



Student Representative Guide

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Context

The role of a Student Representative is a very important one which provides a vital link between the students on the course and the staff who run and manage it. Student Representatives have the opportunity to make a real contribution to their course by continually improving and enhancing the learning environment for the benefit of all students studying at the College.

This development programme has been written to equip Student Representatives with the basic information needed during their term in office. It will address many of the issues facing new student representatives and provides guidance towards some of the things that can be achieved that will really make a difference to the students on your course.

The programme explains what a Student Representative is, what you may have to do, who you will be working with, and how academic and support staff can help with any problems or issues that you may have to deal with.

Roles and responsibilities

A Student Representative is a student who has been elected by others on their course and whose role it is to represent the collective voice of students to managers, academic and support and staff.

By agreeing to be the Student Representative for your course, you have identified yourself as someone willing to engage with the staff and tutors as well as acting as an effective channel for communicating information between staff and students. Being a Student Representative also gives you the opportunity to meet with other Student Representatives and discover if there are common issues of concern across the Institution.

On election, you will be the recognised voice of the students on your course and confirmed as there to contribute to the continuous enhancement and improvement of the management and delivery of teaching, learning and assessment, to ensure the best possible student experience whilst studying with us at the college.

Whilst your time as a Student Representative may sometimes be hard work, it is a role which you should find both challenging and enjoyable. It will give you the opportunity to learn new skills, enhance your CV and help improve your future career prospects. Undertaking this role demonstrates to potential employers a range of additional skills which will stand you in good stead when applying for graduate opportunities.

We want you to view your role as Student Representative in a positive way: all too often the role is seen as merely passing student grumbles and gripes onto staff, but being a Student Representative is about much more than that. You will play a vital role in enhancing the learning experience and environment for both current and future students at the college.

The joint efforts of Student Representatives and staff are enormously beneficial and rewarding for the individuals involved and it is the input of so many people involved in the academic life of the college that makes it and the Student Representative system so successful. You will be an active link between students and staff and it will be your responsibility to communicate effectively the opinions of students to the staff and vice versa.

Your ability to be effective as a Student Representative, will depend on quite a few different elements. As with many aspects of life, your ability to build good relationships with both staff and students, to act professional and courteously will assist you in doing this.

Remembering that staff, students and student representatives are always working towards the shared aim of improving education for students is important.

“Always look for common ground and ways to collaborate. The more you seek to blur the lines between ‘them’ and ‘us’ the more effective you will be in your role”

It goes without saying that, as a representative of the UK Business College, you must conduct yourself in an acceptable manner at all times and follow the standards below.

- Your conduct should not fall below that expected by the rules and regulations of the College.
- Your academic performance should meet the standards, targets and deadlines required.
- You should meet the attendance requirements of the college.

Your role can really make a difference to the learning experience of lots of students, so it's important you find out what you're meant to be doing and how to go about doing it as effectively as possible. To do this, you should take advantage of the Student Representative Development Programme and events provided for you. The training embedded within the development programme has a key role to play in ensuring that quality assurance and enhancement are issues that are understood by all Student Representatives and then circulated throughout the student body.

An added benefit is that it's also a great place to meet other Student Representatives and you will be contacted with a list of dates following your appointment.

As a Student Representative, you have authority and influence precisely because you have been selected by your fellow students to represent their interests. It is important that you keep both this authority and influence by representing the collective views of students rather than your own individual and personal views of issues and always present your ideas and comments in a calm respectful manner.

Responsibilities of the Student Representative include:

- Making yourself known to the group of students you represent. Your fellow students need to be made aware, as soon as possible, that their programme has a Student Representative and that that person is you!
- Once they know who you are and what you do, you should encourage them to approach you whenever they wish to raise an issue, either positive or negative.
- Actively seeking student opinion on academic issues
- Feeding back student opinion to members of staff
- Attending formal committees (see below)
- Letting students know the outcome of issues raised and meetings with staff members
- Passing on issues that cannot be resolved at programme level to Programme Managers
- Most importantly – act as a representative – make sure that you are speaking on behalf of all students on the Programme and not just giving your personal opinion.

Optional activities include:

- Attending the Annual Quality Enhancement Conference – an annual event showing a range of good practice from both internal and external sources and a celebration of the achievements of both staff and students.

Provide feedback to students on issues discussed

It is vital that you report back to your fellow students on the main outcomes and discussions from the meetings so that they are kept informed. This can also be an important way of demonstrating to students that the Student Representative system does work and is effective.

Report back to student

It's not all over when the meeting stops! You have to keep those you represent informed of decisions. An ideal way to do this is to ask a lecturer if you can make a short announcement at the beginning/end of a lecture/tutorial to let students know what was discussed at the meeting and what is going to happen as a result. Otherwise, the minutes of each meeting should be posted on your notice board/website.

It is especially important that students are also kept informed of actions or decisions which have been raised at meetings between the College and the partner University, and Staff and Student Programme Committees.

Demonstrate a commitment to the feedback process

It is important that a positive culture exists in which the College and Programmes make explicit their commitment to listening to students' views. Students need to know that the process is a meaningful one and that action is taken as a result of their input. As a Student Representative you should celebrate your successes by publicising any achievements or resolutions to problems. This will highlight that Student Representatives can change things for the better and will increase support for and awareness of your role therefore making you more effective.

As these meetings are only scheduled four times per year, issues may frequently be raised where students require a resolution earlier than the next meeting will allow. In such circumstances it is best to approach the Programme Leader to discuss the issues raised and report back to the student in question. Informal routes of negotiation can often be the most successful, so it is important that you try and solve any problems at the lowest level possible in the first instance.

Speak informally to an appropriate member of staff and try to ensure that when speaking in your role as a Student Representative, especially in such "informal" discussion, that you are being representative of your fellow students. Where you are aware that a particular issue might be controversial, it may be advisable to prepare a paper and submit it to the relevant College.

Before making any claim that you represent the "views of students", it is important that you have researched those views thoroughly. Send out an email or ask if you can make an announcement in a lecture/tutorial before each meeting inviting students to raise any issues or concerns. In order to fulfil your role as a Student

Representative, you are required to attend the following three meetings which occur once per semester.

Providing evidence

In order to strengthen your case, you will need to provide evidence when presenting your thoughts, ideas and feedback. This evidence should reflect the views of your student community.

Testimonials

Just some quotes and comments from students you've spoken to can help. It's not the most official of evidence bases but it can demonstrate impact and importantly, that you have been consulting with your community.

Existing data

There is a range of surveys and existing data that exists that can help you in your role. Using data like this will help you to see which issues have come up in the past and how these were dealt with. These should be accessible in some form or another from your programme area.

Committee Meeting Minute

Minutes from previous committees should be made available online. Alternatively, please get in touch with your Programme Leader or administrator.

Formal meeting requirements of the Student representative

The Student Voice is very important to us at the college and there are a number of formal committees with which student representatives will be expected to engage with:

Academic Standards and Quality Committee

The Academic Standards and Quality Committee provides support and direction for the institution's quality assurance processes. It has the prime responsibility for helping develop and evaluate policy, strategy and practice in the areas of academic quality and standards. As a student representative on this committee you will be required to prepare for and participate in four meetings across the academic year.

Teaching & Learning Forum

The Teaching & Learning Forum provides support and direction for the College's teaching, learning and assessment activities. It is responsible for helping develop and evaluate college policy, strategy and practice in these areas.

The purpose of the Teaching & Learning Forum is to provide a platform where students can meet with staff to raise ideas and discuss areas of good practice in relation to their experiences at the college. Within this forum, Student Representatives are able to discuss the functioning of their programme and to give feedback in order to enhance the content and delivery.

They are also an ideal opportunity for Student Representatives to discuss the wider issues which their fellow students have raised and for staff to highlight areas where

students' previous suggestions have been taken on board and successfully been put into practice.

As a student representative on this committee, you will be required to prepare for and participate in four meetings across the academic year.

Academic Board

The Academic Board is the body that prepares and approves key documents and reports for submission to Senior Management Team and Board of Governors. It will also advise on student experience, learning, teaching and assessment, research and knowledge exchange, external relations and new partnerships, and the range of academic subjects and developments. As a student representative on this committee, you will be required to prepare for and participate in four meetings across the academic year.

It is important not just to attend the formal committee meetings but also to engage in the discussion and contribute to enhancing the student experience. Please remember, it is the role and function of the committees to discuss common concerns. Do not sit there in silence: this is your chance to make a difference and to represent your peers as best you can.

Prior to the arranged meeting, all Student Representatives will be invited and will need to confirm their attendance in order to receive the proposed agenda to discuss with their fellow students. Although official minutes will be taken at the meetings, take your own notes of what is being said so you are clear about what has been agreed and who will carry out the necessary actions, this will make it easier to report back to your fellow students.