


Academic Representation



ACADEMIC



REPRESENTATION

AT

WORCESTER



**Annual Report
2020-21**

It has been another highly successful year in 2020-21 for the Students' Union and the Academic Representation system.



In what has been a very challenging year our Reps have shown time and time again resilience and an ability to adapt to significant changes. It has been incredibly motivating to see the commitment of our Reps in representing the student voice across all levels of the University. Whether online or in person they have continued to create new and innovative ways to ensure the completion of the feedback loop and bring about positive change.

Reps and Staff have worked hard in individual Schools on developing both the academic and wider student experience. Adapting to the virtual world Schools have maintained the high standards of representation ensuring that students know who their Reps are and are confident in their ability to bring about positive change through their engagement with the academic representation system. This commitment has been reflected in the improved results of the CES.

These results reflect the incredible hard work and dedication of Course and School Reps, SERCC teams, University and Students' Union staff. Whether this was through supporting and attending Repstival, forums, meetings or committees the positive outcomes this year have shown just how important the system is. Reps have inputted on work around academic integrity, student surveys, digital capabilities and much more.

Despite the challenges that have been thrown our way, the academic representation system has continued to grow and thrive. I am incredibly proud and grateful for everyone's continued dedication to student voice and representation.

I hope you enjoy the report

Harry

Harry South
Vice President Education 2020-21

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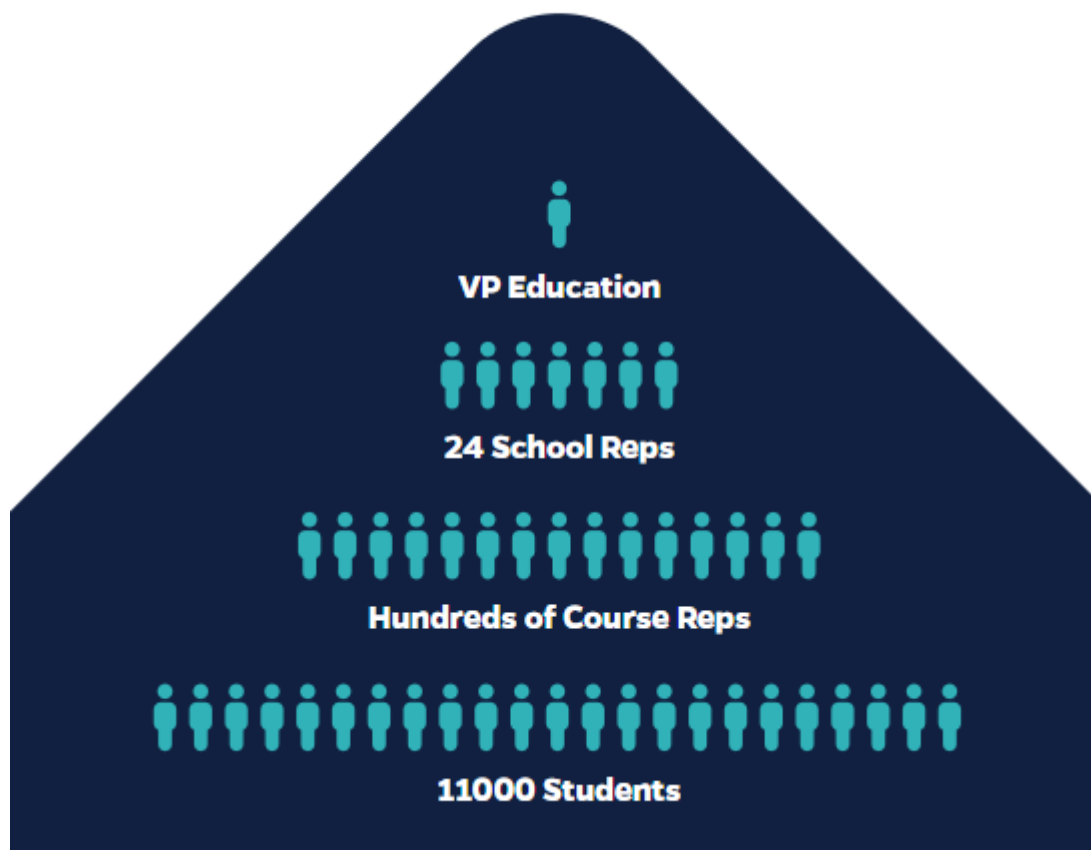
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The Academic Representation System at Worcester

Our student representatives provide feedback on student experiences within their Course, School or College, as well as offering insight with a fresh and innovative perspective. They work closely with University staff to bring about student-led change that will have an impact for their cohort and future students. Worcester Students' Union believes that our students are the experts on what it is like to be a student here at Worcester (or at one of our partners) today and by asking them exactly what they want from their education, we are empowering them to take a leading role, resulting in a more rounded learning experience.

How is the system structured?

The Undergraduate/Post-graduate Taught Academic Representation System consists of three levels: Course Reps, School Reps and the Vice President Education. Course Reps work at the Course level, School Reps work at the Department, School and College levels and the Vice President Education works at the University level. This structure ensures that there is student representation at all levels within University decision-making.



In the 2020-21 academic year, we had **364** Course Reps volunteering their time to represent their course mates' views and ensuring that the student voice is heard. This number is determined by the Code of Practice which lays out a student-to-Rep ratio. The Rep ratio system allows for 1 rep per level per course on a cohort with 40 students or less.

School Reps and Education Council

School Reps create an essential link between Course Reps and senior members of staff within their particular School and College. This year, we had 21 positions filled out of 24 with a new position trialled to represent Postgraduate Taught students in the School of Psychology and the Secondary Department role shared between two of the three reps within the School of Education. School Reps helped deliver the training of Course Reps within their appropriate Schools and they also worked as a team to encourage Course Reps and other students to provide feedback and discuss various aspects of the educational experience.

Following the implementation of the Union's new governance structure, School Reps met regularly with the Vice President Education at Education Council meetings. Education Council exists to oversee the prioritisation of educational policy at the SU and acts as a sub-group of Student



Council. Consultation on policy is a big part of a School Rep's role, this year, we saw Reps consulted on a range of topics including the University's access and participation work, technology enhanced learning, lecture capture and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reps worked closely with the SU officers during talks with the University on the implementation of a student safety net in January 2021.

University Staff Support to the Rep System

Support from University staff is vital to the functioning of the Academic Representation System. Every School has a Student Engagement, Representation and Communications Coordinator (SERCC) and the School of Education, being one of the larger Schools, also has Course Rep Coordinators.

The SERCC oversees the entire Academic Rep System within their School. They communicate with Course Reps, School Reps and other appropriate staff members with the aim of ensuring effective student representation. They will ensure that issues raised, and subsequent implemented changes, are fed back to Reps, while also helping Reps communicate the University response to feedback

to their course-mates. They are also the first port of call for Reps who need advice and guidance regarding feedback.

Rep Demographics

Figure 1. A breakdown of Demographics of Course Reps in 2020-

Note all figures of overall University population are for the academic year 2020-21.

Table 1: Total Number of Course Reps 2017-2018 to 2020-21

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
387	375	364

Table 2: Breakdown of Course Reps by School 2019-20 and 2020-21

School	2019-2020		2020-21		% of University Population
	Number of Reps	% of sample	Number of Reps	% of sample	
School of Education	69	18.40 %	64	17.58 %	18.22 %
School of Sport and Exercise Science	54	14.40 %	47	12.91 %	9.69 %
School of Arts	48	12.80 %	46	12.64 %	4.69 %
School of Allied Health and Community	44	11.73 %	49	13.46 %	16.74 %
School of Humanities	40	10.67 %	31	8.52 %	4.84 %
School of Science and the Environment	38	10.13 %	31	8.52 %	5.03 %
Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery	26	6.93 %	36	9.89 %	13.97 %
School of Psychology	25	6.67 %	22	6.04 %	7.61 %
Worcester Business School	18	4.80 %	22	6.04 %	14.51 %
Joint Honours across Schools	13	3.47 %	16	4.39 %	4.7 %

Table 3: Breakdown of Course Reps by Level of Study 2020-21

Level	2020-21	% of University Population
Level 3	1.10 %	2.15 %
Level 4	27.75 %	27.84 %
Level 5	29.95 %	27.29 %
Level 6	27.47 %	24.67 %
Level 7/ M	13.74 %	17.38 %

Table 4: Breakdown of Course Reps by Gender 2018-2019 to 2020-21

Gender	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
F	70.79 %	69.60 %	75.55 %	69.86 %
M	29.21 %	30.40 %	24.45 %	30.12 %
0	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.02 %

Table 5: Breakdown of Course Reps by Home/International Status 2019-2020 to 2020-21

Nationality	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
British	90.14 %	89.29 %	79.04 %
International (all others)	9.86 %	10.71 %	20.96 %

Table 6: Breakdown of Course Reps by Ethnicity 2018-2019 to 2020-21

Ethnicity	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
White	88.16 %	87.26 %	86.43 %	78.51 %
Non-White	8.42 %	7.76 %	8.03 %	16.94 %
Unknown	3.42 %	4.99 %	5.54 %	4.55 %

Table 7: Breakdown of Course Reps by Disability Status 2018-2019 to 2020-21

Disability Status	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
Declared Disability	25.26 %	22.44 %	29.36 %	18.53 %
None	74.74 %	77.56 %	70.64 %	81.43 %
Unknown	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.04 %

Table 8: Breakdown of Course Reps by LGBTQ+ Status 2018-2019 to 2020-21

LGBTQ+ Status	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
Heterosexual	71.84 %	77.84 %	75.62 %	82.03 %
LGBTQ+	12.89 %	14.13 %	18.84 %	11.74 %
Unknown	15.26 %	8.03 %	5.54 %	6.23 %

Table 9: Breakdown of Course Reps by Age 2018-2019 to 2020-21

Age	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% of University Population
16-17	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.02 %
18-21	48.42 %	48.00 %	47.80 %	50.40 %
22-25	20.79 %	26.67 %	28.57 %	17.92 %
26-30	12.63 %	9.60 %	7.69 %	9.72 %
Over 30	18.16 %	15.73 %	15.93 %	21.94 %

Table 10: Breakdown of Course Reps by POLAR-4 Quintiles 2020-21

	POLAR-4 Quintiles					
	Unknown	1	2	3	4	5
Course Reps	9.97%	13.85%	18.56%	18.56%	21.88%	17.17%
% of University Population	11.54%	12.86%	18.55%	19.40%	18.86%	18.80%

Table 11: Breakdown of Course Reps by Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2020-21

	IMD (0=most deprived, 5=least deprived)					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Course Reps	11.36%	14.68%	16.34%	18.56%	22.71%	16.34%
% of University Population	13.69%	14.54%	15.79%	19.49%	19.44%	17.05%

This demographic analysis of the Course Reps was completed in June 2021. When these figures are compared to the overall population of the University, we can see the following:

- Females are marginally more likely to be Course Reps.
- International students are less likely to be Course Reps than Home students.
- Non-White students are less likely to be Course Reps, making up only 8.03% of our Reps, yet comprising nearly 17% of the total student population.
- 29.4% of Reps declared a disability, compared to 18.5% of the student population overall.
- LGBTQ+ students are more likely to be a Course Rep, 18.8% of Reps declared LGBTQ+ status, compared to 11.7% of the total student population.

All the above trends broadly match the previous year. For the first time, this year we analysed data by both POLAR 4 quintile and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This shows that our Course Reps broadly mirror the University population by these two measures.

Ensuring that the Academic Representation System is open to the diverse community that exists at Worcester, and reflects the existing demographics, is something that both the Students' Union and the University are committed to achieving. Over the next academic year, inclusivity will be more deeply embedded into the system, in line with SU policy, the University's Access and Participation Plan, and the principles outlined in the University's Inclusion Toolkit for Learning and Teaching.

Supporting our Reps

Rep Training

Training Reps, to ensure they understand their role, is key to the overall success and efficiency of the Academic Representation System. This year, due to the pandemic, we moved all of our training online, delivering this training during the first Progress Week, with the hope that we would increase student availability and thereby the number of Reps trained.

Introductory Rep training was made specific for each College, rather than each School. In total we ran almost 50% less sessions than in 2019-20, freeing up a significant portion of staff time. Rather than attending in person, as they have in the past, SERCCs and/or School Reps from each School produced pre-recorded content for each session.

Figure 2: Overview of Training Numbers 2017-2018 to 2020-21

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No. of course reps listed on SOLE	599	387	375	364
Face-to-face training completion	110	113	108	0
Trained via Blackboard Collaborate/Teams	0	0	8	112
Online training completion	156	80	51	58
No. of returning reps who completed first time training in the previous year	Cannot access data	23	40	33
Total no. of trained reps	266	216	208	203
Total no. of untrained reps	333	171	167	161
Total percentage of reps trained	44%	56%	55%	56%

In total, 112 students attended training sessions, which is marginally more than the number that attended face to face sessions last year, showing us that we were able to run less sessions yet retain a similar turnout. Unfortunately, we were unable to increase the overall percentage of Reps trained which has remained stagnant at circa 55% for the last three years. Moving forward into 2021-22 we have increased admin support for the Rep System, utilising one of our student members of staff from the Welcome Desk. We will use this resource to deliver a quicker post-training analysis of participation so that we can work with SERCCs to more proactively chase those students who have not attended training.

Forums and Events for our Reps

Rep Forums

We hosted 3 Course Rep Forums during the 2020-21 academic year:

1. The first Forum focused on the impact of the pandemic and on the development of a new pledge for Course Reps.
2. The second Forum focused on technology enhanced learning and the technology implemented during the pandemic. This session was supported by Elaine Swift, Head of Digital Learning and Teaching.
3. The third and final Forum of the year was delivered with Helen Hope, Academic Integrity Lead and fed in to both the University's work on the issue and Harry's National Campaign "#BetterByU".

Repstival

This year saw us host our first ever 'Repstival', adapting the development opportunities we used to provide at Course Rep Conference to the conditions of the pandemic. It provided students involved in the Academic Representation system the opportunity to come together as a community of Reps, network, develop their skills, and increase their understanding of their roles.

It was fantastic to see how Reps engaged with the content and we are incredibly grateful to all the staff for creating and hosting sessions. The impact of the content could also be seen after the sessions as Reps got in touch with the SU and/or related university staff members to develop their understanding further, ensuring they were doing their utmost to represent students effectively.

Figure 3: Repstival Sessions Delivered			
Session Lead	Title of Session	Date	No. of attendees
Beverley Sykes	What does the Disability & Dyslexia Service do?	17th November	15
Elaine Swift	You're on Mute! - Tips for managing online student feedback	19th November	34
Pegeen Fisher	Professional meetings etiquette and managing student expectations	3rd December	26
Cristina Muradore	Cultural awareness and International students	27th January	23
Jennifer Zandbeek & Carolyn Moir	But no one reads it anyway: How data is used for enhancement & how you can help	1st February	16

Julian Martin	Student Engagement & Success	17th February	16
Val Yates	The good the bad and the impossible - how to represent inclusively when the world is in turmoil	25th February	10
Sean Bracken	The power of educational networks internally and globally	2nd March	14

We would like to thank all the staff who supported us by delivering sessions and we are pleased to update that following the success of Repstival in 2020-21 we will be continuing in this format, albeit with some face-to-face sessions and with the addition of a social event in 2021-22.

Course Rep Journals

All Reps are encouraged to fill in regular journals to enable the SU to monitor feedback across the University and to ensure Reps have an easy way to ask the SU for support. The SU uses Course Rep Journals to identify key trends and issues. Where

Journal Statistics

- **97 entries**
- **6.6% increase from last year**



applicable, the Vice President Education, will raise issues with relevant University staff members. Reps are able to feedback on updates from meetings they have attended, student feedback received, updates on the impact they are having, or any issues they would like the SU to support them with. All issues raised feed into the SU's Monthly Feedback and Intelligence Report, which helps influence the Union's educational policy and enables it to tackle issues proactively. This year we had 97 entries, which is a 6.5% increase from last year. There is still work to be done to further develop and embed the journal system.

Figure 4: Course Rep Journal Submissions by Month 2017-18 to 2020-21

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
September	0	0	0	5
October	7	8	3	18
November	14	10	29	20
December	3	16	13	11
January	2	5	19	16
February	4	6	5	4

March	2	15	3	7
April	3	18	16	9
May	2	0	2	6
June	0	0	1	1
Total:	37	78	91	97

Recognising our Reps

Course Rep Accreditation



This year we simplified and relaunched our Course Rep Accreditation System accreditation scheme removing the previous three levels and replacing with one level of accreditation. To achieve accreditation Reps must attend their SSLCs and a minimum number of events, such as Course Rep Forums or Repstival sessions, and submit a reflective written piece on the skills they developed as a Course Rep. While the aim of simplifying the scheme was partly to increase uptake, unfortunately we saw only 5 Reps submitting applications for accreditation. All 5 were awarded their accreditation. Anecdotally, this may have been due to the pandemic, which also reduced staff capacity to promote the scheme because of furlough and staff vacancies.

Congratulations to the Reps who received their Accreditation:

- Johanna Rantala - Masters in Business Administration, Worcester Business School
- John Payne - Single Honours Computing, Worcester Business School
- Alexander Allen - Paramedic Science, School of Allied Health and Community
- Jack Austin - Physical Education and Sports Coaching Science, School of Sport and Exercise Science
- Gemma Alcott - Biochemistry, School of Science and the Environment

Reps of the Year Awards

For the second year running, we ran a Course Rep of the Month and School Rep of the Month scheme.

Winners of both awards won vouchers from a variety of local businesses.

As part of our annual Union Awards, the SU presents awards for 'Course Rep of the Year' and 'School Rep of the Year', both of which recognise outstanding achievements. Both staff and students were able to nominate Course Reps for Rep of the Month throughout the year.

Shortlist for Course Rep of the Year Award:

- Anastasia Kennett (Special Educational Needs, Disability and Inclusion).
- Caterina Recchia (Computing).
- Amy Mellin (FdA Integrative Counselling).
- Jane Furey (FdA Integrative Counselling).
- Lydnsey Little (Criminology).
- Tereza Vidrová (Single Honours Psychology).

Joint Winners: Amy Mellin and Jane Furey.

Shortlist for School Rep of the Year Award:

- Adam Harper (Worcester Business School).
- Bartek Kusmierz (Allied Health and Community).
- Lisa-Marie Vaughan (Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery).
- Hattie Morris (School of Education).
- Drew Humphry (School of Education).

Winner: Lisa-Marie Vaughan.

Survey Analysis

Course Experience Survey 2020-21

The Course Experience Survey (CES) is facilitated, annually, by the University and is completed by non-final year students. This year, the survey completion rate was at 44% of eligible students. This completion rate was down on the rate of the 2019/20 academic year by 6%. There are two questions in the CES that are specific to the Academic Representation System:

- Q5.3 "I know who the Course Rep is for my course"
- Q5.4: "Course Reps represent the interests of students on my course effectively"

Q5.3. I know who the Course Rep is for my course

There was a continued increase in the number of students who reported that they knew their Course Rep on their course by 2% year on year from 2019/20.

The School of Psychology saw a large jump in Course Rep awareness this year with an increase of 18% compared to the previous academic year. This is particularly positive seeing as much of the previous academic year students have been working remotely, so to have such a significant increase in awareness/engagement is extremely noteworthy. It was also encouraging to see increases in the scores, albeit more modest increases, in the other two Schools

where we have established action plans for increasing Rep awareness and effectiveness (Nursing & Midwifery, and Business). The decreases that occurred in other Schools were only by 1 or 2 percentage points. Although there was a drop off by 1%, the School of Education has the highest percentage of students who know who their Course Rep is, at 94%.

Fig. 5: Q5.3. "I know who the Course Rep is for my course" (% Agree/Strongly Agree)

School	2018-19 (%)	2019-20 (%)	2020/21 (%)	+/- %
Allied Health and Community	87	89	90	+1
Arts	79	91	89	-2
Education	95	95	94	-1
Humanities	64	73	79	+6
Nursing and Midwifery	90	83	84	+1
Psychology	39	52	70	+18
Science and the Environment	79	79	79	=
Sport and Exercise Science	85	84	83	-1
Worcester Business School	39	65	67	+2
Overall	75%	81%	83%	2% increase
Key:				
Increased Score		No Change		Decreased Score

Q5.4. Course Reps represent the interests of students on my course effectively

Overall, there has been a 6% increase in satisfaction from students for Q5.4., averaging at 73% for the 2020-21 academic year. When comparing results to 2019-20 at the school level, scores for Q5.4. have improved across 7 Schools out of 9 and decreased in the other 2.

The highest increase is again within the School of Psychology which saw a 26% increase, followed by the Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery, now at 77%, showing a 12% increase from 2019-20. This was almost matched in Allied Health & Community, and Humanities, both of which saw 11% increases. The

biggest decrease was in Worcester Business School (WBS), falling from 61% to 56%. This is disappointing considering that they were one of the three Schools with an action plan for improvement, although we do know that the Reps have found it hard to engage students this year in WBS where teaching was online for considerable portions of the year. The highest overall score was in the School of Education, with 86%.

Figure. 6: Q5.4. Course Reps represent the interests of students on my course effectively

School	2018-19 (%)	2019-20 (%)	2020-21(%)	+/-%
Allied Health and Community	74	64	75	+11
Arts	67	70	78	+8
Education	86	84	86	+2
Humanities	50	57	68	+11
Nursing and Midwifery	75	65	77	+12
Psychology	35	38	64	+26
Science and the Environment	57	61	66	+5
Sport and Exercise Science	67	74	71	-3
Worcester Business School	36	61	56	-5
Overall	65%	67%	73%	6% increase
Key:				
Increased Score		No Change		Decreased Score

National Student Survey 2020-21 (NSS)

This year's survey saw a University of Worcester completion rate of 74%, down two per cent from last year. This brief analysis focuses on the Student Voice section which relates most to the Academic Representation System.

There has been a 6.98 percentage point decrease in satisfaction from students for the overall Student Voice category within the NSS, overall averaging at 73.27% for the 2020-21 academic year. The reasons for this decrease may be wide ranging, though we believe that the COVID pandemic has impacted scores across the board and that the challenge of making Reps accessible during this period is a likely contributing factor.

Figure. 7: Overall University of Worcester NSS 2021 results for Student Voice

Question	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	+/- (%)	Student average 2020-21
Overall Student Voice Category	80.59	80.25	73.27	-6.98	66.18
Q26: The Students' Union effectively represents students' academic interests	61.47	64.41	65.16	+0.75	53.02

As an SU, we are very pleased that we are 12.14% above the national average for NSS's Q26 (the Students' Union effectively represents students' academic interests) with Worcester scoring 65.16% this year compared to the 53.02% national average. Overall, the score of this question went up by 0.75% across the University.

The Big Worc Survey

In the internal Students' Union survey, conducted at the end of each academic year, knowledge of, and engagement with, the Academic Representation system in 2021 was the highest since the survey started in 2018. 79% of respondents stated they were aware of the system, compared to 62% in 2020, 40% in 2019, and 73% in 2018. The same number of respondents were aware of who their Course Rep was, with 64% giving feedback to their Course Rep at some point during the academic year. Of that number, 63% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the response they received, with only 5% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Respondents were also asked whether they felt fully informed about how Officers, Networks, and Academic Reps impacted their university experience. This was the first time this question had been asked. In total, 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they were fully informed, with 17% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Figure 8: Are you aware of the SU's Academic Representation system? (Big Worc Survey 2021)

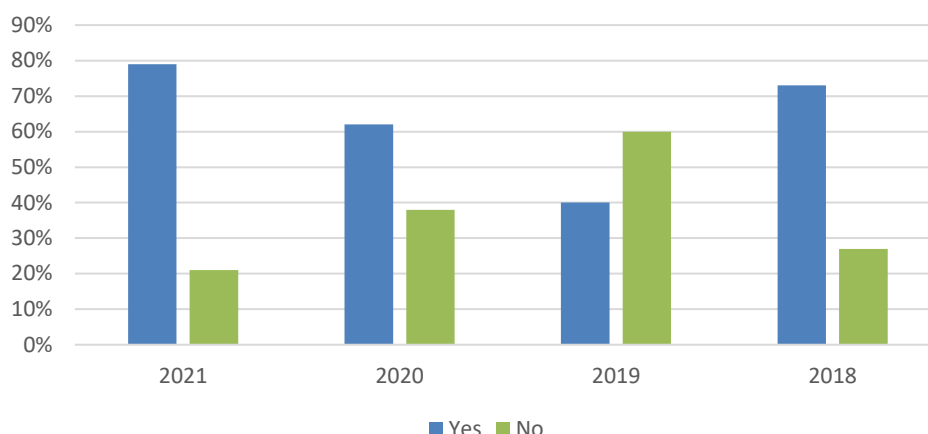
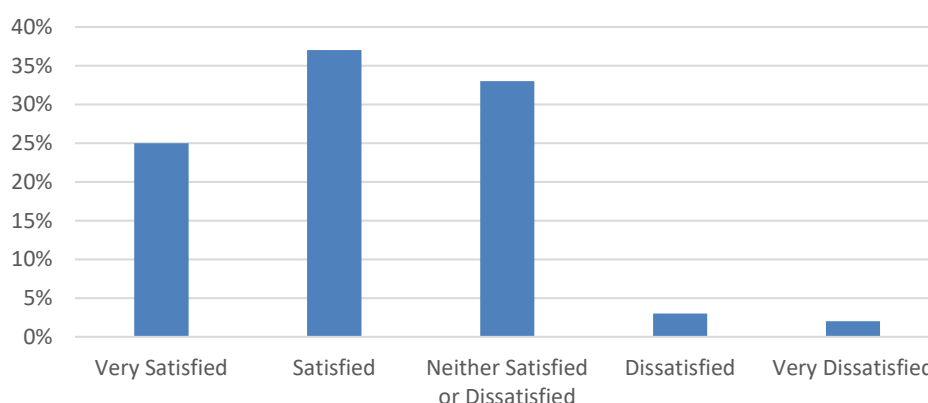


Figure 9. If you have given feedback to your Course Rep, how satisfied were you with the response? (Big Worc Survey 2021)



Reflections on Survey Results

Based on last year's CES results, the Academic Representation Oversight Group (AROG) tasked the SU to work with the School of Psychology, the Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery and Worcester Business School in the 2020-21 academic year. It is pleasing to see that the work put into improving the effectiveness of the Rep system within these Schools is broadly reflected in the results.

It has been very positive to see a continued year on year growth of the overall CES results from students' feedback on questions pertaining to awareness of their Course Reps, as well as a continued trust believing that their Course Reps represent their interests effectively. Increased awareness and satisfaction in the Big Worc Survey is encouraging and mirrors the CES results. The overall decline in the

NSS results on Student Voice are disappointing but it should be noted that these questions do not relate to the Rep System specifically.

For the upcoming academic year, we need to continue to engage students with the Rep system, ensuring that Reps and the impact that they have are as visible as possible, raising awareness amongst their peers. We need to build on the scores where they are positive. Despite indications that Reps on professional courses were disengaging, the survey results appear to counter that rather than assert it, although we still feel there is more work to do.

It is positive to see the School of Psychology's hard work to improve the CES scores, however, they remain one of the lower scoring schools and need to have a continued focus on improvements next year. Equally, Worcester Business School has continued to improve, though the 5% drop in how students rate their Course Reps' ability to represent their needs within the CES highlights that continued action is required.

There is a sustained discrepancy in overall score differences for the two CES questions. The general trend appears to be that the majority of students within of all of the Schools know who their Course Rep is but are less aware/affirmative that the Course Reps represent them as well. It would be wise for us to consider collecting student feedback on why this gap exists, understanding why students do not necessarily know/believe that their Course Reps represent them. Also, as a Students' Union it would be positive for us to consider how our training and continuous development for the students are carried out throughout the year.

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Academic Representation System was, like all of the Union's services, significantly impacted by the ongoing pandemic throughout the academic year 2020-21. The system was, however, able to continue to function effectively online at a time when feedback and student input in their educational experience had never been more important.

In order to help Reps and the staff supporting them to adapt to the pandemic the Union undertook a number of actions including:

- Updating Course Rep elections guidance to include advice on running them online through Blackboard.
- Working with SERCCs to ensure that all Reps had Microsoft Teams or an equivalent online tool to communicate amongst themselves and with students.
- Working with a number of Schools to create online 'Rep Noticeboards' on Blackboard.

- Adapting the Course Rep Conference into an online Repstival and running all Forums and meetings online.
- Supporting SERCCs to host online Course Rep Clinics
- Delivering the Ask the SU campaign, enabling students to ask us anything

During this year, collaboration between the Academic Representation System and the Union's Help and Advice Service increased significantly as we worked to respond to periods of intense student engagement with us.

Overall, while the system continued to function and feedback continued to flow, we saw declines in volumes of feedback and Rep engagement as the third national lockdown wore on in the spring of 2021. Anecdotally, we believe the pandemic has also caused significant erosion of the community of Reps, rebuilding this will be a key focus for us in 2021-22.

Issues Raised through the Academic Representation System

As expected, a significant proportion of feedback received by Reps in 2020-21 was pandemic related. Reps, and the Union more widely, had to respond to the ever-changing restrictions, the busiest period for feedback was after Christmas when a third national lockdown severely restricted the operations of the University.

Key themes within feedback in 2020-21 included:

- Student access to technology.
- Requests for a safety net/no-detriment policy.
- Placement disruption due to the pandemic.
- Access to general support and financial support.
- Access to online lectures/technology/internet problems.
- Clashing of Eid with exam period.
- Access to lecturers/response times.
- Issuing of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to students starting courses abroad.
- Requests for contactless payments in car parks.
- Mitigating circumstances.
- Communication from the University.

The vast majority of issues were course specific and dealt with at the course, department or school level. The Union continued to support Reps, as required, attending meetings with Reps and staff or by providing guidance to Reps on how to frame more challenging feedback.

As in previous years, collating “wins” for the Academic Representation System has been challenging in 2020-21 and this is something we will continue to work with the University on.

The input of Course Reps was particularly important in framing the Union’s requests to the University regarding a safety net for students in January 2021 and we were pleased to see the positive response from the University who delivered a policy that met almost all the requests from students. We were also pleased to see several Schools proactively respond to our feedback on communication and make positive changes to increase their engagement with student voice.

Harry also worked very closely with Reps and officers nationally to co-launch the national BetterByU campaign to tackle essay mills and campaign for them to be banned in the UK. Harry met with MPs and government ministers, and we are pleased that this campaign has contributed to the recent UK Government announcement that they plan to make essay mills illegal.

School Reports

Please find on the following pages an update on how the Academic Representation System has functioned within each of the schools.

School of Allied Health and Community

School Reps

Paramedic: Bartek Kusmierz

SERCC

Jo Lewis

Overview

The last 16 months has been an incredibly difficult time for all concerned. This report pays great credit to the Course Reps, School Rep and all of the staff in the School of Allied Health and Community for their ability to adapt and respond to the ever-changing situation that was unfolding during this time.

The ability to meet in person was almost impossible for most of the academic year but as the courses moved on-line so did the work of the Course Reps and the SERCC. Despite a large number of Course Reps being called to work on the front line they continued to support their cohorts. Virtual Course Rep drop-in meetings were held once a fortnight and Course Reps were encouraged to keep in regular contact with their cohorts and to raise any concerns or issues that changing the structure of university life created.

Key Stats



49 Course Reps elected



15 volunteering hours logged

The meetings were well attended and a number of queries were addressed from anxiety on the impact of lock down, how to access hardship fund for travel to placement, to arranging for safe classroom space so that skills practice could take place before assessments. It was interesting to note that communication during lockdown increased and a sense of shared purpose and responsibility was felt within the group.

There was also the opportunity to hold the two Course Rep Forum meetings over Semester 1 and Semester 2. The consistent message throughout was the recognition of the hard work that everyone has put in over this period to keep students studying in a safe and supportive environment.

School of Arts

School Reps

Art and Design Communication: **Louise Slater** (Year 3, BA Illustration)

Film and Media Production: **Ellen Lowe** (Year 2, BA Film Production)

Theatre and Performance: **Neve Ricketts** (Final Year, MTheatre)

SERCC

Maureen Gamble

Overview

As in previous years, the SERCC worked closely with the Students Union and participated in various training, for Course Reps, and interviews for the recruitment of School Reps, and School Rep Forums held during 2020/21. During the Autumn, in addition to the Student Union training offered to the Reps, a School Rep Forum was held which provided the Course Reps with an opportunity to meet and network with other Reps across all years, as well as discuss any issues and share ideas. Course Reps thought it would be a good idea if the School had a 'who is who' page on Blackboard so that courses had more visibility and feedback could be shared from meetings. The SERCC attended this meeting and fed back to the Deputy Head of School who took it on board to contact IT to request that every course had access to their own course page to provide photos and information for students on School activities and Course Reps. Much progress was made on this and is still ongoing.

Due to disruption from Covid-19 contact between the School Reps and SERCC, meetings took place mainly online, however, Course Reps attendance and participation at online SSLCs was particularly good across the School. The School Reps and SERRC met with the Head of School of Arts and Deputy Head of School

Key Stats



51 Course Reps elected



77 volunteering hours logged

throughout the year and any issues and concerns were followed through and dealt with accordingly.

The School Reps decided that their main target for the year would be to set an Arts Society and 'The Arts Collective' was successfully launched in January 2021. This was a major achievement for the School Reps and the School of Arts particularly given the disruption caused by the pandemic with many events cancelled and arts venues closed.

School of Education

School Reps

Children and Families: Harriet-Mae Cunliffe

Education and Inclusion: Drew Humphry

Primary: Harriet Morris

Secondary and Post compulsory: covered by SoE team

SERCC

Andy Taylor

Course Rep Coordinators

Children and Families: Nicola Watson

Education and Inclusion: Joanne Smith

Primary: Caroline Thomas-Meredith

Secondary and Post compulsory: Suzanne Lawson

Key Stats



66 Course Reps elected



108.5 volunteering hours logged

Overview

In what has been a challenging year the School Reps have played a significant role in supporting the student representation system, working collaboratively with each other, Course Reps, the SU, SLT and academic staff to evaluate and enhance the student experience. They have played a significant role in supporting and enhancing communication between students and staff in response to the Covid pandemic. Due to the nature of the Secondary ITE course the School Reps from the other three departments have worked to support the Secondary Co-ordinator to facilitate student voice and feedback. School Reps have valued the mutual respect and team approach. We were especially pleased that two SoE School Reps were nominated for School Rep of the Year.

This year we have been utilising Teams as a platform for distributing information and gathering feedback. In an 'online world' the use of Padlets has been effective in gathering feedback for course rep clinics and to support School reps at LTQEC meetings. With effective School Rep role in representing student voice at all LTQC

meetings. The College Director praised their professionalism and thanked them for their valued contribution

Feedback on the use of technology and online platforms has been key to developing taught sessions this year and the open communication between staff, school and course reps has been hugely beneficial. This has resulted in positive CES data for the School of Education.

Key Impacts

- Devised a signposting document to support course reps and academic staff with supporting student needs.
- School Reps have created a cohesive team approach and have jointly chaired clinics which have benefitted students
- Communication meetings around placements were introduced on professional courses as a result of School Rep action
- Representation of new post graduate course this year was strong and feedback has been supportive at adapting the course in year and for future cohorts.

School of Humanities

School Reps

Law: Georgia Coleing

History, Sociology & Politics: Sarah Phillips

English, Media & Culture: Seren Price

SERCC

Bill Davies/Michael Bradshaw

Overview

The past year has been a very difficult one and hopefully a similar year will not be experienced again. All commentary and statistics should be read in the light of the context of Covid 19 and the inevitable disruption this has had to normal University life. Teaching in Humanities started in September 2020 on a blended basis and went completely online from December 6th, 2020.

Much of the work of School Reps and Course Reps has been focussed on the University's response to Covid 19 both in terms of academic and more pastoral concerns.

The machinery of the Rep system worked well throughout and there were excellent levels of communication both ways between staff and student reps on many important issues. Unusually this year there were two SERCC's, the Head and

Key Stats



39 Course Reps elected



29.75 volunteering hours logged

Deputy Head of School. Although this was forced upon us by other exigencies, it did mean that the senior management of the school got to hear about important student concerns very quickly.

Elections to Course Reps happened very smoothly and attendance at SSLC meetings was reportedly very high. Apocryphal evidence reports that Course Reps were more engaged this year, quite possibly because of the natural concerns about the Covid 19 pandemic and its impact on university experiences.

There were three meetings of the School Forum this year, two of them scheduled meetings following standard agenda, and one impromptu meeting held at short notice to respond quickly to some reported concerns about in-course communication. The SERCCs are grateful to all the course reps and School reps for devoting their time, for their skill in mediating issues, and for their good advice. Quick communication remains crucial due to the fast-changing nature of HE teaching during the pandemic.

Key Impacts

- Better communication
- Better representation of student voice
- Quicker response to student concerns
- Increased engagement
- Better attendance at SSLC meetings

School of Psychology

School Reps

Psychology: Clara-Jane (CJ) Dangerfield and Kelly Chamberlain

Criminology: Josie Studdards

SERCC

Dr Blaire Morgan and Amy Johnson

Overview

This academic year, we have had a series of objectives in the School of Psychology with the main goals of increasing the visibility of student reps and working to close the feedback loop. In response to these objectives, we have instigated a number of new initiatives this year. In terms of visibility of reps, we have created infographics with details of reps and how to get in touch. These have been shared in a variety of ways, including being hosted on both Blackboard organisation pages and on mandatory module pages. Regular reminders of reps have been circulated to students and a 'Padlet'

Key Stats



22 Course Reps elected



8 volunteering hours logged

for course issues has been available all year round for both Criminology and Psychology students to add questions and feedback. Also hosted on Blackboard Organisation pages for Psychology and Criminology courses are 'You Said, We Did' documents – these documents detail course changes and updates in response to student feedback. Our School and Course reps have made use of the virtual coffee mornings ran by both the SU and course leaders.

This has allowed for continued communication between reps and staff across the academic year. Student feedback has been collected and fed forwards by electronic means this academic year, with students making use of anonymous surveys, Padlets, social media platforms and running virtual drop-ins through Teams. Collecting feedback virtually has been beneficial and the School plans to continue incorporating forms of electronic feedback going forwards (with the hope of re-instigating f2f options as well).

Despite a challenging year, the reps have worked hard to collate key feedback in a timely manner that has been used to improve student's learning experience.

Key Impacts

- Creation of a course Padlet open all year for collecting questions and feedback (and monitored by the School Reps).
- Use of Teams for course rep peers support was useful and increased communication across the years
- Amendment to Level 5 student timetable to avoid bunching of teaching.
- Inclusion of Q&A section at the end of online teaching sessions.
- Course-level guidance on screen breaks during online teaching.
- Planning for a SoP annual conference for all students from 2021 onwards.

School of Science and the Environment

School Reps

Biological Sciences: Eleanor Hinton

Geography, Archaeology and Environment:
Dominic Byrne

SERCC

John Dutton

Overview

A new academic year with a new SERCC. The requirement from Peter Seville, Head of School was *"to close the feedback loop"*. This led to an SSE Academic Representation Blackboard site to which all SSE students have access. This listed Course and School Rep contact details (with photos), was where SSLC meeting, School Forum,

Key Stats



31 Course Reps elected



**22.5 volunteering hours
logged**

and Course Rep meeting minutes were posted. Most importantly a 'You Said, We Did' issues and action tracker was developed to allow all students to see what issues had been raised and to track the progress on them being resolved.

Ongoing challenges with Covid-19 and adaptations to teaching and assessment were recognised as being key issues Course Reps would tackle. First year Course Reps had it particularly hard as they'd not yet formed strong relationships with their cohorts. This was especially hard for those topics and dissertations which involved practical laboratory and fieldwork. Monthly meetings were held between the SERCC and Course/ School Reps in addition to one-to-one support being available on request. In addition, fortnightly 'catch-ups' between the SERCC and School Reps were held.

The CES feedback indicates some success of the Academic Representation process in SSE. 78% of students knew who their Course Rep was and 66% agreed their Course Reps were effective in representing their interests, a raise of 5% from 2019/20.

Key Impacts

- Development of SSE's Academic Representation Blackboard site
- 'You Did, We Said' issues and actions tracker
- Adjustments to assessments and deadlines in response to re-emerging Covid-19
- Additional support to Course and School Reps

School of Sport and Exercise Science

School Reps

PE, Dance & Coaching: Nick Gibbons

Sport & Exercise Science: Abbie Dale

Sport, Management & Therapy: Sophie Monks

SERCC

Jaime Guinan

Overview

In 2020-21, School Reps have identified that the academic representation system seemed to take a while to get going this year compared to 2019-2020. The school reps felt this placed them on the back foot in terms of getting across the importance of the role and therefore had a knock-on effect on response rates from course reps when trying to gather feedback and general engagement. This

Key Stats



47 Course Reps elected



30.25 volunteering hours logged

being due to COVID-19 and lack of engagement from wider cohorts to provide course reps with the feedback they require. However, all SSLC meetings successfully took place in both semester 1 & 2 with course reps either in attendance or providing a report in their absence to still give valuable feedback to enhance the student experience.

School Reps have been working to increase engagement through a number of initiatives, including the use of a bespoke blackboard page. This has been created through the SSES Student Information Bank site within blackboard to communicate to the wider student body within the school. This hasn't ran as hoped due to the restrictions of school reps becoming administrators and is something to push forward with in the 2021-22 academic year. School Reps made themselves available during Welcome Week during the virtual sessions held where feasible to provide Course Leaders support in introducing the Course Rep system through a PowerPoint presentation, how they can get involved but also who they were and how the work within the student representative system.

Continuing from last academic year, we held our second Course Rep Forum, to allow School reps to introduce and touch base with course reps to discuss wider school information. Due the current pandemic this wasn't as well attended as hoped as there was a blended approach to learning which meant some students weren't on campus to attend the face-to-face forum. We still went ahead though, as the school reps believed it was important to have that face-to-face contact with their course reps to get the year started.

Key Impacts

- Opportunity for all of the course reps to communicate with school reps when they had questions/issues within department groups that had been set up.
- Through messaging platforms school reps continued to update all course reps of key information and get their views on subjects of importance.
- Feedback reports submitted for SSLC meetings if course reps were unable to attend due to lectures or covid-19 related absences.

Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery

School Reps

Nursing: Lisa-Marie Vaughn

Midwifery: Vacancy

SERCC

Sethu Sundari

Overview

This academic year's main focus for the TCSNM school was to support the students through the global pandemic in adapting to new ways of study, work, and engaging with the professional community. The Course reps and School reps have been crucial points of contact between the academic teams and the students.

The transition to online learning created new challenges for the students. This was handled by creating monthly meetings between the course leaders and the course Reps called the course Reps clinic and the existing bi-annual course Reps forum. The academics and the leaders of the TCSNM engaged and listened to students concerns through multiple forums so that students' issues could be heard and responded in a timely and suitable manner despite the ambiguity of the circumstances.

The school reps and course reps from the undergraduate nursing and midwifery programme have been instrumental in collecting student feedback on various modules and the courses, ensuring the students' voices are heard, and ultimately responding to the students with the updates from their meetings. One point to be noted is that the foundation degree course Reps and the postgraduate course Reps engagement with the roles and involvement in the programme have been limited. This is primarily due to their professional role as healthcare professionals and the challenges brought by the pandemic for this professional group. For the upcoming academic year, this will be an area to concentrate.

Key Impacts

- School Rep of the Year
- School Reps attend the TCSNM Learning and Teaching committee
- School Rep Lisa stepped up and supported students across both Nursing & Midwifery courses in the absence of a Midwifery representative.

Key Stats



36 Course Reps elected



13.25 volunteering hours

Worcester Business School

School Reps

WBS - Business: Adam Harper

WBS - Computing: Hannah Baker

SERCC

Viv Bell

Overview

The 2020/21 academic started well, with two school reps appointed - one to represent Computing and one to represent Business - followed by a significant uptake of interest in the course rep roles. Despite the impact of the Covid19 restrictions, 22 WBS reps were elected by October 2020. The level 4 computing reps helped to manage the implementation of the new DISCORD server, which was their idea. This proved to be a popular method of communication for computing students (and some staff). Postings were moderated by the reps themselves. Our Student Staff Liaison Committees were well attended, especially in Semester 1, with reps in attendance from all levels. The level 4 computing reps distributed an online survey and presented their findings at the November SSLC. Semester 2 did see a significant drop in engagement across the board. This was mostly due to the lack of face-to-face communication. The teaching went online, and students were working alone from home in most cases. The initiative to start a computing society - suggested at the November meeting - was put on hold, with the hope of a relaunch of the idea for 2021/22. Business Management tutors worked with Adam and Hannah the school reps on the Virtual Celebration Class of 20/21, attended focus groups, and discussed proposed improvements for a specific module which were successfully implemented. Good working relationships were built between the school reps and WBS Course Leadership teams.

The CES data showed a drop in the overall satisfaction for the "course rep" question:

2020: 61.36% **2021:** 55.56% but L4 computing improved. **2020:** 78.57% **2021:** 84.62%

This would indicate that the particularly impressive efforts shown by the L4 Computing reps had a significant impact on the results.

Key Impacts

- Implementation of DISCORD server for use by all WBS students and staff.

Key Stats



22 Course Reps elected



0 volunteering hours logged

- Creation of WBS Course Reps MS Teams Group.
- Study groups organised in Semester 1 for L4 computing students
- Improvements to modules based on student feedback
- Virtual Celebration Class of 20/21

Postgraduate Research Student Representation

The Code of Practice for Academic Representation formalised for the role of Postgraduate Research (PGR) Reps with the wider system, while recognising their different student experience.

Previously, in 2018-19 each School had a Rep who functioned similarly to a Course Rep in the undergraduate system. After challenges faced with recruitment of Reps with the system, the last two years have seen the system running with a reduced number of reps with Reps covering students across Colleges where School Reps have not been recruited. Two Senior Reps continue to represent students at the Research School and University levels.

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic brought about significant challenges for the system and much of the engagement this year was conducted through the Postgraduate Network who arranged a number of virtual events for student including coffee catch ups and a 'Present and Share' online seminar series.

The Vice President Education continued to attend the Postgraduate Research Forum during the year ensuring an SU presence in this key tool for student feedback.

The Union and the Research School recognise that the system is not working as well as it could and a key priority for 2021-22 will be an SU led review of the system for PGR, Postgraduate Taught (PGR) and apprenticeship students.

Postgraduate Research Representatives 2020-21

Senior Reps:

Harley-Jean Simpson and Emma Smith

School/College Reps:

College of Business, Psychology and Sport: **Harley Simpson (SSES) and Kimberley Mee (SoP)**

College of Arts, Education and Humanities: **Diana Russell (SoH)**

College of Health, Life & Environmental Sciences: **Josie Lynch (SSE)**

Looking to 2021-22



As the new Vice President Education for 2021-22, I am very excited for the year ahead as we move forward following the return to more face-to-face teaching. I am hopeful that all students will enjoy a positive educational experience, which will involve a collective effort from the excellent staff we have here at the University and the Students' Union. A strong partnership between students and staff, with collaboration by the Students' Union and the University will be imperative. The Academic Representation system, as always, will play a pivotal

role, the School/Course Reps always do their absolute best for their fellow students, be it highlighting good practice or working collaboratively to achieve positive change.

I have absolutely loved my first few months in office, it has been great to already meet various students and staff members. I have been involved in numerous School Rep interviews, meeting and recruiting some brilliant candidates has been very positive. The enthusiasm for the Representation system shared by the SERCCs across the University has also been refreshing and they have assisted me greatly.

Our priorities for the upcoming year include:

- Recreating a community of Reps as we move into the new normal.
- Improving the closure of the feedback loop through strengthened training, researching best practice and implementing recommendations.
- Addressing the gaps that exist within the Academic Representation system, maintain and develop action plans where necessary and increase engagement.
- Reviewing the provision for Representation for postgraduate, apprenticeship and UWIC students

We believe the importance of Reps should never be underestimated, perhaps particularly during the very unusual year we have had. The Reps will be pivotal to rebuilding the community within the University and making sure new and returning students have a positive experience. The Students' Union and I are so thankful to those who really engage with the representation system. We have some outstanding School Reps this year whose commitment to the role is already evident and I look forward to meeting this year's Course Reps also.

Let us hope for a great year filled with positivity and achievement!

Rag

Ragnar Mularczyk
Vice President Education 2021-22