



ASTON
STUDENTS'
UNION



STUDENT REP HANDBOOK

2024-2025

WELCOME REPS!

Congratulations on taking the important first step to becoming a voice for your peers at Aston University! By choosing to become a student rep, you have embraced a vital role within our community, one that is central to shaping the student experience here at Aston.

As a student representative, you will serve as the bridge between your cohort and the university administration, ensuring that the voices of your fellow students are not only heard but also acted upon. Your role will enable you to engage closely with a diverse range of students, gaining unique insights into their needs, challenges, and aspirations. This invaluable perspective will empower you to advocate for meaningful changes and improvements that will benefit both current and future students.

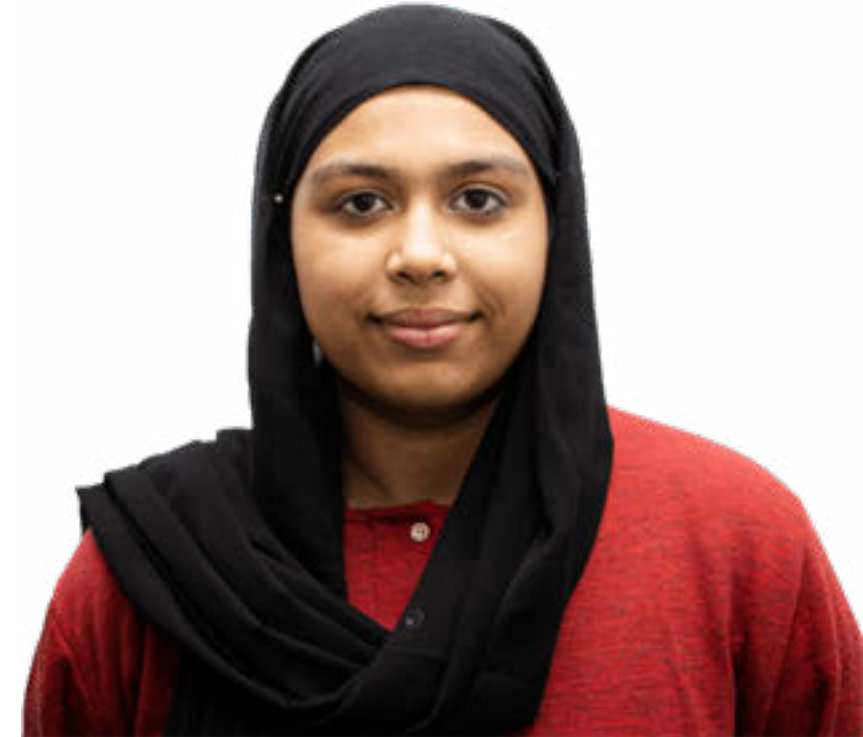
Being a student rep is about more than just representing your peers; it's about building a sense of community and fostering empowerment among your fellow students. Through networking, meetings, and feedback sessions, you will create a space where open communication and collaborative problem-solving can thrive. Your work as a student rep will make a lasting impact, driving innovation and positive change that will enhance the overall educational experience at Aston University

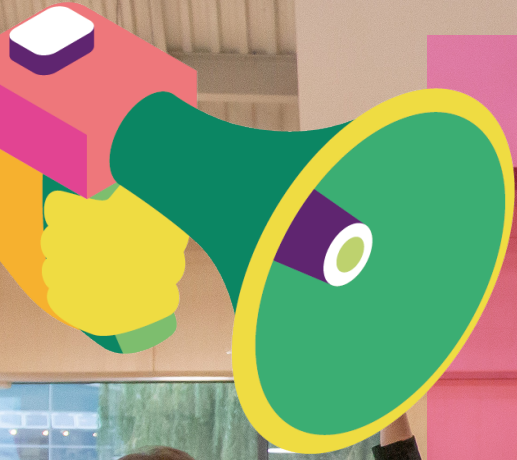
This journey comes with comprehensive training designed to equip you with everything you need to be a pioneer of change. We ask only that you bring your passion, commitment, and drive to make a difference. We are excited to work alongside you, and together, by this time next year, we will be one step closer to creating the perfect academic experience for all

Thank you for your dedication to making Aston University the best it can be—we can't wait to see all that you will accomplish!

Afia Amanoullah

Vice President Education
Aston Students' Union





REPRESENT ENGAGE PROGRESS



WHAT IS STUDENT REPRESENTATION?

Your education should be of the highest possible quality. To make sure that happens, it is important the opinions of students' are listened to. Student representation is the best way for students to have a meaningful say on how their courses are ran.

Your lecturers are the experts in their fields, but you are an expert in the student experience. Your knowledge and experience as a student plays an important role in bringing change to your course, and your expertise will allow you to comment on what works well, and what areas there are for improvements.

To ensure that students' voices are heard, we have asked you (a student) to volunteer as a rep for your course and year, and meet with the university staff to discuss the feedback they have been provided from discussions with their peers.



WHAT DO REPS DO?

GATHERING FEEDBACK / AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

You should talk to the students on your course to find out what they think about their modules and their courses, the learning environment, resources, teaching methods, assessments, timing and feedback etc. You should make it easy for students to contact you as their representative.

Remember being a Student Rep is not only about identifying problems, but identifying areas of good practice within the university. This will ensure that these continue and expand further. As a Rep and an engaged student, you will also have your own ideas about what needs addressing and how things could change. Of course it is okay for you to raise these as long as you provide evidence and reasoning for your ideas.

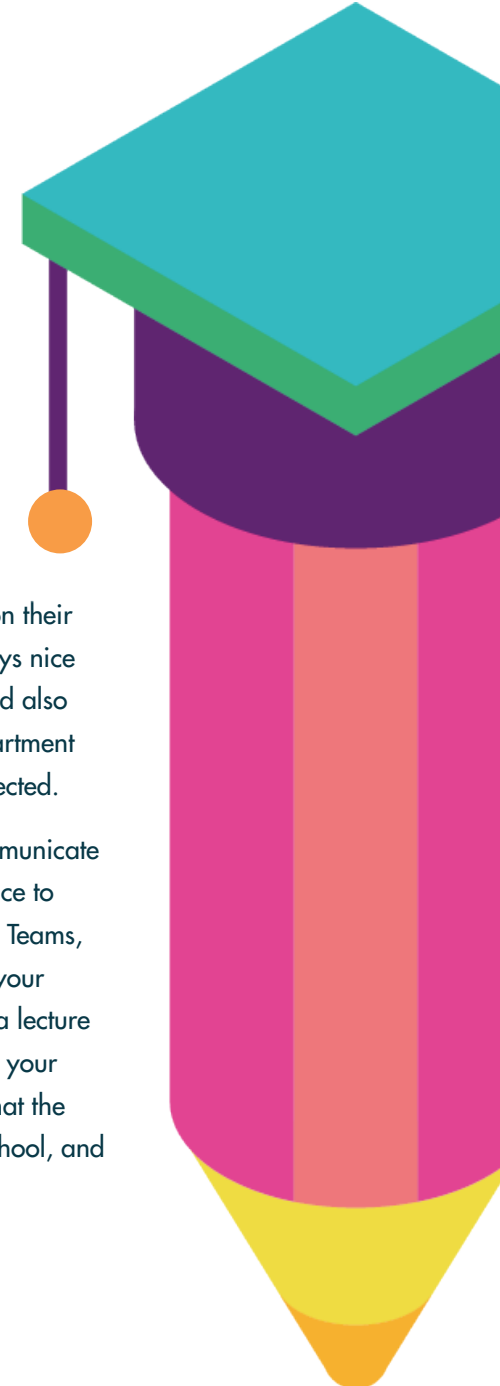
PRESENTING YOUR FINDINGS


This means attending the appropriate meetings, raising issues and working with the relevant staff to find solutions. It is important you play an active role in meetings in order to communicate any issues you may have.

LETTING YOUR PEERS KNOW

Let your course mates know what you've been doing on their behalf. Communication works both ways and it's always nice to know what you say has been acted upon. This would also apply when the answer from the university or the department is not what you or your fellow students wanted or expected.

It is up to you, to decide, which is the best way to communicate feedback to your fellow peers. Generally, the rule is face to face if it's a personal issue. You can also use Microsoft Teams, it's free with your Aston University email. An email to your department if it's to a group of students; or directly at a lecture or seminar. Remember to let the university know about your concerns – they can't improve if you don't tell them what the problem is. Keep in touch with the Reps within your school, and with the Students' Union.



An illustration in the top right corner shows a graduation cap (mortarboard) with a tassel, and three stylized figures sitting at a long desk. One figure is using a laptop, another is looking at a laptop, and a third is also using a laptop. The desk is pink and the background is white.

**TALK TO OTHER REPS IN
YOUR SCHOOLS TO FIND
OUT IF THERE ARE ANY
LIVE OR ONGOING ISSUES
FROM THOSE WHO HAVE
ALREADY TAKEN YOUR
MODULE OR COURSES**

HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS



GATHERING IDEAS:

- Talk to your cohort.
- Be observant.
- Look at recent student feedback such as NSS data for your school.
- Talk to other Reps in your school if there are any live/ongoing issues, especially from those who have already taken your module/course.
- Talk to Reps in other schools and find out what's going on for them – you'll be surprised how different things are in other disciplines.
- It could be possible to take ideas from other departments or schools that you can implement into your own school.

FORMING ARGUMENTS:

- Decide what you are going to say and how you will present it at meetings.
- Talk things through with your fellow Reps or other students.
- Get as informed as you can by seeking information informally through school staff.
- If you need more evidence consider surveys (Survey Monkey, Google Survey, Doodle forms). These will help you back up your arguments with student views that you can refer to officially.

FEEDING BACK:

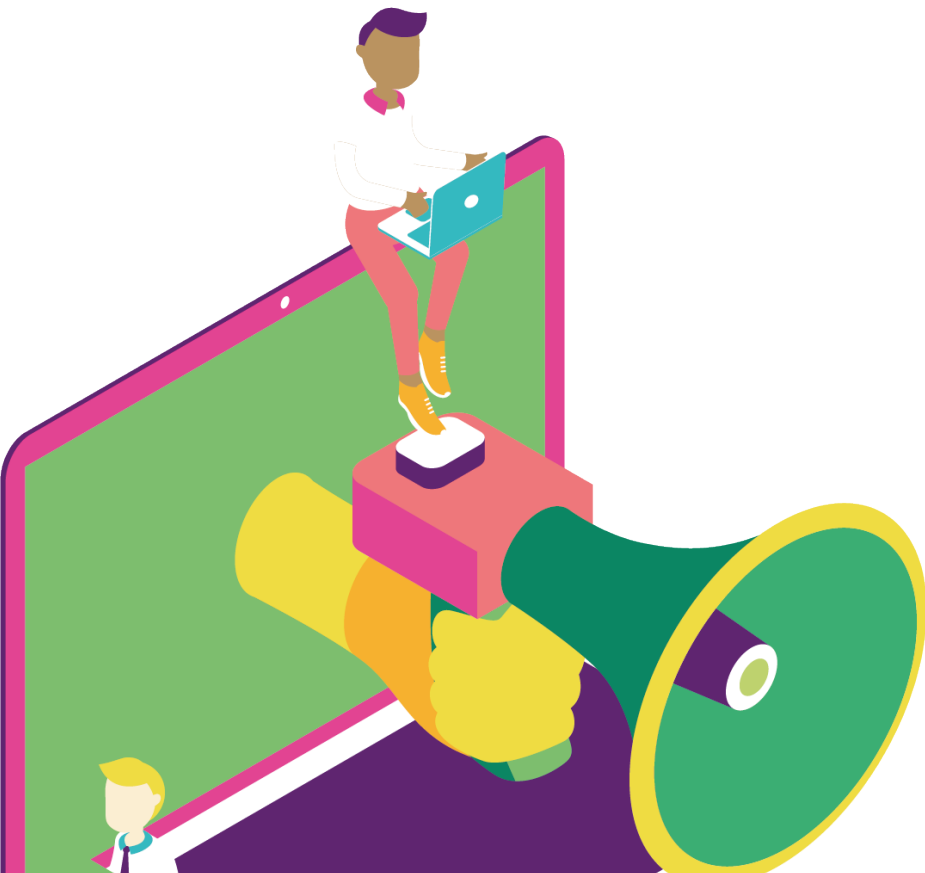
- Coordinate with other Reps in your school to send an email to your whole cohort updating them on the issues you have raised and what the outcomes were.
- Update any social networking sites after each meeting or development.
- Let the VPE know if you run into any difficulties, or come across something you think might affect a wider range of students.
- Keep a record of what you raise and what the outcomes were. You can use this as a point of reference and it will be really useful for the next year's Rep, if they find themselves in the same situation.

KEEP A RECORD OF WHAT YOU RAISE AND WHAT THE OUTCOMES WERE. YOU CAN USE THIS AS A POINT OF REFERENCE AND IT WILL BE REALLY USEFUL FOR THE NEXT YEAR'S REP IN THE SAME POSITION



WHAT ISSUES CAN REPS HELP WITH?

As a Rep you are principally there to represent the view of your cohort and their academic matters. These are issues that will be directly reflected to your experience of teaching and learning but also include wider issues that affect your studies. You are not here to help with student individual problems except when they raise more general concerns that will have an impact on others. If a student wants to discuss the following, you will need to refer them to a more appropriate source for help:



INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

It is not a Rep's responsibility to represent students in regards to their marks. Students who have concerns about their grades should speak in the first instance to their school office/lecturer. Then get into contact with the ARC within the SU via advice@aston.ac.uk. Here they can receive advice on if they have grounds for an academic appeal or complaint.

ALLEGATION OF HARASSMENT OR BULLYING:

Students who allege that they have been bullied or harassed should contact the ARC.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS:

As a Rep you may hear lots of complaining and it is your role to listen. However, if a student wants to make a formal complaint to the university or Students' Union – they should be referred to official procedure or get into contact with the ARC. www.astonsu.com/advice/

PERSONAL PROBLEMS:

If a student has personal problems you can refer them to the ARC. www.astonsu.com/advice/

BEING A STUDENT REP: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Apart from the enormous sense of satisfaction, you may be wondering what you get in return for all your hard work. We want to make sure that being a Rep is not a thankless task and also that you make the most of the experience you have gained as a Rep in your future endeavours.



VALUABLE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR CV

It's a tough world of employment out there, you can use the skills you gain throughout the year to showcase and increase your chances to obtain a job.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This is a big one for lots of employers. From presenting information in meetings and lectures to writing reports and emails, you'll learn a lot about putting your point across effectively. You will also be able to demonstrate experience of effective listening in order to gain the fullest picture of the situation.



ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

You will need to develop effective time management and organisational skills to make sure you can fit in your work and your Rep commitments.



NETWORKING SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

The university is an enormous organisation with numerous layers of management. To be an effective Rep – you'll need to develop useful contacts in order to raise issues at the appropriate level and get your voice heard. These contacts may help you in both a representative and personal capacity. The stronger and more numerous your contacts are within the university, the more people you may be able to ask for references.

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH AS A STUDENT REP

Effective communication is the foundation of a good Rep. Try to be varied and persistent in your efforts to canvas student opinion. Here are some tips to get started:



ASK TO DO SHOUTOUTS – At the start of a lecture ask your lecturer if you could say a few words to introduce yourself and tell them about what you do as a Rep. Remember if your lecture is too big to interact on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, you can always ask your lecturer to do the shout-out for you or you can ask if you can post in the lecture chat.



TALK TO PEOPLE – Make sure your cohort know that you are their Rep and listen to their concerns. This could be before a lecture or even in your own social space.



PUBLICISE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS – Your email will be made available on MAP for your cohort to get into contact with you. This will make it easy for students to contact you. You can also ask students to send emails to students you represent.



NOTICE BOARDS – Use your department notice board to update students regularly. Here you can place contact details or any updates and changes that have been made on your course.



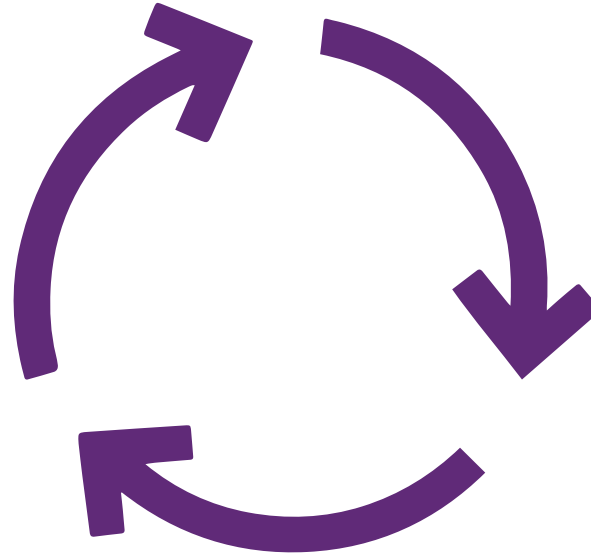
USE ONLINE SURVEYS – You can use this to gather opinions/data such as SurveyMonkey.



HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF MEETINGS

BEFORE MEETING

- Understand the purpose of the meeting: the issues that can be discussed and cannot be discussed. This will enable you to raise issues that are relevant to the meeting you are attending.
- Look through any agendas and minutes – so you are able to collate student feedback for the meeting, so these can be discussed.
- Make notes of points you might want to raise or any questions.
- Always explain your absence – if you are unable to attend make sure to send apologies to the chair.



DURING A MEETING

- Be punctual
- Know who is who: you'll find members to be more responsive if you address them by their name.
 - Listen to others' views.
 - Be concise when making points.
 - Give examples to illustrate your points.
 - Never be afraid to ask questions.
- Do not be scared to put across an opposing view.
- Have a positive attitude: Try and present solutions to issues rather than being seen as complaining about everything.

AFTER A MEETING

- Feedback: it is essential you feedback to students in your school and/or department exactly what happened at the meeting.
- Carry out action points you have been allocated.
- Spread the word: where you come across an issue you believe affects more than just your department (department/school), let the Students' Union VP Education know as soon as possible.



THE SSC

UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT STAFF COMMITTEE

FOR UG & PGT



Student Staff Committee (SSC) –

- Student-Staff Committee a formal programme-level committee that provides an official and recognised forum for the consideration of student feedback from student representatives.
- The main prerogative of the SSC is to allow and encourage debate and discussion, creative input to conjure into useful strategy, and to produce and monitor quantifiable coherent actions.
- There shall be one SSC per programme or subject area. SSCs shall meet at least once a term. Programme director will appoint a student co-chair and a secretary who is a member of university staff. The co-chair is responsible for the operation of the SSC meetings. The secretary is responsible for taking meeting minutes, managing issues reported and their responses, and actively monitoring the progress of actions.

THE SSC

UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT STAFF COMMITTEE CONTINUED

FOR UG & PGT

Student Staff Committee (SSC) -

- Discussions should impact and inform the curation and change of the curriculum, ensuring it is up to date with the current climate and reflects the demands of students where possible.
- Each programme or subject area should have its own dedicated SSC.
- SSC should provide a forum for the student voice in relation to programmes of study.
- Minutes from SSC meeting should remain open to the Learning and Teaching Committee in case they wish to raise any issues from the meeting minutes.



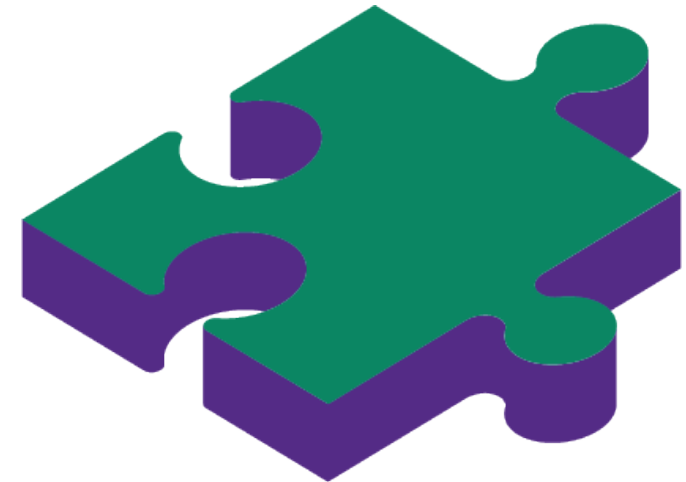
THE SSC

UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT STAFF COMMITTEE CONTINUED

FOR UG & PGT

Student Staff Committee (SSC) -

SSC are held at least once per time and a minimum of three times per academic year. Meetings should be attended by all student representatives on the programme the Academic Lead on Student Representation (ALSR), along with appropriate subject leads and programme directors agreed by the SSCs. Meeting dates, times and members are set before the academic year starts.



Informal and extra meetings can be scheduled throughout the academic year in response to urgent matters or where feedback and or reporting of issues is also of urgency. The reason for the meeting must be supplied and seconded by at least two other members of the SSC. It is up to the chair and the ALSR to give every SSC member appropriate notice of the new time, date, and location of such meetings.

THE SSCR

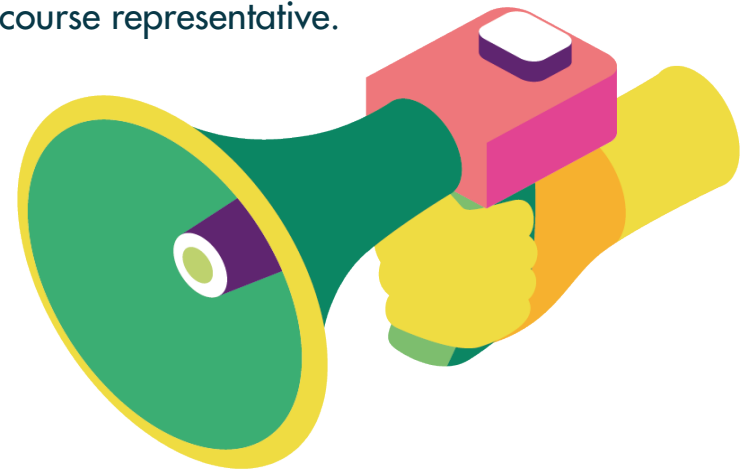
UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT STAFF COMMITTEE RESEARCH

FOR PGR ONLY

Student Staff Committee Research (SSCR) -

- Each college will have their own SSCR and hold a meeting twice a year minimum. All student representatives are invited to contribute, contributions can be made electronically or in writing. PGR who are not representatives can submit feedback in writing. Meetings can be with all reps or with specific research related groups within a college.
- SSCR is co-chaired by the Research College Representative of the College Research Committee and its Chair, the Secretary is usually the College Research Committee Secretary. Meetings will be shared among all the research students in the college and passed on to the College Research Committee.
- Each department requires a staff representative along with a student course representative.

All other aspects remain the same as SSC



GLOSSARY

UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

Meeting Minutes -

- A written record of all aspects of a meeting that is of relevancy and significance to the agendas of said meeting. Meeting attendees and absences, highlight the agendas to be discussed in the meeting, monitor points made that are significance and by who, makes note of what points of action were delegated and to who.

Learning and Teaching Committee -

- A committee that acts to develop, enable, and evaluate the implementation of the Universities strategy for learning and teaching, ensuring that their colleges strategies align and support with the university's strategy
- The committee has the power and responsibility to enable and evaluate the work of colleges in highlighting and sharing ideal practices and innovation of programmes design, how it is delivered, taught, the feedback and assessment methods. They also are expected to make recommendations to the enhancement to the standards of taught programmes and over all student learning experience.

GLOSSARY

UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

Academic Lead on Student Representation (ALSR) -

- An academic member of staff who takes responsibility and overseeing the implementation of the Student Representation Framework on a small level relevant to a school and even at a programme, or subject level.
- At least one ALSR is required per school.
- They are there to ensure that the SSC's duties are conducted in a way that corresponds to the Student Representation Framework whilst being effective.

Union Senate -

- Union Senate is a meeting held by Aston Students' Union, which is open to all student representatives and attended by the Vice President of Education along with enough University staff in senior roles to cover the broad spectrum of the student experience. It serves as an opportunity for students to ask questions to the University and SU staff and for university staff and the SU to provide relevant updates that are significant to the student cohort.

GLOSSARY

UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

Programme Director -

- A program director is responsible for overseeing an academic program or department within the university. The program director is there to provide leadership, coordination, and management of the program's operations, curriculum, faculty, and students.
- They take the helm for the overall organisation and consistency of the programme, especially ensuring that the learning outcomes of the programme remain met and relevant to industry standards.
- Ensures that all future planning and current practices reflects that of the universities vision. Supervises the staff and faculty within the programme and is seen as a point of contact for support from students.



GLOSSARY

UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

Vice President of Education (VPE) -

- A program director is responsible for overseeing an academic program or department within the university. The program director is there to provide leadership, coordination, and management of the program's operations, curriculum, faculty, and students.
- They take the helm for the overall organisation and consistency of the programme, especially ensuring that the learning outcomes of the programme remain met and relevant to industry standards.
- Ensures that all future planning and current practices reflects that of the universities vision. Supervises the staff and faculty within the programme and is seen as a point of contact for support from students.

GLOSSARY

UNDERSTANDING THE JARGON

- **The Officers or Sabbatical Officers** - They are the democratically elected full time student officers, which include the President, Vice President of education, Vice President of Student Activities, Vice President of Welfare and the Vice President of communities
- **NUS or National Union of Students** - confederation of students' unions in the United Kingdom
- **Student Reps or Student Representatives** - students to represent student courses and overall experience within higher education
- **School Reps or School Representatives** - Student representatives that represent the overarching school for their course. School reps are a limited position and have desired requirements such as being in 2nd year or above and having experience as a course rep and or acquired applicable relevant experience
- **Voluntary Officers** - Elected officers representing smaller student groups, such as BAME Officer, LGBTQ+ Officer, Disabled students' Officer, Commuter Student Officer, International Students' Officer, Postgraduate Officer, Sustainability Officer, Raise & Give (R.A.G) Officer, Womens Officer, Mature Students' Officer
- **Students' Union Elections or SU Elections** - Bi yearly elections taking place in autumn and early spring to decide on the next intake of Part time, Sabbatical Officers and our universities NUS delegates
- **Academic Awards** - Recognition for all academic hard work, including efforts towards the student rep role

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO
SIMPLY **LISTEN** TO STUDENT
VOICE. EDUCATORS HAVE
AN **ETHICAL IMPERATIVE**
TO DO SOMETHING WITH
STUDENTS, AND THAT IS
WHY MEANINGFUL STUDENT
INVOLVEMENT IS **VITAL** TO
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!
**REMEMBER YOU ARE THE TRUE EXPERT IN
STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT ASTON.**

**IF YOU HAVE ANY URGENT QUERIES,
PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT -
YOUR VP EDUCATION.**

