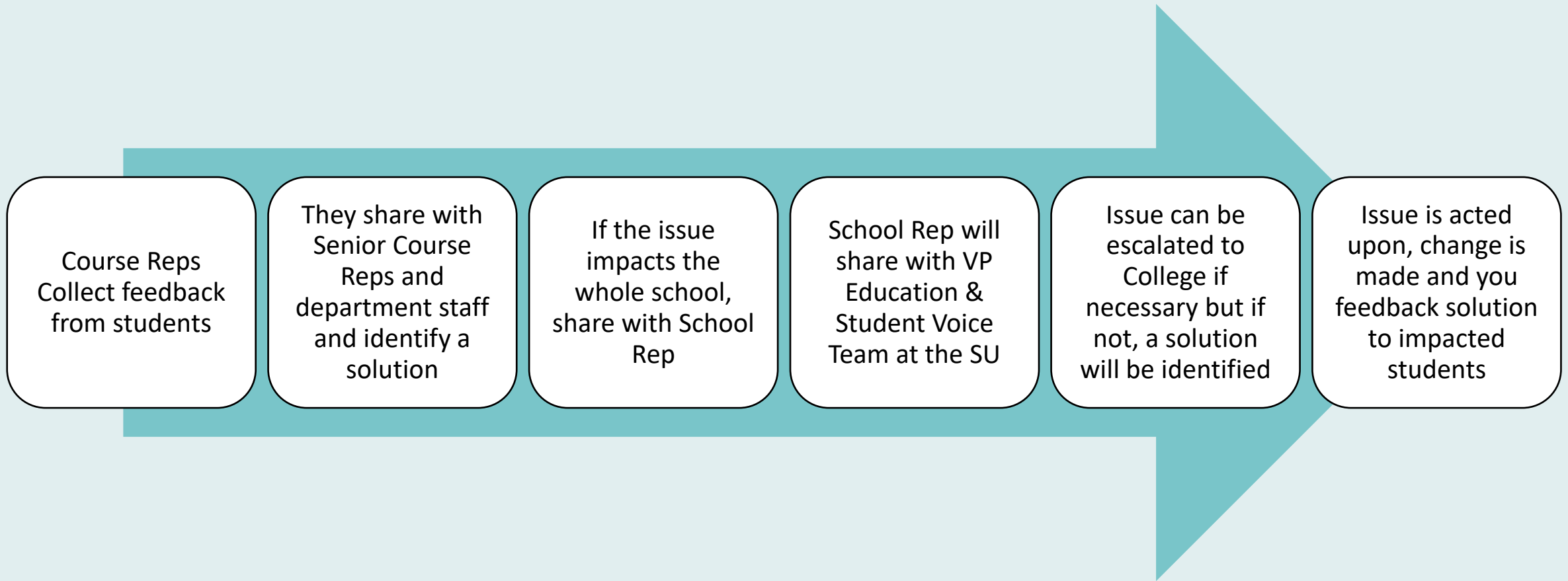
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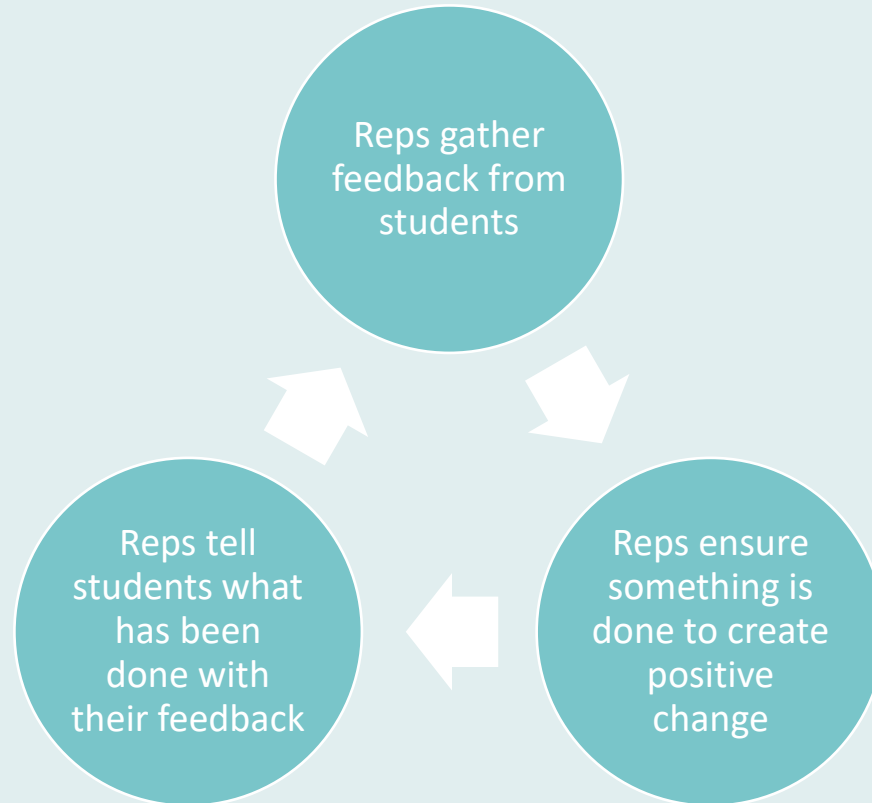
Sharing Feedback



Feedback Loop

As a Course Rep, communication is key when collecting feedback to help close the feedback loop.

The feedback loop follows this structure:



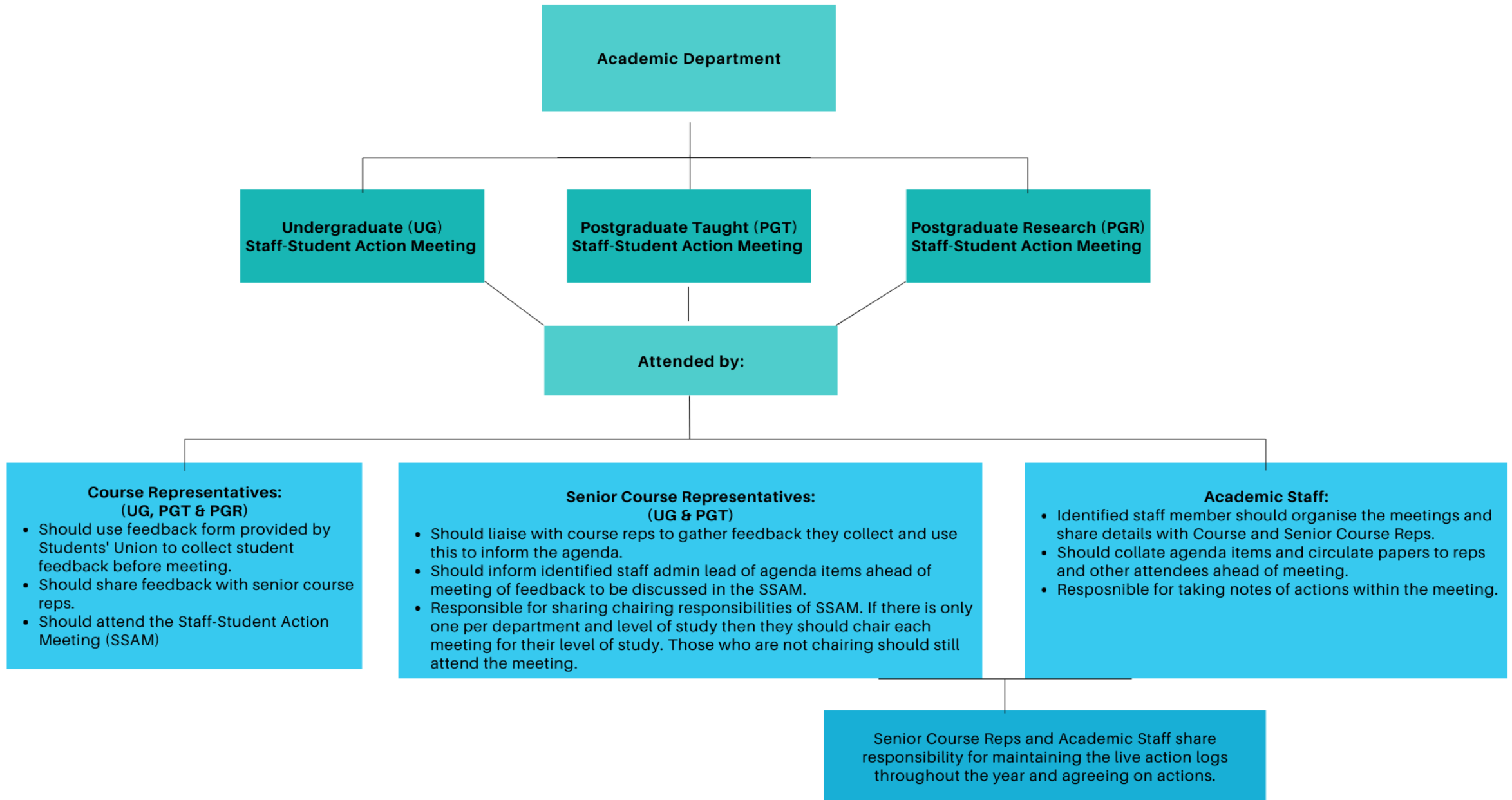
Staff-Student Action Meetings

- This system 'Staff-Student Action Meetings' (SSAM) is being introduced across all 6 schools and all levels of study in September 2023.
- Course Reps and Senior Course Reps attend the SSAM meeting for their department and level of study at least once per term and identified key members of staff should also be present.
- Course Reps should speak to students ahead of the meeting and gather any feedback they have that they would like to raise. They should collate the feedback in a specific feedback form which you can find a template of on the [Rep Hub](#). They will then liaise with Senior Course Reps in their department to make them aware of the issues and what is going to be discussed in the meeting.
- Senior Course Reps send all feedback to an identified member of staff at least two weeks ahead of the meeting who will add each point onto the agenda for the meeting.
- The identified member of staff should invite all attendees (Course Reps, Senior Course Reps, and staff) with plenty of notice and include important details such as time, date, and location along with the agenda and any other useful documents.
- At Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught levels of study, one Senior Course Rep will chair the meeting and at Postgraduate Research, a Course Rep will chair.

Staff-Student Action Meetings

- In the meeting, the chair should go through each agenda point and invite attendees to discuss the issue and identify solutions to create positive change for the students who originally raised the feedback.
- Staff will have the opportunity to update reps on developments happening behind the scenes that may be useful for them to know.
- Identified members of staff and Senior Course Reps will record identified actions which need to be completed as part of the 'Staff-Student Action Log'.
- These logs are a live document which are to be hosted in an individual department MS Teams channel which will be created by the Students' Union Voice Team and accessible to all students in that department and level of study. This is so that students who don't attend SSAM can still see what is being discussed and how their feedback is being acted upon.
- Although SSAMs are a great way of providing feedback to your department, you are still encouraged to raise student feedback outside of these meetings if necessary.
- In agreement with the Students' Union, Department staff may choose to adapt the model so it works as best as it can for their individual department.

Staff-Student Action Meetings



Recognition

'Your Impact' and 'Rep of the Month' are great ways to shout about your achievements as a rep.

If there is something you have done that you want to share with the SU then you can add a 'your impact' submission to let us know.

Each month, the submissions will be reviewed and the VP Education will select someone to be recognised as Rep of the Month based off the your impact submissions we receive.

Rep of the Month winners will have a Q&A with VP Education and they will get their own news article on the SU website as well as a section dedicated to them in the monthly rep newsletter.

Peer Support

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with links: YOUR UNION, REPRESENTING YOU, GET INVOLVED, ADVICE, WHAT'S ON, VENUES, and STUDENTPAD. On the left is a 'NAVIGATION' menu with items like Democracy Review, Your Sabbs, Campaigns, Academic Reps, Student Hub, Find My Rep (highlighted), Information Security, Submit Your Feedback, What Do Reps Do?, Become A Rep, Rep Hub, Staff Hub, Rep of the Month, You're Valued Awards, Bright Ideas, All Student Meetings, Governance, and Key Contacts. The main content area is titled 'FIND MY REP.' and contains the text: 'Every one of you has a course rep to represent your academic interests, as well as a department rep who you voted for at the start of term. To find the rep for your programme, search for your department below and you'll be shown your course reps.' Below this text is a yellow zigzag line and a search box with the placeholder text 'START TYPING YOUR DEPARTMENT'. At the bottom of the main content area is a 'REP OF THE MONTH' banner featuring a group photo of student representatives.

As a School Rep, you will regularly be in contact with other academic reps in your department throughout the year.

The SU website has a 'find my rep' page which will be updated after training has been completed.

Just type in a department and you will find the names of the reps, their role, course and year of study.

SU Support

Year long development programme:

Each term, the SU will deliver sessions on various topics which are tailored towards you and your development as an academic rep.

Last year's sessions included

- Navigating a typical formal meeting
- Mental health awareness
- Current issues in Higher Education
- Dealing with feedback
- Career and employability support



Day-to-day support:

- Empower you to work with your department to make change
- Provide support from/ 121 meetings with Academic Communities Coordinator/ VP Education
- Give you the tools you need to create real change around campus
- Send monthly rep newsletters directly to you
- Shout about your achievements and successes!

School Support



Facilitating **opportunities** and tools for School Reps to **communicate** with students they represent e.g. helping circulate surveys



Supporting and developing academic **representation** within the department



Ensuring reps feel **valued, supported** and **encouraged** to submit feedback



Proactively **communicating** with you as School Reps about relevant **information**



Maintaining effective **communication** with the Student Voice Team at the SU

Key Contacts

Vice President Education



Sharanya Sivarajah

Email - VPEducation@su.rhul.ac.uk

Instagram - RHSUEducation

Academic Communities Coordinator



Lauryn Fleming

Email - lauryn.fleming@su.rhul.ac.uk

Student Voice Manager



Laura Black

Email - laura.black@su.rhul.ac.uk

Student Voice Team:

Email - Voice@su.rhul.ac.uk

Head of Department & Course Convenors

Next Steps

- If you haven't already completed the diversity monitoring form, please make sure you do by scanning this QR code:



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