

University of Oxford Staff Guide to Student Representation

Written and produced by
Oxford University Student Union



Version 1.5

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Introduction

Oxford University Student Union (OUSU) works in partnership with the University to help develop, support and enhance student representation across Oxford. We offer training and support to every course representative who sits on their JCC/GJCC or local equivalent.

Department and faculty staff are crucial in ensuring student representation works effectively, so OUSU has created this guide for staff to sit alongside the University's *Policy and Guidance on student engagement (P&G)* <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/policiesandguidance/pandgstudentengageandrep/> and complement its training and support for students.

This guide is written to support staff by providing examples of best practice from within the University and from other institutions and Student Unions. It is designed to help staff reflect on how they can work together with their course representatives to make student representation in their department or faculty as effective as it can be.

This guide covers four key areas:

1. The responsibilities of
 - 1.1. Student Reps
 - 1.2. Department Staff
 - 1.3. OUSU (Oxford University Student Union)
2. Ways to select student reps.
3. How to run JCC/GJCC (or equivalent) meetings
4. Development and support of student reps

We are always looking for case studies and example of best practice from across the University. If you have some good practice you would like to share with us, or you would like advice on how to enhance student representation in your department or faculty, or have any questions about this guide please get in touch by emailing ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk.

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Terminology

ARO	Academic Representative Officer. Staff member based at OUSU. Responsible for supporting and training student reps.
Course Representatives	Umbrella term for JCC/GJCC Reps, Student Reps, Course Reps, Year Reps, Cohort Reps, Subject Reps etc.
Div Reps	Students elected at OUSU Council to represent Undergrads and Postgrads at Divisional Board.
EPS	Education Policy Support.
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee.
JCF	Joint Consultative Forum. Divisional meeting of Course Reps to discuss divisional wide issues or points.
GJCC	Graduate Joint Consultative Committee.
OUSU	Oxford University Student Union.

Responsibilities

P+G Student Representation and Engagement 4.11-4.15

Sections 4.11-4.15 of the P+G Student Representation and Engagement cover the roles and responsibilities of the course representative, department/faculty staff and OUSU. Please see Appendix 3 for the full descriptions.

Selecting your Reps

Student Representation P+G 4.5-4.7

We encourage all departments/faculties to elect their course representatives democratically. We believe that students should choose who represents them on committees and electing them is the best way to do it, however we do recognise that this isn't always possible.

Selecting your reps should take place in three stages:

- **Promotion of position**
- **Selection process**
- **Transfer of details**

Promotion of Position

There is no best method for promoting the positions available to students. However, we have put together a few things you might want to consider:

- ✓ **Be clear** about the position, what it's for and what you expect students to do. Please see Appendix 1 of this Document.
- ✓ **Consider a few email reminders** leading up to when you need them to be selected.
- ✓ **Advertise** the position on the course Sharepoint or Weblearn page.
- ✓ **Ask a 2nd/3rd year** who has done it before to speak to the cohort.
- ✓ **Ask a student** to facilitate the election (possibly the student chair/deputy chair) of the JCC/GJCC committee.
- ✓ **Emphasize the skills** they may pick up through being on the committee.
- ✓ **Emphasize the opportunity** to make positive change for people on the course.
- ✓ To alleviate any concerns students have about taking on more responsibility on-top of their studies, emphasis the role isn't a big commitment and there is training available.
- ✓ Ask an **OUSU Rep** to come and give a quick talk about being a course rep.

Selecting Reps

Method	
Asking for volunteers	<p>This is commonly used if departments are struggling to find people to fit the role. If you are selecting your reps in this manner please ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.) You are clear about the role, the position, what is the committee is for and how many hours of their time it will take.

	<p>2.) Try to encourage a number of people to do it. Research into engagement has shown that people who volunteer for a position rather than take it through being approached, will engage more.</p> <p>3.) If through emailing/asking for volunteers you get more people than there are positions available you can either 1.) increase committee membership or 2.) follow steps below.</p>
<p>Election via 'show of hands'</p>	<p>This method of selection is a quick and easy. If departments choose this method they should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Email/tell students that they will be selecting their rep during that class/lecture/seminar. Include: Description of the role, the position, what the committee is for and how many hours of their time it will take. 2.) Ask students who are interested to tell the class why they are interested in being the student reps. 3.) Send out the 'candidates' while you take a tally of the hands. For sake of ease, most votes wins.
<p>Election via 'paper in a hat'</p>	<p>As above but cast with paper ballots in a 'hat'. You will need to count ballots either then or outside of the class.</p> <p>This method is preferable to the above because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Students don't have to show who they voted for. 2.) You don't have to tell students how many votes they receive to save any embarrassment. 3.) It is a more legitimate method.
<p>Election online</p>	<p>OUSU uses software called Mi-Voice to help Colleges run their JCR/MCR elections. If you would like to run your Rep Election online we can support you to do so:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Contact ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk notifying OUSU you would like to run an election online. 2.) Provide the names of the candidates and a list of the names of the students on the course. 3.) OUSU then adds these details to the software and each person on that course will be provided a login code which they can use to login to the system and vote for their rep. 4.) OUSU will email over the results to the course leader/course administrator.

Transfer of details

Once you have selected your rep, please pass on the details of your reps to OUSU by emailing ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk. We will need the following information as soon as possible:

Name:

Email address:

Course:

Year of study:

UG/PGT/PGR:

Department:

Division:

College:

Are they a returning rep:

Alternatively you can fill out the online form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13rWgL4xsB-c0pr89t7k2gOuHbChP4j7aDCtUF4usZYE/viewform>

We hold the details of the reps confidentially on our database and email them throughout MT and HT in relation to training available, briefings on key academic issues and networking opportunities with the reps.

Running JCC/GJCC (or equivalent) Meetings

Student Representation P+G 4.20-4.27

We recognize that getting students to engage students with committees can sometimes be a challenge.

We've split this section up into three areas that might help you support your JCC/GJCC to run effectively:

- 1.) Things you can do in advance
- 2.) How to set the agenda
- 3.) What to do during the meeting

While these points are focused around joint consultative committees, many of them apply to situations where a single student is sitting on a ~~higher-level~~ department/faculty committee.

Things you can do in advance

- ✓ Advertise meeting dates as **early as possible**.
- ✓ Try to ensure that the timings of the meetings are accessible as possible for students. Think about the **location and time** of the meeting. For example, how far do students need to come? Is it at a time that works for them best around lunch or lab hours?
- ✓ If your department has the budget, **provide a lunch** as is it a good incentive for people to attend.
- ✓ Offer a pre-meeting to any of the student reps if you believe this is useful to clarify any agenda points.

How to set the agenda

The P+G Student Representation and Engagement 4.26-4.27 sets out the terms of reference for JCC/GJCC or equivalents. However, committees may cover additional business if they choose to.

When thinking about an agenda, try and find a good balance between items you put on the agenda and items that students bring forward.

Try to help and work with students to encourage them to canvas their course-mates for discussion points, or give them a prompt for discussion points:

- ✓ Students will always engage the best in committees where they feel they can **contribute to the discussion** or if the discussion point has some relevance to their studies. It's worth thinking hard about the agenda. If you have a

student as the Chair or Vice-Chair why not think about meeting them before hand to talk about the agenda and what would work/could be good to discuss.

- ✓ Email reps for **agenda items well in advance**. Not all students answer emails quickly (or at all) so if you have the chance, speak to them face-to-face.
- ✓ Ask/remind the reps to **speak to their students** about agenda items or things to discuss.

To help you think about agenda items we've put together a few ideas. Please note, we do not suggest that you go through **ALL** of these, but plan what is most appropriate for **Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity Term**.

Agenda Item	About
How was Induction/freshers?	A really good agenda item to discuss with new students and for them to gather information from their peers. Did they get their timetable okay? How have they found the first couple of weeks? Are there recurring issues? If so, what?
Survey results for your department	There are two sets of data you might find useful: The National Student Survey and the Student Barometer. Both surveys have a wealth of information about your department, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Assessment and Feedback 2.) Organisation 3.) Teaching Standards 4.) Student Support <p>Good discussion points could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What areas did we do well at and why? ✓ What areas did we do poorly on? ✓ What areas can we improve on and how?
End of Term/Module Feedback Forms	If your department runs end of module/term/series evaluation forms, looking through the results is a good way to engage reps in a 'current' discussion.
Feedback on the previous terms/weeks leading to meeting	You may want to pencil in an open slot for students to give general feedback from the previous term. Some ideas to focus on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Timetable layout 2.) Workload 3.) Field trips 4.) Lab work 5.) Assessments/Formally assessed work 6.) Building/learning space
Department	If your department is considering changing an element

<p>Changes/Alternations (please also see the Student Consultation Benchmark)</p>	<p>of the course or is proposing changing a practice that will affect students, consulting your JCC/GJCC is a good place to start. A good place to start is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How will the change affect current students? ✓ What is the rationale/driver behind this change? ✓ What are the timescales involved? ✓ Does that change impact on what the student initially signed up for on the course?
<p>Issues to be sent to the CLiPS or other committee</p>	<p>If your department has a Committee for Library Provision and Strategy (CLiPS) committee or a higher education/UG/PG Studies board, are there any items you can defer to them?</p>
<p>Selection of rep to represent department at Divisional Joint Forum</p>	<p>You might want to consider choosing/electing one of your department reps to go to the Divisional Joint Consultative Forum (where these are in place). These are to discuss larger divisional points and it's useful to ensure your department's views are heard. You should contact your Divisional Academic Registrar for details of when these take place.</p>
<p>Confidential Section</p>	<p>You may want to consider having a section to allow students to provide confidential feedback about the course. Normally this format would be without any other members of staff. It allows students to feedback specific issues without it being minuted in a secure space.</p>
<p>Points to research for next time</p>	<p>During the meeting items might have arisen that need additional consultation/research. You want to specifically pencil in something you both agree to research/consult with the student reps before the next meeting.</p>
<p>Building/Health and Safety</p>	<p>You may want to consider having an agenda item for students to comment on anything in relation to your department/faculty building. This could a very broad topic, or something very specific.</p> <p>Additionally, this is a good place to discuss any H+S issues or concerns, especially if your department has Lab place.</p>
<p>Socials/Events</p>	<p>If your department has budgets for student reps to run their own events or socials this could be a good discussion point to allow reps to organise things for themselves.</p>

What to do during the meeting

As before, there is no perfect way to run a JCC/GJCC meeting. However, we've put together a few suggestions you might want to consider:

- ✓ **The Chair.** We recommend that a **student rep** chairs the meeting, or at least is the Vice/Co Chair. This gives students a feeling of importance and worth within the meeting and can help set the agenda. *P+G Student Representation and Engagement 4.22*
- ✓ **Introductions.** Make sure everyone knows who everyone else is (both students and staff). Explain any acronyms or terminology and assume from the beginning not everyone will be confident if they don't understand.
- ✓ **Action Points.** If this is the first meeting of the academic year, it's worth going through some points the committee considered last year. Otherwise, make sure you feedback to students on outstanding points or consultation that has been done since you previously met.
- ✓ **Seating.** Try not to create an 'us' and 'them' atmosphere in the room with the staff and students sitting apart. This might sound like a small point, but creating a positive and open environment is key to making the committee work well.
- ✓ **Transparency and openness.** Be open and transparent about the powers of the committee. It's a good idea to set the boundaries of what can and cannot be changed in house during the academic year. For example, for financial or governance reasons like changing the examination regulations. This openness will help to manage the expectations.
- ✓ **Explanation.** We recognise that not all student ideas or feedback will be able to be acted upon. Make sure you give a clear and fair reason as to why the suggestion cannot happen. Try not to close the idea down immediately, otherwise students will assume it's not worth bringing any idea forward in the future.
- ✓ **Ensure that all agenda items are heard.** Meetings are normally 1 or 1.5 hours long. Make sure that you give each item a fair hearing. If students have put things on the agenda and it's only squeezed in 5 minutes at the end, it won't help to re-enforce them putting things on in the future. You can always arrange to meeting with reps outside of the meeting for coffee etc to discuss them further.

Development and support of course representatives

Selecting and having a course representative in post should be the first stage in having an effective course rep system. Both OUSU and the University have committed to supporting and developing the reps throughout the year through a combination of training and better tools.

This section covers ways in which both departments and OUSU can support course reps:

- 1.) OUSU training
- 2.) Department support
- 3.) Tools for course reps

OUSU Training

OUSU has a range of sessions that are available for reps to attend. We would encourage you to ensure that as many of your reps are trained as possible.

OUSU's training runs from 1st Week MT until 7th week. We recognize that courses recruit reps at different times of the year and therefore hold additional sessions in HT. We can also run additional sessions on demand.

For 2015/16 we are expanding the training opportunities for reps to sign up for:

Open Sessions:

<u>Session</u>	<u>Details</u>
Introduction to being a Course Rep	<p>This session is designed for 1st time reps who have just been selected. Reps who are returning but haven't had training are also welcome to come along.</p> <p>The 1.5 hour session will cover:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.) Your role as a rep.2.) Committees and how they work.3.) Consultation methods4.) From Consultation to Argument5.) Change in a University context
Returners: Developing your skills	<p>This session is for reps who have already been in position.</p>

	<p>The 1 hour session is designed to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Look at and evaluate what they have done over the last 12 months. 2.) Identify positives and negatives and begin to plan for the future. 3.) Plan a research/consultation in more detail.
Consultation Methods	<p>This session is specifically designed to look at the variety of consultation methods available to reps in their role.</p> <p>The 1 hour session will look at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) Data already available in NSS and the Student Barometer. 2.) Different types of student consultation. 3.) The steps involved in planning a consultation. 4.) How to turn the results into a paper or proposal.
Chair Training (Provided by a external trainer, limited spaces available)	<p>This session is for students who are interested in developing their skills in chairing meetings.</p>

How do students sign up?

Once OUSU has the details of the student reps, they will be emailed a full schedule of training available and can sign up online:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/o/ousu-course-rep-training-8220673703>

The sessions are free to attend and wherever possible we provide tea, coffee and water (and occasionally biscuits).

Department/Faculty Specific Training:

A number of departments and faculties have asked OUSU to run department specific training for their reps. These sessions are held to fit in around lectures and to enable reps across multiple years to come together and be trained in one cohort.

Your department/faculty might want to consider running specific training for its students in order to include:

- Department specific material (if you want your students to focus on a few specific things).
- Ensure your reps are training all together.
- Enable department staff to attend if they want.
- Make sessions available at more convenient time and location for your students (ie over a lunch break) in your department building.

To book a department specific training email ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk with the following information:

- 1.) How many reps would you like trained?
- 2.) Are they first time reps or returners?
- 3.) Are they are UG/PGT/PGR?
- 4.) Details of any department specific material to include.

We hope that this training is of some interest to your reps. This training is part of a larger network of support we offer reps and believe it has value to them.

In 2014/15 OUSU trained 150+ course reps across the University. From our evaluation forms:

	% respondents agreed
Q1 As a result of the training I feel I better understand my role as a Academic Rep	89%
Q2 I found the material used in training helpful to my position	87%

Department/faculty support

We recognise that students are very busy and the more help and support you can give increases the likelihood of them being effective in their role as course representatives. Your department/faculty can help reps find better and more effective ways to consult with other students on their course.

Additionally you could help student reps run particular projects or events to better support and enhance your system.

We've come up with a few ideas that you might want to consider:

Course/Department Mailing List	Student reps need a method of communicating with their students. If you can give them access to a mailing this will help them to ask for agenda items, consultations or gathering feedback. If this isn't possible, could you send something on their behalf to the cohort?
Helping to facilitate an Academic Feedback Session	An academic feedback session is often run by reps to allow students to comment on a range of things or a very specific issue to their rep. These can take a variety of forms, from a one hour meeting to a coffee morning or drop-in session over a break. You could help your reps do this by booking a room or providing some refreshments to help encourage students to come along.
Specific consultation time	If your department/faculty has larger lectures/seminars/classes try allowing the rep to have 5/10 minutes at the start or end to collect feedback from peers. This is a quick and easy way for the rep to get discussion points and for them to be known in their cohort.
Informal meeting with reps	We recognize that issues happen outside of the JCC/GJCC meetings. It might be a good idea for the lead academic staff to meet informally with the student rep on a semi-regular basis for coffee and a catch up. This allows for a more informal setting to discuss issues and for a more regular flow of information between you and the reps.
Help them run a change project	To help give reps a particular focus you might want to support them in a particular project. This could be to run a conference or change a way the course is delivered. See Appendix 2 for a planning sheet which goes into further detail.

Tools Available to Course Reps

There are a number of tools that are available to reps to help them in their role. When your reps are selected, is it worth going through with them what resources are available for them to use:

- **Student Barometer:** This is public information which can you find online via the University website (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/feedback>). There is a huge range of data online covering Learning, Living, Arrival and Open Days.
- **National Student Survey:** a Survey completed by finalists. OUSU can provide reps with specific course-by-course breakdown by emailing ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk. Results are made available publicly via Unistats (<https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>).
- **Course Rep Sharepoint Site:** When new reps are added to OUSU's database they will be added to the Sharepoint site specifically for Course Reps. The site is designed as a place to share ideas, material and briefing sheets. <https://sharepoint.nexus.ox.ac.uk/sites/AcademicRepresentation/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- **OUSU Student Consultation Benchmark.** This is a guide for reps to use when their department is considering a change or alteration to their course. You can find this guide online at ([enter location](#)).
- **Divisional Board Reps.** There is an Undergrad and Postgrad representative for each division that sits on the Divisional Board in order to represent students. Course reps are more than welcome to get in touch with them at any point to ask wider questions about divisional issues.

<u>Division</u>	<u>UG</u>	<u>PG</u>
Humanities	Ug-humanities@ousu.ox.ac.uk	PG-Humanities@ousu.ox.ac.uk
MPLS	Ug-mpls@ousu.ox.ac.uk	PG-mpls@ousu.ox.ac.uk
Social Sciences	Ug-socsci@ousu.ox.ac.uk	PG-socsci@ousu.ox.ac.uk
MSD	Ug-Medsci@ousu.ox.ac.uk	Pg-medsci@ousu.ox.ac.uk

OUSU Contacts:

If you would like to enquire about support for your own JCC/GJCC, would like more specific details about anything in this guide, or to enquire about training available please get in contact with OUSU:

Matt Tennant *Academic Representation Officer* ARO@ousu.ox.ac.uk

OUSU *Vice-President Access & Academic Affairs* vpaccaff@ousu.ox.ac.uk
OUSU *Vice-President Graduates* vpgrad@ousu.ox.ac.uk

Appendix 1: Course Rep Role Description

Can be modified as per department/faculty requirements

This document explains what we expect from you as a rep, shows you the time commitment it is likely to involve and outlines what we will do to support you as a Representative. It's important that you enjoy being a rep. It's a crucial role within your department and can create some positive change for people on your course.

Your responsibilities as a Course Representative

We expect you to...

- 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 experience.
- Run consultations with your students over the academic year and feed these results back to the committee.
- Attend the meetings (or send apologies) and present student issues or provide student opinion on issues.
- Raise student issues on both a formal and informal basis.
- Update the students you represent on the outcome of any issues raised
- Attend OUSU Rep Training.
- Communicate issues and resolutions between your fellow students, staff members on your course and the committee chair.
- Refer students with individual issues to appropriate sources of help, where necessary (for example OUSU's Advice Service).
- Identify areas of good practice at Oxford and share this with your programme
- Follow up and report back on actions assigned to you at the various meetings you will attend.

Time Commitment

Training – 1.5 hours

JCC/GJCC– Approximately 3-5 hours (1-1.5 hours per meeting, 3 per academic year)

General 'Rep Duties' (see responsibilities) –on average 30 mins per teaching week

What you can expect from your department and OUSU to support you in your responsibilities?

From OUSU

- Train you to represent students effectively.
- Facilitate elections of reps to University.

- Maintain a Student Rep database to enable students and staff to contact representatives.
- Maintain a Sharepoint for Student Rep information, tools and resources.
- Invite to the OUSU Teaching Awards (held in TT).
- Help you develop skills distinct from your academic qualification that will enhance your employability.

Your Department/Faculty will:

- Hold a minimum of 3 Joint Consultative Committees per academic year.
- Help you with signposting to support services.
- Work with University colleagues to ensure your voice is heard.
- Work with you to ensure that the outcomes of feedback from students are reported back to them.
- Liaise with University colleagues to ensure that additional opportunities such as focus groups/ involvement in quality assurance enhancement boards are available to you.

Appendix 2: Change Project Plan

Change Project Plan

Department/Faculty/School:

Course Rep Details:

Head of Department/Faculty/School:

What are the key issues you want to address?:

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Methodology: How are you going to ask students? What consultation methods?

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Timeline

Date	Activity	Responsibility
DD/MM/YY		
DD/MM/YY		
DD/MM/YY		

Resource: What are you going to need?

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Appendix 3: Responsibilities

P+G Student Representation and Engagement 4.11-4.15

The Student Rep will:

- Regularly seek out the views and opinions of the students they represent on all matters concerning their student experience;
- Bring course-level issues and concerns raised by the students they represent to meetings of the JCC/GJCC or equivalent;
- Attend and contribute, as far as possible, to any other meetings with staff to which they are invited;
- Ensure that they are prepared for meetings by reading papers and consulting with the students they represent on the issues to be discussed;
- Feedback to the students they represent on the outcomes of meetings;
- Liaise with other course representatives to form a picture of the views of the department student body; and
- Attend training for course representatives provided by OUSU.

One of the recurring comments that OUSU receives is that student reps are unsure of what they signed up to do. This is not a definitive list of what you should expect reps to do, however when describing and promoting the position, we believe these are a good place to start.

To help with your promotion of the rep system, we have produced a **Role Description** which you can use/adapt. See **Appendix 1**.

The Department will:

- Promote the positions of reps to the student body.
- Ensure that reps are selected in a fair and open process.
- **Identify a lead administrative contact** who is responsible for effective administration of the student representation system including the following responsibilities:
 - Acting as first point of contact for student representatives for all administrative matters, for example, meeting arrangements, communicating with the student body etc.;
 - Administration of JCC/GJCC meetings including the preparation and distribution of papers and publication of minutes; and
 - Communicating with OUSU regarding the names and contact details of course representatives.
- **Identify a lead academic or academics** responsible for the running of the JCC/GJCC.

- They will be the first point of contact with course representatives regarding any issues or concerns they wish to raise through the JCC/GJCC or other mechanisms as appropriate.
- They will act as first point of contact for students and staff regarding the operation of the student representation system including any complaints regarding course representatives.
- They will be responsible for the chairing, co-chairing or supporting course representatives in setting the agenda for the JCC/GJCC, as appropriate.

As above, this is not the definitive list of what departments need to be doing to support their JCC/GJCCs. What is vital is that each department has a **administrative lead** who will be in charge of the email lists, setting the meeting date and time and an **academic lead** who will normally be the chair or lead department/ faculty officer on the relevant committees.

OUSU will:

- Provide support and assistance for individual departments in relation to student representation.
- Hold and maintain the central database for all student reps.
- Provide training sessions for student reps (**see develop and support section**).
- Provide links with contact details for their Divisional Representatives.
- Encourage reps to attend Divisional Joint Consultative Forums (or equivalents).
- Provide reps with research tools such as Survey Monkey, NSS and Student Barometer Data.
- Support reps with projects or campaigns.