

Your Voice
Only Louder

Student Representation System

Rep System Guide 2023



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Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to act as a refresher to those who will be working alongside the Guild's Rep team for the 2023/24 academic year. The guide contains a lot of information about the system that will be useful to those who are returning to the system or those who are new to it. Please use this guide as your first port of call for any queries that you may have with regards to the rep's system.

1. Changes to the Rep Team

There have been a number of changes to the Rep Team over the last few months. We now have a Senior Representation Coordinator along with 2 new Representation Coordinators who will support the Representation System over the coming months. Our new team consists of:

Senior Representation Coordinator: Chris Black

Representation Coordinator: Solomon Gibson

Representation Coordinator: Amelia McLoughlan

Representation Coordinator (6-month FTC until November 2023): Louie/Sophie-Mai Salmon

The team will be organised to provide support across the 5 colleges of the university:

- College of Social Science: Solomon
- College of Arts and Law: Solomon
- College of Engineering and Physical Sciences: Amelia
- College of Medical and Dental Sciences: Amelia
- College of Life and Environment Sciences: Louie/Sophie-Mai

Any and all queries relating to the student rep system should go to the student rep inbox. You can contact us on this via studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk

Please ensure that you use the student reps inbox before contacting individuals. This allows us to cover everyone's needs and requests. In the event that your coordinator is away from work, we can ensure that your email is picked up by someone else in the meantime.



2. Changes to Summer Recruitment

In the 23/24 academic year, there will not be a summer recruitment or election process for elected rep positions. Please note that this change to the schedule is currently on trial. We will review the engagement outcome in 2024 and decide whether to make this a permanent change.

Course reps can be recruited from September until the end of October. The recruitment and election for the elected roles have been moved to allow colleges more time to plan for the upcoming academic year.

Instead of the previous Summer period being the focus of the Rep Recruitment and Election, these will now be moved to the Autumn term. For the 23/24 academic year, we will be holding 2 recruitment windows. These windows are as follows:

- 1st September 2023 – 31st October 2023
- 8th January 2024 – 9th February 2024



3. Process changes to the Rep System (From 23/24)

3.1 Rep Code of Conduct and Misconduct

This year, the student reps team have bought an official code of conduct to the system alongside processes and procedures for misconduct in the event that these codes are incorrectly followed.

As a Student Rep I agree that I:

1. Will actively engage with the Rep System and Rep Community throughout the year.
2. Will deliver feedback at key points within the academic year and endeavour to close the feedback loop where possible.
3. Will use my position as a Student Rep to the academic benefit of all students.
4. Will respect all students' contributions to the feedback process and to our academic community equally when gathering feedback and representing students.
5. Will deliver all feedback and discussion with students and staff in a respectful and reasonable manner at all times, even where I may disagree.
6. Will honestly and constructively represent the views of my cohort, as I understand them, when delivering feedback.
7. Will attend committee meetings relevant to my role wherever possible; and where absence is unavoidable, to inform the relevant chairs or organisers at the earliest opportunity prior to the meeting.
8. Will engage fully and enthusiastically with the Rep System to the best of my ability and understand that I am able to seek support from the Guild of Students and my School where I am uncertain or facing difficulty

By agreeing to this Code of Conduct, I agree to uphold all of the above to the best of my ability, and understand that failure to do so may result in my removal as a Student Rep.

3.1.1 Misconduct complaints procedure

In the event of this code not being adhered to by a rep, there is now a misconduct and removal process which can be followed.

In the first instance, we want to empower university staff to be able to converse with their reps about negative behaviour towards the code of conduct so that it can be resolved informally. We understand that these things can happen which is why we invite this informal resolution first. We also understand that there may be instances where staff are not comfortable with having these conversations with their reps. In this case, the reps team will be on-hand for support.

From September 2023, there will be a form on the Rep Hub part of the Guild of Students website. The form will ask the person complaining which element of the CoC they believe that a rep has not abided by, how they have broken this code and any evidence that they may have to support this.

When the complaint has been sent, it will be reviewed by the Senior Representation Coordinator who will decide as to whether the complaint is within the scope of misconduct. If this is the case, both parties will be informed and a panel will be formed to investigate the complaint. The panel will consist of:

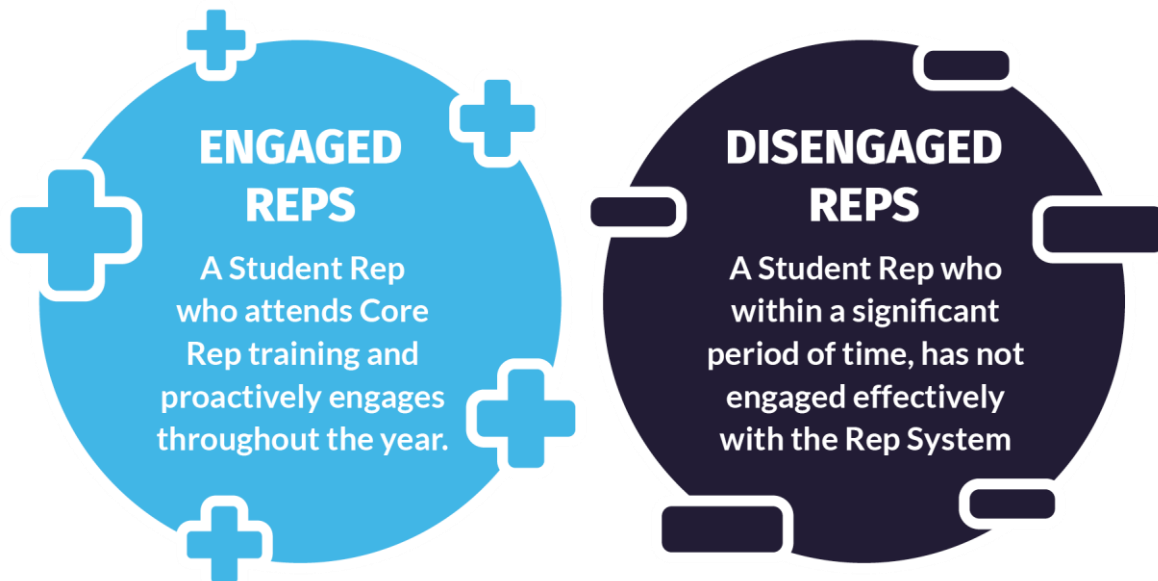
- 1 Elected Full-Time Officer
- The Student Voice and Advice Manager OR the Director of Community of Representation
- 1 University Staff member from SRSAB
- Senior Representation Coordinator – Attending meetings to clerk/investigate

Once the panel have met to review the complaint and had a chance to hear from both parties, a decision will be made. There are 2 possible outcomes for a decision:

- Complaint Upheld
 - o Resolution plan – A personal resolution plan (with a probationary period) may be appropriate to give to the Rep as an opportunity to develop through additional support or training.
 - o Rep Withdrawn/Removed – The Rep may be withdrawn from the Rep system depending on the Code of Conduct and available options for resolution.
- Complaint Rejected
 - o The rep in question can continue in their role. Work may be undertaken by the Guild/Registry/College to address any disingenuous complaints.

3.1.2 Rep Removal Procedure

In the event of a Rep being found to not engaging with the rep system, there is now a process and procedure for removal.



We understand that there can be external pressures that Student Reps may be experiencing. We have designed this procedure to be supportive of our Reps. To do this, we were able to identify key opportunities for Reps to engage with over a 6-week period. These opportunities are outlined below:

1. Completing additional Training with the Guild or College
2. Attending SSF Meetings or sending apologies and written feedback prior to the meeting
3. Attending or arranging Rep Social opportunities
4. Evidence of conducting feedback gathering activities
5. Attending SSF pre-meetings or meeting briefings with the Guild.
6. Attending check-in meetings with Guild Staff.

If a Rep is able to present evidence of any other activities that are not defined by this list, we can also take these into consideration.

If a college believes that one (or multiple) of their Reps are actively not engaging with the Rep system, we would ask them to check-in with their reps via email. The purpose of the email would serve as a gentle reminder to the Rep(s) of their role and responsibilities.



From this initial E-Mail, it is likely that 1 of 3 outcomes can occur;

1. A Rep replies to the email and advises that they wish to step-down from their role. In this case, the Rep will need to complete a withdrawal request on the Guild Website.
2. A Rep responds and states that they have been engaging with the system. In this case, the reps team will work with the student to ensure that they are engaging with the correct parts of the system.
3. The Rep does not respond to the email within 2 weeks. In this case, the reps team will check the rep's engagement.
 - a. If the rep has engaged, we will inform both parties to ensure that they are communicating.
 - b. If the rep has not engaged, we will inform the rep that they are being removed from the system. They have the right to appeal this process, if they choose to, they will be entered into a 4-week probation plan.

3.2 Rep Improvement Plan

As part of feedback from the university, the student voice team and the Guild, the rep team have implemented an improvement plan that will be used as the focus of the rep team for a period of the next 12 months. The improvement plan states the following:

Recruitment	Training	Support	Recognition	Partnerships	Enablers
Improve the quality of information provided to university staff	Track and communicated the completion rates of all core training across the system.	Create briefings for all relevant education meetings within the system	Review the 'Rep of the Month' system and evaluate effectiveness – prepare for delivery in 23/24	Review our current college contacts, identify the gaps and support the rep team with developing and maintaining relationships with their team.	Review the communications plan for the team. Ensure that content is engaging, regular and focused on driving success.
Improve the way that we track our data in the system and ensure that access is shared only where appropriate	Discuss with colleges how to merge aspects of training and recognise students upon completion	Create a template, guide, timeline and a recipients list for a new, rep newsletter which will be delivered to the reps from September 2023	Improve the 'Find my Rep' function on the Guild website and increase promotion.		Review website content.
Successfully support the delivery of the Autumn 2023 recruitment process	Begin to develop a skills tracker for our rep roles which identifies and coordinates relevant and engaging training for all roles	Review and evaluate the current Rep Fund system with a plan to increase knowledge and engagement	Successful preparation, delivery and promotion of the Rep Awards 2024		
		Find a process in which student reps can easily reach out and book a time-slot with the rep team.			



3.3 Academic Engagement Fund

The Academic Engagement Fund is funding delivered by the Guild of Students, that Reps across the university can apply for; to support their work in gathering and delivering feedback. Reps are able to apply for up to £150 in each application period (usually a term) in order to provide incentives, events and engagement tools in aid of gathering feedback. The goal is to encourage active and creative feedback collection, networking and insights that should be delivered by Reps in SSFs and other feedback spaces.

Requirements:

- **Current Rep** - Applicants must be registered reps; this means being nominated/ elected and also having completed the Guild's core Canvas training and induction module.
- **Criteria** - Applicants must be able to demonstrate through their application how the Academic engagement fund will be used to gather feedback from their cohort and enable them to represent peers and/or how it will enrich their cohorts experience and course engagement.
 - **Feedback** – Demonstrating how they will collect, record and report on feedback into the Reps System.
 - **Enrichment** – Detailing how the proposed initiative will enrich the cohorts experience and engagement with their course and the Reps System.

The Academic Engagement fund is a reimbursement scheme, and Reps will need to keep receipts and ensure your application is approved prior to expenditure so that we can reimburse them appropriately. If Reps are unable to purchase the items/service required themselves, or are spending money within the Guild, they can get support from the Reps Team to arrange alternatives.

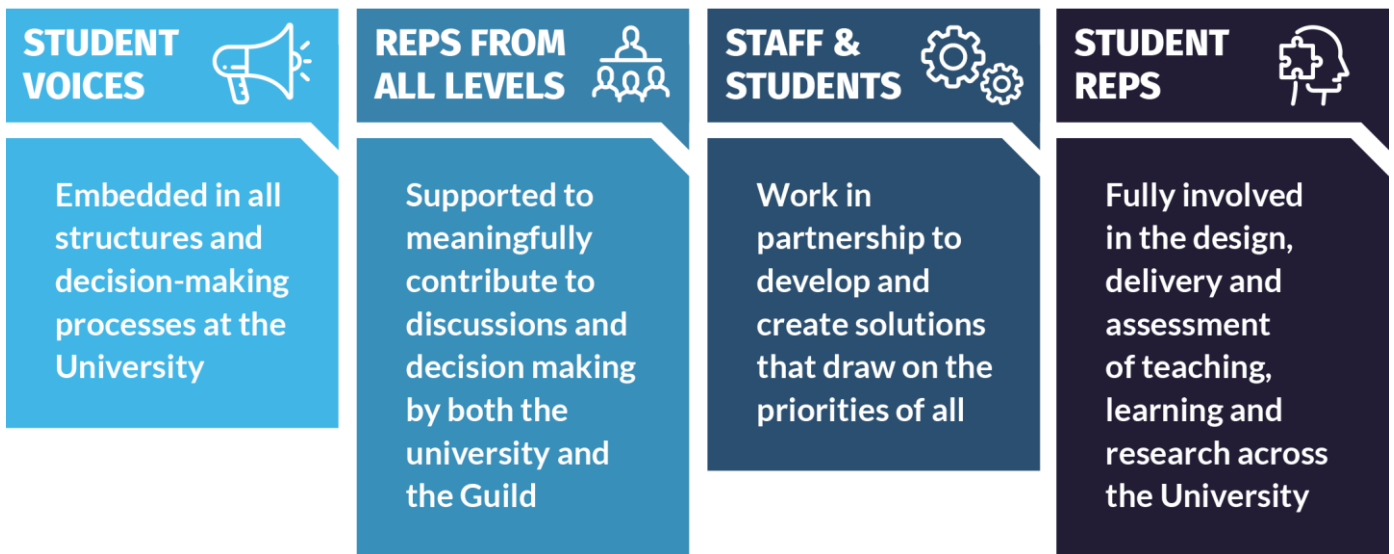
For details on where applications can be made and for any other queries please get in touch with the Reps Team at the Guild by emailing studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk

The Academic Engagement Fund replaces the previous "Rep Fund" initiative, if you have any queries please get in touch with our team.



4. General Rep Recruitment Guidance

4.1 Core Principles in the Rep System



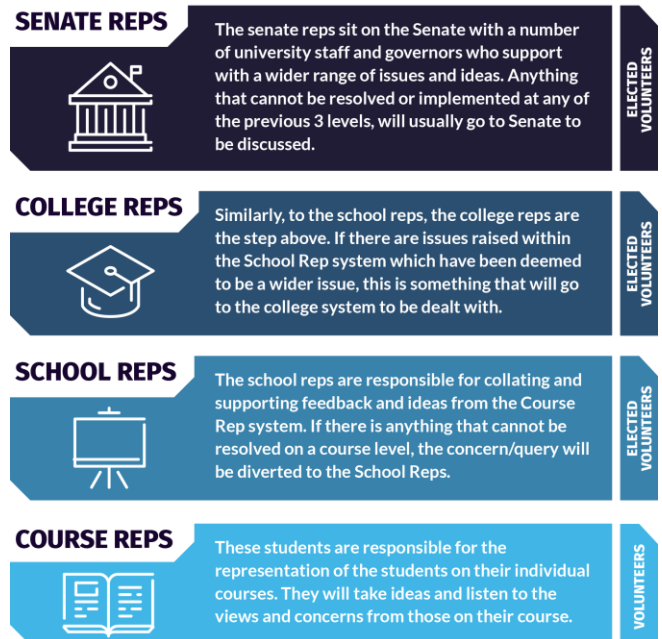
There are a number of positions available in the UoB rep system. There are 2 distinctive roles which are important to note.

The first role is voluntary only. This role applies to course level reps. They volunteer themselves through the website, once they have completed the core training (provided by the Guild) they are considered course reps.

The other roles available to UoB students are the elected roles.

These students nominate themselves via the website but are elected in by the student cohort at a later date.

There are lots of details and guidance available to university and guild staff to support with the recruitment process. A brief overview of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are available throughout this document.





4.2 Student Staff Forum (SSF)

Student reps are responsible for attending the SSF meetings that are relevant to them. SSF meetings take place between 3-4 times per academic year. These meetings are the opportunities for student reps to take their feedback to the college and discuss what can be done to support them. This is a very good way of being able to discuss relevant issues with the correct people in a big forum rather than finding people on an individual basis.

Student Reps are required to follow a code of conduct at all times while representing their cohort and feeding back. If they are unable to attend an SSF meeting, they must inform the relevant parties as well as sending their apologies.

When attending an SSF, student reps must always remember to deliver their feedback in a professional and respectful manner. They should maintain their level of respect and professionalism when they receive feedback too.

Once minutes for the SSF meetings are completed, please ensure that they are sent to the student reps inbox via studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk

4.3 How Recruitment Works

Students can volunteer themselves for the role via the online portal (located on the guild website). College, School and Senate reps are elected by the Guild.

Staff and students work together throughout the academic year to understand and remove the barriers that prevent students from volunteering. This ensures that the system is accessible for everyone.

We focus recruitment communications on the values within the rep roles, the work that has been achieved and the ways in which reps are awarded and recognised.

The Guild provides an online space for rep recruitment. This is where students can go to find their reps online.

Students are encouraged to volunteer for the role through informal, non-competitive processes which encourage diversity in student representation.

Schools and departments promote these roles, alongside the volunteering process, in line with the agreed promotion and marketing timeline.

The Guild provides marketing materials for colleges and schools which links to student recruitment. The Guild promotes academic representation to all students.



Rep recruitment schedules are coordinated by the Guild which takes place by the start of September for the September programmes.

For the 23/24 academic year, the Guild will be co-ordinating a 4-week window from January to February where the January intake of students can sign-up to be a rep.

The Guild, via the Rep Portal reporting tool, aims to provide contact details of Reps to appropriate contacts according to the agreed schedule.

The Guild works with relevant College and School staff who are responsible for the election of College and School reps.

School and College Reps are elected at all levels of Higher Education, including Undergraduate and Postgraduate, to sit on the appropriate committees according to their roles.

Details of College and School reps are shared within and across colleges to support and work on cross-College projects and further issues.

4.4 Support and Training

Core training is provided by the Guild which is essential and is required to be completed before student reps can undertake any training assigned by colleges. The training plan is a partnership which is based and led by student feedback.

Forums are responsible for inducting reps to their meetings, providing overview, and ensuring that they feel welcome to their role.

Training and support empower reps to contribute meaningfully to discussions about teaching and learning. It also supports them to understand how data and feedback are used to support their contributions.

Reps are provided with tailored programme and school level inductions before their first forum meetings.

The Guild provides a rolling programme of skills and development training sessions for its reps. Information about sessions is shared with Reps by their departments. Reps are encouraged to attend these programmes.

Reps are encouraged to develop their community through events and communication before their first SSF meeting.

The University of Birmingham provides guidance documents on the SLC role prior to the academic session.



4.5 Reps to Students Ratio

The ideal rep to Student ratio is 1 rep to every 15 students. We recommend that Colleges look into finding ways in which they can make the ratio work for them; such as, aiming for 1 to 40 before finding where a higher student to rep ratio works and where a lower one might be better suited.

We also encourage open conversations with your representation coordinator to discuss your student to rep ratio if you need some support with this.

4.6 Over-Subscription Guide

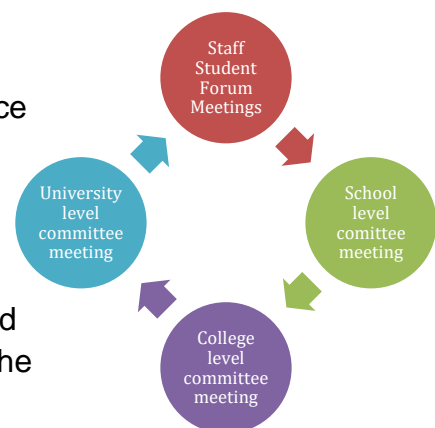
In the event of an over-subscription taking place, we have written a plan to support the relevant parties in accommodating applications when the volume of applications approaches or crosses the cap threshold.

During the application process, we are looking for students to answer these questions (or similar ones) in no more than 50 words each. We have opted for shorter answers and more questions because it gives us a better indication on who is applying, what their skills and abilities are and how these will support the student cohort. These questions will be completed by all students at the application process so that we can prepare in the event of oversubscription rather than reacting to it after it has happened.

More information on the over-subscription process will follow in a separate document

4.7 Communications and resources

- The SSF is provided with the resources and guidance needed to function effectively
- Student reps are responsible for gathering feedback across their cohort
- The Guild, SEOs and SLCs work together to ensure that reps can communicate with students and each other. Everyone will work together to support the closure of the feedback loop.
- Once the feedback has gone the whole way through the rep system, the completed feedback along with key actions and communications should then go to the student reps' team via the rep inbox (studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk)



Schools, SEOs and SLCs promote reps to students via regular communication. This could be social media, canvas training or newsletters.



Department reps provide a standard email address for students to communicate with their reps.

Departments provide mailing lists of students to reps or assist reps with their communications when requested.

Reps are provided with a timeline for departmental meetings. They are also provided with an agenda, previous minutes, and paper at least a week in advance of the meeting.

Staff support is provided to ensure minutes are taken. Reps do not take forum minutes. Once minutes are written, they are provided to the college CAPP, all members of the meeting and the guild.

Conversations between reps, staff and departments are maintained outside of formal Forum meetings – this remains in line with the rep code of conduct. The Guild provides funding for the Rep Projects via the Student Rep Fund.

Resources required are made available to reps in good time before Staff Student Forums. These include:

- Student survey data
- External examiners report
- School Education Plans

All rep achievements are shared via appropriate communications and engagement activities. These achievements are also shared with the reps team.

4.8 Partnerships

Student reps are seen to be key parts of departmental and school structures

The student voice in meetings is respected in the same way as staff or individual communications. All contributions are valued appropriately while always following the Rep Code of Conduct.

All School and college reps are full members of the appropriate committees.

SSF nominates a rep to co-chair the meeting. From 2023/24, the Guild will be providing co-chair training.

Student voices are well engaged and valued in learning and teaching, Quality Assurance and programme changes
Relevant UoB parties are invited to SSFs.



A mid-year evaluation is to be completed by the SSF committee to provide any and all updates on the discussions from the first semester. This should be completed and supplied to appropriate members in good time before the next scheduled SSF.

An annual report form is to be completed by members of the SSF at the end of the academic session to provide an overview of all key topics raised and actioned throughout the academic year. Code of Conduct items should be discussed.

The university registry collaborates with The Guild to produce a School and College-wide summary of all SSFs that take place.

Topics which are raised and discussed in SSFs are shared appropriately with the wider student cohort.

Reps reflect on their achievements and how this contributes to their personal development.

4.9 College Level Responsibility

College reps receive suitable training from The Guild which includes an introduction to committees, a briefing on key college issues and a chance to network with other College Reps.

Committee papers should be provided to committee members and the Guild at least 1 week in advance of meetings. The Guild can then provide briefings to the relevant reps.

Colleges discuss common topics raised by other members of the Rep system at a College Student Rep Forum which recommends actions passed on to the College Education Committee.



5. Frequently Asked Questions

5.1 What is a Student Rep?

The Student Representation System is a crucial part of the relationship between the University of Birmingham and the Guild of Students. The aim of the system is to give students and researchers a voice which can be heard.

All of our student reps are volunteers who work on behalf of their cohort. There are a number of cohorts that a student can represent:

- COURSE REP (VOLUNTEERS)
 - o These students are responsible for the representation of the students on their individual courses. They will take ideas and listen to the views and concerns from those on their course.
- SCHOOL REP (ELECTED VOLUNTEERS)
 - o The school reps are responsible for collating and supporting feedback and ideas from the Course Rep system. If there is anything that cannot be resolved on a course level, the concern/query will be diverted to the School Reps.
- COLLEGE REP (ELECTED VOLUNTEERS)
 - o Similarly, to the school reps, the college reps are the step above. If there are issues raised within the School Rep system which have been deemed to be a wider issue, this is something that will go to the college system to be dealt with.
- SENATE REP (ELECTED VOLUNTEERS)
 - o The senate reps sit on the Senate with a number of university staff and governors who support with a wider range of issues and ideas. Anything that cannot be resolved or implemented at any of the previous 3 levels, will usually go to Senate to be discussed.

Reps are responsible for working with the University and the Guild on behalf of their student cohort to ensure that their opinions and ideas are heard. This system is designed to support all students and researchers to ensure that they are involved in all levels of decision-making.

Reps are also responsible for ensuring that they are following their Code of Conduct at all times while undertaking their role. The Code of Conduct can be found under section 3.1 of this document. If you believe that a rep is not adhering to this conduct, you can get in touch with the student reps team via studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk or by using the complaints form on the Guild website.

5.2 What are the main responsibilities of Student Reps?

There are varying responsibilities for student rep from role to role. Overall, all of our student rep volunteers are responsible for gathering feedback about academic experience from both students and researchers on the programme which they represent. Reps then take this feedback to Staff Student Forums (SSFs) where they present their findings in a confidential and respectful way. Solutions for the issues raised are discussed in the SSFs which then gives guidance to the parties on their actions and next steps.

Both academic and administrative staff attend the SSFs alongside student reps for other programmes in the department. The SSFs take place at least 3 times per academic year.

The role descriptions can be found via the **resources** section of the rep hub on the guild website.

5.3 What can Reps achieve?

All student reps are crucial to the representation of the student voice within the University and the Guild. Reps are responsible for making impactful changes on their programme, their school, college and even the university as a whole. Over the years, rep feedback from programme and course level has led to university-wide change. We have seen reps make hundreds of changes each year. Some of which can significantly improve student experience both on and off campus.

5.4 What can students gain by being a rep?

There are many skills and qualities that students can gain from volunteering as a rep. Some of these skills include leadership, communication and time management skills. The role itself gives you the opportunity to have a voice for yourself and your cohort at the university. There is constantly opportunity to make impactful changes for yourself and your cohort. Reps are given full, transferrable training which will support them in developing themselves.

We also like to recognise our reps at any opportunity that we can. Rep of the Month and Rep awards are just some of the ways in which we do this. Reps are nominated for these awards and are rewarded with a voucher.

Reps also benefit from added information to their enhanced transcripts which supports them in their next step after university. These comments will give an oversight into what role student reps undertook which will be detailed on the



transcript. For more information about what roles are available for students, please see section 5.1.

An enhanced transcript will display all of the Guild volunteering work that a Rep has undertaken as well as their academic accomplishments. The enhanced transcript is made available to students at the end of their degree.

5.5 How are Reps recognised for their work?

Part of a good rep system involves the celebration and successes of our student reps through events and incentives.

Once you have completed your time as a rep, you will be eligible for an enhanced transcript. This transcript is made available to you at the end of your studies and it outlines all of your achievements including your status as a rep.

We also have an annual rep awards ceremony which celebrates all of the fantastic things that our reps have achieved. The rep awards are an opportunity for students to be recognised for all of their hard work as a rep throughout the academic year. Take a look at our 2023 rep awards results here:

<https://www.guildofstudents.com/news/article/website/Rep-Awards-Results/>

If you have any further questions related to this document or if you have a query about something that isn't covered in this document, please don't hesitate to reach out to us via email:

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