Student Engagement Guide: Setting up a Rep System

A rep system is where student representatives of classes, courses - or any other grouping of students that you decide on - come together to feed into the institutions quality assurance process as well as discussing positive changes that students would like to see happen.

Why should you do this

For the same reason that all decisions that are made purely on one perspective or view are likely to be decisions that are unsustainable, disadvantage groups of people and end up causing additional problems. When decision makers can make decisions with as much perspective as possible the decisions they make are more likely to be sustainable and solution focused.

In an education environment the people making decisions are almost always senior members of staff – by definition, these people are not experiencing the education that their institution delivers so there needs to be a mechanism for the student perspective to be understood by these decision makers. By regularly asking students about their experience, you can gain a good understanding of their perspective and can feed this into your decision making. The process also gives an insight into problems and issues that are affecting students, so you are able to fix them before they become bigger problems.

It is really important to have elections for all your reps (even if there is only one candidate). This is all about accountability and making sure students know who is representing them but also that the institution is taking it seriously. It will often be the first time a student has been asked to vote for anyone so it's really paramount that the process is taken seriously.

Key Partners

- Senior leadership team
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Academic Staff
- Students
- Learner Voice Practitioners Network
- NUS Charity

How to

- **Who to represent -** Decide on the cohorts you will elect your student reps from. A lot of this will depend on how your institution organises its cohorts so you could end up with class reps, course reps, or something else entirely.

- **How many reps?** You will need to consider how many reps each system will leave you with as your capacity to meet with all of them is an important factor. You will also need to consider who has responsibility for the actual delivery of these elections – and communicate clearly to those individuals the process they need to follow and the timeline for this process.

You will also need to create a way of holding the contact data of reps so you can communicate to them directly.

- **How often do you meet? -** You will need to decide on how often you are going to meet your reps, taking into consideration reps studying commitments as well as ensuring a regularity so as to have issues be raised and resolved quickly. You may to choose to have one meeting with all reps together or you may choose to have a number of meetings for each slot to keep numbers attending lower. This will depend of your capacity to deliver these meetings and the size of your institution.

- **What will the meetings look like -** Think about how you want to structure your rep meetings. You can choose to be very prescriptive and set questions you want to discuss at each meeting or, set no agenda at all and allow reps to talk about whatever they choose, or you can find a happy medium between the two with some space set aside for questions from the institution and some space for student led feedback.

- **When -** If you are going to be asking reps questions from your institution you will need to work out what those questions are and when you are going to ask them. For example - talking to reps about induction and registration at the end of their course isn't very useful just as talking to them about exams a week after they've started isn't very useful either.

- **Their how to -** Once you have elected reps it will be beneficial to provide them with training or a guide to being a rep. This should include some information about what they can expect from meetings and as many finalised advanced dates as you can give them.

- You're ready to start your first set of rep meetings!

Next steps – How to grow from here

- The Completing the Voice Loop guide (see resource) has advice on what to do with the information you gather through reps.
- There is no such thing as a perfect rep system – if you build in regular evolution of the system you use then you can make changes to the system when they are needed.
- Join the Learner Voice Practitioners Network to pick up best practice from other institutions

Useful Resources

- The Student Engagement Partnership resources

- Learner Voice Framework

- Wise Wales resources