

Course Rep Handbook

2023/2024 





Welcome!

We are so thrilled to have you on board as a Course Rep! Whether you are just starting out as a Course Rep or are returning for another year, we would like to say a huge thank you for giving your time and energy to make sure the voices of students on your course are listened to at the University of the Arts London (UAL).

You will be joining a community of over 1000 representatives across all UAL Colleges as the voice for students and work with your school/department, School Reps and Elected College Officers to help make your education and experience at UAL the best it can be.

We have created this handbook so that you can find all the information about being a Course Rep in one place.

We hope that you are able to quickly and easily find what you're looking for here, but if you still have questions or worries about being a Course Rep, please don't hesitate to contact us.

At the SU we have a whole team dedicated to working with you all on student representation, and you can drop us an email at coursereps@su.arts.ac.uk. We'd love to talk with you.

Best wishes,

Emily, Laura, Helena, Shane, Lee & Rachel
and your 2023/24 Elected Officer Team

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Your Role

As a Course Rep you will **volunteer** your time to **speak on behalf of other students**. Your role is vital to ensure that students views and feedback are part of the decision-making processes within your course, school/department, and across the University.

By working with staff on your course, school/department and other elected representatives to raise feedback and put actions into place, you can help to influence positive change that will improve the academic experience for both current and future students!

The role is flexible and fits around your studies with no prior experience being necessary. Our Arts SU staff team will provide you with all the relevant training and support you need.

It is a very much collaborative role, and you will build positive relationships with other Course Reps, staff and students as well as develop useful skills.



Your Role

As a Course Rep, you will be expected to:

- Attend training sessions held by the Students' Union.
- Introduce yourself to students, teaching staff and other reps on your course – everyone should know who you are and be able to approach you!
- Gather a balance of positive and negative feedback about the experiences of students on your course and/or in your school/department.
- Attend Course Committees and Student & Dean Forums to present feedback to fellow reps and staff as well as raise feedback as necessary to staff.
- Report back on actions or outcomes of feedback to the students you represent in your department, as well as the Students' Union.
- Where appropriate, signpost students to relevant staff or services where an issue may be more personal to the individual, or the query is not feedback related.

Your Role

In return, Arts Students' Union will:

- Provide training and resources to professionally develop and support you in your role.
- Be a source of support and advice where needed.
- Provide opportunity to build a social and creative network with other reps.
- Give you adequate notice of Students' Union organised meetings we'd like you to attend.
- Keep you in the loop with regular newsletters throughout the academic year.
- Ensure your contribution to the academic experience is recognised.

Your Role

What Course Reps Don't Do:

It's important to look after your wellbeing and establish clear boundaries when undertaking the role of Course Rep. Understanding what you're not expected to do as a Course Rep is part of this.

You are not expected to get involved with students' personal problems, academic difficulties or individual complaints. This includes:

- Personal disputes between students and academic staff or individual students, including allegations of harassment, discrimination or victimisation.
- Formal procedures including extensions, extenuating circumstancing, academic misconduct, academic appeals and individual complaints or disciplinary procedures.
- Financial and funding queries, including student finance and debt.
- Health issues, whether related to housing, employment, immigration or wellbeing.

Issues like these require a different kind of expertise and in-depth knowledge, in order to ensure the most appropriate advice and guidance can be provided. If a student brings any of the above issues to your attention, please refer them to the Arts SU Advice Service, Student Services or other appropriate services as required (contact details can be found near the end of this handbook).

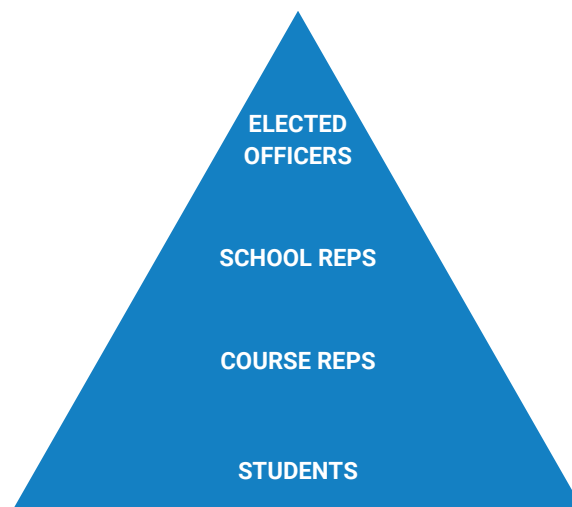
Other Benefits

There are a lot of perks to being a Course Rep, including:

- It will look great on your CV and applications to future employers.
- You can enter yourself or another rep to win our Rep of the Month award. Winners receive a £20 gift voucher!
- You will build up a professional network by working closely with students, Arts SU and university teams.
- You will get access to free in-person and online training provided by Arts SU.
- You will develop new skills in problem solving, communication and team-working.
- You will get a unique insight into how Arts Higher Education works - useful if you ever want to apply your creative skills to working in this sector in future.
- Enjoy fun socials and events hosted by Arts SU.
- We always order way too much cake and coffee for trainings and meetings, so if you have a sweet tooth, you're in luck.

How do Course Reps fit in?

As a Course Rep, you are one of many groups of students at Arts SU and UAL who help gather student feedback and ideas.



This pyramid allows feedback and ideas to move swiftly between the different levels. Course reps help to give feedback on the views of students to your course and the Students' Union via their School Reps and College Officers.

These levels are supported by Course Committees (attended by course reps), Boards of Study (attended by school reps) and College Academic Committees (attended by College Officers) which each feed into each other and ensure feedback is raised and dealt with where most relevant.

Arts SU will organise a number of opportunities throughout the year for Course Reps, School Reps and College Officers to meet and socialise with each other to share feedback and develop ideas on how to improve the academic experience at UAL.



What is a School Rep?

A School Rep is someone who has been elected to volunteer their time to speak on behalf of students at school/department level. Similarly to Course Reps, the role is flexible and fits around their studies with no prior experience being necessary.

Once elected, School Reps meet regularly with their College Officer and Arts SU staff. They support Course Reps by raising feedback and issues at school level as well as representing students in their School once a term at Board of Study meetings.

They also attend ad-hoc meetings with key staff from their College throughout the year and support engagement and community development within the school. To find out who your School Reps are visit www.arts-su.com/yourvoice/schoolreps/

The Feedback Loop



The feedback loop is a simple way of fulfilling the role of Course Rep and ensures that feedback is raised, acted upon and seen by students.

Closing the feedback loop is core to your role. Carrying out all the steps ensures that the thoughts and feelings of students are being responded to and valued.

1
Speak to students
Speak to students on your course and identify feedback they have about the course, school or University.

2
Raise feedback with staff
Share feedback with the most relevant staff member. Include: what's working well, where there are issues and maybe even suggest solutions to resolve them.

3
Feed back to students
Share the outcomes of your discussions with staff back to the students. This includes instances when changes are still being considered or are not as easy to implement as first thought.

It is crucial if Course Reps are to be seen as effective that students know who you are and what you can achieve.

Suggested solutions can often focus on a positive outcome and may include ideas not considered by staff.

Gathering Feedback

To effectively represent your peers, you'll need to gather feedback from them throughout your time as a Course Rep. There's no one right way to collect feedback, so test out a few different things and see what works for you. Some suggestions could be:

- Create and circulate surveys or polls using Google Forms or Survey Monkey.
- Ask your lecturer if you can have five minutes at the beginning/end of class to speak to your course mates about their experiences.
- Ask your lecturer or course admin team if they are able to share on your behalf an email with students on your course, including how they can contact you.
- Create a Teams chat to stay in touch with other students on your course.
- Let your course mates know when you have meetings coming up which you can take their feedback to.
- Let your course mates know a convenient time and place when you're available for a chat, this could be when you plan to be in a workshop, the library or grabbing lunch.



Gathering Feedback

What kinds of things should I collect feedback on?

Students are experts on their experience - what do they think is going well, and what could be improved? Is there anything which they find frustrating, or think could be done in another way? If you are looking for conversation starters, or areas to gather feedback on, think about:

Assessment and Feedback

- Do tutors provide you with timely feedback on your work?
- Do you find this feedback useful?

Teaching and Learning

- Have you encountered anything you didn't anticipate?
- Are there any changes you think should be made to enable you to enjoy or get more out of your course?
- How do expectations of students, the learning outcomes and course content match-up?
- What do you think of the teaching quality on your course?
- Are the learning outcomes for assessment clear and understood?

Course Organisation and Management

- Does your course share information on how they respond to student feedback?
- Have you had any problems with your timetable?
- Is there clear communication between students and staff when changes are made?
- Is information relating to extensions and extenuating circumstances easy to find?
- Are course texts and related resources readily available?
- What is your experience of using Blackboard and Moodle?
- Are there any changes you think should be made to enable you to enjoy or get more out of your course?

Learning Resources / Other

- Do you have access to resources (books, materials, computers, workshops, software) that you need?
- Are any additional course costs clearly shared in advance and explained?
- Are the University's support services useful?
- Do students know how to access student support services?



Course Committee Meetings

These meetings take place three times a year, usually once per term.

Course Committee Meetings are the formal way for Course Reps to raise feedback with staff, find solutions to problems, and tell your course what is working well.

The committee monitors how the course runs and considers issues related to the content and organisation of the course. During these meetings, Course Reps are expected to raise course-level feedback that you've collected from the students on your course.

As these meetings are not organised by Arts SU, information about these meetings and when you need to attend will come from your course team. As you are representing all students on your course, you should make every effort to attend. If you can't attend, you should let your course team know as soon as possible.

What is discussed at course committees will feed up to Boards of Study, which are attended by your School Dean and School Reps.

Student & Dean Forums

These meetings take place twice a year, usually once in term one and another in term two.

Student and Dean Forums are an opportunity to bring Course Reps, your School Dean, and your Elected Officer together to discuss issues affecting their course and academic experience at school level. Both Course Reps and School Reps are expected to attend their relevant Student and Dean Forums.

These forums could take place fully in person, in a hybrid form, or fully online.

These forums are a space for you to raise feedback that cannot be solved at a course level. If you have a topic you want to ensure is discussed, you can email us at coursereps@su.arts.ac.uk and we will add it to the agenda. Otherwise, you can simply raise the topic during the forum.

Ahead of the meeting, Arts SU will also ask School Deans if they have any specific topics they would like to hear feedback on. If they share any topics, we will add them to the agenda and share them with you. We would appreciate if you could reach out to your course to get their feedback on these topics before the forum begins.

The dates and times for your forum will be emailed to you closer to the event and minutes will be shared afterwards. Please keep an eye out for those messages!

Where can I turn to for extra support?

The vast majority of students who volunteer to be a Course Representative have a wonderful experience and enjoy the time they spend in the role. However, it's essential that you know how to access support if and when you need it.

In many ways, this is why Arts SU exists. We are a registered charity and independent from the University of Arts London with a staff team working purely for the benefit of its students.

Every student at the University is automatically a member of the Students' Union. This means you can access all the support and opportunities we provide. Your needs and interests are also **represented by our six Elected Officers** who are elected every year.

What might a Course Rep need help with?

Examples of things that Course Reps typically might seek support with include:

- Breakdown of communication between student representatives and staff.
- Feeling overwhelmed by student feedback and/or complaints.
- Confusion about how to raise feedback with students or staff.
- Worries about how the role might be impacting your studies.
- Lack of engagement or feedback from students.

- Uncertainty or anxiety about how to deal with a particular issue.

This is not meant as an endless a list and if you're experiencing a problem that isn't listed here and still need support, we want to hear from you.

Who can I contact if I need support?

There are two main points of contact at Arts SU should you need them during your time as a Course Rep:

Representation and Democracy Team | Email: coursereps@su.arts.ac.uk

The Representation and Democracy team can support and advise with any aspect of the role which involve the collection and sharing of feedback be it involving other reps, students and/or staff.

Examples can include disputes or a breakdown in communication you may encounter with other reps, students and/or staff as well as situations where you struggle to engage students in the collection of feedback.

Advice Service | Website: www.arts-su.com/advice | Email: advice@su.arts.ac.uk

The Advice Service team can support any individual student with difficulties of a more personal nature and unique to them. The team provides advice on academic and housing issues and links students to a range of university student services.

Examples can include if you feel overwhelmed by student feedback or concerns, are worried about the role impacting your own study or need to signpost a student with a query that is individual or personal to them whether it be an appeal, meeting with the university or complaint.

If you're unsure who to contact don't worry. We all work closely together and can put you in touch with the relevant team and/or individual.

Top-tips for being an effective Course Rep

- **Don't feel you have to wait until your course committee meeting....** raising feedback at the earliest opportunity either with staff on your course or the Students' Union can often ensure issues are resolved earlier and not left until it's too late.
- **Mix-up the way you ask for feedback...** whether its social media, emails or just talking to student before and after lectures, there are loads of ways you gather feedback. Find at least two ways that work for both you and those you represent.
- **Work with your fellow reps...** meeting and talking with other reps on your course is a great way of getting feedback from a larger number of students. You can also share the workload more and compare notes to get an understanding of the issues and solutions needed.
- **Tell us about your successes...** we know many reps work hard to influence positive change on their courses but it's equally important to make sure others are aware of these.
- **Attend training and seek support when needed...** don't be afraid to ask for help where needed, and if unsure of who to speak to, email coursereps@su.arts.ac.uk.



Arts SU Elections

Arts SU use elections to decide who should speak and work for you on a range of issues while you're a student at UAL. Nominations open in early January with elections held in March each year for the following academic year.



Consider putting yourself forward for the elections.

We encourage all students to consider standing with a variety of roles available, broadly split between two types:

Elected Officer roles – These full-time paid roles are carried outside of studies. They represent and speak on behalf of all students, are collectively responsible for promoting and defending the rights of students, campaigning on issues and promoting involvement in union activities.

School Rep roles – These roles are carried out on a voluntary basis alongside studies. They work closely with Course Reps and key staff to understand students' academic and learning experiences, advocating for changes and development related to learning, teaching and the community.

Why should students vote in SU Elections?

Elections are about deciding who will represent and make decision on behalf of students in the coming year. Even if you don't realise it, every student has a vested interest in the outcomes of the elections, because our Elected Officers will represent you on a variety of issues covering the student experience. The question is, why wouldn't you vote? For more information visit: www.arts-su.com/elections.

Useful Contacts



Arts SU Elected Officers

www.arts-su.com/yourvoice/officers

Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Officer ccwofficer@su.arts.ac.uk

Central Saint Martins Officer csmofficer@su.arts.ac.uk

London College of Communication Officer lccofficer@su.arts.ac.uk

London College of Fashion Officer lcfofficer@su.arts.ac.uk

Community Officer communityofficer@su.arts.ac.uk

Union Affairs Officer unionaffairs@su.arts.ac.uk

Representation and Democracy Team

www.arts-su.com/yourvoice

Course Rep Queries coursereps@su.arts.ac.uk

School Rep Queries schoolreps@su.arts.ac.uk

Student Communities Team

www.arts-su.com/yourcommunities

Sports sports@su.arts.ac.uk

Societies societies@su.arts.ac.uk

Arts Active Programme artsactive@su.arts.ac.uk

Arts SU Advice Service

www.arts-su.com/advice

For free, confidential and impartial advice on academic (including university policies and procedures) or housing and accommodation matter.

Contact an Advisor advice@su.arts.ac.uk

Companion Scheme companionscheme@su.arts.ac.uk

University Support Services

www.arts.ac.uk/students/student-services

For advice and support on various aspects of student life including money, personal issues (including stress, anxiety and mental health concerns) and queries related to disability.

General Queries student.services@su.arts.ac.uk

Health and Wellbeing Advice studenthealth@arts.ac.uk

Counselling Service counselling@arts.ac.uk

Disability Service disability@arts.ac.uk