

University Centre Colchester Student Engagement Policy

2021/22

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 University Centre Colchester (UCC) is committed to encouraging the active involvement and engagement of the student community with its programmes and the wider institution.
- 1.2 The present policy focuses on student engagement in two areas: while being enrolled on a course at University Centre Colchester, and after graduation from the institution. The former includes the roles of student representatives, the Student Union, as well as module evaluations, mid-Semester reviews, the NSS and student participation in, and contribution to, programme validation events. The latter includes the Graduate Outcome Survey and UCC's alumni and employer networks.

2 The Student Representative System

- 2.1 **Definition of a Student Representative** – Students who represent their programme or School at a course level, who feedback any issues and good practice to their School at Student Rep meetings, Learning and Teaching Forums, and any other appropriate UCC meetings.
- 2.2 **Selection of a Student Representative** - Students on all UCC programmes are asked to nominate a student representative for each year group of a programme.
- 2.3 **Role of a Student Representative** – A student representatives ensures that the student voice is heard in the institution. Student representatives feedback directly to University Centre Colchester staff on academic and non-academic issues, typically by attending a variety of meetings throughout the year, to ensure University Centre Colchester maintains its commitment to the assurance and enhancement of the academic programmes and student welfare

Guiding Principles of Student Representation

- 2.4 Student Representatives are required to:
- Be Accountable – Student representatives are responsible to the students they were chosen to represent;
 - Consult – Student representatives are asked to put aside their own views and gather collective views, by talking and listening to other students, and to avoid any assumptions about the student experience;
 - Communicate – Student representatives need to feedback information to the student body. They must let their peers know what actions and outcomes have resulted from their feedback. They must do this by using efficient communication channels; this can be done in person, via social media, or any other appropriate means of communication;
 - Engage – Student representatives should act as a link between the student body, the Student Union and University Centre Colchester. Student representatives should inform other students of the feedback they receive. It is important that

Student representatives are fully engaged with opportunities to represent the student community;

- Signpost – Student Representatives might be the first point of contact for students with any issues, concerns or general enquiries. As such, they should be familiar with the structure of University Centre Colchester in order to signpost students to appropriate staff and/or services.

2.5 **Roles and Responsibilities of a Student Representative**

Students should appreciate, when formally expressing an interest in the role, the importance and time needed to undertake the role properly. Anyone interested in becoming a student rep should consult the information published on the UCC Student Portal and Appendix A of this policy.

- 2.6 Students should attend all training sessions so they are appropriately prepared for the role. A *Guide to being a Student Rep* can be found in appendix B.

- 2.7 Students should prepare for meetings by collecting student feedback relevant to the agenda items of the meeting.

- 2.8 Students should attend all meetings they have committed to attend. If a student is unable to attend, they should arrange for either another student to represent them, or forward their comments to the Student Experience Officer.

- 2.9 If a student feels they can no longer fulfill the role, they must make their Course Leader and the Student Experience Officer aware, so a replacement can be found.

- 2.10 If a Student Representative fails to meet the requirements of the role, they may be removed from the post or a replacement sought.

Commitments of University Centre Colchester

- 2.11 Planning – Individual Schools and the Student Experience Officer should allow time for Student representatives to meet the student body and collect feedback. This should be done by giving Student representatives meeting dates a minimum of one week in advance.

- 2.12 Action and Feedback – Schools and the Student Experience Officer will be approachable and receptive of the feedback from the Student representatives. It is also the duty of the Schools and the Student Experience Officer that appropriate action should be taken in response to feedback.

- 2.13 Training – Student representatives will receive training and advice from the Student Experience Officer on what is expected of them in their role, including different methods of collecting feedback and presenting this feedback to UCC.

- 2.14 Support – If at any time during their role as a Student representative they find there are difficulties with the role, Student representatives can expect support from their Course Leader and the Student Experience Officer.

The ‘Super Rep’

- 2.15 Each School is required to nominate at least one ‘Super Rep’. Super reps will represent their entire School and, on top of their duties as a Student Rep, will be asked to attend UCC Learning and Teaching Committee, UCC Academic Board, and any other meetings involving other universities and/or validating bodies where their attendance is deemed necessary. They will also ensure that the other Student reps from their School are aware of and attend all Student rep meetings with the Student Experience Officer and are kept up-to-date with regards to actions and feedback resulting from these meetings.
- 2.16 The key role of the Super rep is to ensure representation of their School at UCC meetings involving senior management and teaching staff, and to subsequently inform Student reps of any major changes or developments in institutional policy or procedures. They should therefore make sure they are able to attend such meetings, or allow enough notice for their deputy (see below) to attend in their place.
- 2.17 Students must first be selected as a Student rep in order to be nominated for the position of Super Rep.
- 2.18 Super reps can be nominated by Student reps in their School or Student reps can nominate themselves. Once appointed by the Head of School, Super reps should also appoint a Deputy Super rep, who will deputise for them at meetings.

3 UCC Module Evaluations and mid-semester reviews

- 3.1 All University Centre Colchester students are given the opportunity to feedback formally on their individual experiences through the Module Evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaire is completed at the end of the taught module (normally at the end of the semester), with programme teams required to provide a published response on Moodle.
- 3.2 Although module evaluations can be completed remotely, it is anticipated that time will be found within the timetabled module delivery to facilitate students undertaking the survey.
- 3.3 Module evaluations are considered at programme, School and institutional level and feed into the annual reporting and action planning of University Centre Colchester.
- 3.4 The current list of questions in the Module Evaluation Survey can be found in appendix D.
- 3.5 Mid-Semester reviews are meetings between the Student Experience officer and Student reps, as well as any other student wishing to attend. Mid-Semester reviews are a platform for students to raise concerns mid-Semester, as well as an opportunity for the institution to gather some qualitative data from its students.

4 The National Student Survey

- 4.1 All eligible students are contacted by a national external organisation that collects data responses from final year undergraduate students on a set number of questions. This usually happens between January and April. All student responses are anonymous. The survey results are usually published at the beginning of the next academic year.
- 4.2 The student responses (percentages only, not qualitative feedback) are published annually, and are made available to all HEI in the UK. Qualitative responses by individuals are also anonymised before being shared with the institution they apply to.
- 4.3 UCC regards the National Student Survey as one of the key performance indicators for student feedback.

5 The Graduate Outcomes Survey

- 5.1 The Graduate Outcome Survey, describes itself as 'the biggest UK annual social survey and captures the perspectives and current status of recent graduates. All graduates who completed a course will be asked to take part in the survey 15 months after they finish their studies. The survey aims to help current and future students gain an insight into career destinations and development'. (www.graduateoutcomes.ac.uk , accessed 03/11/2019)

6 Participation in Programme Oversight and Development

- 6.1 In addition to the student representative programme University Centre Colchester actively looks to involve students in the development of its programmes.
- 6.2 All programme development initiatives are required to consult with the student community, and seek their support for any changes to existing programmes.
- 6.3 Student must also be involved in the development of new courses.
- 6.4 Students who sit outside of the student representative system are equally valued and will also be considered for roles within validation, accreditation or course variation activities.

7 The Student Union

- 7.1 For details about UCC's Student Union, including its constitution, please see Moodle.

Alumni and Employer Networks

- 8
8.1 UCC values the ongoing feedback from its alumni and employer (many of whom are also alumni) networks, who contribute to academic programme development, offer placements or hire graduates.

- 8.2 At present, there is no centralised database or oversight for these networks. Instead, most of them have grown out of Schools or disciplines with a particularly distinct subject identity. For example, the School of Music, Media and Performing Arts has a closed Facebook group of over 900 alumni and past and present staff. In contrast, Construction & Engineering at UCC maintain their industry contacts through a predominantly part-time student community that works in companies within commuting distance of UCC.
- 8.3 All Schools at UCC hold formal employer/industry meetings, usually one per Semester, to ensure that UCC's understanding of the respective employment sectors remains current.

Appendix A - UCC Student Representative Job Description

Summary of the role

A Student Rep is a student who acts as a key contact between the students on their course and UCC. They are responsible for gathering feedback, opinions, and ideas from their classmates, voicing them to their tutors and during meetings, and working together to resolve issues. This is achieved through Student Rep meetings, Learning and Teaching Forums, and meetings with awarding organisations.

Student Reps are vitally important to UCC because we want to ensure that our students have the best possible learning experience, but this would be difficult to achieve without student feedback. Feedback from Student Reps allows the issues affecting other students to be raised, discussed and, where possible, resolved. Working as a Student Rep is also an invaluable personal experience, helping you to gain new skills in communication, negotiation, and leadership experience.

Duties & Responsibilities

- gathering feedback, opinions, and ideas from fellow students on your course in order to present these at meetings with members of staff including Course Leaders and Heads of School;
- providing feedback on any issues and good practice to your School at Student Rep meetings, Learning and Teaching Forums, and any other appropriate UCC meetings;
- working together as part of the UCC community to resolve issues;
- helping to ensure that students feel they really are valued and listened to, and celebrating successes among the UCC community;
- attending all training sessions so that you are appropriately prepared;
- attending all meetings that you are expected to attend;
- reporting back to peers on relevant issues arising at the meetings;
- attending promotional events such as open days and UCAS fairs when asked to do so.

Key Qualities for the Role

- **Accountability**
 - candidates must be fully committed and should appreciate the time needed to meet the requirements of the role, since they are elected by and asked to represent their fellow students;

- **Consultation**
 - candidates are expected to relay feedback on behalf of their peers and should therefore be open to the views of other students, avoiding any assumptions about the student experience and always ready to listen to different viewpoints;
- **Communication**
 - candidates should regularly communicate the actions and outcomes of meetings to the students they represent, as well as notifying them well in advance of opportunities to give feedback, effectively acting as a bridge between the student body and their lecturers & Course Leaders;
- **Engagement**
 - candidates should be enthusiastic about representing their fellow students and recognise the important contributions they are making to help improve the UCC student experience;
- **Signposting**
 - candidates will be familiar with the structure of University Centre Colchester as an organisation, so that they can signpost students to the relevant departments and staff when approached as the first point of contact.

Commitment of UCC to its Student Reps

University Centre Colchester makes the following commitments to its Student Reps while they are in the role:

- Planning: Student Representatives will be given the time to meet and consult their students to collect feedback before meetings, and will be notified of meeting dates at least a week in advance by the Student Experience Officer;
- Action & Feedback: Schools and the Student Experience Officer will be approachable and receptive to feedback, and ensure that appropriate action is taken in response;
- Training: Student Representatives will receive training and advice on what is expected of them in their role, including different methods of collecting feedback and presenting this feedback to UCC;
- Support: Student Representatives can expect support from their Course Leader and the Student Experience Officer should they encounter any difficulties whilst undertaking the role.

UCC 'Super' Representative

Summary of the role

Super Reps will represent their entire School and, on top of their contribution as a Student Rep, will be asked to attend Learning and Teaching Committees, Academic Boards, and any other meetings involving other universities and/or validating bodies where their attendance is deemed necessary. They will also ensure that the other Student Reps from their School are aware of and attend all Student Rep meetings with the Student Experience Officer and are kept up-to-date with regards to actions and feedback resulting from these meetings.

The key role of the Super Rep is to ensure representation of their School at UCC meetings involving senior management and teaching staff, and to subsequently inform Student Reps of any major changes or developments in university policy or procedures. They should therefore make sure they are able to attend such meetings, or give enough notice for their Deputy (see below) to attend in their place.

Super Reps will be nominated by Student Reps in their School. Once appointed, Super Reps should also appoint a Deputy Super Rep who will stand in for them at meetings if they cannot attend.

N.B. You must first be selected as a Student Rep in order to be nominated for the position of Super Rep

Super Reps (and a Deputy Super Rep) are required for the following areas:

- School of Art
- School of Applied Technology
- School of Music, Media and Performing Arts
- School of Social Sciences

Appendix B - A Guide for Student Representatives

What is a Student Rep?

A Student Rep is a student who acts as a key contact between the students on their course and UCC. They are responsible for gathering feedback, opinions and ideas from their classmates, voicing them to their tutors and during meetings, and working together to resolve issues. This is achieved through Student Rep meetings, course meetings, and meetings with the University of Essex.

Why are Student Representatives important?

We want to ensure that our students have the best possible learning experience, but this would be difficult without student feedback. Student feedback helps us to monitor and improve the quality of the education and services we provide. The feedback from Student Representatives at the meetings allows the issues affecting other students to be raised, discussed and, where possible, resolved.

In your role as a Student Representative, you will be helping to ensure that students feel that they really are valued and listened to. Student Representatives are also important in helping to celebrate our successes, whether it is recognising good teaching, great resources, or new opportunities.

Being a Student Rep is also an opportunity to gain invaluable experience and learn new skills in communication, negotiation, and leadership experience.

What do I need to do?

Your role is to:

- identify issues affecting students;
- attend meetings to communicate these issues on behalf of your peers;
- report back to your peers on relevant issues arising at the meetings.

What next?

Once we have your details, we will contact you directly about meetings and events that you are expected to attend. You will be given at least one week's notice for meetings, and the minutes from meetings will be distributed no later than a week after the meeting.

Student Rep Meetings

Student Rep meetings are an ideal opportunity to collect feedback from your peers about all matters regarding UCC. Reps should share ideas and concerns which will then be fed back to UCC staff. During the meetings, feel free to discuss and debate issues, take notes, and remember to feedback to your peers.

Programme Forum Meetings

Programme Forum meetings allow students to speak freely about anything that is related to their specific programme of study. Representatives should present their own concerns and comments along with those from their cohort, these may include concerns such as timings of coffee breaks, teaching methods, classroom layout ect.

Learning and Teaching Forums

At this level of meeting students are required to represent the views of their whole cohort. Learning and Teaching Forums are where your Course Leader, Head of School, and lecturers meet to discuss any issues with the Faculty, course reviews, any research that's taking place, and student feedback. These normally happen once a semester.

Learning and teaching forums are not a place to raise individual or personal issues. This is a platform for the students to discuss wider issues around their study, students may also raise issues that they feel were not brought to a satisfactory conclusion for their cohort from the Programme Forum meetings or have arisen in the intervening period.

Students are encouraged to submit any questions ahead of the meeting where practically possible, this will enable research to take place to assist the Chair in providing an informed answer to any questions.

Awarding Organisation Meetings

The content of these meetings will vary greatly each time, as it depends on the topics that the University wishes to bring up. These meetings may be to do with how they feel we're doing as a partner institution, to look at our academic content, or how our students feel as members of a learning community. Of course, there are other matters outside these, and you will be invited to attend meetings when necessary.

Appendix C - Student Reps FAQs

Car Parking

This is a common issue raised by Student Representatives but unfortunately, due to council restrictions, we are unable to build over any more land and as such are unable to expand the car park. Colchester Institute currently provides 463 car parking spaces in total for students.

Commencing in September 2020, Colchester will be a cashless campus. In line with this, our car parks will be managed by ANPR barriers and we will be using app-based technology to pay for Pay to Park parking with JustPark. Please go to the Apple App Store or Android Play Store to download the app and add your details prior to parking on campus.

Higher Education Student Bar

This has been raised quite a few times, and while this is something we've considered in the past, there currently aren't any plans to open a bar onsite.

Contact Time

This can vary from course to course and module to module. However, as a guideline UCC has two fourteen week Semesters. Each Semester usually has 12 weeks' teaching time, followed by tutorial and examination weeks. On average, a full-time course at UCC has four blocks of three hours each of contact time most teaching weeks.

Food & Drink*

Eat Central Main Refectory (C Block)

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Monday to Thursday | 8am – 3.30pm |
| Friday | 8am – 2pm |

Proud to Serve Costa 55 Degrees (UCC Building)

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Monday | 8am – 4pm |
| Tuesday to Thursday | 8am – 7.30pm |
| Friday | 8am – 3.30pm |

We Proudly Serve Starbucks (K Block Kitchen)

| | |
|------------------|------------|
| Monday to Friday | 10am – 2pm |
|------------------|------------|

*During Semester time only

Appendix C - Module Evaluation Questions (2020/21)*

1. Module Teaching

- Staff made the subject interesting and were good at explaining things

2. Learning Opportunities

- The module content introduced me to new ideas/gave me new skills.

3. Assessment

- I have been shown the assessment sheet for my coursework.

4. Academic Support

- I have received helpful feedback and support from staff.

5. Organisation and Management

- The module was well organised and ran smoothly

6. Learning Resources

- I have been able to access the learning resources I needed.

7. Overall

- Overall the module has been a positive experience.

8. General (Open Text) Comments Box

*Questions are subject to change for the 2021/22 academic year.