ARU Students' Union Democracy Review 2022-23





Context

Our Democracy Review focusses on representation across our core Chelmsford and Cambridge campuses.

We are seeking to ensure that:

- Students and Staff will have confidence in their Reps
- Students will engage with electing their Reps
- Our democratic structures & roles will reflect the needs of students
- Our Reps are accountable for their work



Cambridge

Our campus is a stone's throw from the centre of Cambridge, often described as the perfect student city.

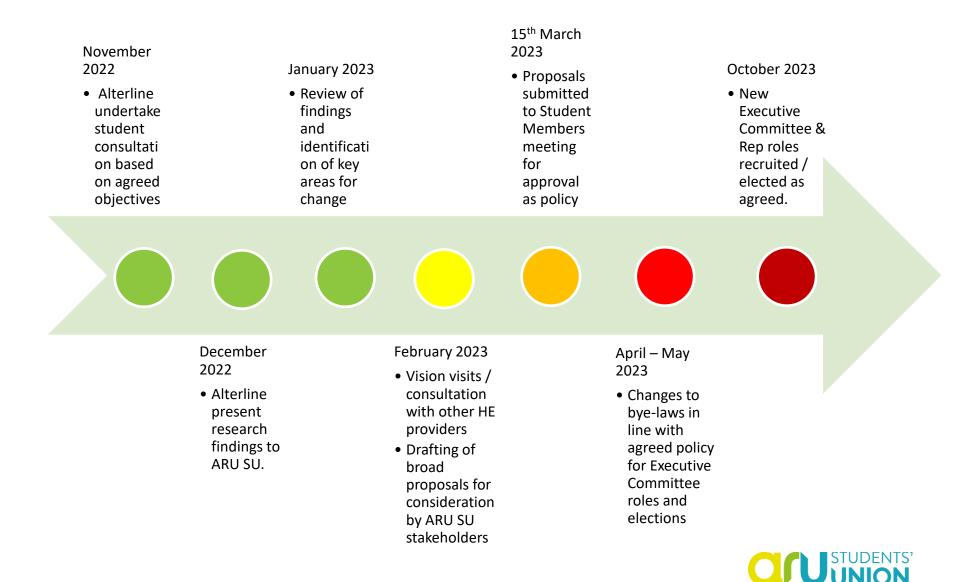


Chelmsford

In Chelmsford, you'll find our striking, modern campus in the city's University and Innovation Quarter.



Timeline



Alterline research findings:

• Officer Visibility -

Students want to understand and engage with our Officers better

• Course Reps -

Staff and students understand these roles, their purpose and their impact

• Understanding of Roles -

Students want to know more about what our other Rep roles involve and how they are accountable

Executive Committee -

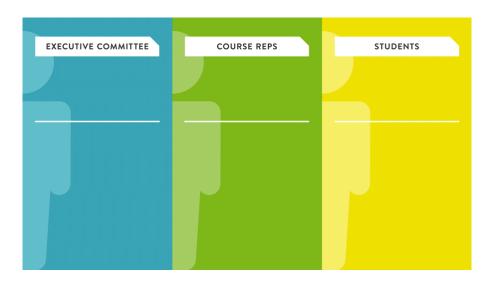
Understanding of, and engagement with the Executive Committee is poor

• Faculty Reps –

There is some understanding and value placed on these roles by both staff and students

• Campaign Reps -

These reps are the least well understood in both role expectations and impact



• Accountability -

Part time reps are not made accountable within their roles and are currently unpaid

 Accessibility – Elections were viewed in general as accessible but information about specific roles was noted as a possible improvement



Current: Executive Committee

Purpose (as defined in Articles)

- To appoint Student & Lay Trustees
- Shall include representation, campaigning & implementation of policy work
- Jointly (with Trustee Board) make Bye-Laws

Purpose (as defined in Bye-Laws)

- Oversee use of campaigns budget
- Ensure EDI in Union work
- To elect a Deputy President

Challenges:

- Poor understanding of & engagement with Exec by students
- Poor engagement in meetings from reps
- Poor attendance in meetings from reps
- Patchy campaign/project work by campaign reps
- Lack of accountability for reps

Composition:

- President & 5 Vice Presidents
- Faculty Reps (10)
- Campaign Reps (14)





Proposal

To support student-led societies to elect campaign reps as part of their committee and provide specific support for them to campaign on issues relating to that society.

To help campaigns be more connected to the communities they are campaigning for by connecting roles to societies.

To provide specific additional resource and support for campaign reps that relate to groups of students discriminated against by wider society (as stated in our Articles).

To remove bureaucratic burden of attending Executive Committee and give more time & space to delivering impactful campaigns.

To be dynamic in the campaign roles that exist based on annual student interest & demand.

Starter Question: Will this model help campaign reps be engaged and active?



Proposal

To focus the purpose, membership and scope of the Executive Committee to its core responsibilities, as outlined in our Articles

To focus of the membership of the Executive Committee to be the President, Vice-Presidents and Faculty Reps of our core campuses

To focus the responsibilities of the Executive Committee to be only what is defined in the Articles:

- To appoint student and lay trustees
- To include representation and campaigning work and the implementation of Policy





Starter Question:

• Is this a good idea to help free up time for reps to focus on representing their students and campaigning?



Proposal

To support accountability, engagement and scrutiny of elected roles through better communication of the work of the elected reps and informal opportunities to ask questions about this work

To provide specific support to elected students to better communicate who they are, what they are doing and what they have achieved for students.

To provide more informal channels for student to hold their elected reps to account for their work, in addition to the Student Summit

Starter Question:

• How can reps communicate with the student body more effectively?



