

# **Academic Representation at Royal Holloway, University of London**

- **The UK Quality Code for Higher Education:**

- **Providers must “actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.”**
- **Providers should “engage students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.”**

# Background

# Structure



# Staff Student Committees

- **Outlined in the Academic Representation Partnership Agreement**
- **Report to School Education Committees (SECs)**
- **The SSC terms of reference also notes the purpose of SSCs**

*“The core purpose of the academic representation system, which aligns with the revised UK Quality Code, is to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students at Royal Holloway and engages students as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their learning.”*

# Wins

- Introduced lecture capture on courses in Biological Sciences before the College policy was introduced.
- Created study guides to support first year students in Classics.
- Introduced assessment support sessions and evaluated exam practices across various departments.
- Created student led Moodle pages in Law and Criminology.
- Fed into the curriculum and updated reading materials in Media Arts.

# Challenges

- Attendance.
- SSC minutes are not circulated.
- The notice period for the convening of a meeting is not met as fed back by academic reps.
- Key contacts or staff that administer the SSCs change frequently, with mixed understanding of the role and purpose of academic representation.
- Due to the recruitment cycle and the formal structure and processes of SSCs, there is a gap in representation in term one until mid-November.
- SSCs are an administrative burden with mixed levels of engagement.
- A lack of trust in the system.

# Academic Representation Review (2017)

- There are significant levels of variation in the way that academic representation is managed, supported and delivered across academic departments;
- There is strong and widespread commitment to student voice across the University. However, this doesn't translate into a culture whereby Academic Reps believe that they are genuinely empowered to create change to their academic experience;
- A 'one size fits all' structure is unlikely to be effective in an institution with significant autonomy and variation at department-level, however a set of fundamental principles will help to ensure a structure that is consistent, transparent and logical;
- There are high-levels of confusion regarding roles, responsibilities and expectations, which should be clarified;
- There is an opportunity to utilise technology to improve the development of, and communication between, Academic Reps;
- Practice surrounding the election, induction and support for Reps will need to improve significantly if RHSU is to achieve a world-class academic representation system



# Benchmarking

# Sector

**After research into 22 institutions, 20 follow the format in which takes place at Royal Holloway is standard practice found in institutions across the UK with little variation.**

Similar to RHSU		Different from RHSU
Aberystwyth University Anglia Ruskin University Arts University Bournemouth Bangor University Bath Spa University Cardiff University City, University of London Loughborough University Newman University Queen Mary, University of London	Queens University Belfast St Mary's University Staffordshire University London School of Economics and Political Science University of Bath University of Winchester University of Sheffield University of Brighton University of Cambridge	University of Salford Coventry University

### University of Salford

Three levels of academic representation including Course Rep, Education School Rep and VP Education

Course reps Attend programme leader office meetings every four weeks.

Course reps collate feedback to produce action logs, which are then circulated with education school reps.

School reps attend termly subject meetings which oversee the action logs.

Action logs are used for quality assurance processes.

### Coventry University

Four levels of academic representation including Course Rep, Senior Course Rep, Education School Rep and VP Education.

Senior course reps collate feedback from course reps and produce and monitor action logs to ensure that actions are being followed up on and chasing up where they are not.

Education school reps represent at a school level, attend University Committee Meetings utilising and monitoring logs produced by senior course reps.

Action logs are used for quality assurance processes.

# Moving forward

# Structure

Role	Responsibilities	Recruitment
Course Rep	They gather feedback from students and provide feedback at a course level.	Autumn (T1) Voluntary
Senior Course Reps	They gather feedback from students and provide feedback at a course level. They support course reps as peers.	Summer (T3) Voluntary
School Reps	The highest level of voluntary posts. There is one per school and they represent students at school level meetings.	Spring (T2) Elected
VP Education	The highest level of academic representation and operates at College level.	Spring (T2) Elected

# Pilot

## 2022 - 2023

# Department Action Meetings

## (DAMs)

### What Are They?

- They are meetings to replace the current Staff Student Committees (SSCs).
- The participants will be Course reps, Senior Course reps and relevant identified staff leads.
- They will be led by Senior Course Reps.
- They will take place every four to six weeks.
- Flexible on the needs of a department.

### What Are The Aims Of The DAMs?

- Produce ongoing Department Action Logs (DALs).
- Be solution focussed spaces where those present can identify specific actions to change.
- Reps should have raised issues ahead of DAMs to ensure effective problem solving.

# Department Action Logs (DALs)

- A single live document that is maintained through the year.
- Updated during the meeting.
- Maintained by both Senior Course reps and identified staff leads.
- Contains agreed actions to take forward, as well as documents of where actions have been completed.
- Hosted in a shared space, accessible by relevant teams.
- Replaces the use of minutes



# What's the difference?

Staff Student Committees	Department Action Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet three times per year.</li><li>• A set of minutes are produced by a member of staff.</li><li>• Where issues are predominantly raised.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet every four to six weeks, as required by each department.</li><li>• Maintain logs that act as live documents that record agreed and completed actions, by both staff and Senior Course Reps. Accessible at any time.</li><li>• Allow for a solutions focused discussion, supported by issues being raised continuously outside of meetings.</li><li>• More flexible spaces that allow departments to consult students, as partners, in the co-creation of their teaching and learning environment.</li></ul>

# Structure

Role	Responsibilities	Recruitment
Course Rep	They gather feedback from students and provide feedback at a course level. They also attend Department Action Meetings (DAMs).	Autumn (T1) Voluntary
Senior Course Reps	They gather feedback from students and provide feedback at a course level. They support course reps as peers. They work with key contacts to maintain Department Action Logs (DALs) and share chairing responsibilities of Department Action Meetings (DAMs).	Summer (T3) Voluntary
School Reps	The highest level of voluntary posts. There is one per school and they represent students at school level meetings.	Spring (T2) Elected
VP Education	The highest level of academic representation and operates at College level.	Spring (T2) Elected

# 2022-23

## Participants

- Business and Management
- Law and Social Sciences
- Performing and Digital Arts

## Monitoring

- Touch points in December and February.
- Drop-in sessions in January and April.
- Outcome of the pilot to be determined in May internal to the Students' Union, with core stakeholders.
- Final outcome confirmed June 7<sup>th</sup> Academic Board.