Academic Convenor Handbook 2024/25

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# Introduction

The Academic Representation System is a student-led structure that is jointly operated by the University of Warwick and Warwick Students’ Union. The system consists of four levels of representation: Course level (Course Reps); Faculty level (Faculty Reps); and University level (Sabbatical Officers). Warwick Students’ Union and Warwick University seek to continually review, improve, and enhance the Academic Representation System, to ensure students are best empowered to co-create their educational experience. Whilst it is imperative to ensure that the System is effective and functional on a day-to-day basis, we must also ensure that it remains fit for purpose over a number of years, adapting to the ever-changing needs of the student educational experience.

# The Students Union

Warwick SU is run by students, for students. Our elected team of [Student Officers](https://www.warwicksu.com/student-voice/student-officers/) works closely with the SU's dedicated Staff Team and the Board of Trustees to ensure that everything we do is in the best interests of the student community as a whole. The SU's Academic Representation system works in partnership with the University to ensure that students have a say on their educational experience here at Warwick. The Students’ Union supports student reps and University staff in order to establish an effective partnership with the power to make change. Our aim is to ensure that the student voice is heard, discussed and acted upon.

# Representation Structure

The chart and table below demonstrates the representation structure, and explains the different possibilities of where feedback can go to:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Representatives | University Meetings | SU Meeting |
| Whole University | **Full-Time Officers**The Vice President Education & Postgraduate Officers are elected to represent student interests in Education and Postgraduate experience | SLEEC, AQSC, BGS & More | Academic Representation ForumThe Education Officer & Postgraduate Officer sit on Academic Representation Forum with the Faculty Reps to discuss University level feedback. |
| Faculty | **Faculty Reps**Faculty Reps are elected for each Faculty to represent student interests of their Faculty. | Faculty Education Committees (FECse)Faculty Reps raise the Faculty level feedback given at Faculty Forums to FECs. |   |
| Course | **Course Reps**Course Reps are elected per course, per year of study to represent student interests of their cohort. | Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs Network)SSLCs are a partnership between the University & Students’ Union. This is where course-level feedback that Course Reps have received from their cohort can be raised. |
| Student | **SSLC Network**SSLC Chair is elected by course reps on a particular course to lead the SSLC Meetings. |

# SU Support Staff

The Students Union is committed to supporting not only the Course Reps but the Academic Convenors too. In doing so, the SSLC shall be able to make long-lasting change at Warwick and beyond. The Academic Voice team at the Union, and staff members at the University, are here to support Reps, and should be utilised effectively and when needed.

**When/ why should I contact:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Voice Coordinators | As soon as you are in this role, we encourage you to find out who your Academic Voice Coordinator. Each faculty has a SU Representative who is here to support you and the SSLC. We highly recommend inviting an Academic Voice Coordinator or other SU Representative to your SSLC at least once, so that they can answer any questions and also support the Course Reps during this meeting. They can help support you with any SSLC enquiries and also the setting up of elections. |
| Student Voice Manager | During your time as an Academic Convenor, you may have enquiries about policy or University mapping for your department. If you have any questions linking to this, we highly suggest contacting this member of staff. |
| Student Voice Team  | Our Student Voice Team are dedicated to making sure that any elections are carried out efficiently and fair. Make sure to contact your Academic Voice Coordinator first about setting up elections, then our team will pass your information onto the Student Voice Team. |

# Academic Support: Student Engagement Co-ordinators

Each faculty is supported by one or more student engagement co-ordinators (SECs); academics with an interest in student voice and experience of SSLCs. They meet regularly with the SU to support development of student academic voice. They may also request an invitation to attend your SSLC, in order to understand discussions emerging across their faculty, and to gather good practice. They host the Academic Convenor Network on Teams, which holds termly meetings to discussion SSLC approaches and issues (please email Gemma Gray to be added to the network). They also offer informal catch-ups for Academic Convenors and are very happy to be contacted with any SSLC queries you may have.

**Faculty of Arts**

Margaux Whiskin: m.whiskin@warwick.ac.uk

**Faculty of Social Science**

Will Haywood: w.haywood@warwick.ac.uk

**Faculty of Science, Engineering & Medicine**

Gemma Gray: g.gray@warwick.ac.uk

Jianhua Yang: jianhua.yang@warwick.ac.uk

# Academic Convenor Roles

## Achievements

An Academic Convenor who is engaged within their role can develop and establish a very successful SSLC. Part of your role will be to make sure your Course Reps receive every opportunity they can to make a difference to their department. Achievements that have been created due to the help of an Academic Convenor include:

* Module changes
* Roles created in the SSLC to support students
* Events created such as Breakfast clubs or Cafes
* Promoting the SSLC and their work

## Promote the elections, Course Rep training and other events

Elections are the most crucial time for encouraging students to undertake this role to create a real difference to their department. The SU Team will do as much as they can with regards to promoting on their website or emailing the key dates, but the SU **does not** have access to student email addresses to promote elections. Your role will include sending out as much promotion as possible to encourage students to go for Course Rep roles. This will also be similar for training (please read further on for more detail) to make sure the best time is chosen so your Course Reps can be trained for the role. If you do need any help with promoting or have any questions, the SU team will be more than happy to help in any way they can.

## Confidentiality

The training that is provided by the SU team will prepare the Course Reps on issues such as confidentiality and recognising any GDPR issues that may arise. We highly encourage that the Academic Convenor keeps vigilant at all times to make sure that confidentiality is kept. For example:

* Information people share in the SSLC or receive from students should be treated in confidence.
* Information from the SSLC is not shared without clear and expressed permission in case of risk to confidentiality.
* Any disclosed information will be respected as confidentiality and retain anonymity for the parties concerned when appropriate.
* Ensure that private or personal information (about staff or students) is not disclosed in SSLC meetings.

## Promote the SU priorities.

Every year the SU set key priorities to be addressed in the academic year. As Academic Convenor, it is important to be aware of these priorities and discuss with their applicability within their SSLC’s. You will also be notified about SU updates and key events via email and at the Academic Convenor Network meetings – please also promote these to your SSLC’s.

## Support the SSLC

Support can be in a variety of ways, such as:

* Guiding a Course Rep in the role by encouring them to gather feedback from their fellow students
* Supporting the chair and secretary with creating the agenda/minutes and making sure they are sent out before/ after the meeting effectively. Template documents of the agenda and minutes and other resources are available on the [SU webpages](https://www.warwicksu.com/student-voice/academic-representation/im-a-course-rep/).
* Provide continuity between year-on-year transitions between Course Reps
* Ensuring the feedback loop is closed on outstanding/iterative projects and encouraging reps to feedback to the study body about outcomes
* Ensuring that all feedback has been delegated to the appropriate department/ staff members
* Supporting the chair and secretary in writing the annual report
* Ensuring the chair and/or secretary are invited to report at key departmental committees, e.g. staff meetings, undergraduate studies committee, Welfare committees etc.
* Promoting the SSLC to the student body as much as possible throughout the year

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Nominations**  | **Open**  | **Close**  |
|  | 18th September 2024  | 4th October 2024 |
|  |  |  |
| **Voting**  | Open  | Close  |
|  | 7th October 2024  | 11th October 2024 |

# Elections

**1.** Setting up the election, this will all be carried out online on our website! Please use this online form: [Submit An Election (warwicksu.com)](https://www.warwicksu.com/student-voice/elections/course-rep-elections/submit-an-election/) to register your courses and how many Course Reps you need in advance. This year we have two Course Reps default for elections. If you do not wish to have two Course Reps elected, please make sure you email the team if you have not done so already. If you are carrying out the election in a different way, please contact the SU Team for an audit of your election system.

2. Schedule of the Autumn Elections:

3. Nominations: during this period, this is the time where promotion will be key. Making sure to inform the students of not only why they should volunteer for the role but also what substantial differences they can make will be essential. Make sure to also promote anything that appears on the SU social media platforms or anything that is emailed to you.

4. Voting: it is *essential* that those students who have nominated themselves for the role receive support and guidance with promoting their profile to be voted for. Make sure to encourage the nominated Course Reps to spread the word about being voted for online. When supporting the vote, *please also reiterate who R.O.N.* is.

R.O.N. stands for Re Open Nomination. This option is given for every nomination, so students when voting will have the choice between a nominee and RON. The vote for RON means that the student voting wishes to open the election again. Some students believe this is a give their vote at random option, but it is not, and we would highly recommend letting students know about this when voting opens.

 5. The Grand Finale: now that the voting is completed sit back, relax and we will do the rest! Once we have the results, they will be published on the SU webpages with the elected student names so you will be able to contact the Course Reps and welcome them to the team. Only the SU Education and Student Voice team have access to the nomination count. We will also email you with any departments who did not have a Course Rep elected or R.O.N so that future elections can be discussed.

6. Co option: If rep roles have not been filled, there is also an option to carry out co-option, please email the SU team to discuss this further.

## Training

Training Course Reps consists of one fun, interactive session where all must attend. Most are in-person, but there are online options for those that are unable to attend an in person session. These sessions are important as some of the objectives to name a few that are covered are:

* Confidentiality
* Progressing Feedback
* Where to send feedback received
* How to handle a GDPR situation
* The roles of chair/secretary
* How to use our new Moodle system with accessing online resources

There is also separate training for SSLC chairs and Secretaries, focused on setting the agenda, taking minutes and chairing the SSLC.

Our training is designed to make sure students feel ready and confident to carry out their role! The SU will contact Course Reps to let them know about the training, but as Academic Convenor, please check with your Course Reps to ensure they have attended.

## Setting up the SSLC

Once you know who all of your new Course Reps are, it’s time to invite them all to the first meeting! The first meeting should be set up by the Academic Convenor with a proposed time that the Course Reps and key staff members can attend.

## What shall I do in this first meeting?

* Make sure at the beginning of the meeting that you inform the students that you are looking to appoint a Chair and Secretary and outline what these roles entail. In this first meeting, make sure you demonstrate as the ‘chair’ how you wish the meeting to be carried out.
* Please be sure to share documents with the SSLC such as the last year report, NSS Report and External Examiner Report.
* Set out the rules of how the SSLC will be carried out. For example, will questions be held until the end of the topic/ hands up during?
* At the end of the meeting, a new chair and secretary for the SSLC should be elected. Students should be invited to nominate themselves for the role, and if there are two or more candidates, an anonymous vote should be held (this can be done anonymously using an online poll or names in hat).

We hope that this handbook has given you useful information or guidance to your job role or the running of an SSLC. If you do have any questions, please be sure to either contact studentvoice@warwicksu.com or your Faculty Student Engagement Coordinator.