

Course Representative Job Descriptions and Training

What do we mean?

Course Representatives (Reps) are one of the most well-developed areas of student partnership across the sector, so it follows that they should be trained and prepared for their roles effectively.

Providing learners with adequate role descriptions before they consider running for a role will ensure

they understand what being a course rep involves.

Providing training after they have been elected is then vital if you want to ensure retention and engagement levels remain high throughout the year.

Course Reps should be trained and prepared for their roles.

Why is it worthwhile?

Giving your reps the right tools to be able to perform their jobs effectively will mean your rep system can develop and grow into a sustainable platform for learner voice. Providing staff with the appropriate knowledge to help support reps is also an important step in achieving this goal. The benefits of a system working in partnership will be seen across the institution:

Course Reps

- Gain transferable skills and confidence
- Potential for personal development
- Become influencers within the institution
- Receive knowledge that can help with employability

Wider student body

- Empowered to make a change within the institution, as their voices are being represented
- Inspired by their peers to take on the role themselves

Institution and staff

- Staff trained on the benefits of learner voice and the role of course reps will be more engaged with the system
- Better support for student reps
- Improve the relationship between learners and staff
- Developments made to the institution due to input from learner voice
- Higher retention levels of reps throughout the year if they understand the long-term benefits

Where to start

Usually, writing a job description will help to influence what it is you might want to include in your training. For example, if one of the expectations of the role is to attend meetings, you might want to train your reps on meeting etiquette. Therefore, we suggest tackling the job description first.

Job Description



Preparing learners for the role is an important step in ensuring their continued enthusiasm and dedication.

A job description for course reps should outline the role for any prospective candidates. Coleg Sir Gâr give their job description, which can be found in the resources section of this document, after the reps have been picked. It is an excellent example of what a job description should look like. Job descriptions are also great to use during the election process itself as a means of advertising the roles and encourage students to put themselves forward.

Preparing learners for the role is an important step in ensuring their continued enthusiasm and dedication throughout the year. If they do not know what they are signing up for, they may lose interest over time. Conversely, if they understand what is involved from the very beginning, it is more likely they will wish to see the project through to completion.

It is also an excellent advertising tool, if phrased in a way which demonstrates the engaging and rewarding nature of the role. **Having keen reps who are enthusiastic is important in developing the course rep system**, as they are more likely to inspire their peers. If reps did not comprehend the responsibility of the role and become disengaged, this can have knock-on effects on retention.

The content of the job description should include the main duties of the role as a bare minimum, but can also include information on the types of issues that might be raised (as seen in the Coleg Sir Gar example), initial signposting for where to seek help, dates of any upcoming meetings, and any useful hints and tips for being a successful rep.

All of this should then be complemented by some initial training once your reps have been elected.

Training

Initial training for your reps should involve giving them the necessary information to enable them to carry out their roles. This will include information such as how, when, and why they should gather feedback from their peers, who to feed this back to, any committees or councils on which they sit, etc. This initial training should cover the basics so that the learners understand the fundamentals of being a rep. Many colleges provide this already, and will **host training sessions over several days to ensure that students do not have to miss lessons**.

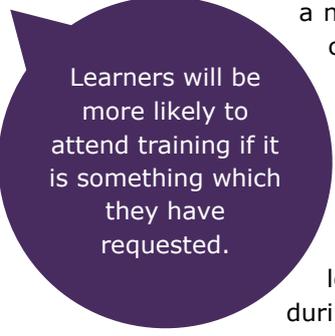


Provide further training for the personal development of your reps.

Beyond this, it is encouraged to provide further training for the personal development of your reps. The aim of this would be to improve their confidence in the role, give them opportunities to learn new skills, and overall increase the effectiveness of the course rep system.

Possible training modules could include subjects such as meeting skills, how to run a campaign, and dealing with stress. All of these have been delivered by Wise Wales at our annual Course Representative Conference. Some of the slides used at previous conferences can be found on our website, listed in the resources section of this document.

There is also an example training handout from Plymouth University. This might prove useful in helping you develop your own training material.



Learners will be more likely to attend training if it is something which they have requested.

One of the areas not previously covered by Wise, but which we have seen raised a number of times, is social media. It is a tool which, if utilised properly, can prove to be very effective in engaging learners in the rep system. It can help to collect feedback and disseminate back any results. There should be clear outlines, however, on what social media should be used for and in what capacity. One of the other resources in this series focusses on communication and branding, including social media.

We recommend that you ask your Reps what it is they would like to learn. You can give them options in a survey, or openly discuss ideas during meetings. They will be more likely to attend and engage with training if it is something which they have requested.

Training can also be part of a reward scheme, which helps reps become motivated to explore their role more fully. If there are different levels of training, from basic to personal development, you could create a system which encourages reps to work their way through the training each term.

Overall, your training should ideally cover a range of subjects throughout the year, tailored to what your learners require. This will help to support them during their period as a rep, and hopefully **increase retention levels, as well as overall engagement.**

Staff Training

While preparing your reps is essential for a successful course rep structure, it is also important to train staff. **Understanding the role of reps, how they can and should be supported, and the overall impact of learner voice, is an essential part of creating partnership.**

Training does not need to be overly formal, and should not create any extra work for staff. It should simply provide knowledge about how staff can interact with the reps to support both the learners and the institution in making the most out of the role. Tutors, for example, could be asked to help with the promotion of the election period. Staff who sit on any boards shared by reps should also be made aware of why the rep is there, what their role is, and how they should be involved.



Provide knowledge about how staff can support the learners and the institution.

Case Study: Class Reps in 6 Steps

Grwp Llandrillo Menai took a new approach to their course rep training after receiving feedback that their lecture-style slides were not effective. They asked their reps what they thought they needed to learn, and the learners came up with 'Class Reps in 6 Steps' (a link to the steps is in the Resources section). These simple steps communicated the essential information that the reps required, without overwhelming them.

The six steps were developed with help from the Students' Union, and have had a great feedback from learners. This is an excellent example of how involving students in the development of your training can have great outcomes.

Summary

These are simple steps which can make all the difference to a class rep system as a whole. There is the potential to increase participation, retention rates, and overall satisfaction for your reps. While many (if not all) colleges already have training in place, we hope this resource has helped you think about the way you conduct your training and how it benefits your learners.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask Wise Wales (contact details below).

Resources

- [Example of a Course Rep job description from Coleg Sir Gar](#)
- [Class Reps in 6 Steps](#)
- [Course Rep training slides](#)
- [Course Rep training handout from Plymouth University](#)
- [sparqs course rep training website](#)
- [TSEP Rep Training Sessions](#)



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