



# **Programme Rep Handbook**

**2010-2011**

# 1 Welcome

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## *From the Students' Union VP Education*

### **Hello!**

First things first - huge congratulations on being elected! By becoming a Programme Rep you have become part of the team of student representatives within the City University London Students' Union (CULSU) and through this you will make a huge difference to the lives of students by helping to create change that will improve their experience at City University London.

The staff and Officers in the Students' Union are here to help you be the catalyst for those changes on behalf of the students you represent, so if you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in contact, we will always listen and will offer any support and advice we can, all you need to do is ask!

The role of a Programme Rep is a vital one at City as it allows the students to have an input into how their courses are run. The University, Students' Union and the students you represent all value your input and appreciate the work you'll be doing throughout the academic year. Previously reps have improved on issues varying from: contact hours with tutors, feedback on coursework and exams, reducing library fines, better timetabling to issues as big as securing a new students Union Venue

This handbook, along with the training you'll receive from the Students' Union, is intended to help you understand your role better. It will also show you what support you can expect and how your role fits into the bigger picture.

### **VP Education**

[vpeducation@city.ac.uk](mailto:vpeducation@city.ac.uk)

**020 7040 5614**

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## *From the Dean of Students*

I am delighted to welcome you to your role as Programme Representative. City University is committed to listening and responding to student views; we all want to further enhance provision and the student experience and achieve a position where City University is the University of choice. Your role in the collection of constituent views, feeding them in through the appropriate channels and informing students whom you represent on actions taken is invaluable. It is through these series of actions that members of our community grow to appreciate that we value, respect and care about each other in our various roles, both staff and students alike.

It is by no means an easy task being an excellent Programme Representative. You will have to balance multiple perspectives; what works for one doesn't always work for others. You will have to synthesise views, prioritise and report upon them succinctly and constructively. You won't always know who the best person is to talk to about the

concerns or suggestions of your fellow students but there is support available and this online handbook and training will help you to develop the knowledge and confidence to progress feedback.

Do take advantage of the excellent level of support and guidance offered by the Students' Union. This experience should add value to your personal and professional development along with adding value to the institution.

Thank you sincerely for your commitment. I know that together we will make a difference.

***Dr Malcolm Cross***

***Dean of Students***

**020 7040 8531**

## **2 Why Programme Reps Are Important**

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It is important for both the University and for students that there are a number of channels for honest and constructive feedback – both positive and negative – and Programme Reps form one of these channels. By facilitating feedback you will help your University achieve excellence, which is one of the core values in the Mission Statement for City and you will also help improve the experience of current and future students at City.

By involving Programme Reps to key committee meetings, we achieve the following:

- Create a prime opportunity for the views of students to be heard in a formal context
- Provide the ideal forum to discuss new ideas and ways of solving problems
- Enable City University to gauge student opinion on academic matters and matters relating to the student experience
- Ensure that students can be well informed about developments and changes going on within the University, so they can respond via their Reps on the basis of informed opinion
- Allow students to have a deeper understanding of their programme, their School, their University and Higher Education in general

The University totally supports the idea that students are best placed to represent the views of their fellows across the University.

The Vice Chancellor meets annually with Student Representatives to hear their views directly and thank them for their input.

### **3 The Role Of A Programme Rep**

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It's all in the name. Programme Reps represent the students on their programme or course!

Programme Reps are the most important link between students, the Students' Union and the University. Programme Reps let us know what students think, what they want and they are pivotal in getting out there and acting on behalf of students.

Programme Reps talk to the students on their course, finding out what their educational wants and needs are and they then feed this information back to the Students' Union and the University. They are a vital component in the representation structure, ensuring that the student voice is heard. After all, it's your education and you deserve the best!

Programme Reps are involved in all aspects of representation, from informal liaison with course tutors and directors through to sitting on academic committees and working groups.

Make sure you have a copy of the Programme Rep Role Description which is available as part of the Moodle Programme Rep Initial Training. Contact the Students' Union to get access to this training.

There are around 300 Programme Reps across the University and they have a real impact on the student experience. Without them, things just wouldn't get better!

#### ***Some of the key functions of the role include:***

- Making sure the students you represent know who you are and representing the views of the students within your course;
- Consulting with students to find out their opinions on your School, your course and the student experience at City and on the campus where you are based;
- Regularly attending committee meetings, representing student views at these meetings and ensuring student needs are considered in all decisions;
- Feeding back the outcomes of these meetings to students and following up on any agreed action points
- Acting as a channel of communication back to students, members of staff, other Programme Reps, School Representation Officers, the Students' Union and appropriate committees where necessary;
- Regularly checking the Programme Reps' Forum here on Moodle so that you are up to speed with any relevant developments
- Actively engaging in the discussion forum on the Moodle Programme Rep Initial Training course.
- Attending Programme Rep follow on training;
- Respecting the anonymity of individual students when representing their views;
- Referring issues, where necessary, to the Students' Union or other University Departments;
- Keeping in contact with the Students' Union's VP Education and the Student Advocacy Manager;
- Having the power to influence and really make a difference!

## **Making yourself known**

It is important that the students on your programme know who you are and are regularly reminded of how you can support them by taking their questions and concerns to committee meetings.

### **Here are a few tips to help you remain visible and do your job well:**

- Wear your Programme Rep badge! Ask the Students' Union if you have not received yours.
- Ask if you can display a poster on a notice board with your photo and contact details.
- Ask your lecturers if you can take a minute or two at the beginning of lectures to let students know who you are and when your committee meetings are coming up.
- Make sure you feed back the results of discussions at committee meetings so that students know you are working for them.
- Create an email group for your programme. Make sure you ask students on your course if they wish to be part of it.
- Get your friends to promote you.
- Ask other Programme Reps and SROs what promotional tactics they have found successful.

### **Typical issues**

There is a range of issues you may be asked to deal with as a Programme Rep. See Chapter 6 in this handbook on *Knowing Your Boundaries* for more information.

## **4 The Benefits Of Being A Programme Rep**

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There are many benefits to becoming a Programme Representative. If you approach the role with a professional attitude, you will be able to develop a range of skills as well as enhancing existing ones.

### ***Transferable Skills:***

There are countless skills to develop as a Programme Rep. Presentation skills and public speaking, negotiation, leadership, diplomacy, problem solving, networking, time management, communication skills and self confidence are just a few of them. These are all skills that can benefit you in your studies, personal life and in your future career.

### ***Employability:***

Being a Programme Rep can look very impressive on your Curriculum Vitae (CV). Prospective employers want to see more these days than just a qualification. If you can show you've done something outside the parameters of your course then this will prove you can juggle different tasks. Being a Programme Rep demonstrates that you are motivated to help improve things for others and that you are willing to take on additional responsibilities.

### ***Make a Difference:***

Being a Programme Rep allows you to get actively involved in the decisions made about your education. It's a great way of increasing the quality and standards within the University and can benefit you, your peers and future students.

### ***Make Friends:***

There's no better way of making friends with other students than being a Programme Rep. It gives you the opportunity to approach them for their opinions and help them with issues they are having difficulties with. It has the potential to dramatically improve your communication and people skills and at the end of the year you'll feel more confident talking to people you've never met before.

### ***Access to Introductory Training and Ongoing Development Days:***

The Students' Union offers full training via Moodle to all Programme Reps to ensure that you are fully equipped to be able to carry out the role effectively. Additionally, throughout the year there will be fun, interactive development days for you to be able to reflect and build upon your skills. These are advertised on the Events Calendar in Moodle.

### ***Students' Union Rewards and Recognition:***

The Students' Union is keen to recognise and reward Programme Reps who make a particularly strong contribution over the course of the year. Depending on your level of engagement, you may be eligible for a Bronze, Silver or Gold level award at the end of the year. There is more on this in the next section of this handbook.

All Programme Reps will be invited to an end of year Thank You Celebration at which the awards will be given out.

## 5 Rewards And Recognition Scheme

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The Students' Union is keen to encourage excellence amongst elected Programme Reps at City.

To support this we have created the Rewards & Recognition Scheme, designed to acknowledge those Programme Reps who make a notable contribution in their role. The Rewards & Recognition Scheme makes awards at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels

Awards outline at different levels

<b>All Programme Reps</b>	A place at the end of year Thank You Celebration
<b>Bronze Level</b>  (100 awards to be given)	A place at the end of year Thank You Celebration  Bronze Programme Rep Certificate  £10 Amazon voucher
<b>Silver Level</b>  (30 awards to be given)	A place at the end of year Thank You Celebration  Silver Programme Rep Certificate  £25 voucher
<b>Gold Level</b>  (10 awards to be given)	A place at the end of year Thank You Celebration  Gold Programme Rep Certificate  £50 voucher

### Qualifying for an award

To qualify for the different levels of award, we will look for evidence of your involvement and engagement with your role as Programme Rep. broadly speaking, the awards are categorised as follows, but we will also take into account any exceptional contributions which may not fall exactly into the categories below. So if you have any innovative ideas and creative approaches to engage and represent your students, then by all means give them a try!

Level	Requirements
<b>All Programme Reps</b>	Completion of the Programme Rep Initial Training on Moodle (completed checklist submitted to SU)  Completion of an Action Plan for the year  Evidence of working to the Programme Rep Job Description
<b>Bronze Level</b>	As above plus:  Attend Representation Networking Event in November  Evidence of active engagement with the Programme

	<p>Rep Community on Moodle</p> <p>Meet regularly with SRO for your School and evidence of working collaboratively over the course of the year</p> <p>Attend School level Networking event for Programme Reps organised with SRO</p> <p>Completion of End of Year Review of their work</p>
<b>Silver Level</b>	<p>As above plus:</p> <p>Completion of Programme Rep Activity Log with evidence of activities engaged in plus evidence of reflective practice</p> <p>Reports submitted on Committees attended</p> <p>Active involvement in promoting the NSS – log of activity</p> <p>Record of feedback activities upwards &amp; downwards</p> <p>Attendance at min. 2 additional training sessions</p>
<b>Gold Level</b>	<p>As above plus:</p> <p>Involvement at NUS level eg NUS Facebook group and attendance at training, conferences and/or running campaigns</p> <p>Connection with Prog Reps at other Unis</p> <p>Recommendation for the award by School staff and students</p>

## 6 Knowing Your Boundaries

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The students you represent may come to you as their Programme Rep with a number of issues. You need to be clear which ones you can take forward and which ones need to be referred on.

### **Issues that Programme Reps CAN deal with:**

*Teaching Resources* : availability of lecture rooms, lecture facilities, room facilities, disabled access etc.

*Teaching Methods* : do students have the opportunity to experience different learning environments such as small seminar groups as well as lectures? Do lecturers make use of a variety of teaching methods such as board-work, OHP, flipchart, PowerPoint, Video etc? Do the teaching methods used exclude students with specific learning difficulties?

*Assessment feedback* : student concerns on assessment feedback – how quickly it is received, how much or little detail it contains, whether it is received at all!

*Anonymous marking* : is the anonymous marking system used universally to ensure fair marking of student work?

*Study Resources* : availability of books and other resources in the library, access to workstations, facilities etc.

*Programme content & structure* : does your Programme match the description in the Programme Handbook? Do lectures and seminars focus on the important topics? Have changes been made to the Programme without warning or consultation? Is the workload distributed reasonably throughout the Programme? Are the feedback mechanisms clear and appropriate?

*Personal tutor support* : students not being assigned a personal tutor, not being able to meet with their tutor, not knowing who their tutor is.

*Hidden Programme costs* : have students been given adequate information about the costs of photocopying, attending field trips, extra materials that are needed as an essential part of completing the Programme etc? Are the charges reasonable?

*Access to facilities after hours* : do the University and/or College provide adequate services to part-time students and students who need to use facilities outside 9am-5pm (this includes access to food outlets etc)?

*Communication of issues* : are students aware of what is happening in the University & Students' Union and are they happy about the way this information is disseminated?

*Comparisons between Schools and/or University sites*: sometimes students hear of an area of good practice within another School or on another University site and want their Programme Rep to get it introduced in their own area.

### **Issues Programme Reps should refer on to others:**

Individual student needs: students may come to you with individual and/or personal needs, which could be in relation to academic worries, complaints, personal emotional problems, financial problems, accommodation problems or visa/immigration problems.

No matter how prepared you may feel to deal with such issues, DON'T! It is not in the best interests of yourself or the student for you to do this. You will find guidance on who you can refer on to in the Moodle Programme rep Initial Training course.

It is not a Programme Rep's role to represent students in relation to their individual needs or coursework assessments. Students who have concerns about their grades should speak in the first instance to the member of staff who has marked their work or to their personal tutor. If unsatisfied with the response, they should be referred to the Union Support Service.

Don't just say what you think: it is important to remember that you are not just representing your own view but the view of all the students on your Programme. If you are unsure of what the students view is on an issue then don't say anything until you have canvassed a broad range of opinion.

### **What To Remember:**

As a Programme Rep you don't have to take work on single-handed. If you need help, your first port of call would probably be your School Representation Officer. There is also a network of University and Students' Union staff to help you deal with issues or take cases on for you, so make sure you utilise them!

Other people are paid to give specialist advice so don't be tempted to do this yourself! And don't take on every minor issue that is thrown your way – students should be encouraged to tackle problems on their own wherever possible and appropriate!

If in doubt, always ask someone on the support network available to you.

## **7 The Student Representation System At City**

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### ***How Programme Reps work***

1. A student has an issue with their Programme or a suggestion that they think would make it better.
2. They make contact with their Programme Rep.
3. The Programme Rep, who has been trained by the Students' Union, then uses their relevant knowledge and skills to resolve the issue or put forward the suggestion through various routes.
4. These routes could include Programme Committees, Boards of Studies, Staff Student Liaison Committees, School Student Affairs Committees, working with other School Programme Reps and/or with the SRO for their School, working with Full Time Sabbatical Officers, carrying out research, lobbying Deans and campaigning on campus.
5. Throughout this whole process, the Programme Rep has access to full support from the Students' Union to deliver the best results for students.
6. As a result of all of this, problems should be addressed and resolved, students are happier and able to focus on what matters. The Students' Union is also able to share this experience with others to help more students.

### ***The Role of the SRO***

The School Representation Officers (SROs) are part-time elected officers who form part of the Students' Union Executive Committee. They also sit on the University Student Affairs Committee. There are 7 SROs in total, one for each School.

Part of their role is to offer real and practical support and advice to Programme Reps at a local level. With almost 300 Programme Reps spread all across a number of University sites, SROs offer a local level of support to help you to be an effective Programme Rep.

SROs also provide a link between the student body and the Students' Union Executive Committee.

### ***Aspects of the SROs job include:***

- Organising a meeting for Programme Reps once a semester to support their work in the School and to canvass their views on major policy developments in the Union.
- To meet with the School's management (ideally the Dean) informally once a semester to promote a dialogue between the Union and the School's management
- Encouraging Programme Reps and other students to be more involved in the democratic processes and structure of the Students' Union.
- Taking issues raised by students via the Programme Reps to the Students' Union Executive Committee and /or to the University Student Affairs Committee.

- Promoting the Students' Union's annual elections to Programme Reps, from getting them to vote to motivating them to stand for a position.
- Enabling Programme Reps to become involved with more opportunities for campaign work and information exchange.

## **Who is Your SRO?**

You will have been introduced to your SRO at the Student Representatives' Networking Event. Make sure you have made a note of their name and contact details on the Useful Contacts list in Chapter 10 of this handbook.

## **Union Council**

The Union Council is the governing body of the Students' Union. All members of the Executive Committee (which includes the School Representation Officers) are accountable to the Union Council and the Union Council Members approve the work that the Executive carries out. Union Council represents a broad range the views from students and can inform the direction of the Executive Committee and thus the Union

Union Council Members are elected to represent the views of students to the Students' Union Executive Committee and to make recommendations regarding the work of the Students' Union.

## **How Programme Reps link into the University Committee Structure**

All student representatives are elected members who work with Departments, Schools and the University to ensure that the views and opinions of City students are fully taken into account by staff when they are conducting the business of the University.

City values the views of its students and the University's committee structure allows for participation by students (through their elected representatives) at all levels.

As Programme Reps It is likely that you will be acting as a representative on one or more of the following committees (or their equivalents in your School):

- **Programme Management Team**
- **School Student Affairs Committee**
- **Student Staff Liaison Committee**

## **Roles for other Student Representatives**

*Student Representation Officers (SROs)* will represent students at School level, including attendance at Boards of Studies, Student Staff Liaison Committees, Research Committees and School Student Affairs Committees (or their equivalent). Many Schools invite student representatives to participate in other committees too.

At University level, Student Affairs Committee (SAC) is the primary committee with responsibility for considering issues relating to the student experience. Half of the elected members of SAC are students, and the Full Time Sabbatical Officers and the seven SROs are also members. SAC reports directly to Senate (the supreme academic body of City University).

*Research students* are invited to participate in the both the University Research Committee and the Research Degrees Committee.

*Full Time Sabbatical Officers* represent students on other University-level committees – Senate, Council, Academic Practice and Programmes Committee, for example.

Further information about governance at City can be found at:  
<http://www.city.ac.uk/aboutcity/governance/index.html>

Issues raised by students are always managed (so far as is possible) at local (module or departmental) level by programme teams. If an issue cannot be resolved here, it will be considered at School level. When an issue is larger or has wider relevance to the institution, it is escalated up through the committee structure so that it can be addressed at a higher level.

Individual students can of course take their concerns to the Union Support Services ([uss@city.ac.uk](mailto:uss@city.ac.uk)) if they feel their concerns are not being properly addressed within the University systems

***As representatives, you (along with other students) may occasionally also be invited to attend:***

- Consultation meetings with staff members responsible for a wide variety of projects.
- Periodic Programme Review panels. Students are invited to answer questions from panel members relating to the students' experience of a particular course.

## **8 Which Meetings Do I Attend?**

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As a Programme Rep there are a number of meetings that you may be asked to attend. For example

- Programme Management Team (PMT)
- School Student Affairs Committees (SAC)
- Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)

However, bear in mind that not every School uses the same names for their School and programme level committees so you will need to check this out in your own School. It might be helpful to work with your SRO to agree who will attend which meetings so that the student voice is always represented

You should find out more information about dates and times for these meetings from the Committee Secretary. The staff in your School Office should be able to advise you who to approach

Before you attend, you should locate minutes from previous meetings to see what has been discussed before.

We recommend that you keep a close track of dates and times of the meetings you have attended, so we have provided a chart at the end of this handbook for you to note them down.

### ***Dealing with Meetings***

Committee meetings can sometimes seem to operate in a rather obscure way which may be confusing for you as a newcomer. You will find more detailed advice and information about how to manage your participation in committees in the module on effective meetings in the Moodle Programme Rep Initial Training course.

To help you get to grips with the jargon and common acronyms, refer to the Glossary in the Moodle Programme Rep Initial Training Course. If you have not been given the password to access this training, contact the Students Union on [studentrep@city.ac.uk](mailto:studentrep@city.ac.uk).

## **9 Training And Support For Programme Reps**

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### ***Programme Representative Training***

The Students' Union provides you with a Moodle based Programme Rep Initial Training so you are fully prepared to be an effective Programme Rep. The course allows you to interact with other Programme Reps via blogs and forums, so make sure you use it to keep closely connected with your fellow Reps as well as with Students' Union staff. If you have not yet been given access to this course, contact the Students' Union on [studentrep@city.ac.uk](mailto:studentrep@city.ac.uk)

### ***Student Representation Networking Event***

There is an annual Student Representatives' Networking Event where there will be additional training and a further opportunity for you to network with your fellow Programme Reps, your School SRO and with staff from your School and from the Students' Union. The date of this event will be advertised via the Moodle forum.

### ***Additional Training***

In addition to the Moodle based Programme Rep Initial Training course, the Students' Union will offer a package of additional training to help support and develop you in your work as a Rep, such as assertiveness, negotiation skills and time management. Dates and topics will be circulated via the Moodle forum.

### ***Support from Full Time Staff***

There are a number of staff you can turn to with queries and questions about your work as a Programme Rep.

- The Secretary of the Committee you are attending
- Your School Representation Officer
- Other Programme Reps
- The Student Representation Adviser in the Students' Union
- Union Support Services
- VP Education
- Dean of Students
- Academic Development Officer

### ***Developing the Programme Rep System***

Also, if you feel that the Programme Rep system isn't working or you think you know of a way to improve it let the staff and/or Officers in the Students' Union know and they will see what they can do to change it for the better.

Even if you want to just pop in for an informal chat about how you're finding the role of a Programme Rep, we'll be happy to see you!

## 10 Useful Contacts

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### **SRO for your School:**

Find out who this is and make a note

### **Other Programme Reps in your School:**

Find out who some of the other Programme Reps in your School are and make a note

### **Key University and Union Contacts:**

Malcolm Cross, Dean of Students	Ext 8531	m.c.cross@city.ac.uk
Shereen Sally, Academic Development Officer	Ext 8971	<a href="mailto:shereen.sally.1@city.ac.uk">shereen.sally.1@city.ac.uk</a>
Student Representation Adviser	Ext 5603	studentsunion@city.ac.uk
Students' Union President	Ext 5609	president@city.ac.uk
Vice President, Education	Ext 5614	vpeducation@city.ac.uk
Union Support Service	Ext 5600	uss@city.ac.uk
Services for Students	Ext 7040	studentcentre@city.ac.uk