



Student Representative Volunteer Agreement

This Agreement has been drawn up to establish what student volunteers can expect in becoming Student Representatives (Reps), and how the Student Representative System operates within SOAS.

As volunteers Reps are not under any obligations and can step down at any time; however, to get the most out of the experience of being a rep, both personally and for the wider student body, Reps are encouraged to access the training available and apply the skills gained to ascertain and represent students views for the academic year by participating in the various meetings and forums Reps are invited to attend.

Outlined are the commitments of the School and Students' Union (SU) in running the Rep system and the reasonable expectations of what volunteers agree to do by volunteering to undertake the role. The underlying principle of the Rep system and this Volunteer Agreement is to strengthen the student voice in the decision-making around and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum, accessibility, and the student experience at SOAS.

Reasonable Expectations of Rep Volunteers

All Student Reps:

1. To coordinate with fellow Reps in the department as a team from each year and degree level, to fairly divide up who will attend the meetings and forums open to reps; this includes choosing a School-level Rep (which can be rotated within the group), and various Student Liaison and Student Interests roles (respectively, these roles link either to other established School services, or to more general activities of importance to students);
2. To collect and report module and programme-level student feedback and to articulate student views to the relevant academic and/or administrative staff;
3. To inform students of the major issues discussed in any meetings they have attended;
4. To partner with and support the School-level Student Representative by communicating student concerns and feedback for review and consideration at Departmental meetings and the School-wide Student Feedback Panel (SFP);
5. To engage with and be engaged by the student community through the SOAS Student Representative BLE page(s), the S.U website and other SOAS platforms, and to engage with S.U forums and where possible support the S.U's work around other priority areas, such as democracy and education initiatives, equality, liberation and welfare campaigns, and events and activities;
6. To listen to students, respect confidentiality guidelines and signpost available support across the School, while always maintaining a reasonable boundary between being a Rep and being a student at SOAS;



7. To attend core training sessions and consider the additional training opportunities; if unable to attend a training after having signed up, to make every effort to cancel in advance as a courtesy to the trainer and to 'free up' this space for other Representatives;
8. To attend occasional Rep briefings and meetings organised by the S.U and receive news updates on issues relevant to reps;
9. To feedback on their activity as a Rep through submitting a pro-forma report at the end of term 1 and term 2 of the academic year;
10. To alert the S.U of any ad-hoc issues which require attention at higher levels of the School, or which go beyond the role of a Representative;
11. To inform fellow students of how best to contact their Rep(s); to have their name and SOAS email accessible for student representation purposes to other Reps, the S.U, department staff and Student Experience team; to be named as a Rep on the S.U and BLE Reps web pages;
12. To help achieve student participation in departmental reviews and other quality assurance processes, and to be consulted on any reports and recommendations arising from SOAS-specific and sector-wide surveys of students;
13. In the course of volunteering as a Representative, to follow the policies and procedures pertaining to confidentiality, equality, inclusion and accessibility; by undertaking all of the core training sessions, Reps will become familiar with these policies, and be confident in referring cases of discrimination, sexual harassment or personal problems to the relevant bodies and in helping to champion to values of the School and;
14. If deciding to step down as Rep, to inform the Head of Department, department support staff (in particular, the Departmental Student Support Officer) and the S.U of this decision so that a new election or co-option process can be arranged.

School-level Student Reps:

15. Coordinate with their departmental team of Reps to ensure that the views and opinions of students are kept central in the School-level decision-making and feedback processes they are invited to attend and participate in;
16. Collect and collate module and programme-level feedback gathered by the team of Reps and;
17. Report this feedback to academic and professional services staff at Departmental Meetings (held twice a term) and the monthly Student Feedback Panel (SFP) and to work with the membership of these forums to develop solutions to student concerns.

The School and Students' Unions' Joint Commitments to Reps

1. To ensure a well-publicized democratic process is held to elect Student Representatives, accepting that where any vacancy remains after the nominations and elections process is complete, students in the department and year group concerned may volunteer to be co-opted to fill the gap. Details of how to volunteer will be announced after elections are complete;



2. To provide necessary induction and training for the role and to develop further training to enhance the experience of Representatives;
3. To actively develop and improve tools of communication between Reps, students, the School, academic departments and the Students' Union;
4. Maintain a central list of all student Reps internally accessible to the representee students and relevant staff of SOAS;
5. To prepare a letter of recommendation in third term to include a list of training and key activities they have completed as a Rep;

Academic Department's Commitments to Reps:

6. To inform School-level Reps of Departmental meetings by email at the same time as all other full members of Department meetings; to make minutes of previous meetings available to Reps, where suitable and/or applicable to do so;
7. To ensure Reps have the opportunity to meet with either the Head of Department, the Learning and Teaching Coordinator or the Director of Student Experience at least once a term outside the Departmental meeting structure;
8. To consult Reps about any changes in course structure, teaching methods, assessment methods, and engage Reps in discussions regarding the creation or withdrawal of courses and programmes;
9. To listen to Reps and take the input of Reps seriously; to recognize that reps are volunteers while also studying and are not obligated to carry out any work; and to act upon the information disclosed where appropriate to do so;
10. To recognise that Reps have no obligation to disclose individual names when articulating the views of students; and to maintain absolute confidentiality when Reps inform them to do so;

The Students' Union's Commitments to Reps:

11. To maintain a regularly updated website providing resources and covering information relevant to the student voice, consultations and changes affecting students at SOAS and in higher education, and the School's and the S.U's decision-making and complaint procedures;
12. To provide core training for all Reps, and facilitate ongoing team-building and mutual support amongst Reps within and across departments throughout the year;
13. To support and advise the Reps whenever appropriate and / or requested to do so, and to connect Reps with S.U officers and Co-Presidents where the activity of Reps overlaps with or connects to the work of the S.U where this is appropriate and feasible to do so.

Last reviewed: August 2020