LEICESTER STUDENTS' UNION

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION IMPACT REPORT 2023/24
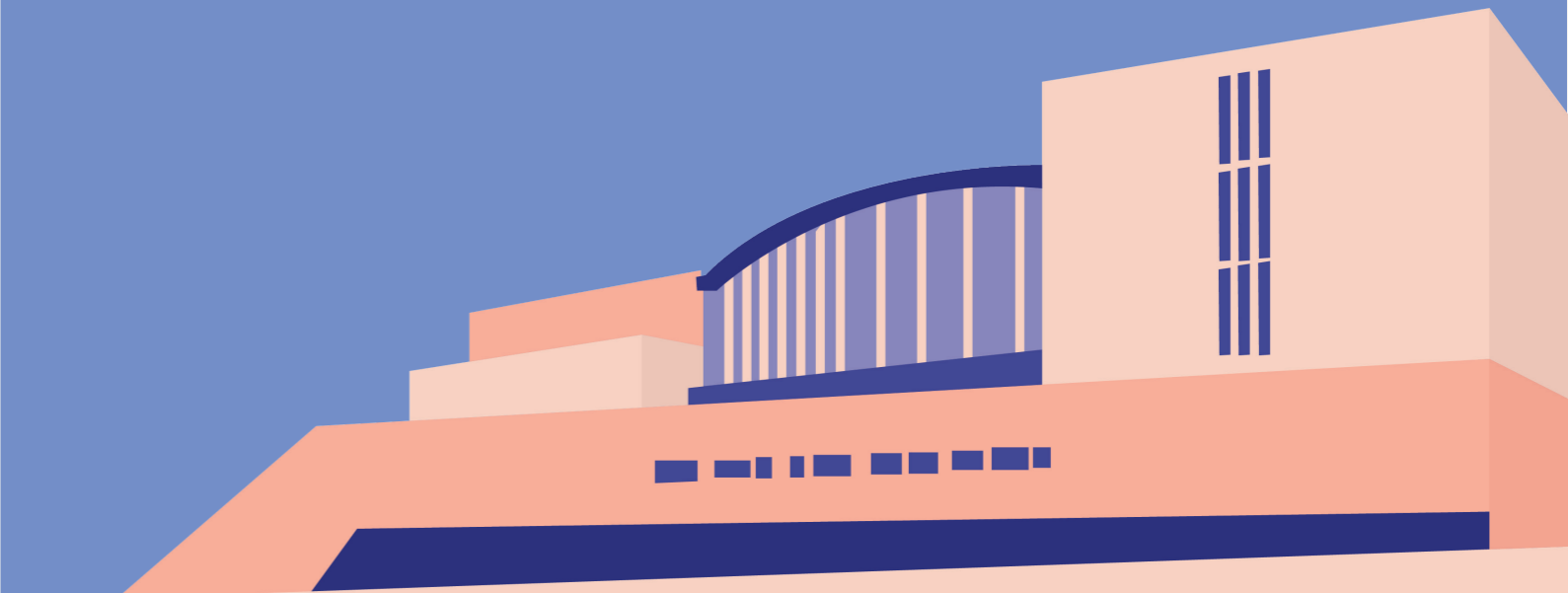
Contents

Key Stats

167
SSC's held

Over 100
Students attending the Student Leaders Conference

157
Students attending the Academic Rep Briefings

Average of
227
Students completing each round of checkpoints

94
Students attending the Academic Rep Forums

283
Course Reps completed their training

Just under
two thirds
of Reps completing their accreditation

433
Nominations received for Superstar Awards

105
Nominations received for Student Voice Awards

Your Reps

4
College Reps

38
School Reps

333
Course Reps

2
PGR College Reps

50
PGR Reps

Academic Rep Overview

Newly Introduced College Reps

Introduction from Education Officer Prachi Bhatt

Our academic representatives have played an invaluable role in shaping the academic experience for our students. Through their dedication and tireless efforts, they have ensured that student voices are heard and that concerns are addressed promptly. Their contributions have led to significant improvements in course delivery, resources, and overall student satisfaction.

We are excited to welcome our newly recruited college reps, who bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to their roles. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our outgoing college reps for their outstanding work and dedication. Additionally, a big thank you to all our course and school reps for their continued commitment and valuable contributions. Your efforts have made a lasting impact on our academic community."

Prachi Bhatt
Education Officer 2023/24

Vardy Pentakota – College Rep for the College of Life Sciences

- Focussed on investigating the feasibility and creation of a Digital Tool that tracks feedback. This would enable students, reps and staff to easily see where a piece of feedback has progressed, who is working on it and what outcomes there might be – in the form of a Digital Tool.

  Through working in collaboration with the Digital Tools working group, Vardy has explored multiple different avenues, and has considered what features are important to students so they can be included. We are hoping to able to host a feedback tool on the website in the next Academic Year!

Caitlin Hanna – College Rep for the College of Science and Engineering

- Working closely with their College within the EDI sphere including sitting on the College's EDI Committee, and working on the creation of project creating a College-wide EDI Charter. The Charter has incorporated college wide rep feedback with the final charter been due for completion by the start of the Academic Year with plans in place to roll the charter out across the University.

- Work on projects around Personal Tutoring, including helping to create a Personal Tutor tool for the SU Website, which will launch in time for the new academic year!

Anya Ekwuozor & Iman Khokhar – College Reps for the College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH)

- CSSAH is a College with a large Distance Learning cohort, and Anya and Iman have focused on the Distance Learning Student Experience, linking up with School Reps in Archaeology and Ancient History to draw up recommendations to improve belonging, online materials and Students' Union support.

- Examined the Careers Support there is in the College, working with the Careers Team and students to help investigate what exactly it is students want to see from the Careers support they receive. This has then focussed discussions on communication, and how Careers can highlight positive graduate experiences so students can see that their degree has a strong, tangible benefit.

- Improving visibility of themselves and the role by working with their School Reps on lecture shoutouts, and interacting with students in the Library and the Brookfield Campus, in order to reach students who wouldn't usually engage with the Rep System.

School Rep - Led Visions – 15 School Led Visions

What are School Led Visions (SLVs)?

They are a new initiative where our School Reps, working in partnership with key staff from their School, identified, created and then worked on projects relating to the experience of students within their school, these projects together form the School Led Visions. The projects included within the visions varied considerably across the University and were reflective of the different challenges facing students within their individual schools and across the University.

What was in the SLVs?

There was a wide range of subjects tackled in the Visions, from approaching long-standing issues with group work, to looking into building community, and working on increasing rep visibility, the scope was huge and ambitious. Below is a sample of some of the Visions Projects:

- **School of Arts** - Improving the consistency and quality of Trigger Warnings in the School of Arts

- **Biological Sciences** - Improving timetabling in the School of Biological Sciences

- **School of Business** - Investigation including focus groups and surveys into why International Students don't access English Language Support within the school with findings from report going to worked on next year

- **Chemistry** - Addressing Practice Question Gaps in the School of Chemistry

- **Computer Science and Mathematics** - Conducted research into how group work can be improved in the School of Computer Science and Mathematics, presentation of results in SSC with a working group being formed to implement the changes

- **Criminology and Sociology** - ran a focus group on ways to improve belonging with the school with outcomes presented to the school

- **Engineering** - Increasing Rep Visibility and the number of engaged Reps.

- **Geography, Geology and Environment** - Seeking to establish a Prayer Room in the Bennett Building including running a student feedback survey (216 responses) – findings from survey were shared with the School of Geography, Geology and Environment

- **Healthcare** - a Focus on EDI Issues in the School of Healthcare, including ensuring student voice on relevant committees and forums

- **History, Politics and International Relations** - held a feedback forum with regard the experience of joint degree students, shared recommendations with the Joint Degree coordinators that will be actioned for the next academic year

- **Law** - Working with students and staff to investigate alternative styles of assessment

- **Medicine** - Developing recommendations for improving attendance at academic classes

- **Physics** - Enhancing clarity on room availability for student study in the School of Physics and Astronomy including making availability visible on website and posted on doors

- **Psychology** - Improving access to information on post-degree Careers Prospects in the School of Psychology including collating volunteer opportunities and then uploading them onto Blackboard sites for all cohorts

- **Archaeology and Ancient History** - Engaging Distance Learning Students in the School of Archaeology and Ancient History including the creation of a DL Newsletter

The SLV process has been an undoubted success this year – from a suggested small-scale pilot scheme, to a wide-ranging and impactful almost-University wide process.

Course Rep Successes

Our Course Reps have been hard at work across the year, working closely with staff to make positive change based on wide-ranging feedback from their cohorts!

Course Reps work on feedback about students' day-to-day experiences on their courses – from assessments, to teaching quality, to space provision, to community and IT resources (and many more!), our Course Reps feedback on everything course-related to make sure student experience is as good as it can be.

Top 5 Areas of Course Rep Successes:

1. Assessments - Probably the number one discussion point in SSCs (Student Staff Committees) this year, Assessments are a key part of a student's journey through the year, and as such it's so important schools get it right! Course Reps managed to make a huge impact in this area this year - from working with staff to get access to past papers (and better quality worked examples) in Chemistry, Media, Communication and Journalism (MSJ), and STEM Foundation Year, to ensuring that deadlines were appropriate (in Computer Science, reps worked to ensure deadlines weren't outside working hours or at weekends) and correct on Blackboard (reps from Physics flagged feedback that some Blackboard deadlines were incorrect, and helped fix this!). Reps in Museum Studies and MSJ also helped to improve assessment support and guidelines, which means students will be better equipped to tackle their assessments and are full of confidence over what is expected of them!

2. Rep Visibility - Course Reps are great – but sometimes, students don't know where to go with their feedback, or what support is on offer, so our Course Reps have been hard at work this year working with their departments to improve the visibility of themselves and the rep system in general! In Archaeology and Ancient History, reps held socials and encouraged students to sign up to the system – to great success! In Law and Geography, Geology and the Environment (GGE), noticeboards were put up with reps and their contact information, to improve knowledge and to spread the word about the rep system – Law also added a digital version on Blackboard as well! This was all off the back of feedback from cohorts that was raised with staff and is going to be a key way to improve visibility going forward!

3. Inclusive Content - Making sure that the things students are taught content that reflects the diversity of the world we live in now is integral to making sure they feel included and welcome at university – our reps have dealt with lots of feedback this year to help improve things on this front! Course Reps from English helped to improve one of their modules to ensure it used inclusive language, while reps in Psychology and Modern Languages both helped their departments to create new and improved content trigger warnings for harmful content, so students can feel confident accesses their teaching, after feedback from their cohorts!

4. Careers - Blackboard sites, sessions and signposting. What students do after university might feel far off and distant when you're studying, but careers support and guidance is key to help equip students with the skills and confidence to approach their future post-graduation! Course Reps have been really active in this area, making sure their departments listen to the needs of their students to craft the Careers support specifically for them! In GGE, reps took the time to listen to their cohorts on what kind of support their needs (including the need for more opportunities to explore options in sustainable and environmentally friendly careers) and worked with staff to see how this could be implemented, and in Psychology, Course reps worked with their School Reps to improve the visibility of current careers support on Blackboard, and making ensuring the information available was comprehensive, up-to-date and useful for them!

5. Timetabling - The student timetable is a complex and ever-changing thing, so it's really important staff listen to student concern and make sure positive changes are made! In Healthcare, reps made sure that the super helpful Wellbeing Cafes were scheduled with placement students in mind, to make sure as many students can access it as possible, while in PGT Business, rep feedback led to the introduction of 10 minute breaks in longer sessions, and staff will also be listening to feedback to make sure that there are no clashes with presentations next year. Clashes in teaching times was also an issue raised by reps in Natural Science, with staff taking the feedback forward within planning for next year!

Other Notable Successes!

- The introduction of module information boards on Blackboard

- Improvements to lecture structure to aid understanding and comprehension

- Creation and release of a terminology glossary for Y1 students

- Improving reading lists, and highlighting how to use the various texts to improve lecture knowledge

- Improvement to feedback turnaround times, and their communication to students

- Improving the credit-workload balance so that the credits awarded reflect the effort of students

- Signposting for where, when and for whom study spaces are available

- Fixing printers, and their access – including within departments and in the library

- Ensuring Personal Tutor support is useful and accessible for all students

Rep of the Month

October - Abu Bakr Khan

Abu has been described as extremely supportive and consistently being a source of moral support. Especially with the technical issues that they encountered and taking his own time out to support students with any matters outside of lectures.

November - Alfie Gray and Molly Mather

Alfie's dedication to serving his cohort as Course Rep shines brightly through his proactive and inclusive approach. He consistently ensures that every voice is heard by representing students at Student-Staff Committee meetings and conducting regular surveys to gather feedback. His recent initiative to clarify the types of calculators permitted for exams highlights his commitment to advocating for fairness and accessibility. Recognizing the financial strain on students, Alfie is actively working to address the issue, especially for those who are balancing work and studies.

Molly's efforts extend beyond mere administrative duties, she has actively worked to raise awareness about the responsibilities and impact of school reps. Her successful event, aimed at educating others about the role, saw an impressive turnout and sparked meaningful discussions, with some attendees even expressing interest in becoming course reps themselves.

January – Natalie Hayward

Natalie is a DL Course and School Rep for the School of Archaeology and Ancient History. They have worked really hard on helping to improve Distance Learning student experience at this university. They have started a DL newspaper for their department which helps students not on campus find out what's going on and what university services are available to them. They have also been described as a great person to work with. Well done Natalie!

February Sashini Gangopadhyay

Sashini is a first year Psychology Course Rep and students have described them as extremely friendly and someone who is easy to talk to. They have really gone above and beyond this month and students have said that they are glad to be working with her. They have taken a part in the Psychology School led visions and feel that they will make a real difference to the current and future BSc course. Well done Sashini!

March – Olivia Hennessy

Olivia is one of the School Reps for Museum studies and has been working hard this month on including the Distance Learning community in the School of Museum studies and their work helped them to relaunch the DL café and bring together the DL and campus-based students in the School to help form a wider community. From this work, they have been described as an example to follow for the inclusion of DL students. Olivia also worked on putting on virtual round table discussions and invited external speakers for LGBTQ+ history month so DL students could remain included!

Academic Rep Awards Winners at the Students' Union Awards

Most Impactful Academic Rep - Ella Chadwick

Ella has been an outstanding Course Rep this year - they always make insightful and valuable comments in their SSC meetings, have independently arranged Course Rep meetings, and have led student discussions as staff outlined potential improvements to modules. Their input should dramatically improve the student learning experience.

Best Academic Rep Researcher - Tasneem Ali

Tasneem worked with the personal tutor lead in the department to find out how students feel about the personal tutoring system as it is now. They made a short, easy to access survey that was sent out to students, Over 40 responses were collected, and the information she collected was valuable and comprehensive.

Community-focused Academic Rep of the Year - Sahaya Afra Johanna

Afra has been particularly dedicated in building a student community across the school - One of their initiatives was to establish the Inspiring Educators Masters Student Forum which brings together students from the Masters programmes including distance learning programmes to share their diverse professional experience across a wide range of country contexts and educational sectors and their passion for enhancing education.

College of Life Sciences Academic Rep of the Year - Vlad Makar

Vlad shows an excellent, proactive attitude to their role and an ability to balance this with their studies and other responsibilities. They are willing to contribute to promotion, delivery, and gathering student feedback, and they do all of this to a very high standard.

College of Science and Engineering Academic Rep of the Year - Manprabh Singh

Manprabh attended every SSC that was scheduled this year, and they came prepared to every single one. They developed an excellent rapport with the members of the committee and provided academic colleagues with detailed feedback that had been obtained by speaking with his peers. It always felt as though they were speaking on behalf of their cohort and they took the role very seriously.

Outstanding Contribution - Emilia Mocko

Emilia has represented a programme that has always been under represented, throwing light on a traditionally ignored area of study with insightful comments and feedback. This has been particularly important as new modules were introduced and staff required (and received) detailed feedback on them from this rep.

College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Academic Rep of the Year – Molly Mather and Magdalena Horackova

This category was incredibly difficult to call – as we had so many excellent nominations – which meant that our panel eventually made the decision to award two of our fantastic CSSAH Reps.

Molly is well known in their department as someone who really cares about the issues that affect students, and who has been working hard across the year to increase the visibility of the rep system in their department, including hosting an event to help students learn what reps are and encourage them to volunteer (which worked!), amongst many other exciting projects as School Rep.

Magdalena has gone above and beyond in their role throughout their degree – staff and students have all noted that commitment to gathering students' views and sharing these in a constructive way at SSCs and in other appropriate forums is outstanding – and they have helped to shape positive change in many ways, including the design of the school's Blackboard sites and the development of content warnings.

Coordinator's Choice Award, Special Recognition – Molly Mather and Natalie Hayward

Molly and Natalie really went above and beyond the job description and worked tirelessly together to improve, support and empower all the students in their School – from Distance Learning students who are often left out of these conversations, to running social events in their School to help advertise the rep system and recruit new reps, to creating an impactful School Led Vision, their hard work was fantastic to see.

Coordinator's Choice Award, Most Impactful School Led Vision – Vlad Makar and Hassan Sonki & Maja Horackova, Akash Pillai & Maisie Bolton

Vlad and Hassan worked incredibly hard to create a School Led Vision that was truly representative. They worked on increasing volunteering and careers opportunities for students, exploring their curriculum and looked into the assessment and feedback on their courses. From working closely with the Course Reps in their School, to creating strong working relationships with key staff, the impact of their visions couldn't be more positive.

Maja, Akash and Maisie created a strong, well organised Vision that targeted the wide-ranging problems across a complex and large School. Their work included: making changes to the mid-module feedback survey, implementing more effective trigger warnings in modern languages, investigating teaching styles and alternative style assessments. They worked proactively and collaboratively with each other and with their key staff, with numerous positive outcomes as a result.

Champion for Change – Jess Pascal

Jess has been a champion for their department raising awareness of and using more inclusive language in teaching and assessment. Nominees note that the winner has "taken the time to discuss this issue in a careful and considerate way, and they believe that they are a true champion of change."

Rising Star – Kawar Gulli

Kawar is passionate about advocating for students and is always the first to sign up to help with any projects not just those related to their school. They have also put plenty of effort into making sure they are known by fellow students - many students feel confident approaching them while they are walking around as they have made very clear who they are and that they are happy to talk.

Superstar Award Winners

Best Lecturer – Jason Johnstone

Students have talked about how Jason has inspired them throughout their studies, and how they make their student journey as enjoyable as possible (one phrase used by a nominee was that the sessions were "not just informative but plain fun"!) – and the students even admitted they were a particularly hard cohort to reach as Distance Learning Students, but that this staff member goes above and beyond in making their experience a positive one.

Best Personal Tutor – Emma Staniland

Emma is a great all-round personal tutor, both supportive and helpful – they were singled out in a very difficult category to shortlist for their exceptional work on pastoral support, ensuring students feel heard and that their wellbeing matters just as much as their studies. They help students to be their most authentic self through their great support!

Best Supervisor – Jason Hughes

Students noted that Jason was great to work with, always giving incredible feedback, and constantly learning about students' topics to help out in the best way. One nominee noted that it was 'just really amazing to experience having a supervisor be so interested and passionate about my work' and that this supervisor would always support and fight for students to carry out the project that they wanted to do. As one of the nominees said: "They are the type of supervisor every student deserves!"

Best Supporting Staff - Zyggy Banks

Zyggy has been an excellent support member of staff for students – nominees talked about how they wouldn't have still been at university without this staff member's support, helping student to believe in their abilities, succeed at their studies and thrive at University.

Best Academic Support Staff - Hannah Richardson

Hannah always has a particular enthusiasm and passion for helping out students, and their approachable personality means students can always come to them for support – they are, according to one nominee, "kind, inspirational and practical, and above all else, she has consistently gone the extra mile to support the cohort."

Best Implementer of Student Feedback - Michael Barkley

Michael is very appreciative of student feedback across the course, and takes both electronic and paper surveys, whilst also keeping an open door to any student's queries. Sorting through hundreds of surveys is very time consuming, but their dedication to this is unwavering.

Most Inclusive Practice - Jenn Hobbs

Jenn always holds thought-provoking discussions in their sessions, and is always open to discuss essay plans. They will go out of their way to make sure students can discuss their essays before submitting, and nominees commented that this always "prepares them for academic excellence! Their ways of integrating the school and bringing students together does not stop once they are out of the classroom, but continues throughout the whole School.

PGR Teaching Excellence - Kai Francis

Kai is really supportive of everyone in their classes, making the seminars really fun and making sure everyone gets the opportunity to take part if they want to, not just letting the most outspoken students talk for the whole seminar. They create a really safe space for students to explore the ideas raised, even if they normally hate talking in seminars!

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