Academic Convenor Handbook 2020/21

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**Introduction**

The Academic Representation System is a student-led structure that is jointly operated by the University of Warwick and Warwick Students’ Union. The system consists of four levels of representation: Course level (Course Reps); Faculty level (Faculty Reps); Department Level (Department Reps) and University level (Sabbatical Officers). Warwick Students’ Union and Warwick University seek to continually review, improve, and enhance the Academic Representation System, to ensure students are best empowered to co-create their educational experience. Whilst it is imperative to ensure that the System is effective and functional on a day-to-day basis, we must also ensure that it remains fit for purpose over a number of years, adapting to the ever-changing needs of the student educational experience.

**The Students Union**

Warwick SU is run by students, for students. Our elected team of [Student Officers](https://www.warwicksu.com/student-voice/student-officers/) works closely with the SU's dedicated Staff Team and the Board of Trustees to ensure that everything we do is in the best interests of the student community as a whole. The SU's Academic Representation system works in partnership with the University to ensure that students have a say on their educational experience here at Warwick.  The Students’ Union supports student reps and University staff in order to establish an effective partnership with the power to make change. Our aim is to ensure that the student voice is heard, discussed and acted upon.

**Representation Structure**

Below is a chart to explain how a feedback loop can be completed, and also the different possibilities of where feedback can go to:

 

**SU Support Staff**

The Students Union is committed to supporting not only the Course Reps but the Academic Convenors too. In doing so, the SSLC shall be able to make long-lasting change at Warwick and beyond. The Academic Voice team at the Union, and staff members at the University, are here to support Reps, and should be utilised effectively and when needed.

When/ why should I contact:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Voice Coordinators | As soon as you are in this role, we encourage you to find out who your Academic Voice Coordinator is as soon as possible. Each faculty has a SU Representative who is here to support you and the SSLC. We highly recommend inviting an SU Representative (academic voice coordinator) to your SSLC at least once, so that they can answer any questions and also support the course reps during this meeting. They can help support you with any SSLC enquiries and also the setting up of elections. |
| Academic Voice Policy Consultant/ Supervisor | During your time as an Academic Convenor, you may have enquiries about policy or University mapping for your department. If you have any questions linking to this, we highly suggest contacting this member of staff. |
| Democracy Team | Our Democracy Team are dedicated to making sure that any elections are carried out efficiently and fair. Make sure to contact your Academic Voice Coordinator first about setting up elections, then our team will pass your information onto the Democracy Team. |

**Academic Support: Student Engagement Co-ordinators**

Each faculty is supported by one or more student engagement co-ordinators (SECs); academics with an interest in student voice and experience of SSLCs. They meet regularly with the SU to support development of student academic voice.They offer informal catch-ups for academic convenors and are very happy to be contacted with any SSLC queries you may have.

Faculty of Arts

Gavin Schwartz-Leeper G.E.Schwartz-Leeper@warwick.ac.uk

David Lees D.W.Lees@warwick.ac.uk

Faculty of Social Science

Jane Bryan J.M.Bryan@warwick.ac.uk

Faculty of Science, Engineering & Medicine

Ian Tuersley Ian.Tuersley@warwick.ac.uk

Elke Thonnes E.Thonnes@warwick.ac.uk

Kate Owen Katherine.owen@warwick.ac.uk (Gibbet Hill)

**Academic Convenor Roles**

**Achievements**

An Academic Convenor who is engaged within their role can develop and establish a very successful SSLC. Part of your role will be to make sure your Course Reps receive every opportunity they can to make a difference to their department. Achievements that have been created due to the help of an Academic Convenor have been shown for example through:

* Module changes
* Roles created in the SSLC to support students
* Events created such as Breakfast clubs or Cafes
* Promoting the SSLC and their work

**Promote the elections, course rep training and other events**

Elections are the most crucial time for encouraging students to undertake this role to create a real difference to their department. The SU Team will do as much as they can with regards to promoting on their website or emailing the key dates, but the SU **does not** have access to student email address to promote elections. Your role will include sending out as much promotion as possible to encourage students to go for the role. This will also be similar for training (please read further on for more detail) to make sure the best time is chosen so your course reps can be trained for the role. If

you do need any help with promoting or have any questions, the SU team will be more than happy to help in any way they can. Also, keep an eye on updates and key events taking place on the website.

**Confidentiality**

The training that is provided by the SU team will ensure to prepare the course reps on confidentiality and recognising any GDPR issues that may arise. We highly encourage that the Academic Convenor keeps vigilant at all times to make sure that confidentiality is kept. These can be seen for example:

* Information people share in the SSLC or receive from students should be treated in confidence
* Information from the SSLC is not shared without clear and expressed permission in case of risk to confidentiality
* Any disclosed information will be respected as confidentiality and retain anonymity for the parties concerned when appropriate.
* Ensure that private or personal information (about staff or students) is not disclosed in SSLC meetings.

**Support the SSLC**

Support can be in a variety of ways, such as:

* Guiding a course rep in the role
* Supporting the chair and secretary with creating the agenda/minutes and making sure they are sent out before/ after the meeting effectively.
* Provide continuity between year-on-year transitions between course reps
* Ensuring the feedback loop is closed on outstanding/iterative projects
* Ensure that all all feedback has been delegated to the appropriate department/ staff members
* Supporting the chair and secretary in writing the annual report
* Promote the SSLC as much as possible throughout the year

**Elections**

**1.** Setting up the election, this will all be carried out online on our website! Please be sure to email us the course and how many course reps in advance. This year we have two course reps default for elections. If you do not wish to have two course reps elected, please make sure you email the team if you have not done so already. If you are carrying out the election in a different way, please contact the SU Team for an audit of your election system.

2. Schedule of the Autumn Elections:

3. Nominations: during this period, this is the time where promotion will be key. Making sure to inform the students of not only why they should volunteer for the role but also what substantial differences they can make will be essential. Make sure to also promote anything that appears on the SU social media platforms or anything that is emailed to you.

4. Voting: it is *essential* that those students who have nominated themselves for the role receive support and guidance with promoting their profile to be voted for. Make sure to encourage the nominated course reps to spread the word about being voted for online. When supporting the vote, *please also reiterate who R.O.N.* is.

R.O.N. stands for Re Open Nomination. This option is given for every nomination, so students when voting will have the choice between a nominee and RON. The vote for this option means that the nominee wishes to open the election again. Some students believe this is a give their vote at random option but it is not, and we would highly recommend letting students know about this when voting opens.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Nominations**  | **Open**  | **Close**  |
|  | Monday 14th September 9am  | Friday 16th October 12pm |
|  |  |  |
| **Voting**  | Open  | Close  |
|  | Tuesday 20th October 9am  | Friday 23rd October 12pm  |

 5. The Grand Finale: now that the voting is completed sit back, relax and we will do the rest! Once we have the results, they will be emailed to you with the student names so you will be able to contact the course reps and welcome them to the team. Only the SU Education and Democracy team have access to the nomination count. We will also email you with any departments who did not have a course rep elected or R.O.N so that future elections can be discussed. If places have not been filled, there is also an option to carry out co-option, please be sure to email the SU team to discuss this further.

**Training**

Training course reps consists of one fun, interactive session where all must attend. These sessions are important as some of the objectives to name a few that are covered are:

* Confidentiality
* Progressing Feedback
* Where to send feedback received
* How to handle a GDPR situation
* The roles of chair/secretary
* How to use our new Moodle system with accessing online resources

Our training is designed to make sure students feel ready and confident to carry out their role! As the Academic Convenor, what you will need to do is find out a time that your course reps will be available, [click here](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=PUBZqIuqekeBwMGiJO6__nsMI8_xGxBAmhU1IYasEL5UN1ZHUTdLMFNaUkJMWTZKR0JKNEU0NEs3Vi4u) to fill out the form and return it to us!

**Setting up the SSLC**

Now that you know who all of your new course reps are, it’s time to invite them all to the first meeting! This should be set up by yourself, with a proposed time that the course reps and key staff members can attend.

**What shall I do in this first meeting?**

* Make sure at the beginning inform the students that you are looking to appoint a chair & secretary. In this first meeting, make sure you demonstrate as the ‘chair’ how you wish the meeting to be carried out.
* Please be sure to share documents such as the last year report, NSS Report and External Examiner Report.
* Set out the rules of how the SSLC will be carried out. Example, will questions be held until the end of the topic/ hands up during?
* At the end of the meeting, appoint a new chair and secretary for the SSLC.

We hope that this handbook has given you useful information or guidance to your job role or the running of an SSLC. If you do have any questions, please be sure to either contact your Academic Voice Coordinator for your Faculty or email sslc@warwicksu.com