

YOUR COURSE REP HANDBOOK 2020/21

A guide from your students' union
on how to make the most of your
time as a Course Rep at LSBU

WELCOME!

Hey everyone, I'm Rabbi - your Vice President Education and Deputy President this year.

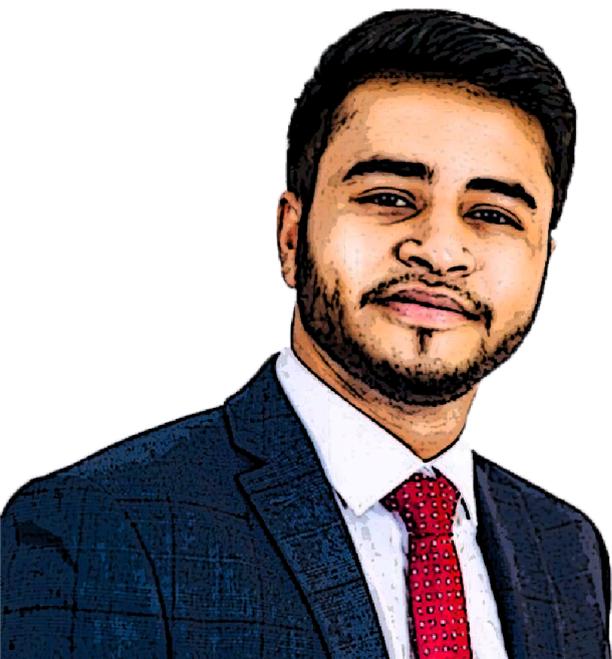
As an international student studying Accounting and Finance at LSBU, I started getting involved with the students' union and campaigning on student issues back in 2018 in exactly the same way as you - by being elected as a Course Rep. That is why I am so passionate about you, your voice and your campaigns - because I know the difference we can make together.

I am also delighted to be one of the first people to congratulate you on becoming a Course Rep. By stepping up, you've made it clear you want to be part of making LSBU better for you and the students on your course.

As a Course Rep, you have the power to form and shape your course and the university as a whole together with university staff in the way that students want. You will bring a fresh look and perspective about your course and how it can develop for the London South Bank students of tomorrow. This role is a great opportunity, and you will get out of it what you put in. So, make sure you make the most of it! By taking an active part in your role you'll also be developing leadership, presentation and communication skills. Things which employers value highly and much much more.

As your Education Officer, I can't wait to start working with you. I know that together we will form a wave of student voices which will allow us to make the university work for everyone and improve the studies and lives for each and every one of our 18,000 students. To help you make the most of your year, me and team have put together this guide which will let you know everything you need - and don't forget you can also get in touch with us anytime at coursereps@southbank.su with any questions.

Rabbi



What is the students' union?

Your students' union is an independent charity that exists to champion the academic interests of every student at LSBU. Membership is totally free and you will automatically become a member of the students' union when you enrol on any course.

Get in touch with Rabbi and the SU team

You can get in touch with us anytime on hello@southbank.su. You can also reach us on social media at Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE?

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This guide has been created by South Bank Students' Union

If you have any questions or feedback about its content you can get in touch with us anytime at course reps@lsbsu.org and a member of the team would be glad to hear from you.

WHAT EVEN IS A COURSE REP?

A Course Rep is an LSBU student that has been elected by their classmates to collect and represent the views of the course:

- Course Reps work to communicate issues, ideas and feedback to LSBU lecturers and staff as well as other students and the students' union
- Course Reps will find out about and raise issues, ideas and feedback in a number of ways including 121s with students, asking and collecting responses to surveys, questionnaires and campaigns, attending Course Boards and meetings and taking part in students' union conferences and events
- Course Reps are supported and trained by the students' union and are part of a community working to make the university better for everyone.

Being a course rep is a really valuable and rewarding experience:

- You'll be part of making change happen on issues that are affecting your course and students, helping shape your course and classroom and much more
- You'll have the opportunity to enhance your skills and knowledge in public speaking, research and policy, time management and campaigns to name a few!
- You'll make friends and meet new people and students across the university.

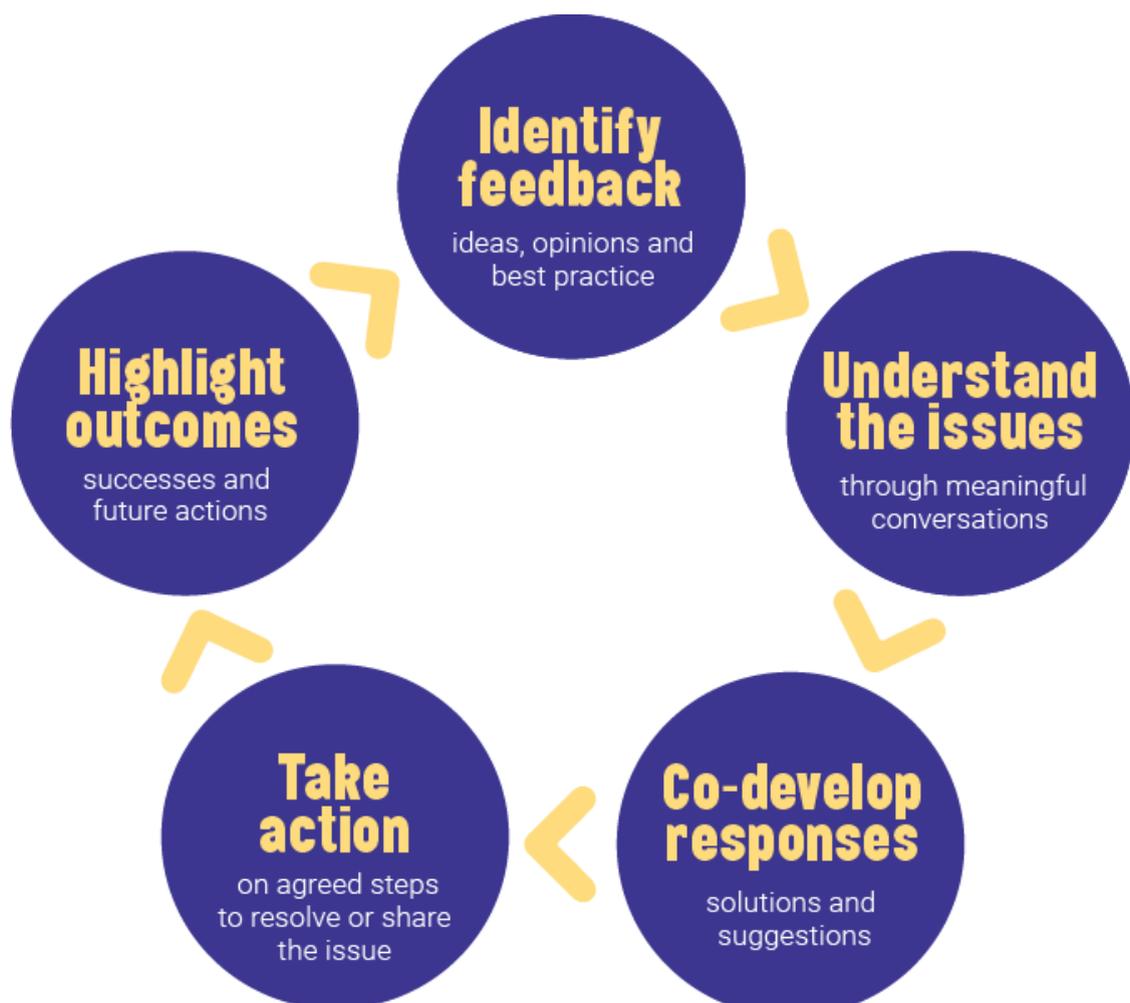
Course Reps are elected in the first few weeks of your course:

- At the beginning of the year, Course Directors and the students' union will help organise an election where you can put yourself forward as a candidate
- Each candidate will then have around 30 seconds to say why they think they'd be an amazing Course Rep and should be elected
- Everyone on the course will then have a vote - with the person who has the most votes being elected
- Once elected, the Course Director will work with you and let the students' union know who you are so training and support can be organised for you
- You should also make sure you've registered yourself,
- Then the fun work begins in representing students!

HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

Course Reps provide a vital link between the university and students.

- Throughout the year, Course Reps help raise feedback from students to the university and the students' union
- Course Reps take part in the process to make sure feedback is addressed by attending meetings and supporting further discussions on issues and ideas
- Course Reps will also feedback to other students about progress that is being made or updates about the feedback they have provided



Course Reps work together with the university, students' union and students

- Every student should feel able and open to share feedback and ideas with their course staff, and Course Reps exist to help facilitate this and raise issues and suggestions with the university and the students' union
- Sometimes there may be issues or ideas that can't be resolved within the course and course staff, and may need a bit of extra help or support or need bigger solutions that can't be sorted at a course or school level
- Course Reps therefore have a number of ways of raising feedback and ideas get additional support from the students' union and other university staff:



Finally, feedback and actions are tracked so that students can see change happen

- The university and students' union work with Course Reps, staff and students to ensure that feedback, ideas and outcomes are tracked and that up to date information and communications are shared back to students

WATCH OUR EXPLAINER VIDEO!

Watch this quick video which tells you everything you need to know about how the Course Rep programme works - it'll only take 2 mins!

[WATCH THE VIDEO BY CLICKING HERE](#)

SO, WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A REP?

Your year as a Course Rep

Being a Course Rep is an exciting and rewarding experience - and there's lots of help and support along the way. Here's a quick breakdown of what your year may look like:

Oct - Dec 2020

- October: Put yourself forward to represent your course and get elected!
- October: Register as a Course Rep with the students' union & have a 121 with a member of your course staff
- November: Attend Course Rep Training run by the student's union
- November: Collect feedback from students and attend a Course Board Meeting
- December: Collect feedback from students and attend the students' union Course Rep Conference and Forum ahead of the Winter Break
- December: Hold a quick feedback session in class to let students know about the kind of issues being raised and the actions taken to address them

Jan - May 2021

- January: Collect feedback from students returning for the year
- January: Attend the students' union Course Rep Forum and meet new Course Reps who have just started in January and catch up with people from before
- February: Attend a refresher Course Rep Training session and take part in 'Speak Week' alongside all 700 Course Reps across the university and a Course Rep Conference to talk about student issues at LSBU and across the country
- March: Collect feedback and attend Course Board meeting
- April: Review progress and have another 121 with course staff and students' union to talk about the programme and put together your skills profile
- May: Celebrate successes and shout about the work you've done as a rep

Throughout this you'll also take part in Course Rep socials, events and more happening across the university and the students' union. To help keep track of your progress in the role and what you're learning; here's some questions to think about throughout the year:

Why I stood to be a Course Rep:

Why student feedback is important:

What I have learned/ skills used so far in being a Course Rep:

What I haven't done yet that I want to:

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Being a Course Rep comes with great benefits, but also big responsibilities! The list below will help you ensure you're taking action on the right things and help you get to know the role a little better.

Course Rep Responsibilities

The main things I do as a Course Rep	How I feel I am doing in this role
<i>"As a Course Rep I talk to students to collect their feedback and represent them and their views."</i>	
<i>"I provide a link between students and staff, identifying and communicating student issues."</i>	
<i>"I take these issues and negotiate on behalf of students, updating them with the progress and the outcome as it happens"</i>	

Handy tips for being a Course Rep

As a Course Rep, you may be approached by students with a range of different issues. Sometimes it's hard to understand what's expected of you in certain situations. So, here's a handy breakdown for you.

What Course Reps do:

- Gather feedback from students on their course about their academic experience
- Attend meetings organised for Course Reps like Course Rep Forums run by the students' union and Course Board meetings run by the university
- Talk about student feedback at those meetings with staff and other students and Course Reps
- Identify actions and updates at those meetings to report back to students
- Raise ideas and feedback with the students' union

Here are some of the issues you can expect to deal with as a Course Rep:

- Quality of teaching and the curriculum
 - Do students feel prepared for the learning process?
 - What is great about the course and the curriculum?
 - Are any parts of the course not meeting the standard expected?
 - Do students have the information and tools they need?
- Study feedback and assessments
 - Do students have access to regular feedback?
 - Do you know what kinds of assessments are being used on the course?
 - How prepared do students feel for assessments?
 - Is there something wrong with how you are being assessed?
- Lecture rooms and spaces
 - Is your learning space appropriate?
 - What could help improve the learning environment?
 - Are there any tools or resources that are particularly helpful?
 - Do you have access to other learning and study spaces?
- Student support
 - Do students have what they need to succeed?
 - Are there any other areas of support students may need?
 - What kind of student support or issues may be helpful?
 - How do students feel about the support that is available?
- Reading lists and library resources
 - Can students access the necessary resources?
 - Are there any resources that would be useful for students?
 - What are the best resources that students have used?
 - Is there anything else students or groups of students need/would like?

- Workloads
 - How are students coping with the work required by the course?
 - Are there any clashes for students timetables or issues with it?
 - Do students feel appropriately challenged?
 - Is there anything more students would like from the course?

There will always be other issues that crop up too from time to time, and other students, Course Reps in other year groups and course staff can also help you get to know what kind of issues might come up throughout the year.

What a Course Rep should watch out for:

At times you might be asked questions about something you're not sure about, or something that sounds like a student needs professional support. It's absolutely not your job to have to give other students academic or professional advice and you aren't trained to do this, so it's best left to the experts.

Below is a list of issues which you are not expected to deal with; and in the event that a student approaches you asking to discuss any of the issues on the below list, please direct them to the students' union and we can signpost them to the relevant service or suggest they approach any member of course staff.

- Complaints against individual members of staff or students
- Personal grievances/ issues between students/ staff and the university
- Financial advice
- Counselling
- Lecturing/tutoring issues such as assignment feedback or disputes
- Family or personal issues preventing a student from succeeding

In cases like the ones listed above, these are best dealt with by the university and student services or the students' union. The students' union also offers confidential, free advice for students on a range of issues through the union's advice service. You can sign post students to this via www.southbank.su.

Does a student need help?

If a student approaches you or discloses a personal issue to you - please direct them towards the union's advice service at www.southbank.su where they can get confidential, free support and be directed to the university's support services. If you are concerned about a students' wellbeing you can raise this with the students' union confidentially at any time via hello@southbank.su.

WHAT ARE COURSE BOARDS?

During your time as a Course Rep, you will attend Course Board meetings. These are meetings where you can present the feedback you have received from students and share these with your lectures and Course Directors alongside Course Reps from all year groups.

When do Course Boards happen?

You meet twice a year to discuss the content of your course and how you and your fellow students feel about the course.

What happens at a Course Board?

Attending a Course Board meeting may seem a bit daunting, especially if it's your first time in the role! But here is a run-down of some things and a checklist to help you get started:

Before a Course Board Meeting:

- Contact students and identify issues
- Prepare feedback to be raised via a short report or presentation
- Look back on past issues raised at previous meetings
- Double check where and when your meeting is
- Check-in with your course staff or School Rep

During a Course Board Meeting

- Make sure you turn up on time
- Ensure you introduce yourself, and that people are introduced to you
- Take notes on the main points of the meeting
- Check on progress of previous points
- Report new feedback, issues and ideas and ask questions!
- Agree decisions / be part of forming actions
- Plan a date and time for the next meeting

After a Course Board Meeting

- Feedback on what happened at the meeting to your classmates (either in the class or maybe through an email)
- Carry out any action points or follow-ups before the next meeting
- Network with students and staff - make contacts with anybody you feel could help you improve your Course Rep experience or help with your actions and activities
- Check-in with course staff, share any information from the meeting and attend Course Rep forums

Confused about Course Boards or don't know when yours are?

During your time as a Course Rep, information about Course Boards will be sent to your university email. If you're not getting information, or are confused as to what a Course Board is or when yours is, you can get in touch with us at any time and we'll work with your course staff to let you know and make sure you get the information and updates you need. Just email the team on coursereps@southbank.su and a member of the team will follow up for you.

At Course Rep training we'll cover what happens at Course Boards in more detail - and give you more information about how to make the most of the meetings and what being at one is like - including some handy tips from people who have attended them before!

HOW DO I GET FEEDBACK?

Gathering Feedback

One of the most important parts of your job as a Course Rep is gathering feedback from other students. There are a number of ways to do this, and sometimes students will also raise things directly with you - but you should think about how you are going to engage with students to get feedback to take into meetings.

The three fundamental questions to ask when gathering feedback are:

- 1. What's going well?**
- 2. What's not going well?**
- 3. How could things be improved?**

When gathering student feedback, keep it simple and think about how you as a student would like to be contacted. The less effort someone has to make the more likely you are to get feedback from them!

Common methods of gathering student feedback are:

- **Lecture Pop-Ups** - Simply ask your course staff or lecturer if you can borrow the class for 5 minutes at the start or end of a lecture/ course session and ask for feedback or if there are any issues. Your lecturer should be ok with this and would also be happy to leave the room if it will make students more open to giving feedback and raising suggestions and comments.
- **Paper Surveys** - You could hand out paper surveys at the start of a lecture so students can fill in feedback and then gather them back at the end. These could be anonymous if students don't want to give their names!
- **Online Surveys** - Using one of the many platforms available you can create an online survey to gather feedback. This can be shared out via email by your lecturer or by the students' union. Again, these could be anonymous. You could also use the courses Moodle page - and you could talk to course staff about getting access to post some details onto it.
- **Feedback Box** - Some Course Reps also leave a box at the front of every class and lecture that students can drop ideas and feedback into at the end or start of lectures and you can pick it up at the end
- **Post Lecture Chats** - Make yourself available at the end of a lecture/ course session every now and then for students to come and chat to you and raise any issues. Simply let your class know you will be doing this by announcing it at the start of the lecture - or let students know how to contact you to set up a quick 121 or how they can drop ideas and comments to you via email.

Remember - all feedback should be constructive, and this is not just about 'negative' things or problems. You should try to get positive feedback as well!

HOW DO I RAISE ISSUES?

Solving Issues and taking action on ideas

When a student raises an issue or suggests an idea to you, you will want to make sure you have gathered feedback from other students to check whether this is something they are facing or have opinions on as well before raising it at a Course Board or a Course Rep Forum.

If an issue is specific to a particular student, then it doesn't mean you can't raise it - but it should be presented in this way, to make it clear what kind of issue/idea this is and who it is affecting and why. You can't just say "students say..." - you should seek to present feedback in a way that is referenced and clear. For example, surveys, tables, graphs, etc are really helpful to backup your points.

Ideally, once you have gathered the feedback you should be able to raise it to the university through your course staff, Course Rep surveys and forums, Course Boards and other methods. Don't forget that you'll want to keep track of the issue so that once it has been resolved or action has been taken on it you can promote that outcome back to your course.

If you are struggling with a specific issue or going to the university did not help resolve it, then you should go to the students' union for support. You can do this by either raising the issue at a Course Rep Forum or by contacting the team via coursereps@southbank.su. You can also get in touch with Rabbi, the Vice President Education via rabbi@southbank.su too!

Got a problem?

If you've been trying to tackle or raise an issue for some time but progress seems stuck, then get in touch with us on coursereps@southbank.su and we can see what we can do to help get things moving! Make sure you're highlighting the issue in our monthly Course Rep survey as well!

HOW DO I TALK ABOUT IT?

Celebrating wins and communicating progress is a key skill

It is important that you tell students what outcome or decision was agreed about issues and ideas they raised feedback about.

No matter how trivial the success, it is important that it is communicated to students. Be proud of your achievements, students deserve to know that you are representing them and what has happened.

You can use a variety of methods to feedback the information from meetings to your fellow students. Find and utilise the method that works best for you and you can always speak to the course staff or the students' union to get help and support.

Here are some ideas to get you started

- **Hand-out:** Create a flyer detailing the main points and hand them out at the beginning or end of lectures.
- **Email:** Formulate an email detailing the main points discussed and send this out to your course mates.
- **At a lecture:** Ask your lecturer for 5 minutes at the beginning or end of your lecture, to stand up and speak about the meeting you have attended and what action is being taken.

The students' union can help you with this - we want to hear all about the little victories and those big wins too. We can work with you, and the university, to feature your work on our website and across our social media and champion the work you've done together.

Made a change? Let us know on social media @LSBSU or [email us!](#)

WHAT SUPPORT DO I GET?

As your students' union, we are here to support you and help with training and any questions throughout your year as a Course Rep. You can email the team at any time on course reps@southbank.su with any questions.

Training and support

Throughout the year you will get access to training and support from the students' union. Here are some examples of the training we will provide to you:

- Public Speaking
- Getting and Giving Feedback
- How To Make A Difference in your year
- Campaigning and advocating for change
- How to be the best Course Rep in the world
- How the university works

The Student Voice & Advocacy Team

The Student Voice and Advocacy Team run the students' union Course Rep programme and are here to help and support you. Here's a quick introduction to the team:

Andrew Quick

Student Voice Coordinator

"I'm Andrew - and given you've picked up a Course Rep handbook, it's likely you're interested in becoming a student leader. I can help you with that and help make sure amazing things are happening for LSBU students. Becoming a Course Rep is one of the best things you could possibly do. It's fun work and you are able to meet some awesome people, enhance your employment prospects through learning new skills and do things to enhance the student experience of those that follow you. You will also have a lot of fun along the way. Students are really powerful, and you will be one of the students that makes LSBU the best possible place to be. You can get in touch with me anytime at andrew@southbank.su."

Josie Ramsingh

Student Voice Coordinator

"I have recently joined the students' union as Student Voice Coordinator because I am passionate about student engagement and student voice. During my own degree, I founded and ran my university's first Feminist Society and was a Course Rep both at my home uni and when studying abroad in Hong Kong. So I know how you feel and a lot of the questions you'll have! I then spent several years as a Senior Academic Manager in language schools in China and have been a teacher.. I've worked in student support, student mental health and student advice and so am particularly interested in helping and supporting student leaders on issues and improving BAME students' and LGBTQIA+ students' access to student support services and representation in the wider student body. I'm really looking forward to getting to know you so please don't hesitate to contact me at josie@southbank.su!"

Got questions or need help?

You can email the team on coursereps@southbank.su at any time and we'll get back to you on any questions you may have or help you need.

Most of all...

**HAVE A GREAT YEAR
AND ENJOY IT!**

Got questions?
SOUTHBANK.SU

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