Programme Representatives Handbook: A Guide for University Staff

Introduction

Welcome to the Programme Representatives Handbook – A Guide for University Staff. In this guide, we aim to explain how the Programme Representative System works, the importance of elections and how to carry these out, training that we offer and the support available to you as Staff from the Union.

We want Programme Representatives to feel empowered to create a positive impact on their learning experience and provide useful and constructive feedback. As representatives, they play a vital role in the checks and balances on the quality processes at City, University of London, so we want them to feel as supported and effective as possible.

We want to thank you for all the support you give to Programme Representatives, and for your continued involvement in helping us make the System better – they are something for both the University and the Union to proudly champion together.

We hope you find this guide useful and a tool to help you. We are constantly looking at how we can better support staff and Programme Representatives, so are always open to feedback. We will be running a series of Staff Briefing sessions, to enable you to understand the training that we give to Representatives and to ask any questions you have.

If you have further queries, comments or concerns, or you would like to attend a Staff Briefing session on Programme Representatives, please do not hesitate to contact us at studentrep@city.ac.uk or 020 7040 5605.

Malek Arab – Vice President Education, 2017-18 – vpeducation@city.ac.uk
Laura Dickens – Academic Representation and Democracy Coordinator – laura.dickens@city.ac.uk
1.0 Role of a Programme Representative

Training is provided to Representatives in the first term, with additional training throughout the year. As part of this training, we inform Representatives that their role is to:

- Represent students on their programme by collecting their feedback on both academic and non-academic issues.
- Report on good and bad issues affecting their cohort.
- Liaise with Staff, including Programme Directors and Course Officers regularly.
- Attend and actively contribute to Committees and meetings.
- Feedback the progress with issues, what decisions are being made and what they are doing to their cohort.
- Promote Union, University and National surveys to collect feedback (e.g. The National Student Survey (NSS), Your Voice)
- Take part in academic campaigns with School Representative Officers.
- Take opportunities provided to them by the Students’ Union and University.

We are keen to stress that their role is to represent Students’ opinions.

We inform them that sometimes students may approach them with issues that concerns their welfare, academic performance or needs for extenuating circumstances. We tell them that their role is to signpost students to the relevant support, and provide them with information about the Student Centre and the Union’s Advice Service.

For the academic year 2017-18, we will be introducing Signposting to Support sessions to support Representatives in understanding more about the different services available from the University and the Union, so that they can feel confident to signpost students to these.
2.0 Role of Staff in the Programme Representative Scheme

In order to facilitate a successful scheme, both the University and Union have different roles to play.

Staff are responsible for:
- Facilitating the election of Programme Representatives, and providing the elected students’ information to the Union within a set timeframe.
- Ensuring that Representatives are invited to all meetings they are expected to attend.
- Ensuring that Representatives are sent paperwork for meetings in advance of meetings, and are given a chance to feed in where they can.
- Encouraging Representatives to participate in meetings and welcoming feedback.
- Contacting the Union if there is an issue with or a request for attendance at a particular meeting.
- Ensuring the Union receives copies of minutes from all meetings.

The Students’ Union is responsible for:
- Collating details for all Representatives onto a central database.
- Supporting Staff in the electing of Representatives.
- Organising and delivering training for Representatives and School Representative Officers.
- Providing advice and support for Representatives – including putting together templates and resources to facilitate feedback.
- Organising forums and events for Representatives to take part in.
- Providing a report to the Student Experience Committees (SEC) each term.
- Looking through meeting minutes to identify common trends.
- Carrying out a yearly review of the system and producing recommendations.
- Co-developing of a successful system of student representation with Quality Teams.
- Providing recognition at the end of each academic year to Representatives.
3.0 Elections Guidance

For the Programme Representatives System to be effective, the Students’ Union needs all Representatives to be elected to their positions. We have seen that this provides students with a strong level of accountability to those that they are representing, and gives a strong sense of student ownership and engagement.

We recognise that student participation can sometimes be difficult, but we are always on hand to support you through this process. It is our ultimate vision to be able to run these elections for you using our online systems, but this is a work in progress, and until then, we want to give you as much support as possible.

With this guide, you have been given:
- a PowerPoint slide to advertise Programme Representative Elections
- a sample nomination form
- sample ballot papers

We are also able to provide ballot boxes if required.

How many Representatives do I need to Elect?

The ratio we advise for each Programme is 1 Representative for each 30 students, with a minimum of 2 Representatives for each year group of each course. This is to ensure that the workload is not put upon one person, and can be shared, and that the views of all years of the course are taken into consideration.

In practice, this looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-30</td>
<td>2 reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60</td>
<td>2-3 reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-90</td>
<td>3-4 reps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90+</td>
<td>4-6+ reps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In cases where your ratio does not comply with this ratio, you are advised to provide details of plans for an alternative feedback mechanism on the spreadsheet. Please note that if you have elected more Representatives than the suggested ratio, then this is not a problem.

When to run an Election?

We ask that elections are held in the first 2 weeks of the course. This is so that you have Representatives in place for your first meetings and so we can arrange their training. This also applies to those starting their courses mid-way through the academic year.

For the first week, it is recommended that you promote the role of a Programme Representative, and talk about the election – including when it will be held and how they can put themselves forward. Then, depending on the size of your cohort, you can either hold the election within the same session, later in the week or the following week.
How to run an Election

The key consideration to note is that each student must be given a chance to put themselves forward for the positions. This means that elections must happen each year so that all students can be given the opportunity.

In order to collect nominations for the positions available, you can either have students submit a nomination form to you (in person or via email) or come to the front of the lecture. We are happy to leave this up to you to decide which route you take.

When running the election, you can elect Representatives in any of the following ways:

- **Show of Hands**
- **Ballot**
- **Email Ballot**
- **Moodle Choice**

**Show of Hands** – students come to the front of the room and make a 1-2 minute speech on why they would like to stand. When all of the candidates have made their speeches, you can ask the class to vote via raising their hands. Those with the most votes are elected. This tends to work better in smaller – medium sized groups.

**Ballot (sample attached)** – again students can come to the front of the room and make a 1-2 minute speech on why they would like to stand. When all of the candidates have made their speeches, you can distribute the ballot papers. Students can then cast their votes for who they would like and deposit these papers with you or in a ballot box provided by the Union. Those with the most votes are elected. This tends to work better in medium – larger sized groups.

**Email Ballot (sample attached)** – students email you a nomination form and a paragraph on why they would like to stand or hand in a copy. Once the deadline comes, you can email all students in the cohort – information about the candidates and copies of their paragraphs and ask them to vote via email their votes. Those with the most votes are elected. This tends to work better with those courses who have distance learners, part time students and in medium – larger sized groups.

**Moodle Choice** – students email you a nomination form or hand in a copy. You can then set up an election on the course’s Moodle page via Choice. Add in all the different candidates and include information about their reasons for standing below. Run the election for up to a week. Those with the most votes are elected. This tends to work better with those courses who have distance learners, part time students and in medium – larger sized groups.

**Next Steps**

Once you have elected your Representatives, please send through their details to your Quality Officer/Key Contact using the template excel document. Please ensure that you arrange all the key information such as email, and year of study etc.

If you need any support to run any of these elections, or would like help in setting them up, please contact studentrep@city.ac.uk and the Union can arrange for someone to assist you.
4.0 Support Offered from the Students’ Union to Programme Representatives

The Union wants Representatives to have year round support to enable them to carry out their roles, so we have introduced the following measures, trialled in the last academic year, in order to provide this.

Welcome Receptions
In October and November, we will be hosting Welcome Receptions in each School, to bring together Representatives and the Staff in those Schools who will be working closely with them. The idea of this is to ensure that they know who they can go to, and who to expect correspondence from. It also means that when they come to attend their first meetings, they will already recognise some familiar faces.
We want these receptions to be seen as a thank you, for the work you do to support the Representatives, and to the Representatives for taking on those roles.

Pre-Student Experience Committee Meetings
Before each School’s Student Experience Committee Meeting, the Vice President Education and School Representative Officer will be hosting a meeting for Representatives, to take them through the meeting’s agenda and discussing any items that they wish to bring forward. We have found this a successful mechanism for ensuring that items coming forward are relevant to the committee’s aims, but also as a way of gathering feedback from those who are unable to attend.

Programme Representative Forums
These are termly meetings hosted by the Vice President Education, to bring together all Representatives across the University, to find out what the key issues they are facing, and what campaigns can be collectively put together to try and further these. These also provide an opportunity for Representatives to raise any concerns they are having in their role to the Union to address.

Course Rep Conference
Each year the National Union of Students (NUS) hosts a Course Rep Conference, which offers additional training and national insight to Representatives. We have budgeted for a small number of Representatives from each School to be able to attend, if they feel this would be a benefit.

School Representative Officers
School Representative Officers will be hosting Tea and Coffee morning within their Schools each term, as a way of providing peer support to Representatives, and to collect any feedback or issues that they may be facing.

Reward and Recognition
This year, we are providing incentives and recognition for Representatives. These will be in the form of:
- A reward of £10 printing credit for Representative of the Month (for 9 months)
- Branded lanyards
- Cost price hoodies
- Cost price business cards
- Vouchers for encouraging and participating in surveys
- City Students’ Union Leadership Award – Representatives will be able to sign up for first round of our certified Leadership Award for Students’ Union volunteers.
5.0 Common Queries from Representatives

Academic Misconduct, Extenuating Circumstances and Academic Advice
The Union runs a Union Advice Service, offering independent academic advice for all students around such issues as academic misconduct and extenuating circumstances. www.citystudents.co.uk/advice

University Food Outlets & CityBar
All of City’s catering and food outlets, including the CityBar, are run by a company called Sodexo or Lexington at Bunhill Row. The Union has no control over these outlets, including opening hours, prices or what they stock.

We do however, have a relationship with both providers, and hold regular meetings with Sodexo to raise students’ concerns and we tend to run events in collaboration with Sodexo in the CityBar throughout the year.

If Representatives raise an issue with the Bar or catering facilities, it’s key that these are taken on by the relevant supplier.

Societies
Any student can join or set up a Society during their time at City. There are 5 application periods that happen throughout the year, so there are always plenty of opportunities to get involved. We currently have over 70 different societies; including academic, cultural & international, political & campaigning, faith and special interest societies – there’s something for everyone. There are a host of development opportunities throughout the year, including dedicated training on areas such as leadership and events management, as well as a funding pot that can be bid to, to assist societies with their overall development.

You can direct Representatives to find out what societies we have already, how to join and how to start up a new society by visiting www.citystudents.co.uk/societies

6.0 Key Contacts and Support for You!

There’s a whole team in the Union who are dedicated to Programme Representatives – please feel free to contact us at any time with any query, no matter how big or small. If your query is School specific, it is advised that you contact the Quality Team within your School.

Our dedicated email for Programme Representative Queries is: studentrep@city.ac.uk

To contact our Elected Students’ Union Representatives:
Vice President Education – vpeducation@city.ac.uk
Cass Business School Officer – businesssro@city.ac.uk
School of Arts & Social Sciences Officer – sasssro@city.ac.uk
School of Health Sciences Officer – healthsro@city.ac.uk
School of Mathematics, Computer Science & Engineering Officer – smcsesro@city.ac.uk
The City Law School Officer – lawsro@city.ac.uk

We offer dedicated Staff Briefing sessions to take you through our Programme Representatives training and support. If this is something you would be interested in attending, please contact us at studentrep@city.ac.uk