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| **Agenda Item: JEC/19/XX** |
| Summary of Business for**Joint Executive Committee** | C:\Users\unyr120\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\H25NY2TJ\RHUL_Master_logo_CMYK.JPG |
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| Title | Academic Representation Partnership Agreement |
| Author/ Comments | Maia Jarvis, SU Vice President Education |
| Date | 07/07/22 |
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| Summary | One of the recommendations of the external review of academic representation at Royal Holloway (commissioned by the Students’ Union and a joint endeavour with the College) was to adopt a partnership agreement between the College and the SU outlining the nature of the partnership between the College and the Students’ Union to deliver effective academic representation. It is proposed that this Agreement is forms an appendix to the Memorandum of Cooperation between the College and the Students’ Union, being monitored and reviewed every year at the Joint Executive Committee.The Agreement has been updated in light of the changes made to the College’s structure and the Students’ Union democracy review. |
| Paper referred from  | N/A  |
| Recommendation | Joint Executive Committee is asked to approve the amendments of this Agreement. |

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**Academic Representation Partnership Agreement**

1. **Purpose**
	1. The purpose of this agreement is to outline the nature of the partnership between Royal Holloway, University of London (the College) and the Students’ Union (RHSU) to deliver effective academic representation. It highlights the work that is currently being undertaken to improve the academic experience. It does not replace other strategic documents, and students are not limited by this document.
2. **Partnership**
	1. The terms 'partner' and 'partnership' are used in a broad sense to indicate joint working between students and staff; RHSU and the College.
	2. Partnership working is based on the values of openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between the partners. It is not based on the legal concept of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences.
	3. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. The term reflects a mature relationship based on mutual respect between the College and RHSU.
3. **Context**
	1. The College recognises the importance of students being involved in decisions and is committed to making sure all students have the best academic experience possible.
	2. RHSU, as an organisation, is dedicated to working in partnership with students and the College to continuously develop teaching and learning practices and environments. The student voice is a fundamental part of this and will guide RHSU’s approach to understanding, supporting and enhancing the student experience at Royal Holloway.

## **Principles of Academic Representation**

* 1. The academic representation system operates as a partnership and joint endeavour between the College and RHSU.
	2. Both parties recognise the value, importance and benefit of a healthy and effective academic representation system.
	3. All students should have access to appropriate representation through elected Course Reps who are trained and effectively supported.
	4. There will be at least two members of staff from each school who will act as a ‘Key College Contact’ for academic representation within that school. This will include the School Manager and a relevant academic lead (normally the Director of Student Experience, Director of Undergraduate Education, Director of PGT Education or Director of PGR Education). Expectations of these roles are outlined in section 9.The Head of Department and Head of School will have overall responsibility for ensuring effective academic representation within their department, as per this agreement.
	5. The core purpose of the academic representation system is to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students at the College and engages students as partners in the development and enhancement of their learning.
	6. The core standards that should underpin the above purpose are:
		1. In accordance with the revised UK Code for Quality Assurance, representatives are engaged as partners in “the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience”.
		2. Representatives are involved in 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;
		3. Representatives are utilised to foster and build that understanding amongst the wider student body;
		4. Representatives are able to provide context surrounding issues and problems and help to establish the depth of feelings about certain issues - sometimes it’s right to prioritise the issue that affects a small number of people deeply rather than one that affects the majority to a lesser extent;
		5. 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 students;
		6. 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 encouraging active citizenship.
	7. Academic Reps, College staff and RHSU should treat each other as partners in all aspects of the scheme, and should commit to mutual respect and should work together to improve and enhance the student experience for all students.
1. **Academic Representation Structure**
	1. Representation (and therefore Rep roles) exist at four levels: every year of each programme (Course Reps), the Department (Senior Course Reps), the School (School Reps) and the College (Sabbatical Officers).
	2. Every student should have (at least) one named Course Rep who is responsible for representing their issues and concerns at the level of programme.
	3. Every department should have (at least) one named Senior Course Repwho is responsible for effectively representing students’ academic interests and creating change at department level.
	4. Every School should have a School Rep who is responsible for effectively representing students’ academic interests and creating change at School level.
	5. The roles of Course, Senior Course, School Rep and VP Education are distinct and should not be undertaken simultaneously by any one individual i.e. if a Course Rep is elected as School Rep they will no longer remain as a Course Rep.
	6. Ideally a Course Rep should never solely represent more than 50 students.
	7. The agreement recognises the significant amount of variation across the academic structures and is flexible enough to ensure that variations in provision are accounted for. For example, it may be appropriate to allocate specific Rep roles for ‘types’ of programme – for example having ‘Year in Industry Reps’ to represent all students on year in industry programmes, or ‘Joint Honours Reps’ where there are a number of Joint Honours programmes with relatively few students per programme, as well as Postgraduate Research Reps. To ensure successful implementation it is important that any specific Rep roles are agreed in discussion with the Students’ Union’s Academic Communities Coordinator for support and training purposes.
	8. The academic representation system should be as accessible and representative as possible. Therefore, all Course and Senior Course Reps should be offered as voluntary positions, while School Reps should be elected by their fellow students.
	9. Course Representative roles will volunteer at the beginning of the new academic year and will be in post until the end of the academic year. If a student wishes to continue the role they can volunteer again the following year. Student intakes after the beginning of the academic year will be covered by the existing representative(s) and students will be able to put themselves forward for election the following year.
	10. Senior Course Representative roles will volunteer in May, so that induction and training can be completed by the end of the third term and they are ready to take up positions from June.
	11. School Reps will be elected in March, alongside the Officer Trustee positions, so that induction and training can be completed by the end of the third term and they are ready to take up positions from June.

## **Course Reps**

* 1. Course Reps exist to effectively represent students’ academic interests at programme level; create change that improves the academic experience of students and escalate any issues that exist beyond their programme.
	2. They are expected to:
* Proactively and effectively gather feedback from students that they represent – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved;
* Exercise influence through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students they represent;
* Communicate progress and the outcomes of feedback to students – to ensure they understand what has, and will, or cannot happen as a result of their feedback;
* Act as a positive ambassador for the Students’ Union and Academic Reps.
	1. To achieve this, they will:
* Connect with all students that they represent and present a balanced view;
* Engage with underrepresented and hard-to-reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them;
* 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;
* Maintain strong ongoing relationships with staff in their academic unit;
* Work in partnership with staff within their programme and department to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students;
* Where applicable, work with the Senior Course Rep to actively engage with, and participate in, Periodic Departmental Reviews;
* Work together with students, College staff and RHSU to ensure the success of the academic representative system.
1. **Senior Course Reps**
	1. Senior Course Reps exist to effectively represent students’ academic interests at department level; create change; engage Course Reps within their department and to escalate any issues that exist beyond their department.
	2. They are expected to:
* Proactively and effectively gather feedback from Course Reps – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved across their department;
* Exercise influence at department level through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students they represent;
* Communicate progress and the outcomes of feedback to Course Reps and students in their department – to ensure students understand what has, and will, and cannot happen as a result of their feedback;
* Act as a positive ambassador for the Students’ Union and Academic Reps.
	1. To achieve this, they will:
* Ensure that they connect with, and regularly meet, Course Reps within their department and present a balanced view based on their feedback;
* Engage with underrepresented and hard-to-reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them;
* Chair Staff Student Committee (SSC) meetings and prepare effectively for those meetings by working with key College contacts to develop agendas and papers and ensure that agendas reflect key issues;
* Contribute to Periodic Departmental Reviews, where applicable, ensuring engagement and attendance of Course Reps to present a comprehensive and balanced view.
* Act as a Curriculum Consultant, where applicable, ensuring student representation during the validating of new, and continuing, degree programmes.
* Attend any department-level meetings as required.
* Maintain strong ongoing relationships with their Head of Department, School Manager and other key College contacts - providing regular input about what is working well and what could be improved;
* Work in partnership with staff within their department to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students;
* Work together with students, College staff and RHSU to ensure the success of the Academic Representation system.
* Work with the School Rep to provide feedback and input to the Students’ Union Education Executive and escalate any issues as appropriate.
1. **School Reps**
	1. School Reps exist to effectively represent students’ academic interests at School level; create change at School level; engage Senior Course Reps within their School and escalate any issues that exist beyond their School. This role is available for undergraduate students only (see section 9 for postgraduate provision).
	2. They are expected to:
* Proactively and effectively gather feedback from Senior Course Reps – building up an understanding of what is working well and what could be improved across their School;
* Exercise influence at School level through a range of relationships, networks and meetings to achieve positive change on behalf of the students they represent;
* Communicate progress and the outcomes of feedback to Senior Course Reps, Course Reps and students in their School – to ensure students understand what has, and will, happen as a result of their feedback;
* Act as a positive ambassador for the Students’ Union and Academic Reps.
	1. To achieve this, they will:
* Connect with, and regularly meet, Senior Course Reps within their School and present a balanced view based on feedback;
* Engage with underrepresented and hard-to-reach students, actively seeking out minority voices and representing them;
* Attend School-level meetings as required, such as School Board and School Education Committee;
* Maintain strong ongoing relationships with their Executive Dean and other key College contacts and provide regular input about what is working well and what could be improved;
* Work in partnership with staff within their School to co-create solutions and positive developments that will benefit students;
* Sit on Education Executive and provide feedback to guide SU initiatives and share best practice with other School Reps;
* Work closely with the VP Education to influence policy decisions;
* Ensure that positive changes are logged, recognised and celebrated;
* Work together with students, College staff and RHSU to ensure the success of the academic representative system.

## **Collectives**

* 1. Collectives are autonomous student bodies that are responsible for working with the Students’ Union to secure the general interests and collective rights of the students that define into the relevant groups.
	2. Provision of Collectives for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Students and Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students is bound by RHSU’s constitution.
	3. RHSU will elect six convenors for both the PGT and PGR Collectives who will be responsible for leading the work of the Collective. There must be one convenor per School.
	4. The convenors will attend School meetings as required, such as School Education Committee and School Research & Knowledge Committee (PGR).
	5. Each Collective will nominate, amongst themselves, a Chair. The Chair will attend College-level meetings as required, such as Education Strategy Committee (PGT) and Research Degrees Programmes Committee (PGR).

## **College Roles and Responsibilities**

* 1. Each school will nominate at least two members of staff who will act as ‘Key College Contacts’ for academic representation within that department. This will include the School Manager and a relevant academic lead (normally the Director of Student Experience, Director of Undergraduate Education, Director of PGT Education or Director of PGR Education). The Head of Department and Executive Dean will have overall responsibility for ensuring effective academic representation within their department(s), as per this agreement.
	2. Key contacts are responsible for supporting and developing academic representation within their department and for fostering an environment whereby Reps are valued, supported and encouraged to submit feedback.
	3. Key College Contacts are responsible for ensuring that every student on every programme within their department is aware of and has access to a named Course Rep and Senior Course Reps.
	4. The School Manager will maintain effective communication with RHSU ensuring key messages are cascaded within Departments and within RHSU as appropriate.
	5. The School Manager will ensure there is a record of Course Reps and Senior Course Reps within the department and will liaise with RHSU if they become aware of any changes or inaccuracies.
	6. Key College Contacts will proactively communicate with their Course and Senior Course Reps about relevant information from the department – such as any issues, developments, meeting dates etc.
	7. Department colleagues will encourage students to participate in Rep recruitment and provide time / space to do so where possible.
	8. Department colleagues will actively facilitate opportunities and the means for Course and Senior Course Reps to communicate with the students that they represent.
	9. Department colleagues will help raise the profile of the academic representation system overall and Course and Senior Course Reps within their department.
	10. Department colleagues will encourage the use of the Students’ Union system to log examples of positive changes that have resulted from students’ feedback and/or the work of Academic Reps.
	11. Key College Contacts will ensure that SSC meetings are organised in a timely manner and that the meetings are conducted effectively with minutes circulated and outcomes communicated.
	12. The School Manager will be responsible for the inclusion of the School Rep onto the School Board and the School Education Committee.
	13. The School Manager will be responsible for the inclusion of Collective Convenors onto School level committees as required.
	14. The Schools will ensure the inclusion of their School Rep on any other meeting that is deemed suitable.
	15. The Schools will ensure the circulation of minutes of School meetings and communication of outcomes to School Reps and RHSU.
	16. The Schools will work in conjunction with RHSU to ensure the effective running and ongoing development of the School Rep system.

##  **Students’ Union Roles and Responsibilities**

* 1. RHSU, in conjunction with the College, is jointly responsible for overseeing, supporting and developing the overall academic representation system.
	2. RHSU is responsible for overseeing all Course Rep, Senior Course Rep and School Rep recruitment – it will publish a clear timeline for promotion of volunteering, elections, nominations and voting.
	3. RHSU will collate the details of all Course Reps, Senior Course Reps and School Reps across the institution and ensure that these are communicated to Key College Contacts.
	4. RHSU will maintain effective communication with Key College Contacts, ensuring key messages are cascaded as appropriate.
	5. RHSU will provide effective training to all Academic Reps in a timely manner.
	6. RHSU will provide ongoing support and guidance to Academic Reps.
	7. RHSU will provide Academic Reps with the tools to create change i.e. policy briefings and research reports.
	8. RHSU will maintain a record of all key College contacts and provide opportunities for colleagues across departments to network and share challenges / examples of best practice.
	9. RHSU will track and analyse the diversity of the Academic Rep system and will develop joint plans with key College contacts about how to ensure Reps are representative of the student body.
	10. RHSU will maintain a system for recording positive achievements, successes and changes as a result of academic representation and use these to promote the benefits of the system.

## **Staff Student Committee**

* 1. The role of the StaffStudent Committee (SSC) is to provide a forum where Academic Representatives, in partnership with department colleagues, are able to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students in their cohorts. The committee provides a platform for an ongoing dialogue about opportunities and challenges and should provide the chance to build understanding about a range of issues. The committee is a formal mechanism for students to raise topics on behalf of the body they represent as well as an opportunity for staff to seek the views of students.
	2. The SSC should not be the only way for students to give feedback to department or school staff. It is the responsibility of Reps and department colleagues to ensure that there is ongoing dialogue.
	3. The SSC should meet at least three times a year, with at least one meeting in the Autumn term and one in the Spring term. Dates should be advertised to students at least three weeks in advance of the first meeting of the academic year.
	4. The main areas of responsibility for SSC should be as follows:
* Discussion and response to academic/course-related matters raised by students and staff.
* Reviewing the quality of the student experience within the department(s) through consideration of the relevant areas – such as learning and teaching methods, assessment and feedback, support, resources and organisational issues;
* Considering any proposed changes to the existing course units and programmes.
	1. It is recommended that, where possible, the number of staff members of an SSC should not exceed the number of student members.
	2. Membership of SSCs will be determined by departments, in recognition of the variation to academic structures across the College, but should generally include:
* Course Reps for all appropriate levels of study and (at least) one Senior Course Rep;
* Programme Lead(s) ;
* Academic lead as identified in Key College Contacts (usually the Director of Undergraduate Education, Director of PGT Education or Director of PGR Education)
* School Manager or relevant administrator, e.g. School Programme Administration Manager;
* Where relevant, in accordance with submitted agenda items, representatives from professional services teams.

### **Accountability**

* 1. This Agreement will form an appendix to the Memorandum of Cooperation between the College and the Students’ Union. It will be monitored and reviewed every year at the Joint Executive meetings.
	2. If, during the term of office, a Course Rep, Senior Course Rep or a School Rep steps down (or finishes their period of study – e.g. for January intakes), then every effort should be made to secure a new representative for the remainder of the term and RHSU will support this process.
	3. If it is felt that a Course Rep, Senior Course Rep or School Rep is not performing adequately in their role then RHSU should be contacted to discuss the issue and consider appropriate coaching and/or performance interventions.
	4. If either Party feels that this Agreement is not being adhered to, the issue should at first be raised:
* With the Senior Course Rep and/or Key College Contact ; or
* With the School rep and/or Executive Dean; or
* With the VP Education and/or Senior Vice-Principal (Education) if at a College-wide level.

**Signed:**

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***Principal Students’ Union President***