

Code of practice for student voice

Academic year 2025/26

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Introduction

1. High levels of student engagement are supportive of positive educational outcomes for students. Students are not expected to be passive recipients of the delivery of their education, rather they are encouraged to become active in shaping their own experience and those of others. The *Code* has been informed by the Expectation and Core and Common practices in the [QAA Quality Code](#).
2. For the purposes of this *Code of practice*, there is a distinction made between the engagement of students in their academic studies and student engagement with the mechanisms in place to ensure students are partners in the quality assurance/enhancement of their programme. Please see [C7: Procedure for Attendance and Engagement](#) that outlines how the University supports students to engage fully with their studies, what type of systems are used to record students' attendance, and other evidence of academic engagement and how the University manages students who, after support, fail to engage with their programme.
3. The *Code* has been produced as part of the University's Quality Framework and will be reviewed and updated periodically by the University Education Committee.

Applicability of the Code

4. The *Code* applies to all students studying at the University campus and at a distance for University awards. It does not apply to students studying on University validated programmes at the Associated and Accredited Institutions (AIs), although AIs are encouraged to use this *Code* to inform their own policies and practices for student engagement.

Principles of student engagement

5. Using the Manifesto as a foundation, the following principles underpin the University's ethos of student engagement and are reflected in the processes described in this document:
 - (i) Students are expected to proactively engage in the educational experience offered by the University;
 - (ii) Students are partners in their educational experience;
 - (iii) All students have the right and the opportunity for their voice to be heard in the delivery of their education;
 - (iv) Students have the right to have a say in who represents them in elected, representative positions;
 - (v) The student voice is valued;
 - (vi) All students have the opportunity to engage and provide feedback via the Students' Union as their representative body;
 - (vii) Students are assured that their constructive feedback is provided without detriment to their individual academic progress;
 - (viii) The University will facilitate opportunities for formal and informal student engagement;
 - (ix) Students are represented at all levels of the University's academic governance structure;
 - (x) Student engagement processes take account of the differing needs of a diverse student body;

- (xi) Students who take on particular roles as reps and panel members are trained to do so and provided with ongoing support in these roles;
- (xii) The University will provide feedback to students on the outcomes and actions taken in response to their feedback, for example resulting from the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

Student engagement as partners in quality assurance and enhancement

6. The [Student Staff Partnership Manifesto](#) sets out the ways in which students may provide feedback on their experiences, either individually or via elected student representatives.
7. The University utilises a range of mechanisms to engage students. These operate at institutional, Faculty, School, programme, and module level, and are a combination of formal and informal activities. The following table provides an overview of the various types of engagement at each level which are discussed in more detail under thematic headings below.

Level	Type of activity
Institutional	• SU representation on academic governance committees • University/Students' Union Committee • SU representation on panels convened under the regulatory framework • Student panel members for validation and review • SU Student Voice Forum • National Student Survey (NSS) • Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) • Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) • Membership of ad hoc working groups • Engagement with professional service areas • Informal feedback in discussions with senior management, including the Vice-Chancellor
Faculty	• SU representation on Faculty Education Committees • Elected representation on Faculty Research Degrees Committees • Informal feedback in discussions with Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty
School	• Staff/Student Liaison Committees (if not at programme level) • Student representatives on Boards of Studies (if not at programme level) • MySurrey Voice campaign powered by Unitu, student discussion boards and Course Rep moderation • PGR Student Engagement Forum • Informal feedback in discussions with Head of School • Head Reps
Programme	• Course Rep system

	• Staff/Student Liaison Committees (if not at School level) • Student representatives on Boards of Studies (if not at School level) • Student views input to Continuous Enhancement Review considered at Board of Studies • Discussion regarding major and minor modifications to programmes • Meetings with periodic review panels • Meetings with PSRBs and Industry Advisory Panels • Informal feedback in discussions with Programme Leader
Module	• Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) • Discussion regarding major and minor modifications to modules • Informal feedback in discussions with Module Leader

Academic governance structure

8. Formal opportunities for student voice operate via the academic governance structure (see diagram on the following page). In addition, the Students' Union has representation on Council. Students are members of all academic governance committees from Senate down to Staff/Student Liaison Committees (with the exception of Boards of Examiners, the Admission, Progression and Examination Sub-committee (APESC), and the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE)). Representation at University level committees, sub-committees, and Faculty Education Committees is through Students' Union sabbatical officers. For other committees, representation is via elected student representatives. There are student representatives on the following committees within the academic governance structure:

Senate and its Sub-committees

- University Education Committee (UEC)
- University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC)

UEC Sub-committees

- Quality Enhancement Sub-committee (QESC)
- Student Experience Sub-committee (SESC)

URIC Sub-committees¹

- Doctoral College Board

Faculty committees

- Faculty Education Committees (FECs)
- Faculty Extraordinary Board of Studies
- Faculty Research Degrees Committees (FRDCs)

School committees

- Boards of Studies (BoS)

¹ The Research Integrity and Governance Committee (and its sub-committees) also reports to URIC; however, this is not concerned with student matters and so is not included in the scope of this *Code of practice*.

- Staff/Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs)
 - Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Fora (PGRSEF)
- 9. The Senate flowchart and Terms of reference for its committees and sub-committees can be found in [Senate Governance](#).
- 10. Chairs of committees will manage the items of business so that there are sufficient opportunities for students to make their views heard.

University/Students' Union Committee (USUC)

11. This Committee deals with finance and resourcing matters and therefore sits outside the academic governance structure, but it is mentioned here for its role in agreeing Students' Union finances which are used by the Students' Union in part to support the Course Rep system.

Students as Panel members

12. In addition to the formal governance structure, students also participate in processes that arise out of the regulatory and quality assurance framework. These are as Panel members on appeals, complaints, disciplinary Panels, Fitness to Practise, Support to Study, and panels for validations and periodic reviews.
13. The presence of students on Panels is enshrined in the [Regulations](#) and [Codes of practice](#). Students are equal members of the Panel upon which they sit and are given the opportunity to participate fully in all Panel discussions. Further details of the composition of regulatory-related Panels can be found in the [Procedures for hearings by Panels](#). The role description for the student panel member for validations and periodic enhancement events can be found in the Roles and responsibilities section of the [Code of practice for programme lifecycle processes](#).

The Course Representative System

14. The University and the Students' Union work in partnership on the Course Representation system, following the principles listed under paragraph 5 in this *Code of practice*. The Voice Zone of the Students' Union remains responsible for Course Reps and the development of the system, led by the Vice-President Voice. The University is responsible for promoting Course Rep elections, and organising SSLCs and Boards of Studies, where Course Reps are the official student representatives. The Students' Union is responsible for arranging Course Rep elections, training opportunities, providing support to Reps over the academic year, and producing and disseminating Course Rep promotion and recruitment materials. While these responsibilities are distinct, there is a shared responsibility between the Union and University to collaborate in areas where necessary, such as advertising of elections and success of the program, in order to promote the importance of the student voice.
15. Course Rep elections take place twice each academic year (in weeks 1 – 3 of semester 1 for new students and in weeks 9 – 11 of semester 2 for returning students). To ensure Reps can attend training with the Union before attending SSLCs, elections must follow this timetable in each School. Elections are organised by the Students' Union, with support from University staff, and are to be conducted online in accordance with the agreed process. Any exceptions are to be agreed with the Students' Union. Elections must follow a consistent, transparent, and democratic process. There is at least one member of staff in the University with responsibility for liaising between Faculty staff and the Students' Union. This member of staff communicates regularly with the Students' Union and is responsible for ensuring that the register of Course Reps (held in full by the Students' Union) for each Faculty remains up to date and that Course Reps are provided with the correct role attribution on the MySurrey Voice platform, Unitu. See Appendix 1 for the role description for a Course Rep.
16. To ensure good communication between Course Reps, the Vice-President Voice, and senior educational leadership within the University, the Union also trains and supports students who take on a Head Rep position to provide an intermediate level of the student representation system. Head Reps will facilitate the effective representation of the student voice by providing guidance and support to Course

Reps within their department. This role is advertised to those who have already gained experience as a Course Rep, as the Head Rep will operate at a more senior level. Head Reps may also be given the opportunity to co-chair SSLC meetings as they will take on a senior leadership role amongst their fellow Course Reps. See Appendix 1 for the role description of the Head Rep role.

17. The Vice-President Voice is the Students' Union representative responsible for Course Reps, supported by full-time staff and part-time elected Union officers. The Union produces promotional materials to encourage students to become Course Reps, runs training sessions following elections to enable Reps to be effective in their roles, and communicates with Reps throughout the year. The Union is also responsible for responding to concerns about ineffective representatives via the Course Rep Removal policy (see Appendix 2). The Union makes a commitment to supporting and recognising the efforts of Course Reps and therefore ensures the Voice Zone and the wider Students' Union are representing the issues brought forward by Reps and championing their successes. The Students' Union also processes individual Reps' applications to be recognised on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and maintains the criteria for this award through the University Education Committee (see Appendix 3).

The Students' Union Student Voice Forum

18. The Students' Union holds a minimum of three Student Voice Forums a year. Student Voice Forums offer an opportunity for students to meet and discuss issues across the student body. Senior members of University management invited by the Students' Union are expected to attend Student Voice Forums, which are chaired by the Students' Union Vice-President Voice. The Students' Union keeps a record of these meetings and works in partnership with the University to ensure that Reps are aware of outcomes. Course Rep attendance at the Student Voice Forum is an essential part of the criteria for inclusion in the HEAR.
19. Utilising the Voice Forum format, the Students' Union will also hold targeted Forums for distinct groups of the student population or focused on specific topics where necessary.

MySurrey Voice (Unitu)

20. The University and Students' Union work in partnership to facilitate the student voice through MySurrey Voice, powered by Unitu. Students can raise feedback privately for the attention of Course Reps and Students' Union Officers, and following agreement and moderation, feedback can be escalated for the attention of University staff. The University commits to responding to student feedback and taking action to resolve issues when possible. The Students' Union works with Course Reps to effectively moderate and promote the sharing of student feedback.

Informal opportunities

21. Students also have many informal opportunities to engage with staff. There are regular meetings between University senior managers and officers of the Students' Union. At Faculty level, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Executive Deans of Faculty usually hold meetings with student representatives once per semester to gauge student opinion on a range of topics. Schools also provide similar opportunities.

Student surveys

22. The student voice is heard anonymously through the opportunity to participate in a number of surveys. These are national surveys such as the NSS, PTES and PRES,

and at an institutional level via the Student Life Pulse survey run by the Students' Union in collaboration with the University. Internally, students are asked to feed back on their experience at modular level via Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs).

23. It is University policy that Schools do not survey students in addition to the above surveys in order to avoid "survey fatigue". Student views outside formal surveys can be sought via the academic governance structures, through ad hoc focus groups, and via the Students' Union who may conduct their own surveys in order to provide student insight-informed representation to students.
24. The outcomes of surveys are relayed back to students in a number of ways. NSS and PTES results and action plans are considered at Boards of Studies and FECs, as are MEQ results. Students are able to view examples of improvements the University has made in direct response to student feedback through webpages and various student communication channels.
25. The results of PRES are shared with postgraduate research students and have the opportunity to contribute to the development of action plans emerging from the survey. The results are shared with students primarily through the Postgraduate Research Student Engagement Fora or other dedicated meetings. The results are also discussed at the FRDCs and the University Research Degrees Committee, all of which have student representation.
26. Appendix 4 indicates the periods when annual student surveys are live and when survey results are expected to be received.

Appendix 1 – Role description for Course Rep roles



Course Rep Role Description - UG and PGT

As a Course Rep, you are expected to:

- Complete Course Rep training run by USSU, and complete Unitu training
- Research student opinions on issues relating to your course
- Represent student feedback to the University at formal meetings such as SSLCs and Boards of Studies and in informal interactions with staff
- Attend Student Voice Forum and other Union-run events to represent students
- Report outcomes from these meetings back to your peers
- Show and promote active engagement on MySurrey Voice discussion boards, powered by Unitu, moderating and escalating feedback to staff
- Share ideas and issues with your fellow Reps
- Keep in contact with USSU by sharing your success via Course Rep Wins forms
- Complete the Course Rep end of year survey
- Commit 15 hours each term to the role

As a Rep, you can expect your Department to:

- Help you to advertise your position as a Course Rep to your cohort
- Facilitate representation within your School/Department (e.g. giving you adequate notice of upcoming meetings)
- Respond and take action on feedback posted on discussion boards on Unitu

As a Rep, you can expect the Students' Union to:

- Contact you in semester one regarding training dates
- Offer advice and guidance to enable you to represent your cohort effectively
- Ensure that contact details are available for you to contact your VP Voice with any queries or problems
- Facilitate Student Voice and Faculty Voice Forums to allow you address issues directly to the University's Senior Management team
- Promote the work of Course Reps throughout the year Identify issues that require involvement of senior members of University staff

Skills and experience you can expect to gain from this role:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • Leadership skills | • Organisation skills | • Meeting skills |
| • Communication | • Persuasion | • Time-management |
| • Team-working | • Collaboration | • Digital literacy |

Your Surrey Life.



Course Rep role description - PGR

As a PGR Rep, you are expected to:

- Complete online Course Rep training run by USSU
- Research PGR opinions on issues relating to your course
- Represent PGR feedback to the University at formal meetings such as PGR Engagement Forums and Student Voice Forum, and informal staff interactions
- Report outcomes from these meetings back to your peers
- Share ideas and issues with your fellow Reps
- Keep in contact with the VP Voice and Students' Union
- Share your successes via the Course Rep Wins form
- Complete the Course Rep end of year experience survey

As a PGR Rep, you can expect your Department to:

- Confirm in writing (email) that you have been elected to be the PGR Representative for your School/Department, and outline the group of students you will be representing
- Inform the Students' Union that you will be a PGR Rep and update them if this should change
- Help you to advertise your position as a PGR Rep to your School/Department
- Facilitate representation within your School/Department (e.g. giving you adequate notice of upcoming meetings)
- Arrange for an election to take place when required, to ensure continuity of PGR representation

As a PGR Rep, you can expect the Students' Union to:

- Contact you in the first semester regarding training dates
- Have a representative attend Student Engagement Fora when possible
- Offer advice and guidance in your role, including Rep training
- Ensure that contact details are available for you to contact your Vice President Voice with any queries or problems
- Facilitate Student Voice Fora to allow you address issues directly to the University's Senior Management team
- Recognise and reward the work of outstanding PGR Reps
- Identify issues that require involvement of senior members of University staff

Skills and experience you can expect to gain from this role:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • Leadership skills | • Organisation skills | • Meeting skills |
| • Communication | • Persuasion | • Time-management |
| • Team-working | • Collaboration | • Digital literacy |

Your Surrey Life.



Head Rep Role Description

With over 550 course reps across the university Head Reps provide the next platform of student representation. Head reps advocate the student voice at a higher level across their faculty. After already gaining experience as course rep or school in previous years the Head Rep will represent the student voice at a more senior level.

As a Head Rep, you are expected to:

- Coordinate the Course Reps and act as the main point of contact for broader feedback which may need escalating within the University
- Engage and support Reps to be effective and empowered in their roles
- Escalate any necessary feedback to staff or students
- Motivate and support the Reps within their area with a particular focus on first-time Reps
- Attend SSLC meetings and co-chair with existing staff
- Promote the course rep positions to other students
- Attend monthly meetings with VP Voice
- Hold meetings with reps to prepare for SSLC
- Encourage good line of communication between reps
- Encourage sharing of rep wins to wider student community and staff
- Promote and advocate for the use of My Surrey Voice, powered by Unitu
- Commit around 15 hours each semester to the role
- Encourage reps involvement with the union via wins

As a Head Rep, you can expect your Department to:

- Confirm in writing (email) that you have been appointed to be a Head Rep, and outline the group of students you will be representing
- Inform the Students' Union that you will be a Head Rep and update them if this should change
- Help you to advertise your position as a Head Rep to your cohort
- Facilitate representation within your School/Department (e.g. giving you adequate notice of upcoming meetings)
- Respond and take action on feedback posted on discussion boards on Unitu

As a Head Rep, you can expect the Students' Union to:

- Contact you in semester one regarding training dates
- Offer advice and guidance to enable you to represent your cohort effectively
- Ensure that contact details are available for you to contact your VP Voice with any queries or problems
- Facilitate Student Voice and Faculty Voice Forums to allow you address issues directly to the University's Senior Management team via email to the VP Voice
- Promote the work of Head Reps throughout the year
- Identify issues that require involvement of senior members of University staff

Appendix 2 – Course Rep removal policy

COURSE REP REMOVAL POLICY



COURSE REP REMOVAL POLICY

Guidelines for procedure to be followed, should it come to light that a cohort is not being effectively represented by their elected Course Rep or PGR Rep.

- 1 Attendance records show Rep has not attended any of the necessary training or representative meetings, or sent apologies.
OR concerns are raised by either student(s) in the cohort or a member of University Staff via the Course Rep email ussu.course reps@surrey.ac.uk
- 2 Acknowledgement email will be sent to the student/staff member who raised the issue by the Students' Union, confirming the matter is being looked into.
- 3 VP Voice will make contact with the Rep to establish why they have been unable to represent their cohort effectively, offering additional support and training where necessary. This will lead to either outcome A or outcome B.

A The Rep Responds*

- 1 The Students' Union will work with the Rep to create a plan to improve their representation skills and arrange regular meetings to monitor their progress.
- 2 Improvements are seen and the cohort in question is represented effectively.
- 3 The matter is closed.

*If the Rep responds, but states that they no longer feel they can fulfil their duties as a Course Rep, actions taken will be in accordance with steps 3-5 in outcome B.

B The Rep does not respond

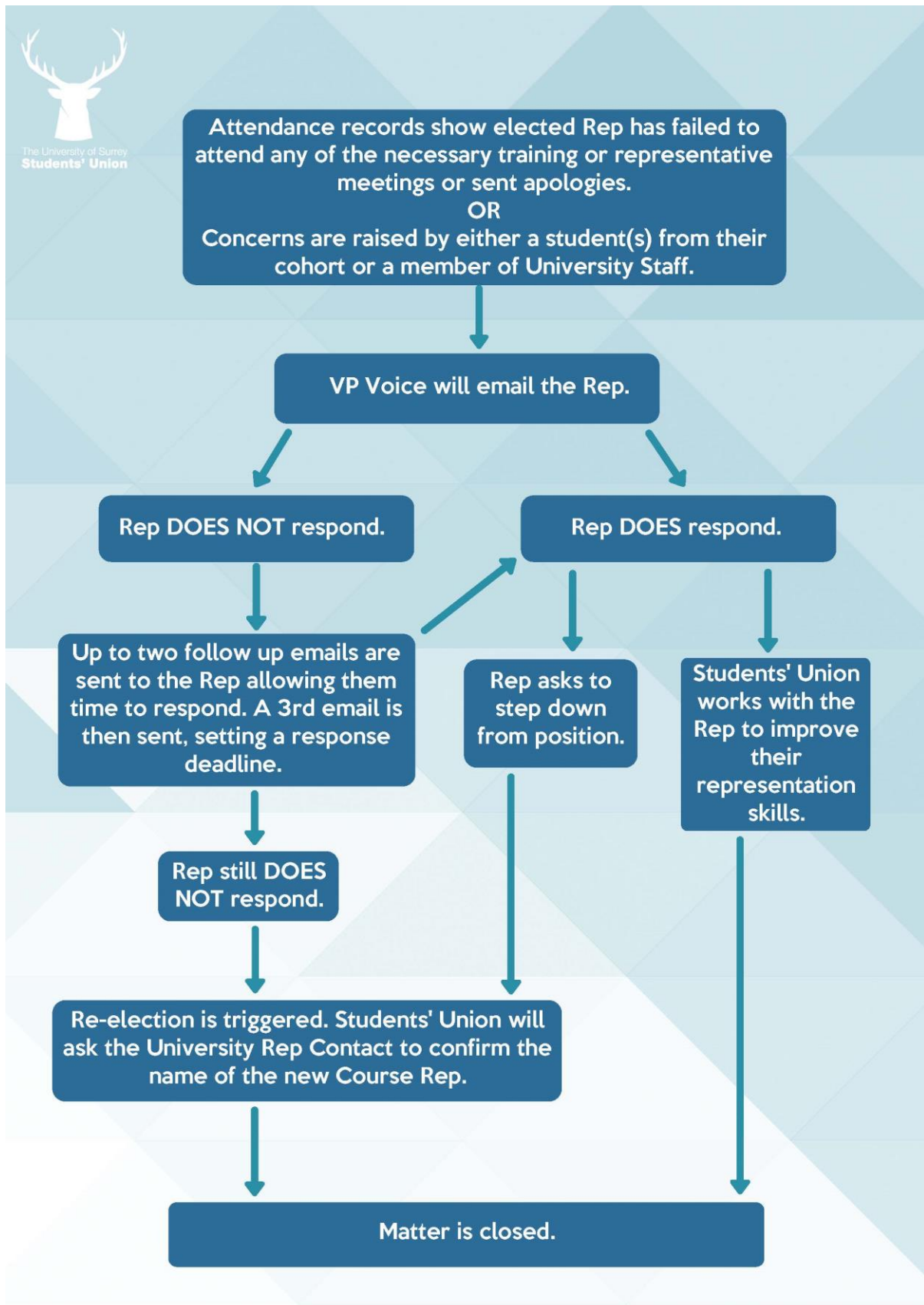
- 1 Up to two follow up emails will be sent to the Rep.
- 2 The third email will advise the Rep that, should they not respond by a given deadline, the Students' Union will assume that they no longer wish to take part as a Course Rep and this will trigger a re-election.
- 3 If the Rep still does not respond, The Students' Union will inform the University Rep contact that a re-election must take place. **
- 4 The University Rep contact will email the Students' union once the election has taken place to confirm the name of the new Rep and then upload their details via the USSU website.
- 5 The matter is now closed.

**If the Rep responds to any of the emails before the deadline, actions taken will be in accordance with steps 1-3 in outcome A.

- 4 If the issue was raised by a student/staff member, following the conclusion of the matter in either scenario, the person who originally raised the concern will be notified of the conclusion.

To find out more about Course Reps, go to
www.ussu.co.uk/voice/Pages/Course-Reps





Appendix 3 – Criteria for inclusion of activity in the HEAR

Course Reps exist to represent the views of all students across all courses and at all levels. It is crucial for students' prospects that active student leaders who take on volunteer roles during their time at Surrey are able to verify and articulate the skills they have developed. To commend their hard work in improving the student experience across the University, the Students' Union recognises the role of Course Rep on a student's HEAR.

To ensure that Rep contribution is monitored and scrutinised by the Union, and that the benefits of the Course Rep system are felt in terms of quality and standards across the University, specific criteria must be met in order for a Rep to have their role included on their HEAR.

Criteria:

1. Be elected by a majority

To attain Course Rep status on the HEAR you must be an elected representative voted for in a fair and balanced election by the members of the student community which you represent.

Evidence required: Correspondence from Faculty Course Rep contact confirming an election took place.

2. Attend Course Rep training

There will be training sessions for new and continuing Course Reps in the early weeks of Semester 1. This may also be fulfilled by completing online training.

Evidence required: The Students' Union will take attendance at training; the Course Rep is responsible for filling in the attendance form or sending apologies before the training unless in exceptional circumstances. For online Course Rep Training: successful completion of the online training material.

3. Attend all Student Voice Fora

This may also be fulfilled with acceptable and pre-submitted apologies.

Evidence required: The Students' Union will take attendance at the Forum; also fulfilled by pre-submitted apologies being received.

4. Complete account activation on Unitu

Reps will be asked to activate their account on Unitu at the start of the year to monitor private discussion boards and escalate feedback to the public attention of staff. Course Reps must be active on Unitu to ensure feedback is filtered and heard by staff.

Evidence required: Account activation to be completed on Unitu.

5. For Head Reps – Above criteria plus completion of 30 hours per semester

Head Reps will be invited to complete a form at the end of each semester to track their activities and achievements. 30 recorded hours completed per semester will fulfil these criteria.

Evidence required – The Students' Union will process Head Rep activity forms to verify completion of these hours.

Review process

In order to be considered for recognition on the HEAR, Reps must meet all four of these criteria. The Students' Union will monitor which Reps have successfully met these criteria over the academic year and will collate a list of Reps who will receive recognition of their role on the HEAR.

Appendix 4 – Survey live periods and results

Student surveys: survey live periods												
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
MEQs (non-standard)												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 1												
NSS												
PRES												
PTES												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 2												

Student surveys: results												
	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
MEQs (non-standard)												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 1												
MEQs (standard) - Semester 2												
NSS - data												
NSS - free text comments and analysis												
PRES - data												
PRES - free text comments												
PTES - data												
PTES - free text comments												