GUSRC Class Representative Survey 2023

Key Findings Report: May 2023

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# Executive Summary

**Background**

The Class Representative (Class Rep) system plays a crucial role in Glasgow University’s Quality Enhancement activity and forms an essential element of the Student Representative Council’s (SRC) Representative and Consultative activities.

The system allows students to air their views to the academic and support staff that run their department on issues such as course content, teaching, and resources. The Class Rep is also the first point of contact for students who have a problem or a suggestion about a class or course.

Any student at the University can become a Class Rep. They are elected in class, during the first few weeks of each semester, with the class lecturer or course convenor organising a brief election amongst those who are interested. If only one person is interested, they are automatically selected. If no one is interested the class lecturer or course convenor may ask a student to take the position.

In spring 2016 it was agreed that an end of year Class Representative survey be developed and piloted to establish baseline figures and identify future benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of the system and its impacts. The survey has been conducted annually since then.

The following report details the results of the 2023 Class Rep Survey.

**Research Objectives**

Specific research objectives were to:

* Understand the level to which their Class Rep training impacted on their capacity to fulfil their role.
* Understand the communications channels used by Class Reps
* Measure the overall impact of Class Reps on the student experience.
* Examine the range of personal development skills acquired by Class Reps during their tenure.

**Research Methodology**

As previous years the questionnaire was developed by the SRC and the researcher, and an online research methodology adopted. Although in previous years the survey tool itself was developed using Glasgow University’s software and the IT support team, this year data was gathered using Survey Monkey. It appeared on the My Class Rep website in addition to being sent out via a link embedded within an email to the 1,384 Class Representatives (1,502 last year).

A final total of 1,067 valid responses were received – a response rate of 77% (58% in 2022). Although respondents were informed that completing the survey was a condition of having their role as Class Rep certified on their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) some may have already completed their training and the survey in a previous year and thus feel no need to repeat.

**Profile of Respondents**

A similar gender, residence and age profile have been recorded across the lifetime of the survey, with just over two-thirds of respondents being female (67%). In terms of age nearly half (45%) were aged 17-21yrs with a further third (33%) being within the 22-24-year-old age band. Most students were from Scotland (41%) with a further 13% being from the EU and a further 32% classified as International Students. There was a relatively even response across all Colleges.

**Recruitment and Training**

In 2022, 64% of respondents were selected by their tutor / lecturer or were the only volunteer. This number has risen to 72% this year. Only 28% of Class Reps went through an election process.

The College of Arts was again most likely to have only one volunteer for the role of Class Rep - 66% compared to the overall average of 46%. The Colleges of MVLS again delivered the most elected Class Reps.

Class Rep training is delivered through a mix of self-study via Moodle and an online Zoom session. Most Class Reps – 83% - thought that the training from the SRC had prepared them very well/well for their role (73% in 2022), indicating that the training was still held in high regard since delivery has been moved online three years ago.

Only 11% did not undertake the Class Reps training this year – a great reduction from the 20% in 2022. For most of these non-attenders this was because they had undergone training in a previous year and a small minority stated they had not been informed that training was taking place.

**SSLC & Class Rep Impact**

Over two-thirds of Class Representatives in the survey (69%) reported that action had been agreed and / or taken on issues they had raised within the SSLC meetings - a positive result for the format. In addition, 44% stated that action had already been taken by the time of the survey. However, the number who were unaware if action had been agreed or take on the issues they had raised was still high at 24% (27% last year).

Similar barriers to last year were identified around why some Class Reps found it difficult to raise issues:

* A sense that their issue(s) was **not taken seriously** / not valued or perception that staff were dismissive and / or unreceptive.
* **Difficulty raising concerns** regarding a specific member of staff or course when staff member was present. Also, awkwardness due to large number of outspoken reps in meeting and senior staff.

There was a marked increase in the number of Class Reps perceiving the SSLC meetings to be an effective process for getting student issues actioned. From 52% last year to 66% this year. Correspondingly, those who thought the system not very effective/not at all effective has dropped from 10% to 5%.

When asked about changes due to their input, respondents recorded a range of changes resulting from their input into SSLC meetings, but as previous years the most common was improved access to course materials/resources (34%) followed by changes to lecture/tutorial arrangements (30%). As last year those recording ‘No Change’ due to their input stays at 21%.

Half of Class Reps (50%) reported that they were able to contact relevant university staff out with SSLC meetings without difficulty to discuss any issues they may have.

Across the past six years the main reason for non-attendance at the SSLC meetings is that the meeting clashed with their timetable or other commitments or when another Class Rep attended on their behalf. Only 6% stated they did not attend.

**Skills Development**

Respondents reported that they had developed several soft skills during their time as a Class Rep. Over three-quarters (77%) reported that they had developed communication/listening skills, followed by 61% who gained a greater understanding of university structures. These skills were highly valued and appreciated by the Class Reps both for increasing their effectiveness in their role and their future employability.

**SRC Support**

The number of Class Reps who did not contact the SRC throughout the year has risen from 43% in 2020 to 61% this year. However, those using the Advice Centre has risen from 12% to 19% in the same period. Only 6% stated that the support they had received from the SRC overall was not very useful.

**Communications**

This year Class Reps yet again perceived WhatsApp as the most effective way to communicating with their peers (58%) followed by email (50%). In addition, 41% had participated in the Teams Channel for Class Reps. Of those that had used utilised it, nearly two-thirds (64%) thought it useful / very useful.

Just over half of Class Reps (52%) stated that their School had also reached out to them online / by email to find out what support they needed.

**The Class Rep Experience**

In all, two thirds (66%) of open-ended comments at the end of the survey were extremely positive, extolling the benefits of being involved, the training and the impact on their own skills. A further 22% felt the experience was satisfactory but due to other reasons (such as lack of engagement) they did not find their time as a Class Rep particularly rewarding. A minority (12%) were rather negative about their involvement.

Amongst those recording a less positive experience comments tended to be around 4 main areas:

* Lack of communication from fellow students
* Slow process of change
* SSLC meetings – scheduling issues / short timeframe to gather feedback.
* Perception that role not taken that seriously by staff.

**Conclusions & Recommendations**

Across the eight years that the SRC has evaluated the Class Rep experience, certain positive outcomes have been reported – and for specific aspects this is still the case this year:

* The perceived **appeal of the role** is increasing with more Class Reps being given the position by an election rather than being the only volunteer. It is still important therefore that the SRC continue to raise awareness of the posts and the transferable skills that come from being in the role
* Moving the **SRC Class Rep training online has been a success**. The majority of participants are clear that it had prepared them well for their role. There were however some comments around more Class Rep activities where they could meet others, build connections, and have the option of peer support. Consideration should be given to other face-to-face events early in the academic year.
* Class Reps overall find it **easy to raise issues at the SSLC** and a large increase in those finding these meetings an effective vehicle to raise issues. University staff mostly make themselves available out with meetings and reach out to offer support. It would be beneficial to communicate these encouraging results to academic staff.
* There is still a **plethora of changes resulting from Class Rep input** – especially around improved access to course materials and changes to lectures and tutorial arrangements.
* The **personal development of the Class Reps continues to be the one of the main benefits** of the role and is highly valued by respondents and in addition greatly enhance employment prospects. These skills are appreciated and attaining such a level of accomplishment during their tenure they believe has brought an added value to the role. As mentioned previously – this is the strongest message to send out when recruiting Class Reps. It may help to add an additional recognition to the role such as online badge as evidence of their position.

Although this year’s survey signals that the Class Rep model works well – there was a minority of results this year that may require further consideration:

* Nearly a quarter of Class Reps are unaware if any action has been taken on issues they raised at SSLC meetings. This is the same level as last year. Although the majority still perceive this model of discussion effective the lack of knowledge around next steps is concerning. Training should ensure that Class Reps are aware of the procedure to investigate what happens to issues they have raised
* Although seen as an effective vehicle, one in five Class Reps still **feel they made no impact** as a Class Rep. Next year’s survey should include a supplementary question to unpick the perceived reasons behind this thinking
* There remain several comments around **scheduling conflicts** resulting in Class Reps being unable to attend SSLC meetings. Consideration should be given to requesting the dates of SSLC meetings to be agreed and confirmed at the beginning of each semester. Allowing Class Reps, a larger period to avoid clashes
* Many Class Reps do not feel additional support from the SRC was necessary during the year. However, the **significant increase in those using the Advice Centre** indicates that further help has been necessary.
* Although the new **Teams channel** for Class Reps was utilised by some, the majority had not participated, were aware or simply unsure of it. Increased communications to highlight the benefits of this channel may be necessary.

# Background & Introduction

## Background

The Class Representative (Class Rep) system plays a crucial role in Glasgow University’s Quality Enhancement activity and forms an essential element of the Student Representative Council (SRC) Representative and Consultative activities.

The system allows students to air their views to the academic and support staff that run their department on issues such as course content, teaching, and resources. The Class Rep is also the first point of contact for students who have a problem or a suggestion about a class or course.

Any student at the University can become a Class Rep. They are elected in class, during the first few weeks of each semester, with the class lecturer or course convenor organising a brief election amongst those who are interested. If only one person is interested, they are automatically selected. If no one is interested the class lecturer or course convenor may ask a student to take the position.

The SRC coordinates the delivery of the training every year, in both Semesters 1 and 2 and Class Rep training is now delivered through a mix of self-study via Moodle and an online Zoom session. The training includes group activities to:

* Help Class Reps understand how they can have an impact.
* Illustrate how to discuss issues and develop negotiations skills.
* Explain the support structures at their disposal for help and advice.

A short evaluation questionnaire is completed at the end of the training session. This provides demographic information and brief immediate feedback about the training just undertaken. Although useful, and always highly positive, this short evaluation does not provide an opportunity for reflective insight as to how the training contributed to the Class Reps’ effectiveness over the year and what their impact had been.

## Fit with Strategy

GUSRC’s strategy document includes the following stated objective:

“We will ensure our democratic, representative structures are valid and accessible for all students”.

Priority actions include:

* Working with the University to develop the class representative system to ensure it remains fit for purpose and responsive to the growing diversification of University Learning and Teaching delivery methods.
* Working together to develop and implement a system for evaluating the impact of class representatives on the student experience.

Given the above strategic aims and priority actions, in spring 2016 it was agreed that an end of year Class Representative survey be developed and piloted to establish some baseline figures and identify future benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of the system and its impacts.

Thus, the SRC wished to use the pilot in 2016 to measure three clear research objectives which were to:

* Understand the level to which their Class Rep training impacted on their capacity to fulfil their role.
* Measure the overall impact of Class Reps on the student experience.
* Examine the range of personal development skills acquired by Class Reps during their tenure.
* Understand the communication channels used by Class Reps

## Survey Timeline

From 2016 the Class Rep online survey has been repeated annually to allow comparisons but amending some questionnaire content accordingly when necessary.

This year the survey was sent out on 22nd March 2023 with a reminder email dispatched on 6th April 2023. The survey closed on 17th April 2023.

## Introduction to Report

The questionnaire was loosely structured into five themes as detailed below, and hence forms the main structure of the remainder of this report:

Section 2 – Research Methodology

Section 3 – Profile of Respondents

Section 4 – Recruitment & Training

Section 5 – SSLC & Class Rep Impact

Section 6 – SRC Support & Skills Development

Section 7 – Communication

Section 8 – The Class Representative Experience

Section 9 - Conclusions and Recommendations

# Research Methodology

As in previous years the questionnaire was developed by the SRC and the researcher. An online research methodology was adopted as the most efficient and effective approach to reaching Class Representatives.

In previous years, the survey tool itself was developed using Glasgow University’s software and the IT support team. This year data was gathered using Survey Monkey. It appeared on the My Class Rep website in addition to being sent out via an embedded link to the 1,384 Class Representatives (1,502 last year).

A final total of 1,067 valid responses were received – a response rate of 77%. This is the highest response rate over the lifetime of the survey. Respondents were informed that completing the survey was a condition of having their role as Class Rep certified on their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). Some Class Reps may have already completed their training and a survey in previous years and thus felt no need to repeat.

Please note that not all responses will add to 100% because of rounding and multiple response questions. Due to routing, which enabled respondents to skip some questions, base numbers may also differ in some cases.

# Profile of Respondents

A similar gender and age profile as previous years was recorded with just over two-thirds of respondents in the survey being female (Figure 3-1) and 3% preferring not to state their gender. In terms of age 45% of respondents were aged 17-21yrs (Figure 3-2) with a further 33% being within the 22-24-year-old age band.

Most students were from Scotland (41%) with a further 13% being from the EU and another 32% classified as International Students. This data however could not be compared with the 2016 survey due to differences in classifying students in the pilot survey:

Figure 3‑1: Gender of Respondents

*Base = 1061 (2023); 878 (2022); 735 (2021); 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 594 (2016)*

Figure 3‑2: Age of Respondents

*Base = 1060 (2023); 878(2022); 735 (2021); 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 594 (2016)*

Figure 3‑3: Student Type

*Base =1060 (2023); 878(2022); 735 (2021);720 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017)*

A slight drop in the number of students from Scotland this year within the Class rep sample and over the last few years there has been a large decline in Class Reps from the EU with a corresponding trend upwards in those from overseas.

Figure 3‑4: College

*Base = 1059 (2023); 875 (2022); 721 (2021): 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 594 (2016)*

# Recruitment & Training

This section of the report considers how respondents became Class Representatives and the value of their training.

## Class Representatives Elections

The questionnaire began by asking respondents how they became Class Reps. In 2022, 35% of respondents were the only volunteer and this has increased significantly to 46% this year with the trend appearing upward. However, there is also an upward trend across the last three years in those who were elected to the position.

**Figure 4‑1: Selection / Election of Class Representative**

*Base=1066 (2023); 878(2022); 735 (2021); 721(2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 594 (2016)*

As with previous years there was no correlation found between Student Type, Age or Gender and method of obtaining the position of Class Rep. However clear College differences emerged.

The College of Arts – like last year - was again most likely to have only one volunteer for the role of Class Rep with 66% the only volunteer compared to the overall average of 46%.

With regards to elected posts College of MVLS again delivered the most elected Class Reps at 34% compared to the overall average of 28%.

## SRC Class Rep Training

The SRC provides training for Class Reps near the beginning of each semester. This training is an important part of preparation for the role and gives students the tools to tackle any issue that may arise.

Training is now undertaken online through a self-study Moodle course and a subsequent Zoom training session.

Respondents were asked how well the training they received had prepared them for the role. Nearly all of Class Reps – 83% - thought that their initial training from the SRC had prepared them very well/well for their role reversing the trend downwards across the last few years.

Indeed, the numbers who did not undertake the Class Reps training has also dropped from 20% in 2022 to only 11% this year. For most non-attenders this was because they had previously undergone training and the SRC has informed Class Reps that have previously undergone training they do not need to attend again. 5% stated they had not been informed that training was taking place. For a further 4% the Zoom times did not suit them.

There was little variation when analysed by the various demographics.

**Figure 4-2: How well did the SRC training prepare you for the role?**

*\*Please note in 2020 training was moved online*

*Base = 1066 (2023); 874(2022): 735 (2021) 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 594 (2016)*

# SSLC & Class Rep Impact

## Ease of Raising Issues at SSLC

This next section looks at Class Reps’ ease at raising issues at Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings. All meetings in the academic year 2021-2022 were conducted online however this year SSLC meetings have been a mix of face-to-face and online.

As previous years, most of the Class Reps have little difficulty in raising issues, with 76% of survey respondents overall believing it was Very Easy/Easy. Only 3% of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to raise issue (31 respondents).

There were no statistically significant variations in terms of demographics and perceptions around ease of raising issues with figures similar across the board:

Figure 5‑1: Ease of Raising Issues at SSLC

*Base = 1067 (2023); 874 (2022) 735 (2021) 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892(2017); 592 (2016)*

Some - a minority (6%) - had yet to attend a meeting due to meetings being cancelled or due to scheduling conflicts. Some reported that other reps were attending instead. Strikes also caused SSLC meetings to be cancelled.

Those who found it hard to raise issues at the SSLC meetings were asked to explain why via an additional comments box. 29 respondents added a comment. A selection of these comments is reproduced verbatim overleaf.

As in previous years, the rest of the comments reported regarding difficulty raising issues centred around:

* A sense that their issue(s) was **not taken seriously** / not valued or perception that staff were dismissive and / or unreceptive.
* **Difficulty raising concerns** regarding a specific member of staff or course when staff member was present. Also, awkwardness due to large number of outspoken reps in meeting and senior staff:

*“Felt like staff had already made up their mind about certain issues so we were wasting our breath…”*

*“I found that I raised issues that were quickly dismissed by staff….”*

*“I was dismissed nearly immediately the one time I did…”*

*“Did not feel like staff was ready to listen…”*

*“Felt like certain stronger personalities in other class reps overshadowed and took control…*

*“I felt that my suggestions to help with improving the course were disregarded (this was frustrating as my suggestions also came from students ….”*

*“Staff were unreceptive, dismissive, and seemed to want the meeting to finish as quickly as possible…”*

*“Due to industrial action and issues with the wrong email being used for myself, SSLC meetings didn’t happen resulting in email communication used instead…”*

*“I understand why the lecturers/ programme leads are there and it is good to get input from them as well, however, I think quite often the conversation can turn into the teachers/ programme leads furiously defending their teaching methods. I understand it's good to get perspective and that teachers will obviously want to defend themselves, but as a student that can be quite intimidating. Around halfway through the meeting I felt hesitant to give any more feedback as the staff just felt offended by the feedback from the students and got quite defensive. I think it's worthwhile considering whether they should always be there or not…”*

*“Some suggestions were not taken seriously or glossed over”*

*“When reps raise issues, staff expects the reps to also provide suggested solutions. However, as student reps, we may not understand the full picture (e.g., staff roles, university resources, curriculum planning) to suggest constructive, feasible solutions that can be favourable to all parties…”*

*“Sometimes, staff holds preconceptions about students. (Of course, students have preconceptions about staff too.) As a rep, when I reported at the SSLC some students' concerns about communicating with their dissertation supervisors, staff immediately said that students should develop communication skills. The conversation ended there without adequate understanding of the issues involved…”*

*“Agenda not well organised and some of the other class reps from other departments tended to take over the conversation/meeting…”*

## Reason for Non-Attendance at SSLC Meetings

Only 6% of respondents stated that they did not attend the SSLC meetings (76 respondents). Those that did not attend were fairly split across all demographic groups.

As before, the main reason for not attending SSLC meetings was when the meeting clashed with their timetable or other commitments or when another Class Rep attended on their behalf.

21 Class Reps claimed they had no notification of SSLC meetings or were unaware of them.

## Action Taken on Issues Raised

The majority of Class Representatives in the survey (69%) reported that action had been agreed and / or taken on issues they had raised within the SSLC meetings – still a positive result for the format and a slight increase on last year’s figure of 63%.

However, the number who had no idea if action had been taken on issues they had raised is still high at 24%. From 14% last year to 27% this year.

Figure 5‑2: Action Taken on Issues Raised

*Base= 1065 (2023); 863 (2022); 712 (2021) 661 (2020); 892 (2019); 924 (2018); 892 (2017); 591(2016)*

When analysed by College – the College of Science & Engineering was most likely to have actions agreed on issues raised (77%) compared to the overall figure of 69%.

## Impact of Class Representative

This next section looks at the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Class Reps’ perception of their own impact within these meetings.

Respondents were asked if they felt that the SSLC was an effective committee for getting student issues actioned. As can be seen in Figure 5-3 last year only 52% of Class Reps believed in the effectiveness of the SSLC. This year the trend is again upwards with 66% stating effective / very effective.

There were no significant differences between demographic groups in their perception of effectiveness of the SSLC.

Similarly, there has been a significant drop in those who thought the system Not Very Effective/Not at all Effective from 10% to 5%.

Figure 5‑3: SSLC as an Effective Vehicle

*Base= 853 (2022); 701 (2021); 721 (2020); 959 (2019); 1,022 (2018); 892 (2017); 588 (2016)*

Class Reps were then asked what types of changes had resulted from their input at SSLC meetings and in most cases multiple changes were recorded because of their time as a Class Rep and attending SSLC meetings.

The data overleaf has followed a similar pattern across the past eight years: Improved Access to Course Materials/Resources was again the most recorded change (34%), followed by Changes to Lecture/Tutorial Arrangements (30%) with both these figures at a similar percentage as last year. There has however been a large increase in those who state there had been No Changes as a result of their input increasing from 10% in 2021 to 21% both last year and this.

Figure 5‑4: Changes Resulting from Class Rep Input

There was a small number of Class Reps that reported ‘Other’ changes (7% - 71 respondents) not applicable to the available codes. The general theme of these other issues was around:

* Specific course / module changes
* Changes that had yet to be seen

## Availability of University Staff Outside SSLC Meetings

In 2021 a new question was introduced to examine the accessibility of relevant University staff out with the SSLC meetings. Half of Class Reps (50%) found they were able to contact relevant University staff out with meeting to discuss issues without difficulty:

Figure 5-7: University Staff Support

# SRC Support & Skills Development

## Ongoing Support from SRC

The SRC provide all training for Class Reps and can also provide ongoing support for those who need it. The survey therefore asked Class Reps about the support they had from the SRC - apart from this initial training – over the year.

For the past four years those stating they had no further contact with the SRC has risen from 43% in 2019 to 61% this year. In addition, those who had met or corresponded with a School / College Rep has also dropped significantly from a high of 57% to the lowest level ever at 25%. There were no significant differences between Colleges.

However, those contacting the Advice Centre has risen quite substantially from 9% to 19%.

A few respondents had mentioned ‘Other’ support from the SRC (13 respondents). The additional support most often mentioned included the following:

* Preparation for Zoom meetings.
* Through training days and social occasions

Overall, 93% of Class Reps thought the support they received from the SRC was very useful or somewhat useful / ok. Leaving only a minority perceiving the support not to be useful (6%):

Figure 6‑1: SRC Support

As can be seen in Figure 6-1, nearly two-thirds of Class Reps in the survey (61%) had no further contact with the SRC. A supplementary question asked why this was the case.

As in previous years, over three-quarters of those Class Reps who had no other contact (78%) simply felt that no other support was necessary. A further 18% stated that they were unaware what other support the SRC offered:

Figure 6-2: Reason for No Other Contact with SRC

\*% do not add up to 100% due to multiple recording

Amongst the ‘Other’ reasons given for not having any other contact with the SRC from the 10 respondents, no clear themes emerged with Class Reps claiming a diverse range of reasons such as lack of information about further support; lack of time; first semester as Class Rep and unsure if SRC could / would help.

## Skills Development

One of the benefits of becoming a Class Rep has always been the personal development that can result and therefore, respondents were asked within the survey if they thought they had developed any skills through their role. Several skills are recorded year on year. This year, again, the top skill recorded was communication and listening with over three-quarters of respondents (77%) reported that they had developed Communication/Listening skills through being a Class Rep, followed by 61% who gained a Greater Understanding of University Structures. Figure 6-3 below shows the full list of skills that were developed through being a Class Rep from 2020-2023

Figure 6-3: Skills Development

*Base=1064 (2023); 860 (2022): 735 (2021); 721 (2020)*

# Communication

This section looks at how Class Reps communicate with their peers and each other.

## Communication with Classmates & Reps

Zoom, Teams and Facebook have declined as methods of communicating with classmates and this year WhatsApp (58%) and Email (50%) were the most popular with WhatsApp also perceived as the most effective way of communicating.

Other communication methods mentioned included Instagram, Snapchat, and online surveys. In addition, this year nearly a fifth (18%) stated in-person contact:

Figure 7-1: Communication with Classmates

*Base=1067 (2023); 861(2022); 735 (2021)*

## Class Rep Systems & Process Adjustments

Respondents were then asked if their School had adapted their class rep systems and processes to ensure they could still fulfil their role in the online environment.

This indeed had happened for the majority of Class Reps. 52% stated that their School had reached out to reps online or by email to find out what support was needed. And nearly a quarter (24%) had moved SSLC meetings online. However, 25% felt that nothing had been adapted:

Figure 7-2: School adaptions to ensure Class Reps can fulfil their role online.

*Base=1061 (2023); 861(2022)*

## SRC 22/23 Academic Representatives Teams Channel

Class Reps were asked if they had participated in the new Teams channel for Class Reps and 41% had used it. However, over a quarter were unaware of the channel. Of those that had utilised it, nearly two-thirds thought it was useful / very useful.

Figure 7-3: Participation in Teams Channel for Class Reps

*Base=1067 (2023)*

Figure 7-4: Usefulness of Teams Channel for Class Reps

*Base=441 (2023)*

# The Class Representative Experience

Every year the respondents are asked to provide any further comments about their experience as a Class Rep. In total 246 Class Reps provided more verbatim detail about their experience in 2021. This year 319 provided additional comments about their experiences. Although mostly positive they were rather broad in theme making coded analysis difficult. In all, two thirds (66% of comments) were extremely positive, extolling the benefits of being involved, the training and the impact on their own skills. A further 22% felt the experience was satisfactory but due to other reasons (such as lack of engagement) they did not find their time as a Class Rep particularly rewarding. A minority (12%) were rather negative about their involvement.

Amongst those recording a less positive experience comments tended to be around 4 main areas:

* Lack of communication from fellow students
* Slow process of change
* SSLC meetings – scheduling issues / short timeframe to gather feedback.
* Perception that role not taken that seriously by staff.

Below some comments received have been replicated:

*“It was nice getting to know the other class reps and discussing issues with them. I wish the staff was sometimes less defensive about criticism though, we are aware that it is difficult for students and staff, however, sometimes the tone felt too defensive. Overall, I did enjoy discussions and hearing the teaching staff’s point of views and advice.…”*

*“Being a class representative was a rewarding experience that taught me a lot about leadership, communication, and responsibility. It was a great opportunity to make new friends from different geographical locations, and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to develop their skills and contribute to their community. Overall, it was an enthralling experience....…”*

*“No one ever chooses to be a class rep once we get to third year. It’s always just whoever puts their hand up first to put the tutor out of their misery. We need to push it more as a desirable occupation to take on whilst studying.…”*

*“Seminars where low in attendance so it was difficult to gather information…”*

*“There needs to be training on how to do surveys, the younger reps (year 3) were very unorganised this year.…”*

*“I found that the SSLC meetings were not organised in a way that best suited students. Would have been better to reach out to students with prospective dates prior to setting up meetings.…”*

*“It seems like our concerns are always heard but every solution seems to be out of the schools’ hands in some way. This can make it seem hopeless to even attempt to make changes as it can seem the meetings are just a formality, and no real changes get made to create a solution.…”*

*“It was a very useful experience for confidence building and the spaces for discussion really left one optimistic that their opinions were to be taken seriously, felt like a very productive environment…”*

*“It was good to have 2 class reps for my level, as there were many students who gave feedback in our cohort, but we could share the workload. Also, this meant that when the other class rep was ill for an extended period of time, it didn't really affect the running of things. On the other hand, it was also challenging to work with someone else when generating feedback, because our interpretations of how to create it were very different...…”*

*“It feels amazing to represent a course I love, the SRC class rep training was super helpful and interactive, and I definitely learned a lot, from organisation skills to arranging socials. It is great knowing that I can help make this course even more enjoyable for the staff and students….*

*“I would have appreciated signposting of SSLC through a calendar so that I would be prepared ahead of time and be able to gather further feedback. The notice through the email invitation did not leave an appropriate timeframe for this to happen....”*

*“I represent a relatively small PhD cohort, and the frequency of meetings was often excessive for the level of feedback I received. Despite organising monthly sharing and contacting colleagues through WhatsApp and email, it was difficult to raise new issues every meeting. This is, of course, a good thing, and it's great that my colleagues had few issues yet still had the opportunities to raise them. However, this has added to my own workload for very little benefit....”*

*“It was very few class reps that came to meetings at the campus I go to (Dumfries campus). It made it difficult to develop a class rep culture where we could discuss issues and collaboratively raise them at SSLC meetings. There were more lecturers and uni staff at the meetings than students…”*

*“I initially became class rep because no-one else volunteered for the role, but I'm actually really grateful to have had the opportunity to do this. It has been interesting to get a better understand of how the university works, and to see that students are listened to. It will also be a good thing to have on my HEAR transcript and CV…”*

*“Being a class rep on a satellite campus (Dumfries) I felt very far removed from the going ons of the SRC. Communication when present was good and helpful but there were often times when things were presented to us at the last minute/with very slow and often contradictory responses.…”*

*“Being a Class Rep for an Erasmus program has its unique challenges. A lot of the issues I raised for my fellow students regarded travel, the next school, and visa info. There was less support or space to discuss these issues more broadly, and there was no opportunity to meet other Erasmus course Class Reps which would have been appreciated....”*

*“As the class representative for a year, I embarked on an exhilarating journey that exposed me to a myriad of remarkable personalities from SRC, provided me with an in-depth understanding of how the university operates, enabled me to extend a helping hand to my peers, and instilled a sense of pride within me as I contributed to leaving behind a course that was marginally better for the incoming students.…”*

*“I enjoyed meeting with staff and some students .... We had a lot of difficulties with gathering feedback though. We provided platforms where people could get in touch with us, but we barely got any comments on the course. It is difficult to improve on the courses we take if there is no student feedback.”*

*“It was a bit challenging to find time as a part-time online student. But the needed information was easily accessible and the SSLC meetings were very cordial and helpful. In addition, it is challenging to collect enough feedback from classmates if you are studying online as there are not many opportunities for informal interaction and the response rate is low…”*

*“The role of class rep should be adapted to meet the needs of post-graduate students who are also employed full-time as a one-size fits all approach based around the nature of undergraduate courses is not fit for purpose…”*

*“The class rep conference was interesting and useful. I am looking forwards to receiving follow up information about it. I think it should be made compulsory in some form, for all class reps, and that it would be more useful if we could have it at the beginning of term…”*

# Conclusions & Recommendations

Across the eight years that the SRC has evaluated the Class Rep experience, certain positive outcomes have been reported – and for specific aspects this is still the case this year:

* The perceived **appeal of the role** is increasing with more Class Reps being given the position by an election rather than being the only volunteer. It is still important therefore that the SRC continue to raise awareness of the posts and the transferable skills that come from being in the role
* Moving the **SRC Class Rep training online has been a success**. Most participants are clear that it had prepared them well for their role. There were however some comments around more Class Rep activities where they could meet others, build connections, and have the option of peer support. Consideration should be given to other face-to-face events early in the academic year.
* Class Reps on the whole find it **easy to raise issues at the SSLC** and a large increase in those finding these meetings an effective vehicle to raise issues. University staff mostly make themselves available out with meetings and reach out to offer support. It would be beneficial to communicate these encouraging results to academic staff.
* There is still a **plethora of changes resulting from Class Rep input** – especially around improved access to course materials and changes to lectures and tutorial arrangements.
* The **personal development of the Class Reps continues to be the one of the main benefits** of the role and is highly valued by respondents and in addition greatly enhance employment prospects. These skills are appreciated and attaining such a level of accomplishment during their tenure they believe has brought an added value to the role. As mentioned previously – this is the strongest message to send out when recruiting Class Reps. It may help to add an additional recognition to the role such as online badge as evidence of their position.

Although this year’s survey signals that the Class Rep model works well – there was a minority of results this year that may require further consideration:

* Nearly a quarter of Class Reps are **unaware if any action has been taken on issues** they raised at SSLC meetings. This is the same level as last year. Although the majority still perceive this model of discussion effective the lack of knowledge around next steps is concerning. Training should ensure that Class Reps are aware of the procedure to investigate what happens to issues they have raised
* Although seen as an effective vehicle, one in five Class Reps still **feel they made no impact** as a Class Rep. Next year’s survey should include a supplementary question to unpick the perceived reasons behind this thinking.
* There remains a number of comments around **scheduling conflicts** resulting in Class Reps being unable to attend SSLC meetings. Consideration should be given to requesting the dates of SSLC meetings to be agreed and confirmed at the beginning of each semester. Allowing Class Reps a larger period of time to avoid clashes.
* Many Class Reps do not feel additional support from the SRC was necessary during the year. However, the **significant increase in those using the Advice Centre** indicates that further help has been necessary.

Although the new Teams channel for Class Reps was utilised by some, the majority had not participated, were aware or simply unsure of it. Increased communications to highlight the benefits of this channel may be necessary.