2017/18 edition

Academic
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Undergraduate Academic Representatives

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Contents

Tell us what you think of this training publication

Introduction

Nick Burstow

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Congratulations on your election result and welcome to the Academic Representation Network of Imperial College Union!

You are now part of a 500-strong team of student representatives, and speak on behalf of hundreds of your student peers - representing them to Departmental and College staff, to Imperial College Union, and to the wider world.

We are grateful to each and every one of you for volunteering and dedicating your time to improving the academic standards and social community within your department. Without your collective work in assuring and enhancing the student experience, Imperial would not be able to offer an education worthy

of the its standing as a world-class institution. Everyone at Imperial, including the President and Provost, recognises the importance of the Academic Representation Network in improving and maintaining the academic standing of Imperial College London.

In return for your efforts, we provide you with training to make sure you are as effective and knowledgeable about your role as possible, as well as supporting you throughout the year. Being an Academic Representative is a fantastic opportunity for personal and professional development, as well as allowing you to truly make an impact on the student experience.

This training manual is the primary resource to prepare you for the year ahead. It is complemented by in-person training sessions in the first weeks of the academic term, as well as a conference later on in the year, online resources, and the continued availability of staff and fellow student volunteers for advice and guidance.

We hope you have an amazing time this year, and make the most of all the opportunities that Imperial offers you. If you ever have a question or need some advice, feel free to drop by and see me, or send me an email.

Nick Burstow
Deputy President (Education), 2017/18

The Academic Representation Network

The Academic Representation Network is a body of over 500 student representatives (Reps), across all Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes and research groups that brings together student volunteers and departmental staff in order to improve teaching, research and supervision at Imperial.

Think back to when you first applied to Imperial College London. Many of you will have looked up university league tables, such as the Guardian University Guide or the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. In each of these tables, College does very well - usually placed in the top ten in both UK and global rankings. These rankings reflect the high quality of teaching and research at Imperial, and this quality is one of College's most precious assets.

Imperial's quality is also important on a national level, as one of the UK's foremost scientific institutions. It is regularly audited by Government agencies, external examiners, funding bodies and its own internal assurance processes - but these top-down quality checks can be as infrequent as once every five years. They are only part of the picture when it comes to maintaining College's academic standing.

The Academic Rep Network is one of the ways College maintains the quality of its teaching, by offering access to a decentralised, distributed network of trained student volunteers "on the ground" - the Academic Representatives. The Academic Rep Network allows for quick, student-led feedback on every lecture slide, every assignment, every handout, and every lab demonstration - which number in the thousands across College.

By collecting your thoughts and comments, and then raising these issues with relevant staff, Academic Reps are responsible for identifying and addressing issues affecting your education. They also work to proactively improve both your learning experience, and that of future students, by coming up with new ideas and sharing best practices from different parts of College, helping the Union's agenda.

With the introduction of new courses, changes in technology and teaching methods, and ever increasing expectations of students, courses must adapt over time. Acting on students' feedback will ensure that Imperial's courses are the best they can be, and of the high quality that we expect from a world-leading institution.

Roles, Responsibilities and Boundaries

Your Responsibilities

- Make sure the students you represent know who you are and how they can contact you
- Proactively seek out and identify students' views on matters relating to their academic student experience The Academic Representation Network
- Represent the students on your programme and take their feedback and ideas to your departments and faculties How to be an effective Academic Representative
- Raise student feedback on both a formal and informal basis
- Attend Student-Staff committee meetings (or send apologies) and other informal meetings with academic staff and provide student feedback, opinion and ideas at these meetings
- Update the students you represent on outcomes of feedback raised and any responses you have received from staff
- Attend Academic Rep Induction
- Communicate with the Deputy President (Education) and the Education and Welfare team
- Refer students with individual issues to appropriate sources of help when necessary
- Work with fellow Academic Reps, elected officers and staff on ideas and campaigns that will improve the student experience
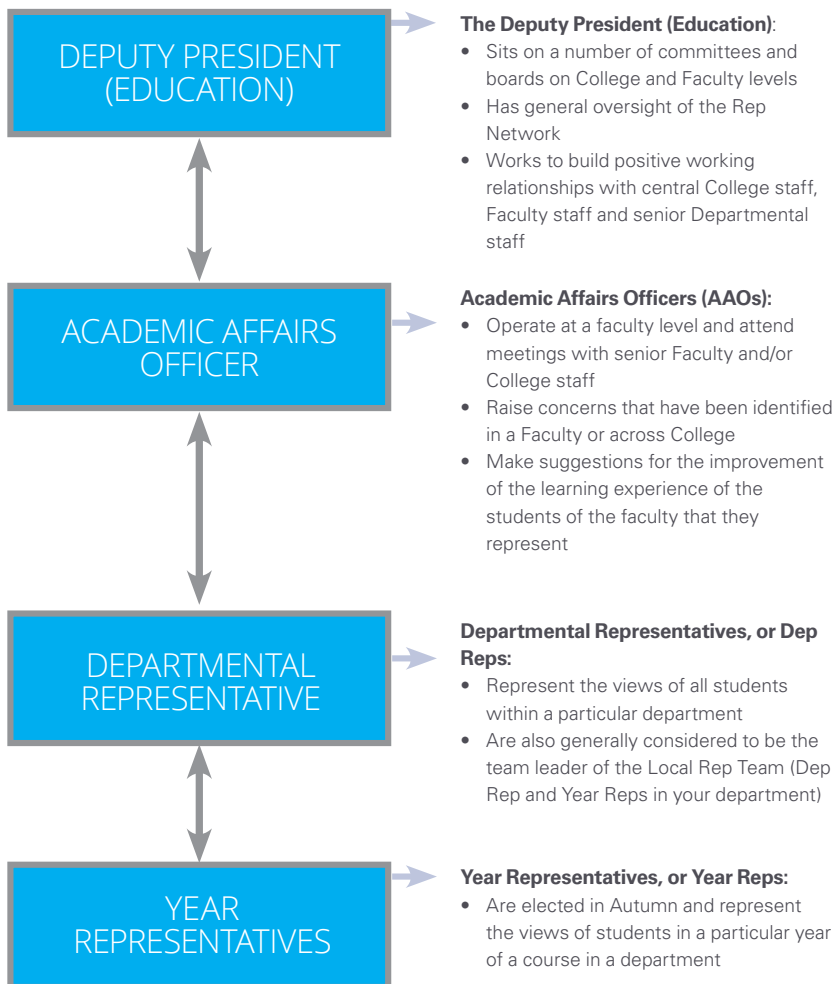
Your Boundaries

- Student disciplinary issues: It is not an Academic Rep's role to represent students on disciplinary matters. Students who have concerns in this area should be referred to Imperial College Union's Advice Centre
- Allegations of harassment or bullying: Students who allege that they have been bullied or harassed should be referred to the Advice Centre
- Complaints: Students who wish to make a formal complaint should be referred to the complaints policy and may wish to seek independent advice from the Advice Centre
- Personal problems: If a student has personal problems you should refer them to the Advice Centre as they are trained to give specialist advice and have expertise in this area
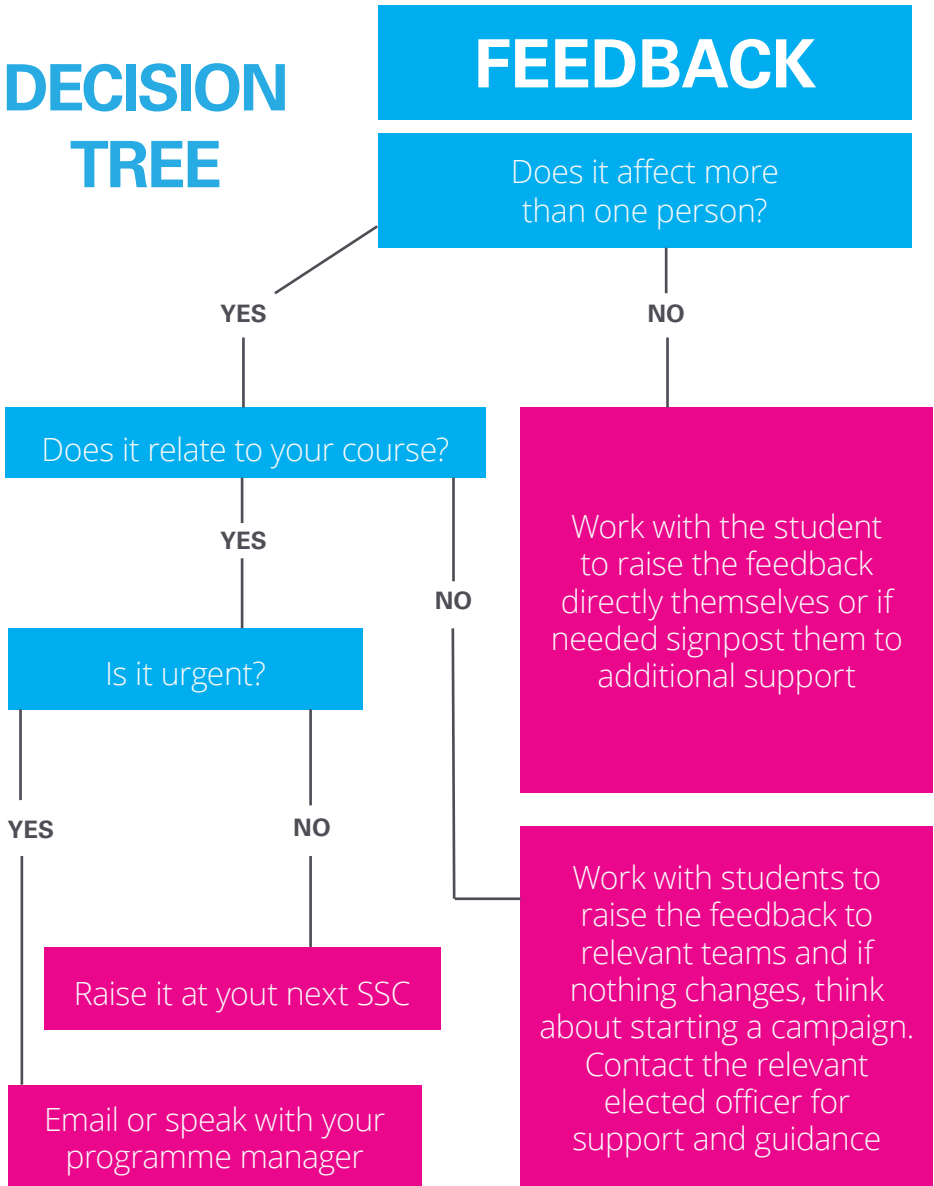
Contact details are available online via the Rep A to Z on the Union website.

Imperial College Union operates an Academic Representation Network, consisting of over 500 elected Academic Representatives across all Undergraduate and Postgraduate programs and groups, led by the Deputy President (Education). These Reps are responsible for identifying issues affecting students' learning experience. They work with staff across the College to come up with student-centric solutions, resulting in positive changes for the students that they represent. The way the network operates is shown below.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (EDUCATION)

The Deputy President (Education):
- Sits on a number of committees and boards on College and Faculty levels
- Has general oversight of the Rep Network
- Works to build positive working relationships with central College staff, Faculty staff and senior Departmental staff

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Academic Affairs Officers (AAOs):
- Operate at a faculty level and attend meetings with senior Faculty and/or College staff
- Raise concerns that have been identified in a Faculty or across College
- Make suggestions for the improvement of the learning experience of the students of the faculty that they represent

DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE

Departmental Representatives, or Dep Reps:
- Represent the views of all students within a particular department
- Are also generally considered to be the team leader of the Local Rep Team (Dep Rep and Year Reps in your department)

YEAR REPRESENTATIVES

Year Representatives, or Year Reps:
- Are elected in Autumn and represent the views of students in a particular year of a course in a department

Use this Decision Tree to identify what to do with feedback.

DECISION TREE

FEEDBACK

Does it affect more than one person?

YES

NO

Does it relate to your course?

YES

NO

Is it urgent?

Work with the student to raise the feedback directly themselves or if needed signpost them to additional support

YES

NO

Raise it at yout next SSC

Email or speak with your programme manager

Work with students to raise the feedback to relevant teams and if nothing changes, think about starting a campaign. Contact the relevant elected officer for support and guidance

How to be an Academic Representative

You are responsible for making sure the student voice is heard within your department.

The basic principles of being an effective Academic Representative are:

RECEIVE

RESEARCH

REPRESENT

RECORD

REPORT
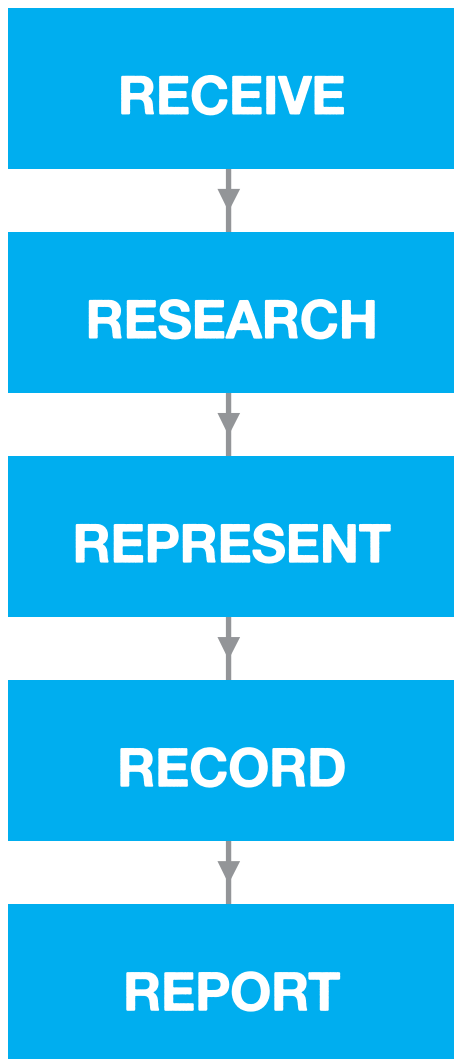
RECEIVE

The first step of being an effective Rep is to be well-known by the students who rely on you. Once you are elected, make yourself known by using emails, lecture shout outs, posters in communal spaces, and make clear to students that you are always available by email and are approachable in person.

Quick Wins:

- When elected, ask a lecturer for two minutes at the start or end of a lecture to introduce yourself
- Ask a Departmental Administrator to have an explanation of your role added to the next email being sent out
- Put your role and as your email signature – it will appear at the bottom of every email you send

RESEARCH

REPRESENT

It is your responsibility to find out as much as you can about any issue raised to you. How many students does it affect? Has there been a recent change that caused it? What possible solutions are there? Find out as much as you can to prepare you for raising the issue in person with a member of staff.

You represent your entire constituency – whether that's a year group, a department, or an entire faculty – and not just your personal opinion. Take care to verify that you are accurately conveying the views of the entire group, and not your own take on the situation.

Quick Wins:

▲ Use survey apps and mailing lists to talk to students you represent about these issues
▲ The Deputy President (Education) and Union staff are available for advice and support, and have experience of College and departmental policies. Contact them at any time – their contact details are at the end of this manual
▲ Talk to other Reps in your department and faculty – are they finding the similar issues? How have they researched more about the issue at Imperial?

Quick Wins:

▲ Emphasise your research and consultation when in discussions with departmental staff
▲ Let your constituency know what you are planning to say before each staff-student committee, so they can give you feedback beforehand
▲ Take care not to give the impression you are only representing yourself – avoid phrases like "I think…" or "In my opinion…"

RECORD

REPORT

It is important that the work of our Academic Representatives is recorded and shared across the whole network. Record all of your goals and your ongoing tasks in the eActivities SMART Goal tracker which will allow your colleagues to see your progress and enable you to track your work from any computer or device.

If you've made a change, shout about it. Tell your peers through email or in person, and report back to your staff-student committee. This is called "closing the feedback loop", and it's an important aspect of your role.

Quick Wins:

▲ Keep your Departmental Representative and Constituent Union Academic Affairs Officer up to speed with major issues

▲ Schedule in time to meet with your Rep teams and Union staff to talk about the issues that have been raised to you by your constituency

▲ Keep your role-related notes together, whether that's on paper or in electronic form. This will aid the handover process to your successor later on in the year

Quick Wins:

▲ Let the students who you have consulted know the outcome of any work you have done

▲ Send a termly update email to your constituency – keep it short, focus on the changes you have made, and remind the students that you are available

▲ Let the Union's Representation Coordinator know of any major successes – we will highlight big wins in our all-Rep emails, and the most active Reps may receive a Union Award at the end of the year

Events Calendar

Use this space below to plan your year as an Academic Rep. Add in your SSC Dates, important committee meetings. We've added in some key Union events that you'll need to know.

October 2017

November 2017
- Rep Mingle Saturday 18
- Student Academic Choice Awards (SACAs) Nominations open Monday 27

December 2017

January 2018

February 2018
- Rep Conference Wednesday 14

March 2018
- The Leadership Elections

April 2018

May 2018
- Student Academic Choice Awards (SACAs)

June 2018
- Handover

Support and Staff Contact

While our Academic Representatives are empowered to suggest and make changes to academic and welfare provision in their department, they are not intended to support individual students through situations such as academic appeals or mental health problems. College and the Union offer a number of professional, trained services to support students through personal difficulties.

The Advice Centre
advice@imperial.ac.uk
020 7594 8067, extension 48067
imperialcollegeunion.org/advice

Contact for: Academic, housing, money and consumer rights advice

Faculty Senior Tutors
TBC

Contact for: Advice on complaints and appeals regarding College departments and/or staff

Counselling Service
counselling@imperial.ac.uk
020 7594 9637
imperial.ac.uk/counselling

Contact for: Mental health advice and support

Disabilities Advisory Service
disabilities@imperial.ac.uk
020 7594 9755
imperial.ac.uk/disabilities

Contact for: Physical and/or mental health disabilities; advice on rights and available support, including bursaries and equipment.

International Student Support
international@imperial.ac.uk
020 7594 8040
imperial.ac.uk/international

Contact for: Visa and integration advice

Health Centre
020 7594 9375
imperialcollegehealthcentre.co.uk

Contact for: Non-emergency medical advice

In case of emergency, call College Security on extension 44444 / 020 7594 4444; they will contact emergency services if necessary.

If someone is a risk to others or to themselves, call College Security immediately.

Useful Contacts

Deputy President (Education)
dpeducation@imperial.ac.uk
020 7594 8060

The Deputy President (Education) is a full-time student representative, elected by students, who works to improve the student voice for all students at Imperial College.

Contact DPE about: College staff, SSCs, meeting etiquette, general concerns about the role or individuals

Fran Hyatt
Education & Welfare Manager
f.hyatt@imperial.ac.uk
02075945091

Fran supports the Deputy President (Education) and Deputy President (Welfare), and is responsible for supporting both Academic and Wellbeing Representation Networks, Liberation Officers and campaigning activity.

Contact Fran about: running large-scale campaigns, working with Liberation Officers, training needs

Nayab Cheema
Representation Coordinator
n.cheema@imperial.ac.uk
02075941597

Nayab works with Fran to support the Deputy President (Education), the Academic Representation Network, and our response documents.

Contact Nayab about: issues with College staff, meeting etiquette, training needs, general concerns about the role or individuals

Angela Urasala
Advice Centre Manager
advice@imperial.ac.uk
02075948067

Angela manages and is an advisor at the Union's Advice Centre, offering professional, impartial and free advice to students on a range of issues – from academic problems to housing, money and consumer rights issues.

Contact Angela about: academic appeal and withdrawal procedures; referring a student with personal problems for professional supportbursaries and equipment.

Checklist

Checklist

Do you know who the following people are, and how to contact them? All of their details are available via the Rep A to Z on the Union website.
- Deputy President (Education)
- Representation Coordinator
- All other Reps in your department
- Head of Department
- Director of Undergraduate Studies
- Senior Tutor
- Undergraduate Administrator

Have you introduced yourself to relevant people within your department?

Have you familiarised yourself with eActivities and the Union website?

Do you know which committees you are expected to attend?

Have you put meeting dates and deadlines into your calendar?