






ALL YOURS

COURSE REP HAND- BOOK

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YOUR VOICE



THE UNION
MANCHESTER
METROPOLITAN
UNIVERSITY

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HELLO AND CONGRATULATIONS ON BECOMING A COURSE REP

I am Bran Catron, your elected Education Officer. I represent students' views on learning, teaching and all aspects of the academic experience. I take a lead role in campaigning on academic issues within the University and beyond, inputting into the University's academic strategy at all levels. I look after the Course Representative structure and hope to empower and inform students of their rights.

Course Reps are an integral part of Manchester Met, and it's your dedication and hard work that allows students to make real change. As a Course Rep, you'll create some exciting campaigns and have a positive impact on students' time at University. You will be representing students on your course and making sure that their voices are heard throughout the University.

You will also meet other students across different courses, develop key

employability skills, attend various meetings and improve the academic provision at Manchester Met.

This handbook and our training sessions will give you an understanding of the role and some tips on how to get going as a Course Rep. We have a wonderful team, which includes our Faculty Liaison Coordinator, four Faculty Organizers and the other Student Officers, who will be on hand to help you throughout the year.

I wish you the best of luck for the year ahead, and look forward to working with you. If there is anything you need, we are here to help no matter how big or small the issue. I hope you enjoy being a Course Rep this year and that you find it a rewarding experience.

Bran Catron – Education Officer

WHAT IS THE UNION?

THE UNION IS A REGISTERED CHARITY AND YOUR STUDENTS' UNION. ALL STUDENTS WHO START AT MANCHESTER MET ARE AUTOMATICALLY A MEMBER OF THE UNION. WE ARE HERE TO HELP STUDENTS MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR TIME AT UNIVERSITY BY TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES, LEARNING NEW SKILLS, SUPPORTING AND REPRESENTING STUDENTS AND ENSURING THAT THEY HAVE FUN DURING THEIR UNIVERSITY LIFE.

OUR VALUES

- + We are passionate about student success
- + We strive for excellence in all that we do
- + Nobody understands our students better
- + We work together to achieve our goals
- + Every student matters



President: Evelyn Sweeney



Education: Bran Catron



Wellbeing: America Fabiana Pardo-Gomez



Societies and Development: Savannah Middleton



Sport: Fabienne Robertson-Barnett

STUDENT MATTERS

There are five Student Officers elected by fellow students to lead The Union: President, Education, Societies & Development, Sport and Wellbeing. The Student Officers listen to any issues that students have and campaign to make positive change.

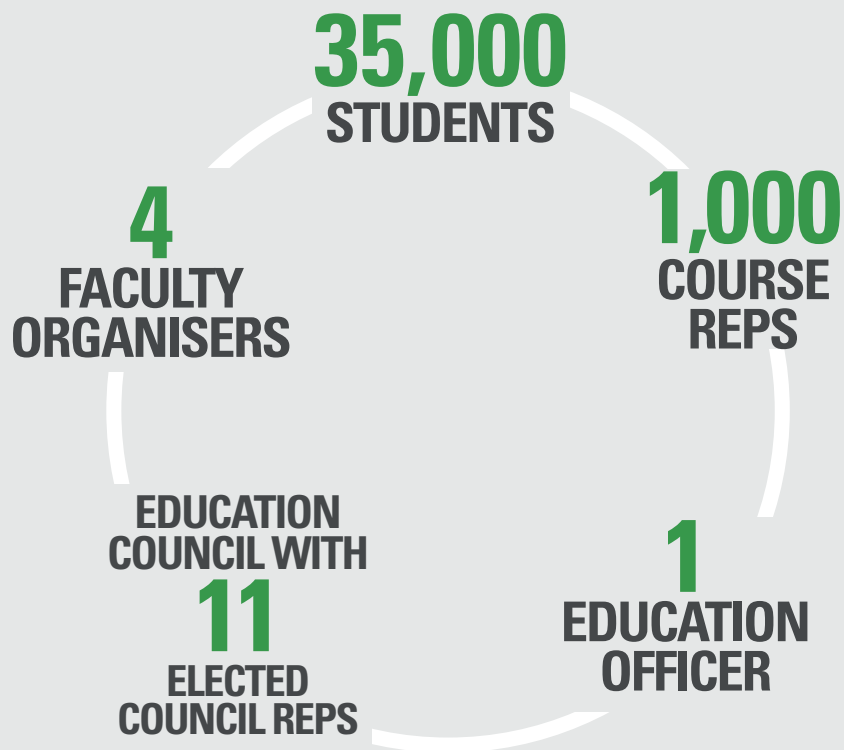
President:
s.u.president@mmu.ac.uk

Education Officer:
s.u.education@mmu.ac.uk

CONTACT US

The Union is here to help you on your journey as a course rep with whatever you may need. Currently, we are delivering a virtual service, if you need support our contact hours are between 10:00–16:00, Monday to Friday via email – s.u.reps@mmu.ac.uk. The team work alongside your elected Student Officers and are available to answer any queries you may have.

WHAT DOES REPRESENTATION LOOK LIKE?



THE COURSE REP ROLE

You will act as a voice of the students in your year/course by gathering student feedback and attending meetings with Manchester Met staff. You are the link between the students on your course and all levels of faculty staff. You will bring the voice of students to the people who make decisions about your education.

You are there to work closely with university staff to bring about positive, student-led change that will have impact both for your cohort and for future students of that programme.

As a Course Rep you will need to be:

- + Self-motivated and organised
- + Comfortable speaking on behalf of others
- + Able to separate your role from your own views
- + Passionate about your education
- + A good communicator

COURSE REP RESPONSIBILITIES

The key tasks that you will carry out include:

- + Attend Education Council meetings to discuss big issues, influence campaigns and hold the Education Officer to account.
- + Registering as a Course Rep online theunionmmu.org/course-reps.
- + Undertake training from The Union to enable you to do your role successfully.
- + Gathering student feedback regarding satisfaction, ideas for change, and issues, and recording this on the feedback tool '[what's on your mind?](#)'
- + Presenting this feedback at all Staff Student Liaison meetings and at Programme Committee meetings and other meetings with academic staff throughout the year.
- + Contributing to discussions about issues identified by External Examiners in their annual report on your programme.
- + Working with faculty staff to find the best solution possible for students.
- + Attending development sessions and events at The Union and within the faculty.
- + Keeping in regular contact with your Faculty Organiser, particularly ahead meetings with the University.
- + Regularly checking your email for Course Rep News and other communications from your Faculty Organiser, the Education Officer and the wider Union team.

HOW YOU WILL BE RECOGNISED FOR YOUR WORK

SKILLS YOU CAN GAIN

- + Working collaboratively with university stakeholders
- + Negotiation skills
- + Leadership skills
- + Campaigning for positive, student-led change
- + Advocacy
- + Communication skills
- + Ability to liaise with a range of partners

CERTIFICATION

- + Register as a Course Rep on The Union website
- + Attend Course Rep training
- + Attend all Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings (these occur once per term)
- + Attend informal catch ups during the Unit Feedback process (these occur once per term)
- + Actively engage with the feedback tool '[what's on your mind?](#)'
- + Attend at least one faculty forum (these occur once per term)

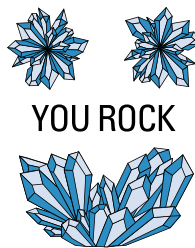
If you can't make it to these events, make sure that you send your apologies and pre-submit student feedback to be discussed at the meeting.

FUTURES SKILLS AWARD



The time that you volunteer as a Course Rep can count towards your Futures Skills Award. Find out more online: <https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/careers/students/futures-skills-award/>

VOLUNTEERING AWARDS



Each year, student volunteers are nominated for categories within the Volunteering Awards, which take place in May. This recognises the amazing hard work and commitment of our volunteers at The Union.

GATHERING FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

YOU CAN GATHER FEEDBACK ABOUT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- + **Curriculum** – The curriculum element is all about what you learn and how that learning is structured.
- + **Learning resources** – This relates to what equipment and materials are provided that help you learn.
- + **Learning and teaching process** – This is all about the transfer of information from the academic staff to you, how you process that information and apply it to real life settings.
- + **Assessment and feedback** – This is about measuring your achievements through exams, practicals, assignments or projects. It is also about how staff provide you with information to learn what you are doing well and where you need to improve.
- + **Student progression and achievements** – How the university designs and supports the transition from one module to another or from one year to the next.
- + **Guidance and support** – This is how the university helps you navigate your way through your course. It also relates to how they provide advice to when things are not going so well.
- + **Quality enhancement and assurance** – Quality enhancement is how your institution and the staff that run your course are looking to improve what they are doing. A key part of that is how they involve you in the process. Quality assurance relates to how the institution can say to you and the outside world that your qualification meets the standards set out for the course.

You will feedback to staff at Student Staff Liaison Committees and informal meet ups on these topics.

You are not expected to deal with:

- + Issues that are specific to an individual. This includes issues regarding visas, student finance, housing, personal problems etc. You should signpost this student to a Student Support Officer or the Advice Centre at The Union, as they will be able to help with this.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

CURRICULUM

- + How is the course organised?
- + How clear is the timetable?
- + Does the curriculum match your expectations from the prospectus?
- + Were learning expectations clearly outlined?
- + Is the curriculum sufficiently diverse?

LEARNING RESOURCES

- + Are there adequate library and computing facilities?
- + Do you have access to materials you need? For example, books, lab equipment and art materials.
- + If you are studying a practical course, do you have access to the right resources?

LEARNING AND TEACHING PROCESS

- + Were you guided to practise your skills throughout your course?
- + How good is the teaching?
- + Are there any forms of learning you would like in addition to lectures and tutorials?

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

- + Does the assessment adequately and fairly represent the content of the course?
- + Do you perceive the grading to be fair?

- + Do you receive adequate and timely feedback from your assessments?
- + Can you comment on the types and timings of assessment on your course – are they varied and adequately spaced?

STUDENT PROGRESSION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- + Do you feel you have improved by completing this course?
- + Do you think your course has made you more employable?
- + Are you able to move from one module to the next?

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

- + How much support are you getting from staff?
- + Is there a place or person you can get help from if you're struggling with the subjects?
- + Do you get relevant careers advice?

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT & ASSURANCE

- + Do you feel that your department is receptive to concerns?
- + Do you know how to communicate issues about the student experience to your programme team?
- + Has your programme/department responded to issues raised about the student experience?
- + Are you aware of the Academic Community Commitment?

HOW TO GATHER FEEDBACK

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

Use the [online reporting tool](#) to record all your conversations with students both online and face-to-face.

If you record everything here, it means it will all be in one place and The Union can pull off a report from the system that you can take to your informal catch up and your faculty. This will contain all the feedback submitted from your course.

Encourage students to use the online feedback tool to submit feedback. Share the link on social media, Moodle and emails. When students submit feedback you will automatically receive an email so that you can take action.

HOW TO PROCESS FEEDBACK

You should record all feedback you receive via other methods on the feedback tool so that it will be included in the report.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Using a Facebook group for your course is a great way to ask quick questions, and good for making events and polls.

Twitter is good for sharing links or videos related to course issues. If you don't have a Twitter page for your course, why not make one and use it as a way to promote meetings such as the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC). Follow the University and retweet information relevant to your course mates.

FACE TO FACE

Introduce yourself as the Course Rep in a lecture that most of your course attends, and regularly ask your lecturer for a few

Once you have gathered feedback about specific issues and encouraged students to submit their feedback, contact your Faculty Organiser to ensure you receive your full report to take to the SSLC and informal catch ups.

If an issue is not resolved after it is raised at the SSLC or in an informal catch

minutes to gather feedback. Ask your lecturer to demonstrate how to reach the online feedback tool on the big screen. It only takes a few short minutes.

OTHER WAYS

Most departments have noticeboard space or digital screens. Ask your Student Hub if you can use this space to advertise your work as a Course Rep, and to feed back any outcomes from action that you have taken.

Ask your Programme Leader to share the link to the feedback tool on Moodle – then students will know to contact you with any issues.

up, contact your Faculty Organiser for support from The Union.

Remember that you don't have to wait until one of these meetings to raise an issue – you can bring it up with the Advice Centre, your Programme Leader, Student Experience Tutor or other relevant member of staff at any time.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT MEETINGS

STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE (SSLC)?

A SSLC is an informal forum for staff and students to discuss programme and faculty related matters in an informal setting. All students, not only course reps, are entitled to attend, but course reps are expected to attend each one. Meetings should take place at least once per term. It is a place to discuss the suitability of teaching, learning style, the learning environment as a whole or any other issue, which affects the quality of the student experience on your programme.

Issues can be submitted anytime to the programme team informally in a catch up or at the SSLC/faculty forum. Remember, unit feedback takes place three weeks into every unit this year, so two weeks into each unit is a useful time to gather feedback.

UNIT FEEDBACK PROCESS AND INFORMAL CATCH UPS

The University runs the Unit Feedback process. At the mid way point of each unit cycle (around week three of its delivery) the programme team should be looking to identify and fix any issues affecting students. Course reps have a key role here in encouraging students to give their feedback. We suggest you use the 'what's on your mind?' feedback tool to gather the feedback and present it to the programme team.

We recommend that course reps meet with their programme leader or programme team once per term to discuss issues related to their own specific course. These can align with the Unit Feedback process. These allow course reps to raise issues that they are not comfortable raising in a faculty wide forum. They also allow the programme team to reflect on what students have fed back on their course and what action has been taken to resolve any issues. If your students have completed the online feedback tool in sufficient numbers, your programme team, or you, can have a summary document ready ahead of the meeting.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SSLC AND INFORMAL CATCH UPS

- + Let the Programme Leader know at the beginning of the academic year that you wish to arrange an informal catch up at an agreed date and time.
- + Talk to students to gather feedback on issues within the department – positive or negative.
- + Contact the the SSLC chair and the Programme Leader if you want to discuss anything in particular.
- + Read the agenda and check minutes from previous meetings to understand matters arising.
- + Contact your Faculty Organiser or Programme Leader ahead of the meeting to receive your course report.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AT AN SSLC INFORMAL CATCH UP:

- + Talk to staff beforehand if you have concerns about a major issue. This will help to build a good working relationship, and will give staff time to prepare before the meeting.
- + Think about what you're going to say before you get to the meeting. A rule of thumb is to follow the ABCD of representation – your feedback should be Accurate, Balanced, Constructive and Depersonalised.
- + Don't raise issues concerning individual students or staff. You should address these issues with a Student Experience Tutor, Programme Leader or the Advice Centre.
- + Be polite and considerate of other individuals. Use phrases such as "wouldn't it be better if...?" or "could we consider...?"
- + Try not to only focus on your own experiences and aim to communicate the views of the students you represent.
- + Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand something.
- + It's always more effective to give positive solutions, instead of a list of problems.
- + It's important to tell staff what you do like, so that they know to keep doing it.
- + After the meeting, make sure you know what the resolutions to issues were, so you can feed back to your course mates.

WHO'S IN YOUR FACULTY?

Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor

Has overall responsibility for the faculty.

Head of Department

Has overall responsibility for the department. They report to the Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor. Heads of Department are supportive of the role of the Course Rep and welcome your feedback.

Programme Leader

Has the main responsibility for the running of the course. This is the key person to contact firstly with issues and suggestions. Course Reps who wish to be a member of the Programme Committee should let the Programme Leader know at the beginning of the academic year.

Head of Year

Normally a lecturer who has the responsibility of overseeing the running of the units for each year group.

Lecturers/Tutors

These are the people who you will have day-to-day contact with and should be your first contact for queries.

Student Experience Officers (SEO)

They support the development of learning communities and are available to provide designated support to students. Full details are available from your Student Hub.

WHO'S AT THE UNION?

THE UNION AND THE UNIVERSITY RUN THE COURSE REP PROGRAMME IN PARTNERSHIP, SO YOU CAN CONTACT US FOR SUPPORT – OR JUST TO SAY HELLO:

Bran Catron – Education Officer

The elected officer who deals with all matters relating to your educational experience. If you have an idea for an educational change or campaign that could be successful across the university, get in touch: s.u.education@mmu.ac.uk

Faculty Liaison Coordinator

A full-time member of support staff at The Union who can help you if you need extra support in your role. The Faculty Liaison Coordinator designs the training and looks after Digital Rep. If you have any questions you can contact them on: s.u.reps@mmu.ac.uk

Faculty Organiser

Your Faculty Organiser is a member of staff at The Union who is another point of contact if you need support in dealing with any feedback you receive.

Your Faculty Organiser will facilitate a faculty-wide forum each term that you are expected to attend. This is your opportunity to inform the work of the Education Officer and make sure The Union is effectively representing your academic interests. You will be invited to this via email, so make sure you're checking them regularly.

Find who your Faculty Organiser: <https://www.theunionmmu.org/your-voice/course-reps/contact>

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Let your Programme Leader know you wish to become a Course Rep, then register online.
- Attend the Course Rep training.
- Attend Faculty Networking Events.
- Introduce yourself to staff and students on your course.
- Receive meeting dates from your Programme Leader.
- Start using the online feedback tool to collate feedback and ensure that your fellow students are aware they can submit feedback for you to take to the committees at any time.

Find out how to do all of this and more online:
www.theunionmmu.org/course-reps

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