UWTSD Students' Union

Course Rep Handbook

2020-2021

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COURSE REPS

New Course Rep Checklist

Now you've been elected as Course Rep, you'll want to get stuck into your new role. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

Create an account on our website UWTSDUnion.co.uk

We will populate our website with useful content for you. You'll also be able to Submit and Vote for Big Ideas, a platform where you can make recommendations and steer the direction of the work of your Students' Union. Keep us bookmarked!

Attend in-person and online training sessions.

Your Course Rep training is mandatory and will equip you with the knowledge you'll need to thrive in your new role. It will provide a great opportunity to meet other Course Reps and members of the Students' Union team and will give you the chance to ask us any questions you have.

Read your Course Rep Handbook.

This will be a vital source of information, which you can dip in and out of as you experience your role throughout the academic year. It comes with lots of useful resources and key contacts to help you succeed.

Be Visible.

Introduce yourself to your peers! Tell them about your role, your aims for the year, and how you can help to enhance their student experience.

Prepare.

Contact your Programme Director for details of any upcoming Staff-Student Committees or other activities you can get involved in. Mark them in your calendar, to give yourself plenty of time and flexibility to meet course-mates and prepare for meetings.

Keep a record of your achievements.

As a Course Rep you will have the opportunity to influence and make positive changes to impact your cohort. Make sure you keep a record of any wins – big or small. We want to hear about them so we can celebrate your successes with the wider University community.

Submit and vote on Big Ideas!

If you have an idea and would like the Students' Union to drive it forward, submit it as a Big Idea on our website. Other students will be able to back you up and it may become policy: www.uwtsdunion.co.uk/big-ideas

Keep in touch with us and ask for help when you need it.

We are always here to lend a listening ear. If you are unsure of whether to raise an issue, want some advice, or have feedback about your role, please get in touch with us at any time by emailing union@uwtsd.ac.uk.



What is a Course Rep?

Student Voice is at the heart of all we do, and Course Reps are an integral part of our partnership approach to embed this in decision-making at all levels of UWTSD. Feedback is invaluable for the continuous improvement of the student experience at UWTSD, and your position of Course Rep is one of the most important in making sure the views and experiences of students are heard.

As a Course Rep, your role will be to canvas students on your course, to find out what they think, and to represent their views. You will be an essential and valued link between students, the University and the Students' Union, serving as a conduit for student voice on Staff-Student Committees and playing an integral role in quality processes such as Annual Programme Reviews and Institute-level reviews. You will also provide feedback on all aspects of the educational experience to the Students' Union, so that you can enrich and steer the direction of our work.

Although Course Reps are student representatives, for our system to be effective, academic staff have an important role to play in ensuring reps are elected for all courses. For you to have an idea of where you fit in, we've unpacked the expectations of your role of Rep, the SU, and the University.

The Role of a Course Rep



To promote your role and responsibilities with others on your course, so you become a friendly face and a point of contact for anybody with feedback for the University.

To consult students on matters of their academic experiences, finding out what they think of things such as feedback and assessment, course structure, and teaching and learning.

To represent the views of students at Staff-Student Committees, Annual Programme Reviews and Institute-level reviews where applicable.

To relay meeting outcomes to students on your course, to make sure they're informed of how their feedback is being implemented.

Where necessary, to signpost students to more appropriate University or SU services so that they're effectively supported.

To actively engage with Student Voice Reps by channelling wider trends in student feedback in their direction.

In order to thrive and enjoy your role as Course Rep, it is important you:

Participate in compulsory training run by the Students' Union.

Familiarise yourself with the University and SU services so that you can refer more complex issues.

Attend informal meetings run by the Students' Union and Student Voice Reps (such as Tasty Tidbits sessions).

Keep in contact with the Students' Union, to report on progress and any areas you need additional support. Help us to help you!

The Role of the Students' Union

The role of the Students' Union is to support you in your role of Course Rep. We are here as a point of contact for you throughout your time as a rep, to answer any questions or concerns you have, and to empower you in your role. We are here to support you through training, helping you to promote your role, and to assist you in raising issues where you are unsure of how or where to go.

The Role of the University

The role of the University is to provide you with opportunities to give feedback about your experiences, such as through organising Staff-Student Committees. The University has a commitment to ensuring student voice activity is embedded in all aspects of its planning, and to acknowledge its importance in enhancing the student experience. The University also have a role in creating a discursive, inclusive culture where you are given the opportunity to raise ideas and issues, and where the views of students are treated with respect.



How to be a Course Rep

Now you know a little more about the role of Course Rep, and how you will be supported by the University and Students' Union, you'll want some tips and advice about how to effectively carry out your role.

Remember that you've been elected as Course Rep by your peers to act and speak up on behalf of students on your programme. Your role is to find out what students on your course think about their academic experiences, and to relay that information to the University so that they can make positive changes. It is important during your time as Course Rep that you do not simply give your own opinions or represent the views of your friends. You should actively engage, canvas, and represent your whole group, even if this means you do not necessarily agree with the opinions you're presenting. Remember that if you're ever unsure or uncomfortable in presenting student feedback, you can contact one of our Student Voice and Advocacy Coordinators for advice.

Unsure of how to promote yourself?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Ask your lecturers if you can make announcements in class.

Use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself to your peers, outlining your role and how students can contact you. Once you've settled into your role, you can do this before any upcoming Staff-Student Committees to help you prepare.

Ask to put up your contact details on your programme noticeboards or on forums on Moodle.

Talk directly with students as much as possible.

Chatting to students on your course is the most effective way to find out what they think and show them that you're committed to your role. You could even consider setting up 'drop-in' sessions, where you invite students to join you for a cuppa in between lectures.

Use the Students' Union!

We're here to support you throughout your time as Course Rep. Talk to SU staff if you have an idea to boost engagement with your peers and we'll help you to set it up.

Consider writing a blog post for our website.

Share your success stories or to raise your profile as a Rep.
www.UWTSDUnion.co.uk/articles

Remember that the more you engage with students and their feedback, the better understanding you'll develop of them. Having a sound understanding of their views will give you confidence in representing them.

Unsure of how to resolve issues?

Don't panic – we are here to give you as much help and support as you need. Your Course Rep training should equip you with all the information you need to effectively resolve issues, however most problems can be resolved in the following ways:

An issue affecting students on your course.

If there is a pressing matter, it's best not to wait for your next Staff-Student Committee to raise concerns. Tackle time-sensitive issues by addressing them directly with your programme team. If you do not feel comfortable in doing this, you can ask the SU for some support.

If an issue is brought to you and it's not time-sensitive but remains an important piece of feedback, collate this and take it to your next Staff-Student Committee. The benefit of this is that it will be heard, and therefore should be actively addressed by the University.

An issue affecting students across the University.

If issues are raised with you that are impacting students outside of your programme as well, the best thing to do is to make your Sabbatical Officers and Student Voice Reps aware of the feedback. They will be able to raise these concerns at an appropriate University committee, where high-level issues are addressed.

An issue involving individual staff members.

It is important in any meeting where you are asked to give feedback, that you don't name or publicly criticise individual members of staff or students. If you are approached with concerns about an individual staff member, it is always best to seek advice from the Students' Union. We can help to address issues sensitively and discreetly. Talk to one of our Student Voice and Advocacy Coordinators.

The boundaries of your role

As a Course Rep, you may find at times that students feel more comfortable in approaching you with issues than University or SU staff.

At times you may be unsure of how to address them, and it is important you are clear on what you can and cannot help with.

You can help with

In summary, you will be a point of contact for any course-level issues. Use the resources in this handbook to help you keep records and document them. Issues may include:

- Study resources (such as availability of books, computer labs, laptop loans, library resources, content uploaded to Moodle)
- Curriculum and course content issues
- Communication between University staff, Students' Union and students
- Timetabling issues
- Placement concerns
- Hidden course costs that the University may be unaware of
- Issues of course structure (for example, block teaching, work distribution)
- Assessments and deadlines
- Teaching methods and resources
- Accessibility

You cannot help with

You should always signpost when students want to discuss any of the following issues with you:

- Welfare concerns.
- Formal complaints.
- Individual student cases such as allegations of academic misconduct, non-academic misconduct, appeals, extenuating circumstances.
- Allegations of harassment or bullying.
- Individual student performance.
- Complaints against staff members.

Remember that it's okay to not know all the answers. Other students on your course will value that you're there as a first point of contact, even if you don't know how to help them. Just get in touch with us at the Students' Union, and we will help you out. Alternatively, the Hwb help desk is an excellent service if you're looking for a point of contact within the University to support you in referring a student.

UWTSD Union
Values and Priorities

At UWTSD Union, we are proud of our activities which help to amplify and strengthen your voice.

Our priorities are:

1. To strengthen your influence over decisions that affect you.
2. To ensure that you understand your rights and have help when you need it.
3. To invest in activities and opportunities to enable you to develop your skills.
4. To campaign for a fairer and more inclusive society.
5. To make it easy for you to direct our work and resources.

Our values are:

1. That education should be shaped by students.
2. That a University experience is more than a degree.
3. That University and Students' Union activities and services should be accessible to all.
4. In challenging inequality.
5. In student leadership.

Key Contacts

Students' Union:

Sabbatical Officers

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Student Voice & Advocacy Coordinators

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