



UWTSD  
**Students'  
Union**

# **Course Rep Handbook**



**Course & Class  
Representatives**

# UWTSD SU Course Rep Handbook

Congratulations on being elected as a Course Rep! We are excited to have you onboard with our work to ensure that UWTSD students have the best possible experience during their time as a student here. This role opens up interesting and exciting opportunities for you to have influence on your university, and to gain valuable skills and experience.

This handbook has been put together in collaboration with the Student Voice Reps, for you to refer to during your time as a Course Rep.

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## Course Rep Checklist

Here are some ideas to help you get started with your role: These will also help you understand some of the things contained within this book:

### ☐ **Read your Course Rep Handbook.**

This will be a vital source of information, which you can dip in and out of as you experience your role throughout the academic year. It comes with lots of useful resources and key contacts to help you succeed.

### ☐ **Create an account on our website: [uwtsdunion.co.uk/policies/privacy-notice](https://uwtsdunion.co.uk/policies/privacy-notice).**

We will populate our website with useful content for you. You will also be able to Submit and Vote for Big Ideas, a platform where you can make recommendations and steer the direction of the work of your Students' Union. Keep us bookmarked!

### ☐ **Attend training sessions.**

Your Course Rep Fundamentals training (approx. 2 hours online) is mandatory and will equip you with the knowledge you will need to thrive in your new role. It will provide a fantastic opportunity to meet other Course Reps and members of the Students' Union team and will give you the chance to ask us any questions you have.



There are also additional optional training sessions that you are strongly encouraged to attend, which will support your development of knowledge and skills in representation, engaging students, and time management. Other development opportunities will be available throughout the year, so do look out for these, and let us know if there is any other training you think would benefit you.

### **❑ Be Visible.**

Introduce yourself to your fellow students! Tell them about your role, your aims for the year, and how you can help to enhance their student experience. Setting up a group or chat on Teams is a wonderful way to communicate with them.

### **❑ Prepare.**

Contact your Programme Director for details of any upcoming Student Staff Committees (SSC) or other activities you can get involved in. Mark them in your calendar to give yourself plenty of time and flexibility to meet course-mates and prepare for meetings.

### **❑ Keep a record of your achievements.**

As a Course Rep you will have the opportunity to influence and make positive changes to impact your cohort. Make sure you keep a record of any wins – big or small. We want to hear about them so we can celebrate your successes with the wider University community. Contact us at [studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk).

We have included some resources in the Course Rep Handbook to support you with this.

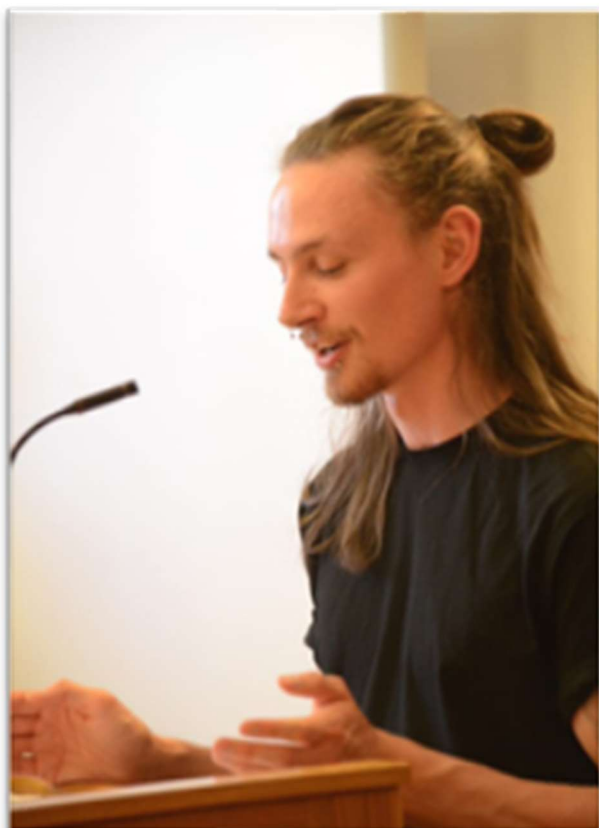
### **❑ Submit and vote on Big Ideas!**

If you have an idea and would like the Students' Union to drive it forward, submit it as a Big Idea on our website. Other students will be able to back you up and it may become a policy: [uwtsdunion.co.uk/big-ideas](http://uwtsdunion.co.uk/big-ideas).

### **❑ Stay connected with us and ask for help when you need it.**

We are always here to lend a listening ear. If you are unsure of whether to raise an issue, want some advice, or have feedback about your role, please get in touch with us at any time by emailing [studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk). You can also arrange to speak to us over MS Teams, Phone, and Face-to-face, by booking an appointment.

## What is a Course Rep?

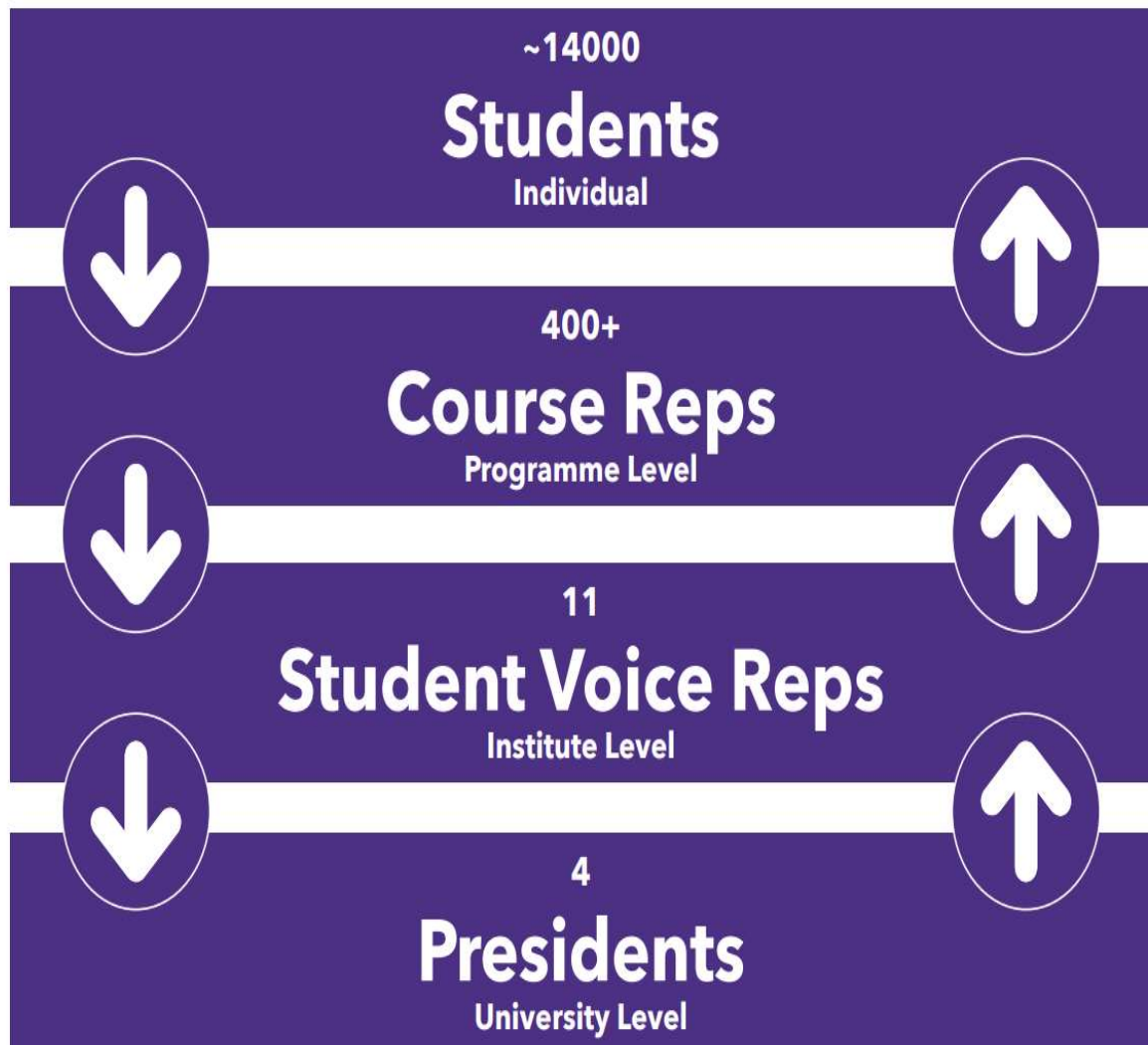


Student Voice is at the heart of all we do, and Course Reps are an integral part of our partnership approach to embed this in decision-making at all levels of UWTSD. Feedback is invaluable for the continuous improvement of the student experience at UWTSD, and your position of Course Rep is one of the most important in making sure the views and experiences of students are heard.

As a Course Rep, your role is to canvas students on your course, to find out what they think, and to represent their views. You will be an essential and valued link between students, the University and the Students' Union, serving as a conduit for student voice on Student Staff Committees and playing an integral role in quality processes such as Annual Programme Reviews and Institute-level reviews. You will also provide feedback on all aspects of the educational experience to the Students' Union, so that you can enrich and steer the direction of our work.

Although Course Reps are student representatives, for our system to be effective, academic staff have a vital role to play in ensuring reps are elected for all courses. For you to have an idea of where you fit in, we have unpacked the expectations of your role of Rep, the SU, and the University.

## The Academic Representation Structure



Your role plays an important part in the representation of students' academic experiences at UWTSD. Feedback is funnelled up through Course reps to Student Voice Reps, and then onto the Presidents, to ensure that students are being represented on all levels in the University. As the arrows on the diagram demonstrate, communication goes both ways, up and down the structure. Course Reps should work closely with students and Student Voice Reps.

## The Role of Course Rep

As a Course Rep you are expected to:

- Promote your role and responsibilities with others on your course, so you become a friendly face and a point of contact for anybody with feedback for the University.
- Consult students on matters of their academic experiences, finding out what they think of things such as feedback and assessment, course structure, and teaching and learning.
- Represent the views of students at Student Staff Committees, Annual Programme Reviews, and Institute-level reviews where applicable.
- Relay meeting outcomes to students on your course, to make sure they are informed of how their feedback is being implemented.
- Where necessary, to signpost students to more appropriate University or Students' Union services so that they are effectively supported.
- Actively engage with Student Voice Reps by channelling wider trends in student feedback in their direction.



In order to thrive and enjoy your role as Course Rep, it is important that you:

- Participate in compulsory training run by the Students' Union.
- Familiarise yourself with the University and Students' Union services so that you can refer more complex issues.
- Attend informal meetings run by the Students' Union and Student Voice Reps.
- Stay connected with the Students' Union, to report on progress and any areas you need additional support. Help us to help you!



## The Role of the Students' Union

The role of the Students' Union is to support you in your role of Course Rep. We are here as a point of contact for you throughout your time as a rep, to answer any questions or concerns you have, and to empower you in your role. We are here to support you through training, helping you to promote your role, and to assist you in raising issues where you are unsure of how or where to go.

The Student Voice Reps (SVRs), work in partnership with senior staff at the University to create solutions and make your voices heard. This is the next step up from a Course Rep, with SVRs representing all students within the same Institute at a campus. Hence, there are 11 SVRs covering the whole University.

## The Role of the University

The role of the University is to provide you with opportunities to give feedback about your experiences, such as through organising Student Staff Committees. The University has a commitment to ensuring student voice activity is embedded in all aspects of its planning, and to acknowledge its importance in enhancing the student experience. The University also have a role in creating a discursive, inclusive culture where you are given the opportunity to raise ideas and issues, and where the views of students are treated with respect.

This is all laid out in the [University's Student Charter](#) and [Academic Quality Handbook](#) (see links under Policies and Procedures).



## How to Be a Course Rep

Now you know a little more about the role of Course Rep, and how you will be supported by the University and Students' Union, you'll want some tips and advice about how to effectively carry out your role.

Remember that you have been elected as Course Rep by your classmates to act and speak up on behalf of students on your programme. Your role is to find out what students on your course think about their academic experiences, and to relay that information to the University so that they can make positive changes. It is important during your time as Course Rep that you do not simply give your own opinions or represent the views of your friends.

You should actively engage, canvas, and represent your whole group, even if this means you do not necessarily agree with the opinions you are presenting. Remember that if you're ever unsure or uncomfortable in presenting student feedback, you can contact one of our Student Voice team for advice: [studentvoice@uwstd.ac.uk](mailto:studentvoice@uwstd.ac.uk).

### Unsure of how to promote yourself?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Ask your lecturers if you can make announcements in class. Use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself to your classmates, outlining your role and how students can contact you. Once you have settled into your role, you can do this before any upcoming Student Staff Committees to help you prepare.
- Ask to put up your contact details on your programme noticeboards or on forums on Moodle.



- Talk directly with students as much as possible. Chatting to students on your course is the most effective way to find out what they think and show them that you are committed to your role. You could even consider setting up 'drop-in' sessions, where you invite students to join you for a cuppa in between lectures.

- Use the Students' Union! We are here to support you throughout your time as Course Rep. Talk to Students' Union staff if you have an idea to boost engagement with your classmates and we will help you to set it up.
- Consider writing a blog post for our website [uwtsdunion.co.uk](http://uwtsdunion.co.uk) to share your success stories or to raise your profile as a Rep.

Remember that the more you engage with students and their feedback, the better understanding you will develop of them. Having a sound understanding of their views will give you confidence in representing them.



## Student feedback

Sometimes students may not be forthcoming with feedback, but that is not necessarily because they have nothing to raise, and it is important to get both positive and negative feedback.

## collecting feedback Methods of

Use the methods that suit your group best and will give you the type of data you are looking for. Some suggestions:

- Lectures – ask if you can have five minutes at the beginning or end of the class without the lecturer present to talk to everyone together.
- Speak to students individually before/after a class.
- Online forums e.g., Teams, Moodle, or social media groups
- Host a focus group (online or in-person)
- Anonymous surveys e.g., Microsoft Forms
- Opinion polls

## **Module evaluation surveys**

Every module has a feedback survey. This data is collected by the University and is really useful for course staff, it helps them to plan future teaching based on the feedback from these surveys, so do encourage your classmates to fill these out on Moodle.

## **Unsure of how to resolve issues?**

Do not panic – we are here to give you as much help and support as you need. Your Course Rep training should equip you with all the information you need to effectively resolve issues, however most problems can be resolved in the following ways:

### **An issue affecting students on your course**

If it is a pressing matter, it is best not to wait for your next SSC to raise concerns. Tackle time-sensitive issues by addressing them directly with your programme team. If you do not feel comfortable in doing this, you can ask the Students' Union for some support.

If an issue is brought to you and it is not time-sensitive but remains an important piece of feedback, collate this and take it to your next SSC. The benefit of this is that it will be heard, and therefore should be actively addressed by the University.

### **An issue affecting students across the University**

If issues are raised with you that are impacting students outside of your programme as well, the best thing to do is to make your Sabbatical Officers and Student Voice Reps aware of the feedback. They will be able to raise these concerns at an appropriate University committee, where high-level issues are addressed.

### **An issue involving individual staff members**

It is important in any meeting where you are asked to give feedback, that you do not name or publicly criticise individual members of staff or students. If you are approached with concerns about an individual staff member, it is always best to seek advice from the Students' Union. We can help to address issues sensitively and discreetly; talk to one of the Student Voice team.

## The boundaries of your role

As a Course Rep, you may find at times that students feel more comfortable in approaching you with issues than University or SU staff. At times you may be unsure of how to address them, and it is important you are clear on what you can and cannot help with.

### *You can help with...*

In summary, you will be a point of contact for any course-level issues. Use the resources in this handbook to help you keep records and document them. Issues may include:

- Study resources (such as availability of books, computer labs, laptop loans, library resources, content uploaded to Moodle)
- Curriculum and course content issues
- Communication between University staff, Students' Union, and students
- Timetabling issues
- Placement concerns
- Hidden course costs that the University may be unaware of
- Issues of course structure (for example, block teaching, work distribution)
- Assessments and deadlines
- Teaching methods and resources
- Accessibility

### *You cannot help with...*

You should always signpost when students want to discuss any of the following issues with you:



- Welfare concerns – *signpost to Student Services*
- Formal complaints – *signpost to SU*
- Individual student cases such as allegations of academic misconduct, non-academic misconduct, appeals, extenuating circumstances – *signpost to SU*
- Allegations of harassment or bullying – *signpost to SU*
- Individual student performance – *signpost to course staff*
- Complaints against staff members – *signpost to SU*

Remember that it is okay to not know all the answers. Other students on your course will value that you are there as a first point of contact even if you do not know how to help them. Just contact us at the Students' Union and we will help you out. Alternatively, the Hwb helpdesk is an excellent service if you are looking for a point of contact within the University to support you in referring a student.

### Setting your own boundaries



It is important for your personal wellbeing and study-work-life balance to set some boundaries with the students you represent. Pick a method of contact that works for you but that also will not impose on your personal time. We know many Course Reps use WhatsApp groups but make sure that you establish with students that you probably won't be able to reply instantly. It may be an idea to mute the conversation briefly when you are taking time to focus on something or when you are taking time for yourself.

Nothing that students should be coming to you with should be an absolute emergency – you can remind students of the support services available to them. If you feel that your role is having an impact on your studies and/or personal life, please contact the Student Voice for support.

### **Top tips for success**

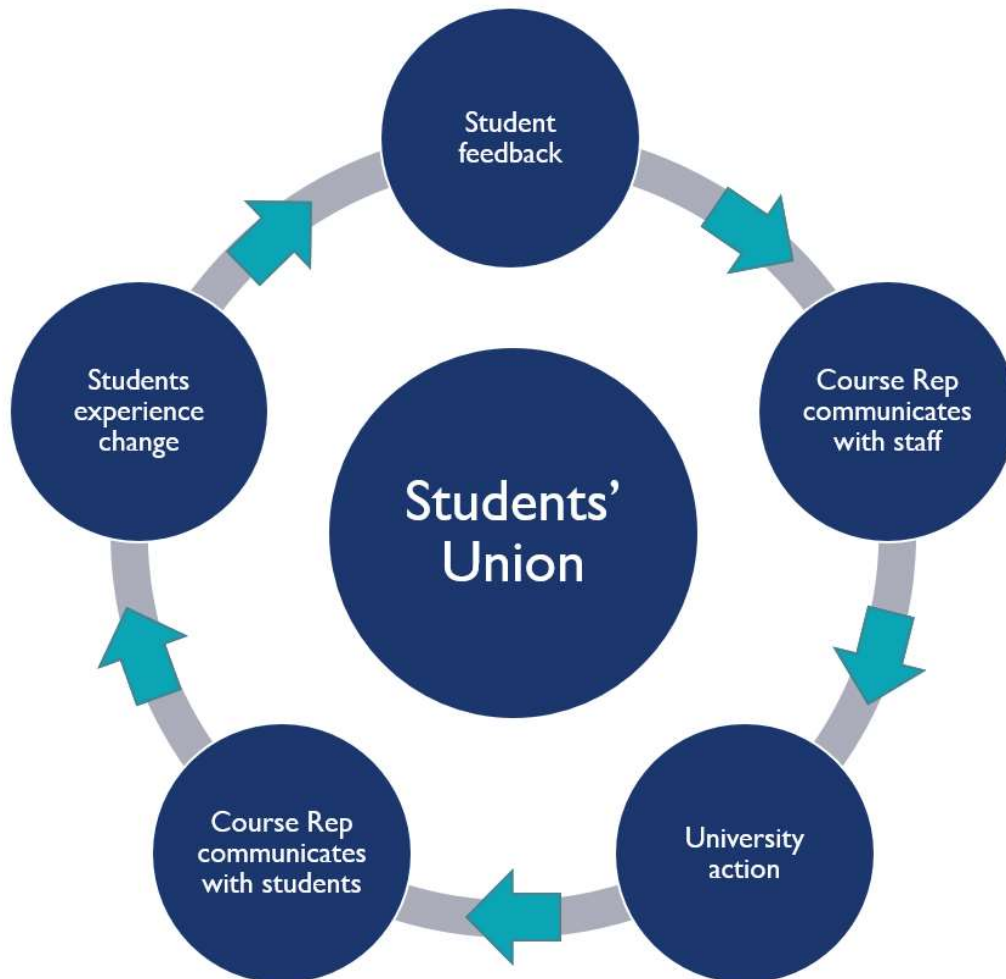
**“I would advise Course Reps to keep up communication with their groups and remind them that they are there for them! Regular check-ins to see if anyone has any feedback.**

**Make plenty of notes before a meeting about the feedback they are giving. Keep it professional and clear.”**

**- Lauren Thomas, 2021/22 Student Voice Rep for the Institute of Education & Humanities, Carmarthen**

## The Feedback Loop

The feedback loop is a continuous cycle of communication with all relevant stakeholders, to ensure that student feedback drives improvements to the student experience forwards.



**Student feedback** - Issues, ideas, and positives raised by classmates.

**Course Rep communicates with staff** - Student feedback is taken to relevant staff via SSCs and other methods (if more urgent).

**University action** - You work in partnership with staff to address the feedback you have given.



**Course Rep communicates with students** - Keeping classmates updated with where their feedback has gone and what action is being taken. Sometimes this will not happen, but it is important to keep the loop going regardless.

**Students experience change** - Action leads to an improved student experience.

**Student feedback** - The cycle starts again: student feedback continues to be collated, particularly how students feel in relation to any changes that have been made a result of prior feedback.

It is really important that reps and staff work together to close the feedback loop.

## Student Staff Committees

Student Staff Committees (SSCs) are important meetings with course and programme staff that you attend as a Course Rep – sometimes they are known by a different name, but the principles are the same. At least three SSCs will be held over the period of a year. These are formal meetings that are minuted, which means that the student feedback you present at the meeting will go on record. This means that there is evidence of discussions and agreed action points.

### Preparing for an SSC

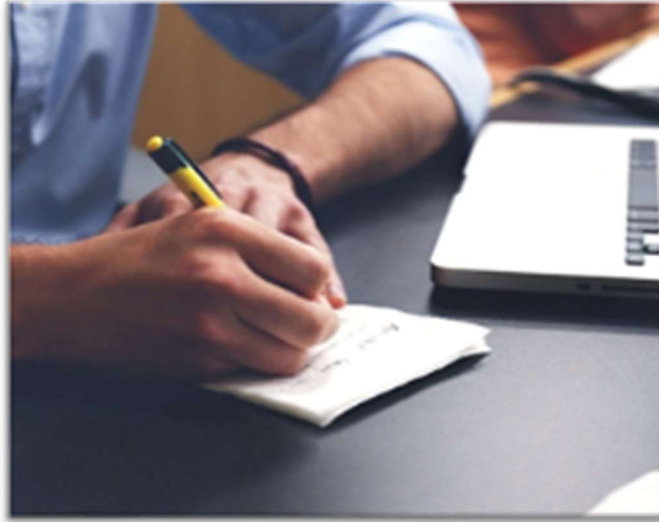
Make sure that you are prepared for the meeting to ensure that you can effectively represent students during the meeting.

- Find out the dates and times of the meeting – please put these in your diary and prioritise these meetings as much as possible
- Collect student feedback in advance – *Is there anything on the SSC agenda that you could ask students about?*
- Read the minutes from previous meetings – note what student feedback has been discussed before
- Write down any questions and specific points that you want to voice in the meeting

### During an SSC

Remember that you are representing all students in your cohort at these meetings. These meetings exist to give students' views a platform, but you should be professional. This does not mean dressing up smartly but rather being professional in how you participate in discussions.

- Give feedback constructively – provide ideas for solutions to issues, and do not single out staff members
- Be respectful – especially if there is disagreement on a matter



- Take notes and ask questions – if you do not understand something ask it to be explained (staff will sometimes forget that not everyone knows everything that they do)

### **On the agenda (what to expect):**

- Updates from staff
- Annual programme reviews
- Module feedback

A lot can be on the agenda for these meetings. You may find that need to push for your chance to provide feedback to come sooner on the agenda so that it is prioritised, and you have ample time for discussion.

### **After an SSC**

Your work does not end when the meeting does. Make sure that you close the feedback loop by updating students on what was discussed during the SSC. The Student Voice team and your Student Voice Rep would love to hear from you about how your meeting went too, especially if there is anything you may need support with.

## **UWTSD Students' Union: Values and Priorities**

At UWTSD Students' Union, we are proud of our activities which help to amplify and strengthen your voice.

### **Our priorities are:**

- 1) To strengthen your influence over decisions that affect you.
- 2) To ensure that you understand your rights and have help when you need it.

- 3) To invest in activities and opportunities to enable you to develop your skills.
- 4) To campaign for a fairer and more inclusive society.
- 5) To make it easy for you to direct our work and resources.

### **Our values are:**

- 1) That education should be shaped by students.
- 2) That a university experience is more than a degree.
- 3) That University and Students' Union activities and services should be accessible to all.
- 4) In challenging inequality.
- 5) In student leadership.

As one of our members you can hold your Students' Union accountable to these values and priorities. You should also consider them when conducting your role, as a key part of the student representation system.

## **Policies and Procedures**

The following are really useful for you to know about and share with students. Please contact the Student Voice team if you would like support going through these.

**Academic appeals, misconduct, and advice:** [uwtsdunion.co.uk/academic-advice](https://uwtsdunion.co.uk/academic-advice)

**Academic Quality Handbook:** [Academic Quality Handbook | UWTSD](#)

➔ *This is really useful for ensuring that your course is being run in line with university standards.*

**Lecture recording policy:** [UWTSD Lecture Recording Policy](#)

**Student Charter:** [Student Charter | UWTSD](#)

➔ *This sets out what you should expect from the University and the Students' Union, and what is expected of you.*

## **Key Contacts**

### **Student Voice Team**

Student Voice & Advocacy Manager: Euan Morrison

Student Voice Co-ordinators: Jeremy Harvey, Samina Zia, Lubaba Khalid, Farrah Black

The easiest way to get in touch with the team is via email: [studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:studentvoice@uwtsd.ac.uk).

You can arrange to have a Teams call or a face-to-face meeting if that would be helpful - availability for in-person meetings is limited.

You will receive communications from the Student Voice team throughout the year. Please put aside some time to read these and respond if requested to.

## Other Student Reps

As we mentioned, there are other student representatives. To find out who your Student Voice Representative is, check out the [Student Voice](#) pages of our website. Remember, you can contact your Student Voice Rep for support and advice if you think that you have a problem that's too big for you to deal with.

You can also contact the Sabbatical Officers and can find their contact details [here](#). The Sabbatical Officers are the leaders of the Students' Union and are there to help and can be contacted for anything that is non-academic.

## Useful Links

**Hwb:** [hwb.uwtsd.ac.uk](http://hwb.uwtsd.ac.uk)

**Student Services:** [uwtsd.ac.uk/student-services/](http://uwtsd.ac.uk/student-services/)

**Students' Union Advice:** [uwtsdunion.co.uk/advice](http://uwtsdunion.co.uk/advice)

**Careers Service:** [uwtsd.ac.uk/careers/](http://uwtsd.ac.uk/careers/)

**IT Support:** [uwtsd.ac.uk/its/](http://uwtsd.ac.uk/its/)