

Department Reps

Shaping departments for the better



Department Reps: 80



Course Reps: 1,500



Students: 37,000

Course Reps

Shaping courses for the better



STUDENT REP TRAINING 2015

Analysis and Report

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1.0 Executive summary

1.1 Department Reps

Department Reps are a new role for the 2015/16 academic year as well as their training, therefore a review has been conducted to establish satisfaction with the training and to see if any changes need to be made for future years.

Overall, the feedback was positive; most of the Department Reps understood their role and how it makes a difference. Furthermore, the majority of students understood the types of meetings they would be attending and the support that is available to them. Finally, the majority of Department Reps understood how to set their objectives and the support they can receive to meet these. All the Department Reps stated they understood the ways in which they can engage with Course Reps and the ways in which they can engage with other Department Reps.

Reps were asked to rate how useful they found the different training sessions. Overall, the majority of reps found all three of the training sessions useful (being a Department Rep, how the University works and working with others). There were a small amount of Reps that found these sessions either 'partially useful' or not at all useful'. Finally, Reps were asked to freely comment on what they found useful about the day and what they think could be improved.

1.2 Course Reps

Course Reps were asked to complete an evaluation into their training, overall 426 Reps took part in the 6 question survey. The style of training differed from Faculty to Faculty with Development and Society (D&S) and Health and Wellbeing (H&WB) running their training in smaller groups whereas Arts Computing Engineering and Science (ACES) and the Sheffield Business School (SBS) tended to run theirs in larger groups.

Just under a 100% of Reps stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand their role. When broken down by faculty it appears Development and Society (D&S) have the best understanding of their role and Sheffield Business School (SBS) Reps appear to have the lowest. Just fewer than 100% of Reps 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand how their role makes a difference. When broken down by faculty Health and Wellbeing (H&WB) Reps have the best understanding of how their role makes a difference and SBS Reps appear to have the lowest. When asked about staff-student meetings, just fewer than 100% stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the purpose. When broken down by faculty D&S and H&WB appear to have the best understanding of staff-student meetings, with SBS Reps having the lowest. Just over 90% state they understand the difference between a Course and Department Rep. When broken down by faculty; D&S appear to have the best understanding of the difference, with SBS having the lowest. Finally, when asked how able they feel to find out who their Department Rep is, just over 80% state they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel able. When broken down by faculty H&WB feel the most able whereas SBS appear to feel the least able.

Just over 95% of Reps stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident approaching staff with a problem. When broken down by faculty, it appears D&S Reps are the most confident, with SBS Reps being the least confident. Just fewer than 100% state they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they

feel confident giving feedback to staff. When broken down by faculty, it appears D&S Reps feel most confident, whilst SBS Reps feel the least confident. Finally Course Reps were asked to comment on what they found useful about the training and what they think could be improved.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Methodology

This piece of research was planned and managed by Katie Davorn, Student Rep Programme Leader, in order to measure the effectiveness of the training sessions carried out between October and November.

Two surveys, one specifically for course reps, and the other for departmental reps, were designed by Katie Davorn in consultation with the Students' Union researcher, Pete Crowson, and the Students' Union Research GI, Vicki McGregor. The surveys are comprised of mostly closed questions, with a small number of open ended questions that allowed for free-text feedback. The surveys were conducted online for ACES and SBS whereas H&WB and D&S were paper copies.

426 respondents chose to complete the Course Rep survey (94 from ACES, 190 from D&S, 100 from H&WB and 41 from SBS) and 26 respondents completed the Departmental Rep survey. All participants did so without the offer of an additional incentive.

2.2 Analysis description

Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed and checked, and questions are reported on individually in a structure that reflects the arrangement of the surveys themselves. Regarding the free-text feedback, key themes were identified, and key verbatim quotes have been extracted and included to reference findings.

3.0 Recommendations (Course Reps)

Recommendation 1: Ensure there is consistency during training to ensure best practice across all faculties.

Throughout the 'understanding your role' section (section 4) there are inconsistencies throughout the responses when broken down by faculty. For example, when asked about how well they understand their role D&S Reps have just over 20% more 'definitely agree' responses in comparison to SBS. Furthermore, when asked about how well they understand how a Course Rep makes a difference, H&WB Reps appear to have a better understanding in comparison to the other three faculties. Therefore, it could be argued there is a review of the training to ensure there is consistency in delivery styles to make sure all Course Reps within each faculty have an equal understanding of their role.

Recommendation 2: Ensure staff in all four faculties are approachable so Course Reps feel confident giving feedback.

On the whole it appears most Reps are confident approaching staff with a problem (over 95%, **Figure 9**). However, within SBS this is less high. Furthermore, when giving feedback to staff SBS Reps are less confident (**Figure 12**). Therefore, it is suggested there is focus on improving approachability of staff, to ensure consistencies across all faculties.

Department Reps

Shaping departments for the better

4.1.0 Department Reps

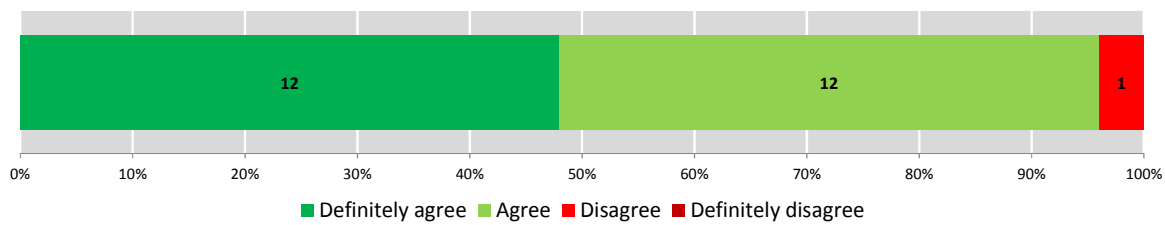
Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understood different aspects of the role on a 4 point scale (definitely agree, agree, disagree and definitely disagree), for clarification the positive responses are shown in green and the negative in red.

Department Rep Training took place on the 31st October 9.30-2 and offered three different sessions to Department Reps, Being a Department Rep, How the University Works and Working With Others. The training was jointly run between Sheffield Hallam Students' Union and Sheffield Hallam University .

4.1.1 Understanding of the role

Firstly, Department reps were asked to rate how well they understand their role as a Rep; this is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Responses to 'I understand my role as a Department Rep':

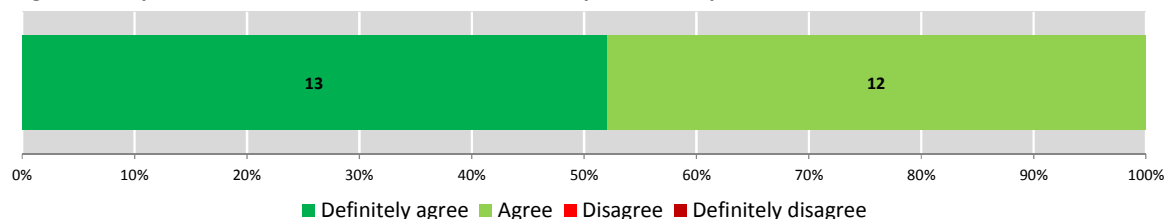


Overall, the majority of Department Reps either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand their role as a Rep, with a very small amount selecting 'Disagree'.

4.1.2 How it makes a difference

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand how the role of a Department Rep makes a difference; this is shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Responses to 'I understand how the role of a Department Rep makes a difference':

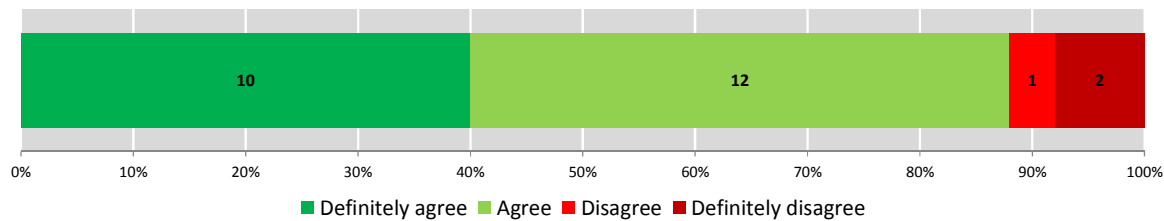


Overall, the graph shows all of Department Reps either selected 'definitely agree' or 'agree' for how well they understand how their role makes a difference.

4.1.3 The meetings

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the different types of meetings they may be attending, as shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Responses to 'I understand the different types of meetings I may be attending':

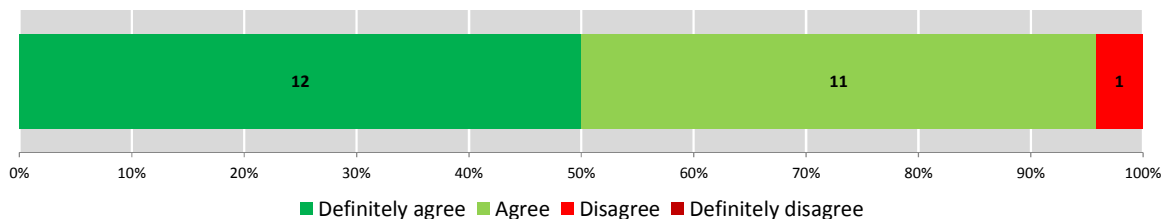


The graph shows the majority of Department Reps either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the different types of meetings they may be attending. However, there are a small number of Department Reps who stated they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they understand the different types of meetings they may be attending.

4.1.4 Support that is available

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the support that is available to them, as shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Responses to 'I understand the support that is available to me':

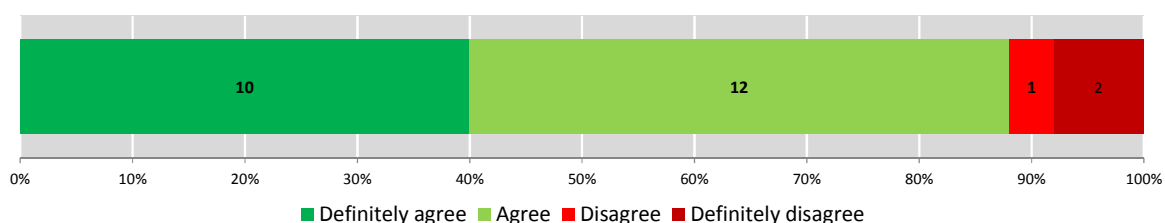


Overall, the majority of Department Reps either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the support that is available to them. However, a very small amount stated they 'disagree' they understand the support that is available to them.

4.1.5 Setting objectives

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand how to set their objectives and the support they can receive to meet these, as shown in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5: Responses to 'I understand how to set my objectives and the support I can receive to meet these':



The graph shows overall the majority of Department Reps either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand how to set their objectives and the support they can receive to meet these. However, there is a small amount who either 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with this.

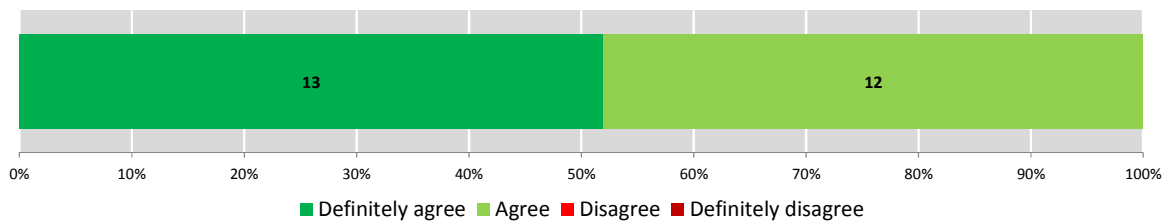
4.2.0 Engagement with colleagues

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the ways they can engage with other colleagues. For clarification the positive responses are shown in green and the negative in red.

4.2.1 Engagement with Course Reps

Firstly, Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the ways in which they can engage with Course Reps, as shown below in **Figure 6**.

Figure 6: Responses to 'I understand the ways in which I can engage with Course Reps':

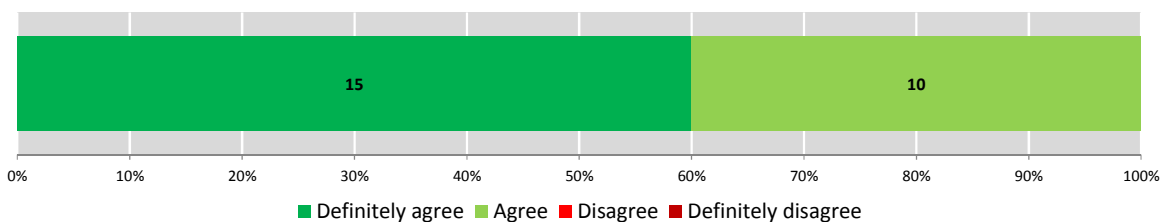


Overall, the graph shows all of the Department Reps either stated 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the ways in which they can engage with Course Reps.

4.2.2 Engagement with other Department Reps

Department Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the different ways in which they can engage with other Department Reps, as shown below in **Figure 7**.

Figure 7: Responses to 'I understand the ways in which I can engage with other Department Reps':



Overall, the graph shows all of the Department Reps either stated 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the ways in which they can engage with other Department Reps.

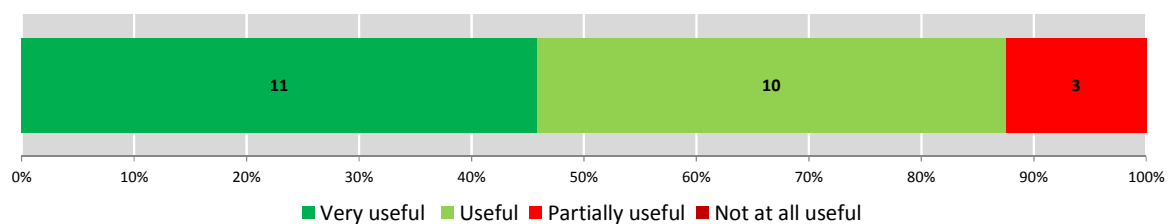
4.3.0 Effectiveness of training sessions

Department Reps were asked to rate how effective they thought the different training sessions were on a four point scale, for clarification the positive responses are shown in green and the negative in red.

4.3.1 Being a Department Rep

Firstly, Department Reps were asked to rate how useful they found the training session 'Being a Department Rep', this is shown below in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8: Responses to 'How useful did you find the training session being a Department Rep?':

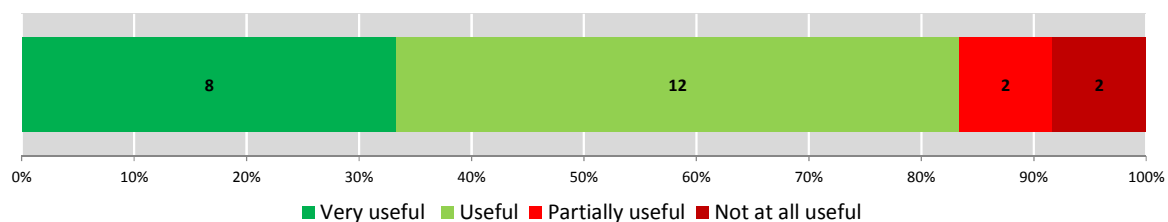


Overall, the graph shows the majority of Department Reps either stated they found the session 'very useful' or 'useful', a small amount of Reps stated they found the session 'partially useful'.

4.3.2 How the University works

Department Reps were asked to rate how useful they found the training session 'How the University works'; this is shown in **Figure 9**.

Figure 9: Responses to 'How useful did you find the how the University works training session?':

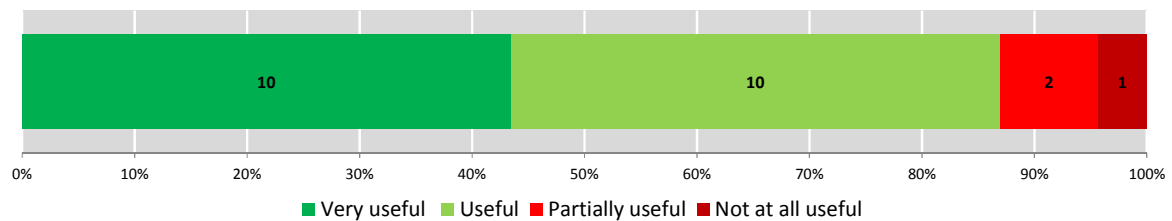


Overall, the graph shows the majority of Department Reps either found the session 'very useful' or 'useful', however in comparison to the previous session (being a Department Rep) there were less Reps who found this one 'very useful'. There were also a small amount of Reps who found the session 'partially useful' or 'not at all useful'.

4.3.3 Working with others

Department Reps were asked to rate how useful they found the training session 'Working with others'; responses are shown in **Figure 10**.

Figure 10: Responses to 'How useful did you find the working with others training session?':



The graph shows overall the majority of Department Reps stated the session was 'very useful' or 'useful'; there are a small amount of Reps who stated it was either 'partially useful' or 'not at all useful'.

4.4.0 Final Comments

Department Reps were asked to leave any final comments on anything they found useful about the day and anything they think could be improved.

Participants commented on how they liked being able to meet other Department Reps and members of staff, for example, '*engagement with other reps, staff and union members*' and '*an opportunity to meet other department reps*'. Furthermore, they also commented on how useful the sessions were as they were interactive with group work, which enabled ideas to be shared.

However, some Department Reps did comment on some things that could be improved, which involved improved timing (for example, '*slightly shorter sessions*' and '*better timing*') and sessions not being on a Saturday.

Course Reps



Shaping courses for the better

5.1.0 Course Reps

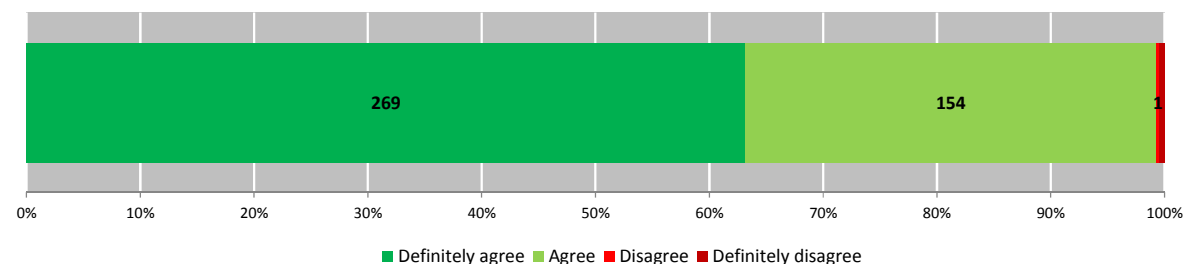
Course Rep training took place in partnership between Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield Hallam Students' Union. Training took place between the 1st October until 30th November. The aims of which were to give Course Reps a basic understanding of their role, what to expect from it and what meetings they would be attending as well as equipping them with some basic skills to undertake their role.

Students were asked to answer various questions about their role on a 4 point scale. The positive responses are shown in green and the negative in red for clarification.

5.1.1 Understanding of the role

Firstly, Reps were asked if they understand their role as a Course Rep, responses are illustrated below in **Figure 11**.

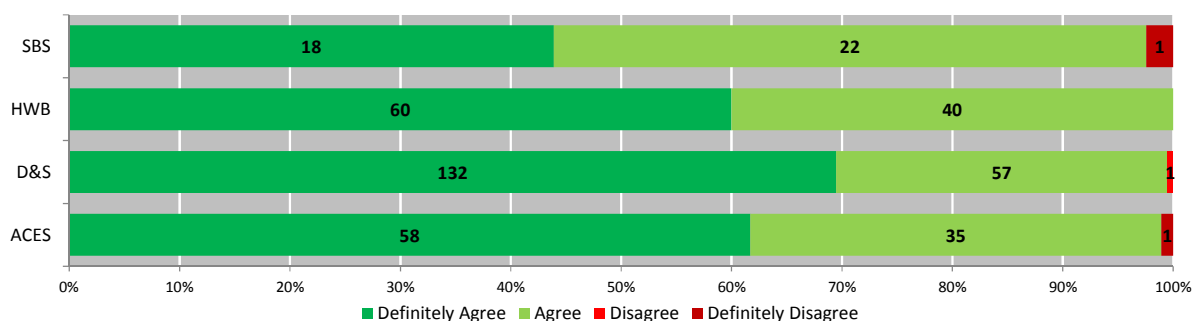
Figure 11: Responses to 'I understand my role as a Course Rep':



Overall, the graph shows the majority of Reps understand their role either selecting 'definitely agree' or 'Agree'. There is a very small amount either 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'.

Responses from Reps have been broken down by their faculty to establish if there are any differences; this is illustrated below in **Figure 12**.

Figure 12: Responses to 'I understand my role as a Course Rep' by faculty breakdown:

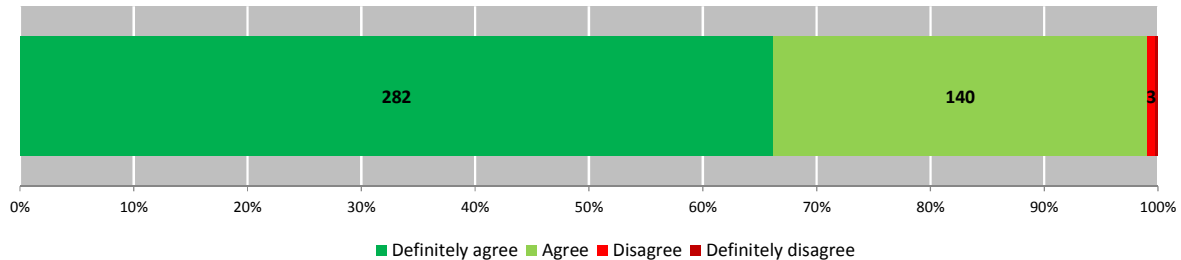


The graph shows although the majority of all faculties state they understand their role as a Course Rep, D&S have the most 'definitely agree' (just under 70%) responses, with a very small amount of 'disagree' responses. However, all of the Reps within H&WB have either selected 'definitely agree' or 'agree'. SBS have the least amount of 'definitely agree' (just over 40%) and a very small amount of 'definitely disagree' responses. Finally ACES have just over 60% of Reps stating they 'definitely agree' they understand their role, just fewer than 40% stating they 'agree' and a very small amount stating they 'definitely disagree'.

5.1.2 Making a difference

Reps were asked if they understood how their role makes a difference, responses are shown below in **Figure 13**.

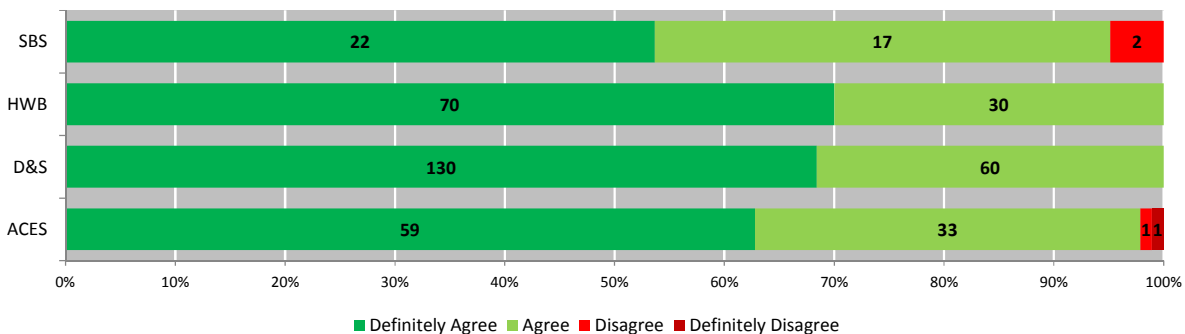
Figure 13: Responses to 'I understand how the role of a Course Rep makes a difference':



The graph shows the majority of Reps either state 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand how the role of a Course Rep makes a difference, a very small amount selected either 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'.

Responses from Reps have been broken down by their faculty, to establish if there are any differences. This is shown below in **Figure 14**.

Figure 14: Response to 'I understand how the role of a Course Rep makes a difference' by faculty breakdown:

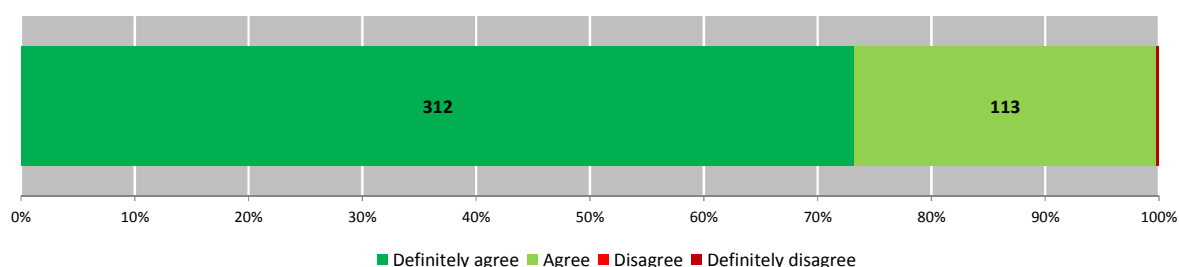


The graph shows H&WB and D&S have the highest amount of 'definitely agree' responses and all the Reps in these two faculties either selected 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand how the role of a Course Rep makes a difference. SBS and ACES have a small amount of Reps stating they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they understand how the role makes a difference.

5.1.3 Understanding staff-student meetings

Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the purpose of staff student meetings; this is shown below in **Figure 15**.

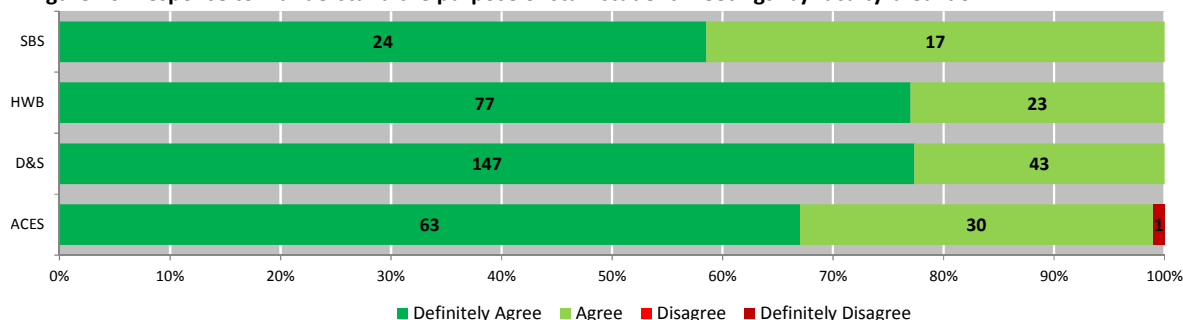
Figure 15: Responses to 'I understand the purpose of staff-student meetings':



Overall, the graph shows the majority of Reps either stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the purpose of staff-student meetings.

Responses from Reps have been broken down by faculty to establish whether there are any differences, as illustrated below in **Figure 16**.

Figure 16: Response to 'I understand the purpose of staff student meetings' by faculty breakdown:

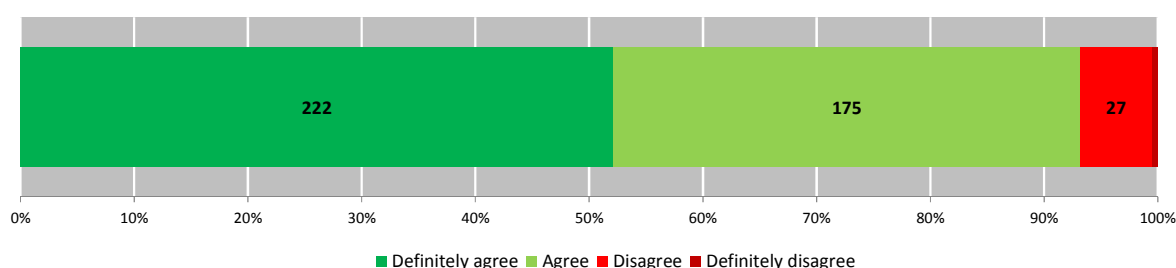


The graph shows Reps in SBS, H&WB and D&S either selected 'definitely agree' or 'agree', however SBS does have the smallest amount of 'definitely agree' responses in comparison to the other faculties, with H&WB and D&S having the highest. The only faculty to report Reps stating they 'definitely disagree' they understand the purpose of staff-student meetings is ACES, however this represents only a slight view in a sample of nearly 100, which is statistically very small.

5.1.4 Understanding the difference between a Course and Department Rep

Reps were asked to rate how well they understand the difference between a Course and Department Rep, responses are shown below in **Figure 17**.

Figure 17: Responses to 'I understand the difference between a Course Rep and a Department Rep':

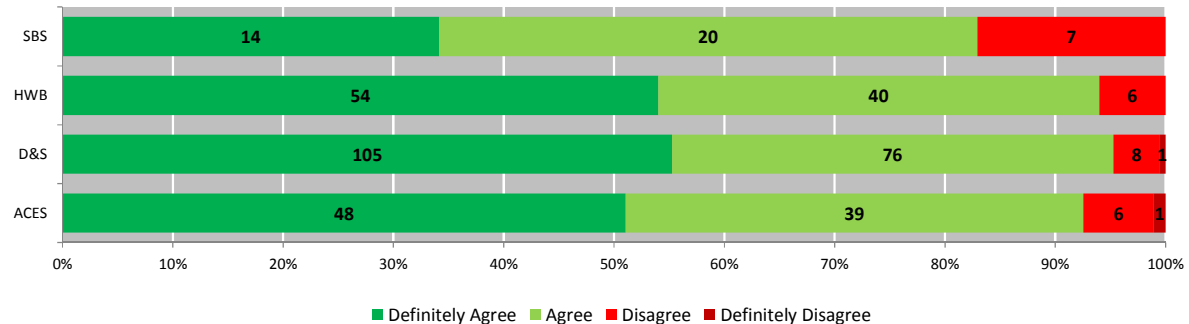


The graph shows just over 90% of Reps stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the difference between a Course Rep and a Department Rep. A small amount (just under 10%) stated they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they understand the difference.

Reps responses have been broken down by their faculty to establish if there are any differences, this is shown below in **Figure 18**.

Figure 18: Responses to 'I understand the difference between a Course Rep and Department Rep' by faculty breakdown:

The graph shows SBS have the lowest 'definitely agree' response rate additionally, they have the

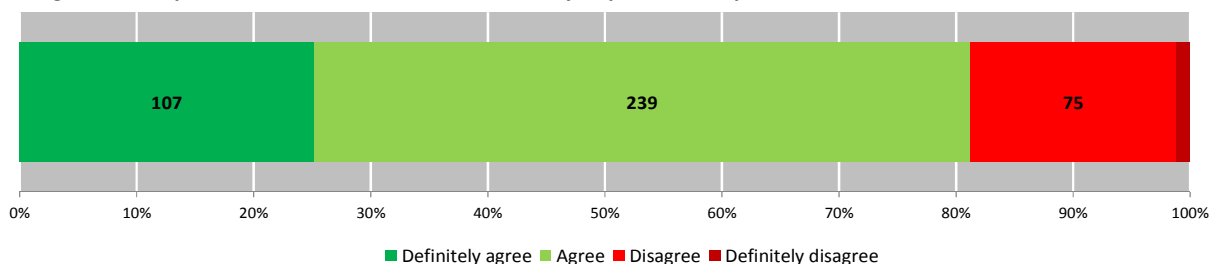


highest amount of Reps stating they 'disagree' (just fewer than 20%) they understand the difference between a Course Rep and a Department Rep. H&WB have just over 90% of respondents stating they either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the difference, with a small amount stating they 'disagree'. Similarly, D&S have just over 90% stating they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the difference, they also have the largest amount of Reps stating they 'definitely agree' compared to the other faculties. A small amount stated they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'. Finally, ACES have just over 90% of Reps stating they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they understand the difference, with just fewer than 10% stating they either 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'.

5.1.5 Ability to find Department Rep

Reps were asked about their confidence in finding out who their Department Rep is, this is shown below in **Figure 19**.

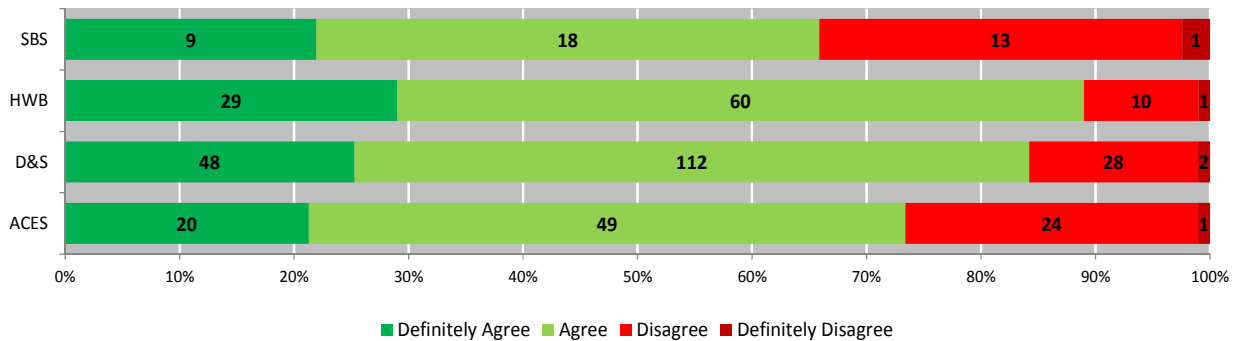
Figure 19: Responses to 'I feel able to find out who my Department Rep is:



Overall the graph shows just over 80% of Reps stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel able to find out who their Department Rep is. Just fewer than 20% state they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they feel able to find out who their Department Rep is.

Reps responses have been broken down by their faculty to establish if there are any differences, this is shown below in **Figure 20**.

Figure 20: Responses to 'I feel able to find out who my Department Rep is' by faculty breakdown:



Overall, the graph shows H&WB and D&S are most confident in finding out who their Department Reps are, with both having over 80% stating they 'definitely agree' or 'agree'. Just over 70% of ACES Reps state they feel able to find out who their Department Rep is. Whereas, SBS have the lowest amount (around 65%) of Reps stating they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel able to find out who their Department Rep is. However a lot of the Department Reps were not in place at the time of training and as a result it was challenging to communicate how student reps to contact their Department Reps. Whereas in the future Department Reps will be appointed earlier in the year so they should already be in place before training begins.

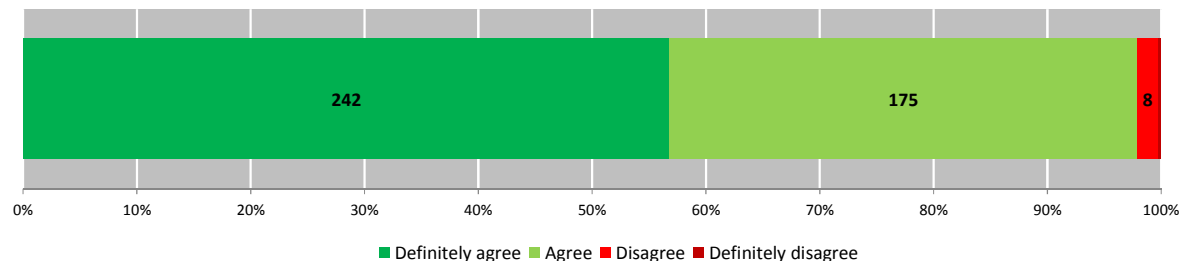
5.2.0 Relationship with staff

Reps were asked to rate how easy they found it to work with staff during their time as a Rep, the positive responses are shown in green and the negative in red for clarification.

5.2.1 Approaching staff

Reps were asked how confident they feel approaching staff with a problem, responses are shown below in **Figure 21**.

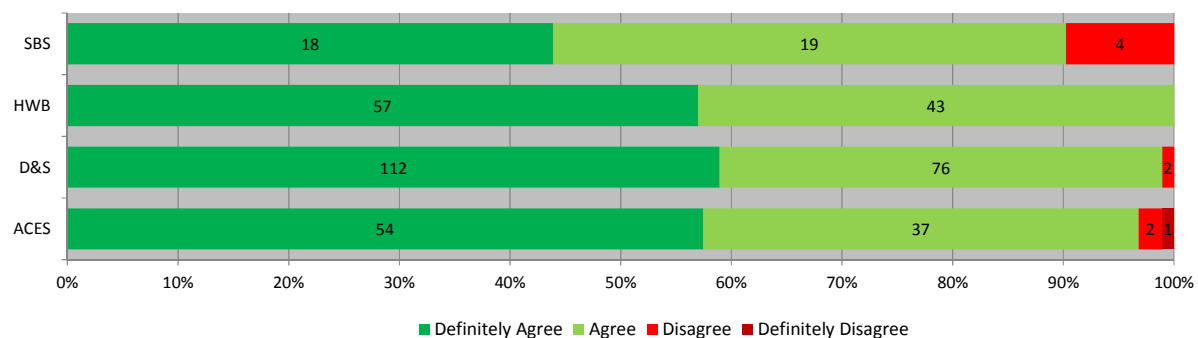
Figure 21: Responses to 'I feel confident to approach staff with a problem':



Overall, the graph shows the majority of Reps either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident to approach staff with a problem. A very small amount of Reps 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they feel confident approaching staff with a problem.

Reps responses have been broken down by their faculty to establish if there are any differences, this is shown below in **Figure 22**.

Figure 22: Responses to 'I feel confident to approach staff with a problem' by faculty breakdown:

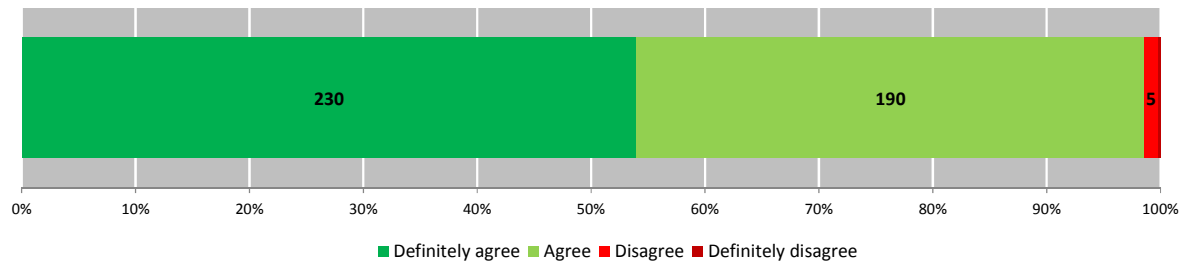


The graph shows, around 90% of Reps from this faculty either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident to approach staff with a problem. However, compared to the other three faculties they have the smallest amount of 'definitely agree' responses and the largest amount of 'disagree' responses. All Reps in H&WB either stated they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident to approach staff with a problem. D&S have the largest amount of Reps stating they 'definitely agree' they feel confident to approach staff with a problem in comparison to the other faculties, with a very small amount stating they 'disagree'. Finally ACES, have just over 95% of Reps stating they either 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident approaching staff, with a small amount stating they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'.

5.2.2 Giving feedback to staff

Reps were asked to rate how confident they feel in giving feedback to staff, this is shown below in **Figure 23**.

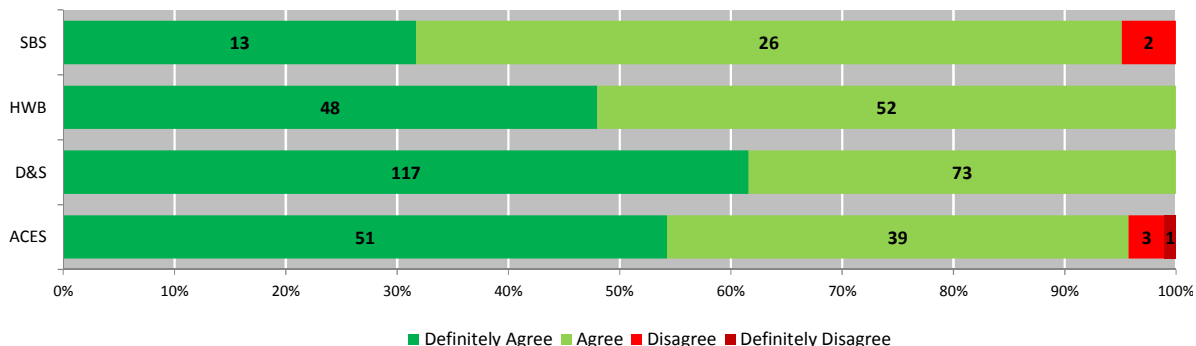
Figure 23: Responses to 'I feel confident in giving feedback to staff':



The graph shows the majority of Reps (over 95%) 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident in giving feedback to staff. A very small amount of reps state they 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree' they feel confident in giving feedback to staff.

Rep responses have been broken down by their faculty to establish if there any differences, this is shown below in **Figure 24**.

Figure 24: Responses to 'I feel confident in giving feedback to staff' by faculty breakdown:



Overall, the graph shows SBS has a considerably smaller amount of 'definitely agree' responses in comparison to the other three faculties, with D&S having the highest. Additionally, all D&S and H&WB Reps either state they 'definitely agree' or 'agree' they feel confident in giving feedback to staff. ACES have the second highest 'definitely agree' response rate with a small amount of Reps stating they either 'disagree' or 'definitely disagree'.

5.3.0 Final comments

Reps were finally asked if they had any last comments on the training session, responses are shown below in the word clouds. Words that appear bigger in the cloud appeared more often throughout the answers.

5.3.1 What was useful about the session

Firstly, Reps were asked what they found most useful about the session; responses appear below in the word cloud.



Reps mostly commented on liking the information they received at the sessions for example 'we found out all the relevant information about Course Reps and what is expected of us' and 'the amount of detail of the information, now fully understanding what my role is...', being able to discuss gathering feedback for example, 'information on how to gather feedback from students' and 'ways to gain feedback from fellow course mates and what to do next', meeting other Reps who were in the same position as them 'meeting with other Reps and finding out about Department Reps' and 'able to meet other Reps and learn from them' and finally, the training being in a friendly environment 'information given in a friendly manor' and 'friendly and understandable presentation'.

5.3.2 What could be improved

Finally, Reps were asked to freely comment on what they think could be improved with the session. Responses appear below in the word cloud.



Reps comments involved the sessions having more detailed information for example '*more information on how to give feedback in meetings*' and '*more information on how to find out the Department Rep and to make contact*', being more interactive for example '*The presentation could have been more interactive*' and '*A few more interactive activities to get the group talkative with each other*', the time meetings were organised, with some participants commenting on not being able to attend due to timetable clashes '*Time of the meetings- not everyone able to attend meetings when planned due to timetable clashes*'. Finally, some students commented on the groups being smaller for example, '*smaller sessions catered to exact course. So that each course rep can meet and introduce ourselves*' and '*I suggest training should be within small groups so everyone can feel more comfortable to share or ask questions*'.