Intermediate Training for Reps in Colleges
WORKBOOK
Introduction

Congratulations! You are now a course rep!

Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) aims to improve student engagement in quality enhancement. One way in which it does so is through the provision of course rep training across Scotland.

The training will provide you with the skills and knowledge to help ensure you are able to make the positive changes you want to, to your learning experience.

In this Senior Rep Training session you will:

- To develop your understanding of what it means to be a senior rep and the importance of being proactive.
- To begin to think about how to make the case for change in your institution.
- To develop the skills required for pro-actively seeking student opinion to improve the student learning experience.

This workbook has been designed to record the work you will be doing during the training. It is also designed to be used as a reference tool during your time as a rep.

The workbook provides some of the essential information you will need to know as a rep but for further information please visit our website www.sparqs.ac.uk/training for further training resources.

NUS Scotland's SLEEC project has also produced a number of guides to different topics that you may find of use. They cover areas such as Assessment, Feedback and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). You can find them at www.bit.ly/SLEEC

Exercise 1- Your rep role
What do you think is the **purpose** of a rep is?

What do you think some of the **tasks** will be?

What **skills** do you think you will need and develop as a rep?

How do you think being a rep will **benefit** you?
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.

What do we mean by learning experience? It is everything related to how you learn and the way you are taught.

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.
We have developed some questions to ask your fellow students that 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?
Exercise 2- Issue? What issue?

In the box below, record your thoughts, and ideas raised in your group.

Exercise 3- How are you going to affect change?

In the box below, record your thoughts and those raised in the group.
Where to find your evidence base

**HMIE reports**

All colleges in Scotland are reviewed every four years by HMIE. The reviews are based on the HMIE quality framework which is based on the three principles of high quality learning, learner engagement and quality culture. For more information on the context and format of reviews visit [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

**Internal reports**

Colleges will have a range of internal reviews and processes that will be reported on. Speak to the quality team in the college to get more information on this.

**College satisfaction survey**

The college might annual survey students to ask them how satisfied they are with life and learning at the college. Such surveys are a useful evidence base as they often cover issues such as teaching and learning, resources and assessment.

**Students’ association policy**

Can and will cover a wide range of topics. See your students’ association for more details.

**Student consultation**

There will be different consultations by the college and the students’ association on various aspects of student life. These can cover anything from library resources to college life to the suitability of resources.
Exercise 4- Gathering student opinion

In the box below record your thoughts and ideas raised in your group.
Providing feedback is an essential part of being a course rep but how do you provide it effectively? 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.
Exercise 5- Closing the loop

In the box below record your thoughts and ideas raised in your group.
Useful information

**Enhancement/Quality Enhancement** - Quality enhancement is about how learning and teaching can be improved. It refers to all the work that a college, departments and individuals do to make learning and teaching better.

**Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education (HMIe)** - A statutory body that has the responsibility for carrying out reviews of colleges. HMIe carries out 4 yearly reviews and an annual engagement visit at all of Scotland’s colleges. To view previous reports or find out more information go to [ww.hmie.gov.uk](http://ww.hmie.gov.uk)

**Management of quality** - Simply, this refers to the college’s approach to managing the overall student learning experience. Colleges need to have processes and procedures in place to ensure that learning and teaching is of a good standard, and this is known as ‘management of quality’. In a student context, management of quality is relevant as it refers to how all students (from sabbatical officers, class reps and other students) are involved in these various processes and procedures to improve the standard of learning and teaching.

**NUS Scotland** - A confederation of students’ associations across Scotland whose purpose is to promote, defend and extend the rights of students, as well as to develop and champion strong students’ unions. Contact them on 0131 556 6598 or more information can be found at [www.nusconnect.org.uk](http://www.nusconnect.org.uk)

**Quality** - In the context of being a student representative, quality refers to the standard of everything to do with learning, teaching, assessment, and the additional support to ensure this happens within a college. When quality is referred to, it usually means “how good is this”?

**Scotland’s Colleges** - Is an umbrella organisation that supports, represents and develops colleges throughout Scotland. To find out more information about Scotland’s Colleges and the organisations it works with go to [www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk](http://www.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk)

**Scottish Funding Council** - The Scottish Funding Council is a statutory body. This means that they have been set up by the Scottish Government. The Scottish Funding Council’s main responsibility is to distribute £150billion to Scotland’s colleges and universities. They are ultimately responsible to the Government for the spending of this money, and so they oversee the quality of learning and teaching provision to ensure that standards are high.

**Scottish Qualifications Authority** - It is the national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees. Further information is available online at [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)

**Scottish Qualifications Framework** - The SCQF aims to help providers, employers and learners in Scotland understand how different qualifications compare to each other in terms of level and credit. The SCQF starts at level 1 (equivalent to an access 1 course) and ends at level 12. Further information is available online at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

**sparqs** - A development agency that exists to assist and support students, students' associations universities and colleges to improve the effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement in colleges across Scotland. Contact them on 0131 662 6599 or more information can be found at [www.sparqs.ac.uk](http://www.sparqs.ac.uk)