CONGRATULATIONS on your election to a Representative Committee; this is your Guide to Representative Committees and their governance at Sheffield Students’ Union.

“Representative Committees exist to promote the views and interests of, and organise activities for, specific sections of the Full Members of the Students’ Union” (Union Constitution, byelaw 6, 1.1).

“Representative Committees truly play a vital role in the life of the SU. Not only are they the first point of contact (and a great place to meet) for students who identify as part of the group that the committee is set to represent, but they are also key platforms to raise the voices of their members and make campaigns happen! The fantastic work our representative committees do includes speaking up against the raise in fees and the marketisation of education, as well as advocating for the rights of international students and raising awareness of issues that affect women, LGBT+, disabled and BME students. Representative committees have the power to make an impact and a difference that is unique to them and that often engages the wider student and local community, going way beyond simply representing the interests of their members. In this regard, some of our committees have run award-winning events, such as ISC’s International Cultural Evening, sometimes even achieving national recognition, like in the case of LGBT+ History Month 2016”.

Serena Cavasin, Womens’ Officer 2016/2017.

This guide is split into sections and covers:

1. Introduction
2. The Role of a Representative Committee
3. Representative Committees and the SU
4. Committee Constitutions
5. Big Ideas
6. Budgeting and Funding
7. Policy and Students’ Union Council
8. Campaigns
9. NUS (National Union of Students)
10. Celebrating Your Achievements
11. SU Committee Space

1. Introduction

Hello and Welcome! Our seven Representative Committees at Sheffield SU are diverse in their roles, going about representing disadvantaged students within the University and Students’ Union. The activities and roles of committees can vary greatly, alongside their priorities for each year. Your election is a really exciting opportunity for you to get involved across your SU and make a change!

This document is designed to be your go-to reference guide for running a successful Representative Committee. In addition to this guide, committees can call upon dedicated staff support, funding, and guidance from the Students’ Union. You can get in touch with the contacts listed in this document for more information.

The purpose of this guide is not to tell committees the activities they should offer their members - it’s important those ideas come from you, as elected representatives. Rather, we hope this document sheds some
light on the governance and processes of committees at Sheffield Students’ Union - making it easier for you to make your ideas and dreams a reality.

2. The Role of a Representative Committee

Representative Committees play an important role in the democratic process of Sheffield Students’ Union. Led by students, for students; the 7 Representative Committees are responsible for ensuring the Student Union’s services and activities cater to the diverse needs and interests of all Sheffield Students. Each of the committees represents the interests of a specific section of the Union membership – leaving no voice unheard.

Being an elected member of a committee gives you the chance to make a change and positively impact on students’ lives and experiences. As a committee member, you’ll be helping to provide an important platform for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups to have a collective and influential voice both in the Students’ Union and University.

Each of the Representative Committees is named after the section of the Student Union membership it acts and speaks on behalf of; for instance: LGBT+ Committee represents Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and other students with a ‘non-traditional’ gender and sexual identity.

Representative Committees may fulfil their role in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):
- providing spaces, events, and activities for their members,
- developing and implementing policy,
- running and supporting campaigns,
- lobbying decision makers,
- and hosting social events.
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<th>Committee</th>
<th>Remit and Contacts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BME Students' Committee</strong></td>
<td>BME Students' Committee represents, and campaigns on behalf of, all non-white students.</td>
<td><strong>Womens' Officer:</strong> <a href="mailto:womens.officer@shef.ac.uk">womens.officer@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong><a href="mailto:BME@Sheffield.ac.uk">BME@Sheffield.ac.uk</a></strong></td>
<td><strong>Equality and Liberation Coordinator:</strong> <a href="mailto:a.prestage@shef.ac.uk">a.prestage@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong>FB: BME Students Committee - University of Sheffield</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students’ Union Councillor:</strong> BME Students’ Councillor</td>
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<td><strong>Disabled and Dyslexic Students' Committee</strong></td>
<td>Disabled and Dyslexic Students' Committee represents, and campaigns on behalf of, students with disabilities and dyslexia</td>
<td><strong>Womens' Officer:</strong> <a href="mailto:womens.officer@shef.ac.uk">womens.officer@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong><a href="mailto:DSC@Sheffield.ac.uk">DSC@Sheffield.ac.uk</a></strong></td>
<td><strong>Equality and Liberation Coordinator:</strong> <a href="mailto:a.prestage@shef.ac.uk">a.prestage@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong>International Students' Committee</strong></td>
<td>International Students' Committee represents, and campaigns on behalf of, all international students.</td>
<td><strong>International Officer:</strong> <a href="mailto:international.officer@shef.ac.uk">international.officer@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong><a href="mailto:isc@sheffield.ac.uk">isc@sheffield.ac.uk</a></strong></td>
<td><strong>Equality and Liberation Coordinator:</strong> <a href="mailto:a.prestage@shef.ac.uk">a.prestage@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong>FB: International Student's Committee</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students’ Union Councillor:</strong> International Students' Councillor</td>
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<td><strong>LGBT+ Students' Committee</strong></td>
<td>LGBT+ Students' Committee represents, and campaigns on behalf of, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and other gender and sexual minority students.</td>
<td><strong>Womens' Officer:</strong> <a href="mailto:womens.officer@shef.ac.uk">womens.officer@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong><a href="mailto:lgbt@sheffield.ac.uk">lgbt@sheffield.ac.uk</a></strong></td>
<td><strong>Equality and Liberation Coordinator:</strong> <a href="mailto:a.prestage@shef.ac.uk">a.prestage@shef.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td><strong>FB: LGBT+ at Uni of Shef</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students’ Union Councillor:</strong> LGBT+ Councillor</td>
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<td>Committee</td>
<td>Representative</td>
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| Mature Students' Committee | represents, and campaigns on behalf of, students over 21. | msc@sheffield.ac.uk  
FB: MSC  
Womens' Officer: womens.officer@shef.ac.uk  
Equality and Liberation Coordinator: a.prestage@shef.ac.uk  
Students' Union Councillor: Mature Students' Councillor |
| Postgraduate Students' Committee | represents, and campaigns on behalf of, all Postgrad Students, taught and research. | pgcommittee@sheffield.ac.uk  
FB: University of Sheffield Postgraduate Committee  
Education Officer: education.officer@shef.ac.uk  
Equality and Liberation Coordinator: a.prestage@shef.ac.uk  
Students' Union Councillor: Postgraduate Research Councillor and Postgraduate Taught Councillor |
| Womens' Committee | represents, and campaigns on behalf of, all women students. | womens@sheffield.ac.uk  
FB: Sheffield Students' Union Women's Committee  
Womens' Officer: womens.officer@shef.ac.uk  
Equality and Liberation Coordinator: a.prestage@shef.ac.uk  
Students' Union Councillor: Women Students’ Councillor |
3. What does it mean to be a Representative Committee at Sheffield SU?

What can you expect from Sheffield SU?

- As a Representative Committee, you are affiliated to the number one SU in the UK; that comes with some pretty awesome perks! The SU will provide you with:
  - Specialist support and guidance throughout the year
  - Funding, budgeting, and a bank account
  - Personal development and training opportunities
  - Access to our facilities and venues
  - Opportunities to engage with a local and national student movement

Sheffield SU provides dedicated staff support and guidance to committees through the Equality and Liberation Coordinator (Specialist Development Team) – they are excited to meet you!

This member of staff can provide you with specialist training opportunities, developing your ideas, and engaging with Union members. Some examples include: Supporting committees develop their aims, goals, and ideas for a month-long programme of events within a budget (like International Womens’ Month, or Black History Month); Guiding committees looking to recruit new members at AGMs or EGMs; and providing specialist advice for committees looking to develop and submit SU policies. Whatever it is your committee plans to do, we’ll be there to help guide you.

What do we expect from your Representative Committee?

Representative Committees are specifically detailed and explained in the Union Constitution, the rule book with which our organisation is run; they are expected to act in accordance with Union Constitution, Bye-laws, and policies. However, the rules committees are bound to are few and, generally, not prescriptive. We ask that your committee:

- Operates within the Union Constitution (and the law) - which assigns committee names and remits
- Elects a Chair, Treasurer, Inclusion Officer
- Holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) once every 13 months
- Remains financially solvent, and doesn’t operate a bank account outside of our provision

The following graphic demonstrates the context under which Representative Committees function in the structure of Sheffield Students’ Union. All democratic structures are led by students, for students - including our 8 elected officers, who provide leadership each year. With this, you’ll be exactly where you and your committee fit into the bigger picture.
Students’ Union Staff work to support, advise, and mentor students and their elected representatives. If you have any questions or queries about the role of Representative Committees or how they may interact with other elements of the SU you can always contact your Coordinator for more info (a.prestage@sheffield.ac.uk).

4. Committee Constitutions

Constitutions are important documents, providing the rules and regulations with which representative committees are governed. Each Representative Committee is required to abide by the Union’s Constitution, alongside its own. Representative Committees are responsible for updating their constitutions in order to ensure they remain relevant and fit for purpose. As a result of this, the 7 constitutions of the 7 committees are each unique and different.

In order to update a Representative Committee’s constitution, 1) two thirds of the committee must be present, and 2) a simple majority vote (50%) for the changes must be reached. Should either or both of these criteria fail to be met, the committee will be unable to change their constitution.

Constitutional change is a big project, and shouldn’t be undertaken lightly! Try to be clear of the areas you want to adjust and amend before drafting a new constitution - staff support is available from the SU to help with this process, or interpreting your committee’s constitution; get in touch with your Coordinator for more info (a.prestage@sheffield.ac.uk). More information and existing constitutions are available on The Zone Online/Society Support Hub.

5. Big Ideas

As a new (or re-elected) committee member you’ll have some big ideas you’ll want to develop and work on! Having an established, long-term vision and plan is important as a Representative Committee, your Chair should take responsibility for drawing together all members’ ideas; a plan will enable your committee to establish common aims and goals, prioritise, and develop a bigger picture. Getting these ideas pinned down and
discussed as a committee early on will help your committee be consistent and effective.

Strategic plans aren’t as scary as they sound; The Zone Online includes a document you can complete as a committee in order to help you develop a plan, based on your ideas, early in your term. You can refer back to the plan as your elected term progresses, ultimately enabling you to be more effective and successful. Dedicated staff support will be able to offer you advice and guidance on your committee’s plan as you develop it throughout the year; get in touch with your Coordinator for more info (a.prestage@sheffield.ac.uk). More information and existing constitutions are available on The Zone Online.

6. Budgeting and Funding

Committees are provided with an annual budget to fulfil your aims and objectives for the coming academic year. Your committee will be able to apply for additional funding throughout the year to complement your original budget – more information can be found on the Money Money Money pages of the SU website. It can be really handy to think how you might make the most out of this budget and funding throughout the year.

Representative Committees apply to the Development Officer for their annual funding. For the duration of the year Committees are buddied up with an officer who has ultimate responsibility for the Committee’s budget (see table in Role of Representative Committee for guidance); this designated officer contact is responsible for signing off committee expenditure and claims.

Support with your budget and expenditure will be available from staff members across a variety of departments, so there’s no need to panic or worry. For more in depth information on Committee Budgets and the role of a Treasurer, please see the Finance Guide for Committee Treasurers - on The Zone Online/Society Support Hub.

7. Policy and Students’ Union Council

Policy reflects the ideas and needs of our students. It’s democratic, and you can influence it. Policy is passed by elected representatives sitting on Students’ Union Council, or in some cases a referendum of the full membership. You might also use existing SU policies to lobby and influence decision makers.

Representative Committees can submit, shape, and influence policy through their officer contacts: Womens’ Officer, International Students’ Officer, and Education Officer. However, feel free to lobby officers other than your dedicated contact! Outside of the Executive Officer Team, Representative Committees can influence and submit Student Union policy through their dedicated Student Union Councillors. These elected representatives are responsible for speaking and voting in the interests of their membership on a variety of issues.

It can be important to foster a strong working relationship between your committee, officers, and councillors; a consistent approach to issues that your membership faces will be more likely to yield success. Councillor elections run annually, early in Semester 1, and Officer
elections in Semester 2 - your committee might consider putting forward a candidate (or more than one!) for councillor or an officer role.

If you are interested in becoming a Councillor, or submitting policy to Students’ Union Council, visit our website’s Council pages for more information.

8. Campaigns

Support with campaigning and change-making is vital to our work as an organisation; campaigns provide a strong and active voice for our student leaders. Throughout the year committees will be presented with the opportunity to lead on, and join in with, a variety of campaigns. If you have an upcoming campaign your committee would like to run or lead on, get in touch with your coordinator to discuss this; they will be able to provide you with specialist advice and guidance, helping you achieve your aims and goals. For more information about ongoing campaigns, or how to make a new change visit our campaigns pages.

9. NUS (National Union of Students)

NUS provides a national collective voice for students, and students’ unions, across higher and further education; as members of Sheffield SU and NUS, you have access to some awesome opportunities. Particularly of interest to Representative Committee members will be NUS’ Liberation and Section Campaigns; NUS supports LGBT+, Women, Black, Disabled, International, Postgraduate, Part-time and Mature students campaigning on issues that matter to them.

Each of the above campaigns includes a nationally elected, self-defining committee, tasked with representing the interests of their membership - these committees are elected annually at conferences, and include both full-time (paid) and part-time (unpaid) roles. In order to stand for election to NUS committee positions, you must first be elected as a Sheffield SU delegate for the relevant conference. Our NUS delegate elections run alongside Student Union Councillor Elections.

In addition to the election of national roles, conferences provide Sheffield students with the opportunity to submit and influence national policy. The annual priorities and direction of each campaign are set at each conference through debate and democratic vote - all delegates have voting and speaking rights, and are able to submit policy to the relevant NUS Campaign.

If you are interested in becoming an NUS delegate, or NUS committee member, visit our website’s represent students pages for more information.

10. Celebrating Your Achievements

It’s important to celebrate your collective and personal achievements throughout your year in office! Be proud of your work, and keep a record where possible - take pictures of your events, document your efforts; it will be helpful to have these to refer to when nominating your committee for awards, or when building and developing your CV.
You can get your hard work recognised through:

Students Union’s Annual Activities Awards
Annual SU Sports, Activities, Volunteering, and Academic Awards.
Various NUS Conference and National Awards
HEAR Recognition

For advice and guidance on accreditation schemes at Sheffield visit our website.

11. SU Committee Space

Last year the SU asked our committees about the spaces they use to organise and deliver their amazing work. Based on your feedback, we’ve created your brand new SU Committee Space.

This dedicated space will be shared by BME Students’ Committee, Disabled and Dyslexic Students’ Committee, Education Committee, Ethical and Environmental Committee, International Students’ Committee, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans* + Students’ Committee, Mature Students’ Committee, Postgraduate Students’ Committee, Womens’ Committee, and Welfare Committee; each committee will be able to book access to the Committee Space one day every other week.

This booking may be used for your committee’s regular meetings, a training workshop you want to run, or a committee-run event or activity - it’s your space! We love the work that our Working and Representative Committees do throughout the year, use this space to collaborate with each other and showcase your achievements.

We’re really excited to see what you all come up with!

In order to make sure all our change-making committees get the most out of the Committee Space we politely ask that you don’t use it as a social or lounge space - we would like to think you might find more exciting places to chat and catch up.

Whilst your regular meetings or training workshops might not need you to think about health and safety, some other activities and events in Committee Space might. Your staff coordinator is on hand to help you ensure the ongoing health and safety of your members and any visitors - get in touch if you aren’t sure.

Your committee’s staff coordinator will be able to help you develop ideas for the Committee Space, and offer specialist support and guidance around planning and running effective and engaging campaigns and activities - get in touch if you have an idea or any questions.

To book the Committee Space on behalf of your committee visit the Representative Committee pages of the SU Website, where there is a booking form.