

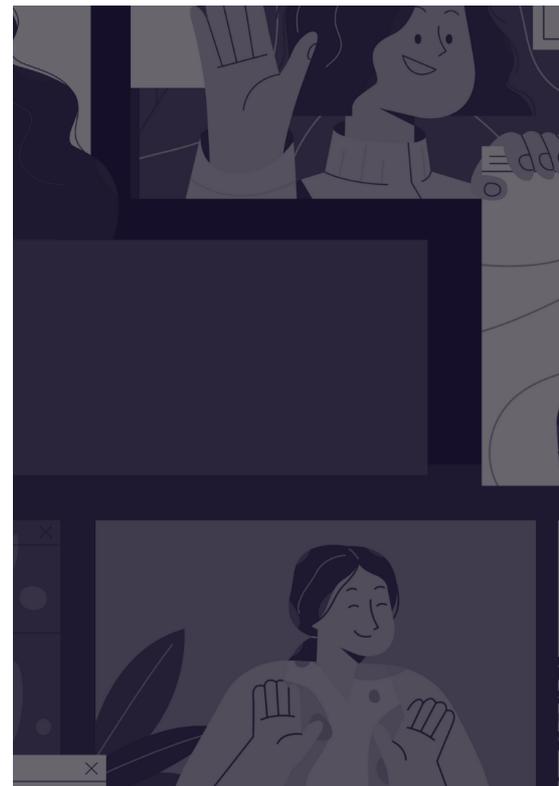


# Academic Rep Handbook

Everything you need to know to be an  
Academic Representative.



by the Students' Union





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# Introduction

**Hey friend!**  
**My name is Tolu,**

Firstly, thank you so much for volunteering to become an Academic Rep and for taking the time to read this Handbook.

If you're wondering who I am, I studied at Buckingham just like you, I got both my undergrad and postgrad here. I have been a member of several sports clubs and societies, and after running in the Students' Union elections in 2022 I now have the privilege of being your first ever Student Voice Officer!

As your Student Voice Officer, one of my main goals for the year is to formalise and define the Academic Representative system, (hence the creation of this very handbook!) So please take the time to read it and feel free to say hi whenever you see me around campus, I'm looking forward to it!



# 01.

## Jargon Buster

You should always be able to ask "What does XYZ mean?", but here is a quick introduction to some of the more technical language and acronyms you may hear thrown around in meetings.

- **SU:** Students' Union
- **Minutes:** Formal notes taken at a meeting.
- **School:** At Buckingham this refers to the department that delivers a variety of courses under the same area of study, E.g., the School of Business delivers the *course* of Business Studies.
- **Faculty:** At Buckingham this refers to the broader academic department your School is a part of, E.g., the School of Business sits within FBHS.
- **HE:** Higher Education (this refers to studying at university level and beyond)
- **TEF:** Teaching Excellent Framework (a way of ranking universities)
- **NSS:** National Student Survey (completed by final year students annually)

02.

# Jargon Buster

Every course at Buckingham is in one of these four faculties, do you know which one your course is a part of?

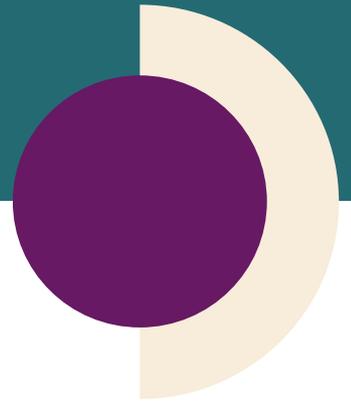
- **FCLP:** Faculty of Computing, Law and Psychology
- **FBHS:** Faculty of Business, Humanities and Social Sciences
- **FMHS:** Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
- **The Faculty of Education** (as one of our largest courses Education sits within a Faculty of its own)

University feedback meetings you may be invited to:

- **SALT:** School Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee.
- **UALTC:** University Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee.
- **ALT:** Assessment, Learning and Teaching Committee
- **SSLC:** Student Staff Liaison Committee

Whilst they may have different titles, your role within them will remain the same, to provide student feedback!

# The Role



## What am I supposed to do?

An Academic Representative's role is to represent your fellow students by gathering their views, attending feedback meetings and then telling everyone in your cohort what happened in that meeting.

You are a vital link between staff and students, you have the responsibility of making sure your lecturers and course leaders know what the students want and use your skills, knowledge and resources to make it happen.

## What are my core responsibilities?

- Complete your online training which can be found in RepHub.
- Gather feedback from students on your course so that you are well informed.
- Attend university feedback meetings.
- Attend Student Representative Council (this is different from a feedback meeting as it hosted by the SU) to keep us in the loop on all the fantastic work you're doing!



# Get the word out

You can collect feedback in many different ways, choose whichever works best for you and your cohort:



- Organise a Teams Groupchat, this is often a good way to get instant feedback and students can send you their issues as they arise.
- Host a coffee morning, forum or drop-in session. This should be at a time where as many students as possible can attend (why not host it after a core lecture?)
- Create a short survey to capture student feedback. Websites like Microsoft Forms or Survey Monkey are free and easy to use.
- **Most students won't proactively seek you out to offer feedback, but they are much more likely to answer direct questions.** (See the next page for some sample questions if you're struggling!)
- When you're waiting for your lecture to begin, start up a conversation with your peers.
- A quick announcement at the start of a lecture to let students know how they can contact you or speak to you at the end of the lecture will go a long way.

# Gathering Feedback

If you're not sure what kinds of questions to ask, here are a few example areas you could focus on:

## Teaching

- Are staff good at explaining things?
- Is the subject interesting?
- Has the course challenged you?

## Learning Resources

- Have you had any problems accessing resources (in the library or online)?
- What resources do you find the most useful?

## Learning Opportunities

Have you had opportunities to:

- Apply what you have learnt?
- Discuss different topics?
- Explore ideas in depth?

## Placements

- Were you given information prior to your placement to prepare you?
- Were you given support and supervision on your placement?

## Organisation & Management

- Do you feel informed about timetabling and any other changes to your course?
- Do you think it is organised?

## Assessments & Feedback

- Do you feel prepared for assessments?
- Is feedback clear and useful?

## Academic Support

- On a scale from 1-10 how satisfied are you with the advice and guidance you are given?
- Can you contact staff easily?

## Student Voice

- Have you been asked for feedback on your course?
- Do you know of any examples where student feedback has been acted on?

## Learning Community

- Have you worked with other students?
- Do you feel part of a community of staff and students?

## General Questions

- On a scale from 1-10 how satisfied are you with your course?
- If you could change one thing what would it be?

## Learning Spaces

- Do you have enough access to labs?
- Are your timetabled rooms fit for your needs?
- Can you access your teaching staff outside of timetabled sessions?

# Feedback Meetings

## Top Tip:

Remember you don't need to wait for a meeting if you need to discuss something - the sooner you are in contact with staff, the sooner it can be addressed.



## How do feedback meetings work?

You'll be sent an agenda (and any other relevant papers) beforehand, usually around a week in advance by email or calendar invitations in Outlook. You should also take this as a last chance reminder to gather feedback!

Feedback meetings will be chaired by university staff, this could be anyone from your lecturers to administrators.

Once you're in the meeting, refer to the feedback you have collected, speak up and share these with the group! It might be tough to give negative feedback, but your course team still want to hear it to be able to improve.

You should do your best to be constructive, meetings should be focussed on solutions, not just listing what students don't like. It's also really important to highlight what is going well - what do students like? Are there any shout-outs to be given to staff or students to recognise their work?

Once the meeting is over, remember to report back and share what was discussed - students will want to know that you are advocating for their interests.

# Our Code of Conduct



We can't thank you enough for putting yourselves forward to help improve the academic experience at the University of Buckingham.

By volunteering your time to represent your peers, you are stepping up to be one of our student leaders. We have lots of different types of student leaders from Academic Reps through to Elected Officers, but there are some key values and behaviours we'd like every one of our student leaders to embody when acting within their roles, so we drafted up this code of conduct as an agreement for us to be able to hold each other to account.

## **Expectations of student leaders:**

- We expect all of our representatives to do their best and engage as fully as you can with your role. This means attending meetings, and engaging with and responding to contact from the Union.
- We expect all our representatives to be just that, representative. This means presenting THE student voice, A student voice. This might mean sharing experiences of others that are different or even contrary to your own in order to give a balanced perspective.
- We expect all of our representatives to represent students in a way that is inclusive of everyone's voice. That means the proactive consideration of those people who are traditionally less present in decision making, or may be from under-represented backgrounds. Every voice is valid, and so must be considered in our decisions.

It is important to understand that not doing your best to engage with your role; or by not acting in a fair, responsible and positive way - as outlined in the above - may lead you to being removed from your role.



# Please direct all queries to:

## **Key Contacts:**

*Tolu Osamolu, SU Vice President - Student Voice*  
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