



The Rep Handbook
2013/14



COURSE



REPS

Contents

Welcome	4
Your role as a Course Rep	6
Benefits of being a Course Rep	7
Who will I work with?	8
What issues might come up?	9
How do I make the most of a Board of Studies?	10
How do I know what my course mates think?	11
The feedback loop	12
Jargon Buster	13
Useful contacts	14

Welcome

Firstly a massive congratulations on being elected as a Course Rep! It's a fantastic opportunity to take control of your education, gain experience as the voice of others and be a co-creator of the academic impact here at the University of Northampton.

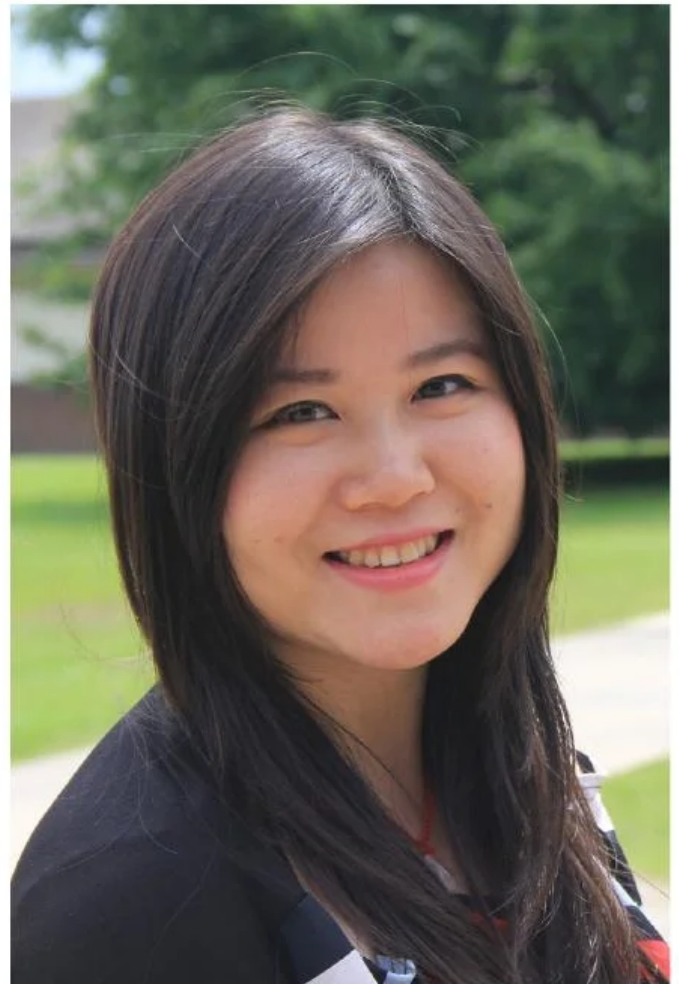
You play a vital role in ensuring that the University is one of partnership ensuring students' views are being heard and that changes are moulded around the student experience.

This year we're developing the Course Rep system to ensure communication is stronger between the Course Reps and the Students' Union through increased training opportunities. I want to ensure that every Course Rep feels supported in their role. I want to increase the recognition we give all of our Reps and really shout about how much we appreciate the hard work you put in, from promoting Course Rep wins to putting on specialist events to further develop skills.

If at any point you have any questions then just get in touch:

Haviour.Chen@northampton.ac.uk
[@Pres_HaviourC](https://www.instagram.com/Pres_HaviourC)

Good luck!



Haviour Chen
Students' Union President 2013/14

On behalf of the University I would like to take this opportunity to both congratulate and thank you for being a Course Representative for your programme of study.

The University recognises the importance of this vital role, as it enables us to listen to the voice of the student body. We need feedback through our Student Representatives in order to ensure the best possible student experience.

Your role is critical and I encourage you to engage fully and get the most out of this opportunity.



Jane Bunce
Director of Student and Academic Services

Your role as a Course Rep

The role of a Course Rep has various responsibilities to the students on your course, the academic staff and the Students' Union. You will be expected to:

- Attend the initial training session, and take advantage of the various training events scheduled throughout the year, particularly the Course Rep Conference.
- Find out what your fellow students have an opinion on - circulate emails, do lecture shout outs, put up a poster or make a Facebook group - and most importantly, talk to people! If your subject has a society, ask the President if they can help you out.
- Absorb the issues that students have raised and deliver them coherently and constructively at the Board Of studies or with the relevant member of staff... even if you don't agree!
- Attend 3 Board of Studies meetings and a minimum of 2 School Student Experience Committee meetings.
- Inform the secretary of anything you want on the agenda prior to the meeting and offer your apologies if you cannot attend.
- Communicate - not only with students, but with other Course Reps too.
- Give feedback to students on any issues they have asked you to raise.

Remember you have been democratically elected by the students on your course and therefore are responsible for ensuring their voice is being heard and that their issues are raised!

Benefits of being a Course Rep

Your efforts will not go unrecognised; the prestige of being on the Board of Studies will not go unnoticed! The hard work you put into speaking to students, attending meetings and feeding back will be recognised by the students you represent, the academics within the School and the Students' Union. Here are some of the key benefits you will experience as a Course Rep:

- Enhanced employability: your CV will benefit from the communication, negotiation, time management, problem solving and meeting skills gained.
- Increased confidence and experience of communicating with a broad range of people.
- Responsibility of being the key vehicle to the student voice being heard by the university.
- A FREE Hoody when attending our Course Rep Conference
- A signed certificate from the Union and the University to recognise your hard work.
- A chance of being nominated in the University's Volunteering Awards.
- The opportunity to develop your employability skills through continuous training through the year.
- The opportunity to meet new people, whether on your course, other Course Reps or at national Course Rep events

Who will I work with?

The biggest and most obvious group of people you will work with are the students on your course, gathering opinions about what's working well and areas that need improvement. However your role expands to the following groups:

Other Course Reps

Depending on the size of your course there may be more than one of you, it is important to keep in contact with the other Course Reps so that you can discuss items before a meeting and see if you have been hearing similar things. This way you are ensuring that all students' views are being considered. It is also worth being in contact with Course Reps from other courses so that you can gauge how wide an issue something is. At the end of the booklet there is a section where you can store Course Rep contact details.

The Students' Union

Your Students' Union is run by students, for students! It is a representative body for all students that seeks to ensure that the student experience at Northampton is the best it possibly can be. The Union is student focused at all times, and is a democratic structure that seeks to represent that of its members.

The University

You should ensure that you have regular meetings with the academic who runs your course and ensure you know the academic structure of your course. At times you will need to address an academic outside of the formal meeting structure if the issue is time sensitive, which will mean you will need to know which academics run which modules for your course year. You will also work closely with the administrators on your course when it comes to putting items on the agenda for a Board of Studies or to gain the email addresses of students on your course.

The Student Voice Coordinator is here to ensure that your views are represented sufficiently both within the University and nationally. They are the main link between you as Course Reps and the Students' Union and their contact details can be found on page 14.

What issues might come up?

In your role the type of issues that you are informed about will be relating to the academic experience of the students on your course, which might include issues around:

- Assessment & feedback
- Personal tutor support
- Technology issues
- Anonymous marking
- Teaching methods
- Module Registration
- Timetabling issues

In your role you'll come across a range of issues, which may affect only one student or your entire course, meaning a large part of your role is deciding which issues you should help with. Sometimes students may have incredibly emotional or personal issues that they turn to you with. No matter how prepared you may feel to deal with such issues - DON'T!

It is not in the best interests of yourself or the student for you to do this. As a Course Rep you don't have to take work on single-handed. There's a huge network of University and Students' Union Officers and Staff to help you deal with issues or take cases on for you. So make sure you use them!

Issues that are not within your remit include:

- Personal, medical or emotional problems
- Financial issues
- Accommodation problems
- Visa / Immigration questions or problems
- Society or Sports queries

For anything that is not related to the course or for further support use the useful contacts on page 14.

How do I make the most of a Board of Studies?

There are only three Board of Studies meetings a year so it is important that you make the most of them and use the opportunity to feed in the students' views on your course. Typically a Board of Studies will start with the minutes of the last meeting and a report of those actions; followed by the agenda items, any other business and finally the chair will dismiss the group by stating the time of the next meeting. You should ensure you follow these steps for every meeting:

Before

Ensure that before your Board of Studies you consult with the students on your course! Find what the students are enjoying, what's working well as well as what they feel needs to be improved and prepare them for the committee. Read the agenda once it is circulated, and look over the minutes of the last meeting to see if anything still needs addressing and read any other papers that may have been circulated so that you are prepared.

During

Make sure that you arrive on time to the meeting or if you will be delayed make sure you send your apologies. During the Board of Studies meeting you will get the

opportunity to present the feedback you have gained from your fellow students on your course. The staff on the committee looks forward to hearing this feedback as it is the key way they can make adjustments and improvements, so make sure you are honest and detailed. However ensure that you present a good argument that is considerate of others and constructive. Listen to others, and wait your turn to speak. Try and encourage others to give their opinions. Never be afraid to ask if you don't understand something!

Discuss solutions to any issues/problems that are presented by your fellow Course Reps.

After

Tell your course what happened, especially to students who raised issues or who you represented on their behalf. Go through the meeting minutes and complete any actions assigned to you before the next meeting. Find out what course mates think about the decisions that were made and if this resolves the problem.

Then do it all again!

How do I know what my course mates think?

You are not telepathic; you can't know the issues your peers are facing unless you ask them! A key part of the role is gauging student opinion. If a student approaches you with an issue you need to see whether it is felt by the wider student body.

Before you go to a meeting as a Course Rep, you need to gather as wide a range of opinions as you can. Remember, you are there to represent the views of the whole group whether or not you agree with them all. There are many ways of communicating with the students you are representing but never be afraid to try something new. And get creative!

Email

To email your course mates, ask your School Administrator if they can forward on your messages, or even better, if you can have a mailing list. You could even set up a Course Rep email e.g. mathscourserep@northampton.ac.uk

Facebook

An easy way to communicate is a Facebook group where they can post opinions and comments on news from your department. However not all course mates will communicate this way!

Forums

Think about hosting a get together where students on your course can get to know each other and be introduced to you as their rep.

Lecture shout outs

Speaking at the beginning or end of a lecture asking for feedback. This can be a little daunting if a huge group, however it is a way of ensuring everyone is aware of your role.

NILE

Most departments use NILE to post Course info and most include a forum where students can post their concerns. You can post as a Course Rep and make yourself known on the forum.

Notice board

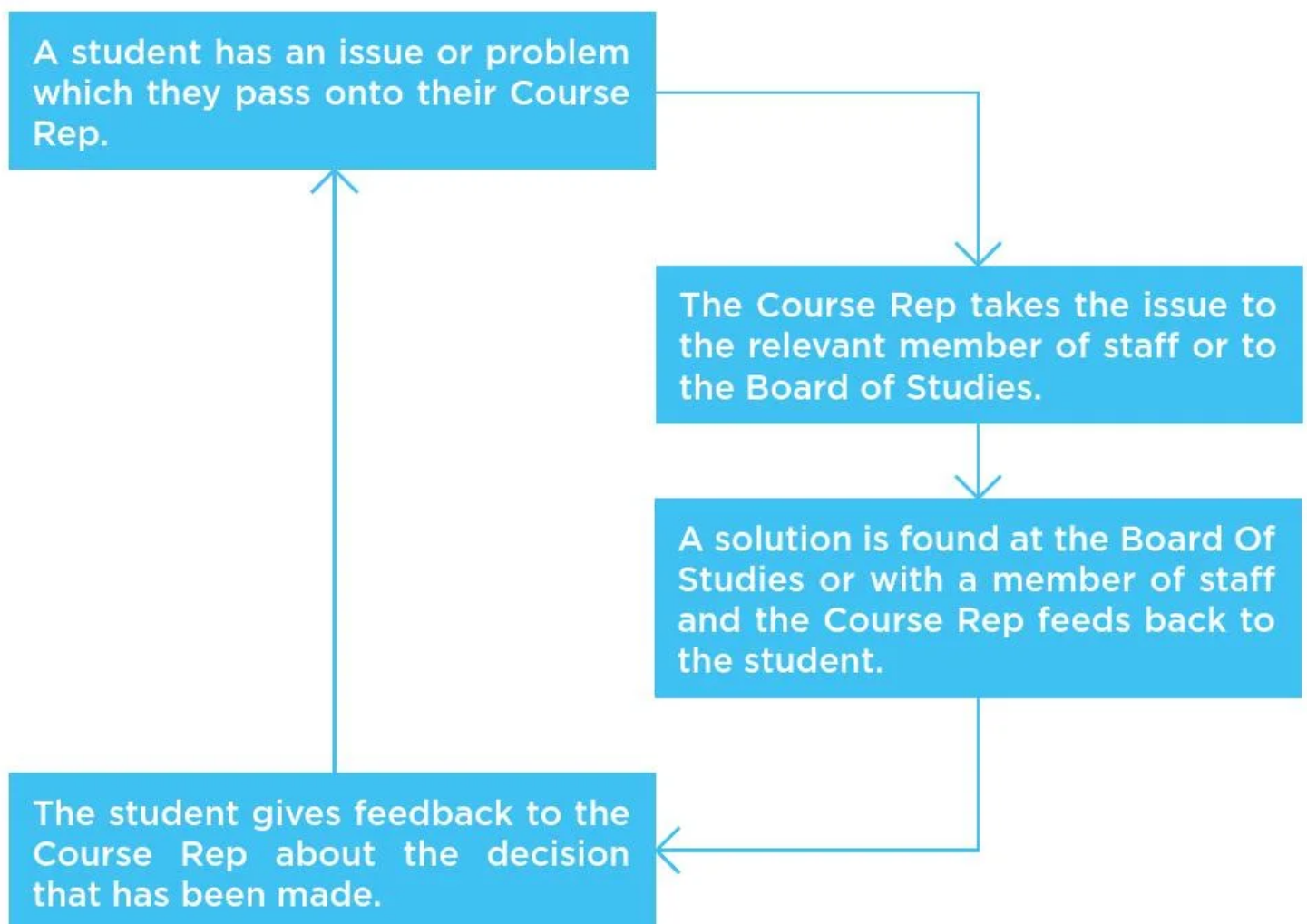
All departments should have a notice board, easily visible and accessible to all students, displaying information about SSECs. Use this board to tell your course mates who you are and how they can contact you.

Surveys

If you want opinion on a specific topic, surveys are free and easy to set up at [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). You can email the link around to your course mates.

The feedback loop

Feedback is the most important aspect of being a Course Rep, and should occur in a loop that feeds back in to your fellow students. It's important to let the other students on your course know that you have passed on their concerns or feedback and to let them know the outcome of any meetings you attend. If you do not do this then students are likely to become disengaged and will not be aware that their views are being represented and will not express issues in the future. Even if the outcome is not as you expect or if you are told that you will have to wait for the answer give them an update on your progress.



Jargon Buster

To help translate some of those acronyms the University uses and other tricky terms:

Agenda	The running order of the meeting that tells you what is going to be discussed.
AIR	Advancement and International Relations
ASSIST	Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services Team
BOS	Boards of Studies: One per programme. Meets three times a year.
CFAP	Centre for Achievement and Performance
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FECs	Further Education Colleges
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
ISB	International Student Barometer
NBS	Northampton Business School
PEC	National Union of Students
PGRs	National Student Survey
PGTs	Personal Extenuating Circumstances
PRES	Postgraduate Research Students
PTES	Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAP	Quality and Academic Practise
SEC	Student Experience Committee
Senate	The highest academic University meeting
SSEC	School Student Experience Committee
SU	Students' Union
UG	Undergraduates

Useful contacts

The people in the know who can help you get in the know:

	Title	Email	Phone
Students' Union	Student Voice Coordinator	Rachael.Thornton@northampton.ac.uk	01604 89 2551
	President	Haviour.Chen@northampton.ac.uk	01604 89 2551
	Student Policy Advisor	Wei.Zhao@northampton.ac.uk	01604 89 2551
Student Services	Accommodation services	residentiallife@northampton.ac.uk	0774 071 6594
	Counselling	studentservices@northampton.ac.uk	Avenue Campus 01604 893162 Park Campus 01604 892833
	Disability or Dyslexia	disability@northampton.ac.uk	01604 893430 or 01604 892390
	Money Matters	money@northampton.ac.uk	01604 892833
	International student support	visateam@northampton.ac.uk	01604 893475
	Multi- Faith Chaplaincy	chaplaincy@northampton.ac.uk	01604 892488

Ensure you keep the details of the important staff members in your school and other Course Reps you meet here:

Title	Email	Phone

For lots of other information and resources visit:

- The Course Rep module on NILE
- www.northamptonunion.com/CourseReps
- studentservices@northampton.ac.uk



Tel: 01604 892818 / Fax: 01604 719454

Boughton Green Road / Northampton / NN2 7AL