

# **COURSE REPS**

## **HANDBOOK 2017/18**



The University of Surrey  
**Students' Union**

## **Contents**

<b>Welcome from your VP Voice</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Your Students' Union</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Voice Zone</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Feedback Structure – How Do Reps Fit In?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Student Voice Forum</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Your Role as a Rep</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Common Problems</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Signposting</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Engaging with the Union</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Recognising our Reps</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Key Contacts</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>What next?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Key Dates</b>	<b>19</b>

## Welcome from your VP Voice



Keep In Touch

[ussu.vpvoice@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.vpvoice@surrey.ac.uk)



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

### Alex Harden | Vice-President Voice 2017/18

Congratulations on being elected as a Course Representative (Course Rep)! Our Course Reps have made incredible changes at the University and you're here because your peers believe in you to help make our experience at Surrey the best it can be!

Together, Course Reps represent over 15,000 students at Surrey across all courses and levels of study so this year, we're doing more to support and recognise our Reps. Alongside University meetings, you'll be invited throughout the year to join us at our new Student Voice Forum, where senior members of the University management team will be in attendance to hear directly from you, alongside Community Reps and other Students' Union representatives.

This year, we're also launching a Course Rep mentoring scheme, new categories of Course Rep Awards, and extra sessions in the Union to get Course Reps together to talk through any issues that come up.

This handbook contains all the key information you need to know to make your time as a Course Rep as successful as possible, including relevant contact details should you have any further enquiries.

I can't wait to get working with you all and help to make this a fantastic year. As a Course Rep, you'll be getting a fantastic insight into how the University and Union work and how we can all work to make the views of every student count!

# Your Students' Union

The Students' Union is the sole representative body for all students at Surrey and it is run by a number of elected officers, supported by full-time staff. The Union is made up of four 'Zones' which all work together to cover all aspects of student life. These Zones are led by a team of 5 full time sabbatical officers and 21 part time student officers who are all elected annually by Students' Union members through an online ballot- #SurreyDecides. All students are automatically members of the Students' Union as soon as they join Surrey.



## The VOICE ZONE

The Voice Zone is led by your Vice-President Voice, Alex. His role is to represent all Surrey students on matters relating to democracy, student opinion, and campaigns to make changes to the student experience.

Together with five part-time officers, and over 550 elected Course Reps, the Voice Zone is responsible for obtaining the opinions of students on issues that have an ever-present impact on their time here at Surrey. It's also paramount that democracy remains at the heart of the Union and, most importantly, in the overall student experience. The Zone works to ensure that all electoral processes are upheld with fair and just democratic procedures, and ensuring that this is continually made accessible to all students. Most of all, the Zone supports students by giving a voice to concerns that they express, and the passions that drive students to make change.

The Voice Zone Committee is comprised of five part-time officers who are all current students here at Surrey. Each officer has specific areas they would like to tackle in the student experience but you can approach any officer in the Voice Zone about any issues you are encountering and they can feed this back to the Students' Union. You will find short introductions to the part-time officers below or you can visit the Voice Zone website [www.ussu.co.uk/voice](http://www.ussu.co.uk/voice) to learn more about the Zone.

### Voice Zone Committee



**Alex Harden (VP)** - Alex came to Surrey in 2010 to study Creative Music Technology and has just finished a PhD in pop music analysis. As VP Voice, his targets for this year are to measure and increase engagement with the Students' Union, work with Course Reps and Societies to support student representation, and work with partner organisations to represent Surrey students at a national level.



**Olivia Mitchell** – Olivia is a Business Management and Marketing student who is on placement this year at EA (Electronic Arts). Olivia has been a Course Rep, and wants to work to promote the Course Rep voice across all schools and faculties. She also wants to fight for the London loan for students at Surrey, and maintain momentum from the Union housing manifesto of 2016-17.



**Taz Kingdon** – Taz is a second year Politics and Biological Psychology student. Her main focus this year is communication; her motto is “you won't know unless you ask”. The housing crisis and lecture capture are just two of the issues Taz would like to tackle this year.



**Hira Arab** – Hira is a second year Biochemistry student. Some of her main aims include working to raise awareness of issues relating to human rights that are being faced globally by women, and holding workshops for networking and personal development.



**Diana Dakik** – Diana is a final year Veterinary Bioscience student. She wants to work with the Voice Zone to help make our Course Rep system even better, to improve the International student experience, and continue to promote lecture capture.



**Biray Kayhan** – Biray is in his final year of International Business. His aims include keeping the Union updated with regular information and connecting with societies to represent those who feel their voice is not being heard.

## Students' Union Staff



**Alex Mackenzie Smith** – *Student Voice Manager* – Alex can assist with all academic and welfare related issues, as well as helping you to navigate and understand the Union's processes of democratic decision making.



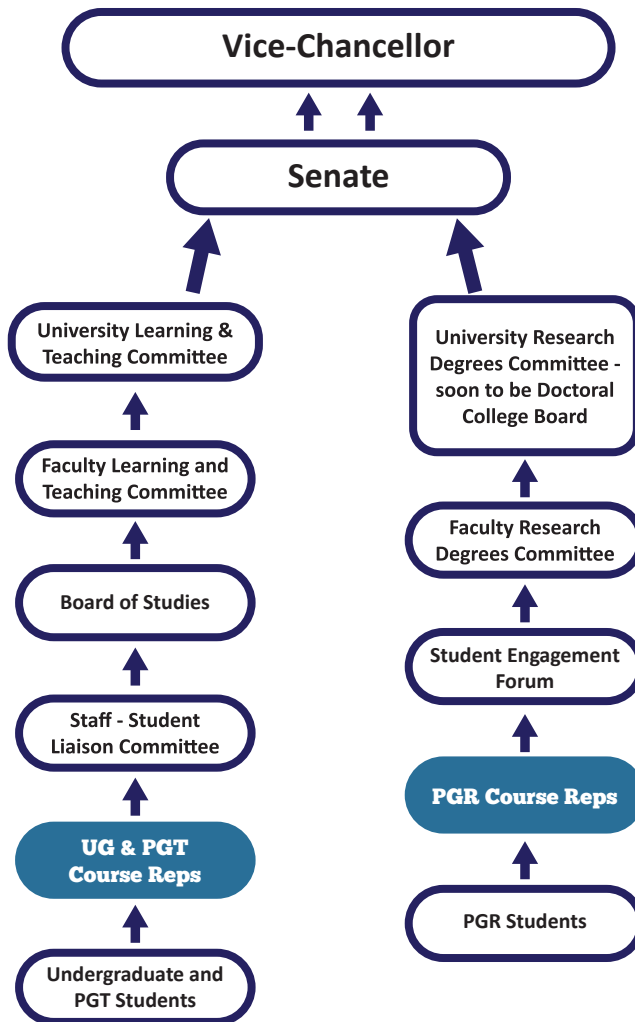
**Hannah Jones** – *Course Rep Coordinator* – Hannah can assist with any Course Rep enquiries, provide information and support to help with your responsibilities, and advise where to take specific issues raised by your cohort.

# The Feedback Structure

## How Do Reps Fit In?

Course Reps are an essential part of the Union's Voice Zone and the University's feedback structure. As a Course Rep, you contribute to this feedback structure by gathering student opinions, reporting back on the student experience, and ensuring that the University is aware of what can be done to make improvements.

Here's where your contribution fits in:



## Student Voice Forum

The Students' Union holds a minimum of three Student Voice Forums each year. Student Voice Forums offer an opportunity for students to meet and discuss issues across the student body. Each Forum will be comprised of members of the student body, including both Course Reps and Community Reps, and will be chaired by the VP Voice.

The Union will invite members of senior University management, so each Forum will be a powerful platform to come together with your fellow students to communicate directly with University senior management.

The Students' Union keeps a record of these meetings and works in partnership with the University to ensure that Reps are aware of outcomes. Collated issues arising from Student Voice For will also be reported to relevant committees within the University and Students' Union to inform institutional planning and management actions.

Course Rep attendance at Student Voice Forum is an essential part of your role and forms part of the monitored HEAR criteria; if you can't come, you'll need to remember to send in your apologies.

You can find the dates of this year's Student Voice Forums along with the key contacts at the back of this handbook.





# Your Role as a Rep

As a Rep, your responsibilities can be broken down into three key points:

## Collect the opinions of your cohort

It's important that your peers know who you are and how they can get in touch with you so you can gather their feedback on the issues that matter to your cohort.

### How do I do it?

You could do this in whatever way you think is best for your cohort, but our advice is get out there and get talking! Whilst emails are convenient for a lot of people, nothing beats face-to-face interaction.

### If you are an undergraduate or postgraduate taught student –

- Lecture shout-outs – ask your lecturer for you to speak at the beginning or end of a lecture.
- Meetings – arrange a regular time that works with your course to gather some feedback.
- Posters – use the notice boards in your department and put your name, picture and email address so people can contact you.
- Surveys – There are loads of online surveys out there – get gathering some stats and opinions.
- Email, Facebook groups and other social media – you know these ones!

### If you are a research student –

- Arrange a regular meeting with your cohort.
- Word of mouth – if you are a PGR Rep in a smaller department, you might find it more effective to have a quick chat with people in the office rather than set up a specific meeting.
- Notice Boards – use these to let your fellow students know who you are and how they can contact you.
- Email – this will help reach distance/part-time/industry-based colleagues.
- Surveys

## Communicate issues that matter to your cohort

As a Course Rep, it's important that you build good relationships with key members of staff in your Department or School – these are the people that can help you make real changes for students. This will help you when you share the feedback you've gathered with the University.

## How?

- Attend departmental meetings such as SSLCs (Student Staff Liaison Committees), SEFs (Student Engagement Forums) and BoS (Board of Studies), and attend each Student Voice Forum.
- Get to know your Head of Department or School.
- Be professional and polite – make sure you are on time and send apologies if you can't make it.
- Be tactful and diplomatic – be prepared to negotiate on issues you raise and debate the feedback you have given. Student feedback is important and you should feel like the student opinions are valued.
- Always remember: you are representing your whole cohort, not just your own opinions.

## Conclude by making sure your fellow students know what is happening as a result of their feedback

It is important that you let your cohort know what is going on as a result of their feedback so try and communicate what happened at meetings as soon as possible. Closing this feedback loop is essential in making sure that students feel that their voice is being valued.

## How?

- Email out a summary of the meeting to let students know what was said in response to their feedback.
- Identify action points or issues that need to be followed up- This will also be helpful for you to refer to before you next meeting. If something is promised to your cohort as a result of the feedback you've communicated, follow this up.

### Rep Successes

- 24 hour access policy to new Innovation to Health Building
- Microwaves in the Library
- Vending machine next to Vet School café
- Tackling "hidden costs" of courses
- Employability masterclasses in Tourism Management
- Multiple timetabling issues fixed across courses
- Promoting lecture capture
- Resources uploaded to SurreyLearn
- Promoting diversity in authorship of required readings
- Digital feedback to minimise paper waste
- Collaborative Games Development "Game Jam"
- Taster lectures before choosing optional modules
- Informal mock exams

# Common Problems

Problems will vary across years, Schools, and Faculties as well as between undergraduate and postgraduate students. Here are some ideas about problems you might come across at each level and what to do about this.

## Undergraduate (UG)

### Feedback and assessments

Some of the most widely reported issues faced by students relate to feedback and assessments. These can range from a lack of sufficient feedback to errors with information provided in module handbooks, or timetabling issues and clashing deadlines. These are best raised individually with the relevant lecturer or module leader, or, if it is a more widespread problem, raised at an SSLC. Often, these issues can be rectified quickly, but it's still really important to communicate back to your fellow students once the solution has been reached.

### Resources and staff availability

Often students will tell us that lecture slides or study materials have not been uploaded to SurreyLearn, or that essential textbooks are in short supply and high demand from the library. Students who feel they do not have access to the necessary resources to progress in their studies can often feel unsupported. Similarly, a lack of clarity or accessibility leading to students not knowing when and how to contact lecturers can cause similar issues. As a Rep, you can raise these issues at your SSLC, or directly with your Head of Department if you don't have a meeting coming up.

### Wider University issues

Sometimes students may give you feedback on issues which may be symptomatic of wider university issues. For example, students feeding back about lack of study space, overcrowding in lectures, or support services being in high demand may be attributable to rising student numbers. These are the kinds of issues that are most suitable for discussion at the Student Voice Forum where you can get a response directly from senior University management.

## Postgraduate Taught (PGT)

Whilst a lot of the above issues will affect students on all taught programmes, there are some additional things that affect PGT students.

### Course content and "crossover"

There have been issues in the past with PGT students being concerned with the content of their course and overlap with things they have been taught at UG level. We recommend that these concerns should be raised at the Student Voice Forum, as this means that the Senior Management will know about this straight away and can look to make changes.

## Postgraduate Research (PGR)

As a PGR Rep, it is likely that your student experience will be affected by some issues that are unique to PGRs.

### Supervisors

The relationship between a PGR student and their supervisor can have a huge impact on their time here at Surrey. As PGRs progress through their research, the lines between staff and students can seem blurred, making it feel more difficult for students to raise issues that they might have with the academic staff they work with.

Whilst as Reps you are not expected to become involved in individual disputes, if you spot a trend in the feedback you are receiving from students about supervisors, please let the Students' Union know. This could be a sign of a wider problem, and is therefore something that we need to know about, so we can support students effectively.

The Students' Union is independent from the University and therefore students should be signposted to us if they are struggling to work with their supervisor or any other members of staff. We can offer advice, support and help to communicate with the University and get things back on track. For more information, visit the Support Zone website – [www.ussu.co.uk/support](http://www.ussu.co.uk/support)

### Teaching duties

Another major aspect of the PGR experience is the balance between research and teaching duties. There can be some issues which arise as a result, and some fellow students may feed this back to you as their PGR Rep. Again, while we do not expect you to settle these issues yourself, please do let the Voice Zone know if you are receiving feedback regarding teaching duties. It's important that we know what students are struggling with, and look at ways we can support them.



## Signposting

As a Course Rep, you are not expected to be able to solve everything! Despite this, students may approach you to ask for help about problems that fall outside of your role. In these cases, you can signpost them to the relevant staff member or service. If you are unsure who to turn to, please get in touch with Hannah, our Course Rep Coordinator, on [hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk).

Here is some key information and helpful contacts for the various services that are offered by the Students' Union and the University:

### The Students' Union

We can advise and support students on matters such as Academic Integrity, Disciplinary Proceedings, Fitness to Practice, Fitness to Study, Appeals and Complaints.

Information is available online at: [www.ussu.co.uk/support](http://www.ussu.co.uk/support).

Students can contact [ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk) and they will be contacted by a relevant member of staff.

### Centre for Wellbeing

The Centre for Wellbeing provides support when personal issues are impacting on your ability to study and cope at University. They offer advice as well as therapeutic and practical support to help you cope and manage your studies.

More information on their services is available on their website:

[www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/wellbeing/health/](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/wellbeing/health/)

The Centre can be contacted via email on [centreforwellbeing@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:centreforwellbeing@surrey.ac.uk) or via telephone on **01483 689498**.

### Student Services

The Student Services Centre is a key point for general information on many areas of student life and also a source of advice about some issues you may be concerned about. They can advise on issues such as: Student Money, Fees and Funding, International Student Support, Registration and Administration, practicalities such as childcare, NHS forms and TV Licences.

More information on their services is available on their website: [www.surrey.ac.uk/ask](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/ask)

Student Services can be contacted on [ask@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ask@surrey.ac.uk) or

via telephone on **01483 686868**

## Library and Learning Centre

In the library you will find several teams that can help students with a variety of academic skills:

**SPLASH** – The Student Personal Learning and Study Hub is where students can drop in or make an appointment to speak to a Skills Librarian or Student Learning Advisor. Visit: [www.surrey.ac.uk/library/learning](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/library/learning) for more information.

**ALS** – Additional Learning Support provide confidential support for disabled and dyslexic students. Visit: [www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/study/als/](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/currentstudents/study/als/) for more information.

## Doctoral College

The Doctoral College oversees training and development opportunities for postgraduate research students and research staff, as well as building a supportive research culture and reviewing PGR regulations. Visit: [www.surrey.ac.uk/doctoral-college](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/doctoral-college) for more information.

# Engaging with the Union

## Support

Throughout the year, the Union will be doing all we can to help support our Reps. For any enquiries, you can always email our Rep Coordinator, Hannah, at [hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk), who can help with advice relating to your role, providing resources, and additional training if you feel like it would be beneficial. Alongside support from our Coordinator, the Union is also offering new opportunities for Reps this year.

## Course Rep Mentoring

For any Reps starting out, we're launching a mentoring programme this year to pair you up with an experienced continuing Rep to give informal advice and help in your new role in the first few months.

Are you a continuing Course Rep? Or a brand new Rep eager to benefit from the support of a mentor? You will have a chance to sign up at Rep Training, but if you weren't able to sign up, please email [hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk) to register your interest, and we can give you more information about the scheme.

## Drop-in Afternoons

Throughout the year, the Union will be running informal drop-in sessions for all Reps to have the opportunity to discuss any issues, get some advice, and learn new skills. These will be brilliant ways of connecting with your fellow Reps outside your department, to share your experiences with both fellow Reps and the Voice Zone, and to engage with the wider Course Rep community! Look out for Rep Drop-in Afternoons on the last Thursday of every month from 3-5pm- more information will be coming soon.

## **The Feedback Form**

It is important that as a Course Rep, you keep the Students' Union up to date with what is happening in your cohort. We love to hear what is going well in your cohort and also what issues you have been tackling in your role. When you tell us about your experiences, it helps us get a clear picture of what students are experiencing across courses and faculties, and this can help form our plans for the Zone and how your experiences can feed into our campaigns and projects.

A benefit to you as a Course Rep is that we use the filled in feedback forms to select who wins the prize and title of Course Rep of the Month. Keeping in touch with us improves the work of both the Union and the Course Rep system as a whole, as well as helping us to celebrate the successes of our Reps across the University!

To keep us informed, please make sure you fill in the online feedback form found on the Course Rep page of the Students' Union website.

## **Recognising our Reps**

We know how hard our Course Reps work and we think it is important that your achievements are celebrated throughout the year, both by us here at the Union and across the University.

### **Rep of the Month**

Based on the feedback we get through the online Rep reports form, every month, the Voice Zone vote on who will be crowned Course Rep of the Month. The winning Rep will be awarded a £30 Amazon voucher to recognise their hard work and their achievements will be recognised on the Students' Union website, and on social media. The winners of Rep of the Month will also be included in our termly Rep updates, and our yearly Report containing information about the achievements of each Rep of the Month.

### **HEAR**

The Higher Education Achievement Record is a national scheme which Surrey takes part in, which means that students receive a record of their extra-curricular activities upon graduating.

We know that your time at University isn't just about getting a great degree, but rather is also about all the other things you get involved in that help develop you as a person. Being a Course Rep is a fantastic achievement and also a great experience, so we have teamed up with the University to ensure that students can have their time as a Rep recorded on their HEAR.

In order to have your commitment as a Rep included on your HEAR, you just need to fulfil these simple criteria:

1. Be elected by the majority.
2. Attend Course Rep training.
3. Attend all Student Voice Forums. If you cannot attend, you will need to make sure you send apologies before the meeting.
4. Complete feedback at the end of the year for improvements to be made to the Course Rep programme.

## Rep Awards

Each year, we run our Course Rep Awards to recognise exceptional Reps. This is our way to give Reps recognition for all the hard work they put in over the course of the year. All Reps will be invited to apply for either bronze, silver or gold status.

### Bronze

- Attend Course Rep Training.
- Complete one online feedback form.
- Show attempts at communication with your cohort.
- Provide evidence of raising one student concern.
- Attend all Student Voice Forums and contribute at one.

### Silver

- Attend Course Rep Training.
- Complete more than one online feedback form and show engagement with The Students' Union.
- Show that you have successfully communicated with your cohort.
- Provide evidence that you have raised student concerns and discussed the problems with staff or at an SSLC.
- Attended all Student Voice Forums and contributed at more than one.

### Gold

- Attend Course Rep Training.
- Completed several feedback forms and engaged regularly with The Students' Union.
- Show that you have communicated effectively with your cohort and other Course Reps.
- Provide evidence that you have identified issues that matter to your cohort and worked with staff to find a solution.
- Attended all Student Voice Forums and contributed regularly.
- Provide evidence that you have attended all SSLCs and made a contribution.



## Rep of the Year Awards

In addition to the bronze, silver, and gold awards, the VP Voice and Voice Zone (in consultation with the relevant University staff) will be selecting our Course Reps of the Year in the following categories:

- Undergraduate Faculty Reps of the Year (1 in each Faculty)
- Postgraduate Taught Rep of the Year
- Postgraduate Researcher Rep of the Year

There is also an overall Course Rep of the Year awarded at the Students' Union Student Awards.



# Key Contacts

Your key contacts as a Rep alongside your lecturers will be your Head of Department or School, below is a space for you to fill in this information.

*My Head of School/Department*

**Name:** .....

**Email:** .....

In each of the three Faculties, there is an Executive Dean and an Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching (ADLT), Student Services Manager, and Rep contact. The faculty ADLTs are responsible for all student experience issues such as personal tutoring, course quality and content; the Student Services Manager oversees a team of administrators who ensure each course runs effectively; and the Rep contacts for each Faculty can answer general questions regarding your role from the University side.

## FASS

- Associate Dean (ADLT) | Anita Eves
- Student Services Manager | Helen Taylor
- Rep Contact | Laura Kitchen- [l.kitchen@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:l.kitchen@surrey.ac.uk)
- PGR | Karen Short – [k.short@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:k.short@surrey.ac.uk)

## FEPS

- Associate Dean (ADLT) | Rick Woods
- Student Services Manager | Lynette Lindsey-Clark
- Rep Contact | Bryony Turner- [b.c.turner@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:b.c.turner@surrey.ac.uk)
- PGR | Beatrice Spedicato- [b.spedicato@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:b.spedicato@surrey.ac.uk)

## FHMS

- Associate Dean (ADLT): Naomi Winstone
- Student Services Manager: Cassandra Wood
- Rep Contacts -*
- Hannah Beech (Nursing)- [h.beech@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:h.beech@surrey.ac.uk)
- Juliet Margerison (Psychology)- [j.margerison@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:j.margerison@surrey.ac.uk)
- David Bralsford (Biosciences) – [d.bralsford@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:d.bralsford@surrey.ac.uk)
- Jade Asbury (Vets)- [j.asbury@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:j.asbury@surrey.ac.uk)
- PGR: Alexia Smith- [a.m.smith@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.smith@surrey.ac.uk)

## What next?

Visit the Course Rep hub of the Union website for more information and helpful resources to get you started.

- Email [ussu.coursereps@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.coursereps@surrey.ac.uk) if you have any queries or need specific advice.
- Keep your eyes on your email inbox for more information about the first Student Voice Forum of the year!
- Get out there and start interacting with your cohort ahead of your first SSLCs/SEFs which will be coming up this term. This year, Course Reps have really made a difference across the University, so take a look at these Rep successes and get inspired!

### Key Dates

#### Student Voice Forums

This year's forums will be from 18:00 – 20:00 on the following dates:

**Tuesday 14th November**

**Tuesday 12th December**

**Tuesday 13th February**

**Tuesday 20th March**

**Tuesday 15th May**





## **COURSE REPS**

A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing.





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