THE UNION

COURSE REP – STAFF GUIDE

CONTENTS

3 WELCOME

4 COURSE REP RESPONSIBILITIES

5 KEY MEETINGS

6 ONLINE FEEDBACK TOOL

7 HOW TO BECOME A COURSE REP

8 COURSE REP SUPPORT FROM THE UNION

9 COURSE REP SUPPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY

10 HOW WE CELEBRATE EXCELLENT COURSE REPS

11 COURSE REP SUCCESS CHECKLIST

12 CONTACT DETAILS



Bran Catron,
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WELCOME

The Union are very proud of the partnership with Manchester Met staff and our Course Rep project is an integral part of that partnership. In this handbook, you will find everything you need to know in order to support Course Reps within your faculty. The handbook is intended for Programme Leaders and Student Experience Officers but may also be useful for other staff who have contact with Course Reps.

WHAT IS A COURSE REP?

A Course Rep is a student who volunteers to represent their peers. They act as the voice of their course mates and attend meetings with Manchester Met faculty staff.

WHY DO WE NEED COURSE REPS?

Course Reps provide feedback on student experiences within their course and faculty as well as offering insight with a new perspective. They work closely with university staff to bring about student-led change that will have an impact for their cohort and future students. By asking our students exactly what they want from their education, we are empowering them to take a leading role, resulting in a more rounded learning experience.

WHAT DO COURSE REPS DO?

+ Attend training sessions run by The Union.
+ Gather student feedback regarding what works, what doesn't work, any new ideas, and then upload these onto the online feedback tool 'what's on your mind?'.
+ Present feedback at Student Staff Liaison Committee and informal catch ups.
+ Contribute to discussions about issues identified by External Examiners in their annual report.
+ Work with faculty staff to find the best solution possible for students.
+ Attend Union events including workshops and Course Rep training.
+ Keep in regular contact with their Faculty Organiser to update them on progress and feedback issues to The Union.

COURSE REP RESPONSIBILITIES

COURSE REPS DEAL WITH:

+ Teaching and study resources
+ Teaching methods
+ Course content and structure
+ Transparent course costs
+ Access to facilities
+ Diversity of the curriculum
+ Teaching and learning environment
+ Assessment and feedback

COURSE REPS DO NOT DEAL WITH:

+ Individual student needs
+ Communicating and promoting information/events on behalf of the faculty
+ Complaints regarding individual university staff members
+ Advice e.g. housing, money, visas
+ Welfare concerns
+ Peer mentoring
+ Discrimination

KEY MEETINGS

COURSE REPS ATTEND OR SUBMIT INFORMATION FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR AND FEED BACK TO THE UNION.

STAFF STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE (OR EQUIVALENT) MEETINGS

There is a University expectation that all programme teams will arrange regular, informal Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, or similar, throughout the academic year.

Course Reps can raise or flag concerns at informal catch ups that need to be taken to a higher level. Course Reps should be made aware of the SSLC at least two weeks in advance. An SSLC is a forum for staff and students to discuss programme-related matters in an informal setting.

Meetings should take place at least once per term. It is a place to discuss any issue that affects the quality of student experience on your programme.

THE UNIT FEEDBACK PROCESS AND INFORMAL CATCH UPS

The University runs the unit feedback process. These review take place every three weeks into unit delivery.

Staff and course reps should encourage students to give their feedback in the run up to the unit feedback. The Union recommends using the online feedback tool to gather student opinion.

It is also extremely useful for the Course Rep and Programme Leader or team member to meet informally one on one and discuss issues on the course and what action has been taken to resolve them. Although these meetings are informal, the discussions are important and action minutes should be kept and confirmation that the meeting has taken place should be recorded within the faculty.

ONLINE FEEDBACK TOOL

The Union operates an online system that allows any student to provide feedback about their course or sports club. Additionally, Course Reps can use the system to record feedback they have received whilst out talking to students. A report will be generated from the system, which details the feedback given in each faculty, department or programme, to be discussed at Faculty-level meetings

Students are simply asked to state what is on their mind and label the category they think best describes the feedback they are giving; e.g. academic or financial.

During their training, Course Reps are inducted into the system and will be encouraged to use it as their primary tool for recording feedback (including responses they have received via emails and social media). We will also be running a communication campaign to familiarise students with the system and encourage them to use it to contact their rep.

The course rep project is a partnership between the students, students' union and the programme teams. We encourage academic staff members to make their students aware of the feedback tool. The data is shared with key people in each faculty allowing them live access and the ability to resolve issues while they are in effect.

To access support ahead of the meetings email s.u.reps@mmu.ac.uk

HOW TO BECOME A COURSE REP

THE ROLE OF THE COURSE REP SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN LECTURES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR. WE'LL BE USING OUR COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS TO RAISE AWARENESS AND INFORM STUDENTS ABOUT THE COURSE REP ROLE.

Course Reps volunteer to represent their student cohort's views for that academic year. We suggest a practical approach is to appoint one course rep for each study group.

+ Course Reps used to be elected but after consulting with Faculty Heads of Education we now recommend that any student can self-appoint and an election is not required. This is to make the process more accessible and encourage a wider range of voices to engage with the Course Rep system.
+ If a Course Rep wishes to stand down, they must contact a member of Union staff directly. We can't remove a Rep from our system otherwise

After deciding they wish to be a Course Rep, Course Reps will need to register online with The Union. Direct them to theunionmmu.org/course-reps Registration means we have their details to keep them informed about events, training and support.

Course Reps must register themselves – we cannot do this for them. Only registered Course Reps are able to attend training and carry out their role properly. Once Course Reps have registered, they should attend the Course Rep training event within their faculty. Face to face training is the preferable option but we will have online training available for part-time students, distance learners or students with other commitments

COURSE REP SUPPORT FROM THE UNION

TRAINING

The Union provides full training and support for all registered Course Reps across every faculty. Training will take place in October and early November, during the day and with some evening and weekend sessions. Please note: The Union can only invite course reps to the training if they have registered on The Union website.

WEBSITE

Online resources are available on the Course Rep section of The Union website, as well as dates for training, workshop and events.

FACULTY ORGANISER

Each faculty has a member of staff who is available to provide guidance and encouragement for registration, opportunities to network, support and structure for gathering student feedback and much more. The Faculty Organiser also sit on faculty-level meetings including Faculty Education Committee. As standard, we will be encouraging Course Reps to meet with their Faculty Organiser at least once a term at a faculty forum.

SUPPORT

Course Reps can contact The Union Team on s.u.reps@mmu.ac.uk with any queries.

THE ADVICE CENTRE

Course Reps can contact the Advice Centre, and direct fellow students to the Advice Centre, about any personal issues or complaints.

COURSE REP SUPPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY

COMMUNICATE WITH PROGRAMMES OFFICE

The Programme Leader ensures that the wider programme team know at the beginning of the academic year which students have agreed to be Course Reps.

ENCOURAGE COURSE REPS TO REGISTER ON THE UNION WEBSITE

This can be done online on The Union website either at an initial meeting with faculty staff and the Faculty Organiser or in their own time here.

DIRECT COURSE REPS TO THE COURSE REP AREA OF THE UNION WEBSITE

https://www.theunionmmu.org/course-reps

ENSURE COURSE REPS ARE PREPARED FOR PROGRAMME MEETINGS

Make sure they know which meetings to attend. For example, Student Staff Liaison Committees (or equivalent) for all students including course reps, and informal programme team catch ups for course reps who have agreed to be members – and when they are scheduled to take place.

Give Course Reps the opportunity to meet with staff once per term. If students have been encouraged to compete the online feedback tool then a summary of issues should be available.

SUPPORT YOUR COURSE REPS IN GATHERING FEEDBACK

For example giving them time in class to introduce themselves and talk to students; you can also build Moodle profiles for your Course Reps to help each student know who their Course Reps are.

HELP RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE COURSE REPS

Encourage students to contact their Course Rep via the online feedback tool and support the Course Rep using emails, social media, posters or Moodle to raise their profile.

KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE FACULTY ORGANISER

Catch up with your Faculty Organiser (details below) regularly to keep communication channels open and work collaboratively to find solutions to problems that may arise, and to celebrate your Course Reps and the changes they make on behalf of their students.

HOW WE CELEBRATE EXCELLENT COURSE REPS

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

The Union hosts an awards ceremony to thank our fantastic volunteers each year, and this includes Course Reps. In the second term, The Union will be in touch with staff to encourage them to nominate across all the award categories.

CERTIFICATES

Course Reps who meet the criteria will receive a certificate, and all Course Reps who have volunteered for us will receive a thank you email.

In order to receive their certificate, Course Reps should register on our website, attend training, attend Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings each term, attend all informal catch ups, attend at least one faculty forum.

COURSE REP SUCCESS CHECKLIST

- ☐ All students have been told about the opportunity to become a Course Rep and some from every course stand.
- ☐ All relevant staff know who the Course Reps are.
- ☐ All Course Reps are registered with The Union.
- ☐ Course Reps have been directed to the relevant section of The Union website.
- ☐ I have met with the Faculty Organiser for my faculty.
- ☐ All Course Reps have been given the dates, times and locations for meetings they are expected to attend.
- ☐ The Union Faculty Organiser for my faculty has also been informed.
- ☐ Students are informed about actions arising from meetings in a relevant and accessible manner.
- ☐ Course reps are given the opportunity to discuss issues with their programme leader or team once per term

CONTACT DETAILS

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YOUR VOICE

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