



# Student Voice Representatives Staff Handbook

Academic Year 2024/25

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## Introduction

This handbook is for staff with a role supporting or promoting the Student Voice Representative (SVR) system at Keele. A separate handbook for Student Voice Reps is produced by Keele SU. We'd really appreciate it if, as the School Contact, you read the information in this pack and distributed the information to those who need to know, such as programme leaders and administrators.

Best Wishes,

Tuesday Forrest (Student Voice Manager)  
&  
Matthew Kemp (Education Officer)  
Keele University Students' Union

Any feedback on this handbook can be sent to Quality Assurance (see Key Contacts on the final page).

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## Message from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education), Keele University and Education Officer, Keele SU.

Students are at the heart of what the University does. Keele continues to prioritise the student experience with recognition as Best UK University (Student Crowd Awards 2022). We achieve an exceptional student experience through working in partnership with our students.

As staff of the University your role is essential in supporting and engaging our students and this handbook is designed to provide you with information on the role of Student Voice Representatives and what you can do to support the student representation system at Keele.

The system is supported by promotional materials that will be provided shortly. Your support promoting applications at the start of the year is vitally important.

We hope you will find this Handbook useful in your work with Student Voice Representatives during this academic year.



Professor Kris Spellman  
Pro Vice Chancellor,  
(Education)



Matthew Kemp  
Education Officer, Keele SU

## Student Voice Representatives – a summary

Student Voice Reps represent their fellow students by gathering the views of their year group, attending Student Staff Voice Committees (SSVCs) and communicating back to students.

Each year reps are appointed for every cohort across all programmes at Keele with the number of reps required dependent on the cohort size. Keele SU will not run applications for PGT courses with less than 20 students unless requested by the school (please contact us if you wish to arrange this) and we will not expect a formal Student Voice Rep to be appointed at every level if the school does not feel this would be practical or suitable for the course. We do expect that students are given ample opportunity to offer feedback and engage both away from and in SSVC meetings.

### Aren't Reps Elected?

Last year we trialled an application process rather than elections to remove barriers to engagement, to simplify the process for staff and students and to get reps in place sooner into the academic year. We are continuing with this process having seen an increase in engagement as well as positive feedback from staff. We anticipate rep positions being available for the majority of students who put themselves forward.

### What do Student Voice Representatives do?

Student Voice Reps are a vital link between staff and students, selected to represent students on their programme and gather student opinions. They also provide a way for programme teams to communicate important information regarding current issues and developments.

Each course has up to four Voice Reps, though for larger courses a higher number of SVRs may be requested. Voice Reps will be ready for schools to work with from the 16<sup>th</sup> October.

### Application Process

There will be one round of applications in October, and all applications are handled by the Students' Union and should be submitted by students at [keelesu.com/svr](https://keelesu.com/svr). Applications are open from September 17<sup>th</sup>, when students start to arrive for the academic year, until October 7<sup>th</sup>. Any student on a taught course, from Foundation Year to Postgraduate courses, can apply to be a Student Voice Rep for their course. Although applications will close on October 7<sup>th</sup> at 12 midday, we will re-open the form in November for those courses without appointed Voice Reps. Please note that due to other departmental responsibilities, we cannot guarantee that applications will be reviewed as promptly as they will in October.

The applications will be reviewed by the Education Officer, Matt Kemp, and the Union Development and Democracy Officer, Tom Robinson, alongside the Student Voice Manager, Tuesday Forrest. Appointments will be decided by the Officers.

Students and schools will be informed on October 9<sup>th</sup> of their new Voice Reps. SVRs both new and returning will be invited to a basic online training course which they should complete before attending an SSVC. In addition, throughout the semester we will hold optional drop-in sessions to build the skills and knowledge base of our Voice Reps and other student leaders (such as society committee members).

Schools will now be able to hold SSVCs from October 14<sup>th</sup>, as all appointed Voice Reps should have received a link to basic online training by this date.

The calendar below shows the application review process, from October 9<sup>th</sup> when applications close.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<u>October 7</u> Applications close	<u>8</u> SU to review applications	<u>9</u> SU to inform schools of SVRs	<u>10</u> SVRs sent online training	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>14</u> Schools can start holding SSVCs	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>

## Training

The SU is currently in the process of finalising a training package that has been externally developed for student leaders – those students taking on additional responsibilities such as society committee roles, elected representative positions, or student voice representatives. This will be used in place of Student Voice Conference, given the limitations of developing in- person training accessible to all, without leaving those SVRs unable to attend lacking in key skills and responsibilities.

To enable those Reps to carry out their role effectively our online training will continue to be available and provide all of the core knowledge that Voice Reps need. Please encourage all reps to complete the training they receive from the Students' Union. If positions are not filled until later in the year, they will still receive access to online training.

The training covers information and skills sessions, including how to prepare for SSVC meetings, communicating with fellow students, HEAR recognition and case studies (such as how to respond to or refer on issues raised by students, e.g. via informal resolution with a module tutor or referral to student support.

## Attendance

We introduced a new document three years ago, a Microsoft sheet for each School which has a list of all the courses within your school and who are the reps for each course. We have shared this sheet with the list of staff contacts for your school we have been given by the University QA team so that you and the Student Voice team can monitor the progress of the Student Voice Reps. We will be able to register who has attended training using these sheets so school staff can see this information and school staff can register who attends an SSVC meeting.

We hope that this will allow the system to be more effective and transparent as it will allow the Student Voice team to be able to monitor where there are reps in need of support or guidance and you as school staff to identify students who have not attended training and encourage them to do so. This will also allow the process of approving volunteering hours and eligibility for the HEAR to be a much smoother process.

We hope you will continue to use these sheets in order to continue to improve the transparency of the Student Voice Representative programme.

## Postgraduate Programmes

Keele SU will also hold application processes for all PGT courses with a reasonable cohort size equal to or greater than 20 students. Schools will need to follow the same procedures as below for holding internal elections if there is a shortfall in the number of students required to stand.

## Encouraging Application

We ask schools to do all they can to promote the Student Voice Reps applications and encourage students to nominate themselves as representatives. We have carefully planned the timetable to allow plenty of time for promotion but also a fast turnaround to enable Student Voice Reps to be in place in time for training and SSVC meetings.

We have provided a presentation on becoming a Student Voice Rep at Keele for use in introductory lectures. If you would prefer an elected officer or staff member from the Students' Union to attend and deliver the presentation, we will happily oblige.

Please request this by emailing [su.voice@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.voice@keele.ac.uk) with the details. We can deliver this as part of an array of introductory talks about the Students' Union or as a standalone Student Voice Reps talk.

We hope that you find this pack useful. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing [su.voice@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.voice@keele.ac.uk).

## Benefits of being a Student Voice Rep

While having SVRs in place greatly benefits schools and the university in ensuring academic quality, there are also a variety of reasons students should put themselves forward. Student Voice Reps:

- Develop transferable skills and attributes, such as networking, communication and advocacy skills, problem solving and diplomacy
- Recognition on the HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report)
- Time commitment counts towards Volunteering Hours
- The chance to win a Keele Student Award
- The opportunity to stand for the strengthened role of Lead School Voice Representative.

Ideas for raising the profile of Student Voice Reps

- Ask returning representatives to talk about their experiences.
- Include information in induction materials.
- Make Student Voice Reps' contact details accessible (with their consent).
- Remind students that being a Student Voice Representative is HEAR-recordable and also counts towards volunteering hours!
- Encourage the students in your classes to make the most of the Student Voice Reps throughout the year by providing feedback to them. If the students see that the staff value the reps and the feedback from students, they are more likely to engage.

## Lead School Voice Representatives

This year, we have received funding for our Lead School Voice Representatives (LVRs). This will be provided in the form of a stipend (£tbc per year, paid in two parts), in return for fulfilling certain criteria. The role has therefore been expanded in terms of responsibilities.

This role is designed to capture feedback effectively and provide a clear representative structure. Lead School Reps will:

- Gather views of Student Voice Representatives, attend SEC meetings, and organise Student Voice forums within their School
- Submit short reports to Keele SU, which will be collated for FEC
- (NB: to attend FEC meetings only if invited to speak about a particular subject)
- Work with their School and the University on relevant projects, events or committees requiring representation
- Attend Faculty Student Voice Committee (FSVC) on a quarterly basis
- Attend University Student Voice Committee (USVC) on a rotational basis

Lead Voice Reps, as in previous years, will be appointed by the Students' Union, in the same timeframe that Student Voice Reps are appointed.

However, LVRs will, as in previous years, be approved by their schools, so we will send you the application of the candidate we would like to appoint, for your school to confirm. This will take place the week of the 14th October.

Students will be invited to a training session where they will receive additional training on their role. They will be offered additional training sessions in report writing, chairing, negotiation and influence and an in-depth explanation of university governance and quality.

## School Responsibilities

Administrative staff contacts are asked to:

- Organise Student Staff Voice Committees (SSVC), arrange for minutes to be taken and send them, with attendance lists, to Keele SU. Please note that SSVCs will now need to take place online; schools will still need to arrange these.
- Support Student Voice Reps communicating with their fellow students.
- Use the newly created SVR Office sheets in which the Students' Union and school staff can jointly monitor the progress of the reps, including training and meetings attended.

All staff contacts are asked to:

- Publicise the student representative's system, encourage students to nominate themselves for the role and ask all students to vote.
- Support Student Voice Reps in communicating with their fellow students, e.g. at the beginning or end of lectures.
- Ensure that SSVCs operate effectively with a member of academic staff supporting students who take on chairing responsibilities.

## What if a course does not have any Voice Reps after applications close?

In the case where a course does not have any Voice Reps after applications close, schools should put out a request for volunteers for the role. Volunteers will be then asked to go through the brief application process.

Things to avoid during this process:

- Picking the first to volunteer – Please allow sufficient time for any student who is interested to express an interest. Therefore, we ask that you give students a deadline.
- Choosing a student – You may have a particular student in mind that you think would make a good rep. If you have a student in mind then please actively encourage them to become a rep in a fair way. We want quality student reps and often it is encouragement from staff that will persuade a student to become a Student Voice Rep but it is very important that staff do not 'pick' these students.
- Using the reps from last year – It is important that students are given ample opportunity to take part in the Student Voice Reps scheme. Many students will not have the confidence to put themselves forward until their second or third year. A Student Voice Rep is only in place for one year and the only way they can extend their term for another year is to be appointed again. Past reps should be encouraged to re-run but they cannot simply be given the position.

If you experience any problems with the appointments, then please contact the Students' Union via [su.voice@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.voice@keele.ac.uk) or telephone us.



## Guidelines for Student Staff Voice Committee

Student Staff Voice Committees (SSVCs) are the main forum for hearing feedback from Student Voice Representatives. Guidelines for these meetings are as follows.

1. Role of the Student Staff Voice Committee
  - a. The SSVC provides a forum for staff and students to discuss matters of mutual interest.
  - b. SSVCs are chaired by a Student Voice Representative with support provided by a member of academic staff. Meetings are held at least once per semester and minutes are taken by a secretary provided by the School.
  - c. SSVC meetings are important because:
    - i. It allows staff and students (Student Voice Representatives) to discuss ideas and to solve problems.
    - ii. It forms the basis for the representation of students' views within the programme or School and identifies concerns which require consideration beyond the programme or School.
    - iii. It is a formal, qualitative means of consulting students and gauging their opinion on academic matters and soliciting suggestions for improvements/enhancements.
    - iv. It provides a mechanism for obtaining student feedback and communicating action taken in response to feedback.
2. Core Responsibilities
  - a. Each SSVC should have a formal written remit, which should be reviewed annually to ensure it provides the opportunity for the discussion of current learning, teaching or research issues. An exemplar agenda is available from the Quality Assurance webpages and the main items for consideration are as follows:
    - i. To discuss matters raised by students and matters on which the School wishes to seek student views.
    - ii. To consider the outcome of student evaluation of programmes and modules, and the School's response to it.
    - iii. To share External Examiner Reports, and School responses to such reports.
    - iv. To share reports from across the University, regarding student experience, allowing the opportunity for feedback.
    - v. To inform students, and seek feedback, on proposals for new programmes and changes to existing programmes, as well as sharing the outcomes from validation events.
    - vi. To share the outcome and actions of any School reviews (e.g. internal audit, professional body accreditations, etc.).
3. Core Membership
  - a. At least two appointed Student Voice Representatives of each student cohort studying on the programme.
  - b. Representatives of the academic staff of the School (whose number shall not exceed the number of Student Voice Reps).
  - c. The Education Officer from Keele SU, who may attend any SSVC.
  - d. Representatives of students from programmes outside the School taking modules from the programme offered by the School, as necessary and previously agreed by members.

- e. Representatives from the Library, Careers & Employability and Student and Academic Services may be invited to attend meetings as appropriate.

While the above constitutes core membership, SSVCs are not closed, and any student who is studying on the programmes in question may attend.

#### 4. Conduct of Meetings

- a. SSVCs must meet at least once per semester. It is expected that there will be four meetings in an academic year (November, February, April, June)
- b. SSVCs should be chaired by a student (unless no student representative wishes to be appointed chair). An identified member of academic staff should support a student Chair. Keele SU will be implementing Chair training for all LVRs and any SVRs who are interested in chairing a meeting this year.
- c. SSVCs must be minuted by a secretary provided by the School, and minutes published in a form accessible to all students. SECs (School Education Committees) should receive the minutes of SSVCs to take oversight of any issues/actions for the attention of the School. The minutes should also be provided to Keele SU and made available to students.
- d. SSVCs must agree actions in response to issues raised and receive updates on actions taken.
- e. The Committee should not discuss personal matters relating to individual students or members of staff.

#### 5. Agenda and Minutes of the Meetings

- a. The Chair and supporting member of academic staff should agree an agenda for each meeting, which should normally be circulated to members of the Committee at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting.

*[\(NB: Sample agenda can be found here\)](#)*

- b. Student Voice Representatives and staff members of the Committee can ask for items to be included on the agenda.
- c. Student Voice Representatives should identify items for the agenda by consulting students in advance of the meeting. Schools may wish to facilitate this process by means of an e-mail reminder.
- d. Draft minutes should be prepared promptly by the School secretary and circulated to all members of the Committee.
- e. Schools should provide incoming Student Voice Reps with copies of minutes from the previous year for information and continuity.
- f. Schools should retain a copy of the minutes for review purposes.
- g. Attendance sheets and minutes should be sent to [su.voice@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.voice@keele.ac.uk) for HEAR accreditation purposes and for the information of the Keele SU Education Officer.

## Key Contacts

Enquiries to the Students' Union should be directed to [su.voice@keele.ac.uk](mailto:su.voice@keele.ac.uk)

This email should be used for providing updates, such as attendance lists, and minutes of meetings.

Your main contact at the KPA (for postgraduate enquiries) is [kpa.vp@keele.ac.uk](mailto:kpa.vp@keele.ac.uk)

Your main contact for Quality Assurance at the University is:

Ed McCauley, Quality Assurance Manager – [e.mccauley@keele.ac.uk](mailto:e.mccauley@keele.ac.uk)



