



Academic Rep Handbook 2020/21



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Introduction

Congratulations on your position as an Academic Rep! Whether you are a Course, Department, or Faculty Rep, all Academic Reps play a major role in developing a better University for students and work together to ensure that all students are equally represented. You will also have the opportunity to gain a lot of new skills along the way! Well done for getting this role and the Student Voice team offers you a warm welcome to the Academic Rep community.

The purpose of this handbook is to supplement the training sessions which you will be offered, alongside the other online resources. This handbook will provide a no nonsense, straightforward guide to your role and offer key advice, contacts and guidelines which you can refer back to throughout the academic year.

During your time as an Academic Rep, we want you to feel supported by YUSU so that you can do your best to represent your fellow students. We also want you to enjoy the role and get the best experience from it that you can! The guide covers the three Rep roles of **1) Course rep 2) Department Rep and 3) Faculty Rep**, but you might find it useful to read over and see how your role fits into the others as a network. The guide also covers the unique rewards and recognition opportunities offered to Student Reps, as well as how we can support your personal and professional development.

If you would like to get in touch to chat or query anything please feel free to message the Student Voice Team via **engagement@yusu.org**. You can also message Matt Johnstone via **academicofficer@yusu.org**.

Welcome!

You Made It!

Thank you for joining the student representation movement with me. You are the most important elements of the movement. I work alongside your YUSU Student Voice team and endeavour to make your life easier. Together we can create the most positive impact on our academic community.

What do I do?

It's my job to represent you in everything academic - including learning, teaching, assessment and feedback. I will facilitate dialogue between students, academic reps and the University at all levels, from informal meetings between students and departments, right up to discussions with senior managers in the University. I will push for tangible improvements to the academic experience at York, making your engagement with your degree the best it can be.

E: AcademicOfficer@yusu.org

F: @yusuacademic

T: @yusuacademic



What does 'Student Voice' really mean, and why does 'Academic Representation' matter?

So, you've successfully been elected as a Student Rep and will be helping to make sure the **Student Voice** is heard, but where do you come into the picture, and why is it important?

When we talk about 'Student Voice' it refers to the fact that our aim within YUSU is to represent the voices of all students across the University. As a registered charity, our main function at YUSU is to listen to all our members and **effectively represent** their academic interests.

One vital way in which we do this is by recruiting, training and supporting Academic Representatives. You as Reps are then able to have a **positive impact** on the academic experience of your fellow students by ensuring that...

- The University is **held to account** and considers student views when making decisions
- All students can **feedback** and ensure they are satisfied with their **academic experience**
- A culture of **partnership** is developed where students have an input into the development of curriculum and teaching design
- Students have an informal complaints system to use that allows **speedy solutions**
- A free flow of **communication** is created between students and staff, helping to share best practice across Departments

YUSU Team

The Student Voice Team are permanent staff members who are here to support representation at YUSU and across the institution.

Laura Kennedy

Democracy and Campaigns Coordinator
l.kennedy@yusu.org | 01904 323485

Laura is responsible for supporting the Part Time Officer Team with delivering their manifestos and coordinates the main YUSU elections. Laura can answer questions regarding student-led campaigns and our democratic procedures.

Gabby Morgan

Student Engagement Development Coordinator
gabby.morgan@yusu.org | 01904 324453

Gabby supports students to engage with academic policies and enhances our student voice practices. She is happy to discuss ideas on adopting new approaches to student engagement that empowers students to take an active role in shaping their learning.

Nick Glover

Student Voice and Insight Manager
n.glover@yusu.org | 01904 324454

Nick heads up the Student Voice Team and has particular interests in the practices of student voice in HE that are democratic, transformational and see students as equal partners and active change agents.

Student Voice Assistant Role

The Student Voice Assistant role is completely new for the 2020/21 academic year. For Autumn 2020, Student Voice are recruiting three part time UG student staff members to support the Student Voice team and Academic Representatives. The SVA's will provide research, operational and administrative support to Student Voice at both YUSU and the GSA (Graduate Students' Association). They will also provide support for project work and the activities of Academic Reps.

 **engagement@yusu.org**

 **[@YUSUCourseRep](https://twitter.com/YUSUCourseRep)**

 **[yusuacademicreps](https://www.facebook.com/yusuacademicreps)**

 **[@yusucoursereps](https://www.instagram.com/yusucoursereps)**



Your Rep Roles

Hopefully once you've been through the training, you'll have a sense of your Rep Role and how the team works together!



Course Reps

Course Reps often the first point of contact for students: they gather feedback to help resolve programme specific queries and relay the outcome to close the feedback loop!



Department Reps

Department Reps support and lead Course Reps and act as invaluable contacts for both departments and YUSU to make sure that student views are heard: they work on department specific projects throughout the year.



Faculty Reps

Faculty Reps work behind the scenes, sitting on University-level committees such as Faculty Boards and Senate, representing all students within their Faculty: they work on projects within their faculty which are based on their manifesto.



Academic Officer

Matt represents in all things Academic: he facilitates dialogue between students, academic reps and the University at all levels to help create positive change, and works on key goals set out in his manifesto.

You can see the [website](#) for a more detailed role description including recruitment process, breakdown of responsibilities and time commitments per week.



Academic Leadership Team (ALT)

Fortnightly meetings chaired by the Academic Officer which allow Academic Reps to discuss student voice issues, share best practice and improve academic policies for all students.



Faculty Forums

Chaired by the Faculty Reps, these meetings provide opportunities for Reps to feed into FLTG agenda items and develop faculty-wide projects.



A-Cake-Demic

Friendly, informal spaces for Reps, students and staff to have conversations and share thoughts about their academic experiences.



Academic Officer

Matt Johnstone



Faculty Reps



Dep Reps



Course Reps



Students

Senate

Senate is responsible for regulating and directing the academic work of the University.



University Teaching Committee (UTC)

UTC manages the University's learning and teaching provision, which includes: the approval, renewal and monitoring of new programmes; assessments and feedback; and the quality of teaching.

Other committees: Standing Committee on Assessment, IT Committee and Library Committee.



Faculty Board

These Boards improve communications between similar departments and aiding the implementation of University-wide strategies and initiatives.



Faculty Learning & Teaching Group (FLTG)

These Groups focus on the teaching standards in the Faculty and feedback to the relevant board.



Board of Studies (BoS)

Responsible for content, structure, delivery and quality assurance of programmes within the Department. Other committees include the DTC - inform and support the Board of Studies and are focussed only on programme delivery on the department



Student Staff Forums

Can cover everything to do with the student experience. Student-Staff Forums are an open space to discuss and explore ideas and are a good place to start projects and listen to student opinion.



Where your role ends:

Support Services

Regardless of your Rep position, you are ultimately responsible for issues of **collective academic representation** within your department. This means that, generally, if the issue is affecting a **single** student on a personal level then it is not for you to represent them or try and help them with this issue. It is best instead to **signpost** them to services that are trained to help. If you are unsure of where to signpost a student about a complex issue then you can ask Daisy for guidance with this.

If a student is opening up to you, try not to close the communication channel but stress the importance of speaking to staff who are more suited to help e.g. **ASC, Academic Supervisor, College staff, Open Door team, Nightline**. There is lots of information on available services on the University website. york.ac.uk/students/health/

YUSU Advice and Support Centre (ASC)

The **Advice & Support Centre (ASC)**, part of the Students' Union (YUSU), provides **independent** and **confidential** advice and guidance to students on academic, welfare and personal issues. yusu.org/advice-support

GSA Advice and Support

The **Graduate Student Association (GSA)** also offer a **support service**. You can find more information and book an **appointment** via the link online. yorkgsa.org/advice/

Rep Wellbeing

It's also important that you take care of your own wellbeing during your time as a student and as a Rep! In addition to these resources, you can find helpsheets via our Rep resources online. If you find that you are struggling to keep up with the responsibilities relevant to your role, then please let us know so that we can be aware and suggest appropriate support. yusu.org/your-voice/academic-reps/resources

Top Tips

It can be daunting to take up a role as a new Rep, and you might not be sure of how to do certain things day to day. We've come up with some 'top tips' to help get you started!

Conduct Online:

If you are a Course Rep, then you will not be given a YUSU email address and you should instead use your University email address **eg123@york.ac.uk**. It may sound obvious, but make sure you use your University email in any correspondence with Reps, staff and YUSU. It's helpful as it keeps messages consistent and professional! Department and Faculty Reps will be given a YUSU email to use **examplerep@yusu.org**.

It's good practice to keep up to date with social media by following the Rep social media accounts and getting involved with the Course Rep facebook page. You will have been given some suggestions on effective social media use in training, but use social media in the way which works best for you! Department Reps can also advertise things via the student voice VLE page which their department can give them access to.

Conduct in Meetings:

Whether it's an informal chat with a group of students or a more formal meeting (for example Board of Studies), it can be tricky to know how to go about it.

As a Course Rep, it's important to remember that you have been elected by students to represent them. This may require you to separate your personal opinions to ensure you are representing the student voice and not just your own or your friends.

- It's positive to be open to challenging others in the room where you feel it is appropriate, but **listen actively** and be open to being challenged yourself.
- It is important that you are **respectful** of everyone present.
- As well as representing your groups, you are also a representative of YUSU as a charitable organisation. As a result, we also ask that you support us by **embodying our values in your work** as a Rep.
- Be **inclusive** in your actions and words towards others. Respect **pronouns** and make others in the room feel comfortable.

Case Studies

Have a look at some fantastic examples of the work Reps achieved last year.

Rep: Psychology Department Rep 2018/19

Project name: 'Psychology Buddy System'

What? 'The buddy system paired freshers with existing psychology students so they had someone to contact!'

Why? 'This followed a response to department feedback that there was a lack of community feel.'

Results: 'This increase a sense of community in the department and we had a great number join.'

Next steps: Hopefully the scheme will keep growing and continuing as the scheme continues.

Rep: English Department Rep 2018/19

Project name: 'A-cake-demic'

What? 'We offered cake and a meet up with Reps so that students could provide feedback through informal conversation, and to help create a sense of community.'

Why? 'It's hard to reach English students with so few hours!'

Results: 'We got feedback about a printing problem which was discussed and acted on within a week!'

Next steps: 'The pilot went really well and more A-cake-demic sessions will be held in other departments!'

Rep: Maths Department Rep 2018/19

Project name: 'The "Paper Plane" method ie. causing chaos in lectures'

What? A cohort of 120 students were invited to throw paper aeroplanes containing feedback at the Department Rep and Course Reps.

Why? The Department Rep needed feedback on a specific topic, very quickly with a high response rate.

Results: It worked! Students engaged with us and we got a response rate of nearly 90%

Next steps: It could be good to try this with bigger groups

Rewards & Recognition

As a Rep, we want to recognise all of the wonderful work that you do to represent your fellow students. As well as gaining some impressive skills you'll also be rewarded for the fantastic work you do. The Student Voice team will be giving out prizes for Course Rep of the term, run socials as well as an end of year awards ceremony in recognition of outstanding contribution.

Follow us on our social media for updates about upcoming Rep socials and awards!

E engagement@yusu.org

 [@YUSUCourseRep](https://twitter.com/YUSUCourseRep)

f [yusuacademicreps](https://www.facebook.com/yusuacademicreps)

 [@yusucoursereps](https://www.instagram.com/yusucoursereps)

Personal & Professional development

During the course of your role, the Student Voice team will provide you with training in the key skills you will need in order to be successful. The training is a great opportunity to think about your strengths, where you'd like to improve, and how you could use your Rep skills beyond University.

Do you want to reflect on the skills you've learned during your time as a Rep? Follow our handy help sheets to see your Rep role through a Careers lens and think about how it would look on your CV!

yusu.org/your-voice/academic-reps/become-an-academic-rep

