



Education Quality and Policy Office

Guidance

<b>Title</b>	Standards for Student Academic Representation
<b>Purpose</b>	An outline of standards for student academic representation, to support the development and effectiveness of the academic rep system.
<b>Contact within EQPO</b>	<a href="mailto:educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk">educationalpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk</a>
<b>Approving bodies</b>	General Board's Education Committee
<b>Approval given by</b>	General Board's Education Committee (minute 569.5.4)
<b>Date of approval</b>	30 June 2022
<b>Date of implementation</b>	Immediate effect
<b>Date of review</b>	June 2023, aligned with Student Consultation Framework
<b>Version</b>	V1.0, final



## STANDARDS FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

### BACKGROUND

In June 2021 GBEC recommended that Cambridge SU and the faculties and schools, in collaboration with academic reps, should agree and embed standards for student academic representation to direct the development of the academic rep system. Specific areas of development were identified. They were rep induction, responding to feedback, proportionate student consultation, and reviewing rep roles. Following a period of consultation, the standards have been produced with a view to implementation in the 2022/23 academic year, pending GBEC approval.

The standards are:

- The structure of rep roles makes sense to staff and students
- Reps receive induction training that allows them to navigate decision-making structures
- There is mutual trust between staff and student reps, regardless of whether there is agreement
- Reps know who to contact when they need something
- Reps consistently have the chance to share student priorities, informally and formally

**Required actions for faculties, departments and schools, academic reps, and Cambridge SU are outlined next to the associated standard in appendix A.**

### CONSULTATION

All schools and faculties were invited to contribute to the consultation on the standards. This consultation began in January and was based on a list of possible measures that could address areas of development identified by GBEC. Of the 24 faculties directly invited to contribute, 16 provided extensive written submissions. We also received written submissions from the School of Physical Sciences and the School of Arts and Humanities. Responses informed the development of the standards, which were shared again for further consideration in May.

All current academic reps were invited to amend and add to the standards, with around 10 actively writing sections of the final document. The impact of contributions to the recent consultation process is shown in the 'Consultation' column in the Standards document (appendix A).

Cambridge SU has ensured that the standards for academic representation are informed by student perspectives and priorities. Academic Reps have regularly discussed the development process at fortnightly meetings, and testimony provided by 2020/21 reps provided the initial direction for the development of the rep system.

## ENSURING ADHERENCE TO STANDARDS

As a result of extensive consultation with faculties, schools and departments, Cambridge SU anticipates that the standards will be met in the vast majority of cases within the first year of implementation.

Cambridge SU will run briefing sessions and provide tailored support and reminders to support staff and students to follow the behaviours outlined in the standards.

In the unlikely event that the standards are not being met, relevant faculty or department staff will work with the Cambridge SU Student Rep Coordinator to identify a solution, involving EQPO where appropriate. In monitoring adherence to the standards Cambridge SU staff will collate information about the continued viability of the standards, in order to refine them based on lessons learnt in the first year of implementation.

## TIMEFRAME FOR REVIEW

The standards will be formally reviewed in time for amendments to be approved and in place for the 2023/24 academic year. This will involve a short consultative exercise with faculties, schools, and academic reps which will seek feedback on strengths and areas of development. The outcome of this exercise, in addition to feedback gleaned from regular communication with staff and students, will inform refinements to the standards that ensure the sustainability and viability of the standards.

Cambridge SU expects that the upcoming development of a Student Consultation Framework will have implications for the application of the standards, and therefore the review will also take into account how the standards can be aligned with the new framework effectively.

## STANDARDS FOR THE ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

- The structure of rep roles makes sense to staff and students
- Reps receive induction training that allows them to navigate decision-making structures
- There is mutual trust between staff and student reps, regardless of whether there is agreement
- Reps know who to contact when they need something
- Reps consistently have the chance to share student priorities, informally and formally

	Actions required to uphold standards			
Standard	Faculties, Departments and Schools will:	Academic Reps will:	Cambridge SU will:	Consultation
The structure of rep roles makes sense to staff and students	<p>Review rep roles yearly to:</p> <p>1) Minimise duplication, especially within faculties and departments.</p> <p>2) Ensure that roles align with student courses so that students intuitively know which rep is theirs based on their course and level of study.</p> <p>In this case minimising duplication refers to removing the need for internally appointed reps to attend specific committees, by electing a sufficient number of subject reps through the SU system so that they can fill all student rep positions available between them, to ensure that there is no overlap in remits.</p>	Share information among reps within a faculty or school so that representatives are aware of issues affecting their students.	Run elections for rep roles in every faculty and school, adapting to any changes in rep roles between faculties and schools over time. Share information about the rep system with all students, oversee the 'Find My Rep' tool and support reps to regularly communicate with their students.	This is already in place in the majority of faculties who responded to the consultation, with several responses citing the efficiency of electing reps through the SU simultaneously. Concerns about removing duplication were about the possible lack of flexibility in terms of role type and eligibility in the SU election system - which Cambridge SU is now confident it can mitigate within the current elections system.

<p>Reps receive induction training that allows them to navigate decision-making structures</p>	<p>Provide a specific induction meeting and where appropriate material resources, covering governance structures in the faculty, department or school. Reps have an introductory meeting with their named contact in the faculty or school to establish the parameters of their working relationship, including the role of the named contact in assisting reps to navigate decision-making structures, for example in suggesting the best forum for a discussion on an issue of the concern to a rep.</p>	<p>Go to induction events, use training resources, and direct questions related to decision-making structures to the named faculty or school contact.</p>	<p>Induct the whole cohort of reps in the overall governance of the University, Schools, Faculties and Department that 1) covers how committee meetings are run, and 2) explains where to direct questions about faculty specific decision-making 3) aids understanding of strategic goals and develops reps ability to contribute meaningfully to high-level decision-making, 4) explains ongoing and longer term projects that reps are likely to encounter.</p> <p>Additionally, continue to liaise with faculties and departments to ensure that rep induction training reflects changes in governance structures.</p>	<p>The vast majority of responses confirmed that some type of induction within the faculty or school is already in place. In recognition of this, we have been intentionally general about the method and content of a faculty or school-specific induction in order for established good practice to be maintained.</p> <p>Several responses detailed concern about pre-meetings for reps being an additional burden on busy schedules, and therefore this suggestion has not been included here, and instead the emphasis will be on encouraging reps to make use of their named contact when deciding where to share feedback.</p>
<p>There is mutual trust between staff and student reps, regardless of whether there is agreement</p>	<p>Arrange introductory meetings between new reps and key staff members in the faculty or school. Demonstrate engagement with rep contributions; this could involve but is not limited to 1) involving reps early on in decision-making processes, even when decisions are time sensitive 2) explicitly minuting both feedback from reps in meetings and responses to concerns from faculty members, 3) share a list of actions taken as a result of</p>	<p>Attend introductory meetings with key staff. Ask the named faculty contact about the best forum to share feedback and raise concerns. When possible and reasonable, engage a broad group of</p>	<p>Provide ongoing, regular 1:1 support and coaching to reps to enable them to be solutions-focussed.</p>	<p>Responses demonstrated that introductory meetings with key staff are already in place in the vast majority of faculties and schools who responded.</p> <p>The vast majority of faculties said that rep contributions are already explicitly minuted as such, or that they are working towards this as it is recognised as good practice. Several faculties mentioned that regular updates about action taken in</p>

	academic rep feedback with students once a term.	students when collecting feedback and suggesting improvements of solutions to problems.		response to student feedback are in place with good results, and therefore we propose this should be implemented more generally.
Reps know who to contact when they need something	State a named contact for all reps within a faculty or or a school board, who will be able to provide information and advice to reps about navigating decision-making structures.	Ask questions to the named contact in order to bring ideas and feedback to the most appropriate forum.	Induct reps in general committee and board structures and empower reps to share feedback in the appropriate forum with skills and knowledge-based training.	Almost all responses described a lead contact for reps as already in place. Many highlighted the success of having encouraged reps to ask questions to the named contact and request guidance of specific papers or topics on an ad hoc basis. In recognition of the existing good practice Cambridge SU will include encouragement to stay in contact with the named contact for reps within induction training and ongoing support.
Reps consistently have the chance to share student priorities, informally and formally	Where not already in place either: 1) A standing agenda item in committee or board meetings for reps to briefly update on their work, student feedback and share ideas for change. Or: 2) A semi-regular meetings between key staff (this may be directors of education or the faculty chair) for reps to update on their work, feedback and ideas  Use a template rep update paper that can be submitted by reps who are unable to attend a committee or board meeting, to ensure any feedback or updates they have are noted.	Prepare short regular updates on ongoing work, student feedback and ideas for change.  As necessary, complete a short written update using a template to be submitted in advance of a committee or board meeting.	Provide guidance, including templates and examples, on how to prepare an impactful and useful regular update for a board, committee or standing meeting with a faculty leader.  Create a template paper for reps to complete and submit in case of absence.	Consultation responses referred to standing agenda items for rep updates as having mixed results, but they are standard practice in some meetings already. We recognise that until this academic year Cambridge SU has not been in a position to offer comprehensive support to reps who are providing regular updates, and therefore believe that continued emphasis on this as good practice will deliver better results in the future when reps get fuller support. As above, we received several responses detailing concern about the additional time burden of regular pre-meetings for reps, and can expect this would be the case for regular informal meetings too. However, some responses also highlighted the usefulness of informal

				<p>meetings between faculty staff and student reps, and therefore the suggestion of a semi-regular meeting is included as an option here.</p> <p>Reps' feedback on the introduction of regular updates at meetings included a suggestion to broaden this to include a template paper to be completed and submitted in case of absence. This has been included as this aligns with the introduction of regular updates and would not involve any additional work beyond the original suggestion.</p>
--	--	--	--	---