

SHEFFIELD HALLAM STUDENTS' UNION

REPRESENTING YOUR ACADEMIC INTERESTS

**COURSE
REPS**

REPRESENTING YOUR ACADEMIC INTERESTS

**DEPARTMENT
REPS**

Student Rep Report

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1.0 Summary & Recommendations

1.1 Summary

The 2018 Student Rep survey was updated to achieve a better understanding of the Student Rep experience at Sheffield Hallam and to help inform changes. Of the 2017/18 Student Reps, 227 completed the survey. The majority of the respondents (88%) enjoyed being a Student Rep and 83% would recommend being a Student Rep to a friend or colleague. The majority of respondents felt that they developed skills because of the role and nurtured a sense of belonging with the University itself. There are indeed a multitude of benefits that students obtain by becoming Student Reps.

Similar to previous years, the majority of Student Reps volunteered for the role (79%), while only 14% were elected into their role. Respondents stated that they wished the role were more democratic and advertised to students more widely, along with a bit more information about the role shared before they began. Additionally, some respondents commented that they were unsure what the Student Rep role entailed before they started and attended a training event.

Sixty-five percent of respondents thought that the training was useful for the role, though this varied across faculties. A majority of respondents struggled to obtain feedback from their peers and would appreciate future training to include more tips for gathering feedback. Most of the respondents (75%) were aware of the Rep handbook, but less than half used the handbook in their role. However, more Reps were aware of the Students' Union website and nearly half used this resource throughout their time as a Rep.

Student Reps that responded generally felt trusted to gather representative feedback from their peers, though only 77% believed that they collected feedback from a wide range. In response to this, Reps would like a bit more training or advice on gathering feedback using various sources, such as online platforms or other methods, which could capture the wider student voice on their course.

Generally, Student Reps felt valued in their role, though slightly less felt that their ideas and/or the student voice was acted upon. One of the main barriers to change was academic staff and/or University barriers. Student Reps felt that their ideas were not taken seriously or that they were never told why change could not occur and instead their ideas were dismissed. If the goal of the Student Rep system is to work in partnership with students to improve the quality of the course, it is crucial to respectively communicate with Reps when changes cannot occur. This will, in turn, allow Reps to close the feedback loop for their student peers and to create an environment of positivity.



1.2 Recommendations

1. Provide consistent promotion of the Student Rep role across the University.

The majority of respondents found out about the role from their lecturer, with little to no knowledge about what the role actually entailed (pg. 9). An increase in advertisement or promotion of the role across the University would help future Student Reps to learn a bit more about the role before they start or attend training. Respondents indicated that the role increased their skill set and that these benefits should be more widely discussed when promoting the role to students. This type of promotion might also lead to an increase in a more democratic recruitment process, particularly if more students become aware of the benefits of the role (pgs. 8-9). Additionally, as the majority of Student Reps did not associate the Students' Union with the role of Student Rep, a partnership promotion could benefit the Students' Union's standing in terms of performance indicators and measures (pg. 22).

2. Include more training and resource with tips on gathering representative student feedback using different methods.

Throughout the whole of the survey, respondents commented that gathering student feedback was problematic and that one of the challenges of the role was contacting peers to accurately represent the student voice (pg. 11, pgs. 14-16, pg. 22). It would be beneficial, therefore, for future Student Rep training to include more tips or additional resources which would help Reps to gather this feedback; this could be achieved in either more traditional survey methods (e.g. Google Forms, Survey Monkey) or in creative ways (PebblePad, Post-It Notes, Anonymous box), which can be used in conjunction with one another or individually, dependent on the course. Though this information is currently provided to students, more time could be dedicated to this in the training with signposting to the Students' Union website for more information.

3. Provide additional training or awareness raising of student support

In addition to Recommendation 2, Student Reps felt under or unprepared to support students. As the role is largely student-facing, Reps felt that students would come to them for various problems, related to course improvement or not (pg. 21). It is recommended that the Student Rep training provide additional clear guidance on the support services that the University and the Students' Union deliver and those which relate to specific student issues (e.g. mental health support, international student support). In light of the University support service model changes (i.e. Hallam Help), this type of clear guidance would be beneficial for future Student Reps. Though it is a small addition to the training programme, it would greatly benefit student wellbeing and support.



4. Create positive working relationships and improve communication between Student Reps and academic staff by providing online training for staff.

While there were many successful changes which took place last year, respondents also felt that they were unable to make change happen due to various reasons (pg. 21). One of the reasons that Reps felt unable to change things on their course or in their Department is University staff and/or University barriers; some Reps felt that their voices were not heard or simply ignored. As mentioned throughout the report, this could be greatly improved with more consistent, open, honest, and respectful conversations between staff and students. Although it is understandable that, at times, suggestions for change cannot occur for various reasons, some of which might be institutional, it is also important that these reasons are communicated to Student Reps. This will allow Reps to close the feedback loop, regardless of the outcome, and will help to foster a respectful working relationship between student and staff. An online training for academic staff, created in partnership between the Students' Union and the University, on supporting and communicating with Students Rep would benefit this relationship.

5. Increase sharing of meeting outcomes through action points after Student Staff Committee Meetings to improve accountability for follow-up when issues are raised.

Similarly to Recommendation 4, it was recommended in last year's Student Rep Report that Reps should be informed of 'action points' which could help to provide accountability for both staff and Reps. Although this is currently being trialled for Department Reps, this type of action log would benefit the Course Rep role as well. Only 66% of Course Reps felt that their opinions and input were acted upon (pg. 19). Providing clear action points and online logs would help Course Reps to see that their opinions and feedback are being heard, while also promoting a positive Student Rep and academic staff working relationship.



2.0 Introduction & Research Method

The Student Rep survey was circulated to all Student Reps, including Course and Department Reps, or students in both roles, and was open between 11 April and 8 June 2018. The survey was sent via email and respondents were entered to win a prize draw upon completion. In comparison to previous years, the survey was updated in 2018 to better inform the current Student Rep System at Sheffield Hallam University.

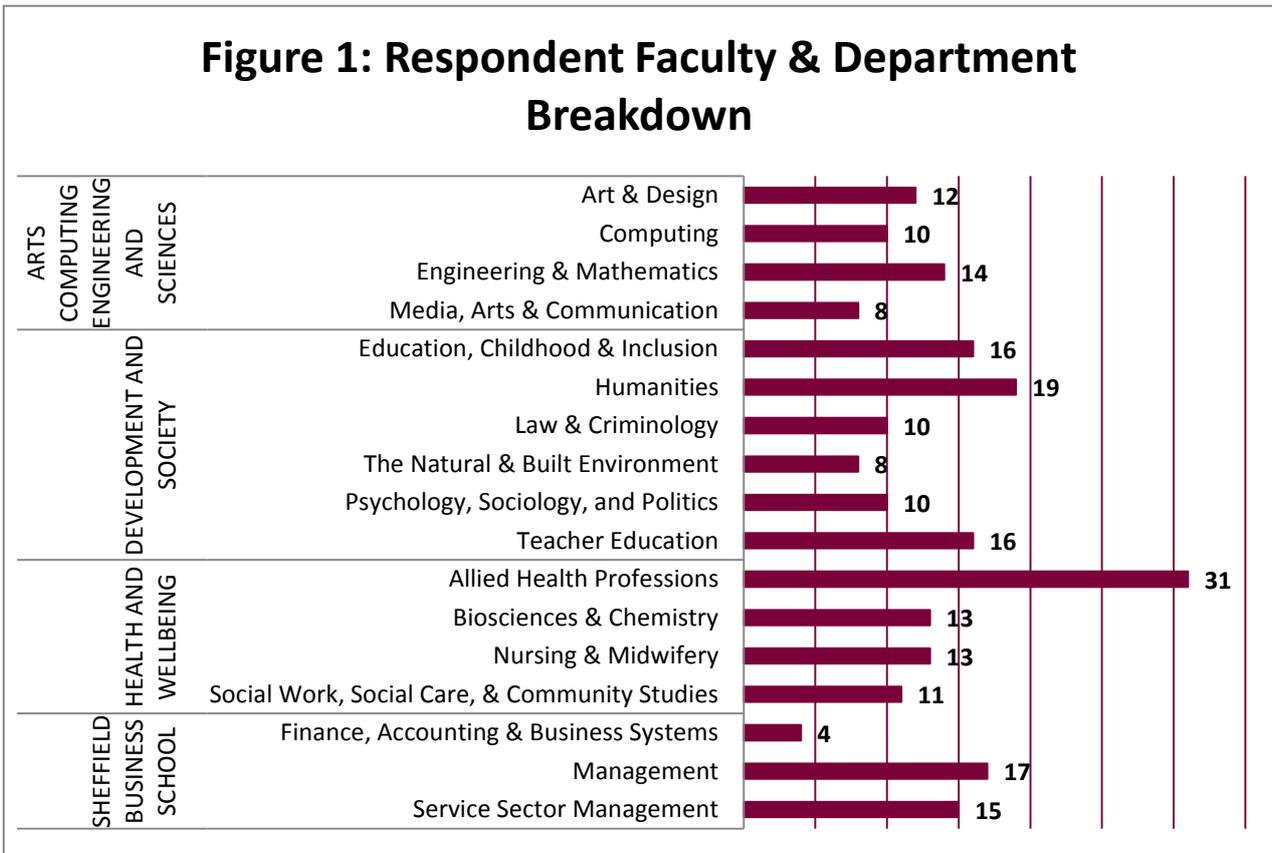
The results are presented in the same, or similar, order to the 2018 survey and the data was analysed and compared, where appropriate, to previous year's Student Rep data.

Respondents were asked a range of questions, from their motivation to take part, to their thoughts on feedback practices and sharing successes and challenges in the role. The survey included both quantitative questions and open-ended, qualitative questions. Where respondents did not answer a particular question, they have been removed from the analysis.

Of current Student Reps, 227 completed the survey. Of those respondents, 200 were Course Reps only, 12 were Department Reps only, and 15 were both Course and Departments Reps. Respondents were well represented across academic levels and faculties, though there were slightly more respondents from Levels 4 and 5, 32% and 27% respectively. Though all Departments were represented, one had only 4 respondents, the Department of Finance, Accounting & Business Services, and the highest proportion of respondents were from the Department of Allied Health Professions (14%, or 31). Figure 1 shows demographic breakdowns by faculty and department.



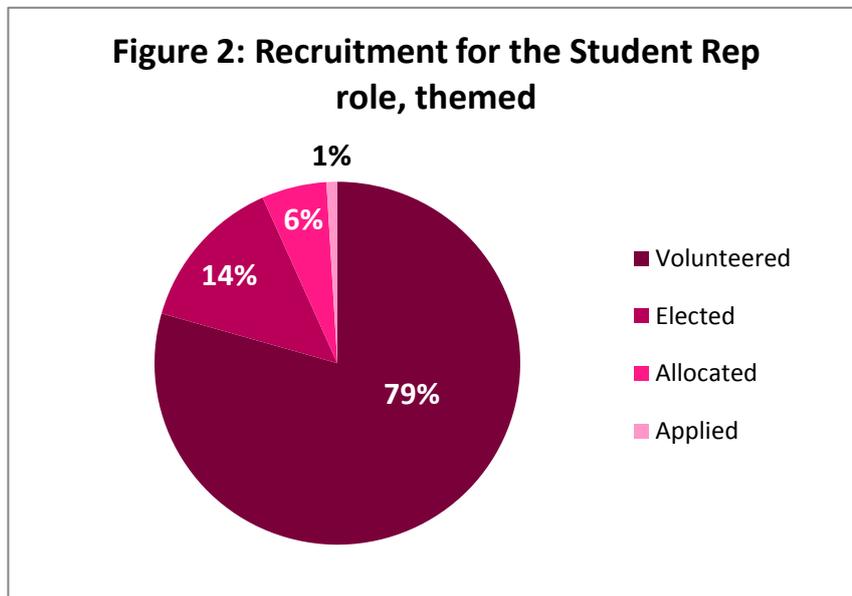
Figure 1: Respondent Faculty & Department Breakdown





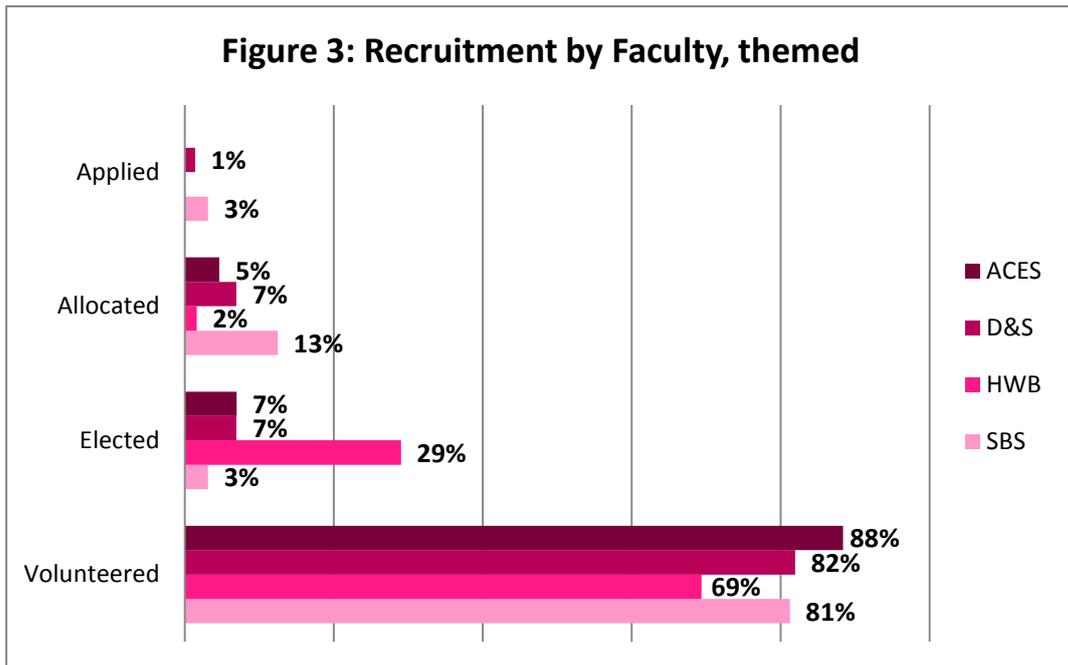
3.0 Recruitment

Respondents were asked about the recruitment for their role as a Student Rep, with the majority stating that they had volunteered for the role (79%, or 164). Other students were either elected (14%), allocated (6%) or applied (1%), see Figure 2. This is similar to previous academic years, where the majority of Student Reps volunteered for the role. Where students have been allocated, Reps are chosen by staff on their course; very small numbers of students applied for the role, similarly to that of paid employment, and it was not clear whether these students were then allocated by staff or voted in by students, hence the differentiation. Furthermore, though Student Reps commented that they were allocated to their role, it is unclear what the process was for this allocation as the Student Rep guidelines prohibits this type of recruitment.



When reviewed by faculty, the highest proportions for Student Reps who volunteered for their role (88%) are from Art, Computing & Engineering Sciences (ACES). Student Reps from Health & Wellbeing (HWB) reported the highest levels of being elected into their role (29%), which is encouraging for the democratic-nature of student representation. Figure 3 displays the recruitment process by faculty, which have been themed as in Figure 2.

Additionally, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the recruitment process; student reps from HWB have the highest levels of recruitment satisfaction, at 92%, indicated by marking 'definitely agree' or 'agree.' This further specifies a preference for a more equal representation process. However, respondents from ACES, with higher levels of students volunteering for the role, were also fairly satisfied with the recruitment process, at 91%. While there are differences in the recruitment process across faculties, there may be other nuanced factors within these areas which impact satisfaction with the recruitment process.



Respondents were also asked to comment on the recruitment process and areas for improvement. Many students commented on the lack of information about the role before they volunteered or started and would like this to improve for future students, including information on the benefits of the role for students (i.e. development of skills) but also the impact that Student Reps can have on the student experience.

"It's a really good process, but a bit more explanation about the role beforehand would be great as I volunteered without fully knowing what I was getting involved in." - D&S Student, Level 5

"Possibly explain in more detail the benefits of being a rep, I feel at the start of the year (as I'm a first year) people may have found it to be 'geeky' however after some people have seen how I was as a course rep more people seem interested in doing it next year." - ACES Student, Level 4

Furthermore, respondents thought it would be useful for there to be more advertisement of the role across the University as an effort to get more students interested in the role; some also commented that the recruitment process should be more democratic in nature. Advertisement could also lead to an increase in a more democratic process, with multiple students applying and student peers voting for their representative, particularly on larger courses.



4.0 Training

Respondents were asked to think about the training sessions and their general usefulness. Overall, 67% (or 135) respondents agreed that the training sessions equipped them with the knowledge and skills needed in their role, with only 63% of respondents using the knowledge gained from training in their role. When reviewed by demographics, more respondents from SBS felt the training sessions equipped them for their role (88%), while only 56% of HWB respondents felt the training sessions prepared them.

When responses are reviewed by domicile, students from overseas and from other European Union countries felt less equipped, felt that they did not use the knowledge in their roles, or did not find the sessions as useful as UK-domiciled, home students. It could also be that relatively low numbers of EU or International students are Student Reps as only 12 of these students completed the survey. These statistics might not be applicable to the wider EU and International Student Rep experience, particularly as the results in three of the measures are split (with only 50% agreeing).

Furthermore, within student academic levels, respondents from Level 7 (Postgraduate Taught courses) felt slightly less satisfied with the training than students from all other levels. Respondents from Level 4 appear slightly more satisfied with training. However, there are variances within each level as seen in Table 1.

		The training session/s equipped me with the knowledge and skills which I needed in my role	The training session/s were relevant and up to date	I found the session/s useful	I have used the knowledge/ skills from the sessions in my role
	ALL	67%	71%	65%	63%
Faculty	ACES	60%	64%	48%	55%
	D&S	73%	74%	76%	70%
	HWB	56%	61%	56%	54%
	SBS	88%	91%	81%	78%
Rep Role	Course Rep	66%	69%	65%	62%
	Department Rep	60%	70%	60%	60%
	Both (Course & Dept)	86%	86%	64%	86%
Level	Level 4	73%	76%	73%	63%
	L5	65%	71%	65%	67%
	L6	69%	67%	59%	63%
	L7	57%	65%	57%	57%
Domicile	Home	68%	71%	66%	64%
	Others (Combined EU/OS)	50%	67%	50%	50%

Table 1: Percentage of respondents that 'definitely agree' and 'agree' to the corresponding question, broken down by Faculty, Rep role type, Level, and Domicile. NB: Non-respondents have been removed from analysis when applicable.



Respondents were also asked to comment on the training they received and if it was sufficient for their role. The majority of respondents thought there needed to be some training on gathering student feedback; some respondents mentioned struggling to get in contact with students to obtain their feedback (in email or online format) or engaging students to provide their feedback. A few students also mentioned that there should be training which addresses student support queries; some respondents felt unprepared and ill-equipped to signpost students to relevant support schemes either in the University or the Students' Union; this will be explored further in Section 9.0.

"I think a session on how to specifically collect your peers opinions would have been beneficial in the session which introduced you to what a course rep was, as even though I knew what the role involved after the first introductory session, I was still unclear how to go about my role and felt as if I couldn't do so confidently until a session a month later." - D&S Student, Level 6

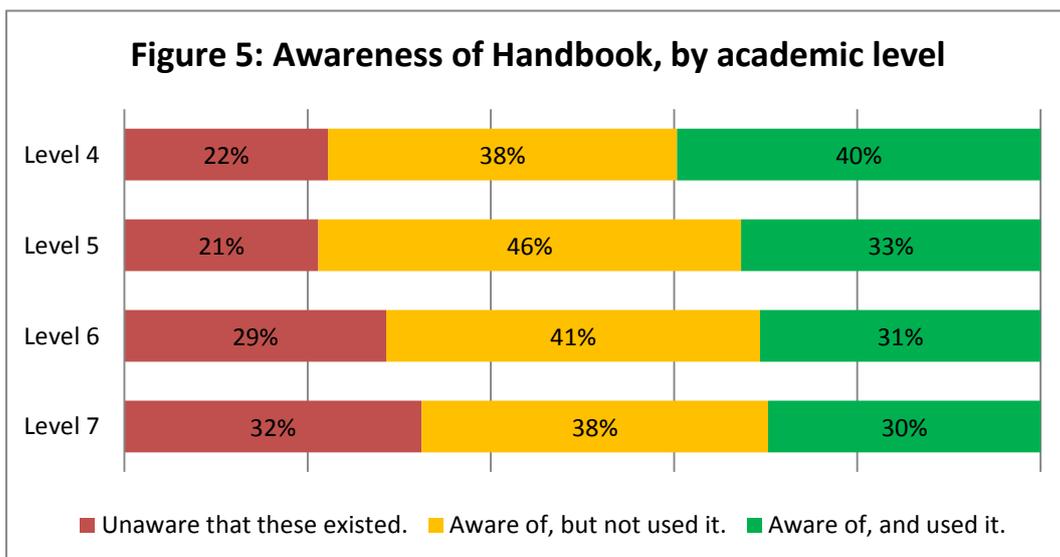
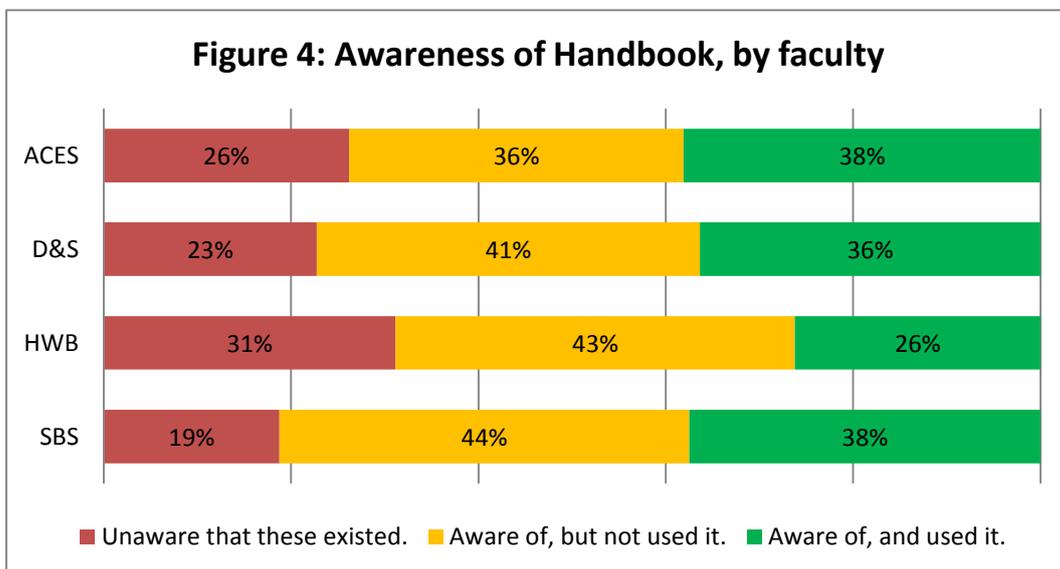
Respondents that stated they were unable to attend the training sessions were from various faculties and departments, but the majority of the comments mentioned the inability to attend due to placement or family and childcare needs. This indicates that there is a need for some online training to become more widely known only for Student Reps when they are unable to attend in-person training. Some students were not aware that training for the role was offered at all and this was within HWB and SBS, where training is coordinated Faculty-wide as opposed to Department level, which signifies a lack of advertisement or communication about the training to Student Reps in these specific faculties.



5.0 Resources

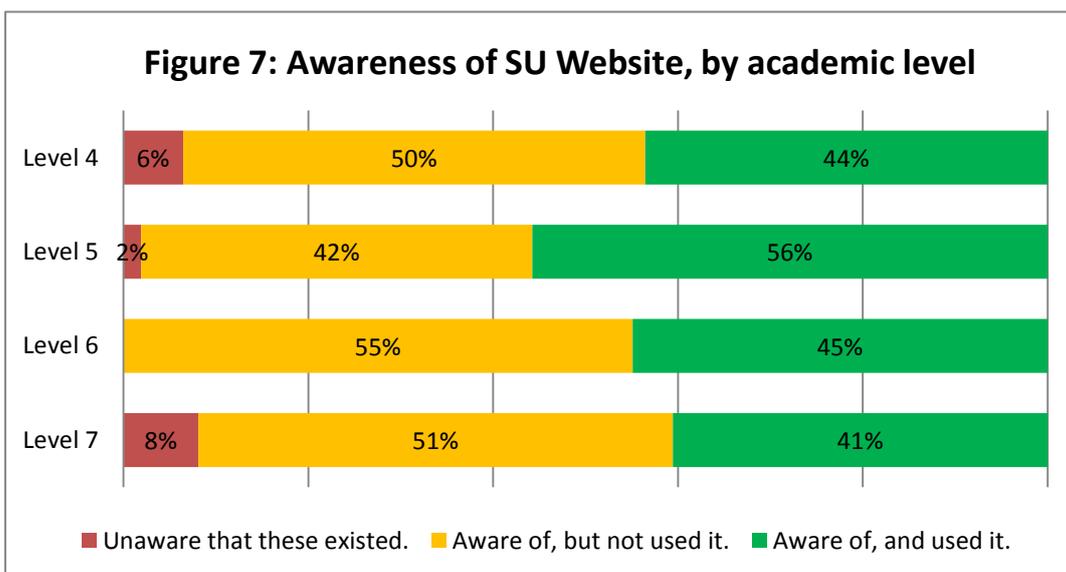
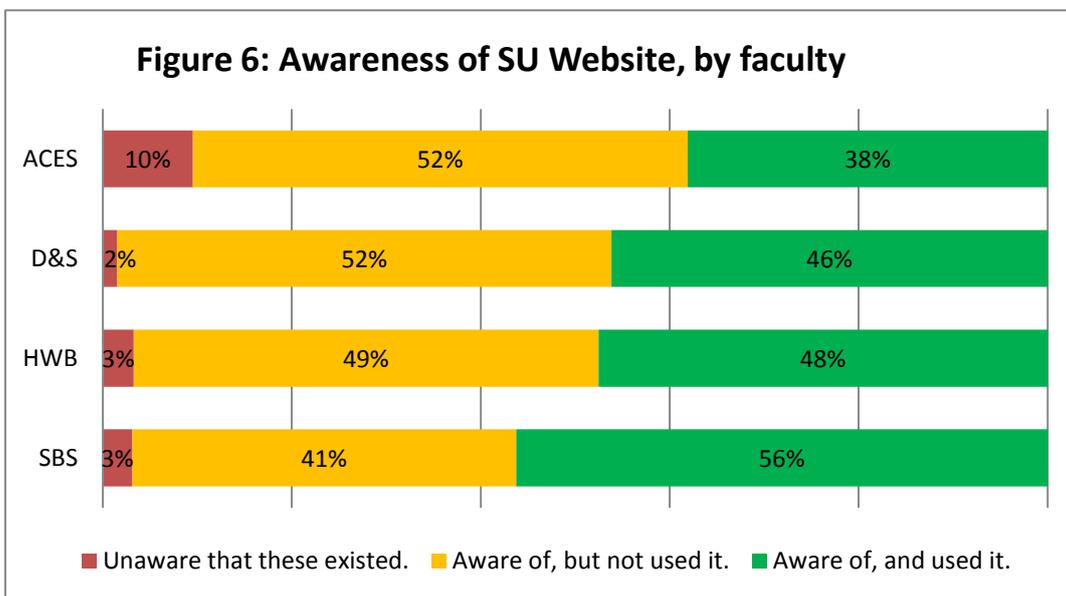
Respondents were asked about their use of particular resources to help their role as Students Reps. In regards to the use of the Student Rep Handbook, the majority of respondents (75%) were aware of the handbook, but only 34% of those used the handbook in their role as Student Rep. One in 4 of all respondents were unaware that the handbook existed and therefore did not use the handbook in their role at all.

Comparatively across academic levels, more 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students were aware of the handbook, with an average of 36% using the handbook in their role. Considerably more postgraduate students (Level 7) were unaware of the handbook, indicating that these students are not made aware of resources which could support them. See Figure 4 for handbook use by faculty and Figure 5 for handbook use by level.





Students are also able to utilise the Students' Union website for support in their role, which includes the handbook, training opportunities, tips for gathering feedback and representing students on their course or in their department, and other useful information. Considerably more respondents were aware of the Students' Union website (96%), with nearly half using the website as part of their role. More 2nd year undergraduate students used the website (56%), than respondents from other academic levels, particularly postgraduate students in which only 41% of these respondents used the Students' Union website. In addition, the highest percentage of respondents whom were unaware of the website were postgraduate level. See Figure 6 for awareness of the Students' Union website by faculty and Figure 7 by academic level.





Respondents were also asked to comment on additional resources which would have benefitted them in their role. The majority of comments were on gathering feedback from peers and offering a platform which would work best to collect this information. The comments ranged from offering an online survey system (e.g. Survey Monkey) for Reps to use to embedding this into BlackBoard or a site that all students currently use. While there are various platforms that Reps could use, they were unsure as to which was the best platform to get the most students to engage and respond. In addition to an online platform for collating the student voice, respondents commented that the use of an online Student Rep forum or site would be beneficial, so students could share best practice and discuss issues which might occur across a course, not just within each separate level. This type of platform would also help Reps on larger courses that might not interact with other Reps on their course or level on a regular basis.

"A page where all the reps could come together and interact on shuspace (or a website which was universal to all reps), comparing what each had found and could discuss issues before the student-teacher sessions." - D&S Student, Level 6

Other comments regarding resources were around staff support in the Student Rep role. While this is not a tangible resource, staff support can significantly affect the Rep experience, particularly where Reps feel empowered to make change and staff interact with students, whether change can logistically be made or not. This will be explored more in the subsequent sections.



6.0 Gathering Feedback

With regards to gathering feedback, just over three-quarters (77%) felt that they managed to collect feedback from a wide range of students; this was echoed throughout comments in the survey from sections 4.0 and 5.0 where the majority of comments in both were around the topic of gathering feedback and accurate representation. Within faculties, respondents from SBS felt the least like they managed to gather feedback from a wide range of students (61%), while more respondents in ACES felt they were able to achieve this (88%).

The majority of respondents felt confident to approach their peers for feedback, with respondents from SBS (77%) or respondents from Level 4 courses (82%) the least confident. However, confidence to gather feedback from their cohort within undergraduate levels does increase gradually as academic level increases. An even higher majority of all respondents (90%) felt that their peers trusted them with their opinions about the course, which is indeed positive. Table 2 includes each question by demographic breakdowns.

		I have managed to collect feedback from a wide range of students	I was confident asking and approaching my cohort for their feedback	I was trusted by my cohort to share their views
	ALL	77%	88%	90%
Faculty	ACES	88%	93%	86%
	D&S	71%	87%	89%
	HWB	83%	92%	97%
	SBS	61%	77%	87%
Rep Role	Course Rep	77%	88%	89%
	Department Rep	78%	89%	100%
	Both (Course & Dept)	79%	93%	100%
Level	Level 4	73%	82%	85%
	L5	76%	86%	92%
	L6	81%	96%	94%
	L7	78%	92%	92%
Domicile	Home	77%	88%	91%
	Others (Combined EU/OS)	88%	100%	88%

Table 2: Percentage of respondents that 'definitely agree' and 'agree' to the corresponding question, broken down by Faculty, Rep role type, Level, and Domicile. NB: Non-respondents have been removed from analysis when applicable.



When respondents were asked about how to improve the feedback process, the majority of comments were around using online feedback mechanisms. This is similar to comments in previous sections, which indicate that Student Reps could benefit considerably from increased training and awareness of online survey methods (e.g. Survey Monkey, Google Forms). Additionally, respondents commented that a survey template and/or example questions to ask their cohort would be valuable.

"Have an online forum where students can voice their opinion anonymously." - D&S Student, Level 4

"Again, tried and tested forms, tips of how to engage students." - D&S Student, Level 7

There were also comments from respondents on the sharing of feedback from academic staff; while this does not necessarily pertain specifically to this question and will be explored more Section 8.0, it is important to close the feedback loop for students. If University staff are wanting student feedback continually, it's extremely beneficial to the feedback system to let students see their feedback is valuable, appreciated, and respected. While the below comment does mention Student-Staff Committee Meetings, it highlights this notion of working in partnership with students respectively, and to increase the amount of meetings (which was a common theme and will be explored in Section 9.0).

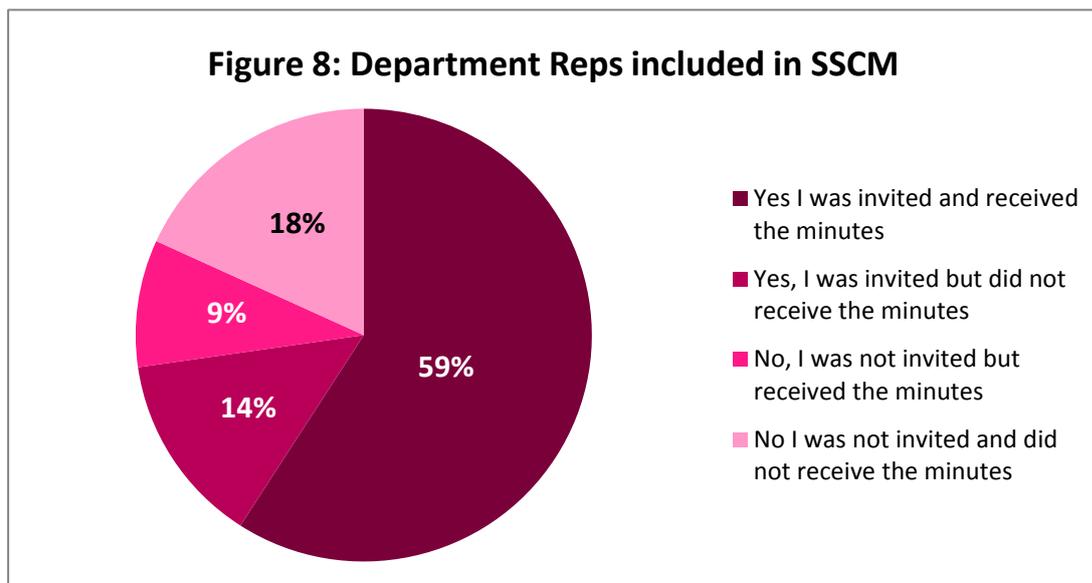
"Keep us up to date about how our feedback is being taken on board. Give us much more notice about the meetings. Have a meeting right at the end of the year because things have happened since the last meeting that I now cannot give feedback on." - SBS Student, Level 4



7.0 Meetings

7.1 Satisfaction with meetings

Course Reps and Reps that held both Course and Department roles were asked about their experience with Student-Staff Committee Meetings (SSCM), while respondents that were just Department Reps were asked about their experience with Department Board Meetings. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had been invited to all relevant meetings. Of the Department Reps and Reps that hold both roles, 82% indicated they had been invited to all Departmental Board Meetings, while 86% of Course or Reps that hold both roles report being invited to all SSCM. Furthermore, as Department Reps are allowed to attend and receive meeting minutes for SSCM, they were asked to indicate whether this had happened. The majority (59%) were invited to and receive meeting minutes for SSCM. Please see Figure 8 for more detailed information.



In general, respondents were fairly satisfied with meetings, although Department Reps responded much more positively to Department Board Meetings throughout all measures. When analysing only Course Reps and Reps that hold both roles, respondents from HWB and SBS were less satisfied with the meetings than students from either ACES or D&S. Comparatively, there is a 30% difference between ACES (82% were satisfied with meeting productivity) and SBS (52% were satisfied with meeting productivity) faculties for one of the four questions. Additionally, Level 7 (Postgraduate Taught) respondents were less satisfied across all measures compared to respondents from any undergraduate course. Table 3 has the breakdown of demographics by question.



Thinking about SSCMs, to what extent do you agree with the following statements: "I am satisfied with...					
		...the time of the meetings."	...the quality of the meetings."	...the efficiency of the meetings."	...the productivity of the meetings."
	ALL	67%	74%	70%	69%
Faculty	ACES	79%	87%	79%	82%
	D&S	71%	80%	78%	80%
	HWB	57%	61%	57%	55%
	SBS	60%	68%	64%	52%
Rep Role	Course Rep	68%	74%	71%	69%
	Both (Course & Dept)	64%	79%	64%	71%
Level	Level 4	64%	70%	64%	64%
	L5	80%	86%	82%	77%
	L6	68%	76%	76%	81%
	L7	55%	65%	58%	52%
Domicile	Home	68%	74%	71%	70%
	Others (Combined EU/OS)	56%	78%	56%	56%
Thinking about Department Board Meetings, to what extent do you agree with the following statements: "I am satisfied with...					
		...the time of the meetings."	...the quality of the meetings."	...the efficiency of the meetings."	...the productivity of the meetings."
Rep Role	Department Rep	88%	88%	75%	75%
	Both (Course & Dept)	71%	79%	79%	71%

Table 3: Percentage of respondents that 'definitely agree' and 'agree' to the corresponding question, broken down by Faculty, Rep role type, Level, and Domicile. Course Reps and Both (Course & Department Reps) were asked questions regarding SSCM; Department Reps were asked questions regarding Department Board Meetings. NB: Non-respondents have been removed from analysis when applicable.

Course Reps and Reps that hold both roles were asked to comment on the mechanisms with which they fed back the outcomes of the SSCM to student peers. The majority of respondents communicated outcomes in-person, though it was not always specified if this was during the course with time set aside, or through informal conversations.

"Told the seminar group what had happened and what they would try and improve in the future." - HWB Student, Level 4

There were also examples of good practice throughout each faculty, as Student Reps recognised the importance of closing the feedback loop within their cohort. As highlighted below, one Rep spoke to peers individually to let them know what had happened with their specific suggestion, while another produced a letter to all students.

"Spoke to the person who gave me feedback personally. This way students knew their feedback was taken on board and encouraged them to keep on giving feedback." - HWB Student, Level 6

"Produced a letter explaining what had happened and what was going to be done." - SBS Student, Level 7



Many respondents also commented that they used social media and/or email to inform their cohorts of SSCM outcomes. Of the Course Reps, one respondent indicated that there was no opportunity for them to feedback.

For Department Reps feeding back outcomes from Departmental Board Meetings, the majority used email or social media to feedback. However, two respondents indicated that they do not share the outcomes of these meetings with students. Although the numbers of students not sharing the meeting outcomes with their cohort are small, it's important that the results are shared with peers to ensure that students see the value in their voice.

7.2 Value of Student Reps

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt their opinions and input were respected, listened to, taken seriously, or acted upon. While most respondents felt they were respected, listened to, and taken seriously, only 66% of all respondents felt that their input was acted upon. Furthermore, when analysed by faculty, only 42% of respondents from SBS felt their input was acted upon, while 78% of respondents from D&S felt this. In addition, for EU and International students, although only nine students responded to this question, less than half (44%) agreed that their input was acted upon, compared to 67% of UK-domiciled students. It was also explored whether EU and international respondents were from a particular faculty more than another; this was not the case and these students were spread across faculties. Please see Table 4 for more specific data within each demographic.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements."I feel my opinions and input were...					
		...respected."	...listened to."	...taken seriously."	...acted upon."
	ALL	89%	86%	83%	66%
Faculty	ACES	90%	85%	79%	64%
	D&S	95%	95%	93%	78%
	HWB	80%	78%	76%	65%
	SBS	92%	88%	81%	42%
Rep Role	Course Rep	89%	88%	84%	66%
	Department Rep	75%	88%	88%	88%
	Both (Course & Dept)	86%	71%	71%	64%
Level	Level 4	88%	89%	80%	63%
	L5	98%	89%	89%	68%
	L6	84%	82%	82%	68%
	L7	84%	84%	81%	65%
Domicile	Home	89%	86%	84%	67%
	Others (Combined EU/OS)	78%	89%	67%	44%

Table 4: Percentage of respondents that 'definitely agree' and 'agree' to the corresponding question, broken down by Faculty, Rep role type, Level, and Domicile. NB: Non-respondents have been removed from analysis when applicable.



8.0 Changes

8.1 Reps Ability to Make Change

Respondents were asked to share any changes they made during their time as a Student Rep. The majority of Course Reps commented on changes made to their timetable.

"An example of one thing I did was ask the course leader to change the time of one of our seminars. It got moved so that we only had a 3 hour break instead of 5 hours between the classes." - SBS Student, Level 4

"Changes to one hour days on the timetable, sessions were either moved or extended. We also raised concerns about the timetable and these are being addressed for next year..." - HWB Student, Level 4

Many respondents also commented on the changes to assessment and feedback, whether related to more in-depth feedback from academic staff on assessment or to ensure consistency amongst marking. Additionally, while some students felt that they did not necessarily make any changes which affected their cohort, they created an environment amongst their peers which valued the student voice and acted as a channel between students and staff. This was also reiterated by Department Reps; while they did not mention a particular change, they felt they increased the dialogue between staff and students to better represent their peers.

"Making peers feel that their opinions are valued. Creating a bridge between students and our staff for easy communication where people feel comfortable to share their concerns and praise." - HWB Student, Level 5

There was also a general appreciation that change is not instantaneous and embedded change takes time, where future students will benefit from current student feedback. However, there were many comments from respondents whom felt they did not make any changes. While students understand that change takes time, some respondents felt that their opinions or voices went unheard.

"I have been course rep since my first year and we were promised changes but it honestly doesn't feel like anything has changed, the course reps on my course including myself are trying we just aren't being listened to and are deeply unhappy with the lack of communication on the course which has impacted our learning." - D&S Student, Level 5

"None really found it difficult to apply anything due to the disorder of the course no real opportunity to change anything." - HWB Student, Level 7



8.2 Barrier to Changes

Furthermore, respondents were specifically asked about changes they wanted to make but were unable to, for various reasons. In contrast to above, the majority of respondents wanted to make changes to assessment and feedback, particularly the timetable of assessments and the 'bunching' of exams, but were unable to.

"We had a high number of deadlines very close together and we were told that something could possibly be done about it, but nothing was. Some lecturers seemed closed to change. We were there to help and give them honest feedback but they just seemed to give excuses to shake us off." - SBS Student, Level 4

Respondents were also interested in increasing student support, though they felt that there were no changes within this area; comments were around creating a drop-in support session for students, increased support on specific modules, or bespoke support for certain demographic (i.e. international, students with disabilities, etc.). There were also comments on the general themes of timetable, facilities, and course content which they felt incapable of changing.

Student Reps were unable to make change for various reasons, though the majority of respondents felt unable to do so because of University staff and/or University barriers which govern particular aspects of a course. There were multiple comments where students were not offered an explanation as to why adjustments could not be made.

"Because that is policy" - D&S Student, Level 6

"Staff saying 'we've noted this as a problem but there's nothing we can do'" - ACES Student, Level 5

Furthermore, respondents felt unable to make change due to a lack of staff support or their feedback not taken seriously by academic staff. As previously mentioned, only 66% of all respondents felt that their opinions and input were acted upon, impacting on their experience as a Student Rep.

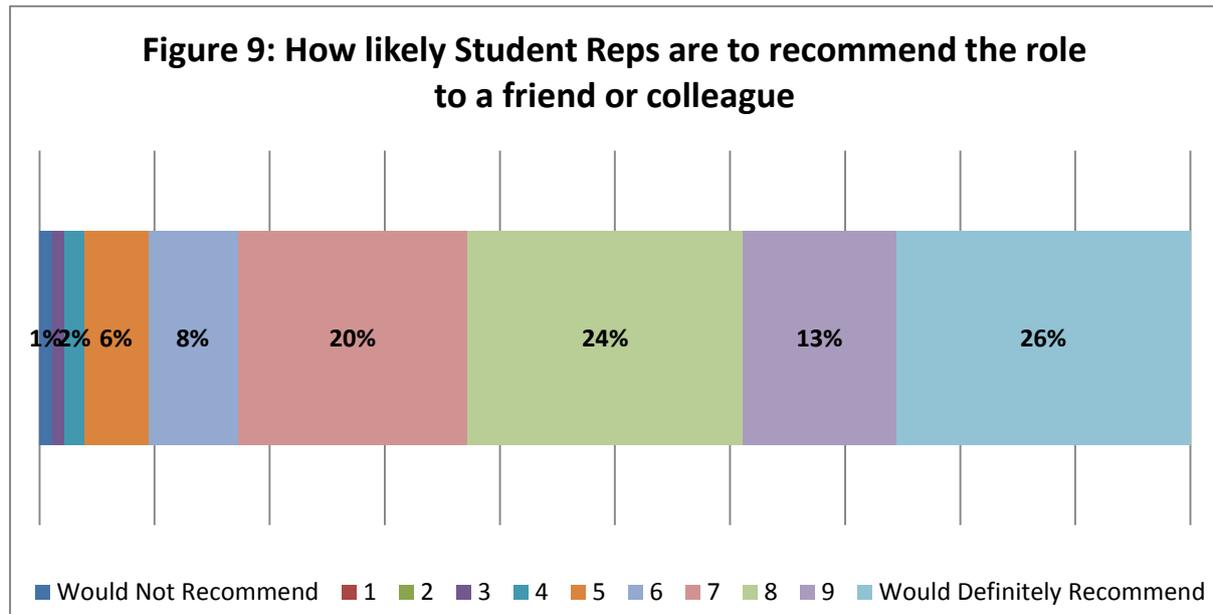
"Not being taken seriously in meetings with lecturers. They were unsympathetic and told me that everybody is busy and it is a part of life, however my course is extremely demanding, especially without a reading week and I felt as though the opinions of people on my course were pushed aside..." - SBS Student, Level 5

In addition, some Reps felt unable to create change due to the lack of engagement from student peers. Students felt, at times, unable to gather feedback which fully represented their peers which impacted the strength and usefulness of data they did collect.



9.0 Experience as a Student Rep

Most Student Reps enjoyed being a Rep (88%), with little to no difference across faculties, levels, domicile or Rep role. In particular, they felt they developed some type of skill in the role (83%). A high proportion of Reps also agreed that they felt an increased sense of belonging due to their role (78%) and that the role had a clear purpose (84%), see Table 5. Figure 9 displays the proportion of Reps who would recommend being a Rep to a friend or colleague, with the majority of Reps saying they would recommend it.



However, the majority of Reps did not associate their role with the Students' Union. While not inherently a bad thing, as any student voice and representation work that is beneficial for the student is beneficial for all, this could also indicate that all students, regardless of Rep work, do not associate Student Reps with the Students' Union. This was particularly the case for respondents in HWB in which only 38% identified their work as a Rep with the Students' Union, who are primarily based at Collegiate Campus and might not interact with the Students' Union regularly. In terms of benefit for the Students' Union and performance indicators, this is an area which could improve amongst all measures for the Students' Union. A more detailed representation of this can be seen in Table 5.

9.1 Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Lastly, respondents were asked about challenges they faced and the majority commented on the difficulty of obtaining well represented student feedback; some Reps mentioned students feeling unable to create change, that their voice would not make a difference. Other Reps, however, mentioned the inability to engage with a wide range of students, particularly with students that they might not have seminars or lectures with regularly.



"Gathering feedback was difficult as students were not engaged so we trialled a range of different methods, hoping we would be successful" - D&S Student, Level 5

A significant remainder of the comments focussed on support, either Reps having difficulty supporting student peers throughout their role or Reps feeling unsupported by staff. Students would come to Student Reps with personal issues, and Reps felt under or unprepared to signpost correctly. Although some Reps did comment that they understood their role did not incorporate these types of safeguarding roles, it's understandable that Reps were contacted for issues like this given the more public nature of their roles. There is potential in this role, or similarly created roles, wherein students act as peer support. This could work well in instances where students might prefer speaking to a fellow student.

Finally, in terms of improvements, the majority of Student Reps would like to see an increase in the amount of meetings, particularly at the end of the academic year. Some of the comments mentioned that meetings were missed or at times when the Rep themselves were unable to attend; for the role of a Student Rep to work well, it's crucial that meeting times are coordinated with the Rep so they are able to accurately represent their peers and advocate for necessary changes. These meetings also enable conversations to happen between staff and students, in cases where a change might not be feasible, staff can offer explanations.

"Staff student meeting rearranged for the middle of deadlines when it was supposed to be in March: very inconvenient" - HWB Student, Level 7

There were also comments on creating a Rep forum or online platform, which would enable Reps to share their experience or best practice. In terms of improvement for the training, while some Reps did find it beneficial, some commented that it would be useful to make the training a bit more interactive and, as previous sections mentioned, include more tips on gathering feedback and signposting students to University or Students' Union support services.



Thinking about your experience as a rep, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:							
		"I enjoyed being a Rep."	"I have learned and developed new skills in my role."	"I feel more belonging to the university because of my role."	"I feel my role has had a clear purpose."	"I identify my work as a Rep with the Students' Union."	"I have faced significant challenges in my role."
	ALL	88%	83%	78%	84%	49%	42%
Faculty	ACES	95%	87%	85%	90%	51%	46%
	D&S	86%	83%	77%	88%	53%	41%
	HWB	85%	82%	71%	77%	38%	30%
	SBS	85%	81%	81%	85%	59%	59%
Rep Role	Course Rep	86%	81%	75%	85%	47%	42%
	Dept Rep	100%	100%	88%	75%	43%	38%
	Both (Course & Dept)	100%	100%	100%	85%	77%	38%
Level	Level 4	88%	82%	77%	79%	51%	35%
	L5	89%	80%	72%	85%	43%	28%
	L6	91%	91%	93%	93%	56%	60%
	L7	82%	79%	68%	82%	44%	47%
Domicile	Home	88%	83%	78%	86%	48%	42%
	Others (Combined EU/OS)	83%	92%	67%	67%	58%	42%

Table 5: Percentage of respondents that 'definitely agree' and 'agree' to the corresponding question, broken down by Faculty, Rep role type, Level, and Domicile. NB: Non-respondents have been removed from analysis when applicable.