

Guidance for using MS Teams as an academic rep

This year, we're making it easier than ever to communicate with both the students you represent, and with each other.

What channels will I be in?

When you've finished your academic rep training, we'll put you in the relevant MS Teams channels:

- The 'SU Academic Representation Team' contains:
 - A 'General' channel with **all the Team members**
 - An 'All course reps' channel for all RHSU's **course reps**
 - An 'All department reps' channel, for all RHSU's **department reps**
 - School-specific channels for **department reps** to communicate with other department reps in their School
- Each **Department** will have its own 'Team', entitled '[Department name] Student Voice', containing **all students and academic reps** within the department

What can I do with MS Teams?

MS Teams has loads of useful functions which make it easy to communicate with the students you represent:

- Polls - use these to quickly gauge the strength of feeling on a particular issue, decide a preferred option out of several or ask simple yes/no questions
- Create a meeting - In your Outlook calendar, select a time and click 'New Teams Meeting'. This allows you to schedule a meeting that includes an automatic link to a Teams meeting
- Instant video calls - Quickly call someone on Teams, no link needed. Make sure you check that it's ok with them first!
- Upload files - want to share your SSC meeting minutes? Found a useful resource on the Rep Hub? You can upload files directly to the channel for students to download

*MS Teams **DO's***

- Introduce yourself! In your first message to your students, tell them your name, pronouns and role, along with a short sentence about you. Students need to know who you are, and telling them a bit about yourself will make you seem more approachable
- Start conversations! General chats can be useful sources of feedback, as people naturally mention what they like/dislike
- Float big ideas! Got a big idea? Want to see whether it's popular? Start a conversation around it
- Close the feedback loop! This is a super important part of your rep role. Update students on what's been done as a result of them giving you feedback to build their confidence in both you and the academic representation system

- Talk to staff! Everyone at the University is on Teams. However, remember to adapt your communication style - chatting with a student requires a different style of communication to relaying feedback to a Head of Department

*MS Teams **DON'Ts***

- Spam, badger or pressure people to participate. Too many notifications can annoy people, making them unwilling to respond to your feedback request.
- Stop using it! Consistency is key. If you primarily use Teams for the first few weeks of term then suddenly switch over to Facebook, people will get confused and won't be able to find your updates. Use MS Teams as your primary platform throughout the year, however it's of course a good idea to repeat any important messages on other platforms where students might see it, for example over e-mail or in your course Whatsapp group.
- Expect responses immediately, or outside business hours. It's encouraged that everyone sets healthy boundaries regarding MS Teams usage, so don't expect people to reply straight away or in the middle of the night. Furthermore, some of your students may have other responsibilities such as caring or a part-time job, or may observe Shabbat - not everybody has the same lifestyle or routine as you do. Make sure you plan your communications in good time so that people get a chance to respond when it suits them
- Record meetings without consent. MS Teams gives you the option to record meetings for future use, however it's important to respect people's personal boundaries, so make sure to get everybody's informed consent if you want to do this and don't pressure people to be recorded
- Share something outside the channel that should be private. Maintaining confidentiality will increase students' trust in you. Sometimes people may not explicitly request that they want to remain anonymous, so use your judgement - it's best to err on the side of caution and not name names

If you have any questions or need support with MS Teams, email voice@su.rhul.ac.uk.