

An introduction to the Student Rep system at DMU

The Student Rep (SR) system gives students the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience in general and gives staff the chance to listen and respond to the student perspective. The system is vital to the institution for quality assurance and enhancement purposes and invaluable to the Student Reps themselves in terms of personal development.

We need your support to provide us with feedback and also to ensure that students are fully informed about the system, that elections take place promptly and that registration forms are returned so that students can be registered with the Students' Union to ensure that they receive relevant information and support throughout the year.

STUDENT REP SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Students' Union provide training for all Student Reps, the dates are:

**Tuesday 3rd November (5—7), Thursday 5th November (12—2), Monday 9th November (5—7),
Wednesday 11th November (12—2), Friday 13th November (12—2)**

All training will take place in the Social Area, the Students' Union.

You are welcome to attend one of these sessions. Our training sessions have proved popular and useful over the past years - we trained over 200 Reps last year and with your assistance we hope that we can maintain, if not improve, this number.

Training covers information on where students fit into the Student Rep system, the importance of the Student Reps and contact details for sources of support. We would strongly urge you to encourage as many Reps as possible to attend the training. We will also arrange 'mop-up' sessions for students who may have missed out or for late starting courses. We can only do this in response to demand, so please inform your Faculty Student Rep Co-ordinators or the Students' Union directly if you have a number of Reps who need to attend after these dates.

One area that we struggle with is returning Student Reps, ideally they would have received the training in previous years but our hope is that they are effective and functioning Reps so any encouragement in asking them to attend a specific informal discussion would be greatly appreciated. There is a specific training session for returning Reps, this is on Tuesday 17th November from 5—7, although it is not expected to last that long.

Within the Students' Union there is an Officer with specific responsibility for Education, they are part of the annually elected Executive Committee which runs the Students' Union. This year's Deputy President Education is Calvin Dass. Calvin will be available to Reps throughout the year as a source of advice and support. The Union also has staff expertise, for example the Welfare and Education Centre, at the disposal of Reps. A big part of Calvin's role is to be the voice of students in academic matters and she represents students' views and concerns on many University committees such as Academic Board.

ENCOURAGING AN EFFECTIVE STUDENT REP SYSTEM

We see Student Reps as part of the formal and informal communication links between staff and students, which exists to maintain and enhance the quality of the academic programme and the learning environment. This is a two-way process, the Student Reps expected to represent the students to the staff, but also the staff to the students. We believe that it is important for them to try and represent the ideas of the course as a whole.

Because the Student Rep system is important to both the University and the Students' Union in that it plays a vital role in the search for quality enhancement by providing feedback on students academic experience, we need your support in ensuring that Student Reps are identified early enough and that they are provided with the information and active encouragement to attend our training.

THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY STUDENT REP CO-ORDINATOR

Faculty Student Rep Co-ordinators (FSRC) act as a key communication link between Faculties and the Students' Union and actively promote and support the implementation and development of the Student Representative system. These are:

Faculty	Co-ordinator	Contact number
Art and Design	Rob Cummings	0116 2506160
Business and Law	Meeta Chauhan	0116 2078216
Health and Life Sciences - Charles Frears	Rachel Fairman	0116 2013850
Health and Life Sciences – Leicester	Yvonne Lee	0116 2577749
Humanities	Donna Neal	0116 2577003
Technology	Angelica Nilsson	0116 2506283

FSRCs will advise Reps on their role and responsibilities and will help them to take issues forward. They are there also to support Reps as committee members, briefing them on agenda topics and encouraging participation in the discussion at the meetings. They welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement.

The Union believes that the key element in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of Student Reps is the Faculty's support. It would therefore be of enormous help and greatly appreciated if each Faculty shared the responsibility and assisted us by:

- Providing a space for students to meet with Student Reps;
- Informing all students of the Student Representative system and selection procedures;
- Promoting the training for Student Representatives;
- Allowing Representatives access to normal channels of communication in order to receive and relay information to the relevant student body;
- Giving feedback to the Students' Union in order that the system is continually improved

THE ROLE OF THE PROGRAMME LEADER / SUBJECT LEADER

The following are a series of key principles identified and agreed by the ASQC, the Students' Union and the Faculties:

- Programme Leaders / Subject Leaders are responsible for ensuring Student Rep elections take place and that the correct number of Reps are elected in accordance with the regulations.
- All students must have an equal opportunity to put themselves forward to become Representatives. This requires effective communication in all appropriate media, fair timing and placement of the elections, provision of appropriate facilities for public speaking and conveyance of information, and no discrimination on any grounds by those overseeing the election.
- It is envisaged that elections will form the basis of selecting students to act as Reps as this method allows for equality of opportunity for all students. However, there are cases where elections are impractical, perhaps due to the small number of students or exceptionally high numbers. In such cases, an alternative method of fair selection may be used, as long as all students have the same opportunities to become Representatives if they so wish.
- Elections should be held during Academic Week 2. This will then allow Faculty Student Rep Co-ordinators to register the Representatives in time for the Week 3 deadline.

STUDENT REPRESENTATION TIMETABLE

WEEK 1

This week should be used as an opportunity to introduce the purpose of student representation (for students in Level 2 and above, this idea should be revisited during this time). Students should be made aware of the roles and responsibilities of a Student Rep. This information should not be given at the same time as when the elections are to take place and should ideally take the form of a written document. There are a number of resources available on the Students' Union website, www.demontfortstudents.com/reps. Alternatively FSRC have been given copies of useful resources for staff.

Students who would like to put themselves forward should make themselves known in advance where possible. By all means point them in the direction of the Students' Union should they have any questions that you might not be able to answer.

WEEK 2

This week should be used to conduct your elections.

On the day of the election each candidate should be given an opportunity to speak to his or her peers. Each candidate should be given an equal amount of time and reasonable access to audio equipment where necessary.

We understand that each course may have its own methods of voting for selecting Representatives. However, if you would like assistance in running the elections or ideas on how to run them, then please do not hesitate to ask the Students' Union. Voting is usually conducted by either a show of hands or by a secret ballot if wished. It may be an idea to ask the candidates to leave the room if your preference is a show of hands.

Once elected the general student population should be reminded about the role of the Student Rep and Student Reps should be provided with a way of passing on their contact information.

The Student Reps will need to complete a registration form which can be given directly to you or to the FSRC. Please encourage the Reps to complete this form fully and to return it promptly. After the FSRC has entered the Reps onto their databases, these forms are sent to the Students' Union where we also register them.

Student Reps must be registered with the Students' Union by the end of Week 3.

THE ELECTION OF FACULTY REPS

We intend to elect Faculty Reps at your Faculty's Welcome Event, these are:

Art and Design, Thursday 22nd October, 1—2.30, Fletcher 1.65

Business and Law, Friday 13th November, 1—3, location to be confirmed

Health and Life Sciences, Thursday 12th November, 12—2, Undercroft (Hawthorn Building)

Humanities, Wednesday 4th November, 1 - .3, 0.03 Clephan

Technology, Wednesday 28th October, 12—3 (exact time and location subject to confirmation)

Please encourage your Reps to attend this event as it gives them an opportunity to get more engaged with the democratic structure of the University. 4 Reps from each Faculty (5 from Health and Life Sciences to encourage participation from Charles Frears) will be elected to collectively sit on the Faculty Academic Committee and the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. We would like to introduce Faculty Rep training too, giving them more of an insight into their additional duties.

WELCOME EVENT

Student Reps are invited to attend a Welcome Event which will be held on Monday 2nd November from 5 - 7. This will be held in the Students' Union. There will be a drinks reception (and possibly nibbles). This event is an opportunity for students to meet with other Reps across their Faculty and the University, with the Deputy President Education and the Democracy and Representation Co-ordinator at the Union and also important University staff.

There will be short presentations on the role of the Student Rep and an introduction from Prof. Philip Martin. We appreciate that this date is quite early, but this is to ensure that this takes place prior to the Student Rep training.

FACULTY SPECIFIC MINI CONFERENCES

Rather than hosting a mini Student Rep Conference in December as we have in previous years, Faculties are being asked to host an event in January, giving their Student Reps an opportunity to speak about the things that impact on them directly. These events are still being discussed but information will be passed on to you in due course.

STUDENT REP MAIN CONFERENCE

The details for the Student Rep Conference are still being confirmed however this event is likely to take place in March. This annual event is attended by a variety of key staff within the University including Philip Martin, David Carrott, Eugene Critchlow, Kathryn Arnold and many others.

This is an opportunity for Reps to be informed of developments within the University and also provide feedback to the University and the Students' Union as well as engage in a variety of workshops, ask questions to key University staff and network with other Reps. The Student Rep of the Year and the Faculty Rep of the Year awards will be presented at this Conference, along with Student Rep accreditation certificates.

FEEDBACK

One of the essential elements for quality assurance at course level is to obtain the views and experiences of students. Also, each cohort needs to be informed and told about developments and decisions that affect their course. This two-way process needs mechanisms and facilities to ensure feedback is adequate. The Rep System is an essential part of this. However, adequate feedback will only be achieved if Reps are given the appropriate support and resources needed for their role.

STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES / SUBJECT AUTHORITY BOARDS

Sitting on a SSCC / SAB can be an intimidating experience for a student, especially if it is their first time. You can help them feel more at ease:

- Make them welcome by ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to introduce themselves to the rest of the committee.
- Display a readiness to listen attentively to what the students have to say, and to elaborate on their comments where this seems appropriate.
- Students do not expect an instant response, be it agreeing to a course of action or ruling it out as unfeasible. In many instances it may be necessary to sound out course colleagues or to consult with students before proceeding further.
- Most of all, where action is called for and agreed, if it is taken promptly and reported back clearly to students via Student Reps, it will be better perceived by students. Students will rapidly become disenchanted if their contribution seldom seems to have direct and visible consequences without feedback.
- Continuity can be encouraged by i) production of an information sheet for new Reps showing what has been achieved in recent years and any issues of which they should be informed; ii) allowing access to past minutes; iii) students in later years of the degree could be asked about issues relating to the course, as well as Student Reps.

AND FINALLY ...

There are numerous benefits to student development through engaging in Student Rep activities; the Union recognises that students are giving up their team to be part of a system of continuous improvement. As such we like to acknowledge these students by offering them the opportunity to participate in the accreditation system. Further information about what this entails will be discussed at the training sessions but will also be available on the website, www.demontfortstudents.com. We have had great success with the Student Representative system and our training programme over the past couple of years. We hope that you will support us in making 2009-10 run smoothly, and contribute to ensuring the SR system continues to be effective.