1. Executive Summary:
The Academic Rep system at Sheffield is innovative, engaging and has supported nearly 1,000 students to have a direct say over their education. As the system moves into its second full year of operation, and becomes established, there is a need to ensure that there is operational and organisational capacity and investment to realise this potential. The system could support in the delivery of a number of University strategic priorities, at all levels of the institution, impacting on student satisfaction and achievement, but delivering this requires further attention and resources.

Academic Reps have enjoyed and continue to ask for more opportunities to come together as a community institutionally, at faculty and departmental level. The Academic Rep Conference and Masterclass programme has also provided avenues for reps to share ideas and develop as individuals.

Our end of year rep report demonstrates that academic reps continue to see value in the role with 85% having enjoyed their time in post. There is also a gradual but significant increase in reps identifying the Students’ Union alongside their department (70%, a 9% increase on 2017/18) as a foundational aspect of the rep experience, which reflects the new partnership based approach.

Academic Reps also influence and produce tangible changes across all faculties and departments, with some of their fantastic work being highlighted in this report. We are also really happy to have seen a successful pilot of the part-time academic rep facilitator post within the faculty of Social Sciences. The outcomes of this work and various elements of best practice have been captured and shared below.

There are still several elements of the rep experience and system itself that require improvement and revision. These have been captured into specific recommendations at the end of this paper, but they include:

- Expanding capacity and provision to support the academic rep system.
- Provide a louder platform to the existence and purpose of academic reps at TUOS.
- Development of the faculty rep and postgraduate research experience in the system.
- A review of accreditation and incentives for academic reps.
- Consolidated and enhanced staff support in student voice work, in partnership with APSE.

Overall, the rep system is now situated in a positive position from which to build on existing foundations and create meaningful and long-lasting change for the institution.
2. Background to Academic Rep review:

Reasoning for the review:

Throughout 2015 discussions between Student Union Officers, SU staff, Institution staff and Student Academic Representatives made clear that the existing Academic Representative system had fallen behind other institutions across the sector. Consensus was that the system did not act as an effective tool with which to articulate the student voice. It also did not allow students to engage in pedagogical, holistic discussions on their learning.

Across 2016/17, an extensive review of the system was undertaken which drew on best practice locally and nationally. Key issues included were identified, such as resourcing, lack of strategic direction, recruitment, training, student engagement and lack of understanding around the purpose of representatives. These findings were presented to University Learning and Teaching Committee in May 2017.

Following this, a collaborative task and finish group, led by the SU Education Officer and University Director of Learning and Teaching (Student Engagement) looked to devise and implement a new system of student academic representation. The aim was to establish a system that ensured the student voice could shape learning and teaching practice. An accessible system, with fair minimum standards and responsibilities. Yet was also flexible in representing a genuine partnership between staff, students, Students’ Union and University in the spirit of partnership and co-production.

Consultation process and new system approval:

During semester 1 of 2017/18 academic year academic reps, departmental societies and university staff across all levels shared their views on what an ideal Academic Representation system at TUOS should look like. Opportunities ranged from online surveys, to face-to-face discussions and presentations at TUOS L&T Conference, Student Staff Committees and the Student Engagement Steering Group.

Collating this feedback led to a series of recommendations focused on rebuilding the system from the ground up. These suggestions were presented to LTC in February 2018. The committee approved the recommended changes in principle.

Over April and May 2018 the task and finish group finalised detailing the proposed changes and consulted Programme Level Approach leads, departmental managers, departmental co-ordinators and faculty representatives on these materials.

In response to this final consultation, a number of significant amendments to the system and implementation proposed by the working group had been made. These proposals were then agreed by Learning and Teaching Committee in May 2018.

Implementation of the new system:

Summer 2018 saw the implementation of the new Academic Representation System in full. Improved guidance and provision has been provided to departmental and faculty staff alongside academic reps having access to an extensive training programme. Several events and institutional opportunities or consultations have had input from academic representatives.

A diverse and engaged student population are having a larger say on the direction of the institution. Whilst still in development there is much to celebrate and highlight from the new rep system which will be addressed below. This will be done by benchmarking against initial recommendations and by analysing existing data. Contrasts to data within the old system will be done where possible.
3. Progress against Initial Recommendations:

To help in understanding development of the academic rep system so far, we will reflect on the initial suggestions outlined and agreed by the Students’ Union and University in May 2018.

3a.) Recruitment Practice:

Suggestion 1: Remove elections and put in place a volunteer model for recruitment. Suggestion 2: Implement a semester 2 April/May recruitment drive alongside September/October.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Volunteer Model):
This year, in most instances academic reps volunteered for the role, rather than standing in elections. Reasoning for this change was rooted in making the system more accessible for students from all backgrounds and to develop a culture shift towards all students taking ownership of their programme.

- As of April 2019 - 1,200 students volunteered to become Reps with 964 confirming their place by completing the online core training.
- Discussions with departments as evidenced through our Social Sciences Report have found that total rep numbers have either increased or remained constant with previous years.
- A ratio of 1 rep to every 15 students was suggested but was deemed as an aspirational, long term goal. Regardless, departments have been encouraged to reflect on their total number of reps in contrast to total number of students they represent.
- Some departments have expressed concern that the volunteer model has skewed rep numbers within particular year groups. For example UG Yr 1 may have 2 reps and Yr 2 may have 15 reps, in extreme cases.

Progress on suggestion 2 (Semester 2 Recruitment Drive):
Following requests by staff, a semester 2 recruitment drive was piloted in May 2018 and will now be implemented fully for May 2019. This was to allow departments to recruit as many returning reps as possible before the summer, so they can start their role at the beginning of term as opposed to late October.

- Roughly 50% of departments participated in the 2018 pilot, recruiting 241 across the University. We feel this number should double for 2019.
- Reception to full implementation has been positive, with guidance provided to university colleagues ahead of 2019 recruitment.
- As of April 2019, 75 returning reps have already confirmed they will be taking on the role again for 2019/20.
- We are confident this will allow for the majority of academic reps to be in position and trained no later than September 2019.
3b.) Training and development within the Rep System:

Suggestion 1: Support to Faculties and Departments by recruiting ‘Academic Rep Faculty Facilitators’.
Suggestion 2: Development of Student Staff Committee pre-meetings.
Suggestion 3: Allow academic reps to specialise in areas of interest within the role.
Suggestion 4: Provide a dedicated online space for academic reps and interactive platforms.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Academic Rep Facilitators):
Within the current system there is only one full time staffing post dedicated to the running and management of the rep system (SU Academic Coordinator). It was felt that to develop the system more provision should be put in place by recruiting a part time ‘Facilitator’ for each Faculty.

• Due to a lack of funding, a pilot for one of the roles was run in Social Sciences (Nov 2018 - May 2019). The remit of the role can be found here.
• Outcomes have included an analysis of student engagement within the Faculty and suggested best practice for colleagues.
• The facilitator has also been able to provide tailored one to one guidance for staff in reflecting on student engagement activity. Examples include Law and the Management School.
• To continue the development of the rep system, having facilitators within each faculty is a strategic priority. Appetite for such support has been recognised by both staff and students across each of the faculties. Their priorities could include driving best practice across their relevant faculties, providing guidance to staff and students as well as supporting the running of SSCs and student consultations or workshops.

Progress on suggestion 2 (Student Staff Committee Pre-meetings):
Based on best practice within particular departments, it was suggested that the facilitation of SSC pre-meetings should become standard practice across the institution.

• Implementation of pre-meetings has been difficult due to the lack of organisational capacity (discussed above). Many departments do not have provision to run pre-meetings alongside regular SSCs and the lack of Academic Rep Facilitators has made it impossible for the SU to provide these as had been hoped.
• Those that do run pre-meetings continue to see the benefit as discussions within SSCs are often more productive. Some departments have also taken a minimal admin approach, simply encouraging reps to meet up ahead of time.
• The Academic Rep End of Year Report has demonstrated that several reps feel pre-meetings enhance a sense of community and support between reps.

Progress on suggestion 3 (Academic Rep Specialisation):
The 2017/18 rep role descriptor was felt to ask too much of a single rep. 2018/19 descriptor was scaled back in response, with ‘masterclasses’ ran by the SU to encourage reps to specialise in areas of interest.

• The masterclass programme has been very well received by academic reps and staff, further details will be provided later within the report. Long term the SU hopes to be able to ‘track’ rep development through the masterclass programme which will allow them to reflect on their interests.
• The revised role descriptor has also been seen as a positive change, although some reps are still not clear on what they should and should not be doing.
Progress on suggestion 4 (Digital Spaces for Reps and Staff):
There was a need to provide a more innovative and useful online space for staff and students to learn more about and share practice on the rep system and student voice engagement.

- Whilst acknowledged as a long term goal, some aspects of the online offer to reps and staff were improved from the outset. Primarily through the SU Academic Rep Hub. Which aims to provide general guidance and information for both groups.
- To reduce department admin, manual excel spreadsheets were replaced with a central Academic Rep Database through airtable. Students manually sign up through the SU website and the airtable spreadsheet updates automatically for staff. This has been a welcomed change by institutional colleagues.
- No development has been made to creating a dedicated online community interactive space at this stage, there is potential that the SU’s move to a new digital platform could provide opportunities in this area.

3c.) Academic Reps and Institutional Staff within the Student Voice process:

Suggestion 1: Ensure academic reps are clear on expectations through role descriptors.
Suggestion 2: That student voice is seen as a priority within programme/departmental leadership.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Clear role descriptors):
As outlined in 3b, suggestion 3 there was consensus from students and staff that reps were not entirely sure on what they needed to do as a rep. Having a clear role descriptor was seen as priority to help mitigate this.

- The revised role descriptor for both the academic rep and faculty rep positions were written collaboratively between the University and Students’ Union. This descriptor is also reinforced and checked in the online core training.
- However, staff and students do continue to comment that they are unsure of what is being asked of them. When challenged further on this, such as in masterclass sessions it became clear that the varied local context that each rep operates in is so unique as to make the central descriptor quite unwieldy.
- Over summer 2019 the Students’ Union will work with departments to reflect on how they can translate the central descriptor to their departmental context for the benefit of the academic reps.

Progress on suggestion 2 (Departmental leadership on student voice):
Within the context of Student Staff Committees and departments generally, it was felt that staff should ensure that student voice work was taken and incorporated seriously within department structures.

- Departments and Faculties were provided a collaboratively created academic rep benchmarking toolkit. Which shared and encouraged various practices on student voice.
- Outcomes of the social sciences report demonstrate however that student engagement activity is not always joint up within departments. For example heads of department or student engagement leads not being involved in Student Staff Committees.
- Staff generally would like more support in how to approach and execute student engagement activity. These conversations could be facilitated and developed between the Students’ Union and APSE.
3d.) Faculty Level Student Voice Activity:

Suggestion 1: Provision to support faculty rep engagement.
Suggestion 2: Establishing a democratic mandate for faculty reps.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Provision for faculty rep engagement):
Due to structural changes within the University, faculty student staff committees lost central support from learning and teaching services. Much of this year has been handing over this provision directly to the faculties and how this has impacted FSSCs and faculty rep engagement as a result.

- The Students’ Union Education officer now meets once per term with each FDLT to discuss student voice at faculty level.
- A key contact within each faculty for the FSSCs has been established with the SU. Information and support is routinely provided to these individuals.
- FSSCs in most cases have continued to run as normal but there is acknowledgement that further work between faculties and the SU must be undertaken ahead of 2019/20 academic year, capacity issues have been raised on both sides of this discussion.

Progress on suggestion 2 (Democratic Mandate for Faculty Reps):
Whilst academic reps are volunteers, faculty reps should in most cases have been elected by their fellow reps from their department. This provides them with a mandate with which to represent the department at faculty level.

- For the first time, dedicated training was provided to the 90 Faculty Reps in post.
- Two thirds of the faculty reps were elected, though there is still work to do to ensure that this practice is taken up across the institution.
- There is also a need to consider the support that is provided to staff at both departmental and faculty staff in order to facilitate this.

3e.) Standards, Benchmarking and Establishing Consistency:

Suggestion 1: Ensuring support structures are in place for staff to effectively develop the academic rep system within their departments.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Staff Provision for rep development):
A key on-going challenge is how we establish ‘consistency’ within the rep system whilst acknowledging each faculty and department approaches student voice differently.

- Several resources have been created to help departments refer to ‘baseline’ expectations on student voice and academic rep engagement. This includes the benchmarking toolkit, map of student engagement, specific departmental guidance and access to historical best practice. All of which has been written and developed and reviewed by institutional staff.
- These have been well received by staff and help to place their work into a wider context. It has also provided them with an avenue to self define how they are meeting a ‘minimum standard’ for student voice.
- However, the rep experience continues to vary substantially from department to department, from recruitment through to SSC support. Addressing this variance is a priority for 2019/20.
3f.) Governance and Strategic Oversight:

Suggestion 1: As a partnership based project, ensure that the academic rep system is owned and answerable jointly to the University and Students’ Union.

Progress on suggestion 1 (Collaborative ownership):
A long standing issue was who specifically responsible for the maintenance and progress of the academic rep system. Identified as a partnership through the rep review several steps have been taken to connect the rep system within formal university and students’ union structures.

- For the Students’ Union the democratic voice of the system was identified as a priority. As such as the Students’ Union Education Committee and Education Officer are responsible for ensuring academic reps feel listened to by the SU. The Students’ Union also monitors the development of the rep system through the ‘My Academic Life’ strand of our 18 year strategy.
- For the University, the day to day development and management of the system was identified as a priority. Currently, routine updates are provided to the university student engagement steering group, alongside a yearly report to the University Learning and Teaching Committee. There may be scope for the university and students’ union to work closer together on the overall strategic direction of the rep system.

4. Headlines of Key Academic Rep Activity for 2018/19 Academic Year:

Throughout the 2018/19 academic year there have been several activities and initiatives which are worth noting. Whilst some of these are regular activities such as our end of year feedback form for academic reps, which provides insight into their experience, others are entirely new. Our masterclass training programme and academic rep conference in particular are worth exploring in detail.

4a. End of Year Academic Rep Report:

Each year the Students’ Union asks Academic Reps to complete an end of year report, which looks for them to reflect on their overall experience for that year. We pull out several key trends, prominent issues and points in a separate report. You can find the 2017/18 report for reference here. For now we are interested to see if there has been any significant changes due to the new system and a snapshot of the overall rep experience.

2018/19 Completion Rate: 410
2017/18 Completion Rate: 458

Overall, how did you find your time as an Academic Rep (7 out of 10 or higher):
2018/19: 89%
2017/18: 86%

Did you feel you received appropriate support from your department to fulfil your role? (Strongly Agree/Agree)
2018/19: 77%
2017/18: 82%

Did you feel you received appropriate support from the Students’ Union to fulfil your role? (Strongly Agree/Agree)
2018/19: 70%
2017/18: 61%
4b. Academic Rep Conference 2019:

For the first time in several years, the Students’ Union re-launched the annual Academic Rep Conference, which ran in February 2019. The purpose of the event was to bring our academic rep community together so that they could learn from each other and consider how best to influence their departments and the University. Seen as a pilot it was hoped that the conference could mark the beginning of developing a sense of identity between academic reps. The event included several different topics, from considering how to develop sustainability within the curriculum, public speaking, programme level approach and general sessions on higher education, provided by WonkHE and the University Vice Chancellor.

Positives:

Overall 140 academic reps attended the conference across day. Our feedback form was completed by 23 reps who attended, all of who said they would like the conference to happen again in 2019/20. There were several aspects of the event which students particularly enjoyed:

• Provided recognition for their role within the University and that their time is valued.
• A chance to share ideas and socialise with other reps, which for those who have been in the system for multiple years, felt was a genuinely new addition.
• The opportunities, diversity of sessions and scale of the event.
• The collaborative nature of the event between SU and University staff.
• The sense of professionalism both in overall experience and what it provided to the role.

“The Academic Rep Conference definitely contributed to my experience as an academic rep. The sessions were interactive and it was good to meet other academic reps”.

“I particularly liked the conference. The session on PLA was helpful as it gave me an insight on the university-wide aims for PLA and I could then use the knowledge when working with the tutor who is responsible for PLA in our school”.

“It was a great cooperative experience between students and the university”.

Areas for improvement:

Whilst we believe the event to be an overall success there are some aspects of the conference we would revise going forward.

• Many reps attending and in providing feedback would like the event to run earlier in the Academic Year, such as October or November. This is so that is has more relevance for the rest of the Academic Year.
• Some reps believed the conference could be more challenging with ideas and concepts discussed. Alongside this, there was a feeling that more could be done to encourage reps to collaborate or campaign across departments.

“It didn't feel particularly inspiring or radical, which is how it was marketed. I wanted to see more on how we can use our voices to make bigger scale changes and organise with reps in other depts”.

We're excited to run the rep conference again in 2019/20 academic year and build on this success. Although the ability to increase the scale of the event is dependent on increased provision.
4c. Academic Rep Masterclass Training Programme:
As part of the new system, the Students’ Union has launched a new masterclass training programme. These sessions, divided between areas of leadership, research and campaigning were created to both empower academic reps within the role and to develop them as individuals. As a new initiative, we wanted to ensure these sessions are responding to the needs and requests of our student leaders.

Facts and figures:
- 972 attendees across the academic year.
- 50 masterclasses sessions in total with 33 unique sessions.
- 428 academic reps have attended at least 1 masterclass.
- 102 academic reps have attended 3 or more masterclasses.

Which masterclass sessions have been popular:
Engagement with the masterclass sessions has varied quite drastically depending on content, time and date of the session, location etc. Despite this there is quite a clear group of masterclass sessions that have had high engagement. They are a mix of ‘self-development’ sessions and ‘practical skills’ in being a more effective rep, as shown by attendance rates below:

- Developing your public speaking skills (110)
- Developing your employability (107)
- Leadership and communications skills (95)
- How to engage other students effectively (73)
- What can you do as an Academic Rep during exam season (64)
- How to use data and evidence to inform your arguments (46)
- How to effectively chair committee meetings (44)

Several sessions such as engaging with PLA, sustainability within the curriculum and national education politics also had good levels of engagement, but seemed to appeal to very specific groups of academic reps. Usually those who have been in the rep role for a couple of years and are looking to take on more responsibility. Many reps also commented in the end of year rep report that they would have attended further sessions if there had been more flexibility in timing or if the sessions have been provided online.

“Masterclasses inspired me to think of other ways to connect integrally with my peers on academic rep matters”.

“I think all of the sessions were greatly informative and interactive. Also, I was able to meet reps from other departments and exchange...advice for each other”.

Next steps for the Masterclass Programme:
We think that the masterclass programme has been a fantastic success and that it has become a core part of the academic rep experience at Sheffield. As such we want to build on this success by:

- Revising and widening masterclass options, bringing in further local/national expertise.
- Develop sessions that could be specific to faculties to enhance community development.
- Look to incorporate ENCORE or online versions of the masterclass programme.
- Revise accessibility in how students can sign up to and monitor their masterclass attendance.
- Train the trainer sessions for long-term reps who could lead sessions themselves.
4d. What have Academic Reps achieved this year?
As always, we feel it is incredibly important to celebrate the successes of the Academic Rep community across the University. Be this within a team or through individual actions, some of the highlights can be found below and have been pulled from our end of year rep report:

• I am proud to have helped in bringing to attention...and finding a solution to the issues with the ACS231 group project concerning iForge availability as that was a major problem that all of my cohort faced during the first semester. After my fellow representatives and I provided feedback to the department on the problem, we were able to work together to improve the situation in the second semester and hopefully for future years.
  (Automatic Control and Systems Engineering)

• I really enjoyed being able to chair Student Staff Committee Meetings and lead on department wide changes. Staff and student contributed equally and respected each others opinions. The sense of community within the department has only ever improved because of this.
  (School of Clinical Dentistry)

• As a team, I believe that the greatest achievement this year was improving the tutor system. During the first semester, it was raised that tutors were given unequal feedback in the formative essays that we did. Talking to other students from Level 2 and 3, I also realised that there have always been some issues with tutors and tutorials. I believe the Committee did a great job in getting feedback from staff and students. It was great to see how all the Academic Reps were anonymously giving their opinion about ideas put forward by staff. After a couple of meetings about this, some improvements were seen immediately.
  (Biomedical Sciences)

• This year was the first time that student members from our SSC sat down with high up members of our department, faculty, SU and University, to discuss our issues in a collaborative environment. With our DLT, Head of school and education officer, we designed and carried out a plan of action to keep students and staff better informed of the school wide changes, and how best to communicate with each other.
  (School of Languages and Cultures)

• In the first SSLC meeting I proposed that assessment deadlines did not give enough time for preparation and this caused a clash. As a result, MOLE is now updated before the term begins which really helped. It was good to know I helped to implement positive change in the department.
  (Archeology)

• We had found computer workshop sessions to not be very useful on the course within first year and the start of second year. After bringing up this issue and potential solutions to the problem within SSC meetings, discussions with year tutors and module leaders lead to immediate changes to the workshops. There is a genuine desire within the department to continue to make changes in the future to further improve these types of sessions.
  (Urban Studies)

• Our greatest achievement this year was in working with the department on the PLA changes next year. I feel that the student feedback on these changes will be valuable to the development of the department.
  (Physics and Astronomy)
5. Case Study - Social Sciences Report:
As has been discussed above, a long standing priority for the Students' Union has been to gain a greater understanding of and provide better provision to each of the faculties. For 2018/19 academic year, the Students' Union piloted the ‘Academic Rep Facilitator’ post within the Faculty of Social Sciences. This being a TUOS student, working part time to support student engagement activity. The culmination of this pilot was an overview report of the state of academic representation within the faculty, which can be found here.

The key findings of the report:
Whilst the outcomes are specific to the experience of the Social Sciences faculty, they are applicable to the wider academic rep experience. Suggestions for future development can be found below:

2.1: Promoting the existence of Academic Reps
Academic Reps are not well known to the wider student population in departments, which makes it harder for them to carry out their role. Departments and the SU should consider how they promote the existence of reps through their communication channels.

2.2: Clarify support routes for Academic Reps
Reps are not aware of support routes, how they connect and how to deal with issues outside of SSCs. The SU and departments need to clarify where reps can access support and where to take questions that do not need to be escalated to SSCs.

2.3: Empower an Academic Rep community
Academic reps want more opportunities to develop a community within the faculty of Social Sciences. Be this through faculty specific masterclasses, an awareness of how each department works in the faculty or accessible ways to communicate with each other.

2.4: Staff development
Staff would like more support in taking a strategic approach to their student engagement activities. Most likely in the form of online or face to face training. The Institution may want to reflect on provision and guidance allocated to staff around student engagement.

2.5: Sharing faculty-wide best practice
Staff would like more opportunities to share and access good practice across the faculty. This is so that they can develop new ideas and gain a better picture of how their SSCs are functioning.

2.6: SSC Membership
Departments should reflect on the membership of their SSCs. There should be a balance between the number of reps, professional support staff and academic staff.

2.7: Connections between departments and the faculty
Overall consensus is that departments and the faculty could be having more productive conversations on student engagement. Suggestions include when should department staff raise issues to the faculty, how faculty reps relay information back to their departments, and how faculty reps are inducted into their role.

2.8: Student voice outside the rep system
Students who are not Academic or Faculty Reps should still be engaged in wider initiatives or consultations such as module and programme evaluations, the NSS, and department or cohort-wide consultations. These forms of student engagement are outlined in the University Map for Student Engagement here.
6a. Recommendations for 2019/20 Academic Year:

Across the year the new Academic Representation System has seen a series of positive developments and provided multiple opportunities to the students who take part. However there are also several areas, many of which are highlighted throughout this report that need revision or improvement in order to continue to develop the rep system.


Whilst many of the following recommendations can be considered in scope of the existing system, it must be stressed that capacity for the management and delivery of the rep programme has already exceeded capacity. Current staffing is limited to a single academic coordinator, which drastically limits development and day to day operations.

In order for the effective incorporation of these recommendations or continued development of aspects such as the masterclass programme, staffing provision is required. One facilitator per Faculty would allow for exploration of direct support to departments, both students and staff. Alongside this, training opportunities, support to faculties and the management of pre-meetings could be incorporated as standard within the rep programme. The social sciences report is a good example of the type of activity which could be established through this provision.

2. Revision of accreditation for the academic rep role:

Several comments from academic reps and staff have expressed concern about the shift of HEAR/Certificate accreditation away from SSC attendance to masterclass attendance. More generally, the way in which we recognise the work and contribution of academic reps requires revision. We would look to see if alternative accreditation (and recognition) could complement HEAR rather than creating overreliance on the scheme.

3. Development of masterclasses and overall training provision:

Reception to the masterclasses has been very positive. We believe this should become standard within the rep system and incorporated accordingly. Training for returning representatives will need reviewing as the current ‘core training’ will no longer be relevant to them. More of the masterclasses and skills that are essential for any rep (such as chairing committees) must be placed online. This is so they can be accessed as needed and help part time, commuter and high contact hour students interact with the materials on their time schedules.

4. Overhaul of Faculty Representation:

Faculty Representation continues to be a challenge, largely due to limited capacity for both faculty staff and the students’ union. Faculty reps do not feel their role is properly supported in terms of recruitment, training, opportunities or accreditation. This is also linked to a wider institutional conversation on what student engagement at university wide, faculty and department should look like. This would assist in defining where and when students should influence these structures. It is suggested that these factors should be addressed over summer and plans put in place ahead of september recruitment.
5. Support department and faculty partnerships by empowering collaboration on student engagement activity:

Staff across both faculties and departments would like more opportunities to bridge gaps on student engagement activity. The Students’ Union could play a larger role in this through putting in place best practice opportunities (both online and in person), led by academic rep facilitators. Guidance on how and when SSCs and FSSCs should be talking to each other can also be distributed, as well as sharing contact details between relevant staff members. Recent work by Robert McKay on this area (opportunities/avenues to engage students at faculty level) should be an effective starting point.

6. Expand training and advice for institutional staff working with academic representatives:

Whilst regular and positive contact between departments and the students’ union is maintained there are still some problems with making sure handovers of the role between staff operates effectively. The Students’ Union should look to expand the academic rep staff hub and collaborate with colleagues in APSE to provide further opportunities for staff to develop this area of core practice.

7. Foster Education Committee as the democratic voice for academic reps within the SU:

Education Committee is now well placed, having elected a new committee for the first time in two years with a revised mandate, to ensure academic reps are effectively supported across the SU. The committee may also take a leading role in ensuring events such as the Academic Rep Conference continue to reflect the needs of the rep population and develop a community.

8. Begin a review and revision of the PGR academic rep experience:

Acknowledged within the initial academic representation review was that the PGR experience is quite separate to that of UG or PGT. Large numbers of PGR reps are not logged onto SU systems and provision continues to be scattered. PGRs who do engage with the rep system note that the opportunities, particularly around self-development and meeting others is welcomed. However, the wider role is not fit for purpose. The SU will begin working with colleagues in research services and APSE to start development of a more refined and standardised PGR rep experience.

9. Offer more diverse opportunities for academic reps to come together as a community:

The academic rep conference and masterclass sessions have provided reps with a chance to meet other students in a format and context that has not happened at the institution before. From sharing best practice to making new friends, we want to ensure this becomes a standard aspect of the rep experience. Ensuring the rep conference happens earlier in the academic year is one way to do this, but we also want to help departments review their engagement activities with reps and foster faculty wide conversations between students and staff.
6b. Opportunities for strategic engagement of Academic Reps in 2019/20

Finally, we feel it is important to recognise the upcoming strategic benefits for the institution in developing partnership working with academic representatives.

- Developments and discussions of the implementation of PLA have been fostered this year and could be more formally put forward as an ask to academic reps for 2019/20.

- Input or discussions around the learning and teaching priorities for the institution could be considered.

- Consultations on university wide initiatives such as the student life cycle project, ENCORE and NSS. Ensuring that these students have a chance to share ideas on how they could be reviewed or embedded effectively.

- Bringing faculty representatives together to build a picture of student voice initiatives across the institution.

- Sharing and highlighting best practice through events such as the Academic Rep Conference and masterclass training programme.