



 **Academic**
Representatives

Staff Guide to Student Academic Representation

2024-25

 **STUDENTS'
UNION UCL**

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Key prompts and things to consider chronologically, to assist with planning the election of Academic Reps locally.

1. Key roles & terms

Academic Representation

Academic representation is a process through which we ensure students' voices are heard. Though their representatives' work with staff, all students should have the opportunity to shape their academic experience. We collectively refer to all students in the roles outlined below as Academic Representatives (or Academic Reps).

Course Representatives

Course Representatives are students who are members of Student Partnership Committees (SPCs) and represent the students on a given programme of study. The role of Course Reps is to work with staff to ensure students' feedback is acted on, and that student's voices are represented in departmental decision-making. The role of Course Reps should not be limited to SPCs; representatives are encouraged to work with their peers and staff both inside and outside of meetings throughout the year.

Research Student Representatives

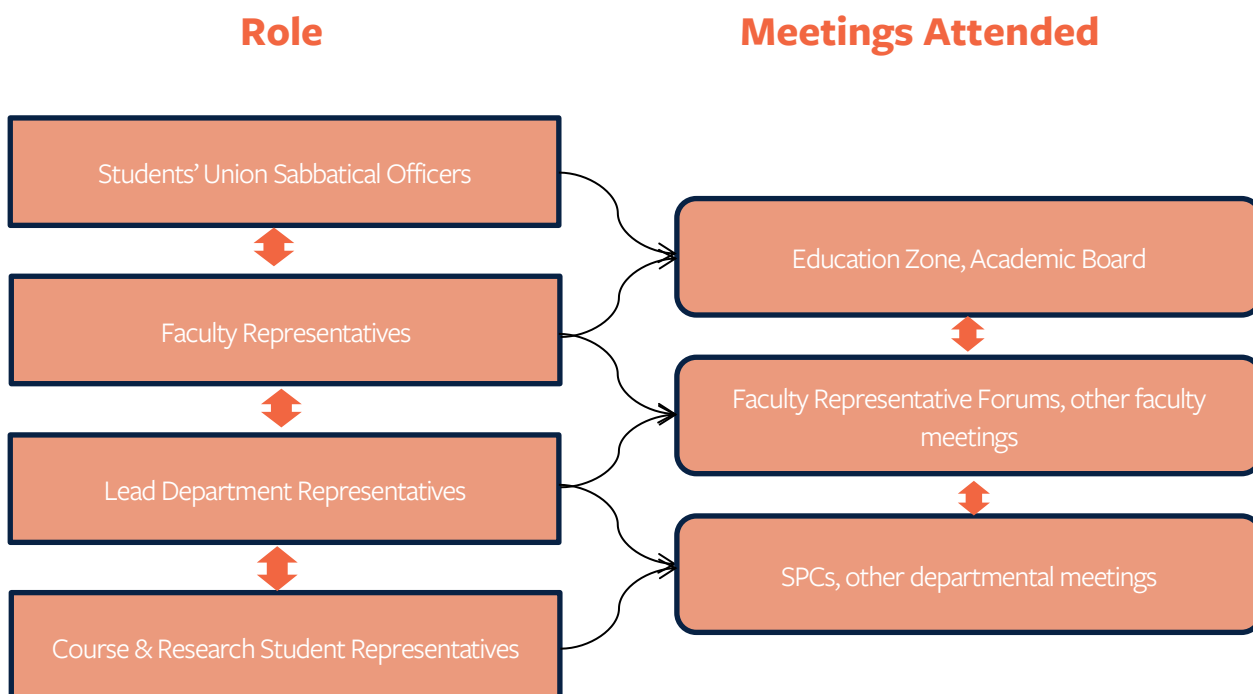
Research Student Representatives play a similar role to Course Representatives, but represent research students rather than taught students on a programme of study. Defining where to place Research Student Reps can be slightly trickier, given they are not assigned to a given programme of study. Any distinct community of postgraduate research students should have representatives, which might be based on department, specialism, physical location, or other attributes.

Lead Department Representatives

Lead Department Representatives are elected from each SPC, and take on a leadership role for student representation within their UCL department. They will work closely with staff in the department, jointly chairing the SPC and agreeing a specific agenda for discussion with a staff Co-Chair in advance of each meeting, according to student priorities. Lead Department Representatives also play a pivotal role in providing input into the Departmental Education Plans. They will also attend the Department's Teaching Committee (or doctoral education equivalent) as a representative, and communicate relevant items between the two committees. If there are multiple SPCs in a Department, there will be multiple Lead Department Reps.

Faculty Representatives

Faculty Representatives play a similar role to other student representatives, but engage with Faculty-level staff and committee meetings. Faculty Representatives liaise with other representatives across their Faculty's constituent departments, particularly Lead Department Reps, in order to represent students effectively. Faculty Reps are elected in elections hosted on the Students' Union's website, in close consultation with Faculty staff.



Find More Online:

Detailed role descriptors can be found on our [staff resources webpage](http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff).¹

¹ <http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff>

Student Partnership Committees

Student Partnership Committees (SPCs) are formal meetings for Academic Reps and staff to work together to develop solutions to students' concerns, and prioritise areas for improvement. Some departments have a single SPC, while others split this into different levels of study. Most commonly, departments operate both an undergraduate and postgraduate SPC.

Please note, SPCs were previously known as Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs). The change of name seeks to signal UCL's commitment to working in partnership with students. It also aims to more accurately reflect the nature of collaboration between staff and students within these forums.

Partnership

The Students' Union believe that partnership between staff and students is the purpose of student engagement. Partnership working breaks down divides 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 through dialogue, helps promote an academic community of staff and students who are engaged with one another's aspirations.

Academic Manual

UCL's Academic Manual is the repository of UCL's policies and regulations. Regulations on Student Academic Representation are contained in Chapter 9, Section 6. There are also requirements for student representation on committees contained in Chapter 9, Section 7. This guide is intended to be read alongside those regulations.

Find More Online:

Full policy on Student Academic Representation sits in Chapter 9, Section 6 of the [UCL Academic Manual](#)²

² <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/>

2. Electing Representatives

When?

Election of representatives should take place during the first few weeks of each academic session, during October. Dates of the election period for this year can be found on page 10. Electing representatives on time is important, as it ensures they are in place and can be trained before their first SPC meeting. **Because training does not begin until mid-October, we ask that SPCs are not scheduled until 28 October at the earliest.**

Do we need an SPC in October for ASER reporting?

The short answer is no. The requirement is to engage with representatives to collaborate with staff in the creation and review of the ASER Development & Enhancement Plans. The Lead Department Rep should also be supported to provide a co-commentary to reflect on student involvement in the review and updating of ASER Development & Enhancement Plans. None of the above requires a very early SPC, so you are welcome to hold the first meeting from the week commencing Monday 28 October.

You should share the ASER data and documents with representatives once they are elected, so they can gauge progress against the existing agreed priorities as part of the ASER cycle.

Who?

Within each Department, there should be **Course Representatives** for the following:

- At least one student from each year of study within each taught programme. (where appropriate, a student or students can be elected to represent closely linked clusters of programmes instead.)
- At least one part-time student for each taught programme (where relevant).

For larger programmes, it may be appropriate to have more than one Course Representative for each year of study. This should be as multiple roles, rather than one shared role, as the Academic Manual states that all representatives elected should be able to attend each meeting of the relevant SPC.

Similarly, there should be **Research Student Representatives** to represent each distinct community of research postgraduate students within the department. Within each community, there should be at least one representative for early years students (years 1-2) and one for later years students (years 3-4).

How many Reps is the right number?

For large cohorts of students, more than one representative might be appropriate. For example, for a group of 30, one representative will be plenty. For a group of 100, there might be a good case for three representatives. We recommend around one representative for each 30-40 students in the relevant cohort.

The role of Course Rep and Research Student Rep should be seen to be important to be effective. Having large numbers of representatives devalues the role, and makes it more likely that reps will speak only for themselves rather than on behalf of the students they represent.

Please do not appoint more than one or two representatives for cohorts of only 1-50 students. The best way to accomplish this is to ensure that when setting a deadline for students to put themselves forward, there is sufficient time afterwards for a poll or election before details need to be sent to the Faculty.

The **Lead Department Representative** should also be elected during the October election period. The recommended way to do this is to ask members of the relevant SPC to select or elect the person from amongst the membership of Course and Research Student Representatives.

How?

Departments elect their representatives in various ways. This section provides some guidance, and highlights things which will help to ensure that students are successful once taking up a role.

1. Explaining the role

Critical to ensuring that volunteers come forward is explaining the role to students early and clearly. This might mean building discussion of Academic Representation into induction talks or other introductory activity, for both new and returning cohorts of students.

In September, the Students' Union will provide publicity materials and resources through its website, as well as a video specifically to introduce the role designed for induction activities. These resources are intended to aid departments in the task of promoting the role.

2. Electing Students to Roles

Representatives should be elected by election unless this is not possible. Holding an election gives students a connection to their representative, ensures those taking on a role feel a greater sense of accountability to their peers, and promotes the role's importance. It is particularly important to hold an election if there are many volunteers, rather than simply allowing a larger than planned number of students to take up a representative role.

Individual students should not be elected directly by staff without student involvement unless the role would otherwise be impossible to fill. If this is frequently the case, please do seek advice from the Students' Union, who are happy to provide support for creating interest in the role.

How can I run an Election?

Running an election for representative roles can be simple if planned ahead of time. If there is an in-person opportunity, you can download resources to do so from the [Union website](http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff)³. Alternatively, a show of hands might be appropriate.

Most simply, many departments make use of the Microsoft Forms or in-class elections. Some programmes with programme Moodle pages use Moodle polls in order to allow students to select representatives instead. When holding a vote, you should circulate 50-100 words from each student saying why they think they would be good at the role.

For departments using Unitu, this service includes a function for electing representatives which should be used. Conducting elections through Unitu helps students and prospective reps get familiar with the platform.

³ <http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff>

3. Communication within the Department

Once students have been elected to their roles, this fact should be communicated to students and staff to help the representatives in carrying out their role. The name and contact details of the representatives should be circulated, and it may be helpful to display the names of representatives prominently somewhere physically and online (such as a Moodle page).

All new Academic Reps are required to complete training arranged by the Students' Union as part of their role, as this is required in order to carry out their role effectively. The department may also wish to provide their own introduction to specific areas, such as the roles and responsibilities of local staff, meeting dates, or ongoing departmental projects and priorities.

The Lead Department Representative for the SPC should be elected from amongst the student SPC members in good time before the first SPC meeting, so consider setting this process in motion as soon as possible with a physical pre-meeting, or electronically. Please remember there should only be one Lead Department Rep per SPC.

4. Communication to the Students' Union

You can submit the details of your elected Academic Reps [online](#)⁴. This should be completed at a programme or department level. Please ensure you have the student's Full Name and UCL email address available for the SPC they are joining.

This streamlined approach should reduce the workload for staff. If you have any questions or comments please get in touch at su.reps@ucl.ac.uk.

⁴ <https://studentsunionucl.org/academic-reps/add>

3. Important dates and contacts

Election Period

The annual election period is when Faculties and the Students' Union require all representatives to be in post and their details confirmed. The time available to the Students' Union and Faculties to process these details has been compressed to give Departments and Programmes as long as possible.

Returning these details on time is the only way we can ensure representatives are trained and prepared to engage positively and constructively within the department as soon as possible.

2024-25	
Recruitment of Academic Reps	Monday 23 September to Friday 11 October
Course Rep and Lead Department Reps to be recruited and submitted via the Union website	Thursday 19 October
Online Training for Academic Reps begins	Monday 23 October
Faculty Representative Details to be sent to Faculties	Monday 30 October
Faculty Welcomes	Monday 30 October to Friday 10 November
Faculty/Lead Department Reps training	Monday 13 November to Friday 24 November

Faculty Contacts

Each faculty has a designated contact for Student Academic Representation. This person is the central point of communication in each faculty, and is the person to whom the details of elected representatives should be provided.

Faculty	Contact Name	Email address
Arts & Humanities	Ben Fowler	benjamin.fowler@ucl.ac.uk
Social & Historical Sciences	Sannah Gulamani Farhiya Hassan	s.gulamani@ucl.ac.uk farhiya.hassan@ucl.ac.uk
Brain Sciences	Rik Ganly-Thomas	r.ganly-thomas@ucl.ac.uk
Built Environment	Tom McMahon Annabel Brown	t.mcmahon@ucl.ac.uk annabel.brown@ucl.ac.uk
Engineering	Roslyn Fanning Michael Wozniak	r.fanning@ucl.ac.uk m.wozniak@ucl.ac.uk
Institute of Education	Elke Theissl Lisa Borejszo Millie Wotton-Davy	e.theissl@ucl.ac.uk l.borejszo@ucl.ac.uk m.wotton-davy@ucl.ac.uk
Laws	Karen Scott Sarah Campling	k-scott@ucl.ac.uk s.campling@ucl.ac.uk
Life Sciences	Hazel Smith	hazel.smith@ucl.ac.uk
Mathematical & Physical Sciences	Sophia MacBlain	s.macblain@ucl.ac.uk
Medical Sciences	Blathnaid Mahony Susan Beesley Nessa Rahman	b.mahony@ucl.ac.uk s.beesley@ucl.ac.uk nessa.rahman@ucl.ac.uk
Population Health Sciences	Paloma Garcia-Paredes Leigh Kilpert	p.garcia-paredes@ucl.ac.uk l.kilpert@ucl.ac.uk

4. Students' Union Support for Academic Representatives

Faculty Welcome

Your Faculty will run an introductory event for new Academic Reps shortly after the deadline for their details to be received. This provides some contextual information about their role and the faculty, and opportunity to meet other Academic Reps.

Training

Online training for Course and Research Student Reps introduces them to the important elements of their role and asks them to consider the strategies they will utilise to fulfil them. This training encourages students to understand students' priorities, and to think about how they can work with staff to take action that will improve students' education.

We will also offer a range of developmental opportunities for Academic Reps to help them succeed as part of their role and to highlight additional representation roles to them.

Lead Department Representative and Faculty Representative Training

Lead Department Reps and Faculty Reps receive an in-person introductory training session that elements of chairing meetings, leadership, and being an active and engaged member of committee meetings, as well as introducing reps to key members of staff from the Faculty. This training will be delivered with Faculty colleagues to provide greater context and insight into the Faculty and its priorities.

Other Resources and Briefings

The Students' Union also provide Academic Reps with access to relevant resources, including an archive of previous SPC minutes, NSS results, PTES and PRES results, and handover documents prepared by previous representatives. We also provide briefings and reports on topics and developments which help them in their role.

Recognition & Reward

Academic Reps may choose to have their experience recognised if they attend training and departmental meetings. This process is student led, and requires them to submit a portfolio demonstrating their active engagement with their role, including work in

their department and attendance at relevant training sessions. We recognise the work of Academic Reps through the year with our Academic Rep of the Month award. We also run a set of annual Academic Rep of the Year Awards, which reward one winner in each faculty and one overall across UCL. Both students and staff may nominate reps in these awards.

We will also be offering LinkedIn recommendations to Academic Reps who complete their Rep Reflection and Handover document, attend two or more SPC meetings and complete the online training.

5. Working with Representatives

Student Partnership Committees (SPCs)

SPCs are a dedicated forum for staff and students to discuss particular issues. Usually discussion will cover issues raised by students, and areas in which staff wish to seek input from students. As mentioned above, SPCs are replacing SSCCs from the 2024-25 academic year onwards.

There is no ‘correct’ way to run an SPC, but here are some simple ‘dos and don’ts’ based on what has proven effective across UCL. The list below highlights a few areas but find out more on our [staff resources webpages](#)⁵.

Do:

- **Meet more regularly if time and availability allows.** UCL’s Academic Manual requires a minimum of three meetings a year. Meeting as frequently as time allows over the year can be highly effective in ensuring a sense of continued dialogue, and in ensuring issues and actions can be followed up.
- **Think about the meeting environment you are creating.** Whilst the meeting should hold importance to attendees, this does not mean the environment cannot be relatively relaxed. Aim for a meeting which feels more like a working-group than a committee.
- **Organise meetings that can be accessed virtually.** Representatives do not need to be physically there in person to contribute, especially given changes in our operating mode. Microsoft Teams can help representatives (and staff) join meetings remotely, and also offer the useful option to record the meeting and share with those who were unable to attend. More guidance is available on our [staff resources webpages](#)⁶.
- **Circulate minutes promptly after a meeting to both attendees *and* other students.** Minutes are important to ensure that representatives can confirm what has been agreed and communicate this to peers. They help to prevent misunderstanding. They also ensure that students are aware that their issues are being addressed, and that students can hold their representatives accountable.

⁵ <http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff>

⁶ <http://studentsunionucl.org/rep/staff>

- Use the benchmarking tool available on our [staff resources webpages](#)⁷ as a diagnostic tool for improving SPC meetings.

Don't:

- **Rely on the SPC as the sole point of engagement with students.** The SPC should act as a focal point for work with students in the department, but not form the whole of it. Focus groups, small surveys, or even open meetings on a particular topic may be useful, and representatives may be able to work with staff to arrange these. You might also find value
- **Use the SPC mainly to gather feedback.** Feedback is available from a variety of sources, but there are few opportunities outside the SPC to directly involve students with interpreting feedback and identifying what should happen as a result. Partnership between staff and students means discussing solutions together, rather than staff agreeing to listen, taking feedback away, and deciding what should be done separately. Identifying students' most positive experiences and how these could be replicated is also a useful way of driving improvement to students' experiences.
- **Hold a separate SPC for each programme.** Whilst inter-departmental programmes need a separate SPC, other programmes do not. However, informal programme level meetings with reps, or open to all students, are a great way of helping keep Academic Reps and staff informed, and ensuring all students feel they have been heard.
- **Hold meetings which are too large.** Some departments hold SPCs with so many representatives that some are not able to speak during meetings. Consider splitting departmental SPCs by level of study if they are otherwise too big, to ensure that agenda items are relevant to the majority of attendees the majority of the time.
- **Schedule SPCs and other key events during teaching** if it can be avoided. Whilst it's often impossible to find a time that all staff and student representatives are available, this should be minimised. Do remember that the more frequently SPCs are held, the less important not being able to make any single meeting is for your reps.

Departmental Teaching Committees (DTCs)

Departmental Teaching Committees, or any equivalent departmental committee that deals with doctoral education, are required to include student representatives. The

⁷ <http://studentsunionucl.org/reps/staff>

Lead Department Representative should be an ex-officio member of the DTC, is responsible for representing the views of students at DTCs, and for communicating items between the DTC and the SPC. Lead Department Reps may delegate this responsibility to another student from their SPC if required.

Remember that each SPC will have a Lead Department Rep. If you have more than one SPC in your department, both Lead Department Representatives should be invited. Conversely, if you have one SPC, and more than one committee responsible for teaching/doctoral education, the SPC Co-Chairs should identify Academic Reps from the relevant level of study to attend the relevant committee.

Working with the Lead Department Representative

The role of Lead Department Representative is intended to have a significant impact on the way academic representation operates within departments. The student in this role will jointly lead the planning and agenda-setting of meetings, helping to ensure that meetings are shaped in a way which engages student members of the SPC, and promotes a joint community of staff and students. Co-Chairing of meetings and ensuring a student presence at Department Teaching Committee meetings will also help to embed partnership working between staff and students.

The practical steps that will help Lead Department Representatives to excel at their role are:

- Giving careful advance consideration to how the role will be elected
- Planning and organising agenda-setting meetings between the Co-Chairs and the secretary in advance of SPC meetings
- Ensuring the Chair of the DTC spends some time with the Lead Department Representative(s) to provide induction and context
- Sharing the department's ASER data and documents once these have been received
- Considering how Department committee meetings can be made more accessible to student members.

6. Planning Checklist

This guide is lengthy and there is lots to bear in mind. To simplify things somewhat, we've provided a practically-oriented, chronological prompt list below, for use at the beginning of the Academic Session.

When	Prompt	My Notes
Promoting the Role		
Early September	Is there opportunity to promote the role in pre-arrival communications for new students?	
Week beginning 23 September 2024	Is the promotional video ⁸ scheduled into induction talks for new students? Who will outline specific local arrangements for putting yourself forward for the role when the video has finished? Which publicity resources will we use to outline how to find out more about the role? How and when will these be distributed?	
Week beginning 30 September 2024	How will we draw the role to the attention of new and returning students? Are there any changes made thanks to students last year we can highlight to help promote the importance of the role? Ask any representatives who are returning to UCL whether they would like to continue for a further year.	
On-Boarding		
Late September	When is the deadline for students to put themselves forward? Who will contact our Academic Reps to ask which one would like to act as Lead Department Representative? Will an email reminder be sent to students in advance of the deadline?	

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpZ9lgmRPZ8>

	<p>Will this deadline allow time to hold an election on Opinio/Moodle/Unitu if there are multiple interested students?</p> <p>Who will pull together the required information for each representative and send these to the Faculty using the return sheet?</p>	
17 October 2024	<p>Deadline to submit all Representative, Research Student Representative and Lead Department Representative details through the SU website⁹.</p> <p>Who will write to Academic Reps to let them know they now have the role, and to outline next steps?</p>	
Induction & Support		
From 21 October 2024	<p>Who will let our reps know to expect to hear from the Students' Union, and encourage them to attend this training?</p> <p>Do we have details of our Faculty's welcome event to pass on?</p> <p>What local information should we send to representatives on what to expect over the year ahead?</p> <p>Is our first SPC scheduled after 28 October 2024 in order to give the new reps time to be trained and talk to students?</p> <p>Is there key information on local staff roles, and how we can support communication with students which we can pass on to new reps?</p>	
From 28 October 2024	<p>Who will encourage the Lead Department Rep to attend Union Induction training?</p> <p>Which is the relevant Department Teaching/Research Committee the Lead Department Rep will be a member of? Who else will need their details in order to invite them?</p> <p>Does the staff SPC Co-Chair have the Lead Department Reps' details? Have they made arrangements for setting a detailed agenda for</p>	

⁹ <https://studentsunionucl.org/academic-reps/add>

	each SPC, and how they will communicate in advance to agree this?	
28 October 2024	Faculty Rep Details to be sent to Faculties Who will welcome them and introduce them to their role? Who will encourage them to attend Union induction training?	
From 28 October 2024	Who will be responsible for attending Faculty Welcomes?	

Find out more at <http://studentsunionucl.org/reps/staff>
 Contact us on reps@ucl.ac.uk



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Representatives

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