



# workbook

**School of Informatics  
Class Rep Training**

## **Setting the Scene: The role of a Class Rep within the wider representation picture**

As a Class Rep you are vital to the University by telling them how they can improve the quality of education they provide from a student perspective.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement are highly valued by the University who strive to make sure the feedback they get from students allows them to provide the courses possible.

**Student Feedback** generally takes the form of the surveys at the end of every course you do and is combined with the Class Rep feedback at SSLCs to allow courses to improve the next time they are delivered.

**Programme Reviews** are carried out every 5-6 years in every subject area at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This looks at how the whole school operates from administration to Personal Tutors to course delivery.

**The National Student Survey (NSS)** is carried out every year by students in the final year of their

undergraduate degree. This gives the university an overall view of the entire education experience.

**Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

like NSS is carried out every year by students on a taught postgraduate programme which allows the university with data on the satisfaction and educational experience of this set of students.

**Postgraduate Research Experience Survey**

**(PRES)** is another nationwide survey which is carried out every two years and gives an in depth look at the experiences of those studying research degrees.

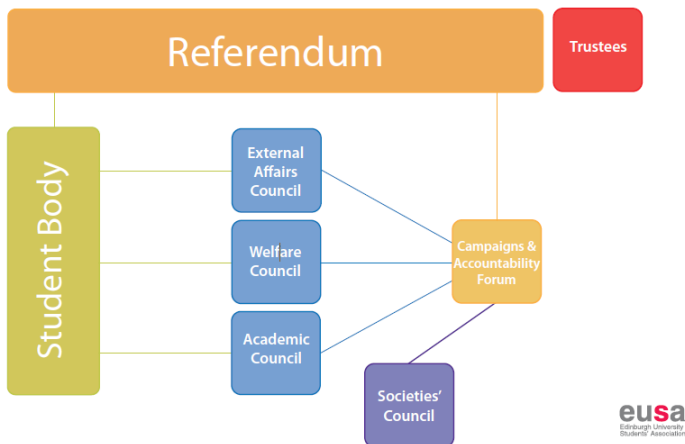
**SPARQs – Student Participation in Quality Scotland**

are an organisation formed by the Scottish government to assist Universities in ensuring students are engaged and involved and represented in their courses structure and administration.

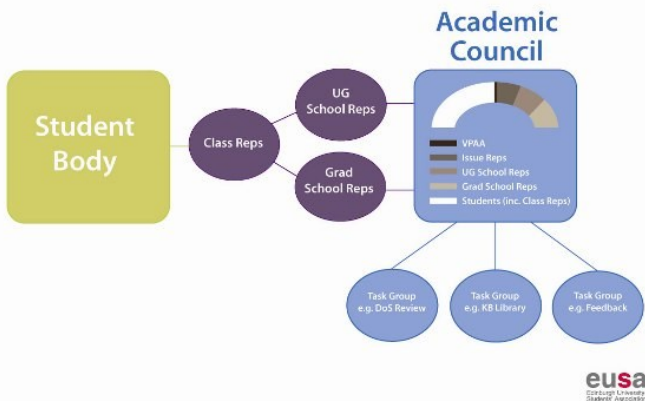
## Setting the Scene: The Bigger Picture

### EUSA's Overall Structure and Academic Council

#### EUSA Democracy



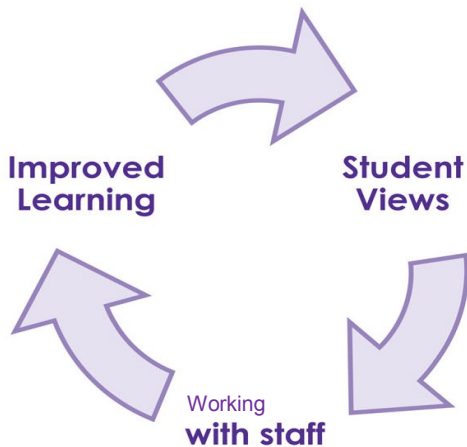
#### EUSA Democracy - Academic Council



## The Role in Action: Overview

There are many qualities and skills which are essential in order to succeed as a class rep, discuss the ideas you came up with in the previous exercise. Are some skills more important than others? What is vital to good representation? Why is each skill useful for the role?

Putting skills into action – the cycle of representation



### 1. Student views

Collecting the views of your classmates successfully so you can understand the issues and problems with the course is the first step in effective representation

### 2. Working with Staff

Communicating your classmate's views successfully to the staff that organise and deliver your course is key in ensuring issues are dealt with and change enacted.

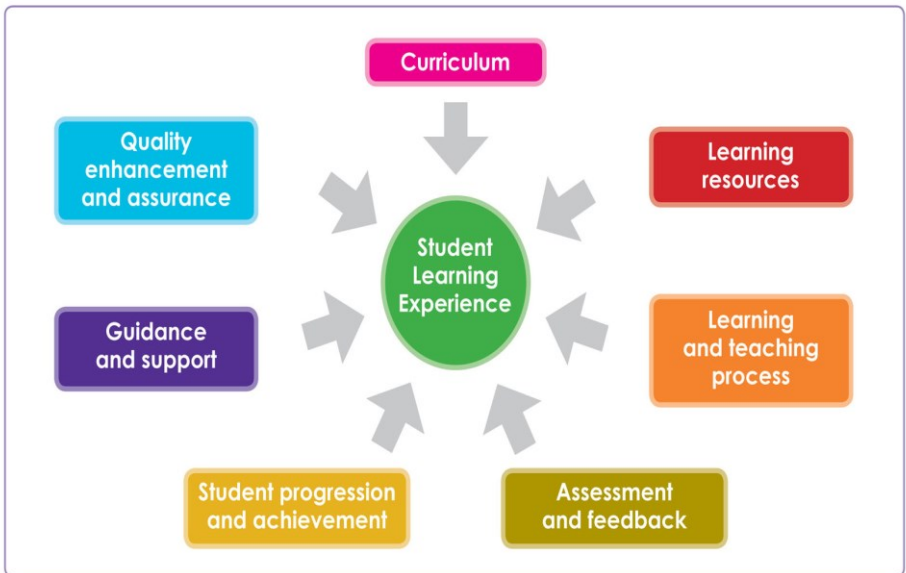
### **3. Improved learning**

The outcome of all your hard work will be an improved learning experience for your classmates and future students, make sure you feedback what has been achieved.

**EUSA are here to support you in being a good representative.**

## The Role in Action – Collecting Student Views

### The Student Learning Experience.



The Student Learning Experience is a concept developed by SPARQs to help you understand the different parts that make up you and your fellow classmates' learning experience.

Asking a fellow student to tell you about their whole learning experience may not get the response you

are looking for. Breaking it down into the different elements that you can see in the diagram over the page will help you gather the positive and negative feedback so you can inform staff what they are doing well and where they can improve.



## **The Role in Action – Collecting Student Views**

These questions will help you gather that all essential feedback. They are grouped under each element of the student learning experience.

### **Curriculum:**

- Do you feel your course is making you more employable?
- How is the course organised?
- How clear is the timetable?
- Is there a curriculum outline provided?
- Are classes useful?
- Does the curriculum taught match your expectations from the prospectus?
- Were learning expectations clearly outlined?
- Did the learning outcomes actually correspond to what you learnt?
- Were you satisfied by the module choices that were offered?
- How are the modules structured?
- Was the course challenging?

### **Learning resources:**

- Are there adequate library and computing facilities?
- Do you have access to materials you need (for example books, lab equipment and art materials)?

- Did departmental facilities meet your expectations?
- Was the lecture material easily accessible?
- Were resources adequately available?
- If you are studying a practical course, do you have access to the right resources?
- Are you aware of/do you know how to use the resources available to you?

**Learning and teaching process:**

- Were you consistently/sufficiently guided to practice your skills throughout your course?
- Are you able to learn in a way that suits you?
- How would you rate the teaching?
- Are there any forms of learning you would like in addition to lectures and tutorials?
- Do you find the lectures a satisfactory method of imparting information?
- Did you find the size of your tutorials conducive to further learning?
- Did you feel your department/course prepared you sufficiently for your assessments?
- Is teaching material up-to-date?
- Do you understand lecture contents?

**Assessment and feedback:**

- Does the assessment adequately and fairly represent the content of the course?
- Was the course fairly marked?
- Do all the lecturers grade to the same standard?
- Do you receive adequate feedback from your assessments?
- Was the feedback received useful and appropriate after assessments or course work?
- Are there too many exams or assessments?
- What is the frequency of course work and assessments in each module?
- Is the assessment criteria clear to you?
- Are you given enough time to prepare for assessments?
- Is the style of assessment appropriate?
- Is there too little or too much continuous assessment?

**Student progression and achievement:**

- Do you feel you have improved by completing this course?
- Would you like to progress to the next level?
- Can you measure your own personal progress through your course?
- Has your course made you more employable?

- Are you able to move from one module to the next?
- What are you getting out of studying this course?

**Guidance and learner support:**

- How much support are you getting with your work?
- How much support are you getting from staff?
- Was academic support readily available?
- Is there a place/person you can get help from if you're struggling with the subjects?
- Are staff and students aware of the channels for dealing with issues?
- Is your advisor of studies helpful?
- How is the career centre?
- Do you get relevant careers advice?

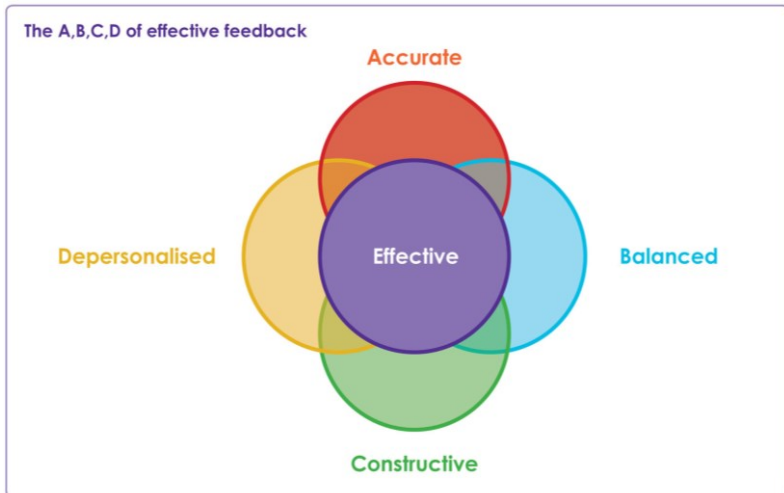
**Quality enhancement & assurance:**

- How do you feel your institution compares with others?
- How many of your lecturers would you give a good mark?
- Do you feel that your department is receptive to concerns?
- Do you feel that your opinions are listened to and taken seriously?

- What improvements have been made to your course?
- Do you feel your course is an acceptable standard?

## The Role in Action – Working in Subject Area

SPARQs has developed the A,B,C,D of effective feedback to help you do so. Below we explain each element and how they contribute to providing effective feedback.



**Accurate:** When commenting on the learning experience, be specific, and provide evidence for what you are saying. Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language. If you have a survey that tells you 67% of people don't like the feedback they receive, don't tell staff that 97% don't like it.

**Balanced:** Don't just pass on negative comments to staff, even if that is mostly what you are hearing from students. Say positive things too. This helps soften the blow and makes you look more professional.

**Constructive:** You are not just here to identify the problems, you are also here to help find a solution too. If you raise an issue, make a suggestion at the same time- this also helps you to look professional.

**Depersonalised:** Even if students think that a member of staff has done something wrong, it's always hard to make or receive personal comments. Try not to mention anyone by name in meetings, talk about the class and the impact on the learning experience. You may want to arrange a specific meeting with other staff to raise issues like this.

## **The Role in Action – Working in Subject Area**

### **Open Meetings**

Every Monday from 1.00 – 2.00pm there is the opportunity for all Informatics Class Reps to attend a meeting with Dr Stuart Anderson, the Director of Teaching. This is your opportunity to present issues that either need to be brought to attention straight away or that you feel can be resolved quickly without the need for a larger meeting. This session is always attended by School Reps so don't feel that you will be on your own and they will provide you support in raising any issues that you are not comfortable with.

### **Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs)**

SSLCs are where students and academic staff come together to discuss course provision and address issues that arise. As a Class Rep it is essential you attend the meetings, read and engage with the agenda and minutes, follow up any action points and report back to your classmates.

The agenda and previous minutes should either be published online or made available to you by the school. If you don't have access to them, just ask!

If there are any major issues then ask whoever is arranging the meeting to put it on the agenda to make sure it is given proper time..





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Once you have attended the SSLC, it is important that you feedback the results of your discussions to your class so they know what is happening.

## **The Role in Action – Working with EUSA**

Class Reps are also very important to EUSA. Not only do you provide information to your school, but also to the students' association to inform and shape their campaigns.

EUSA will be putting on a series of learning lunches over the course of the semester for class reps and school reps to meet and discuss important issues. This includes guest speakers and discussions as well as a free lunch. Dates for semester one are:

- *Wed 13<sup>th</sup> February, Teviot Dining Room (1pm)*
- *Wed 6<sup>th</sup> March, Teviot Dining Room (1pm)*
- *Wed 20<sup>th</sup> March, The Curle Room, KB House, Kings Buildings (1pm)*

You should also attend the Academic Council. This is the forum for students from right across the university with an interest in academic affairs (whether that is library provision or an issue you have discovered in your role as a Class Rep.) The Council will meet 2 more times in semester 2:

- *Mon 11<sup>th</sup> February, Teviot Dining Room (6:30pm)*
- *Mon 4<sup>th</sup> March, Pi in the Sky, KB House (6:30pm)*

## **EUSA Teaching Awards**



As a Class Rep you may want to encourage others to nominate in this year's EUSA Teaching Awards. The Class Rep role can sometimes focus on taking forward negative feedback but there are also plenty of reasons to say when things have been good too!

### **What are the EUSA Teaching Awards?**

The **EUSA Teaching Awards** recognise and reward those academics who are committed to delivering great teaching for their students.

This is the first fully student created and run university teaching award scheme in the UK. The EUSA Teaching Awards ran for the first time in 2008/9 and we were pleased with the overwhelmingly positive reception of the Awards from students, the University and in the education sector more generally.

The EUSA Teaching Awards ran for the first time in 2008/9 and have quickly become an indispensable part of EUSA's annual activity - and the University's academic calendar!

They have also inspired several other Students' Unions to create similar schemes, and NUS in partnership with the Higher Education Academy are encouraging other Universities across the UK to establish Teaching Awards.

We know that good teaching has an enormous positive impact on students' learning experience. Despite the many demands on academics' time, and the fact that most of the incentives in academia promote concentration on research at the expense of teaching, many academics go out of their way to deliver excellent teaching to their students. We think that this should be rewarded.

To nominate and find out more about the EUSA Teaching awards 2012/13, including the award categories, visit:

[www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/teachingawards](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/teachingawards)

## Case Studies

In this session, you get the chance to discuss common problems that could be encountered by class reps in the School of Informatics, and come up with possible solutions.

Developing solutions is one of the most important parts of being a Class Rep and helps you make a valuable contribution to your course.

Working in groups, use the space below to take notes as a patient on how to go about fixing the issue.

### **Case Study 1: Scenario you may face as Class Rep**

A student presents you with feedback on their work. It is a series of numbers, one of which is 0, with no comments or explanations.

What can I do?

## **Case Study 2: Situation you may face as a Class Rep**

Lecturer is hard to hear, when someone asked him to use a microphone he said everyone should move to the front of the class.

*What can I do?*

## **Case Study 3: Situation you may encounter**

Coursework not returned within the standard 2 weeks that the school has set, no word from the TA or lecturer as to when it will be returned

*What can I do?*

## Further Information – Contact Details

### Your School

To contact students and other representatives in the School of Informatics you can use email lists.

<http://lists.inf.ed.ac.uk/local/all-lists.html>

It will send straight through if you're on the email list and you use your **matric number** email address.

Course websites should have their details. Also remember lecturers, TAs, course organisers etc. are all on the relevant lists. None of them just go to students!

### EUSA

EUSA is here to support you as a class rep, and we have dedicated staff here to help should any problems arise.

#### School Rep Emails

If you have any problems within your school and need to contact one of your School Reps then you can email them

Zolt Ero: [Z.Ero@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:Z.Ero@sms.ed.ac.uk)

Kolos Kantor: [K.Kantor@sms.ed.ac.uk](mailto:K.Kantor@sms.ed.ac.uk)



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### VPAA

Contact for any information about campaigns and how to get involved in EUSA

[vpaa@eusa.ed.ac.uk](mailto:vpaa@eusa.ed.ac.uk)

0131 650 2656

Ask to speak to Andrew Burnie at the office reception (Potterrow)

### EUSA Staff

Contact Rachael, Sophie and David for any questions about training and support, Class Rep materials and information

[Class.reps@eusa.ed.ac.uk](mailto:Class.reps@eusa.ed.ac.uk)

0131 650 2656

### The Advice Place

A useful resource to share with fellow students: there are offices at Potterrow, King's Buildings and Moray House.

[Potterrow.advice@eusa.ed.ac.uk](mailto:Potterrow.advice@eusa.ed.ac.uk)

0131 650 9225



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