



Academic Representation Staff Handbook 2025/26

**Engaging with and supporting our
Department Officers and Academic Reps**



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Key Contacts

Academic Representation Team



For queries regarding the delivery of Academic Representation across the University and within Faculties and Departments:

- Tom Clemo – *Academic Representation Lead*
- Tom.Clemo@exeterguild.com

Support for Academic Reps and Department Officers:

- Student staff – *Academic Representation Convenors (1 per Faculty)*
- representation@exeterguild.com

Student Voice Team

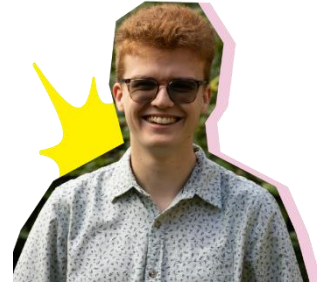
For other queries about student voice at Exeter:

- Student Voice team (general queries) – voice@exeterguild.com
- Student Change (campaigns and activism) – campaigns@exeterguild.com
- Communities (empowerment and belonging) – communities@exeterguild.com

Note that the “Student Voice” and “Student Change” teams at the Guild are different from the University team that is called “Student Voice and Change”, who offer support for departments to deliver student voice activity – studentexperience@exeter.ac.uk

Introduction from Exeter Students' Guild Education Officer

Hello, I'm Francis Steptoe and I am the Education Officer at Exeter Student's Guild for the 2025/26 academic year. In this role I attend various meetings relating to the quality of education provided here in Exeter, uplifting the voices of students at a strategic level. This gets key feedback into the places where it's needed, providing the University with vital input on their ongoing projects so that students not only feel supported in their studies, but happy too.



I'm very enthusiastic about the value of academic representation, having previously sat as both an academic rep and department officer. Through my time in these roles, I was able to support staff in balancing workload for students, improving the content of modules, and ensuring that their courses were as engaging as can be. Collaboration between students and staff can provide really creative solutions to challenges within our University, and with the Guild equipping Student Reps with more data than ever, we hope that you will be able to create meaningful change alongside our students in your departments.

Introduction from Vice President and DVC for Education and Student Experience



Hello, I'm Tim Quine, Vice President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) and Professor of Earth Surface Science in the Geography Department.

Fundamentally, my task is to ensure that education and the wider student experience at Exeter are the best they can be, pursuing excellence in the academic journey of our students and their success at University and beyond. This can only be achieved by colleagues working in partnership with Francis, our elected officers, and our Academic Reps and Officers to create an environment where students can discover, grow, and thrive together.

Partnership working is vital, because creating an environment for success relies on students and colleagues across the whole university, including the Guild, the Athletic Union, our academic departments, and student services including employability, wellbeing, study skills, digital, and hubs.

In the academic environment, we are focused on offering stimulating programmes that enable students to pursue their passions and prepare for success in the increasingly competitive job market. This means ensuring high-quality teaching and academic support, fair assessments and useful feedback, high-quality learning resources, and an inclusive learning community. These priorities underpin Curriculum for Change (C4C), through which we've been working with student panels, coordinated by the Guild and elected officers, to review and reimagine our academic programmes to meet students' needs now and in the future. As departmental C4C plans develop, we are committed to working with Academic Reps to ensure student voice shapes our discussions and decisions.

Our mission to support success for all students depends on placing Student Voice at the heart of planning, governance, and decision-making. That is why Guild Elected Officers represent student interests on all key University committees, and why Academic Representative roles are so important in departments. We can only enhance the academic experience by understanding what students want to change—and what they want to stay the same!



Hello, my name is Liz Jones and I'll be joining the University in October, taking over formally from Tim as DVC Education and Student Experience in January. Throughout my career I've enjoyed working with student reps, and finding ways to work in partnership with students to support the highest quality education and student experience.

In my most recent role, as Pro Vice Chancellor for Education at the University of Leicester, partnership working with the Students' Union and the student reps has been key to responding to students' changing needs. I've found that keeping an open flow of communication between students and staff so there is both constructive challenge and shared project working has been crucial to enhancing education, as well as really enjoyable. I think that If we are committed to creating an engaged and inclusive learning community, all voices need to matter, and our students need to feel valued, empowered and treated as partners in their own education. I'm really looking forward to working with everyone involved in academic representation at the University of Exeter!

Key Roles and Terms

Academic Representation

Academic Representation is all about empowering students to become full and active partners in their education experience, supporting them to make positive changes that will improve the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Exeter. The Academic Representation system at Exeter is managed by Exeter Students' Guild.

Academic Representation Team

The team at the Students' Guild responsible for managing Academic Representation, including our partnership with University colleagues and our training and support for Department Officers and Academic Reps. The team has one permanent full-time member of staff (the **Academic Representation Lead**) and a student staff team of **Academic Representation Convenors**. See separate section for contact details.

Academic Reps

Academic Reps are students who have volunteered to represent other students in their department on academic issues. Their role focuses on resolving the day-to-day issues that arise from students about their academic programme. They collaborate with other reps to analyse views and opinions from students, and work directly with academic and administrative staff to create solutions and bring about positive change.

Note that Academic Reps are considered "ad-hoc" volunteers and have no standing responsibilities. They are not required to attend department committees, and most reps will work to create solutions outside of formal meetings. Academic Reps exist as a pool of interested students which the Department Officers can call on to work on specific topics, and as such should report their activities through the Department Officer team.

Department Officers

Department Officers are the senior student representatives for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, and their role is to drive positive change to the student experience in their academic department. This includes having oversight of Academic Representation by ensuring all students are effectively represented, and building a sense of community by promoting opportunities for students to engage in projects. They work alongside staff and students in their academic community, as well as other student leaders including society committees and the Guild's Full-Time Officers.

At least one Department Officer is expected to attend termly meetings on behalf of their Officer and Rep team to review the department's Student Voice Action Plan. Topics may include discussions about the effectiveness of the department staff and student reps in addressing student feedback, as well as progress updates from reps.

Rep Database

The [Guild Rep Database](#) is the official record of all Academic Reps and Department Officers. If you require access, please get in touch! Note that students may sign up or step down from rep roles at any point throughout the year, and as such it is not feasible for us to communicate every change to the database directly, so keep checking back.

If a student is not in the Guild's Rep Database, they are not a rep.

Rep Meetings

Organised by the Guild for Academic Reps and Department Officers to meet with each other, Guild staff, and Full-Time Officers. These will usually take place in advance of formal meetings to discuss topics that need to be added to the agenda, as well as at other times throughout the year for officers to check in with reps.

Academic Societies

Academic Societies are student groups set up with a core aim of providing additional academic and social opportunities for students in a particular subject, and for other students who have an interest in that subject area. We recommend working with the societies connected to your department on events such as academic skills workshops, placements and internships, graduate opportunities, employability fairs, module fairs, and external speaker events. The Guild staff team are available to support this work.

Student Experience

Student Experience refers to every aspect of University life, and can broadly be divided in two – Academic experience, which covers everything related to their programme of study, and non-academic (or Community) experience, which covers everything related to extra-curricular engagement, wellbeing, and the wider University study environment.

Students who have signed up to be Academic Reps will primarily focus on the academic experience, while the Guild's Department Officers will get more involved in supporting the learning community and study environment aspects of the student experience.

Student Voice Action Plan

Every department should produce a Student Voice Action Plan which is maintained and updated throughout the year. This is a central record of all actions taken in response to student feedback, such as anything arising from discussions or activities outlined in the Academic Representation Toolkit (below). The Action Plan forms the basis of reporting to the faculty's senior committees, and is reviewed termly by Department Officers and senior department staff.

Academic Representation Toolkit (Student Voice Activities)

The Academic Representation Toolkit is a staff-facing document designed to provide colleagues with recommendations and examples of various Student Voice activities to support local engagement with academic representation at department and discipline level. It also suggests how those different methods of engagement can feed into the Student Voice Action Plan (above) for formal reporting to senior faculty committees.

Student/Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC)

SSLCs were termly Department-level meetings between senior staff and one or more student representatives. They were discontinued starting from the 2025/26 academic year and replaced by numerous Student Voice activities (above), which all separately feed into the Student Voice Action Plan. This allows for a more flexible, department-led approach to student engagement.

Recruitment of Volunteers

When do we recruit?

Academic Reps are recruited primarily during Weeks 1-3 of Term 1. The signup form is open all year on the Guild website, but core promotion stops at the end of October. New Academic Reps are inducted approximately twice a term, and added to the Rep Database following their onboarding. Please refer to Key Dates for specific details.

The full role descriptions for Academic Reps and Department Officers can be found at the end of this handbook and on the Guild website at www.exeterguild.com/acrep.

Recruiting Academic Reps

Students who are interested in becoming Academic Reps (INTO, UG, DA, PGT, PGR) can sign up online at www.exeterguild.com/apply.

We would appreciate your assistance in recruiting reps, as colleagues in departments are best placed to promote the role to students locally. Key things to mention are the opportunity to make positive change for their coursemates, the chance to get involved in how their course is run ("the management of learning provision"), and the flexibility of the role as a pool of volunteers who don't have set responsibilities which require them to be active and engaged all year round. We should also outline the transferrable skills gained in communication and teamwork that will help with their future employment prospects.

The recruitment process is as follows:

1. **Complete the form** – Students can complete the form on the website linked above, or University staff colleagues can [complete this MS form](#) with details of interested students. The form for colleagues sends a direct link to the rep signup form to the student's email so we can get their consent to add them as a rep.
2. **Onboarding** – The Guild staff team contact the new reps with a welcome email and details of key Guild contacts. All applications are accepted, and there is no selection process, but reps must complete their induction and onboarding to be added to the Rep Database. Induction and onboarding occurs twice per term.
3. **Rep Database** – Details of new reps are made available to University colleagues through the [Rep Database](#). *If a student is not in the Database, they are not a rep.*
4. **Skills Training** – Throughout the year, reps can complete additional training on making change, closing the feedback loop, communication, teamwork, and EDI.

Recruiting Department Officers

Department Officers must apply through an online form. Selection can either be made by common assent of the Academic Reps in their department, or through an interview process. There is a maximum of two Officers per department in most cases. Selection of Department Officers this year will occur in two main phases – at the end of Term 3, and immediately prior to Welcome Week. We will attempt to fill any vacancies remaining after Welcome Week before Week 4 of Term 1.

This is subject to change based on the outcome of the ongoing Representation Review.

Exeter Students' Guild Support

For Student Representatives

Induction – New Academic Reps will be invited to attend their main induction and onboarding to the role, including an overview of the role responsibilities and some guidance for how to work with students and staff. Inductions take place twice per term.

Training – Core training is available online from the start of Term 1, and includes an overview of active listening techniques, constructive negotiation, working with staff and students to make change, and closing the feedback loop. Completion of both the induction and core training is required for HEAR accreditation of the Academic Rep role.

Development – Throughout the year, we offer additional training and development opportunities for student leaders, including transferrable skills sessions on teamwork, communication, EDI, chairing meetings, disclosure and wellbeing, active bystander training, and leadership skills, as well as in-person and online networking sessions for reps from different faculties and departments to meet each other and their Officers.

Online Resources – Resources are available for student reps through our membership platform, including articles on Quality Assurance, how to engage with students and work proactively with University staff, closing the feedback loop, making the most of meetings, sending newsletters, and how to represent specific academic communities.

Briefings – Where reps have expressed an interest in attending specific meetings and focus groups (or getting involved in other activities), we are available to brief them on what they should be considering to ensure the student voice is at the centre of it.

Support – Throughout the year, the Academic Representation team are available to support all student reps. If you think a rep is concerned about their role responsibilities, or their workload, please do point them in our direction – that is what we're here for! We offer bookable drop-in sessions throughout the day, and most of the time can be found in our offices in Devonshire House and/or G48 South Cloisters.

For University Staff Colleagues

Email Updates – We will circulate an email with any major updates to representation processes and systems approximately once a term.

Meetings – We would love to meet regularly throughout the year to discuss academic representation in your department or faculty. We'll get in touch to suggest grabbing a coffee every now and then, but please do reach out to us as well at any time if you have something specific you'd like to talk about.

Networking – We are planning networking events for reps each term (see the Academic Year calendar for the Big Rep Hello in Term 1, Big Faculty Networking in Term 2, and Big Rep Thank You in Term 3) where networking with colleagues is a key component.

Toolkit – The Academic Representation Toolkit is available as a resource for staff to discover new ways to engage students with student voice activities to discuss the management and review of their learning.

Role Profile: Academic Representative

Role title:	Academic Rep
Time required:	Up to 8 hours per activity, flexible
Role type:	Volunteer
Supported by:	Academic Representation Convenor

Academic Reps ensure the voices of their local academic community are heard, listened to, and acted upon. You will collaborate with other reps to analyse views and opinions from students regarding all aspects of their degree programmes, including concerns and thanks about supervision, teaching, and assessment, as well as course administration, learning resources, and personal career development. You will also work with Guild and University staff to ensure specific items are addressed, with a view to making positive changes which are then reported back to students within a reasonable timeframe.

What you'll be doing

- Work with your local Guild officer team to discuss students' academic needs.
- Work with your local student and staff community to bring about positive change.
- Collaborate with other Academic Reps, Full-Time Officers, Guild and University staff.
- Provide students with regular updates to inform them of actions taken and final outcomes.
- Attend events which promote effective representation in the local student community.

Pathway opportunities

- Work with students to review and process their opinions, aiming to identify recurring themes.
- Work with University and Guild staff to develop solutions to any concerns raised by students.
- Attend University committee meetings to represent the views of your academic community.
- Attend Guild and University focus groups to provide insight on the student experience.

What you'll receive

- Induction and onboarding to introduce you to the role and to the Guild.
- Additional soft skills training in communication, changemaking and teamwork.
- Regular drop-ins and termly networking sessions to catch up with staff and reps.
- HEAR accreditation and/or other official recognition, dependent on completing the initial induction and onboarding, core training, and engaging in at least one representative activity.

What you'll need - Time Required

After completing the induction and onboarding process (about **30 minutes**), you will be added to a register of volunteers and contacted when opportunities arise for Academic Rep activities. The time commitment is flexible, and we expect you to spend no more than **8 hours** on each individual activity that you engage with as an Academic Rep.

Details of specific student voice activities can be found online in the [Academic Representation Toolkit](#).

If you are interested in becoming an Academic Rep but are concerned about the time commitment, please contact voice@exeterguild.com and our team will be able to discuss your options.

Role Profile: Department Officer

Role title:	Department Officer
Time required:	0.5-2 hours per week, flexible
Role type:	Volunteer
Supported by:	Academic Representation Convenor

The Department Officers are the student executive team and senior student leaders for their academic department, responsible for ensuring undergraduate and postgraduate taught students have the best student experience possible during their time at Exeter. You will be the principal representative team for your departments' students to the Guild and the University, and will work with members of staff and the Full-Time Officer team, alongside the students in your department community, to promote solutions that will encourage positive change to the student experience.

What you'll be doing

- Empower the academic community in your department by working with staff and student leaders to improve the student experience (including academic interests, general student wellbeing, and opportunities for their continuous development and engagement).
- Ensure students in every discipline and programme are effectively represented by the Guild.
- Promote opportunities for students to give their thanks, ideas and concerns to the Guild and University, and support a team of Academic Reps for your department who feel empowered to use those thanks, ideas and concerns to make positive change.
- Directly represent the student experience needs of the undergraduate and postgraduate taught student community in your department at appropriate University meetings.
- Collaborate with University leaders and the Guild, including the Full-Time Officer team, to make recommendations that will improve the wider University of Exeter student experience.
- Compile and publish regular Student Experience updates to the students in your department.
- Design, organise and facilitate projects and events which build belonging in the department community, and activities which foster positive change-making and effective representation.

What you'll receive

- Induction and onboarding to introduce you to the role and to the Guild.
- Additional soft skills training in communication, changemaking and teamwork.
- Insight into University academic processes, research design, and administration.
- Regular drop-ins and termly networking sessions to catch up with staff and reps.
- Briefings and workshops on key student representation topics throughout the year.
- Regular meetings with Guild Officers and the Student Voice team to facilitate collaboration.

What you'll need - Time Required

This is a **part-time voluntary** position. The time commitment for this team is flexible to your specific circumstances and there is a **minimum expectation of 0.5 hours per week** (on average). We expect you to spend no more than **2 hours per week** undertaking activities related to this role.

We understand the needs of certain student groups will mean they have less available time to commit. If you are interested in joining the Officer team but are concerned about the time commitment, please contact voice@exeterguild.com and our team will be able to discuss your options.

Key Dates

Academic Year 2025 – 2026	
Department Officer selection for 2025/26	Monday 12 May – Friday 30 May
Department Officer vacancy recruitment	Monday 1 September – Wednesday 24 September
Academic Rep Recruitment for 2025/26 Academic Year opens	Monday 8 September
Department Officer inductions and training	Monday 8 September – Friday 12 September
Department-level Guild welcome sessions for new students with Societies and Reps	Friday 12 September – Friday 26 September
Online rep resources and training modules updated and available	Monday 22 September (Week 1)
Core recruitment drive, focusing on “making positive change”	22 September (Week 1) – 10 October (Week 3)
Core onboarding (role induction and initial training)	29 September (Week 2) – 17 October (Week 4)
Publicised Deadline for Academic Rep recruitment	Friday 10 October (Week 3)
Term 1 Rep Meetings to discuss roles within the team, and “Teamwork” training	13 October (Week 4) – 7 November (Week 7)
Big Rep Hello Networking Event	Late October (Week 5 or 6)
Soft skills training opportunities for all student leaders (Reps, Officers, Societies)	27 October – 31 October (Week 6)
November onboarding period	17 November (Week 9) – 28 November (Week 10)
Term 1 department meetings to review Student Voice Action Plan	17 November (Week 9) – 5 December (Week 11)
End of Term events and meetings to reflect on Term 1 and plan for Term 2	1 December (Week 11) – 12 December (Week 12)
Welcome Back Events and additional rep recruitment / onboarding activity	12 January (Week 1) – 23 January (Week 2)
Term 2 Rep Meetings to discuss ongoing issues and updates	19 January (Week 2) – 6 February (Week 4)
Big Rep Showcase Networking Events	Mid-February (Week 5 or 6)
February onboarding period	23 February – 27 February (Week 7)
Term 2 department meetings to review Student Voice Action Plan	23 February (Week 7) – 13 March (Week 9)
Recruitment for 2026/27 Department Officer roles*	Mon 16 March (Week 10) – Fri 8 May (Week 2)
Term 3 Rep Meetings and department meetings to review Student Voice Action Plan	Mon 11 May (Week 3) – Fri 29 May (Week 5)
Academic Rep Recruitment for 2025/26 Academic Year closes; Rep End of Year and Continuation Form for 2026/27 sent out*	Mid-May (Week 3 or 4)
Big Rep Thank You Event	Early June (Week 6 or 7)

*** Recruitment dates and roles for 2026/27 are dependent on the Representation Review.**