

Your Voice
Only Louder

Student Representation System

Staff Guide 2024



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Welcome

The purpose of this guide is to act as a refresher to university staff who will be working alongside the Guild's Rep team for the 2024/25 academic year. It contains information about and updates to the system that are useful to both those who are returning to the system or those who are new to it. Please use this guide as your first reference for any queries that you may have with regards to the Student Representation System (SRS).

1. The Guild Reps Team

The Guild Reps Team consists of Representation Coordinators that are dedicated to the Student Representation System (SRS) in partnership with the University. The team are located within the Student Voice department and are responsible for recruitment, training and support of Student and PGR Reps across the University. The Representation Coordinators have specific colleges that they support in their day-to-day work, as listed below:

Chris Black Senior Representation Coordinator <i>c.black@guild.bham.ac.uk</i>	
Benjamin Smith Representation Coordinator <i>b.smith@guild.bham.ac.uk</i>	Amelia McLoughlan Representation Coordinator <i>a.mcloughlan@guild.bham.ac.uk</i>
College of Social Science College of Arts and Law	College of Engineering and Physical Sciences College of Life and Environment Sciences College of Medicine and Health

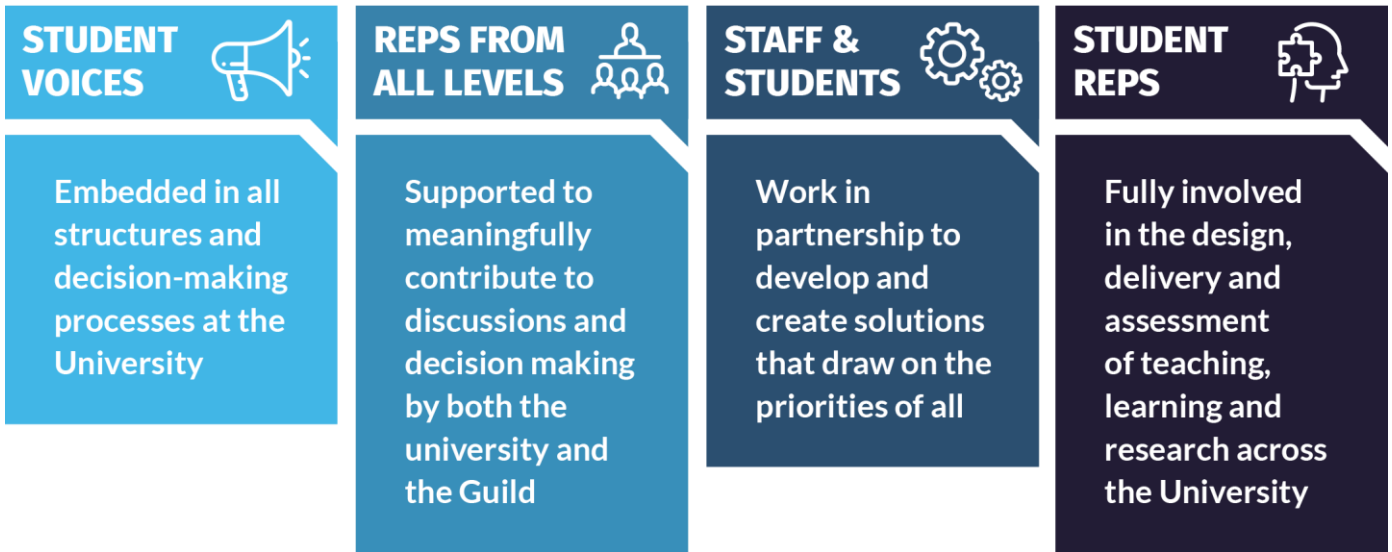
Any and all queries relating to the student rep system should go to the student rep inbox. You can contact the team on this via studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk

Please ensure that you use the student reps inbox before contacting individuals. This allows us to cover everyone's needs and requests. In the event that the assigned coordinator for a given college is unavailable (e.g. on leave), we can ensure that your email is picked up by someone else in the team.



2. General Rep Recruitment Guidance

2.1 Core Principles in the Rep System



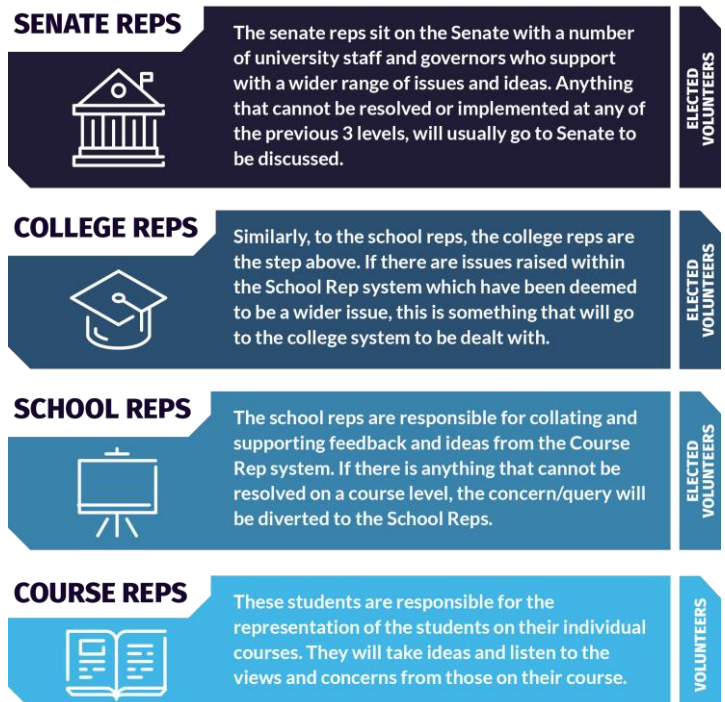
There are a number of positions available within the University of Birmingham Rep System. There are 2 distinctive types of roles which are important to note:

Elected

Students can nominate themselves for these roles via the website and are elected through the Guild democratic elections at specific periods within the academic year.

Voluntary

This role applies to course level reps only. Students volunteer themselves through the website, and once they have completed the core training (provided by the Guild) they are considered course reps.





2.2 Recruitment Process

We recommend that all student and postgraduate research (PGR) rep recruitment be facilitated by the Guild website. This ensures that students and researchers have initiated the volunteer process, have consented to becoming a representative and will receive all relevant communications and recognition.

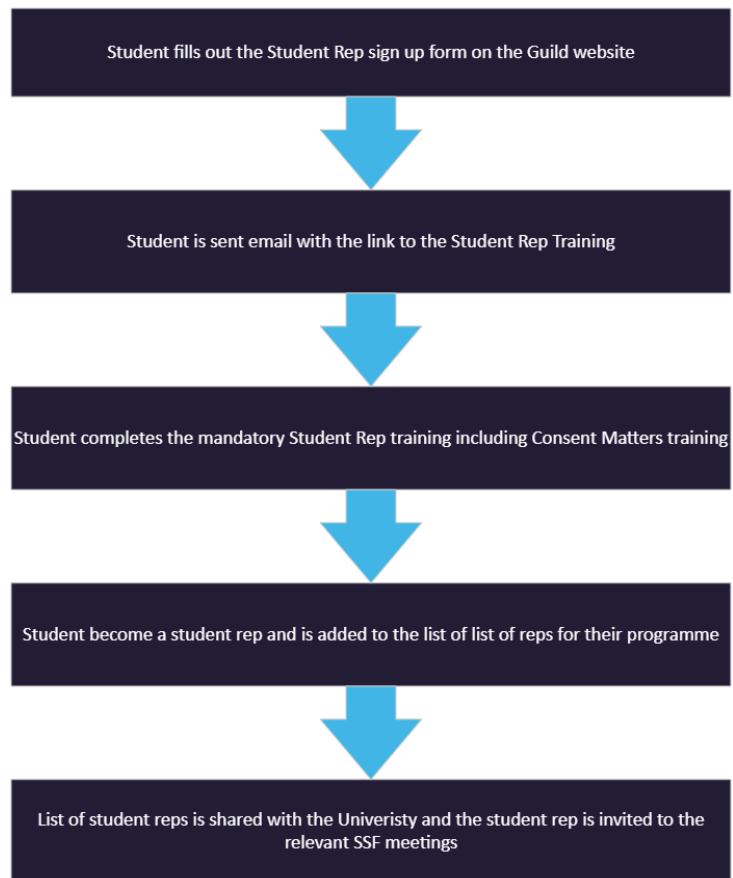
Students and Researchers can volunteer to be a course rep via the signup portal within the “Become A Rep” section of the Rep Hub.

For the academic year 2024/25, the main recruitment period will take place **2nd September – 11th October.**

The general outline of the process for course reps is detailed in the diagram (to the right).

Recruitment communications focuses on the contribution these roles make to the academic student experience, and we encourage students and researchers to volunteer through informal, non-competitive processes which encourage diversity in student representation.

In line with the partnership, we recommend a student to rep ratio of 15:1. However, course structure and intake varies across the university and so we do tailor this where relevant, including a sliding scale:



Number of Students on the programme	Desired number of Reps	Number of Students on the programme	Desired number of Reps
1- 20	1-2	150-250	5-8
21-50	2-3	250-350	6-10
51-75	3-4	350-500	7-12
76-100	4-5	500+	At least 10 reps at a ratio of 1 to 50
100-150	4-7		



The Reps Team works with university staff to promote elected roles, alongside the volunteering process. More information and resources (as relevant) will be circulated by either the Reps Team or wider Student Voice staff.

Senate, School & College Reps will be elected during **Autumn Elections** that are conducted by the Elections Team, between **16th September** (*nominations open*) – **18th October** (*voting closes*).

Regular updates will be circulated to university staff during recruitment, with verified lists of student and PGR reps being circulated once the recruitment (or election period) has concluded.

Partnership Guidelines & Approvals

All Student and PGR Reps are required to be recruited by the Guild unless specific exceptions have been presented by the relevant Deputy Director of Education (DDoE) to, and a approval granted by, the University Student Representation Advisory Board (SRSAB). In these cases, Guild Student and PGR Reps training remains mandatory and therefore Student and PGR Reps need to be registered by the Guild to ensure they receive appropriate communication throughout their role. The Guild Reps Team will work closely with university staff to meet partnership responsibilities and support Student and PGR Reps in their roles.

2.3 Oversubscription

Oversubscription of Student and PGR Reps may happen when the role is particularly popular within a cohort and therefore more students and/or researchers apply than there are places available.

As part of the sign-up process, we ask students and researchers to (optionally) submit a short response to a question based on motivation and the values and responsibilities of the role. This then gives a foundation for selection if oversubscription occurs. Example questions are listed below:

- Can you give us an example of what makes a good rep?

If oversubscription is confirmed, the relevant student representation coordinator will work with the relevant university staff to agree a review and selection plan. Once this process of agreement and selection has been completed, emails will be sent out to all applicants to inform them of the outcome and if they have been registered as reps.



The Reps team will only begin reviewing applications if either:

- A) An internal college cap is in place and a specific cohort is approaching that cap by 10%. Once this has been identified, either party can open a conversation about the process going forward.
- B) There is a sudden increase in the number of cohort signups, for example 48 signups for a rep pool of 4-6.

Partner discussions will also aim to understand where the source of over-recruitment originates and consider that in how applications need to be reviewed, to both resolve the issue in the short term and monitor trends more widely.

There are times where a college may request to close the application process due to an overwhelming number of applications. When this happens, the Guild will refer the college to the list of caps that have been set and offer guidance as to what we can and will do when the college gets closer to their relevant cap. As well as the cap guidance, any decision to close the voluntary application process to any part of the university will be made by the Senior Representation Coordinator.

If the decision is made to keep the application process open, the Guild will continue to work with the relevant parties to ensure the process is both effective and in the interest of students.

2.4 Code of Conduct

Every Student and PGR rep is subject to the Rep Code of Conduct (detailed below). This is available for review and accepted as part of the Guild core training. In the event that a breach of this code occurs, there are processes in place for misconduct (detailed in section 4).

As a Student Rep I agree that I:

1. Will actively engage with the Rep System and Rep Community throughout the year.
2. Will deliver feedback at key points within the academic year and endeavour to close the feedback loop where possible.
3. Will use my position as a Student Rep to the academic benefit of all students.
4. Will respect all students' contributions to the feedback process and to our academic community equally when gathering feedback and representing students.
5. Will deliver all feedback and discussion with students and staff in a respectful and reasonable manner at all times, even where I may disagree.



6. Will honestly and constructively represent the views of my cohort, as I understand them, when delivering feedback.
7. Will attend committee meetings relevant to my role wherever possible; and where absence is unavoidable, to inform the relevant chairs or organisers at the earliest opportunity prior to the meeting.
8. Will engage fully and enthusiastically with the Rep System to the best of my ability and understand that I am able to seek support from the Guild of Students and my School where I am uncertain or facing difficulty

By agreeing to this Code of Conduct, I agree to uphold all of the above to the best of my ability, and understand that failure to do so may result in my removal as a Student Rep.

2.5 Training & Support

Training and support empower reps to contribute meaningfully to discussions about teaching and learning. It also supports them to understand how data and feedback are used to support their contributions.

Core training provided by the Guild is required to be a registered Student and PGR rep. As such this should be completed before Student and PGR reps undertake any local training conducted by local university partners.

The Guild provides a rolling programme of skills and development training sessions for Student and PGR reps. This include both core training and specific sessions according to level (such as Senate and/or College), as well as focused material on areas such as co-chairing and gathering feedback. Information about the available training for the coming academic year will be circulated to colleges by the Reps Team. Student and PGR reps are encouraged to attend relevant training and Speak and Lead events throughout the academic year to support them in their role.

Specific Student and PGR reps, such as Senate and College reps are supported through Guild briefings and debriefings alongside elected Officers.

Reps are encouraged to develop their community networks through communication with course, school and college reps as well as students within their academic network throughout their term to enable effective feedback.

Local training and support act in partnership to provide Student and PGR reps induction to their Student Staff Forum, providing overview, and ensuring that they feel welcome to their role. Reps are encouraged to develop their community through events and communication



before their first Student Staff Forum. The Reps Team can support and advise staff, Student and PGR reps through this process.

The University of Birmingham Registry also provides guidance documents to staff on the SLC role prior via the [staff intranet](#). This also includes a detailed [benchmarking toolkit](#).



3. Committees

Student voices are embedded in all structures and decision making processes at the University and as such, Student and PGR reps are seen to be key parts of departmental and school structures. An example of this is that all school and college reps are full members of the appropriate committees.

During meetings the contributions of Student and PGR reps should be respected in the same way as staff or individual communications. All contributions should always be given in line with the Rep Code of Conduct.

3.1 Student Staff Forums

The aim of the Student Staff Forum is to provide a space where student voices are well engaged and valued in learning and teaching, Quality Assurance and programme changes. To enable this partnership between staff and students, it is good practise for each Student Staff Forum to nominate a Student/PGR rep to co-chair the meeting. This can be implemented in a variety of ways such as singular nomination or rotation. All co-chairs should receive Guild co-chair training.

The schedule of Student Staff Forums, along with any attached papers and subsequent minutes/actions should be circulated to the Reps Team. This allows the Reps Team to attend at least one Student Staff Forum (of the minimum three) throughout the academic year, support any student queries that are received, and aid in reporting collaboration.

Evaluation

A mid-year evaluation is to be completed by the SSF committee to provide any and all updates on the discussions from the first semester. This should be completed and supplied to appropriate members in good time before the next scheduled SSF.

An annual report form is to be completed by members of the SSF at the end of the academic session to provide an overview of all key topics raised and actioned throughout the academic year. Code of Conduct items should be discussed.

University Registry collaborates with The Guild Rep Team to produce a School and College-wide summary of all SSFs that take place.

Topics which are raised and discussed in SSFs are shared appropriately with the wider student cohort. It is also important that Student and PGR reps can participate in local and Guild-led recognition to reflect on their achievements and how this contributes to their personal development.



3.2 College Level Committees

Student and PGR reps elected to College level committees receive specific Guild training which includes an introduction to committees, a briefing on key college issues and a chance to network with other College Reps. They are also supported through Guild briefings and debriefings alongside elected Officers, in addition to any local support.

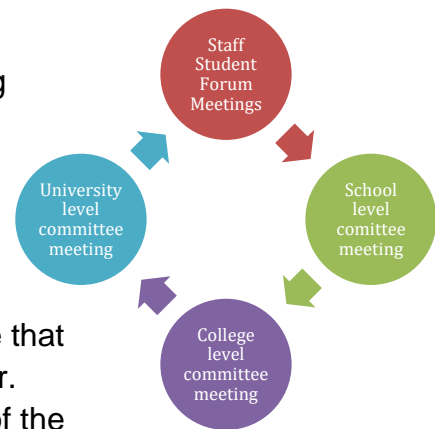
Committee papers should be provided to committee members and the Guild at least 1 week in advance of meetings where possible.

Common topics raised may filter across the Rep system at multiple committees in order to resolve wider issues and disseminate best practise. This may include recommendations to University Education Committee.

3.3 Communication & Resources

Communication styles and resource availability may vary across colleges, however listed below are the partnerships shared understanding:

- Student and PGR reps are responsible for gathering feedback across their cohort
- Student and PGR reps are provided with a timeline for departmental meetings. They are also provided with an agenda, previous minutes, and paper at least a week in advance of the meeting.
- The Guild, SEOs and SLCs work together to ensure that reps can communicate with students and each other. Everyone will work together to support the closure of the feedback loop
- Schools, SEOs and SLCs promote Student and PGR reps to their students via regular communication. This could be social media, canvas training or newsletters.
- Departments provide a standard email address for students to communicate with their Student/PGR reps. Departments provide mailing lists of students to reps or assist reps with their communications when requested.
- Staff support is provided to ensure minutes are taken. Reps do not take forum minutes.
- Once minutes are written, they are provided to the college CAPP, all members of the meeting and the Guild Rep Team.





Conversations between reps, staff and departments are maintained outside of formal Forum meetings – this remains in line with the rep code of conduct.

Resources required are made available to reps in good time before Staff Student Forums. These include:

- Student survey data
- External examiners report
- School Education Plans

All rep achievements are shared via appropriate communications and engagement activities. These achievements are also shared with the Guild Reps Team.



4. Rep Complaints and Removal

4.1 Misconduct and Complaints Process

In the first instance, we want to empower university staff to be able to converse with their reps about negative behaviour towards the code of conduct so that it can be resolved informally. We understand that these things can happen which is why we invite this informal resolution first. We also understand that there may be instances where staff are not comfortable with having these conversations with their reps. In this case, the reps team will be on-hand for support.

There is [a form located](#) within the Rep Hub on the Guild of Students website. The form will ask the complainant which element of the Code of Conduct they believe that a rep has not abided by, how they have broken this code and any evidence that they may have to support this. This can be initiated by either individual students or staff.

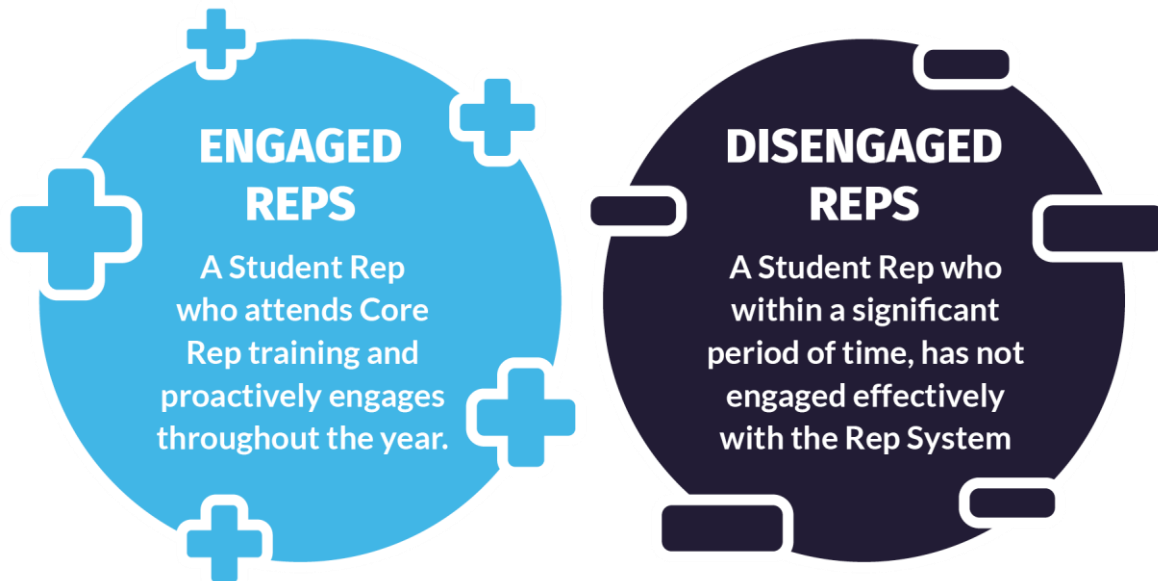
When the complaint has been sent, it will be reviewed by the Senior Representation Coordinator who will decide as to whether the complaint is within the scope of misconduct. If this is the case, both parties will be informed and a panel will be formed to investigate the complaint. The panel will consist of:

- 1 Elected Full-Time Officer
- The Student Voice and Advice Manager OR the Director of Community of Representation
- 1 University Staff member from SRSAB
- Senior Representation Coordinator – Attending meetings to clerk/investigate

Once the panel have met to review the complaint and had a chance to hear from both parties, a decision will be made. There are 2 possible outcomes for a decision:

- **Complaint Upheld**
 - Resolution plan – A personal resolution plan (with a probationary period) may be appropriate to give to the Rep as an opportunity to develop through additional support or training.
 - Rep Withdrawn/Removed – The Rep may be withdrawn from the Rep system depending on the Code of Conduct and available options for resolution.
- **Complaint Rejected**
 - The rep in question can continue in their role. Work may be undertaken by the Guild/Registry/College to address any disingenuous complaints.

4.2 Rep Removal Process



We understand that there can be external pressures that Student Reps may be experiencing, which can lead to disengagement. We have designed the removal procedure to be supportive of our Reps, aiming to identify and remove barriers that may be hindering participation before taking steps to remove them. Initially, we identify key opportunities for Reps to re-engage with over a 6-week period.

These opportunities are outlined below:

1. Completing additional Training with the Guild or College
2. Attending SSF Meetings or sending apologies and written feedback prior to the meeting
3. Attending or arranging Rep Social opportunities
4. Evidence of conducting feedback gathering activities
5. Attending SSF pre-meetings or meeting briefings with the Guild.
6. Attending check-in meetings with Guild Staff.

If a Rep is able to present evidence of any other activities that are not defined by this list, we can also take these into consideration.



If a college believes that one (or multiple) of their Reps are not engaging with the Rep system, we would ask them to check-in with their reps via email. The purpose of the email would serve as a gentle reminder to the Rep(s) of their role and responsibilities.

From this initial E-Mail, it is likely that 1 of 3 outcomes can occur.

1. A Rep replies to the email and advises that they wish to step-down from their role. In this case, the Rep can contact the Guild Reps Team for further information but will need to complete a withdrawal request on the Guild Website.
2. A Rep responds and states that they have been engaging with the system. In this case, the reps team will work with the student to ensure that they are engaging with the correct parts of the system.
3. The Rep does not respond to the email within 2 weeks. In this case, the reps team will check the rep's engagement.
 - a. If the rep has engaged, we will inform both parties to ensure that they are communicating.

If the rep has not engaged, we will inform the rep that they are being removed from the system. They have the right to appeal this process, if they choose to, they will be entered into a 4-week probation plan.



5. Frequency Asked Questions

5.1 What is a Student Rep?

The Student Representation System is a crucial part of the relationship between the University of Birmingham and the Guild of Students. The aim of the system is to give students and researchers a voice which can be heard.

All of our student reps are volunteers who work on behalf of their cohort. There are a number of cohorts that a student can represent:

Course Rep (Volunteers)

These students are responsible for the representation of the students on their individual courses. They will take ideas and listen to the views and concerns from those on their course.

School Rep (Elected Volunteers)

The school reps are responsible for collating and supporting feedback and ideas from the Course Rep system. If there is anything that cannot be resolved on a course level, the concern/query will be diverted to the School Reps.

College Rep (Elected Volunteers)

Similarly, to the school reps, the college reps are the step above. If there are issues raised within the School Rep system which have been deemed to be a wider issue, this is something that will go to the college system to be dealt with.

Senate Rep (Elected Volunteers)

The senate reps sit on the Senate with a number of university staff and governors who support with a wider range of issues and ideas. Anything that cannot be resolved or implemented at any of the previous 3 levels, will usually go to Senate to be discussed.

Reps are responsible for working with the University and the Guild on behalf of their student cohort to ensure that their opinions and ideas are heard. This system is designed to support all students and researchers to ensure that they are involved in all levels of decision-making.

Reps are also responsible for ensuring that they are following their Code of Conduct at all times while undertaking their role. The Code of Conduct can be found under section 3.1 of this document. If you believe that a rep is not adhering to this conduct, you can get in touch with the student reps team via studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk or by using the complaints form on the Guild website.



5.2 What are the main responsibilities of Student Reps?

There are varying responsibilities for student rep from role to role. Overall, all of our student rep volunteers are responsible for gathering feedback about academic experience from both students and researchers on the programme which they represent. Reps then take this feedback to Staff Student Forums (SSFs) where they present their findings in a confidential and respectful way. Solutions for the issues raised are discussed in the SSFs which then gives guidance to the parties on their actions and next steps.

Both academic and administrative staff attend the SSFs alongside student reps for other programmes in the department. The SSFs take place at least 3 times per academic year. The role descriptions can be found via the **resources** section of the rep hub on the guild website.

5.3 What can Reps achieve?

All student reps are crucial to the representation of the student voice within the University and the Guild. Reps are responsible for making impactful changes on their programme, their school, college and even the university as a whole. Over the years, rep feedback from programme and course level has led to university-wide change. We have seen reps streamline feedback locally, advocate for deadline extensions and set up both peer study sessions and peer mentoring systems. The activity of Student and PGR Reps significantly improves student experience both on and off campus.

5.4 What can students gain by being a rep?

There are many skills and qualities that students can gain from volunteering as a rep. Some of these skills include leadership, communication, time management skills and a deeper understanding of the mechanisms within Higher Education. The role itself gives you the opportunity to have a voice for yourself and your cohort at the university. There is constantly opportunity to make impactful changes for yourself and your cohort. Reps are given full, transferrable training which will support them in developing themselves.

We also like to recognise our reps at any opportunity that we can. Rep of the Month and Rep awards are just some of the ways in which we do this. Reps are nominated for these awards and are rewarded with a voucher.

Reps also benefit from added information to their university transcripts which supports them in their next step after university. These comments will give an oversight into what role student reps undertook which will be detailed on the transcript. For more information about what roles are available for students, please see section 5.1.



An enhanced transcript will display all of the Guild volunteering work that a Rep has undertaken as well as their academic accomplishments. The enhanced transcript is made available to students at the end of their degree.

5.5 How are Reps recognised for their work?

We celebrate the successes of our student reps through events such as Speak and Lead, and Rep of the Month and incentives such as T-shirts and badges.

Once you have completed your time as a rep, you will be eligible for an university transcript. This transcript is made available to you at the end of your studies and it outlines all of your achievements including your status as a rep.

We also have an annual rep awards ceremony which celebrates all of the fantastic things that our reps have achieved. The rep awards are an opportunity for students to be recognised for all of their hard work as a rep throughout the academic year.

If you have any further questions related to this document or if you have a query about something that isn't covered in this document, please don't hesitate to reach out to us via email: studentreps@guild.bham.ac.uk