

STUDENT VOICE

HANDBOOK



2020/2021

Why should You get involved?

Have you ever felt frustrated with politics? Have you ever felt powerless in the face of Climate Change? Have you ever felt like giving up because the struggle against institutional discrimination is too hard? Do you feel unable to affect change?



THEN YOU, MY FRIEND, HAVE PICKED
UP THE RIGHT BOOKLET!



I am writing to tell you about an **opportunity** that you, as a student at GSA, have to **affect change**. I can't promise that we will fix a broken system, or change the world, definitely not in one year. But we can take a step towards tackling issues like those mentioned above. This is a long game, institutional changes unfortunately take time, maybe more time than we will spend at this school. That is why we need an **engaged, political and socially aware student body**, who can pass on the torch, as it were, to ensure those who come after us continue the discussion once we are gone.

The GSASA team and GSA have been working on the student representative system for years, and it's pretty good! As a Student Representative YOU will help create this collective memory that's needed to **ensure the fight for a better student experience continues**.

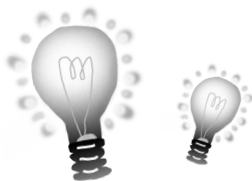
Another massive benefit of becoming a Student Rep is the professional practice skills you can gain. You will participate in professionally chaired and minuted meetings, you will have opportunities to participate in and help run forums and workshops, you will understand some of the inner workings of a Higher Education Institution. As somebody who was a Class Rep and Lead Rep I can tell you these skills are useful and transferable.



However, there are **many ways** to be involved, so if going to meetings to fight via bureaucratic processes isn't for you then, we here at the GSASA have other platforms for you! So stay engaged and critical, we won't always get what we want but we must **always try**.

Thanks for your time and power to you!

Ale
(Student President)

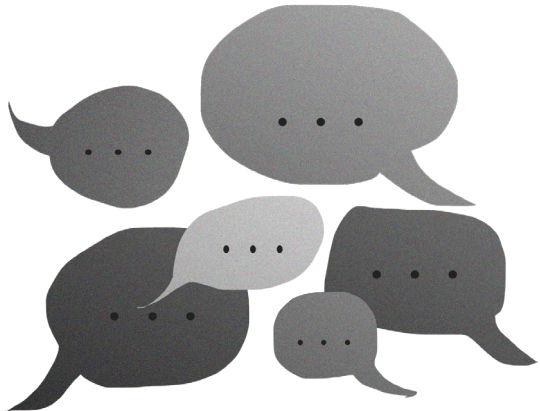


Class and Lead Representatives!

The Student Representative system has been designed by GSASA and GSA in partnership with students to ensure **as many decisions as possible made at GSA are informed by the Student Voice.**

YOU are central to making this system work, and if YOU decide to become a rep you will be a conduit for student opinion between the student body and GSA staff.

There are two types : **Class Reps and Lead Reps.**



Class Reps

Class Reps act as an official spokesperson for the students in their year group on issues affecting their programme - they are there to **empower the student voice and make it heard.** If you want to be part of a movement that can **influence real change** in GSA and the Students Association then this role is for you!

The relationship between staff and students should be a two-way exchange and Class Reps are central to ensuring this primary channel of communication. The Class Rep's role is to collect and vocalise the views of the class to staff members and similarly to feed information back from the staff to the students, keeping the class up to date on any changes that are happening. The Class Rep can be very powerful in situations, for example, when there is a general need for an extension or an extra tutorial before a hand in by the majority of the class.

Class Reps are automatically enrolled onto the Student Representative Council, a representative body of the GSA Students' Association. Through this YOU can make decisions and influence the Students' Associations activities and our student community's voice with regards to social justice issues and distribute funds and resources to benefit your student community. Find more information about the SRC on page 8&9.

Lead Reps



The Lead Reps' role is similar to the Class Reps, but they represent and speak on **behalf of their whole school** rather than just their class. They play a **vital role** in driving forward some of the **most pressing issues** that are affecting students across all years and specialisms of their school. Lead Reps should be enriching their knowledge of the issues facing their peers across their school by attending class meetings and keeping in regular contact with the Class Reps and different staff members of their schools. Lead Reps will also sit on the Student Voice Working Group, which will constantly be reviewing and ensuring the effectiveness of the Student Representative System.

If you want to: encourage and lead a team of Class Reps, help join the dots and find commonalities throughout GSA, lead on data collection projects, work in partnership with senior staff on effecting positive change in GSA and the Students Association then this role is for you! The extra responsibility and time that comes with this role is reflected in the award of an honorarium of £250 per semester.

How can I become a Student Rep?

The number of Class Reps needed to effectively represent a class varies a little depending on the specialism and the class size, but there are generally 1-2 per class across UG and PG programmes. The same goes for Lead Reps, in that there is generally 1 Lead Rep per school for both UG and PG but in some cases it is necessary for there to be 2.



Class and Lead Reps both hand in nominations forms to apply for the role. Appointing a Class Rep can be done fairly informally with a vote during a class meeting, whereas Lead Reps need to attend a short interview process with the Students' Association and staff in your school.

What is expected of me as a Student Rep?

Class Reps have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the student experience and to do this they need to be committed to **maintaining an open dialogue with their classmates on their experiences.**

They need to be unbiased, approachable and willing to go the extra step to encourage participation from everyone.

Class Reps should organise informal Class Meetings with their peers and tutors as well attend **Staff Student Consultative Committees.**

Lead Reps should attend Class Meetings, SSCCs and will also attend their school's Board of Studies. Lead Reps also play a lead role in the organisation and convening of the School Forum, an open forum that fosters discussion about school wide matters in addition to the SSCC. Any student can attend these forums, where as it is only student reps who attend the SSCC.



Class Meetings!

Class meetings are organised by Class Reps and tutors for their class and are vital to ensuring regular, ongoing and constructive communication between students and programme leaders. Some of the issues brought to this meeting will be resolved locally through discussion and negotiation with tutors and departmental staff - where an issue is harder to resolve or where it connects to other departmental issues in the School the class feedback collected from Class Meetings (and from any other method of communication the Class Rep has utilised e.g. surveys, social media outreach etc) is taken directly to the SSCC, where it is supported at the next level.

Lead Reps should try to attend as many of these as possible as they will help the Lead Rep greatly to understand where the issues lie within their school. However, where it is not possible to attend a Lead Rep should try and meet with the Class Reps to receive this feedback at another time.

Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC)

There is one Undergrad SSCC and one Postgrad SSCC per semester, per School. SSCCs are chaired by a senior member of staff from the School and both Class and Lead Reps attend this meeting. Also in attendance are Heads of Department, members of the Support Staff teams (library learning and resources, technical services, sustainability officer) and, where possible, the Head of School.



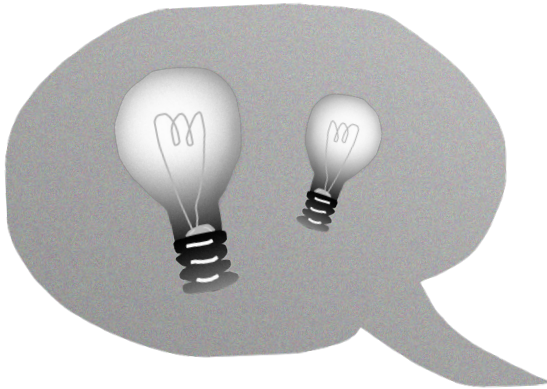
SSCCs should:

- Discuss the operation of the programme in the context of:
 - > Matters arising from student feedback (from Class and Lead Reps).
 - > Student welfare and domestic issues pertinent to the programme.
 - > Suggested changes or improvements in its operation to feed into the Board of Studies or any other academic committee,
 - > External examiners reports.
- Discuss suggestions for changes in the programme content.
- Exchange ideas relevant to the programme.
- Report to the Board of Studies or other appropriate bodies.

Minutes from SSCC meetings are submitted to Boards of Studies and any ideas or issues that have a wider relevance to GSA, or that need consideration beyond your department, will be raised at this level.

Board of Studies

Boards of Studies discuss and make recommendations to higher up academic committees on all matters relating to the Learning and Teaching. Similarly, the BoS also discusses and makes recommendations to the Research and Enterprise Committee on all matters relating to research, research degrees, knowledge exchange and enterprise within the scope of the Board.



As well as academic staff, representatives from Learning Resources, Technical Support and Estates attend the BoS.

The Lead Reps are required to attend their School's Board of Studies.

Board of Studies should:

- Feedback to you on how the School/GSA has addressed the issues you raise.
- Scrutinise and discuss approval of changes to degree and credit-bearing provision overseen by the Board.
- Make recommendations to **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee** on:
 - > Proposals for new programmes and courses of study.
 - > Major and minor amendments to existing programmes and courses.
 - > Proposals for modifications to academic regulations and/or assessment arrangements.
- Report to the **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee** on:
 - > Action taken or proposed as a result of student feedback, or academic developments and relevant planning.
 - > Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting.
 - > Periodic Review.

School Forum



Each of GSA's five Schools will host a once-per-semester School Forum, organised and convened by the Lead Reps and supported by the Class Reps. The School Forum is an opportunity for regular and open discussion on all matters of concern for that School. It is a good opportunity for all students to get to hear about changes being made in response to Student feedback and to speak to issues raised by other students about all aspects of their experience. It is also a useful occasion for hearing back from the student body about things that are improving and working well, as well as things that might be shared from one school to another.



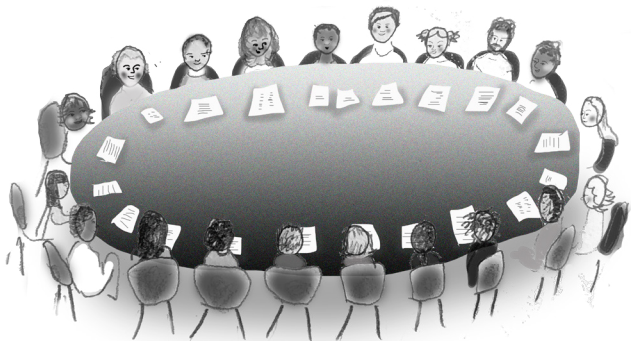
Student Representative Council (SRC)

This year, Class Reps are now automatically enrolled onto the Student Representative Council. Through this YOU can make decisions and influence the Students' Associations activities and our student community's voice with regards to social justice issues such as Climate Emergency or decolonising the curriculum etc.

Joining the SRC is also a really brilliant opportunity to gain lots of professional practice skills that are hard to obtain elsewhere or as part of your usual university experience.

It's easiest to think of the SRC as **the representation committee hosted within the Students' Association**. The SRC is so important to us - we can't function without them! The SRC works with the student sabbaticals (Student President and Events Convenor) to **deliver a student union that works in the best interests of its student body (YOU!)**.

The SRC can have a say in everything, from what events we have on, to how our funds and opportunities for students are distributed.



The SRC exists as three committees that help to keep this place running.

- **Programming Committee :**



- > They oversee and approve applications for Student Fundraisers.
- > They discuss the running of the Students' Association, and help to programme the club nights, workshops, performances, and anything extra curricular.
- > Their voice is at the forefront of decisions made at the Students' Association.
- > They express their opinion on what works well, and what doesn't.
- > They are a creative group who push new ideas.

For more information about the committee, becoming a member, and meeting minutes, visit the SRC Programming Committee page.

- **Funding Committee :**



- > They discuss and allocate the funding which the Students' Association awards for Student Initiated Projects.
- > They help ensure that the Student Association's are being fair in supporting students, and aren't overlooking any issues.
- > They are a supportive group who help projects find valuable resources.

For more information about the committee, becoming a member, and meeting minutes, visit the SRC Funding Committee page.

- **Societies Committee :**



- > They oversee the activities of all our society groups at the Students' Association.
- > They feed back on any recent or upcoming society activities.
- > They approve new societies and monitor the funding made available to existing societies.
- > They are a sociable group who bring people and projects together.

USEFUL CONTACTS!

STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Illustrations by Bethany Millican, 4th year ComDes

