Title Student Rep Election guide

Date 17/08/2020

This guide is for Staff Members of Bournemouth University that are responsible for, or involved in, the election process for Student Representatives at the start of their academic year. This guide highlights the changes to the Student Rep system for 20/21, including the change to online-only elections due to Covid-19. We will also be updating our Staff Toolkit on our website and will distribute this to all Programme Leaders before the start of the academic year. The changes described in this document are a result of the changes to Policy 5b (Student Engagement and Feedback) that has been updated after months of work between BU and SUBU. This is in the process of being published, and we'll be able to send this out as soon as it's ready.

Summary of key changes and expectations on academic staff:

Action	Responsibility	Page ref.
Election of Student Reps	Programme Leaders/Teams (or a relevant Staff Member)	3,5,6
Election of Department Reps	Heads/Deputy Heads of Department/Teams (or a relevant Staff Member)	3,4
Election of Faculty Reps	SUBU	4
Training of Student Reps (including Department and Faculty)	SUBU	7
Setting up Student Staff Forums	Programme Leaders (or a relevant Staff Member)	3
Collecting, Representing, and sharing feedback	Student Reps (with help from SUBU)	2,3
Supporting Student Reps in their role	Relevant Staff Members in the Programme/Department/Faculty, and SUBU	3

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- Key aspects of Student Reps at BU – Page 2
- Different types of Student Reps for 20/21 – Pages 2-4
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    - Your responsibility in electing them
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Key aspects of Student Reps at BU

Student Reps are a working partnership between SUBU and BU. Part of this partnership is reflected in the Student Voice Task and Finish Group, which oversees different types of Student Voice mechanisms, including the role of Student Reps and how BU works with them. This year we have worked hard to update Policy 5b (Student Engagement and Feedback policy and procedure) as a working group, and we are happy with the result of this, which will be published in due course.

It's important to us to ensure that all staff members at SUBU and BU understand the principle of what Student Reps do and don't do, and to have a common goal as an institution. In a nutshell, Student Reps are students elected to represent their cohorts in matters of a collective nature to their Programme Leaders/Heads or Deputy Heads of Department/Associate Deans of Student Experience. We do not expect or support Student Reps to represent matters of a personal or individual nature, and instead to refer students to SUBU Advice or BU Student Services.

Whenever Student Reps collect and discuss student feedback, we expect two things to happen:

- That Reps will regularly use SimOn (our online feedback tool)
- That Reps will represent the collective issues from SimOn when they attend Student Staff Forums

Some Student Reps may be asked by their Programme Leader to attend further meetings and/or 'catchups' but this is down to the discretion of each programme, with the agreement of the Student Rep.

Different types of Student Reps for 20/21

Student Reps – no changes for 2020/21

Student Reps essentially represent a programme and **elections for Student Reps are facilitated by academic staff within that programme**. Some BU Staff members that have worked at other institutions may recognise the word 'Course Rep' to describe this level of Student Rep, but we do not use this term, nor do we use 'Programme Rep'. Part of the reasoning behind this is that not all our Student Reps represent their course as a whole. The majority will represent their cohort in their year of study for their programme, but others may represent their whole year, or some may only represent students in a seminar group, or only for the duration of a unit. Instead of creating different layers for every different nuance, it's preferable to describe them all as 'Student Reps' because:

- They are all elected the same way
- They all must carry out the same initial training
- They must all use SimOn and represent their cohorts
- They all get the same level of support (with an understanding from the Student Rep team of their particular nuance, if we are aware of it)
- They are all eligible for the same reward and recognition scheme

The only thing that changes is our advice and work with Programme Leaders and Departments, so this is all behind the scenes. Student Reps' responsibilities are:

- To ensure they register with SUBU as soon as possible after they are elected (guidance will be in the staff toolkit, which will be updated before the start of term – we will send this out to you anyway in September). We cannot support Student Reps that have not registered.
- To ensure they complete the essential Student Rep training. We cannot support Student Reps that have not carried out the training.
- To regularly gather feedback about their programme and input this on SimOn.
- To represent this feedback at Student Staff Forums and any other meetings they may be invited to.
- To input outcomes to SUBU's Rep Success platform - this is being reimagined at the moment, but will be ready to go for the 2020/2021 academic year.
- To communicate with Department Reps and SUBU when necessary

Your role as a staff member is:

- To ensure students understand what a Student Rep is and what they would be expected to do

- To promote the role during induction/the first few weeks of term
- To organise the election of Student Reps as close as possible to the start of term (no later than week 4). Our recommended ratio of Student Reps is 1 Rep per 20 students. This however is not set in stone and is malleable depending on circumstances. If you have questions about this, please let us know.
- To organise Student Staff Forums and ensure Student Reps are invited
- To escalate issues to a higher committee if unable to be resolved at SSF or within its actions
- Overall, to support Student Reps in their role

Department Reps – some changes for 2020/2021

Department Reps have been rethought for the 2020/2021 academic year, and this is reflected in Policy 5b. Department Reps are students who have experience of being a Student Rep in a previous year and want to develop their leadership, communication and problem-solving skills further by representing a larger number of students. Elections for Department Reps are facilitated by academic staff within their department. As Department Reps, their responsibilities are:
- Ensure they complete the Department Rep training provided to them by SUBU
- Organise (with the help of SUBU) and attend Student Rep forums for their department, a platform for Student Reps to be able to discuss common issues in their department that can then be taken to Department Meetings.
- Attend Department meetings.
- Liaise with Faculty Reps regularly.

In previous years, the election of Department Reps had been mixed, which created difficult situations in terms of legitimacy of their positions, etc. This year the election of Department Reps is at the discretion of each Department. The reasoning behind this is that as Staff members, you will have a good idea of which current or previous Student Reps (that are still students at BU) would be fit for the role. This model has worked very well in every department that elected their own Department Reps in the 2019/2020 academic year. Your role as staff (this may only relate to Department Level staff) is to:
- Promote the role of Department Rep within previous Student Reps. SUBU can provide a list of Student Reps from the previous 2-3 academic years.
- Arrange the election of a maximum of 3 Department Reps as soon as possible. As new students (level 4, and level 7 students new to BU) cannot be Department Reps as they have not been a Student Rep before, this could be done close to the start of term. Only students in that Department should be able to vote for their preferred candidates, and we strongly encourage to carry out these elections in such a way that the results are demonstrable, as any allegations of foul play will be investigated.
- Communicate the results to SUBU as soon as possible
- Invite Department Reps to Department Team Meetings. There may be some elements of these meetings that are confidential and may not warrant a student being present. If this is the case, please make it clear to the Department Rep when they are required for and when they must leave. This will be covered in their training.

Faculty Reps

After a successful pilot for Faculty Reps in the 2019/2020 academic year, we are now expanding this role fully for 20/21.

Faculty Reps are students who have experience of being a Student Rep in a previous year and want to further develop their leadership, communication, problem-solving, organisation and public speaking skills further by representing all students in their faculty. Their responsibilities are:
- Ensure they attend Faculty Rep training provided to them by SUBU
- Organise (with the help of SUBU) and attend Faculty Rep forums for their faculty, attended primarily by Department Reps to discuss common issues in the whole faculty.

- Attend pre-meeting briefings with SUBU
- Attend FASEC and FAB
- Attend ASEC and AQSC
- Attend SUBU's Executive Committee

We suggest that Faculty Reps don't hold any other Representative roles, due to the increased workload. The election of Faculty Reps is done entirely by SUBU during our by-elections that happen within the first 6 weeks of term. The elections will be locked to each faculty, so for example, as student from Faculty of Health and Social Sciences won't be able to vote for a Faculty Rep for Faculty of Media and Communications. Your role as staff members it to:

- Promote the role of Faculty Rep to previous years' Reps. SUBU can provide a list of these.
- Promote the elections to Students in the Faculty. SUBU will send a reminder of this closer to the elections.
- Once the Faculty Reps are elected, Faculty level staff should ensure they are invited to the appropriate committees.

You do not have responsibilities to elect Faculty Reps. Any Faculty Rep not elected through SUBUs by-election will not be considered a Faculty Rep.

Platforms for online elections

This section explains our preferred methods for electing Student Reps in the 2020/2021 academic year. In previous years, some had been done physically in lesson, while others had been done online. Due to covid-19 and social-distancing measures, we encourage that all elections take place online for the coming academic year. There are a host of platforms that could be used for electing Reps, but these are our preferred suggestions.

Mentimeter

Mentimeter (mentimeter.com) is a free presentation online tool that has a host of different applications. We use it effectively for our training and we usually get very good feedback about its interactive features. There is a step-by-step guide that is being sent to you at the same time as this guide, but this is what you need to do if you are using Mentimeter (which we suggest you do!):

- After telling students about the role of Student Reps, gather a list of candidates. You could ask for students to email you if they are interested in being a Student Rep.
- Create an account on www.mentimeter.com and select the 'free' option. You don't need to pay for more functionality as the elections are very simple
- Create new presentation and select 'Multiple Choice' or 'Ranking' from the menu on the right, depending on how you want the elections to happen (we suggest multiple choice, to keep it simple)
- Switch to the 'content' tab on the menu on the right, and enter the names of the candidates
- Switch to the 'customize' tab on the menu on the right, and click on 'hide results'. This is so that you're the only person that can see the results live.
- On the top right of the screen there is a button that says 'configure'. Click on this and and select 'audience pace'. This means that students can just go straight to the vote. In this tab there is also a button that says 'let the audience answer several times per device'. We recommend you leave this unticked otherwise one student could vote for the same person several times.
- On the top of the presentation you will notice a message that says 'Go to www.menti.com and use the code XX XX XX'. With a free account, these codes expire in two days, but students can still access the same presentation and vote after, it just changes the code at the top. This is useful if students miss the session in which you are electing students, and it gives everyone a chance to vote.
- Students will have to go to www.menti.com and input the code at the top of the presentation to vote.
- Use this presentation at the end of a lecture or seminar, or put the share the presentation on brightspace or any other online learning environment that you use. Doing the elections at the end of a lecture is preferable, but not mandatory.

- After the election is complete, go back to the home page of mentimeter. You will see your presentation there, and on the right of it there will be three dots. Click on them and then select 'export data'. This will show you the results of the election.
- Let students know the results, and then email the successful Reps their welcome letter which you'll be able to find on the Staff Toolkit.

The process of creating and configuring the presentation shouldn't take longer than 10 minutes, and the interactive functionality it presents mimics a physical election, as well as the results being easily shareable with students and SUBU. This is why we suggest mentimeter be used as much as possible, but there are other options available. We will be happy to help with this if you have questions.

Survey Software

What we mean by 'Survey Software' is online tools such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Typeform, etc. These are useful when trying to get many students to vote for their preferred candidate. Most of these have common features, but we suggest you do the following:

- After telling students about the role of Student Reps, gather a list of candidates. You could ask for students to email you if they are interested in being a Student Rep.
- Input the names into the tool. The preferred method for this here would be to ensure that students can only select one candidate. However, you may want students to select a number of their preferred candidates, or to rank them in preference. This is down to your discretion as a Programme Leader, but our suggestion is to keep it simple and give one student one vote.
- It's best to not record names or ask them to input their email address, as the election should be anonymous. This should be taken in good faith. However, if you have more votes recorded than you have students, then you have a problem, so please get in contact with us.
- After the election period is over, announce the winner(s) and give them their 'Successful Rep Letter' (which will be in the Staff Toolkit).

Email

We really don't recommend this for larger cohorts as you may be flooded with a string of emails during the elections period. This method is already used by the Doctoral College and other distanced learning programmes, and could be useful for smaller cohorts, but we really don't recommend this for programmes with more than 20 students. But here's what we would normally advise:

- Email the whole cohort about the election of Student Reps, you may want to send them the welcome video (which will be available in the staff toolkit). Ask them to reply to the email if they would like to put themselves forward to be a Rep with 100 words as to why.
- Collate each candidate's 100 words and send them out to the cohort. Ask the group to the reply to the email with the name of their preferred candidate. Alternatively, you can add voting buttons to the email. The person with the highest number of votes will be the Student Rep.
- Email the successful candidate the 'Successful Rep letter'.
- Email the rest of the cohort with the name of their new Rep.

Student Rep training

This year all training will take place online as we are unable to offer secure physical training for the amount of Reps that we get each year. This shouldn't be an issue as we are adapting our training to ensure Reps get the same amount of information and are able to gain some practical knowledge before they start using SimOn and representing students' views. One thing we are changing is making specific training for returning Reps. This is based on feedback received last year, and we agree that going through the whole training again when in theory you should know what you're doing, is unnecessary.

What we do have to stress is that the Essential Rep Training is mandatory and we can't accept Reps that don't complete it. This will be time-bound from when they register with us, but we are still to decide how long a period would be acceptable – this will be updated for the Staff Toolkit. All we really need you to do for training is to help us ensure all elected Reps complete it. We will be sending regular updates about Student Rep numbers per department, which will include how many Reps have been completed the training. We are also planning to offer a programme of optional training for Student Reps throughout the year which will enable them to gain extra skills and knowledge that will help them in their role.

Department Reps and Faculty Reps will have their own separate training sessions.

Frequently asked questions

This section covers the most asked questions during Student Rep elections in the 2019/2020 academic year, as well as some extra information that could be useful for the coming academic year.

- How many Reps am I supposed to elect?
  - The recommended ratio is 1 Rep per 20 students, but this depends entirely on the needs of the Programme. We can talk about particular scenarios with you if you get in contact with us.
- We don't elect Reps per programme, can I elect them by seminar/unit/etc
  - We don't have any issues with this, we just ask that you tell us this is what you are doing so we can keep track. Most programmes that do it this way are very good at keeping us updated.
- I'm from a partner college, how do I elect Reps?
  - For the majority of partner colleges, the process is the same. However, some partner colleges have their own system and their own staff to deal with their Reps. We offer support, but we're not responsible for their Reps. Please check with your institution if you're unsure.
- No one wanted to be a Rep, so we're not going to have one
  - If you find yourself in this situation, please let us know. More often than not, when this situation has arisen in the past, we have managed to work together to elect Reps. There is no particular reason why a Programme shouldn't have at least one Rep.
- My Reps aren't up to the task. Can I get rid of them?
  - There is a process for Reps to step down and we get a handful of Reps voluntarily stepping down because of personal issues. Usually, if a Rep isn't doing what they're supposed to be doing, this can be resolved by us talking to them. There will be guidance in the staff toolkit that explains what to do in these situations.
- Where can my Reps get their purple hoodie?
  - Unfortunately, we will not be giving out hoodies this coming academic year because of safety precautions and the logistics involved.

This is the end of this guide. We hope it has been clear and informative and we're looking forward to seeing a new host of Reps joining us in October. Further guidance will be released in September, but if you have any questions for now, please get in contact by emailing gbaldwin@bournemouth.ac.uk or Reps@bournemouth.ac.uk.