Core Course Representative Training

Learning outcomes for the Session:

• explore your role as a representative and your learning experience to date
• discuss the student learning experience and explore how you can improve your courses’ collective experience
• explore how you can gather student opinion on various aspects of the learning and teaching process
• explore the skills used by course representatives while improving the student learning experience.
**Discussion: The student learning experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why did you choose your course?</td>
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<td>What do you like most about your course?</td>
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<td>If you could change one thing about your course what would it be? and why?</td>
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**Discussion: The course representative role**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the <strong>purpose</strong> of the course representative?</td>
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<td>What do you think some of your <strong>tasks</strong> will be?</td>
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<td>What <strong>skills</strong> do you think you will need and develop as a course representative?</td>
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<td>What do you think <strong>you</strong> might get out of the role?</td>
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</table>
Why are course representatives important?

**Quality of learning and teaching**

- students and course representatives are ideally placed to help staff identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learning and teaching in your department

**Enhancement activities**

- universities are continually striving to improve the student learning experience and course representatives are a key part of this process

**Standards of award**

- universities work with students, colleges, employers and professional bodies to ensure your course is relevant
- external frameworks for standards

**The student learning experience**

- Curriculum
  - do you think the subjects you have studied were relevant to the course you applied for?

- Quality standards
  - do you receive information or feedback from your department following the completion of module evaluation forms?

- Learning resources and their deployment
  - do you think the levels of resource are appropriate?

- Student progression and outcomes
  - do you find the support you’re given about options for future study or employment helpful?

- Teaching and learning
  - are the teaching methods (e.g. lectures) the most appropriate for your course?

- Assessment and achievement
  - do you know how you’re going to be assessed for each module?
Case study one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students on your course:</th>
<th>150</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long have you all been studying:</td>
<td>1 ½ months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course:</td>
<td>BSc Chemistry (Hons)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff:</td>
<td>Faculty Head, Course Leader, Teaching Staff x 9, Administrative support, Research students x 5</td>
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</table>

You were elected as a course representative and started the role in the 2nd month of your course. You know the staff on your course quite well, and have a good relationship with your course leader.

In the later months of the summer before the course began students were sent information about the content and aims of the course, providing you with information about the type of subjects you would be covering in the coming year and the ways in which you might be assessed at the end of each semester. Included within this information were reading lists for each core module that you would be sitting in the first semester.

Each reading list indicated which texts were essential and which were ‘supporting’ texts. The course handbook recommended that you buy copies of the essential texts and stated that copies of all the books were available in the library both at your campus and at the central university library.

You are now 1½ months into your course and the amount of preparation for tutorials is increasing. You also know that you have exams at the end of two of your modules and written assignments and practical assessments for your other modules. Your assessments begin as soon as you return from the Christmas break in January.

A number of students have approached you, as course representative, and highlighted that there is a much greater need for the ‘supporting’ texts than they thought necessary after receiving the reading lists and, in fact, some of these texts are used more than the essential texts.

The library is also not a great source for texts. All have now been taken out on long term loan and may not be returned for up to four weeks. Students are now left without copies of texts they require for assessment preparation and having spent money on the essential texts at the beginning of the term are reluctant to spend yet more.

You have spoken with one of your lecturers who indicated that this was not the first year that this had become an issue within the course. You have also spoken with library staff who have explained the process by which books are ordered on recommendation from course staff and placed on the appropriate loan system.
Case study two

**Number of students on your course:** 60  
**How long have you all been studying:** 3 months  
**Course:** BA Business and European Law with German  
**Staff:** Faculty Head, Course Leader, Placement Co-ordinator, and Administrative support, Teaching Staff × 9

You were elected as a course representative and started the role in the 1st month of your course. You know the staff and students on your course quite well.

This is the fourth year that your course has been running at your institution and it is designed as a ‘sandwich degree’*. In the second year of study you are all due to go abroad and study in a country whose primary language is German or work within an organisation whose work reflects your degree subject.

You are now approaching the end of semester one of your first year and have yet to receive detailed information about the preparations for your year abroad. At the beginning of the course you received a small booklet with some basic information, but students on the course are becoming concerned about what is expected of them.

The information you currently have suggests that your course team will arrange your place at a university in consultation with you and that you will have to arrange your own travel and accommodation for your year away. If you are going to work in an organisation you must arrange this yourself with support from the placement co-ordinator.

A large number of students on your course chose to study this degree as a direct result of the sandwich year which has great potential for developing your language and professional skills as well as developing your understanding of your chosen subject and may provide a basis for your honours year.

As the course representative, student have approached you in the past 3 weeks asking if there is any way that you can help them to find out more about the situation and get the most out of this learning experience.

*a sandwich degree is one which is designed for students to spend their second year either on and industry placement or studying at a university in another country.
Meetings – Glossary of terms

**Agenda** – an itemised list of the topics that are going to be discussed at the meeting. You should receive this before you get to the meeting to help you prepare. If you want to get something on the agenda so that it can be discussed you can speak to the secretary or the chair of the meeting.

**Secretary** – a member of teaching staff or an administrative member of staff from the department who will let you know when and where the meeting is. He or she will draw the agenda together and send it to you. If you have any questions this is a good person to ask.

**Chair** – this could be a member of teaching staff or a student and they will run the meeting, making sure that all of the items on the agenda are discussed in the time that you have. They will also control the meeting by asking people to speak/respond or maybe even ask them to be quiet if they go on too much! If you would like to discuss something at a meeting then speak to the chair. They may also ask people around the table to take responsibility for decisions or actions made.

**Apologies** – if you can’t go to a meeting it is important to let the chair or secretary know that you won’t be there, at the beginning of a meeting the chair will list those people who have apologised so that everyone present knows.

**Any other business** – this is sometimes called Any other competent or committee business, and is where you can raise anything for discussion that is not already on the agenda, the Chair will decide if they will ‘allow’ this discussion or not depending on the topic or the time left, so if it is something important and you didn’t have time to get it on the agenda speak to the chair before the meeting and let them know you will raise this.

**Minutes** – the minutes are the record of the meeting and you will be given these either shortly after the meeting or before the next meeting. It is important that you look through these to see if they are accurate, it could be something has been missed or misunderstood, if that is the case it is important that you correct this at the next meeting when the minutes are reviewed.

**Notes**

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**Meetings**

As an experienced representative, the student liaison officer has asked for your advice to give to new course representatives.

Try to develop some top tips and advice to give new course representatives confidence that they can be effective before, during and after staff student meetings.

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<th><strong>During</strong></th>
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</table>
What are you going to do next?

This section of the workbook lets you to record information and ideas which you can refer to throughout your year as a course representative and even bring along to your meetings.

Now that you have a better understanding of your role as a course representative, why not put this into practice by chatting to your class about any issues or feedback they may have? Remember if you’re struggling to get feedback, refer back to the examples from the student learning experience on page 3 of this workbook and in your handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The process</th>
<th>Why not use this space to record your notes?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start by speaking to classmates and gather student opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think of solutions that you and your class could suggest to resolve the issue</td>
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<td>Decide who will be the best person to contact and think about what you are going to say</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keep track of ongoing progress and any timescales you have negotiated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback to students and gather more of their ideas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- ✔ keep classmates and staff up-to-date with your progress
- ✔ record the dates of your communication with staff
- ✔ know who is dealing with your issue
- ✔ agree a deadline
1. University Name: ........................................................................................................ Date: ..........................................

2. Gender: Male □ Female □ Transgender □


4. a. Title of course: (e.g. BSc Psychology) ......................................................................................................................
   b. Is your course: Full-time □ Part-time □ Distance Learning □ Other □ ...........................
   c. What year of study are you in? Undergraduate □ Postgraduate □
   d. Are you an international student? Yes □ No □

5. a. If you have been a course representative before, how many times? .......................
   b. How did you become a course representative? (tick all that apply)
      elected by my class □ selected by my tutor □
      volunteered □ don’t know □
      other (please state) ......................................................................................................................................................

6. a) How did you find out about this training session? .................................................................
   b) Did you find out about this training in appropriate time? Yes □ No □ Don’t Care □
   c) Did you receive accurate information about the contents of this training? Yes □ No □ Don’t Care □

7. How did you first hear about sparqs?
   From another student □ sparqs leaflet/material □ institution staff □
   students’ association □ at this training session □ other .................................................................

8. Have you previously attended Course Representative training? Yes sparqs □ Yes other □ No □

9. What have you learned? Please indicate how well you think the aims and objectives of the session were met by ticking the appropriate box (1=not met at all/poor and 6=fully met/excellent).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explored your role as a representative and your learning experience to date</td>
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<td>Discussed the student learning experience and explored how you can improve your course’s collective experience</td>
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<td>Explored how you can gather student opinion on various aspects of the learning and teaching process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explored the skills used by course representatives while improving the student learning experience</td>
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10. Did you feel able to participate fully in today’s training? Yes □ No □
    Why? ........................................................................................................................................................................
11. How useful is the training? Please rate each element of the training.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>n/a</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion about what is the course representative role</td>
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<td>Student learning experience exercise</td>
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<td>Case study based learning</td>
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<td>Meetings exercise group feedback</td>
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12. Trainer – Please comment on the quality of the trainer in the following areas.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate pace</td>
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<td>Knowledge of subject</td>
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<td>Creating interest</td>
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<td>Involving the group</td>
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13. Please comment on any way we might enhance the content and method of delivery of this training session and associated materials.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

14. Overall, how valuable do you consider today’s sparqs training?

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<tr>
<th>Value</th>
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Comments ......................................................................................................................................................................................................
________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

15. Would you recommend sparqs training to other course representatives? Yes □ No □

Please take a few moments to complete the following optional information

16. Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes □ No □

If yes, please state the nature of your disability: ...........................................................................................................................

17. Please indicate your ethnic origin:

- White
  - Scottish □
  - English □
  - Irish □
  - Welsh □
- Other White Background (please state) .................................................................
- Asian
  - Indian □
  - Pakistani □
  - Bangladeshi □
  - Chinese □
- Other Asian Background (please state) .................................................................
- Black
  - Caribbean □
  - African □
- Other Black Background (please state) .................................................................
- Mixed Background (please state) ............................................................................

18. Please indicate your sexual orientation:

- Heterosexual □
- Bisexual □
- Lesbian □
- Transgender □
- Gay □

When you have completed this questionnaire, please detach along the perforation and return it to the sparqs Associate Trainer.