

2023

STUDENT REPRESENTATION AT UAL AND ARTS SU

CONVERSATIONS

WITH

STUDENTS

CONVERSATIONS WITH STUDENTS 2023

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INTRODUCTION

We're really pleased to present the results of Arts SU first 'Conversations with Students' research, which provides valuable insights into the views and perceptions of students, staff and courses reps on the student representation structures at UAL.

The research builds on similar pieces of work across the sector to explore the views of all three groups and to propose recommendations and topics of discussion on the future of student representation structures which support quality assurance and enhancement at UAL.

It should not go unnoted that there are already several developments to support student feedback at UAL this year including:

Coordinated work to increase engagement with surveys such as CSS, NSS, PTES and PRES.

The development of a working definition of an **'excellent student experience'**.

The mapping of various spaces and stakeholders where students and the university come together to converse, feedback and collaborate.

This research is therefore occurring at a salient point in the institutions work in this area and enables a 'check-in' on its overall health.

It is important that the the purpose of this work is not solely about one single stakeholder or group but the combined contribution that we can all make as a community to ensure effective partnership working and make a positive impact for the benefit of all.



We hope to repeat this research periodically every 2-3 years and hope in doing so we can track experiences over time and have an ongoing conversation about the effectiveness of our work in this area.

We look forward to working with the University to implement the recommendations within this report.

METHODOLOGY

Conversations With Students is an evaluation exercise, with the aim of providing insight into the understanding of UAL and Arts SU's student representation mechanisms from multiple perspectives.

This is the first year this exercise has been undertaken at UAL; it shall be programmed periodically at future intervals to track changes over time, ensuring that the improvements generated from this research are monitored and evaluated.

The research for this report was conducted via three electronic surveys, targeted at three distinct populations at UAL:

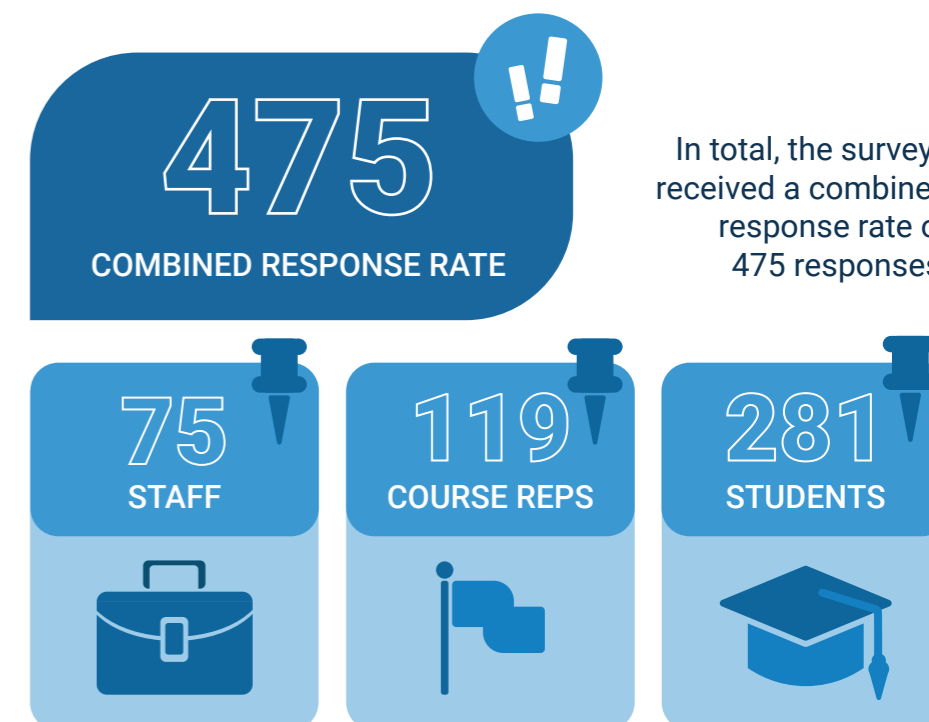
One survey targeting staff at UAL, open to any currently employed member of the UAL staff community. This was not open to Arts SU staff.	One survey targeting course reps at UAL, open to any currently registered course reps at UAL.	One survey targeting students at UAL, open to any currently registered students at UAL who are not registered as a course rep.
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The surveys are composed of a series of Likert scale questions and open text questions. The survey questions are designed to triangulate data across populations, with many replicable questions asked across surveys. Some survey questions are asked solely to one population group, where relevant.

The surveys were open from:



The surveys were promoted through the Students' Union communication channels, such as social media, weekly email newsletters and the course rep system. They were also promoted collaboratively with the UAL Internal Communications Team, and through course teams.



This translates to margins of error of 11%, 6% and 8% respectively. All colleges and all schools from across UAL are represented in the surveys.

For Likert scale questions, each possible response has been assigned a corresponding value from 1 to 4 (as can be seen in chart). As Likert scale questions produce ordinal data, the median is the best indicator of central tendency (average) and is demonstrated in the data below to display areas of commonality or difference across population groups. The mode has also been displayed for some questions in this report that produce categorical data. The median and mode responses will also be displayed visually within the charts, as they have been highlighted.

In addition, total average score has been included to display the raw mean scores of all respondents combined across the three surveys.

Questions in this report largely comprise a series of statements that respondents were asked to agree or disagree with. The statement will be displayed, followed by brackets to refer to which population group was asked this question: staff, course reps, students, or all.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE COURSE REP ROLE

The first questions respondents were asked to consider relate to their understanding of the course rep role as it currently is.

This is to gain understanding about awareness of what the role entails, and the respondents' engagement with the role, across population groups.

Staff members provided a range of responses, many stressing the importance the role plays in representing peers and ensuring students' voices are heard:



It was noticeable some staff compared with other population groups were more willing to recognise an extension of the role from solely a representative frame of reference to one which includes community relations/ organising and student engagement:

Question: Please tell us below what you understand the role and responsibilities of a course rep to be? (All)



Respondents were first asked in an open text question to describe what they understand the role and responsibilities of a course rep to be.

“To represent current and future students as a key voice in the development of courses. To attend course committees. To be in good communication with fellow students, listening and feeding in a range of voices.”

- CSM Programme Director

“To represent the collective voice of student body in that cohort re curriculum content and any other school business, facilities, interaction; to attend course committee meetings; to relay information from school and department over to the student body; to keep named voices of concern as confidential. To be available for discussion and feedback, but not to carry more responsibility or work more than necessary. The role should not interrupt with their study experience. It does not give the student authority over other students, nor should they be expected to serve other students.”

- LCF Course Leader

“The student representatives volunteer with their cohort to encourage student voice and feedback in a constructive way to collaboratively shape the future of the course with the staff. The student reps value unique course culture and community, and are at times able to connect with underrepresented voices.”

- LCC Course Leader

“Course Reps are student representatives who bridge the gap between students and academic institutions. They gather feedback on teaching, curriculum, and assessments from peers, engaging in regular meetings with staff to convey concerns and suggestions. They advocate for student views in decision-making processes, collaborate to solve problems, and report progress to the student body. They also foster community and engagement by organizing events and study groups. Course Reps ensure students’ interests are heard, improving the overall academic experience and promoting a sense of unity among students.”

- LCF Lecturer

For **course rep** respondents, many emphasised the role as one in which listening to others is central, with the intention to take this feedback forward in a constructive way:



“As part of the course rep role you are expected to listen to students needs and suggestions, with this collectively present feedback to the board in order to make changes that’ll better improve the university where possible. With this, you’ll need to be a person students feel they can go to.”

- CCW Wimbledon course rep

“Serve as a voice for peers, relaying their concerns, suggestions, and feedback to the academic staff Facilitate open and constructive communication between students and faculty. Gather feedback from students regarding their learning experience, course content, teaching methods, and any other relevant aspects of the academic program Work collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to find solutions and resolve conflicts.”

- LCF course rep

Student respondents (who are not course reps) were perhaps the least sure or definitive about their understanding of the course rep role. While the vast majority of student respondents offered clear and accurate descriptions of the role, some were more hesitant or openly unsure:



“They go to meetings once every two months or so to represent the students as a whole and put forward any ideas queries or suggestions to the committee to help improve the course and year group.”

- CCW Chelsea student

“Honestly, I don’t know much about them.”

- LCC student

“Relaying student feedback and opinions to staff and acting as a representative of student voices in the college.”

- LCF student

“To represent the student body in their class and communicate feedback back and forth between the students and course staff. To highlight things that are working well, but also need to be changed.”

- CSM student

“From my understanding of the role and responsibilities of a course rep is that they gather information from their peers about the course whether it be concerns, feedback and ideas. With this information they relay this information to course leaders and other appropriate staff.”

- LCC student

Overall, all three groups accurately highlighted that **the role of the course rep is to listen to the views of their peers, to convey these views in a respectful manner, and to work collaboratively with staff to make improvements on their course.** This demonstrates that the role has a consistent identity across diverse courses and colleges.

Question: I think what the course rep role entails is clearly communicated. (All)



	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Strongly Agree (1)	17.86	53.01	21.33	29.76
Agree (2)	67.86	42.17	62.67	57.79
Disagree (3)	10.71	4.82	8.67	7.96
Strongly Disagree (4)	3.57	0.00	1.33	1.38
Not Applicable (0)	0.00		6.00	3.11
Median Response	2	1	2	

Table 1: I think what the course rep role entails is clearly communicated. (All)

Overall, all three groups believe that **the components of the role of course rep are clearly communicated.**

Understandably, course reps feel more strongly that this is the case than staff or students (with a median score of 1 as opposed to a score of 2 for staff and students), as course reps have a more intimate understanding of the role through lived experience and training. However, **all three groups broadly agree that the components of the course rep role is clearly communicated.**

Question: Have the course rep(s) for the course you teach or support communicated with you regarding feedback this year? (Staff)




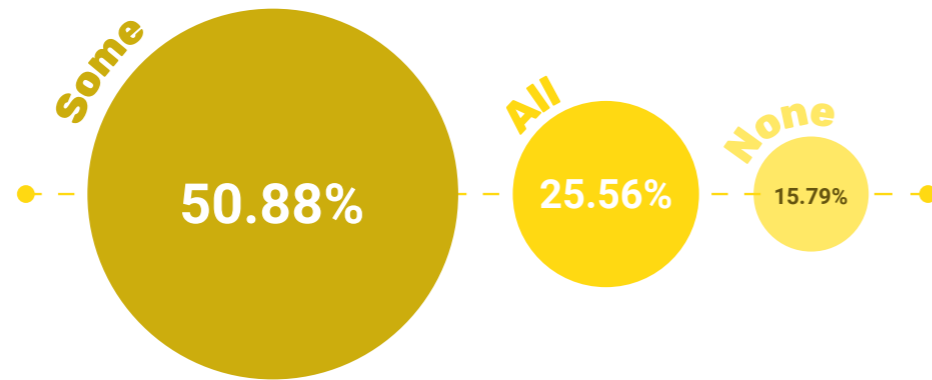
	%
	Staff
 Yes, all my course reps have approached me.	24.56
Yes, some of my course reps have approached me.	50.88
No, none of my course reps have approached me.	15.79
Not applicable (I do not have direct contact with course reps)	8.77

Table 2: Have the course rep(s) for the course you teach or support communicated with you regarding feedback this year? (Staff)

Staff respondents were asked to assess the engagement of their course reps this year, with the vast majority of respondents who have direct contact with course reps reporting that they have had some level of engagement with their course reps.

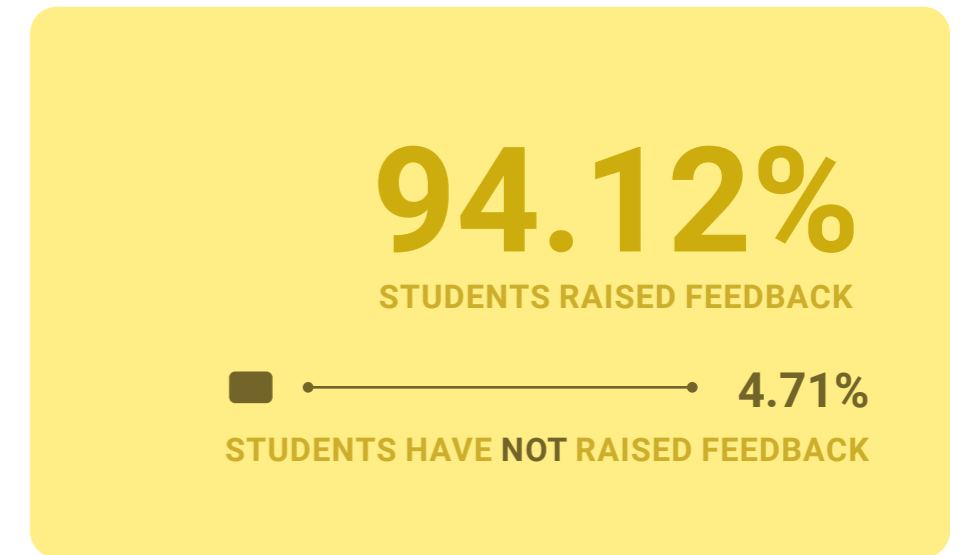
Diagram 1: Have the course rep(s) for the course you teach or support communicated with you regarding feedback this year? (Staff)



Over half of respondents (50.88%) report that they have been approached by some of their course reps, while just under a quarter (24.56%) report that all their course reps have approached the staff member. Only 15.79% report having had no engagement with their course reps.

This is evidence that communication between course reps and staff is consistently high across courses and colleges.

Diagram 2:
 Question: Have students raised feedback with you this year? (Course reps)



This is positive evidence that students are utilising the course rep system as a source of sharing views about their course, and course reps are actively canvassing the opinions of their peers.

Question: Have students raised feedback with you this year? (Course reps)


	%
	Course Reps
Yes	94.12
No	4.71
Other	1.18

Table 3: Have you taken any feedback to a course rep this year? If not, why not? (Students)

Course rep respondents were asked to report whether their peers had raised feedback with them this year. The overwhelming majority of respondents answered in the affirmative (94.12%), with only 4.71% reporting they had received no feedback from students.

Question: Have you taken any feedback to a course rep this year? If not, why not? (Students)


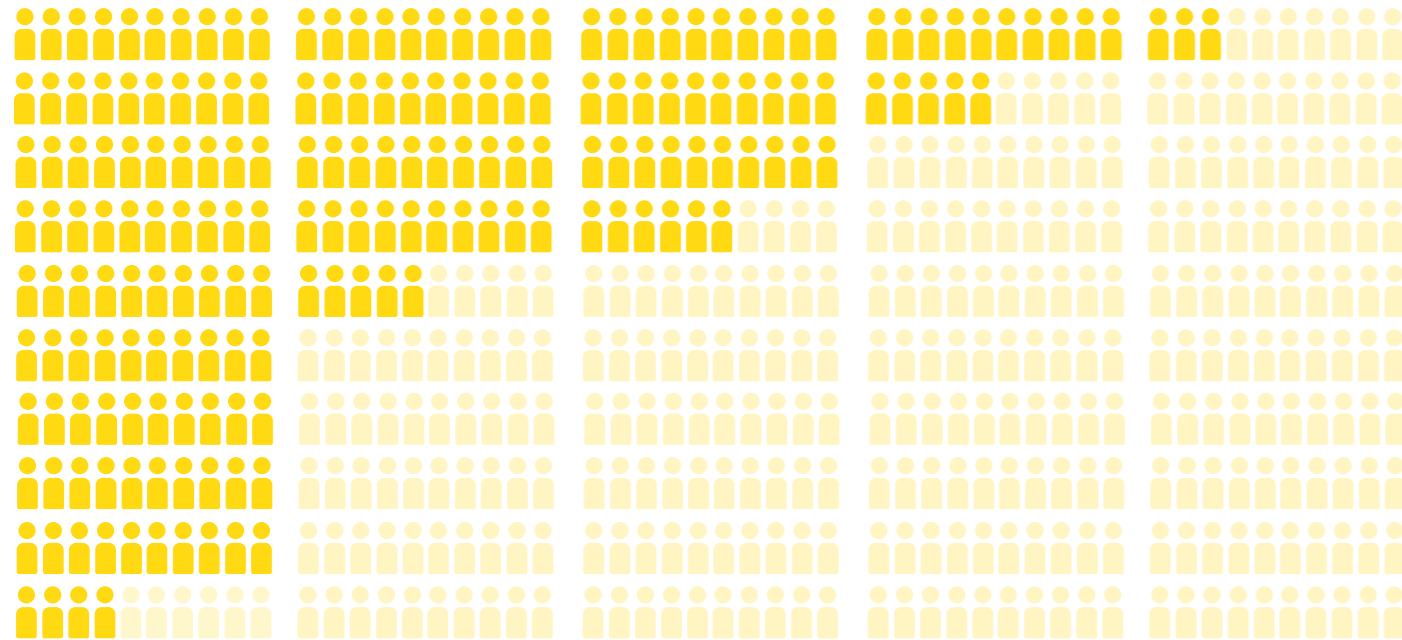
	%
	Students
Yes, I have taken feedback to my course rep(s).	45.10
No, I haven't taken any feedback to raise (positive or negative).	35.95
No, I don't know who my course rep(s) is/are.	15.69
No, I don't know how to contact my course rep(s).	3.27

Table 4: Have you taken any feedback to a course rep this year? If not, why not? (Students)

Student respondents were asked to report whether they have raised any feedback with their course rep this year.



While **94.12%** of course reps report having received feedback from their peers...

Fewer than half (**45.10%**) of student respondents report having taken feedback to their course reps.

While over a third (**35.95%**) of student respondents report that this is due to not having any feedback to raise...

A significant minority (**15.69%**) report not raising feedback as they are unaware who their course rep is.

A much smaller minority (**3.27%**) report having not raised feedback as they do not know how to contact their course rep.

Diagram 3: Have you taken any feedback to a course rep this year? If not, why not? (Students)

This is evidence that **improvements must be made** to address the profile of course reps on some courses, as well as the need to ensure all students are aware of the means through which they can communicate directly with their course reps.

All respondents were asked to provide examples of feedback that has been raised by students through the course rep system this year.

Below includes a range of examples from staff respondents:



Question: What sort of topics have course reps / students raised this year? (All)



“Cost of living (material cost). Cross-year social activities/study trips. Balance of online/onsite teaching. Impact of strikes and marking Boycott.”

- CCW Camberwell Course Leader

“All issues related to the course and delivery - e.g. detailed feedback on specific units, wider issues with scheduling of student events (exhibitions) related to assessment submissions, feedback on content of units, desire for further workshops/masterclasses, individual student incidents that the student themselves did not feel able to raise.”

- CCW Camberwell Course Leader

“Term dates. Dates related to the move to Stratford. Concerns re reduced access to facilities due to move to Stratford. Accommodation in relation to Stratford. Broken facilities. Issues (if any, which is rare) with tech team. Marking and coordination from Collaborative challenge unit... students were unhappy and voiced it via the course reps. Generally they raise concerns rather than positive feedback, which comes via individuals and the PTES.”

- CCW Camberwell Course Leader

“Timetable issues - timing of assessments, project changeovers etc. Access to workshops / spaces / technicians Clarity on expectations of work, concerning assessment mainly Supportive course teams Enjoyed extra sessions - guest lectures / workshops etc.”

- CSM Course Leader

Below includes a range of examples from **course rep** respondents:



“Studio Space - General course structure regarding tutorials, lectures etc. Both improvements and positives. - Complaints within studio health and safety - Accessibility to the uni spaces - The financial side, more accessibility to materials.”

- CCW Camberwell Course Leader

“Most of the feedback we’ve received has been on the structure of our course, teaching, strike days, classroom specific recommendations, and accommodation services for non-native English speakers in our course.”

- LCC course rep

“Feelings about the workshops and tutorials they had. Frustrations about Celcat/timetable. Alumni access. Praise for tutor response times on emails. Anger with higher management in regards to strikes, students empathising with their underpaid tutors.”

- LCC course rep

“Crits, reviews, feedback on their work, grading, timings, studio space etc.”

- CSM course rep

Below includes a range of examples from **student** respondents:



“The degree show organisation. Organisation of the course in general. Uni bathrooms.”

- CCW Chelsea student

“The Moodle incompetence, more involvement in terms of inter disciplinary interactions.”

- LCF student

“Organisation. Often in relation to poor timetabling. Bargehouse exhibition and the organisation of arrival times and lack of facility staff. Consideration for students who commute a long way for university and making it worthwhile to come into site for enriching lectures.”

- CCW Camberwell student

“Mismanagement of resource, lack of organisation, lack of studio space, bad communication on the tutors side, lack of classes and high prices for food and art materials.”

- CCW Camberwell student

“Facilities that are included within the studios and how spaces are managed/communicated within all students using the area.”

- CSM student

All of these examples provide an insight in the meaningful conversations that take place within course committees and Student and Dean Forums across UAL, as a result of student feedback facilitated by course reps.

There are many areas of commonality in the examples of feedback raised across UAL, as reflected in topics such as timetabling, access to resources, cost of study and course organisation. These were reported by staff, course reps and students alike.

COURSE REP RECRUITMENT

For the second topic of enquiry, respondents were asked their views on the recruitment of course reps.

Many course reps across UAL are elected, either through online elections or in-class elections, as facilitated by their course team. For other courses, course reps are co-opted or selected by staff, based on interest, and often if there are too few candidates to create a competitive election. There is a diversity of recruitment methods employed across UAL, and as such **this section seeks to understand the perception of rep recruitment from multiple angles.**

Question: Everyone on my course had the opportunity to put themselves forward to be a course rep. (All)



	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	64.81	65.85	46.31	55.44
Agree (2)	24.07	34.15	44.30	37.54
Disagree (3)	1.85	0.00	8.05	4.56
Strongly Disagree (4)	1.85	0.00	1.34	1.05
Not Applicable (0)	7.41			1.40
Median Response	1	1	2	

Table 5: Everyone on my course had the opportunity to put themselves forward to be a course rep. (All)

Staff and course rep respondents were overwhelmingly positive that all students have the opportunity to put themselves forward to become a course rep. Student respondents also largely agree with this statement, however less strongly than staff and course rep respondents (when comparing the median scores).

This may be explained by the fact that as staff largely organise the elections, and thus create the opportunities for students to come forward, while course rep respondents have been successful in becoming a course rep through whichever process their course has in place.

Student respondents may include unsuccessful course rep candidates, or students who wished to put themselves forward, but did not feel that the process in place on their course was inviting. **More work can be done to ensure that the processes through which reps are recruited are accessible and inviting to all students.**

Question: The recruitment process for course rep(s) is clear, accessible and easy to understand. (All)

	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Strongly Agree (1)	27.27	62.20	24.50	35.76
Agree (2)	41.82	30.49	52.98	44.44
Disagree (3)	20.00	6.10	19.87	15.97
Strongly Disagree (4)	3.64	1.22	2.65	2.43
Not Applicable (0)	7.27			1.39
Median Response	2	1	2	

Table 6: The recruitment process for course rep(s) is clear, accessible and easy to understand. (All)

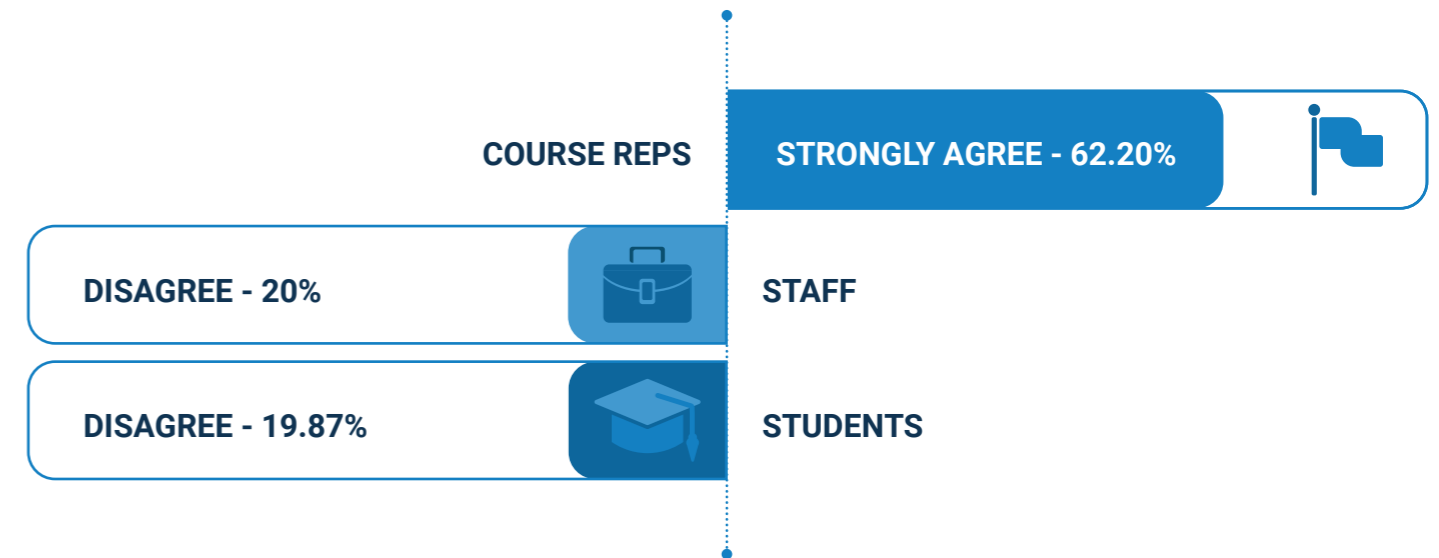


Diagram 4: The recruitment process for course rep(s) is clear, accessible and easy to understand. (All)

Course reps overwhelmingly feel that the process for their recruitment is clear, accessible and easy to understand.

However staff and students are less enthusiastic, with 20% of staff disagreeing with the statement, and an almost similar amount (19.87%) of students disagreeing. Respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement were provided an opportunity to explain the reasons for their response in the next question.

Question: Why did you disagree or strongly disagree with the previous question? (All)

From a **staff** perspective, lack of knowledge about the official process for recruiting course reps is the reason for their response:



"I do not know what the official process is for recruiting courses reps."

- CSM Programme Director

"I send the rep names to the admin team but have no idea what happens after. Sometimes these students don't even get contacted by the SU. Eventually it works out, but I don't know how."

- LCF Course Leader

For other **staff**, the timing of recruitment is a detriment to the quality of candidates putting themselves forward:

“Because this happens way too early in the year before students are comfortable with each other. This deters the more introverted students from running, and also makes it difficult for students to make an informed choice about the reps because they don’t know each other yet (This is in the context of a 15 month MA). So it benefits those that are louder or stand out.”

- LCC Reader

“Too early in the course (students still finding their feet), privileges the confident. Recruitment process itself proved very confusing for the reps who did apply.”

- LCF Course Leader

There was significant overlap with the **course reps** who disagreed with the statement also:



“Because it was very confusing how you can become a student rep and if I was not pushy I probably would have missed the chance.”

- CCW Chelsea course rep

“Course Rep is not something everyone feels they can/ should do. It ends up being tutors pleading for students to do it often.”

- CSM course rep

“It was very rushed. We were asked to vote in a course rep within the first 2 weeks of university but we hadn’t all met each other and everyone was too shy to come forward as course rep. In the end 3 people were just randomly chosen and it didn’t feel so sincere.”

- LCC course rep

Student respondents echoed many of these comments, with some students suggesting that those who became course reps received favouritism from staff:



“It was unclear when or how it was possible to apply to become a course rep; it was likely announced in an email which many students often don’t read. Course reps are also students who are already favoured by the tutors and are popular within the class - main communication about course reps happened in person with the tutors so students who missed these conversations were unable to put themselves forward.”

- CSM student

“I didn’t feel as though everyone was given equal opportunity to put themselves forward for the role nor was the role properly described before asking people to choose reps.”

- LCF student

“The lecturers had to beg people to be course reps or randomly picked them.”

- LCF student

These examples provide insight how improvements can be made in the rep recruitment process, particularly in outlining core processes for rep recruitment to all staff, ensuring that students do not feel that successful course rep candidates receive undue favouritism, and identifying accessible procedures which invite all types of students to want to participate.

Question: Which of these methods of electing course reps do you think would lead to the most free and fair elections? (All)

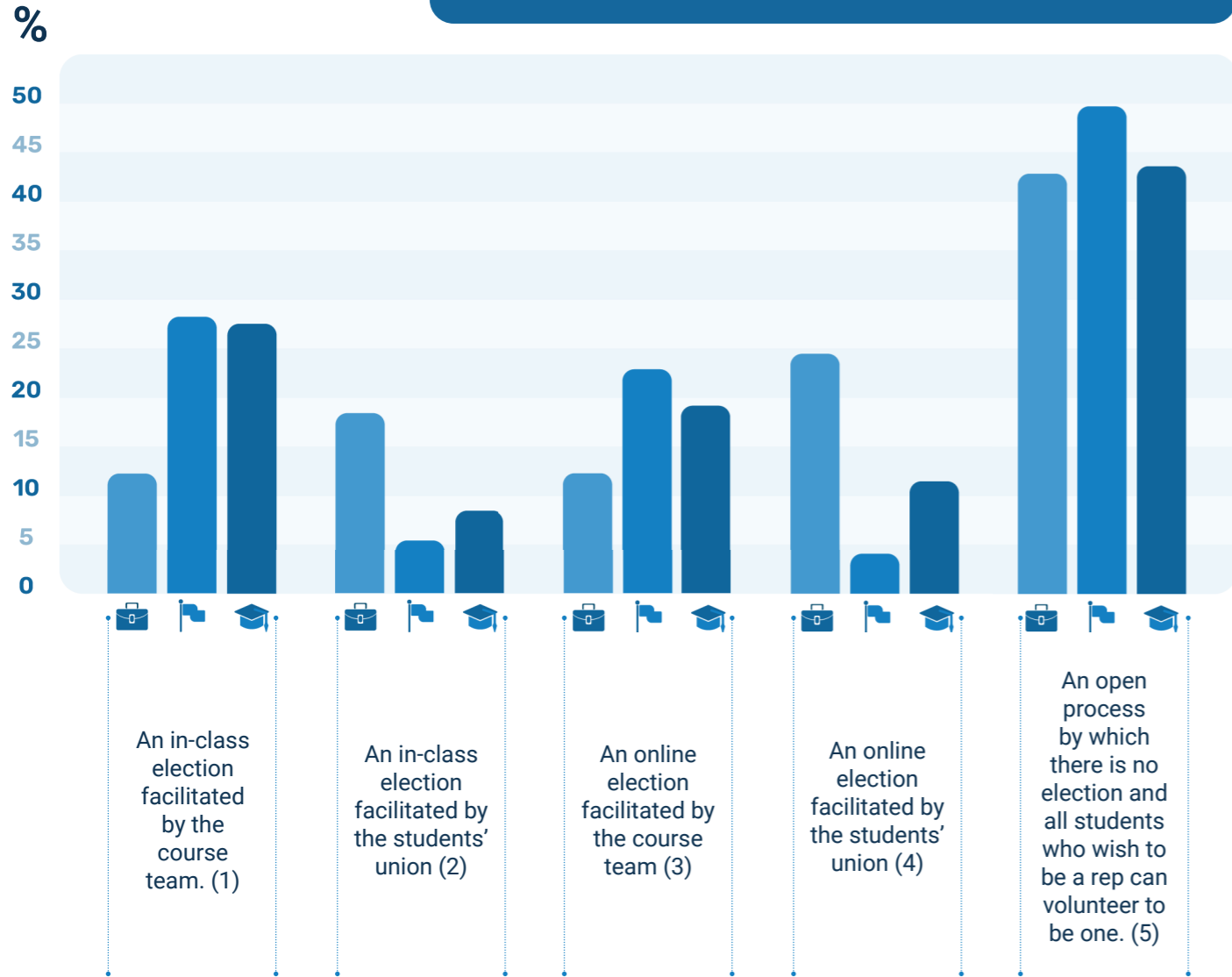


Diagram 5: Which of these methods of electing course reps do you think would lead to the most free and fair elections? (All)

KEY:



	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
An in-class election facilitated by the course team. (1)	11.11	25.61	25.00	22.50
An in-class election facilitated by the students' union (2)	16.67	4.88	7.64	8.57
An online election facilitated by the course team (3)	11.11	20.73	17.36	17.14
An online election facilitated by the students' union (4)	22.22	3.66	10.42	10.71
An open process by which there is no election and all students who wish to be a rep can volunteer to be one. (5)	38.89	45.12	39.58	41.07
Mode response	5	5	5	

Table 7: Which of these methods of electing course reps do you think would lead to the most free and fair elections? (All)

Respondents were asked to choose between different rep recruitment processes (some of which currently exist at UAL, others which do not) based on which they think would lead to the most free and fair elections.

Across all three populations, an open process by which there is no election and all students who wish to be a rep can volunteer to be one is the most popular. **Interestingly, course rep respondents are the most enthusiastic about this method of rep recruitment, suggesting that an open process would be preferable** for those who have undergone the current forms of rep recruitment. This open method would be a less restrictive process from the current thinking around course rep recruitment; however, it is an area worth exploring, taking into consideration how such a process could be delivered practically, and what impact it would have on representation and student voice across UAL.

In terms of the remaining options (those which include an election element) online elections facilitated by the students' union are the most popular form of elections amongst staff respondents. This contrasts with course rep and student respondents, who favour in-class elections facilitated by the course team.

The reason for this difference may come down to resourcing; many course staff already face competing pressures on their time, and as such outsourcing course rep elections to the students union may free up capacity for other areas of their work albeit require opening up access to timetabled sessions. Conversely, for course reps and students, course teams are the UAL staff members with whom they have the most interaction with and attachment to; as such, in-class elections facilitated by these staff members may enhance the legitimacy of these elections, and processes can be tailored by these staff to ensure their inclusivity to all students on the course.

COURSE REP TRAINING

The third topic that respondents were asked their views on relates to the delivery of course rep training, and how adequately this training prepares course reps for their roles.

Arts SU currently provides group training to equip course reps with the knowledge and skills needed for the role. Training covers areas such as expectations of the role, how to prepare agendas and participate effectively in meetings, and how to navigate problems course reps might encounter in the role.

Question: I received training that allowed me to fulfil the role effectively (Course reps) or Course rep(s) seem well trained to fulfil the role effectively. (Staff and Students)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	7.69	31.58	10.56	15.93
Agree (2)	48.08	50.00	36.62	42.59
Disagree (3)	23.08	11.84	21.13	18.89
Strongly Disagree (4)	9.62	6.58	6.34	7.04
Not Applicable (0)	11.54		25.35	15.56
Median Response	2	2	3	

Table 8: I received training that allowed me to fulfil the role effectively (Course reps) or Course rep(s) seem well trained to fulfil the role effectively. (Staff and Students)

While all groups feel that course reps are effectively trained to fulfil their role, this view is most strongly held by course rep respondents, who have undergone the training.

Almost a quarter of staff respondents (23.08%) disagreed that course reps seem well trained to fulfil their role, while over a fifth of student respondents (21.13%) similarly disagreed with the statement. Respondents were provided with the opportunity to explain their answer in the next question.

Staff provided several responses, suggesting that course reps they had encountered do not feel fully prepared for the role after undergoing training, or that greater emphasis in training could be placed on the appropriateness of topics brought forward by course reps:



Despite this, there is a strong sense that all three groups appreciate the training that course reps receive and feel that it equips them to carry out their duties.

Question: Please explain your answer to the previous question. (All)

Respondents who disagreed with the previous statement were provided the opportunity to explain their answer.

“They are not fully prepared but have some knowledge of their role.”
- LCC Course Leader

“Reps feedback on issues like the (crappy) cafe, iPad, timetabling. None of these issues are in the gift of the course teams to fix.”
- LCF Course Leader

“I have had to reschedule two course committee meetings as student reps did not respond to email invitations, or accepted and then didn’t attend. They don’t take their role seriously enough, and often express their own views rather than representing the cohort.”
- LCC Course Leader

“They were great, but I don’t think it had to do with any SU training (in fact, I think they had reported there wasn’t much to the training they were given).”
- LCF Course Leader

“Rep training has improved hugely in the last couple of years - thank you. I still think they need support in objectivity and accessing their cohorts.”

- LCF Dean

“I don’t really know what training they have or whether our reps take part but they take their role seriously.”

- CSM Course Leader

“I’ve only ever had one experience with one of my course reps and they didn’t seem very confident in what they were supposed to be doing.”

- LCF Student

“When I gave feedback to my course rep I felt that the feedback was not going to be passed on because he disagreed and argued against my feedback.”

- LCC Student

“They are not really trained from what I’ve seen. But all they really need to do is feed back information efficiently.”

- CSM Student

Student respondents provided more general feedback, indicating that they were not sure what impact the training had on the work of their course reps, or even if they are aware of whether course reps are trained:



These examples provide starting points for where improvements can be made in the training course reps receive, such as improving knowledge as to appropriate topics to raise with staff, and making students who are not course reps aware that course rep training takes place.

Question: Course rep(s) seem well trained for attending Course Committees (Staff) or The training I received adequately prepared me for attending Course Committees (Course reps)



Table 9: Course rep(s) seem well trained for attending Course Committees (Staff) or The training I received adequately prepared me for attending Course Committees (Course reps)

	%		
	Staff	Course Reps	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	13.73	30.26	23.62
Agree (2)	47.06	51.32	49.61
Disagree (3)	13.73	14.47	14.17
Strongly Disagree (4)	11.76	3.95	7.09
Not Applicable (0)	13.73		5.51
Median Response	2	2	

Staff respondents and course rep respondents were asked about the impact course rep training has on the preparedness of course reps to attend course committees. Both groups overall agree that training has a positive impact on course rep preparedness for course committees.

Question: The training I received adequately prepared me for attending Student-Dean Forums. (Course reps)




	%
 Strongly Agree (1)	25.00
Agree (2)	47.37
Disagree (3)	25.00
Strongly Disagree (4)	2.63
Median Response	2

Table 10: The training I received adequately prepared me for attending Student-Dean Forums. (Course reps)

Similarly, course reps were asked whether the training they had received made them feel adequately prepared to attend Student and Dean Forums.

Student and Dean Forums are an opportunity to bring course reps and their Dean of School together to discuss issues affecting their course. Course reps largely agreed that training had prepared them for these meetings, with a quarter of respondents strongly agreeing, and almost half (47.37%) agreeing.

It should be noted however, a further quarter of respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting that more work can be done in course rep training to ensure all reps feel prepared for these important meetings.

COURSE COMMITTEES

The fourth topic respondents were asked about related to their views on course reps at course committees. These questions were primarily focused towards staff and course rep respondents, as these groups are the most likely to have attended these committees.

Each course at UAL has a Course or Programme Committee which includes all relevant course reps. The Committee monitors the operation of the course/programme and considers issues related to academic content and course organisation.

Question: Course Committees were at a time convenient for course reps to attend (Staff) or Course Committees were at a convenient time for me to attend (Course reps)

	%		
	Staff	Course Reps	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	9.62	20.00	15.75
Agree (2)	48.08	54.67	51.97
Disagree (3)	17.31	22.67	20.47
Strongly Disagree (4)	7.69	2.67	4.72
Not Applicable*	17.31		7.09
Median Response	2	2	

Table 11: Course committees at a convenient time for course reps to attend

* (I do not have direct contact with course reps)

Both staff and course rep respondents broadly agreed that course committees take place at a time convenient for course reps.

Course reps are unpaid, and take on the role alongside their studies, so it is therefore of paramount importance that course committees are at a time that is understanding of their schedule.

Question: The agendas of Course Committees reflect what students wanted to raise. (Staff) or The agendas of Course Committees reflect what students wanted me to raise. (Course reps)

	%		
	Staff	Course Reps	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	15.38	31.08	24.60
Agree (2)	51.92	67.57	61.11
Disagree (3)	15.38	0.00	6.35
Strongly Disagree (4)	3.85	1.35	2.38
Not Applicable*	13.46		5.56
Median Response	2	2	

Table 12: Course committee agendas reflect what students wanted to raise

* (I do not have direct contact with course reps)

Another positive area of alignment between staff and course reps is reflected in the agreement with the statement that course committee agendas reflect what students want course reps to raise.

Ensuring that course committees are a productive space for student feedback is incredibly important, and it is positive for staff-student relations for the agendas of these meetings to be meaningful and responsive to student priorities.

Question: The minutes from Course Committees are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed at the meeting. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	15.38	33.33	4.44	14.89
Agree (2)	61.54	53.33	28.15	41.98
Disagree (3)	7.69	12.00	25.93	18.32
Strongly Disagree (4)	3.85	1.33	14.07	8.40
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	11.54		27.41	16.41
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 13: The minutes from Course Committees are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed at the meeting.

Staff, course reps and students were asked whether they believe the minutes of course committees to be easily accessible, and clearly show the actions agreed at the meeting. While staff and course reps broadly believe this to be the case, **students who are not course reps were less positive**. Over a quarter (25.93%) of respondents disagreed with the statement, while a further 14.07% strongly disagreed.

There is more work that can be done in ensuring that course committee minutes are made accessible for all students to see, in order to hold staff and course reps to account on what takes place at course committees. Making minutes available closes the feedback loop to students effectively, and increases interest and trust in the course rep system amongst the broader student population.

Question: Course Committees would be improved by the introduction of student chairing. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	13.73	16.00	10.95	12.93
Agree (2)	25.49	62.67	47.45	47.53
Disagree (3)	35.29	20.00	4.38	14.83
Strongly Disagree (4)	11.76	1.33	1.46	3.42
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	13.73		35.77	21.29
Median Response	3	2	2	

Table 14: Course Committees would be improved by the introduction of student chairing. (All)

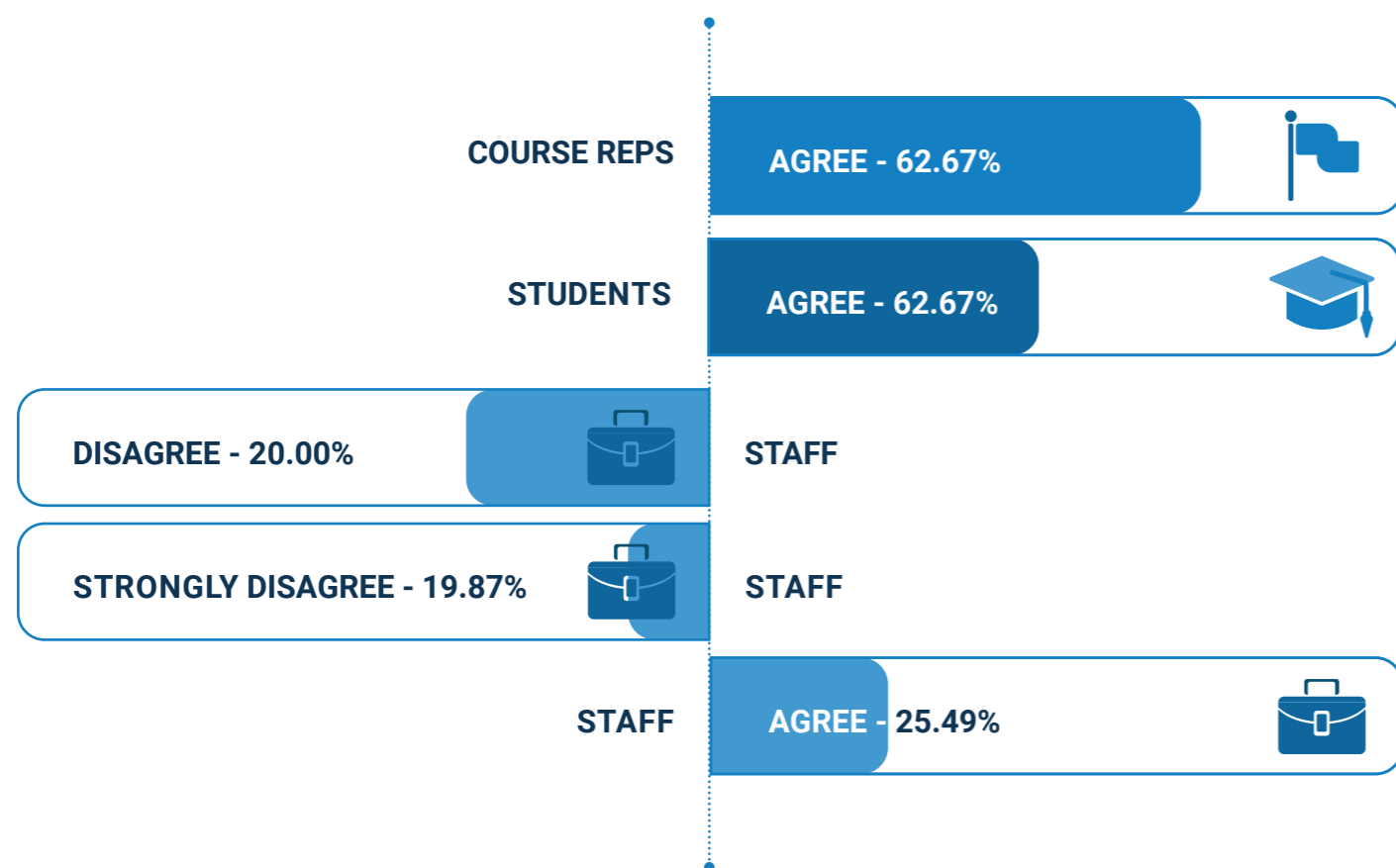


Diagram 6: Course Committees would be improved by the introduction of student chairing. (All)

All respondents were asked whether they believe course committees would be improved by the introduction of student chairing. This is already the case for other institutions and committees across UAL, for example, Arts SU sabbatical officers co-chair UAL's Education Enhancement Committee (EEC), and Arts SU sabbatical officers chair Student and Dean Forums across the university.

While course reps and students are sympathetic to the idea of students chairing course committees (with 62.67% of course rep respondents agreeing with the statement), **staff respondents expressed a greater degree of scepticism.**

Over a third of staff respondents (35.29%) disagreed with the statement, with a further 11.76% strongly disagreeing. It should however be noted that over a quarter of staff respondents (25.49%) agreed with the idea.

Question: Course Committees enable feedback and achieve positive change. (All)



	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Strongly Agree (1)	25.00	37.33	6.57	18.94
Agree (2)	42.31	54.67	53.28	51.52
Disagree (3)	19.23	6.67	7.30	9.47
Strongly Disagree (4)	5.77	1.33	1.46	2.27
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	7.69		31.39	17.80
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 15: Course Committees would be improved by the introduction of student chairing. (All)

Staff, course reps and students broadly agree that course committees enable feedback and achieve positive change. Only 6.67% of course reps and 7.30% of students disagree with the statement. However, just under a fifth of staff (19.23%) disagreed with the statement. These respondents were provided an opportunity to explain their answer in the next question.

The high proportion of students responding not applicable or unsure to this question (31.39%) could point to an increased need to raise awareness around the work of course committees. Staff and course reps do much good work in course committees, but this is diminished if students are not aware of this work.



Question: Please explain your answer to the previous question. (All)

Respondents who disagreed that course committees enabled feedback and positive change were provided with an opportunity to explain their answer.

Staff provided a range of examples to justify their response, including lack of engagement from course reps, the limited time provided to course committees to make meaningful change, and the lack of power course teams have to make change:



“Course committee meetings are strictly limited in time by PAMs with little space for in-depth discussion.”

- CCW Camberwell Course Leader

“It’s a good idea to have course reps but the students don’t seem very engaged with the concept. At our last meeting, we had almost 100% staff attendance and an actual 0% of student attendance.”

- LCF Lecturer

“There is a good reporting mechanism but the ‘course’ management have limited scope to act.”

- LCC Reader

“We are all obliged to do these meetings. I recognise the value, but it feels more like we are ticking boxes and writing forms and reports that we have to summarise for the committee, rather than making authentic space for students. There isn’t time or encouragement for them [to] talk. We are all busy and these are all processed speedily. Which is fine, but it isn’t a space where students want to speak out, especially as they don’t know the other members of staff.”

LCF Course Leader

STUDENT AND DEAN FORUMS

The fifth topic respondents were asked to provide their views on related to Student and Dean Forums. As has previously been mentioned, Student and Dean Forums are an opportunity to bring course reps and their Dean of School together to discuss issues affecting their course.

These meetings are chaired by an Arts SU sabbatical officer and facilitated by Arts SU’s Representation and Democracy Team.

Question: Student & Dean Forums were at a convenient time for me to attend. (Course reps)

	%
Strongly Agree (1)	13.51
Agree (2)	45.95
Disagree (3)	36.49
Strongly Disagree (4)	4.05
Median Response	2

Table 16: Student & Dean Forums were at a convenient time for me to attend. (Course reps)

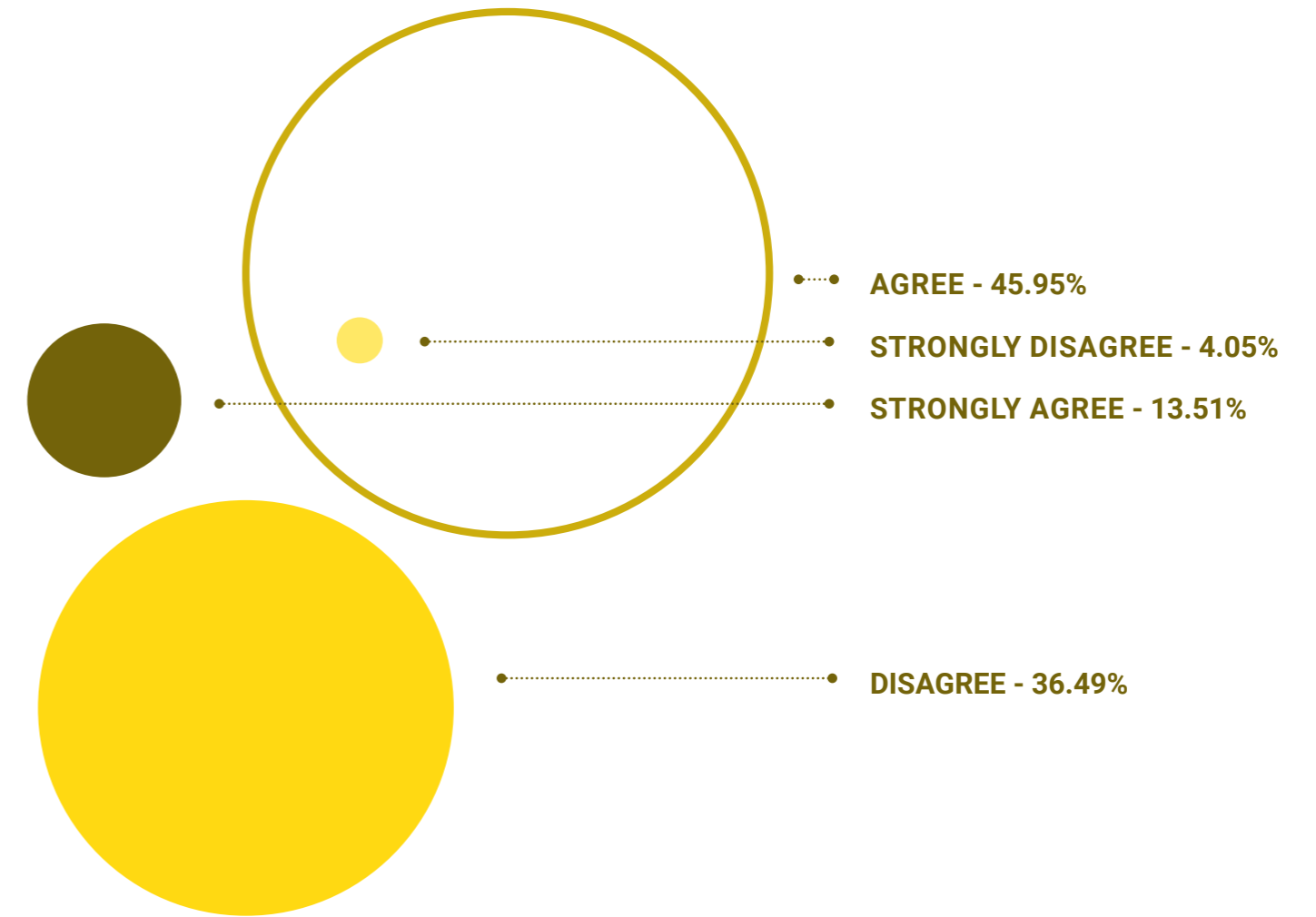


Diagram 7: Student & Dean Forums were at a convenient time for me to attend. (Course reps)

In the main, **course reps felt that Student and Dean Forums are held at a time convenient for them**, with almost half (45.95%) of respondents agreeing with the statement, and a further 13.51% strongly agreeing.

However, over a third of respondents (36.49%) disagreed that Student and Dean Forums had not been held at a convenient time. Much like with course committees, course rep time is especially valuable as they are unpaid volunteers juggling their role commitments with their studies. More must be done to ensure all reps feel these meetings are held at a time that suits their needs.

Question: The agendas of Student & Dean Forums reflected what students wanted me to raise (Course reps)

	%
Strongly Agree (1)	13.51
Agree (2)	70.27
Disagree (3)	14.86
Strongly Disagree (4)	1.35
Median Response	2

Table 17 (right)
Diagram 8
(below): The agendas of Student & Dean Forums reflected what students wanted me to raise (Course reps)

An overwhelming majority of course reps believe that the agendas of Student and Dean Forums reflected what students wanted them to raise (70.27% agreed, while 13.51% strongly agreed).



This is demonstrative that the topics covered at Student and Dean Forums, which are often themed around particularly salient issues concerning student life (such as the cost of living or safe space crits), are reflective of student priorities.

Forums often also provide an opportunity for course reps to freely raise feedback wider than their course of study, while this often is in friction with the purpose of the forums it would appear to provide huge value.

Question: Student & Dean Forums enable feedback and achieve positive change. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	9.80	22.97	3.73	10.42
Agree (2)	47.06	56.76	43.28	47.88
Disagree (3)	17.65	18.92	11.19	14.67
Strongly Disagree (4)	1.96	1.35	1.49	1.54
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	23.53		40.30	25.48
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 18: Student & Dean Forums enable feedback and achieve positive change. (All)

Much like course committees, all groups of respondents broadly believe that Student and Dean Forums enable feedback and achieve positive change.

Fewer staff respondents disagree with this statement than on the topic of course committees, suggesting that staff may see Student and Dean Forums as a more effective form of student representation mechanism. This could be due to the increased powers available to a Dean of School when drawing up actions, as opposed to those powers provided to a course team.

The very high proportion of students responding 'not applicable or unsure' to this statement (40.30%) however suggests that more work needs to be done to raise the profile of these meetings amongst the wider student population.

Question: The minutes from Student & Dean Forums are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	7.69	16.22	2.24	7.31
Agree (2)	23.08	62.16	19.40	32.31
Disagree (3)	34.62	20.27	19.40	22.69
Strongly Disagree (4)	13.46	1.35	14.18	10.38
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	21.15		44.78	27.31
Median Response	3	2	0	

Table 19: The minutes from Student & Dean Forums are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed. (All)

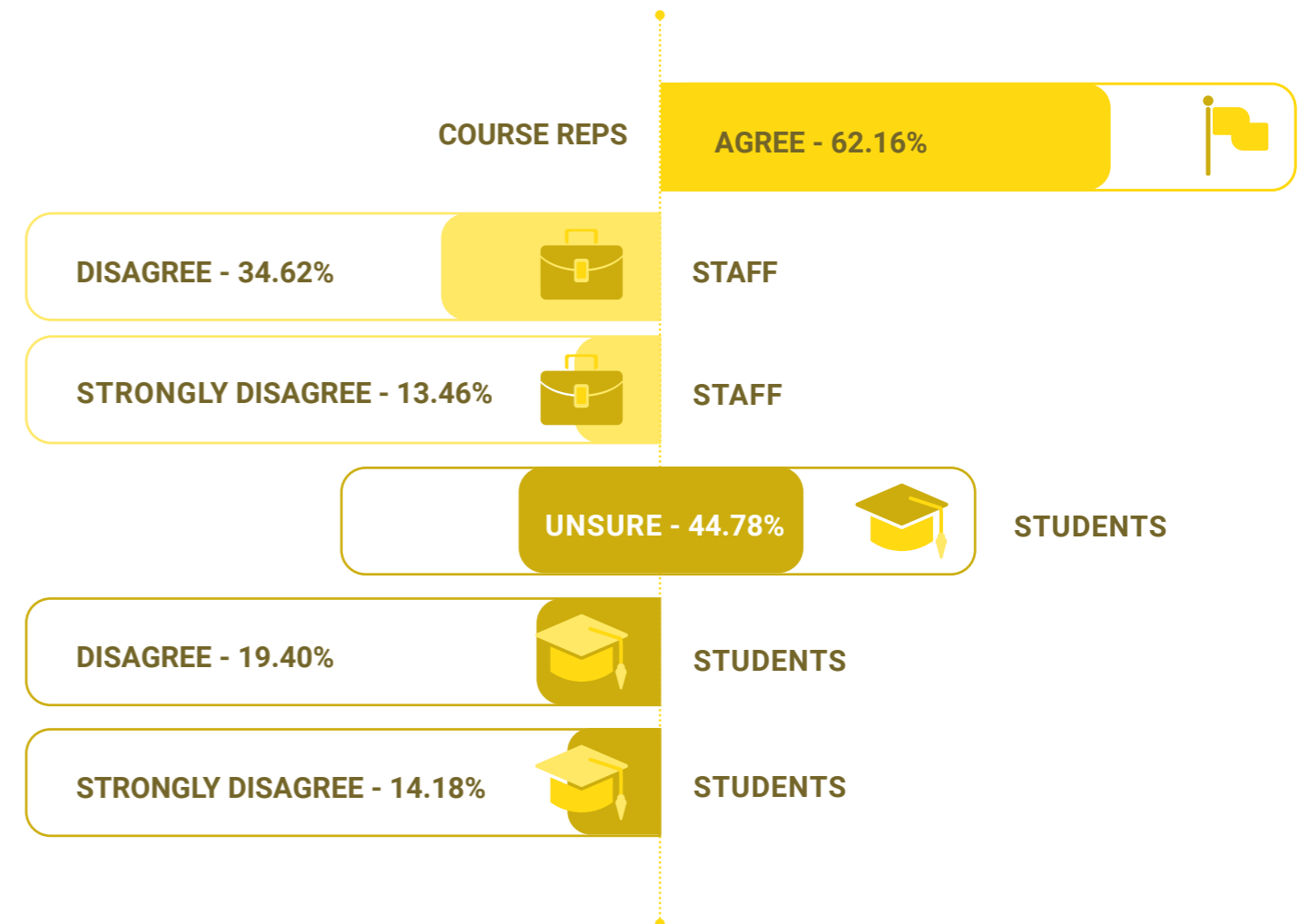


Diagram 9: The minutes from Student & Dean Forums are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed. (All)

While course reps overwhelmingly feel that the minutes from Student and Dean Forums are easily accessible and clearly show the actions agreed, this is not the case for staff respondents or student respondents.

Over a third of staff respondents (34.62%) disagree with the statement, while a further 13.46% strongly disagree. A very significant minority of student respondents are unsure (44.78%), while almost a fifth (19.40%) disagree and a further 14.18% strongly disagree.

COMMUNICATION & WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

The sixth topic of enquiry relates to communication between course reps, staff and students outside of committee meetings, as well as the professionalism of course reps in conducting their role.

Question: I have an ongoing dialogue about student feedback with course reps outside of Course Committees **(Staff)**

I listen to, collect and raise student feedback outside of Course Committees and Student & Dean Forums **(Course reps)**

My course rep(s) asks for student feedback outside of Course Committees **(Students)**

.....
Effective communication between staff, students and course reps outside of Course Committees



Table 20: Effective communication between staff, students and course reps outside of Course Committees

	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Strongly Agree (1)	36.00	52.05	14.93	29.57
Agree (2)	34.00	43.84	33.58	36.58
Disagree (3)	2.00	4.11	23.13	13.62
Strongly Disagree (4)	4.00	0.00	10.45	6.23
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	24.00		17.91	14.01
Median Response	2	1	2	

Staff assert that they have an ongoing dialogue with their course reps outside of committee meetings. Course reps strongly believe they listen to, collect and raise student feedback outside of course committees and Student and Dean Forums (with a median score of 1).

Overall student respondents believe that course reps ask for their feedback outside of course committees, however just under a quarter of respondents (23.13%) disagree with the statement.

Question: I would like a way to be able to email my course peers directly (Course reps) or I would like a way to be able to email my course reps directly (Students)

	%	
	Staff	Course Reps
Yes	73.97	75.37
No	26.03	24.63

Table 21: I would like a way to be able to email my course peers / course reps directly

Both students and course reps would like a means through which to email each other. As has been addressed in the first section of this report, 3.27% of student respondents reported being unable to raise feedback as they did not know how to contact their course rep.

Enabling direct email communication between these two groups may address this issue.

Question: I always give course reps the opportunity to collect student feedback in taught sessions. (Staff)

Staff always give me the opportunity to collect student feedback in taught sessions. (Course reps)

Course rep(s) are given the opportunity to collect my feedback in taught sessions. (Students)

Course reps are given opportunity to collect student feedback in taught sessions

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	18.00	33.43	17.91	22.09
Agree (2)	38.00	33.78	26.87	31.01
Disagree (3)	18.00	32.43	22.39	24.42
Strongly Disagree (4)	6.00	1.35	14.18	8.91
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	20.00		18.66	13.57
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 22: Course reps are given opportunity to collect student feedback in taught sessions

While many respondents report course reps are given opportunities within taught sessions to collect student feedback, there are significant minorities that disagree. Almost a third of course rep respondents (32.43%) disagree with this statement, as do over a fifth of student respondents (22.39%). 18% of staff respondents similarly disagree with the statement.

As course reps are student volunteers who are unpaid, ensuring they are given ample time to consult with their peers at times that is convenient for course reps and students is very important. Taught sessions provide an ample opportunity for visibility of the role and face-to-face feedback, which strengthens the feedback loop overall. Staff must ensure that course reps are given time, with discretion and sensitivity, to collect or signpost the feedback of their peers in taught sessions.

Question: Course rep(s) give student feedback constructively (Staff) or I always give student feedback constructively (Course reps) or Course rep(s) collect student feedback constructively (Students)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	28.00	40.54	17.16	25.97
Agree (2)	50.00	56.76	43.28	48.45
Disagree (3)	4.00	2.70	12.69	8.14
Strongly Disagree (4)	2.00	0.00	4.48	2.71
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	16.00		22.39	14.73
Median Response	2	2	2	

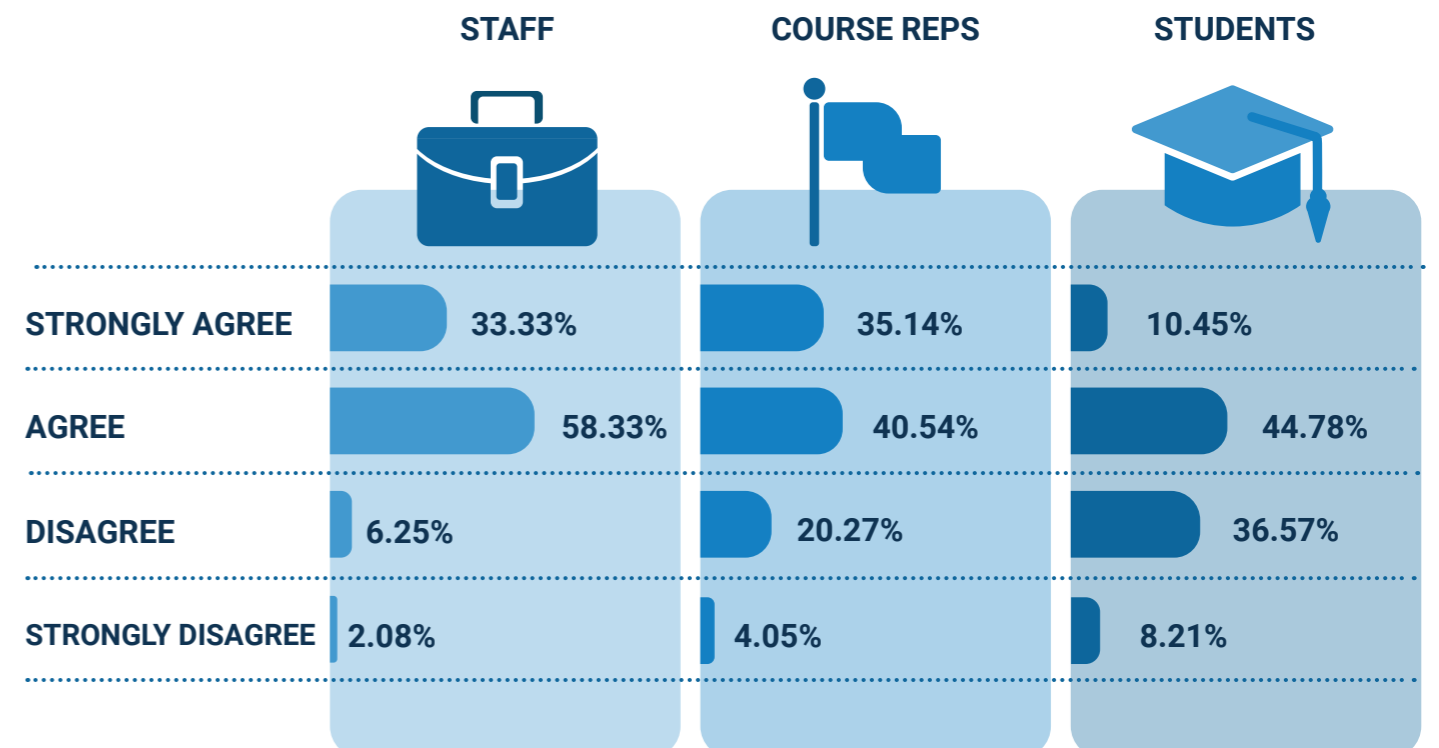
Table 23: Course reps collect and give student feedback constructively

All groups agree that course reps collect and give student feedback constructively.

Question: I inform students about the outcome of their feedback (Staff) or Staff inform me about the outcome of my feedback (Course reps and Students)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	33.33	35.14	10.45	21.88
Agree (2)	58.33	40.54	44.78	46.09
Disagree (3)	6.25	20.27	36.57	26.17
Strongly Disagree (4)	2.08	4.05	8.21	5.86
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 24 (right) & Diagram 10 (below): Staff inform course reps and students about the outcome of their feedback



While staff feel that they inform students about the outcomes of their feedback, significant minorities of course reps and students disagree. A fifth of course reps (20.27%) and over a third (36.57%) of student respondents disagree that staff inform course reps and students about the outcomes of their feedback.

Closing the feedback loop is vital to develop trust that student feedback is taken seriously; if students are asked for their opinions but not provided with the outcomes of this feedback, this breeds cynicism in the feedback process and creates disillusionment amongst students.

STUDENTS' UNION SUPPORT AND PROCESSES

The seventh topic respondents were asked their views on was the level of support the Students' Union provides in relation to the course rep role, as well as their awareness of how to access support if an issue they have raised is not addressed.

Question: I know how to access support from the Students' Union in relation to the course rep role. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	1.96	18.92	9.77	10.85
Agree (2)	25.49	48.65	27.82	33.33
Disagree (3)	41.18	21.62	29.32	29.46
Strongly Disagree (4)	17.65	4.05	8.27	8.91
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	13.73	6.76	24.81	17.44
Median Response	3	2	3	

Table 25: I know how to access support from the Students' Union in relation to the course rep role. (All)

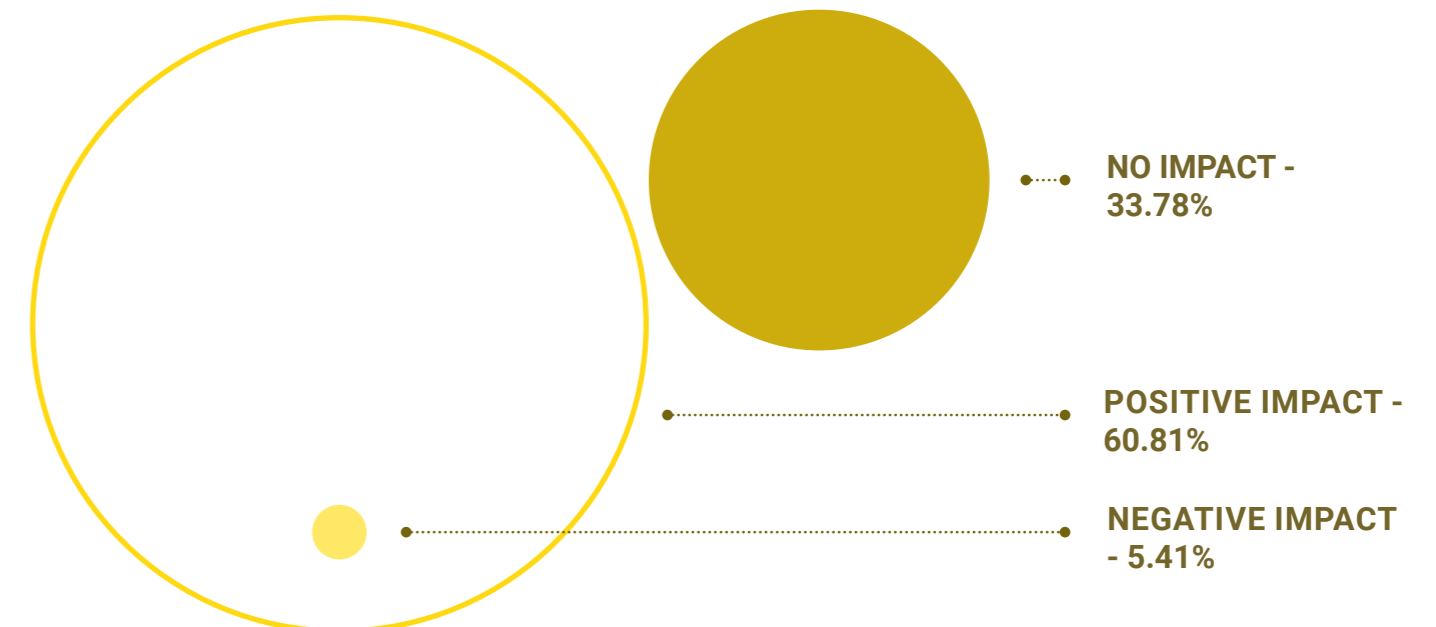
Course reps and students express an understanding of how to access support from the Students' Union in relation to the course rep role. Studying the median responses, both course reps and students show greater understanding (with a median score of 2). However, staff are largely uncertain about how to access support from the Students' Union; of staff respondents disagreed with the statement.

More must be done to foster relations between UAL staff and the relevant team within the Students' Union, to ensure that support is available on both sides in the effective facilitation of the course rep system. The course rep system is a partnership between UAL and Arts SU, and as such both stakeholders must be clear on how to best support each other.

Question: Overall, how has being a course rep impacted your wellbeing? (Course reps)

	%
It has had a positive impact on wellbeing.	60.81
It has had no impact on my wellbeing.	33.78
It has had a negative impact on my wellbeing.	5.41

Table 26 & Diagram 11 (below): Overall, how has being a course rep impacted your wellbeing? (Course reps)



The great majority of course rep respondents believe that being a course rep has either positively impacted on their wellbeing (60.81%) or had no impact on their wellbeing (33.78%).

However, a small minority of respondents (5.41%) believe it has had a negative impact on their wellbeing. These respondents were provided with the opportunity to explain their answer in the next question.

Question: Overall, how has being a course rep impacted your wellbeing? (Course reps)



Course rep respondents who believed their time as a course rep has **negatively impacted** on their wellbeing were provided with an opportunity to explain their answer.



The examples below provide impact into the negative experiences course reps have had that have impacted on their wellbeing:

"Students raise issues but nothing gets [done] or takes so long that it becomes ineffective. This is very frustrating and seems pointless."

- CCW Camberwell course rep

"It takes over my day to day work load and I become a sort of a councillor to provide support for the class. Whereas in a MA course, many members should be able to/ be proactive/ be encouraged/ to raise their concerns and feedback themselves."

- CSM course rep

"It is stressful trying to make changes and taking everything upon yourself when you don't feel listened to."

- CCW Chelsea course rep

These examples provide insights that can be used to ensure more robust support is put in place to support course reps' wellbeing. It also highlights the potentially cynicism in the feedback process which can develop when the feedback loop is not closed.

Question: Are you aware of the School Rep role this year? (All)



	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Yes, I am aware of the role and have had contact with them. (1)	1.96	5.41	4.51	45.74
Yes, I am aware of the role. (2)	31.37	68.92	38.35	4.26
No, I have never heard of this role. (3)	66.67	25.68	57.14	50.00
Mode Response	3	2	3	

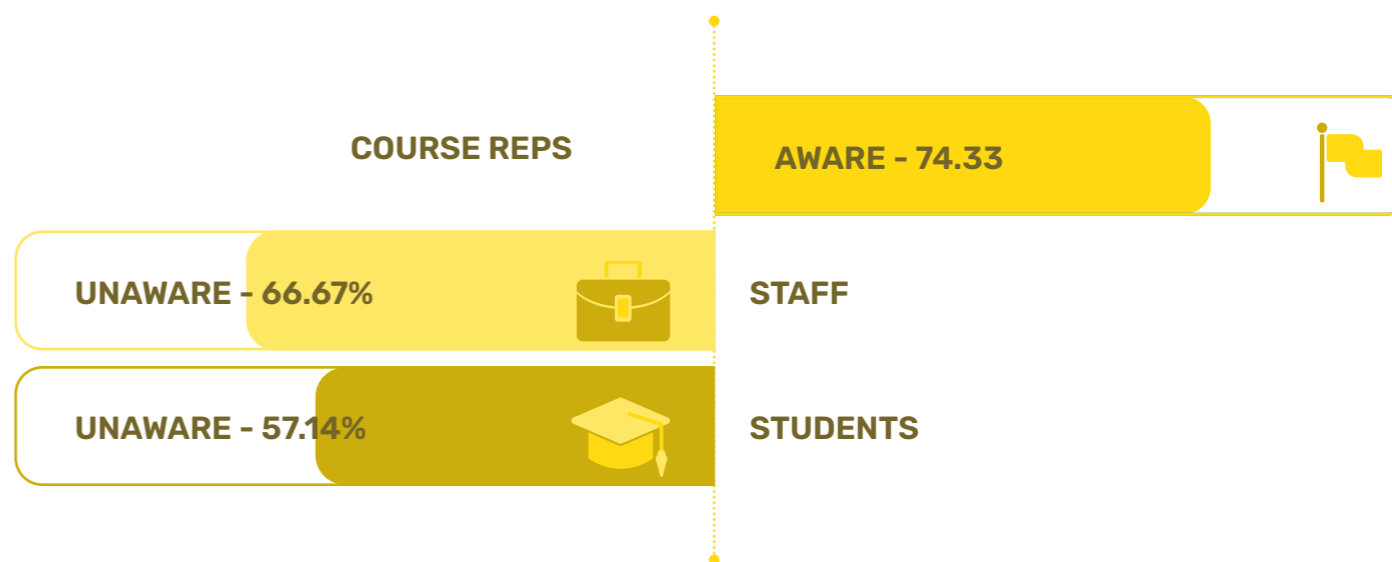


Table 27 (above) & Diagram 12 (above): Are you aware of the School Rep role this year? (All)

In the academic year 2022/23, Arts SU introduced 24 volunteer School Rep roles to support the academic experience of students at school and department level. **School Reps are student volunteers elected by their peers to work with staff and students to improve the academic experience of students at the school level.** There are two School Reps per school/department at each of UAL's colleges.

While course reps reported being aware of the School rep role (with of course reps having heard of the role or had contact with them), **knowledge of this role was far lower amongst staff and students**. Well over half of student respondents (57.14%) reported never having heard of this role, while over two thirds of staff respondents (66.67%) similarly had not heard of this role before. While positive as the direct representatives of course reps. This is evidence that **more work must be done to raise the profile of School Reps** outside the already-involved course reps.

Question: If feedback raised by students isn't acted upon, I would take it to... (All)

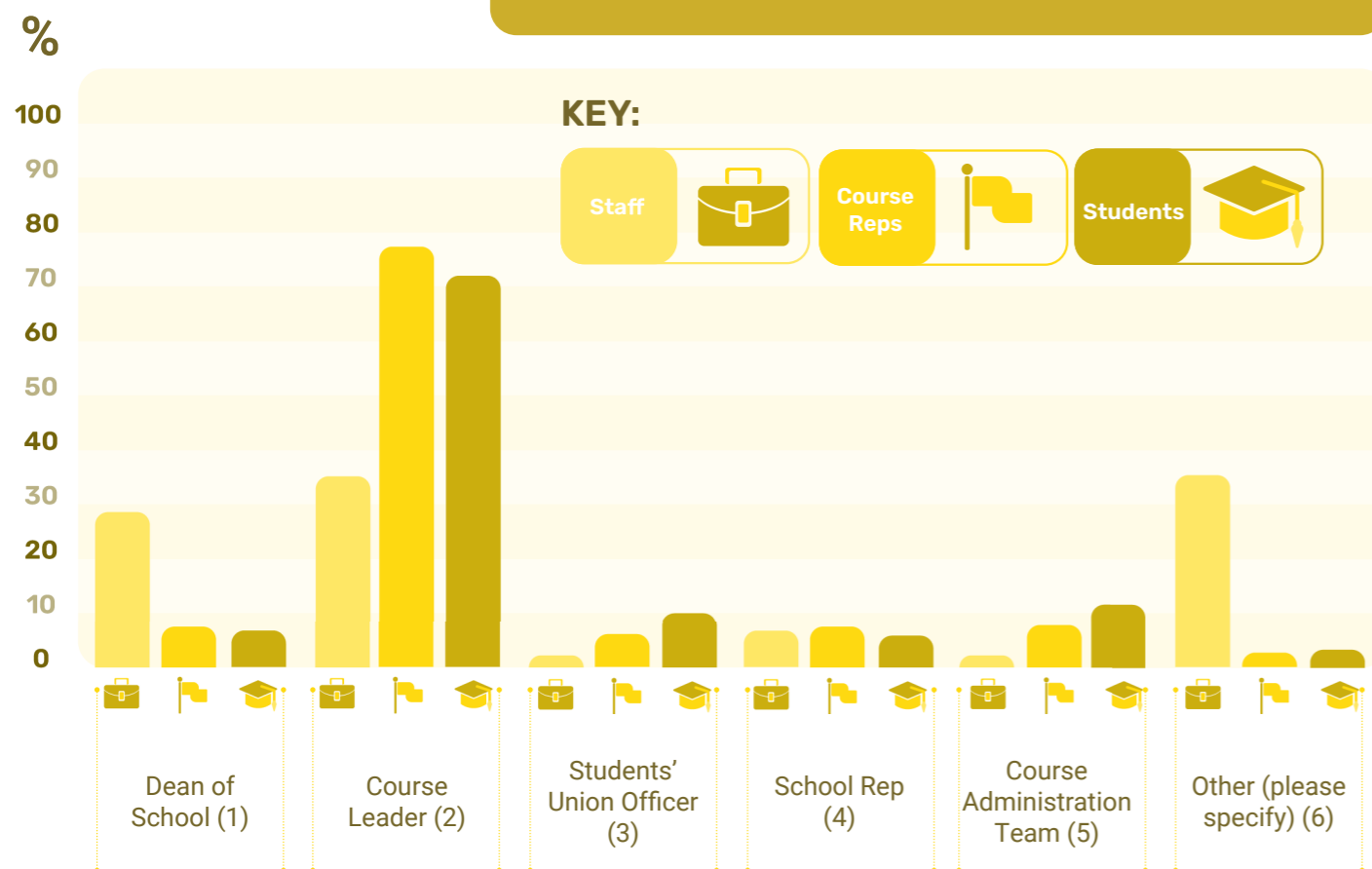


Diagram 13: If feedback raised by students isn't acted upon, I would take it to... (All)

Respondents were asked who they would contact if feedback raised by students isn't acted upon. **Both course reps and students overwhelmingly believe the course leader to be the best role to contact in seeking support with this issue.** This aligns with previous similar research by the union that the course team is often the first and closest point of contact with which they identify in times of need.

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Dean of School (1)	26.00	6.76	6.02	10.12
Course Leader (2)	32.00	70.27	65.41	60.31
Students' Union Officer (3)	2.00	5.41	9.77	7.00
School Rep (4)	6.00	6.76	5.26	5.84
Course Administration Team (5)	2.00	8.11	10.53	8.17
Other (please specify) (6)	32.00	2.70	3.01	8.56
Median Response	2 & 6	2	2	

Table 28: If feedback raised by students isn't acted upon, I would take it to... (All)

Staff respondents however were split, between the course leader, and other relevant members of staff (responding 'other'). The recurring response provided by staff respondents in the 'other' section was "Programme Director", with some staff respondents acknowledging that since they are themselves the course leader, the appropriate escalation for them would be to the Programme Director. The linear nature of line management is most likely an indication for this result amongst staff.

Question: The best person to report concerns about a fellow course rep to is... (All)



	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Dean of School (1)	2.04	0.00	3.76	2.34
Course Leader (2)	53.06	79.73	75.94	72.66
SU Staff (3)	10.20	6.76	12.03	10.16
SU Officer (4)	8.16	9.46	6.77	7.81
Other (Please Specify) (5)	26.53	4.05	1.50	7.03
Median Response	2	2	2	

Table 29: All feedback raised by students isn't acted upon, I would take it to... (All)

Across all sections, all groups identified **the course leader as the most appropriate person to contact** if they needed to report concerns about a course rep. It indicates a lack of knowledge of the role of union staff in supporting course reps and the direct points of contact which are held by team members.

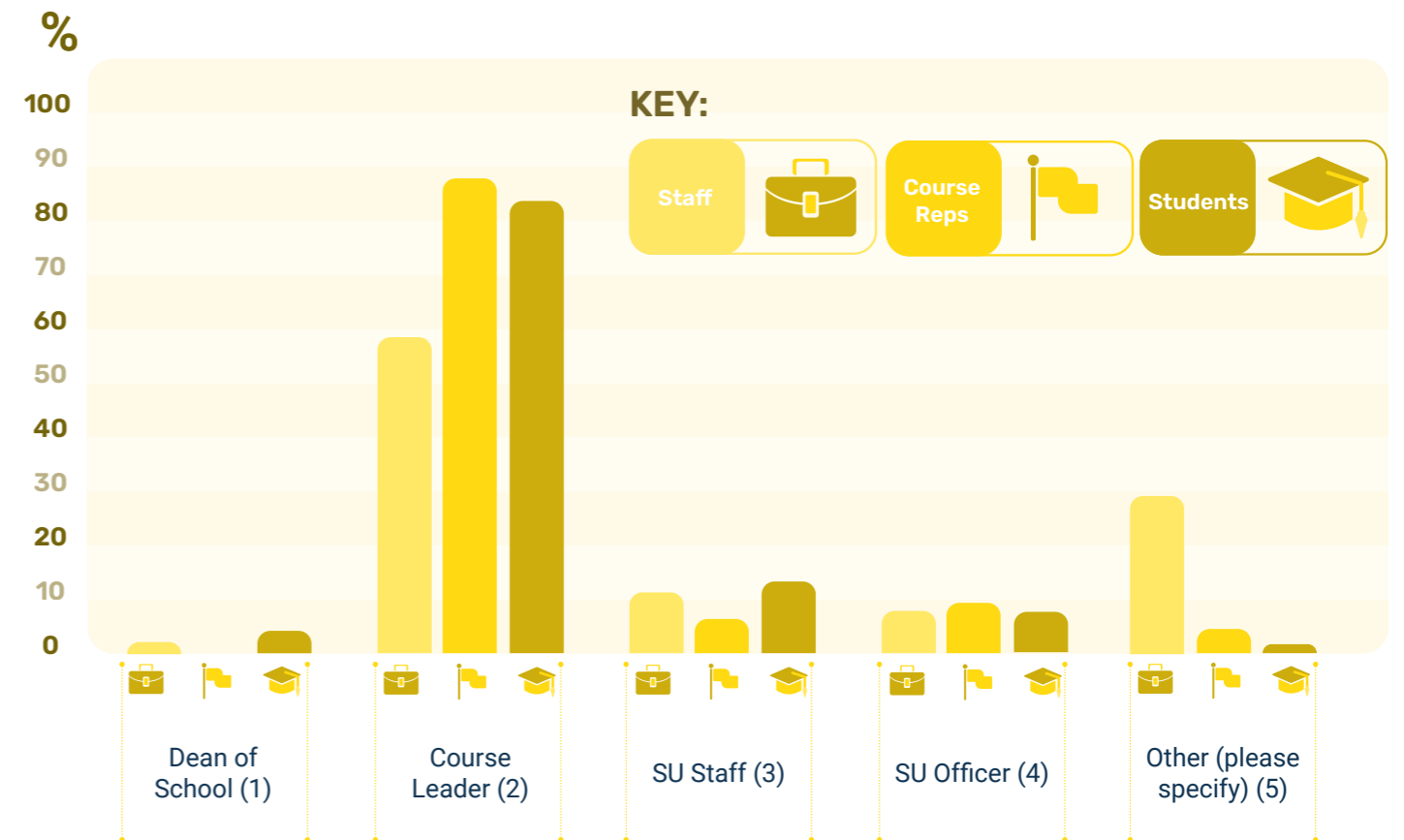


Diagram 14: The best person to report concerns about a fellow course rep to is... (All)

VALUE, IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF COURSE REPS

The final section of this research asked respondents about the value staff and students have for course reps, and the positive impact they have on academic life at UAL.

Throughout this research project, staff and students have emphasised the vital role course reps play in helping the university to make improvements. They have also highlighted that course reps are an essential tool in facilitating student feedback, and an outlet for student sentiment and feeling about their academic experience. This section therefore seeks to capture this data in a definitive way.

Question: Course rep(s) regularly seek out and are encouraged to relay the views and experiences on the course (Staff and Students) or I regularly seek out and am encouraged to relay the views and experiences of students on my course (Course reps)



Table 30: Course reps regularly seek out and are encouraged to relay the views and experiences of students on their course

	%			AVERAGE
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	
Strongly Agree (1)	30.00	47.30	14.39	26.95
Agree (2)	44.00	47.30	53.03	49.61
Disagree (3)	10.00	4.05	24.24	45.63
Strongly Disagree (4)	6.00	1.35	8.33	5.86
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	10.00			1.95
Median Response	2	2	2	

All groups largely believe that course reps regularly seek out and are encouraged to relay the views and experiences of students on their course. It should however be noted that just under a quarter (24.24%) of student respondents disagree with this statement.

As has been articulated elsewhere in this research report, more can be done to ensure that course reps are responsive to the needs of all students, and actively given the support by staff to facilitate the collection of these views.

Question: I actively act upon the views of students on my course. (Staff) or The views of students on my course are actively sought after by staff (Course reps and Students)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	44.00	37.84	42.78	26.07
Agree (2)	44.00	51.35	46.62	47.47
Disagree (3)	0.00	10.81	18.80	12.84
Strongly Disagree (4)	0.00	0.00	6.02	3.11
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	12.00		15.79	10.51
Median Response	1 & 2	2	2	

Table 31: The views of students on my course are actively sought after by staff

Like above, all groups broadly believe that staff actively seek out the views of their students. This is a positive affirmation that the feedback mechanisms in place across UAL are supported by staff.

Question: I value the role of course rep(s) (Staff and Students) or Staff value the role of course rep(s) (Course reps)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	66.00	56.76	27.82	43.58
Agree (2)	28.00	40.54	49.62	42.80
Disagree (3)	0.00	2.70	7.52	4.67
Strongly Disagree (4)	0.00	0.00	6.02	3.11
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	6.00		9.02	5.84
Median Response	1	1	2	

Table 32 & Diagram 15 (below): Staff and students value the role of course reps

Staff and course reps strongly agree that they value the role of the course rep (with both scoring a median score of 1) and similarly students are positive about the value they place in course reps, with almost half (49.62%) of respondents agreeing with the statement, and over a quarter (27.82%) strongly agreeing.



Question: Feedback raised by course reps has contributed to academic decisions made about my course. (All)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	58.00	41.89	15.04	31.13
Agree (2)	34.00	48.65	44.36	43.58
Disagree (3)	0.00	8.11	31.58	18.68
Strongly Disagree (4)	2.00	1.35	9.02	5.45
Not Applicable / Unsure (0)	6.00			1.17
Median Response	1	2	2	

Table 33: Feedback raised by course reps has contributed to academic decisions made about my course. (All)

Staff strongly agree that feedback raised by course reps has contributed to academic decisions about their course, while course reps and students broadly agree. Although the majority of student respondents believe this to be the case, just under a third (31.58%) of respondents disagree with this statement.

This could be indication that when the 'unsure' option is removed, some students are more inclined to disagree that they feel the impact of course reps' actions in academic decisions than agree. **It further reiterates points about the importance of closing the feedback loop and cynicism which can develop where this does not occur.**

Question: I would encourage any student to put themselves forward for the role of course rep next year (Staff) or I would put myself forward for the role of course rep again next year or encourage other students to do so (Course reps and Students)

	%			
	Staff	Course Reps	Students	AVERAGE
Strongly Agree (1)	64.00	54.05	13.64	35.16
Agree (2)	28.00	36.49	31.82	32.42
Disagree (3)	2.00	6.76	16.67	10.94
Strongly Disagree (4)	0.00	2.70	12.88	7.42
Not Applicable*	6.00		25.00	14.06
Median Response	1	1	2	

Table 34: I would encourage any student to put themselves forward for the role of course rep next year

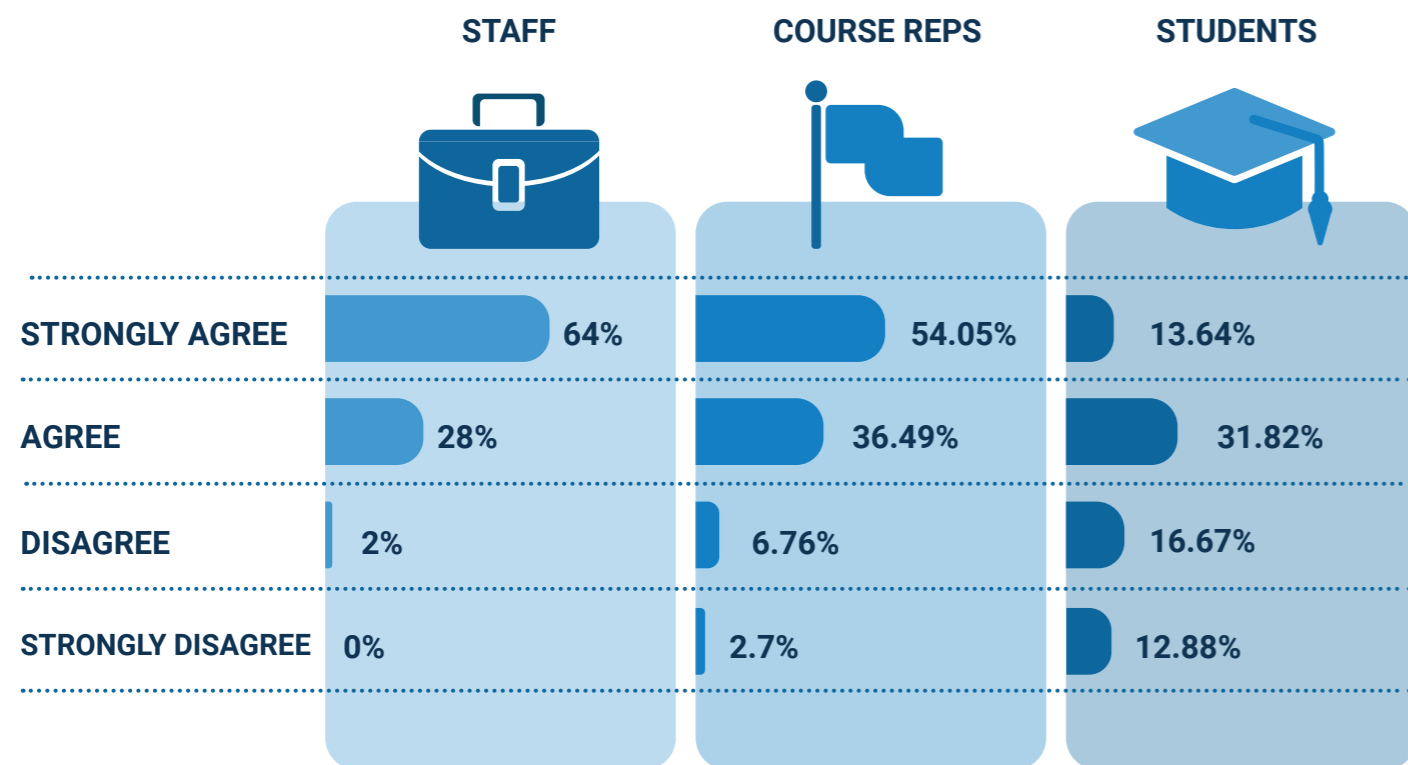


Diagram 16: I would encourage any student to put themselves forward for the role of course rep next year

Staff respondents would overwhelmingly recommend any student put themselves forward to become a course rep, with only a very small minority (2%) disagreeing with this statement.

When asked if they would put themselves forward for the role of course rep again next year, or encourage others to do so, current course reps would overwhelmingly do so. Over half of respondents strongly agree (54.05%), while over a third (36.49%) agree.

This is a positive endorsement of the experience of current course reps, with very few course reps experiencing a negative time in the role.

Amongst students, a plurality would either put themselves forward to become a course rep or encourage others to do so, with 31.82% of respondents agreeing with the statement, and a further 13.64% of respondents strongly agreeing.

REFLECTION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this report, we have sought to accurately reflect the views and perceptions of students with student representation structures at UAL. We have sought to recognise the combined partnership that is required for effective conversations on feedback, while also providing qualitative context from those with experiences. We acknowledge there is no perfect structure that can meet the needs of all stakeholders equally and therefore welcome discussion and collaboration between Arts SU and UAL to make a positive impact for the benefit of all involved.

Through our research we propose several recommended interventions, as well as points for reflection for UAL, Arts SU and students in how we respond to the feedback presented. We emphasise these lists are not definitive or exhaustive but should act as a starting point for ongoing work in this important area.

Reflection Points

What is the best way to recruit course representatives?
How do we ensure roles are accessible and hold legitimacy?
How do we ensure the process by which we use enhances rather than harms both these principles?

How do we improve closing of the feedback loop and ensure cut-through in our messaging?

How can we better facilitate feedback that falls outside of the course and its direct delivery?

How do we better facilitate and ensure the impact of course committees are widely seen by students, staff and course reps?

Recommendations

Develop a set of agreed working and communication principles between Arts SU, Colleges and the UAL Comms team for the promotion and impact of the course rep role throughout the year to all stakeholders:

Overall, there is good understanding of the course rep role, a broad consensus of opportunity for students to put themselves forward for the role. However repeated comments highlight a lack of understanding with the processes by which support this amongst staff, students and some course reps. Closer collaboration between Arts SU, Colleges and UAL Comms could resolve deficiencies in existing understanding and working practices with messaging that already likely exists or can be emphasised.

This could include agreed principles in taught sessions between course reps and their cohort throughout the year to both introduce the role as well as collect feedback of their peers sensitively. More broadly developing a coordinated and shared calendar of key messages.

Strengthen engagement and understanding of course rep training:

While many respondents felt that course reps were trained to fulfil their role effectively almost a third disagreed or were unsure. Many of the comments highlighted little or no understanding of the training provided or even if their reps had engaged with this. Arts SU should therefore work to increase understanding of the training provided through resources and open sessions for staff. It should also develop ways to share engagement with training under clear principles of both University and Arts SU staff supporting unengaged reps to attend.

Strengthen understanding of the purpose, outcomes and impact of Student and Dean Forums:

Its clear from the feedback on Student and Dean Forums that this opportunity for course reps to meet with School Deans is one of the most valuable ways in which the institution engages with students. A majority of course reps agreed that the agendas of these often-reflected what students wanted them to raise and further that broadly staff and course reps believe they enable feedback and achieve positive change albeit with almost half of students feeling unsure or unable to comment.

More should be done to raise the profile of these meetings to a wider audience including students and staff other than School Deans. Arts SU working with Colleges and the UAL Comms Team should develop messaging which support the delivery, outcomes and impact of Student and Dean Forums; ideas include, highlighting minutes once published via blogs and social media as well as circulating these to both course reps and course teams.

Devise a UAL-wide approach to the production and open-access of Course Committee minutes:

Staff and course reps were broadly agreed that course committee minutes were easily and accessible and clearly show the actions agreed at the meeting. However almost half of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this. This chimes with feedback raise often by various stakeholders and Arts SU's own experience of attempting to gain access to these in order to be better able to close the feedback loop and increase transparency of course reps' contribution to academic decisions about student's course.

It is not the minutes themselves which is most crucial but how they can be used by staff and course reps to disseminate timely feedback and enable in further discussion on feedback.

Devise a UAL-wide working model for the introduction of student chairing of Course Committees:

While there is broad agreement that course committees enabled feedback and achieve positive change, one of the more direct improvements captured is the introduction of student chairing with over three-quarters of course reps and over half of students responding agreeing or strong agreeing with this. Staff are noticeably more sceptical of any proposal but do recognise in the effectiveness of course committees a need to improve engagement amongst course reps.

It is important that with any model of student chairing, those students who step up to the role are trained, supported and appropriately remunerated for the commitment that would be require. Arts SU already has student approved policy in place that all course reps should be remunerated for their contributions.

Review UAL's approach to feedback raised at course committees that typically sits outside of the course and its delivery:

There are repeated examples throughout the report of feedback raised both at and outside of course committees that is beyond that of the course and its delivery. Further that as spaces to discuss these such committees can lack the time or power to impact meaningful change resulting in much of this feedback being further raised in annual surveys. This lag between the raising of feedback and ability to instil change has a noticeable impact on the effectiveness of UALs ability to close the feedback loop.

It is important therefore to establish clear principles and routes for dealing with such feedback and to consider how we can ensure it reaches the most relevant and actionable point so that it can be responded to as soon as reasonably possible. There may be an opportunity to link these discussions to the ongoing Student Enquiries project that is already underway.

Introduce a UAL-wide system for course reps and students to be able to communicate with each other:

All groups highlighted the importance of closing the feedback group and staff and students particularly raised concerns with an ability to identify who their course rep was and how to reach out to them. When considering communication almost three quarters of course reps and students indicated that they would like a direct way to be able to communicate each other with ease. Many institutions have already worked in partnership with their Students' Union to provide both students and course reps with tools to enable easier communication.

This can include course-based mailing lists for course reps (which may already exist) with provisions put in place to ensure fair and timely use as well as a 'find my rep' functions online which enable students to search for who their course rep is and how to contact them with ease.

Review UAL's Annual Course Monitoring, Enhancement Plan and/or External Examiners processes to consider not just how feedback from students has been considered but how its outcomes has subsequently been shared back to students:

Currently the institution has numerous processes which considers academic quality and enhancement of its courses, the majority of which uses a range of metrics and open text comments including a section on how student feedback has been used and gathered. These do not currently stipulate by what methods has feedback been communicated back to students and the effectiveness of these methods. This information could be vital in getting a deeper understanding practice when it comes to effectively closing the feedback loop for our students which is repeatedly highlighted throughout the report by both course reps and students alike.

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ARTS SU POLICY AND RESEARCH

Arts SU is an independent charity who work to represent and support students at the University of the Arts London. This project was supported by the Arts SU Policy Team, who focus on producing high-quality research on academic and social issues that impact our members.

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2023

STUDENT VOICE AT UAL AND ARTS SU
CONVERSATIONS WITH STUDENTS REPORT