

UWE Bristol Principles of Academic Representation – Digital Student Engagement

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UWE Bristol and The Students' Union at UWE

Guidance for virtual student representation

This document is for Student Reps and programme teams who attend and arrange Student Rep Staff Forums (SRSFs) and Programme Management Committees (PMCs). It suggests ways that Student Reps and staff can engage digitally. These include methods for obtaining cohort feedback, discussing the feedback, participating in virtual meetings and closing the feedback loop by reporting back to their cohort.

This document is meant to offer practical suggestions for all elements of SRSFs and PMCs, whilst keeping the [Principles of Academic Representation](#) at its heart.

Virtual Feedback Methods

We recommend that programme teams and Student Reps reach out to see how students are getting on regularly. Here are a few ways to obtain virtual feedback:

Surveys

The University encourages students and staff to use [Qualtrics](#), [Mentimeter](#) or Microsoft Forms for online surveys and polling. Surveys are a useful tool for gathering feedback but if students are being asked to complete lots of surveys then they may not give useful details or respond at all, so try to make your survey focussed, short and easy to complete.

We highly recommend not asking for any personal data (e.g. student number or email address) in the surveys. If this information is asked for, you will need to obtain ethics approval and add a GDPR¹ statement. For support and guidance students can contact studentreps@uwe.ac.uk and staff can contact dataprotection@uwe.ac.uk.

MyUWE

Once Student Reps have completed their training they will be given access to make myUWE announcements. This is an easy way for them to call for feedback from their cohort or advertise a survey. Instructions on how to use myUWE announcements can be found [here](#).

Students can also view a list of their Student Reps through MyUWE via the Courses tab.

¹ General Data Protection Regulations

Blackboard

Student Reps can ask their programme team to place an announcement on the Blackboard programme page on their behalf in order to reach their cohort. This is fairly limited in what can be said and shared but it can be a good way to reach those students who are not active on social media.

Student Reps will now be part of a Blackboard group run by the Representation Team in The Students' Union. This will give them access to training, materials, advice and provides a community to support them in their roles.

Students will now be able to find a list of their Student Reps on their Programme Page in Blackboard. This list will be updated by The Students' Union through the Student Rep database.

Email

Student Reps can ask their programme team to send an email on their behalf to their cohort. This is another reasonably good way to get information out there or highlight a survey that your cohort should complete.

Student Reps can also ask their cohort for their email addresses to compile a mailing list (subject to following GDPR guidelines – please seek relevant guidance). They would only be able to obtain these details by asking their cohort directly due to GDPR; they cannot ask their programme team for the details.

Social Media (Facebook closed course group or WhatsApp group)

This can be a fairly quick and easy way to get feedback from your cohort, especially if there is already an existing social media group that you can use. Staff and Student Reps within the group can ask questions, post polls, link to surveys, and keep the cohort updated. Please make sure what is posted is relevant to your cohort. Some cohorts respond extremely well to a staff presence in these groups and others might prefer a separate group to be created for this purpose (or for Student Reps to take the lead). Also be mindful that not every student is on social media and that their views and feedback should continue to be sought through other methods in addition where appropriate.

Microsoft Teams

Students can now access Microsoft Teams and Student Reps can create a Team site for informal collaborations with their cohort and to host video calls. This could potentially be really useful for Student Reps but engagement may vary between cohorts, and you might want to use a platform that students already regularly use to avoid creating too many different communication channels. To create a Team site you would need to invite students

by their email addresses or send them a specific link to the site for them to join. On the Team site you can share files, create polls, discuss topics and update your cohort on their feedback.

Virtual Meetings

Once feedback has been collected from your cohort this should be shared with the programme team. Feedback can be shared at any time but the University also holds regular meetings throughout the year where it can be discussed in more detail. These could be virtual meetings.

The University has two different types of meetings for Student Reps to provide feedback at programme level. These meetings form part of the academic governance structure:

- Student Rep Staff Forums (SRSFs) are open to all Student Reps and relevant student groups and are usually organised and chaired by the programme leader. They can be informal or formal meetings and the way they are held varies across the University. Staff are encouraged to find the best way to engage their students and obtain their feedback, and this shapes the type of meeting that is arranged.
- Programme Management Committees (PMCs) are open to Programme Year Lead Reps and the whole programme team (including module leaders), and some PMCs include more than one programme. PMCs can both be organised and chaired by a programme or cluster leader. These are more formal meetings and are for staff and their Reps to develop the future of their programmes together.

Some programmes may decide to merge the SRSF and PMC together, so that they discuss current feedback and future planning in the same meeting.

The University expects staff and Student Reps to share and record feedback frequently. If it is not possible to meet in-person or virtually for a particular SRSF or PMC meeting then feedback can be shared and discussed at any time through email, online discussion boards, Blackboard Collaborate drop-in sessions or one-to-one. Please make sure that the whole cohort is updated with any outcomes or actions. Staff should also keep a note of what has been discussed (through the new Blackboard student voice template) and escalate any programme concerns that cannot be resolved to their Head of Department who will jointly decide what should be raised at the Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQC) with their Lead Department Rep.

The following virtual meeting methods have been recommended:

Blackboard Collaborate

Staff can set up a Blackboard Collaborate session through Blackboard. Staff can run this session like a meeting call, or they can use the tools to get participants to engage more

creatively. For example, staff can run small polls during the calls by asking for text responses in the chat box or using Mentimeter in a separate browser tab, they can use the 'whiteboard' so that anonymous marks and comments can be left on the screen, they could screen-share documents or slides for discussion and they can use some handy methods to manage the meeting such as muting microphones on entry, using the hands-up button and break-out rooms to have smaller discussions.

Microsoft Teams

Staff and students can set up a Teams Meeting in Microsoft Outlook for both staff and students. When creating a calendar event, click Teams Meeting on the top ribbon (or toggle Teams Meeting in Meeting Options on mobile) and this will automatically generate a Teams Meeting. This will send everyone invited the details of the meeting as well as a link to join the meeting virtually. On Teams you can share your screen or documents on the call.

What not to use

Staff have been advised to not use any non-UWE Bristol approved virtual meeting tools such as Facetime, Facebook, WhatsApp or Zoom, which run the risk of breaching GDPR requirements. Skype for Business should only be used to call phone numbers, not for virtual meetings.

For more guidance on how to use these platforms see <http://fetliu.net/uwe-contingency/> or contact the Academic Practice Directorate: DigitalEducation@uwe.ac.uk.

Hints and tips for running a virtual meeting

- Have an agenda for the meeting, even if it is a bit loose. This could help students prepare and could lead to a more engaging discussion. Students or staff can set an agenda.
- Try to be online early so that early arrivals will know they are in the right place.
- Ask everyone to use a headset or headphones, this will make it easier for most members to hear what is being said and can reduce echoes.
- Ask everyone to mute their microphone when they are not speaking, makes the call clearer and reduces confusion.
- Give time for quick introductions, especially if this is the first time you've met.
- Try video first but if it is causing delays switch to voice call only.
- Be aware that some students may only use the 'chat' function within the platform and that this might not just be due to personal preference but because they do not have a microphone, camera or Wifi stability.

- Make a note of which Student Reps have entered the meeting and make sure to give them all a chance to feedback.

Closing the feedback loop

This diagram demonstrates closing the feedback loop. We recommend using all of the methods utilised to gain feedback from your cohort to report the discussions and outcomes back to them. Let them know how their feedback was shared and what is going to happen next. If students do not see the value of giving feedback then they are less likely to give feedback in the future.

