



# **ACADEMIC REP TRAINING**





# **Academic Representation and the Rep role**



# What will you learn?

- What is Academic Representation
- What do Course Reps and Senior Course Reps do
- How to be an effective Rep
- Where to access help and resources

# What is Academic Representation?

## **RHSU definition:**

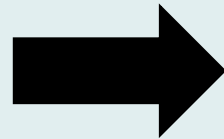
“The purpose of academic representation is to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students at Royal Holloway University and engages students as partners in the development, assurance and enhancement of their learning.”

# Why is Academic Representation Important?

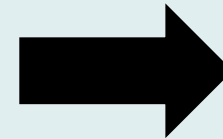
In short:

Academic Representation allows students the opportunity to make changes that they would like to see at a course level all the way to the university level.

An issue is brought up that students want to change



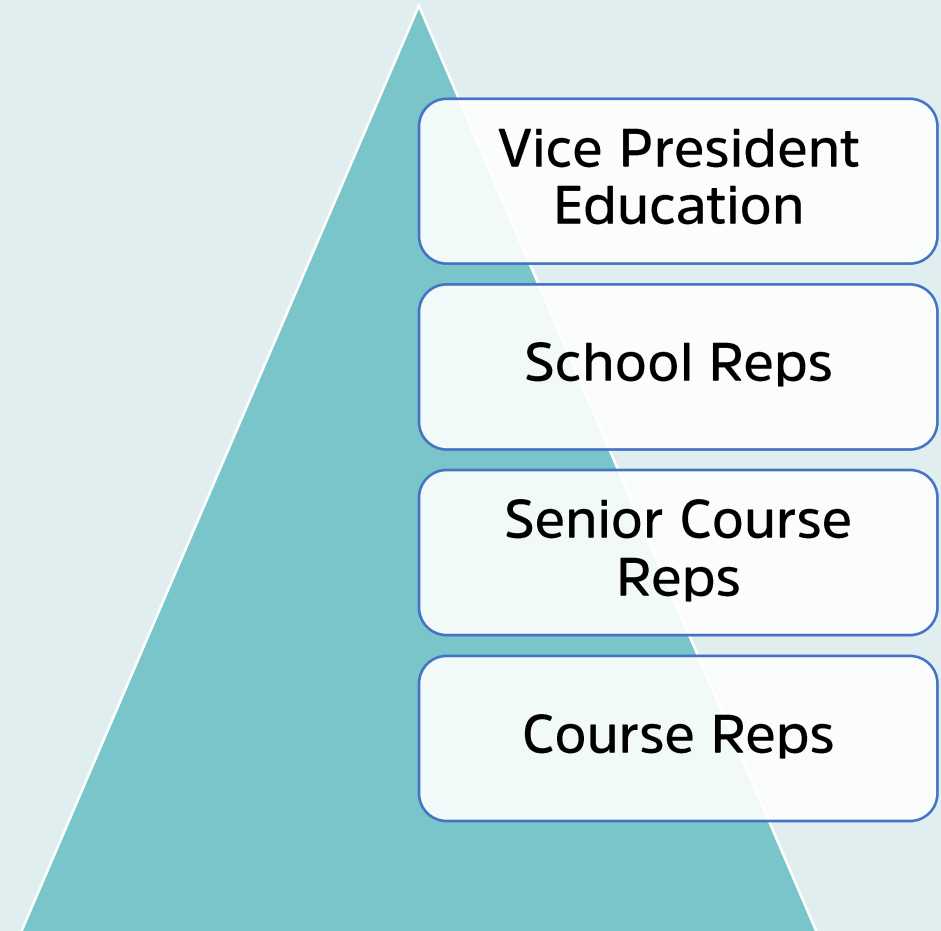
It is discussed with University Staff



Actions are created and change is made

# The Academic Representation Structure

- Academic representation at Royal Holloway has four levels.
- Each level of representation has specific responsibilities and duties to make sure the system is as effective as it can be.
- Each level feeds into the one above it, and vice versa, to ensure a constant flow of information from one end of campus to the other.



# Your role as an Academic Rep & Key Skills

## As a Rep, you should have:

- ✓ Excellent communication skills
- ✓ An ability to listen and effectively represent students' views
- ✓ A basic understanding of education policy issues
- ✓ A commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion
- ✓ Strong relationships with students, University staff and the Students' Union

## Some of the key skills you will develop:

- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Strategic thinking
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Delegation

# Course Rep Responsibilities

- Attending, and contributing to, Staff-Student Action Meetings (SSAM) for your department and level of study.
- Gathering feedback from students in your department and passing it onto Senior Course Reps ahead of the SSAM
- Working alongside, and maintaining relationships with, academic staff in your department.
- Maintaining relationships with VP Education and the SU Student Voice Team
- Escalating issues to Senior Course Reps and/or staff when relevant





# Senior Course Rep Responsibilities

- Chairing (or attending) Staff-Student Action Meetings (SSAM) for your department and level of study.
- Gathering feedback from Course Reps in your department and escalating issues to School Rep and Department staff where relevant
- Sending the feedback you have gathered from the Course reps to the designated member of staff for the SSAM's so they can build the agenda
- Working alongside, and maintaining relationships with, academic staff in your department.
- Maintaining relationships with VP Education and the SU Student Voice Team

Don't forget that you are not responsible for looking after students' wellbeing but you can help to support them and guide them in the direction of someone who is trained and qualified to give support and advice.



# Signposting

**University Wellbeing** - The team are not a crisis service but do provide mental healthcare to students who require support.

- Main contact- [wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Term-time drop-ins available – see the student intranet for joining information
- Counselling service – [counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Mental Health practitioners – [mentalhealth@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:mentalhealth@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Disability and Neurodiversity Support service- [disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Financial Wellbeing team – [moneymatters@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:moneymatters@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Multifaith Chaplaincy – [chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- International Advice team- [internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk)
- Careers Service – [careers@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:careers@royalholloway.ac.uk)

## Students' Union Advice Centre

Email us at [advice@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:advice@su.rhul.ac.uk)

See online advice at [www.su.rhul.ac.uk/advice](http://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/advice)

# Staff-Student Action Meetings

- The 'Staff-Student Action Meetings' (SSAM) take place across all 6 schools for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught levels of study.
- Course Reps and Senior Course Reps attend the SSAM meeting for their department and level of study at least once per term and identified key members of staff should also be present.
- Course Reps should speak to students ahead of the meeting and gather any feedback they have that they would like to raise. They should collate the feedback in a specific feedback form which you can find a template of on the [Rep Hub](#). They will then liaise with Senior Course Reps in their department to make them aware of the issues and what is going to be discussed in the meeting.
- Senior Course Reps send all feedback to an identified member of staff at least two weeks ahead of the meeting who will add each point onto the agenda for the meeting.
- The identified member of staff should invite all attendees (Course Reps, Senior Course Reps, and staff) with plenty of notice and include important details such as time, date, and location along with the agenda and any other useful documents.
- At Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught levels of study, one Senior Course Rep will chair the meeting and the other reps for the department will attend to discuss the agenda.

# Staff-Student Action Meetings

- Staff will have the opportunity to update reps on developments happening behind the scenes that may be useful for them to know.
- Identified members of staff and Senior Course Reps will record identified actions which need to be completed as part of the 'Staff-Student Action Log'.
- These logs are a live document which are to be hosted in an individual department MS Teams channel which will be created by the Students' Union Voice Team and accessible to all students in that department and level of study. This is so that students who don't attend SSAM can still see what is being discussed and how their feedback is being acted upon.
- Although SSAMs are a great way of providing feedback to your department, you are still encouraged to raise student feedback outside of these meetings if necessary.
- In agreement with the Students' Union, Department staff may choose to adapt the model so it works as best as it can for their individual department.

# Professionalism



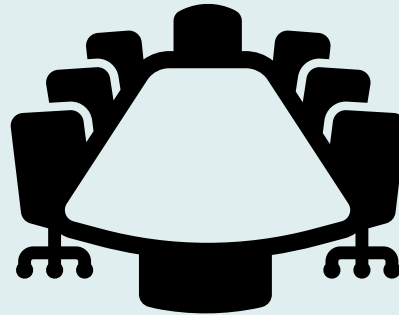
If you are unable to attend a meeting or event, send apologies.



Accept invites when they are sent to you so the organiser can see who is attending.



Complete tasks required for your role.



Reply to emails in a timely manner.



Utilise Teams to communicate with others and keep up to date.



Read and follow the Code of Conduct.



# Recognition

'Your Impact' and 'Rep of the Month' are great ways to shout about your achievements as a rep.

If there is something you have done that you want to share with the SU then you can add a 'your impact' submission to let us know.

Each month, the submissions will be reviewed and the VP Education will select someone to be recognised as Rep of the Month based off the your impact submissions we receive.

Rep of the Month winners will have a Q&A with VP Education and they will get their own news article on the SU website as well as a section dedicated to them in the monthly rep newsletter.

Rep BBQ and End of Year Awards – new for 2024

If you have attended, or sent apologies for, at least 3 SSAM's over the year, you will receive a certificate to celebrate your work over the year and a burger and drink on the SU!

# Peer Support

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with links: YOUR UNION, REPRESENTING YOU, GET INVOLVED, ADVICE, WHAT'S ON, VENUES, and STUDENTPAD. On the left is a 'NAVIGATION' menu with items like Democracy Review, Your Sabbs, Campaigns, Academic Reps, Student Hub, Find My Rep (highlighted), Information Security, Submit Your Feedback, What Do Reps Do?, Become A Rep, Rep Hub, Staff Hub, Rep of the Month, You're Valued Awards, Bright Ideas, All Student Meetings, Governance, and Key Contacts. The main content area is titled 'FIND MY REP.' and contains the text: 'Every one of you has a course rep to represent your academic interests, as well as a department rep who you voted for at the start of term. To find the rep for your programme, search for your department below and you'll be shown your course reps.' Below this text is a yellow zigzag line and a search box with the placeholder text 'START TYPING YOUR DEPARTMENT'. At the bottom of the main content area is a 'REP OF THE MONTH' banner featuring a group photo of student representatives.

As a Course Rep, you will regularly be in contact with other Course Reps and Senior Course Reps in your department throughout the year.

The SU website has a 'find my rep' page which will be updated after training has been completed.

Just type in your department and you will find the names of the reps, their role, course and year of study.

# SU Support

## Year long development programme:

Each term, the SU will deliver sessions on various topics which are tailored towards you and your development as an academic rep.

Previous year's sessions included:

- Navigating a typical formal meeting
- Mental health awareness
- Current issues in Higher Education
- Dealing with feedback
- Career and employability support



## Day-to-day support:

- Empower you to work with your department to make change
- Provide support from/ 121 meetings with Academic Communities Coordinator
- Give you the tools you need to create real change around campus
- Send monthly rep newsletters directly to you
- Shout about your achievements and successes!



# School Support



Facilitating opportunities and tools for Course Reps to communicate with students they represent e.g. helping circulate surveys



Supporting and developing academic representation within the department



Ensuring reps feel valued, supported and encouraged to submit feedback



Proactively communicating with you as Course Reps about relevant information



Maintaining effective communication with the Student Voice Team at the SU

# School Reps



School Reps are elected during the Leadership elections in Spring – there is one per each of the 6 academic schools.

They are responsible for representing students in their school and attend university meetings to advocate for students.

They also work with Senior Course Reps and the VP Education to collect and prioritise feedback and escalate relevant issues.

**School Reps are here to help you make positive change!**

# School Reps

LSS – Matthew Paterson



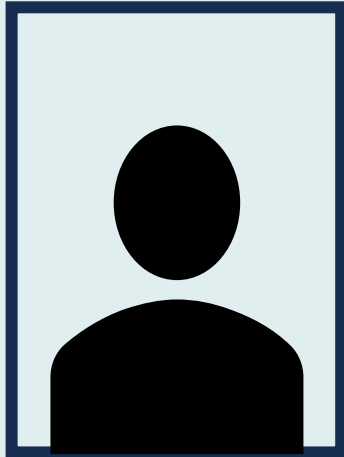
LSE – Dominika Biel



EPMS – William Coote



PDA – Ewan Strangeways



HUM – Mia Cavanagh



SBM – Elise Eriksson



# University Staff

If you are unsure who to contact from your school:

- Use Teams to see who is added to your channel or to send a message
- School Helpdesk can point you in the right direction
- Contact the Secretary for your SSAM's
- If regarding a specific action, contact the person listed in the Action Log that is responsible for it

University Staff are able to help you with queries related to the SSAM's or actions.

SCR's will also need to send the collated feedback to the designated person two weeks before the SSAM's.

A good relationship with University Staff will allow you to make more positive change.

# Key Contacts

Vice President Education



Madelaine Gray

Email - [VPEducation@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:VPEducation@su.rhul.ac.uk)

Instagram - RHSUEducation

Academic Communities Coordinator



Lauryn Fleming

Email - [lauryn.fleming@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:lauryn.fleming@su.rhul.ac.uk)

Student Voice Manager



Laura Black

Email - [laura.black@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:laura.black@su.rhul.ac.uk)

**Student Voice Team:**

Email - [Voice@su.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Voice@su.rhul.ac.uk)

**Head of Department & Course Convenors**



# Collecting Feedback



# What will you learn?

- How to effectively collect feedback from your peers
- Why it is important to collect feedback from your peers
- What to do with the feedback once you have collected it

# What will collecting feedback help you with?

- Team work and building relationships
- Public Speaking
- Time management
- Organisation
- Thinking on your feet



# Collecting Feedback

You could try:

- Talking informally to students and other course reps
- Hosting drop in sessions or focus groups
- Using social media groups
- Giving classmates 5 minutes at the start or end of class
- Creating a survey/poll and asking School admin to circulate
- Using a physical feedback box
- Feedback form provided by the Students' Union



Work together - you are likely not the only rep for your department.

Remember that effective representation should be accurate, constructive and depersonalised!

# Microsoft Forms



<https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/online-surveys-polls-quizzes>

Questions Responses Preview Style Collect responses Present ...

## Untitled form

⚡ Add description ✕  
Share a description of your form to encourage responses.  
Got it Add

1. Question

Option 1

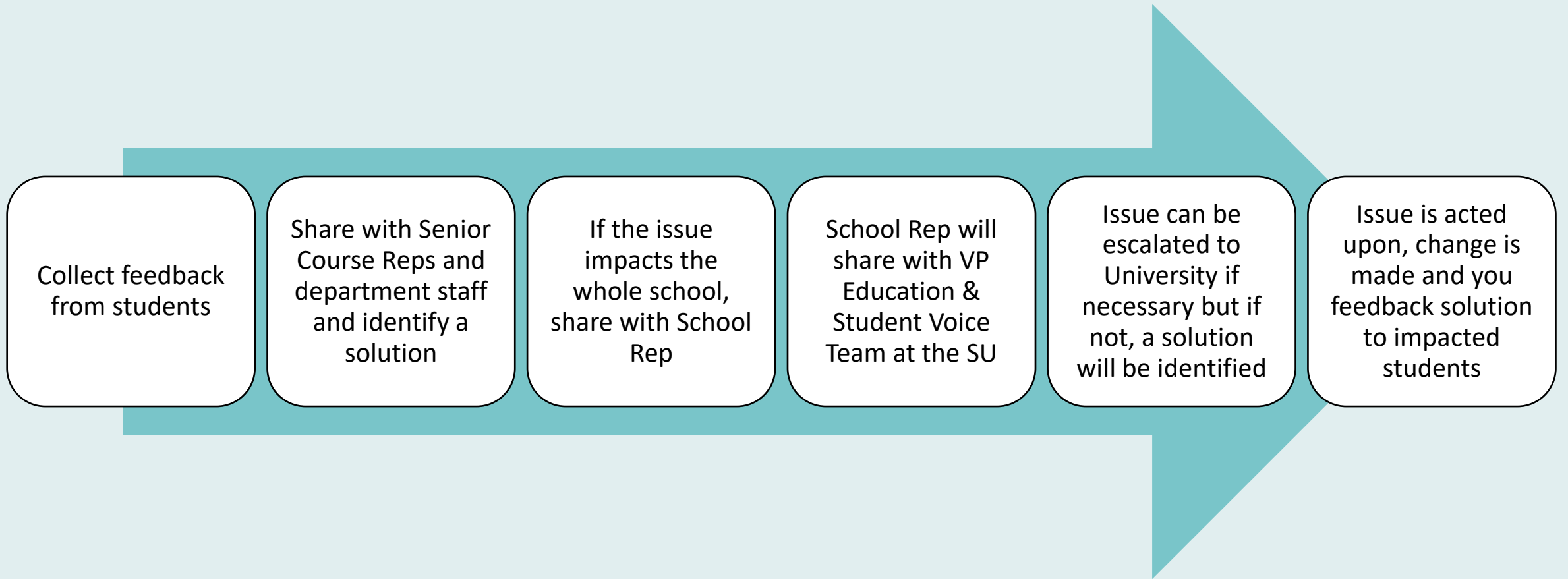
Option 2

+ Add option Add "Other" option

Multiple answers  Required ...

+ Add new

# Sharing Feedback



# Different types of feedback that can be collected

As reps, you will collect feedback on a range of issues - some of the topics that you may cover in the role might include:

Accessibility with  
Buildings

Content  
Discussed in a  
Lecture

Format of  
Teaching

More Events for  
the Department

Community  
Building

Moodle Issues

Exams and  
Assignment  
Issues

# Collecting Feedback



Once you have the feedback, Senior Course Reps should share it to the identified staff member who acts as the ‘secretary’ for the Staff-Student Action Meetings.

This list of points will then shape the conversations in the meeting and you, along with the staff members, will identify actions to help make the changes that students want to see.

It’s then your job as reps to close the feedback loop and make sure students know what is being done with their feedback!



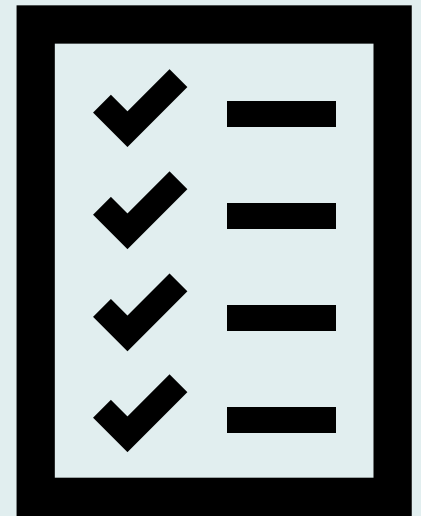


# **Closing the Feedback Loop**



# What will you learn?

- What is the feedback loop?
- Why is it important to close the feedback loop
- Different methods to close the feedback loop

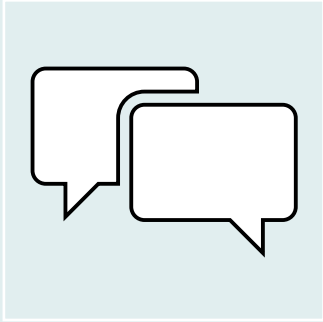


# What will closing the feedback loop help you with?

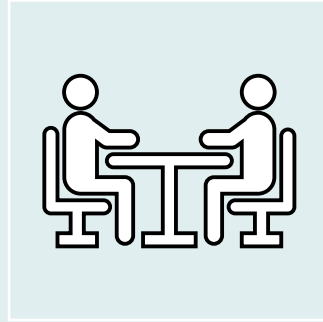
- Time management
- Public Speaking
- Confidence
- Organisation
- Delegation



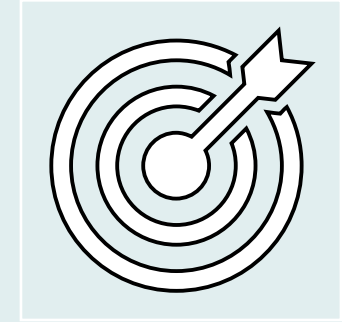
# Why is it important?



**Letting people know  
what you have done  
with their feedback**



**Informing people of the  
changes that have been  
made due to their feedback  
will persuade them to give  
more feedback**



**Precise information  
and feedback will lead  
to better outcomes**

# What is the feedback loop?

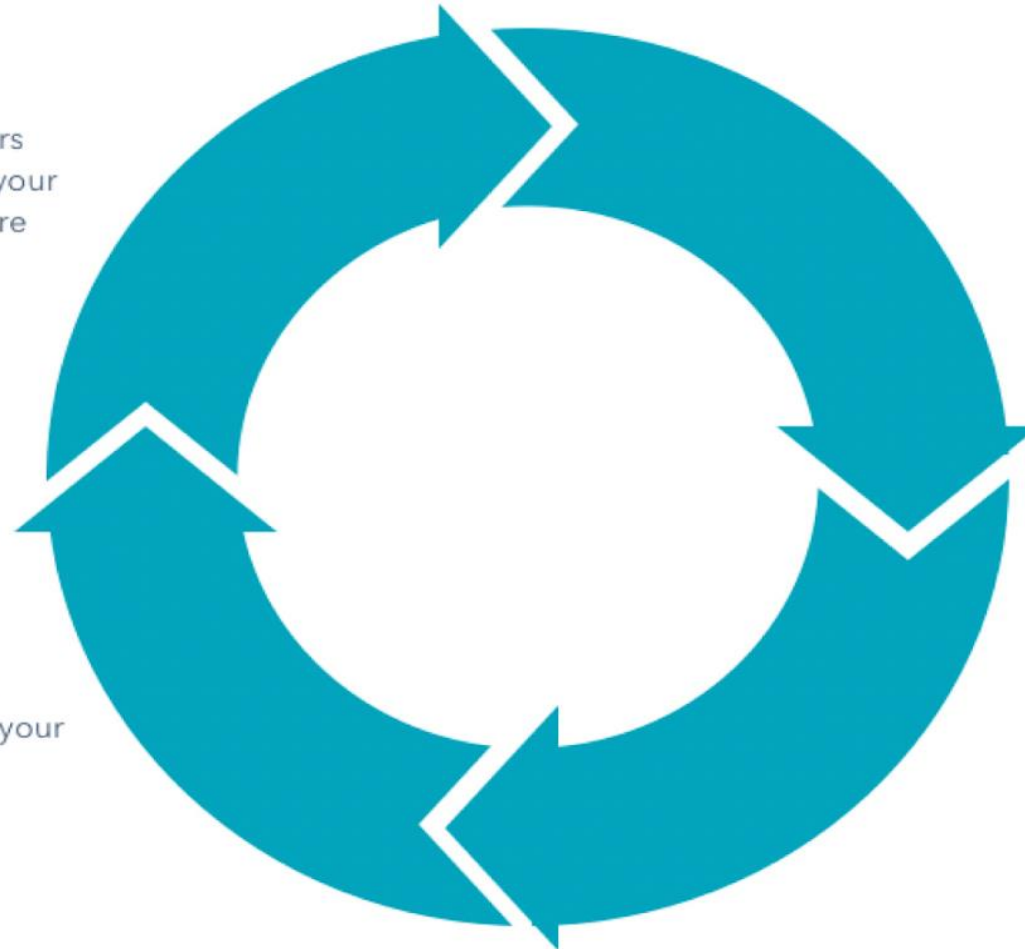
A continuous circle of gaining feedback, using the feedback and feeding back to the original people who raised the feedback

## 4. Follow-up

Follow-up with customers who gave feedback on your plans so they know you're truly listening.

## 3. Act

Act on the feedback by sharing it with others at your company who can implement changes.



## 1. Ask

Ask your customers for feedback on your product or service.

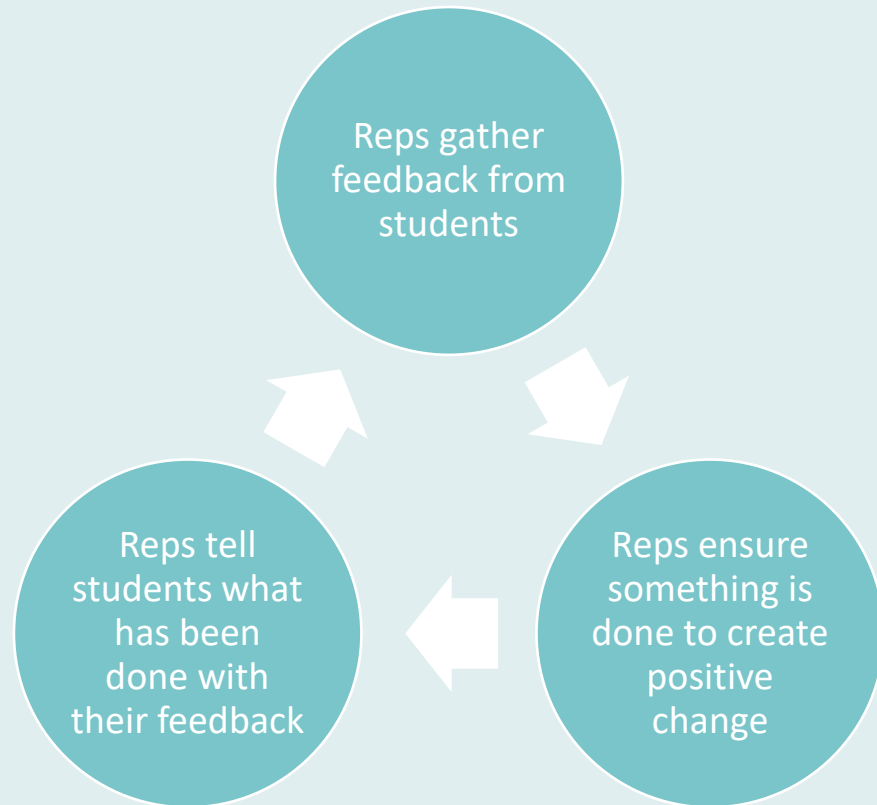
## 2. Categorize

Categorize the feedback into different buckets that are meaningful to your business.



# Feedback Loop

As an academic rep, the feedback loop follows this structure:

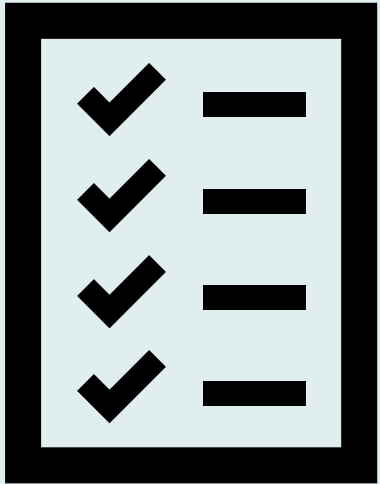


It is important to close the feedback loop even when there has been no action taken from the feedback!

# Ways of closing the feedback loop:

As reps, there are loads of ways you can close the feedback loop:

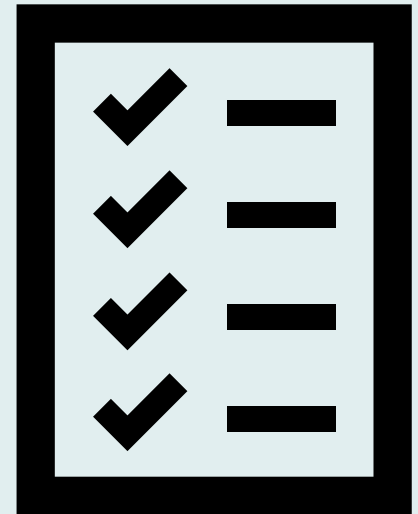
- Your Impact submission
- Sharing the outcomes with other reps in conversation
- Informing your peers in the department through messages/in class
- Regularly updating your Action Log in MS Teams
- Reply directly to the person that has given you the feedback
- Work with the School Rep to utilise their Instagram
- Create slides for lecturers to put at the start of their lectures
- Create a poster and/or a newsletter which detail what has happened at the SSAM



## Ways the SU can close the feedback loop:

Similarly, the Students' Union can help to close the feedback loop through:

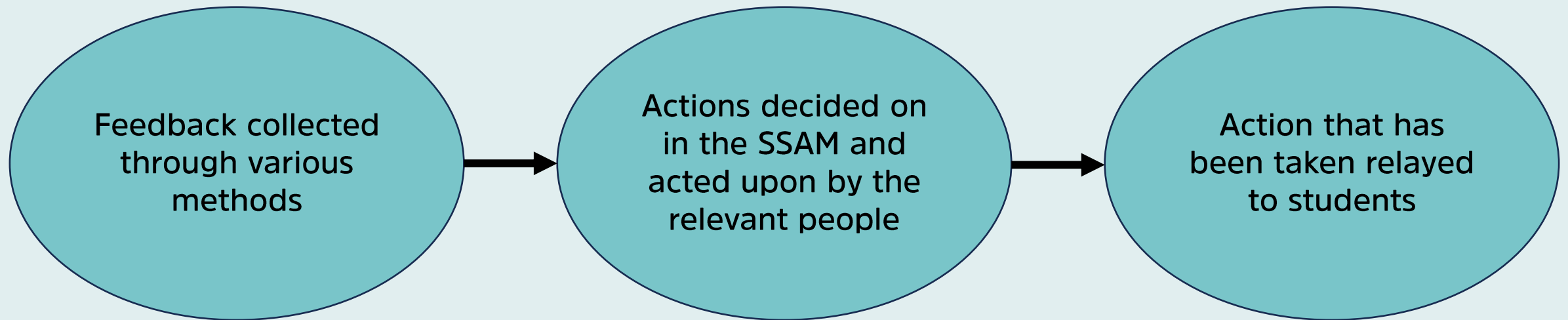
- Selecting a Rep of the Month winner to share their work
- Sharing the outcomes with reps on social media
- Creating termly impact blogs on the SU website
- Uploading Action Logs onto the [Find My Rep](#) page of the SU website



# What to consider when choosing how to close the feedback loop:

The method you use to close the feedback loop will depend on:

- the feedback collected
- the method of collecting the feedback
- the actions that have resulted from the feedback.



The following slides contain some scenarios of feedback that may be brought to you as a rep.

Discuss what would be the best methods of closing the feedback loop when the actions have been decided.

“I cannot access all of the books that I need to for the module through the library system. It would be great if the department could find a way to give us access to them.”

- in person conversation



“My lecturer for the module doesn’t upload the slides to Moodle so I am unable to prepare for my lecture fully.”

- online form

“My lecturer has not returned the results from my work yet and it has been over a month.”

- your personal experience

“We are struggling to understand the content and where to access the resources for our module. It is starting to affect my understanding of my whole course.”

- Email from student



# **Chairing a Meeting**



# What will you learn?

- What a chair of a meeting is
- What the responsibilities of a chair are
- How to successfully chair a meeting

# What will chairing help you with?

- Time management
- Public Speaking
- Confidence
- Organisation
- Delegation

# What is a Chair of a meeting?

- The chair of a meeting is basically the 'leader' who will keep things in order and make sure everything runs smoothly.
- It may feel a little daunting at the beginning but hopefully this section will help you feel more comfortable ahead of your first Staff-Student Action Meeting in Autumn.
- For a SSAM, the chair of the meeting will be a Senior Course rep. If only one person would like to chair then they can chair each meeting throughout the year.
- Otherwise, decide between yourselves either by availability/ pick names out of a hat or find a different way to determine who will chair each SSAM.

# Responsibilities of the Chair

- Giving everybody a chance to share ideas
- Timekeeping - move the meeting in time with the agenda
- Keep a civil meeting – avoiding arguments or debate!
- Have constructive conversations
- Ensure that the Action Log is being filled out during the meeting



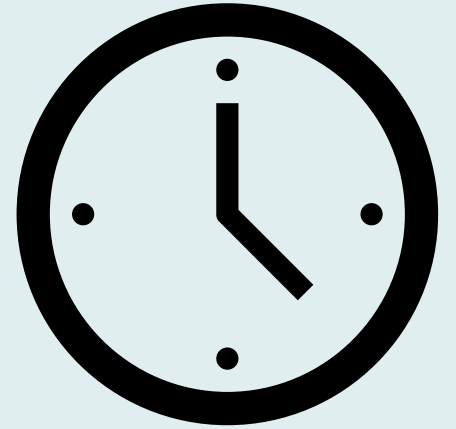


# Chairing a meeting

Before	During	After
Gather students' feedback from course reps	Listen to what other participants are saying and ask questions if you're unsure	Make sure you take note of any action points/logs relevant to you, what's the best way to get them done?
Send agenda items to identified staff member	Follow the agenda as much as you can	Figure out the best way to share the information of the meeting to the students that you represent.
Read papers and make notes of what you might want to say in the meeting	Leave your personal views at the door and Keep any feedback or criticism constructive	Is there any support that you can offer to the Course Reps with their action points/logs?
Make sure you are available for the meeting and arrive on time	Make at least one contribution – your input is valued	Relax!

# Before the meeting

- Gather the feedback that has been collected by the Course reps.
- Send the feedback to the designated member of staff in your department who acts as the secretary. If you are unsure who this is, then you can send a message in the Teams channel or email your school to ask.
- Read the relevant documents to the meeting and note what you would like to say or contribute in each point.



# Step by step chairing

1. Start by welcoming everyone and noting any apologies (those who have informed you that they won't be attending).

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2. Ask members if they have read papers/documents/action log from previous meeting.
3. Work your way through the agenda (the list of points of student feedback to be discussed:
  - Ask staff if they have any updates and facilitate the conversation
  - Ask reps for their updates and work through points with members of the meeting to identify actions and make sure they are noted in the log
  - Ask members if there are any Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) related topics they would like to discuss
  - Ask if there is Any Other Business (AOB) – points that would be useful to raise which don't fit within one of the agenda items as listed.

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- Make sure everyone is clear on the actions identified and who is responsible for completing them by when.
- Talk with the Course reps about how they are going to feedback the outcomes from the meeting to their peers.

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- Make sure everyone is clear on the actions identified and who is responsible for completing them by when.
- Talk with the Course reps about how they are going to feedback the outcomes from the meeting to their peers.
- Thank everyone for their time and close the meeting (on time!)



**Thank you for listening!**

**Questions?**

