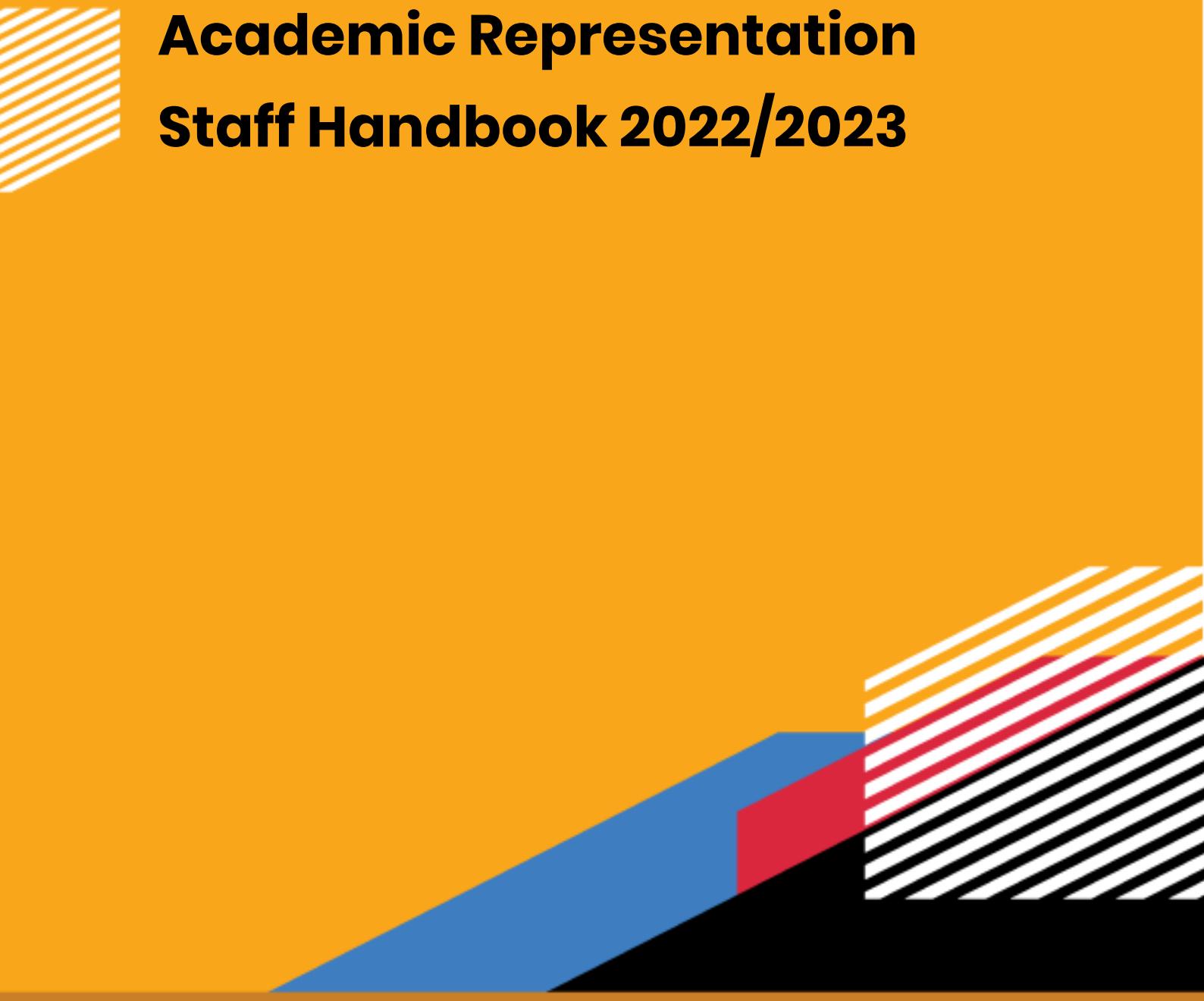


Academic Representation Staff Handbook 2022/2023



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Introduction from VP Education

Hi, I'm Jack Liversedge, Vice President Education at the University of Exeter Students' Guild. I am one of the four elected Full-Time Officers representing students at Exeter.

Why is student representation important?

As an elected officer, it is my job to ensure that I represent all students at the University of Exeter, and that their educational experience whilst here is the best that it can be. As part of my role, I work alongside and support our Academic Representation system.



The Academic Representation system plays a crucial role in improving the student experience as it empowers and provides students with an opportunity to provide feedback to the Guild, University, and their department. The feedback that students provide is then used to shape and improve their course and university experience. Academic Representatives and Department Officers are extremely important as they provide a unique "on the ground" perspective that would be hard to replicate any other way.

Jack Liversedge
Vice President Education

Introduction from DVC Education and Student Experience



Hello, I'm Tim Quine, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) and Professor of Earth Surface Science in the Geography Department.

Fundamentally, my task is to ensure that education and wider student experience at Exeter is the best that it can be. That means working with Jack, other sabbatical officers, and our Academic Representatives to create an environment in which students can discover, grow and thrive together. Much of that environment is created across the wider university by the Guild, the Athletic Union and the professional services staff in employability, wellbeing, study skills, digital, Hubs, etc. With respect to the academic environment, we are seeking to offer stimulating programmes of study, high quality teaching and academic support, fair assessments and useful feedback, access to high quality learning resources and an inclusive learning community. We can only do this if Student Voice is at the heart of our decision-making, planning and governing. That is why Guild Sabbatical officers represent student interests on all of the key University-level committees and why Academic Representative roles are so important in your departments. We can only improve all those aspects of high quality academic experience if we understand what our students most need to see change, and what they don't want us to change!

Over the coming year, please use this opportunity to talk to our students as much as you can, and collaborate with them and colleagues to co-create solutions. Our student representatives are supported by academic and professional services colleagues in your departments, who are committed to working in partnership with them, and by the Students' Guild and other teams who coordinate our representation structures.

Professor Tim Quine
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)

Key Terms

Academic Representation

Academic Representation is the process through which we empower students to become full and active partners in their educational experience, with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Exeter. Any student involved in representation is a Student Rep. The purpose of representation is to bring about change and improvement, not to monitor the status quo.

Academic Reps

Academic Reps are students who have volunteered to represent other students in their department or faculty, who ensure the voices of their local academic community are heard, listened to, and acted upon. Their role is to work with academic and administrative staff to ensure student feedback is addressed, creating solutions, and encouraging positive change for the Exeter student experience. The title of “Academic Rep” includes both Taught and Research reps; Taught reps are generally grouped by Department, while Research reps are generally grouped by Faculty. Note that not all Academic Reps are members of a Department or Faculty liaison committee – most will work to create solutions outside of formal meetings and will report into those meetings through the meeting chair and secretary.

Department Officers

Department Officers are elected volunteer roles which replace the previous positions of College Officer and Subject Chair (but do not take on all their respective responsibilities). They are the most senior student representatives for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in their academic department and faculty. Their role is to work with other officers, reps, and students in the academic community, alongside the Full-Time Officers and senior staff, to promote solutions that will encourage positive change to the overall student experience, including academic interests, building a community, ensuring student wellbeing, and promoting opportunities for engagement.

PGR Officers

This part-time, paid role replaces the former elected position of Doctoral College Officer with three roles recruited by interview. Together, they are responsible for representing the views and needs of the whole PGR student community, focusing on overall PGR student experience (such as research culture, academic interests, researcher development, general wellbeing, and opportunities for engagement). Their role is to support and empower the PGR Academic Reps in each Faculty to make sure students in different disciplines and research groups are efficiently and effectively represented, and to work with and support the Full-Time Officer team and senior University leaders to make positive change in the interests of students.

Rep Pathways

Pathways refer to additional responsibilities that are available for student representatives at any level (UG or PG, Rep or Officer). In addition to the Lead Rep and Student Chair pathways mentioned below, other options that reps may wish to explore include: attending University meetings to represent the views of students within their local academic community; attending focus groups to provide insight on the student experience; undertaking research into specific aspects of the student experience; or leading on local projects, campaigns and events to encourage positive change.

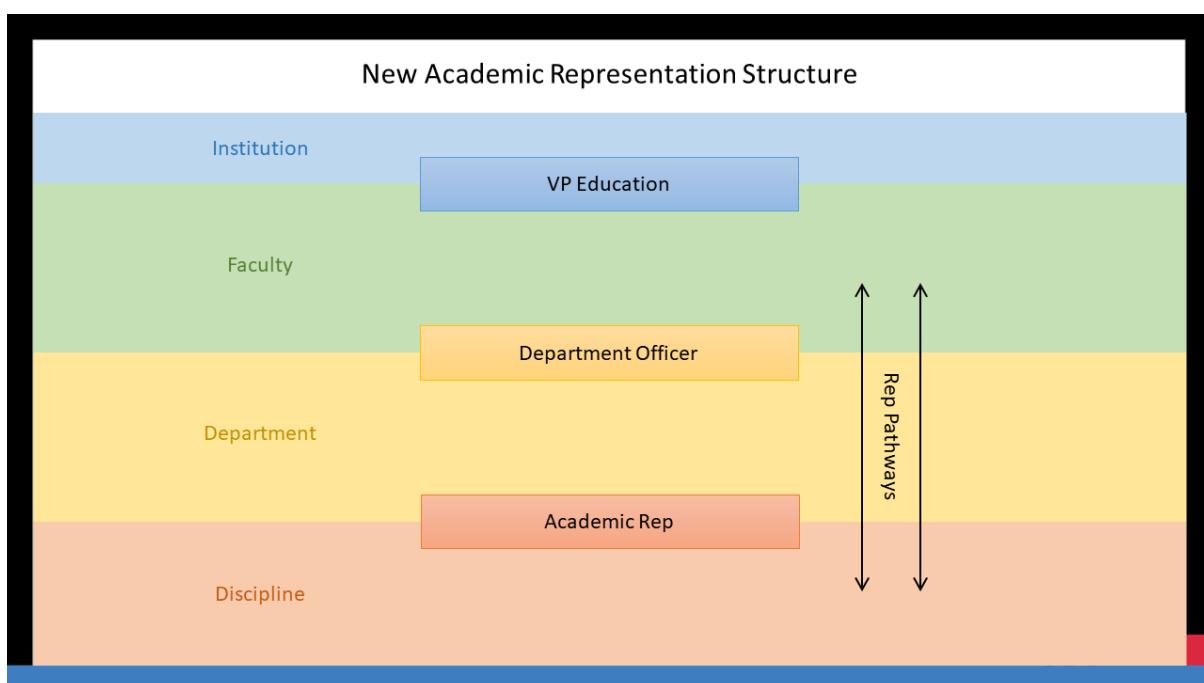
Lead Rep (Rep Pathway)

Lead Reps are Academic Reps who have taken on an optional role to lead local representation within a larger department; this may occur when there are many reps for a particular academic community who require local leadership. For example, there may be a “Natural Sciences Lead Rep” within Physics and Astronomy, a “First Year Lead Rep” within the Law School, or a “French Language Lead Rep” within Languages and Cultures. Reps within each community are supported by the Guild and empowered to decide what their own leadership should look like – they may select a Lead Rep for the whole year, cycle who their Lead Rep is throughout the year, or may decide that they do not need one at all for their particular group (for example, if there are only two or three reps per year). *The decision to have a lead rep would be decided by reps, in conjunction with the Guild.*

Student Chair (Rep Pathway)

The Student Chair is the optional student co-chair of a formal meeting. Their role is to chair regular meetings between students and University staff alongside an academic co-chair (who is a member of academic staff). In addition to leading the meeting itself, the role includes working with the meeting secretary and academic co-chair to organise the agenda and meeting reports in advance of the meeting and following up on actions and progress with them afterwards.

This component of the former Subject Chair role was split out following feedback that reps may not want to be Chair for a whole year, so this is not a permanent role, and is reviewed in advance of each relevant meeting.



Academic Societies

Academic Societies are student groups set up with a core aim of providing additional academic and social opportunities for students on a particular course or in a particular department, and for other students who have an interest in that subject area but aren't studying it for their degree. We strongly recommend working with the Academic Societies connected to your department on activities such as academic skills workshops, placements and internships, graduate opportunities, employability fairs, and external speaker events, and we are available to support this work. Each society is encouraged to select a “Society Rep” from their committee to lead on this activity.

Academic Representation Assistant

Academic Representation Assistants are student staff assigned to a Faculty who support the delivery of our Academic Representation system by working closely with reps in the local community.

Student Experience

Student Experience is a broad term that can have many definitions – when we refer to the student experience here, we are considering every aspect of University life, and as such, student experience can broadly be divided in two – Academic experience, which covers everything related to their programme of study, and non-academic (or Community) experience, which covers everything related to extra-curricular engagement and overall wellbeing. Students who have signed up to be Academic Reps primarily focus on the first area, while Department Officers and other student reps at the Guild will get more involved in both sides of the student experience.

Partnership

Partnership between staff and students is at the core of Academic Representation, as is partnership between Students' Guild staff and University colleagues to deliver support for the processes involved. Partnership working breaks down the barriers between staff and students and enables a joint approach to problem solving. This approach recognises the different but equal value which staff and students can bring and helps promote an academic community of staff and students who are engaged with each other's aspirations.

Toolkit

The Academic Representation Toolkit is a staff-facing document designed to support various methods of local engagement with academic representation (activity at department- and discipline-level). The toolkit provides some examples of different ways to engage students beyond the traditional Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) and PGR Liaison Forum (PGRLF) meetings. It also suggests how those different methods of engagement can feed into formal reporting for senior Faculty committees on the actions taken in response to student feedback without needing to go through specific intermediate meetings.

Responsibilities of the Students' Guild

The Students' Guild is responsible for the direct management, administration, and delivery of the Academic Representation system itself. This includes:

- Maintaining the official database of student reps which can be accessed as needed.
- Recruiting, training, and providing support for student reps at all levels of study.
- Providing HEAR accreditation and other reward and recognition for student reps.
- Communicating with the Student Community and Partnerships team about the University's needs for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught academic representation.
- Communicating with the Doctoral College PGR Support and Researcher Development teams about the University's needs for Postgraduate Research academic representation.
- Communicating with Department and Faculty contacts regarding their local needs for academic representation at every level of study.
- Leading on the delivery of the Unitu pilot.

Responsibilities of the University

The University is responsible for the processing and actioning of student feedback in relation to the management and review of teaching provision in line with the Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) manual, and for actively supporting the collection of student feedback and the Guild's management of the Academic Representation system. This includes:

- Providing the Students' Guild with the contact details of staff who will be responsible for liaising with the Guild about the Academic Representation system.
- Providing the Students' Guild with the contact details of senior academic and administrative staff for each Faculty and Department (e.g. DESEs, DPGRs, Senior Tutors, Dept Managers).
- Maintaining an accurate database of academic and administrative staff roles which can be accessed as needed by students, student reps, and the Students' Guild.
- Administrative duties, and delivery of SSLCs and Toolkit events.
- Promoting student representative positions to students during the recruitment period(s).
- Informing the Students' Guild of any students who come forward to University staff directly wishing to become a student rep [using our Microsoft Form](#).
- Closing the feedback loop with students.

Responsibilities of Student Reps

Student representatives are students that have been elected or appointed to be the voice of other students and to speak and act on behalf of others in order to set out their interests. Academic Reps are not recruited for the second definition of “representative” – to be an example of a larger whole – and as such are not delegates of the student body who can speak for students-at-large. For that type of representative viewpoint, it is more appropriate to set up a focus group or event that is open to all students. Be cautious not to give tasks to Reps and Officers that are outside the responsibilities of a student rep, or beyond their remit as officers and representatives of the Students’ Guild.

Activities that would be considered within the remit of a rep or officer include anything related to student experience (academic, engagement and general wellbeing), such as:

- Closing the feedback loop with students
- Meetings to discuss changes related to student feedback
- Meetings to discuss progress and updates on actions
- Teaching Excellence/Research Excellence/Quality Review meetings
- Other meetings with staff, if directly related to student experience or quality assurance

Activities that would be considered outside the responsibilities of an officer or rep include “student ambassador” promotional activity, and dealing with individual complaints or personal concerns:

- Any other staff meetings, unless directly related to student experience or quality assurance
- Promoting staff-organised social events (unless related to student feedback)
- Organising careers events
- Faculty or Department marketing and promotion
- Championing or advocating for a University service (such as the Library or Career Zone)
- Any activity related to Academic Misconduct
- Personal wellbeing (please direct affected students to Wellbeing Services or Guild Advice)

Student Reps are recruited to represent students’ interests, and not be the first point of contact for staff for anything related to the students in their department. Where students are required for input in activity beyond the student experience, this opportunity should be offered to all students equally.

Student Reps registered to Exeter campuses should also not be asked to take part in any activity related to student experience at Truro or Penryn. This contact should be made with student reps from the Falmouth and Exeter Students’ Union only (see below).

Time Commitment

The **Academic Rep** role is a part-time voluntary position with an estimated commitment of 1-2 hours per week (maximum). This averages at 45-60 hours maximum across the year, and is lower outside of term-time. [Role Description](#)

The **Department Officer** role is a part-time voluntary position for one year with an estimated commitment of 2-3 hours per week in term-time (averaging at 60 hours across the year per officer). The role is designed to be shared between 2-4 officers per department. [Role Description](#)

The **PGR Officer** role is a part-time student staff (employed) position, with an average commitment of 5 hours a week for 32 weeks (term-time) and 2.5 hours a week for 12 weeks (out of term). The role is designed to be shared between 3 officers.

Student Representation in Devon and Cornwall

The University of Exeter has two separate students' unions which provide services to a split student population. Exeter Students' Guild provides representation for students registered in Exeter, while Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union provides representation for students registered in Cornwall.

The Falmouth and Exeter Students Union (The SU)

The SU are our partner union who support and represent University of Exeter students registered at Cornwall campuses – Penryn and Truro. They have their own Academic Representation system which works in parallel with our system at the Students' Guild. Please ensure you are speaking with the correct union when discussing your students' representation and student experience!

Chairing Joint Meetings

Certain meetings include student reps from both the Guild and The SU. Wherever this is the case, if a student co-chair is recommended, any Student Chair(s) for these meetings should be jointly agreed in advance by the reps from Exeter **and** the reps from Cornwall. While the Chair position is not a representative role by itself, every rep needs to be comfortable that the voices of their respective students will be heard in that meeting. If this is not possible, the meeting should be chaired by a member of University staff instead.

Attending Meetings

If student representation is required at a University meeting where the interests of both Exeter and Cornwall students are discussed, such as an Education Strategy Group, Graduate Research Strategy Group, Teaching Excellence, or Quality Review, there **must always** be a representative from Exeter **and** a representative from Cornwall in attendance, as Exeter reps (such as a Department Officer or PGR Rep) **cannot** represent the interests of Cornwall students, and vice-versa.

BMBS Medicine

BMBS Medicine is a course that is split between Devon and Cornwall – as such, the two students' unions work together to provide services to a split population. We introduce this split during induction, and all students who are transferring from Exeter to Truro (or vice versa) will receive information from the union they are departing and the union they are joining to ensure they are given the necessary information about representation, activities, and student support services.

Recruitment of Student Representatives

Recruiting and Appointing Academic Reps (Applications)

The recruitment system for Academic Reps is a website-based application form that is open all year at www.exeterguild.com/apply, although we only actively and widely promote the opportunity to students during the first few weeks of Term 1 (for the current year) and the last few weeks of Terms 2 and 3 (for the following year). We also do local promotion with specific departments when additional programmes start at other points in the year, such as Degree Apprenticeships and Professional Training programmes. There is no selection process for Academic Reps. Anyone who wishes to become a rep is able to do so and we do not put a cap on numbers.

If you have received an expression of interest from a student wishing to be a rep, you can either direct them to our applications page at www.exeterguild.com/apply, or you can add their details directly to [this Microsoft Form](#) so that we can confirm with them and get them added to the system.

For key dates in this year's recruitment cycle, please refer to the Academic Year Calendar (below).

Recruiting and Appointing Department Officers (Elections)

Department Officers are recruited annually during our Student Elections. Anyone who wishes to nominate themselves can do so on the Guild website during the Nominations period, and then students within the same department vote for their preferred candidate during the Voting period. Candidates must complete a personal statement of why they would make a good Officer which other students are able to read to inform their decision. The Students' Guild and the University must not endorse specific candidates, but should work together to promote the elections as a whole.

These elections are usually held in February/March – if the positions are not all filled during that election session, we may hold by-elections in May and/or October to fill the vacant places.

For key dates in this year's recruitment cycle, please refer to the Academic Year Calendar (below).

Recruiting and Appointing PGR Officers (Interviews)

PGR Officers are recruited by interview, usually during May and June with any remaining vacancies advertised in October. Anyone who wishes to apply can do so [on Handshake](#) or by following the links on www.exeterguild.com/careers. Candidates must complete a personal statement of why they would make a good Officer which will be reviewed by the panel in advance of interviews taking place. Students' Guild staff and current student leaders will be involved in the selection process.

Working with Students and Reps

Student Feedback

The core message for engaging with students is to not rely on formal meetings as the only means of collecting and reviewing student feedback. The purpose of those meetings is officially to provide a report to senior executive committees outlining the participation of students in the management and review of education provision, and the outcomes of that engagement – the actual participation of students and engagement with the process of giving their feedback likely occurs elsewhere.

We have prepared an Academic Representation Toolkit which provides some examples of different ways to engage students beyond the traditional Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) or PGR Liaison Forum (PGRLF), as the liaison committee model is seen as ineffective by itself when it is the only component of student co-creation. Some of those alternative and additional methods include:

- Informal meetings with all students in a cohort (these are variously referred to as Town Hall Forums, Student Experience Meetings, Cohort Assemblies, etc).
- Digital feedback platforms, such as Unitu (these platforms allow for the direct collection of feedback from students, enabling student reps to focus on creating solutions with staff).
- Social events for discussing students' feedback, such as coffee mornings or pizza evenings.
- Focus groups (these do not just need to be open to student reps – any student may like to have the opportunity to get involved and discuss a particular topic).
- Ad-hoc meetings between reps and staff (these meetings do not have a fixed membership or a fixed schedule, and are likely to be the main method by which staff and reps discuss and resolve a particular topic).

University Meetings

Some University meetings require student representation – these include senior Faculty committees for Education and Student Experience, Department committees for Employability, Sustainability, and EDI, institutional committees for Quality Review, working groups of the various University Boards, and many others that we are probably not even aware of! It is important that the students invited to these committees are briefed on the purpose of the meeting, and are positively engaged with the work of the committee – therefore Department Officers and other reps with specific titles should not be ex-officio members of committees solely because of their position. Please get in touch with the Academic Communities and Representation team (see next section) with your requirements for student representation for each committee, so we can discuss with you and with students regarding who it would be best to invite.

Working with Officers

The Department Officers for your department (or the PGR Officers aligned to your faculty) are responsible for supporting and empowering the team of reps in their Department and Faculty to ensure students in different disciplines are efficiently and effectively represented. As they sit at a level which is quite far above the day-to-day provision of teaching and research, their main role is to foster the development of an academic community, rather than focus on specific bits of individual student feedback. Be sure you aren't treating them as a "single point of contact" for all the reps in your department or faculty – the Officers have their own areas of expertise that is distinct from the other student reps, so please do get in touch with us so we can point you to the most relevant reps.

Closing the Feedback Loop

Everyone who is involved in Academic Representation – student reps, academic departments, and University and Guild support staff – are responsible for closing the feedback loop. It is important that students clearly see that their feedback has been engaged with, whether or not their suggestions directly lead to changes. Three things are important when closing the feedback loop – referencing that these changes have come about through their feedback (which encourages them to continue giving their feedback), saying how you have worked with their student reps to come to a solution (which shows the value of the representation system), and explaining the decisions that have been made – even if you couldn't make all the changes they wanted (which can help them increase their understanding of the processes behind their learning). You can close the feedback loop by:

- Posting an update on ELE
- Updating the class in the next lecture
- Using display screens or noticeboards in the department
- Closing the feedback item in Unitu, if your Department is in the trial

What to do if a Rep or Officer becomes Unavailable

At certain times during their term in office, an Officer or Rep may become unavailable or otherwise unable to perform their duties. This may occur if they step down from their role, but may also refer to occasions when a rep becomes unresponsive.

If this does occur, there should always be another Officer or Rep who can be spoken to instead; in order to avoid gaps in the system, no role exists in isolation. There are multiple Reps and Officers within each department and faculty who are trained to represent students, and the lack of a rep for a particular programme variant does not preclude the other reps from being able to represent those students.

If you are concerned about a particular rep or officer not performing the expected duties of their role, please get in touch with us so we can support them – we will not directly remove reps from their positions, but we will endeavour to support them through a discussion of whether they are interested in continuing.

Important Contacts

The Academic Communities and Representation team at the Students' Guild supports Academic Representation, and each faculty has a designated contact who covers all levels of study (Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, and Postgraduate Research). Please get in touch with them if you have questions about student reps in your faculty. Each member of the team also supports a specific secondary area of representation which does not neatly align with the faculties.

Faculty	Contact	Also Supports
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS)	Tom Clemo Tom.Clemo@ExeterGuild.com	INTO Programmes
Health and Life Sciences (HLS)	Grace Engle Grace.Engle@ExeterGuild.com	Distance Learners
Environment, Science and Economy (ESE)	Claire Calverley Claire.Calverley@ExeterGuild.com	Degree Apprenticeships
Team Manager	Charlie Kiley Charlie.Kiley@ExeterGuild.Com	All faculties and additional areas of support

Academic Year Calendar

Start Date	Activity	End Date
September (pre-arrivals)	Induction MOOC content	September
Thu 1 September	Guild Induction Sessions for new and returning students	Fri 30 September (Week 1)
Mon 12 September	Department Officer Inductions	Fri 16 September
Wed 21 September	Dept Officer Election Nominations	Wed 5 October
Mon 26 September (Week 1)	Academic Rep Overviews (for Town Halls / Cohort Assemblies)	Fri 14 October (Week 3)
Mon 26 September (Week 1)	Rep Recruitment Open	(Open all year)
Mon 3 October (Week 2)	Rep Recruitment Promotion	Fri 28 October (Week 5)
Mon 10 October (Week 3)	Academic Rep Training	Fri 28 October (Week 5)
Tue 11 October (Week 3)	Dept Officer Election Voting	Thu 13 October (Week 3)
Mon 24 October (Week 5)	Rep Networking Sessions	Fri 4 November (Week 6)
Mon 7 November (Week 7)	PGR Rep Recruitment Open	(Open all year)
Mon 21 November (Week 9)	PGR Rep Recruitment Promotion	Fri 9 December (Week 11)
Mon 12 December (Week 12)	PGR Rep Handover	Fri 16 December (Week 12)
Mon 9 January (Week 0)	PGR Rep Induction	Fri 13 January (Week 0)
Mon 16 January (Week 1)	Leadership Elections Nominations (including Department Officers)	Fri 3 February (Week 3)
Feb TBC	Student Leadership Conference	Feb TBC
Tue 21 February (Week 6)	Leadership Elections Voting	Thu 23 February (Week 6)
Mon 20 March (Week 10)	Rep Recruitment Promotion	Fri 31 March (Week 11)
Mon 17 April	Rep Recruitment Promotion	Fri 5 May (Week 1)
May TBC	Department Officer By-Elections (TBC if needed)	May TBC
Mon 22 May (Week 4)	Department Officer Handover	Fri 16 May (Week 7)
May TBC	Department Officer and Academic Rep training	May TBC

Guild Support for Reps

Officer Handover and Induction

Each year after Officer recruitment, there is a period of handover where the outgoing officer meets the incoming officer to pass on tips and specific activities that should be continued for the next year; this usually happens before the summer break. Handover also generally includes introductions to the Guild and University staff they will be working with over the next year.

Immediately after the summer break, often in the week before Freshers', new Officers receive their main induction to the role, including an overview of the role responsibilities, and training on leading and empowering their academic community.

Rep Training and Networking

Training for Reps generally happens from Week 1 to Week 5 of Term 1 (or the first few weeks of January for PGR), and includes Active Listening and Communication, Collaboration and Negotiation, Teamwork, and Disclosure and Wellbeing. These sessions are delivered live (on campus where possible) and make up the core of rep training. Additional and supplementary sessions are mostly delivered online through our membership platform, and therefore are available whenever reps are recruited throughout the year.

During this period, we also hold in-person networking and Role Overview sessions for reps from different departments to meet their elected officers and each other.

Online Resources

Online resources are available for student reps through our membership platform. Articles include introductions to Academic Representation and Quality Assurance, how to engage with students and work proactively with University staff, closing the feedback loop, making the most of meetings, and how to represent specific academic communities, including distance learners, interdisciplinary students, and degree apprentices.

Briefings

Where reps have expressed an interest in attending specific meetings (or getting involved in other specific activity), we are available to brief them on what they should be considering during those activities to ensure the student voice is at the centre of it. We may also invite University colleagues to assist in some briefings – such as for Quality Review activity – so we are all on the same page regarding expectations of reps at those sessions.

Ongoing Support

Throughout the year, the Academic Communities and Representation team are available to support all student reps. If you think a rep is concerned about their role responsibilities, or their workload, please do point them in our direction – that is what we're here for! We offer bookable drop-in sessions throughout the day, and most of the time can be found in our offices in DH1 Devonshire House and/or G48 South Cloisters.

Development

We are planning numerous activities for continuous development throughout the year – this doesn't stop at the end of initial training! We are hoping to bring back the Student Leadership Conference this year, and while sessions will be tailored for our team of student leaders, many opportunities will also be open to all students.

Who should I talk to?

STUDENT REPRESENTATION

Who should I talk to?

