Course Rep Handbook 2022/23

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# Welcome

Congratulations on being elected to be a Course Representative. Course Reps are key to ensuring that the student voice is heard in every Department, and at every level, across the University. By listening to students, then working with academics to bring about changes, your actions actively help to enhance the quality of education here at Brunel.

Being a Course Rep can be immensely rewarding. Much of the experience you obtain through being a Rep can be linked to personal development and employability. The graduate market is very competitive and prospective employers are looking for people who stand out and can demonstrate, with real examples, skills listed in CVs. As a Course Rep you get to put skills into action, such as communication, leadership, teamwork, problem solving, time management etc.

# Introduction

The responsibilities of Course Reps are:

* To **collect feedback** from your cohort and to **represent** that to relevant academic and professional support staff.
* To ensure appropriate action is taken to address the concerns of students in your cohort (NB. this may be your cohort as a whole or a group within it e.g., dyslexic students). Here you may be required to **problem solve** and **negotiate** to bring about solutions that both your cohort and the associated academic and professional support staff find mutually agreeable.
* To **communicate** to your cohort what your department are doing to address student concerns.
* To **collaborate** with staff and other Reps to help overcome cross-course issues.

It is important to stress the role of a Course Rep is not to provide welfare support for students: when students bring welfare cases to you, please signpost them to the [Student Support services](https://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/supporting-you) or the Student Union’s [Advice Service](https://brunelstudents.com/adviceservice/) who are trained to deal with such issues.

This booklet aims to ensure that you have all the information you could possibly need to be able to fulfil your role as a Course Rep.

# Vice-President Colleges

The Student’s Union is lead by an elected full time Officer team who are employed to work full time representing students. This team is made up of the Students’ Union President, a Vice-President for Student Activities, and a Vice-President for each of the three academic Colleges at Brunel:

* [Vice President College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences (VP CEDPS)](https://brunelstudents.com/representation/vpcedps/)
* [Vice President College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences (VP CBASS)](https://brunelstudents.com/representation/vpcbass/)
* [Vice President College of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (VP CHMLS)](https://brunelstudents.com/representation/vpchls/)

As part of their role, our College Vice-Presidents campaign on areas affecting students’ educational needs, including on developing the Student Rep project, learning and teaching, academic facilities and educational support facilities. They also work on broader campaigns on issues such as Mental Health Awareness, the Climate Emergency and Black Lives Matter.

The College Vice-Presidents also represent students at a wide range of College Level and University Level meetings.

# Induction and Returner Rep Training

The Union provides Induction Training for all newly elected Reps and Returner Rep Training for all continuing and re-elected Reps. Induction training goes over the sort of things you should be doing as a Rep and helps you gain a better understanding of the meetings you should be attending. Returner Rep training seeks to help you take your role to the next level.

From October 10th through to November 4th we will be running over 20 separate training sessions at a variety of different times. Most of the sessions will take place in person but some will take place online. This is in order to make them as convenient as possible for you to attend.

Attending one of these training sessions is a mandatory part of the Rep role: those who have not come along to one of these sessions may be removed from their post.

# Academic Meetings

As a Course Rep, you will be expected to represent the views of your cohort at various academic meetings: Student Experience Committee (SEC) meetings (two times a year) and Board of Studies (BOS) meetings (once per term). You are also expected to attend Open Forums which are open to all students studying a particular course. These meetings are useful for discussing how to improve the educational experience. Sometimes the University may want the opinion of students on something they are doing or planning to do and will use these meetings to get opinions and ideas.

## **Open Forums**

One Open Forum takes place for each course at the start of each academic year (before the end of week 4). Some courses may schedule additional Open Forum meetings later in the academic year. All students on a course (or on highly related courses) are invited to come along to discuss their thoughts and feelings about their course with their department.

## Student Experience Committees

One of your main responsibilities will be to attend Student Experience Committee meetings. Each division within a Department has a Student Experience Committee (SEC), reporting to the Department Management Board, and onwards to College Education Committee.

### What is the Student Experience Committee for?

Student Experience Committee meetings are your opportunity to reflect and give feedback on the overall academic experience of the cohort you represent so that academic and professional staff involved with the delivery of the course can work in partnership with you to make things better. Topics covered at an SEC meeting could include the provision of library books, the size of teaching spaces, the timetabling of lectures, the running of personal tutoring sessions, etc.

### How formal are these meetings?

Although Student Experience Committee meetings can be run in a variety of ways, they all have a set agenda so that the meeting retains a structure and runs to time. A Student Experience Committee meeting, like any other meeting, is not a free for all and therefore you should go prepared knowing what issues you are going to raise and what else is on the agenda to be discussed. If any papers are circulated with the agenda then you should read these before the meeting.

### Student Experience Committee Co-chairs

As shown in the [terms of reference](about:blank), a Course Rep should Co-chair the SEC alongside an academic. Student Co-chairs should:

* Meet with the academic Co-chair of the relevant committee prior to the meeting to discuss the agenda and to prioritise items.
* Share responsibility with the academic Co-chair for making sure minutes and action lists are released promptly following a meeting.
* Share responsibility for chairing the SEC meetings with the academic Co-chair (*if the student Co-chair so wishes*).
* Attend Department Management Board (*in addition to their mandatory SEC and BOS meetings*).

## Board of Studies

In addition to attending Student Experience Committee meetings, as a Course Rep, you are also required to represent your cohort at Board of Studies Meetings. Each Course/ group of Courses have a Board of Studies (BOS), reporting to the Department Management Board, and onwards to College Education Committee.

### What is a Board of Studies for?

The purpose of a Board of Studies meeting is to provide a forum for student and staff representatives to discuss teaching, learning and support issues in an open manner within the framework of a formal structure. Contrary to the Student Experience Committee which looks at everything that affects the overall academic experience, the focus of this meeting is course content.

### How formal are these meetings?

Similar to Student Experience Committee meetings, Board of Studies meetings can be run in different ways although they will still have a set agenda so that the meeting retains a structure and runs to time. If any papers are circulated with the agenda, you should read these before the meeting.

## Department Management Board

The Department Management Board (DMB) provides the focus for the development and monitoring of the Department’s learning and teaching, quality assurance and enhancement, and research strategy. It evaluates these areas against relevant key performance indicators. A DMB receives and considers reports from Student Experience Committees, Boards of Studies, all Research Committees, and External Advisory Board(s) (where appropriate). Student Experience Committee Co-chairs should attend the corresponding DMB meetings for their department.

# Course Rep Elections

Elections for Level 4, Level 6 and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students take place at the start of the academic year. Those elected at the start of their Level 4 studies remain in post until the end of Level 5. Similarly, those elected at the start of their PGT degree remain in post for up to 2 years dependant on the duration of their programme.

## By-elections

Course Rep by-elections can be held at any time during the year. If a student from a course with a vacant Course Rep post wishes to stand for the position, they should contact their Course Director (in the first instance) so they can organise a by-election. Students can find out if there is a vacant Rep position for their Course on the Student Rep section of the Union Website.

As with our main Rep elections, Course Rep by-elections are held in class.

**Removing Reps from post:**

There are two ways a Course Rep can be removed from post:

* If a Rep has not completed either the Induction training or Returner Rep training by 4th November, they may be removed from their role.
* Complaints can be made against any Course Rep. If a complaint is made, it will be investigated and, if found to be legitimate, the Rep may be removed from post and a byelection called. All complaints should be sent to [studentvoice@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:studentvoice@brunel.ac.uk). The full process can be found [here](https://brunel365-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/suxxjjb_brunel_ac_uk/Ee-Lwvgx5CxCjgQocz08oesBY-ICqpwOLoueC9CccyS9jQ?e=ASDjeN).

# Union Support

In addition to the compulsory Induction or Returner Rep Training, we will provide you with the following support:

## Skills and Knowledge training

The Union organises a variety of optional skills and knowledge-based training sessions throughout the year. These sessions seek to help you be both more effective in your role and to develop you professionally.

## Student Rep Congress

Student Rep Congress meetings are an opportunity for you to collaborate with your fellow Reps, and to share your thoughts and feedback with the Union’s College Vice-Presidents to help them effectively represent the voice of students at College and University level meetings. They will take place at least once per term.

## The Rep Hub

The Rep hub is an online resource available to all elected Student Reps via the Union website. Its key features are:

* It enables you to message all students on your course
* Provides you with a variety of Resources to help you to be better able to do your job.

# Reward and Recognition

## Rep Awards

Each year, we provide awards to our best Student Reps. Such may include ‘*Returner Rep of the Year*’ or ‘*Postgraduate Researcher Rep of the Year*’.

Midway through Term 2 we put out calls for staff and students to nominate deserving Reps for an award.

Once we have received all the nominations, we undertake a shortlisting process. Following this, using the shortlist, the winners of each category are decided upon by small panel of judges (featuring the Vice-President Colleges).

## Rep Prize Pool

Each term, the Union hosts a prize pool to reward you for being amazing and engaged Reps. You will be entered into the draw:

* Once for each Union Skills or Knowledge training session you attend.
* Twice for every Rep Congress you attend.

Entries into the prize pool are cumulative. In the past, prizes for this draw have included bamboo coffee cups, hot chocolate, coffee, Locos Bar tabs, and an Ethical shop vouchers!

## HEAR

At the end of the academic year, if you have attending the Union’s mandatory Induction or Returner Rep training, your Rep role will be recognised on your Higher Education Attainment Report (HEAR). This will be published on your transcript when you graduate.

## University recognition schemes

We encourage you to gain recognition through the University’s available recognition schemes.

* Brunel+
* Brunel Volunteers

# Union Contacts

## Archan Raval

**Vice President College of Business, Arts, and Social Sciences (VP CBASS)**

As VP CBASS, Archan helps to represent the Student Voice at high level CBASS and University committees, often seeking the input of Reps prior to meetings. He also works collaboratively with the Union’s Academic Representation Coordinator to develop the package of training and support for Reps.

[Archan.Raval@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:Archan.Raval@brunel.ac.uk)

## Suraj Shaw

**Vice President College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences (VP CEDPS)**

As VP CEDPS, Suraj helps to represent the Student Voice at high level CEDPS and University committees, often seeking the input of Reps prior to meetings. He also works collaboratively with the Union’s Academic Representation Coordinator to develop the package of training and support for Reps.

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## Wiktoria Swoboda

**Vice President College of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (VP CHMLS)**

As VP CHMLS, Wiktoria helps to represent the Student Voice at high level CHMLS and University committees, often seeking the input of Reps prior to meetings. She also works collaboratively with the Union’s Academic Representation Coordinator to develop the package of training and support for Reps.

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## To Be Appointed

**Academic Representation Coordinator** – Andrea Stock

Andrea Stock is the Union Staff member responsible for academic Student representation. As part of his role, he works collaboratively with the VP Colleges arranges training for Course Reps and Postgraduate Researcher Reps and manages the logistics of the Course Rep elections process.

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# College Contacts

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