



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND

# STUDENTS' UNION CLASS- REPRESENTATIVE HANDBOOK 2021

NCI Students' Union is a proud member of Union of Students in  
Ireland (USI)



Union of Students in Ireland  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

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## WELCOME MESSAGE FROM STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT

Fáilte Romhaibh,

On behalf of the Students' Union Executive, I would like to begin by congratulating you on being elected to represent your class! I also want to remind you of the important role you will play during these unprecedented times. Throughout the year and in your capacity as a class-representative, you will play a vital role in being directly involved in the developments in the College, experiences in the class-room and bringing forward your classmates' concerns. During this time, you will improve transferable skills such as communication, meditation and problem solving which are essential to this role.

As part of the 'Improving The Student Voice' initiative, which intends to review and revise the existing feedback mechanisms at National College of Ireland, we attempt to launch an integrated learner voice, through the class-representative system.

The project dives into 4 key mechanisms; module evaluation, the class-rep system, student survey, and complaints and appeals. While the class-representative system is administered by the Union, we endeavour to establish a self-sufficient forum to be supported by staff, faculty and learners to collaborate in the identification and resolution of local issues relating to teaching, learning and assessment and primarily base it on the principle of partnership.

Please remember, this is one of the most rewarding ways you can get involved in NCI and your Union. While we are just a team of 5, but with your support, we can make our impact felt and I'm looking forward to working with you for the duration of this academic year.

Dajana Sinik,

NCI Students' Union President



## WELCOME MESSAGE FROM COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Dear Class Representatives

I would like to congratulate you on your election to this role and to wish you every success. Class representatives are an essential part of the fabric of our College, and you will play an essential role in ensuring that the academic and college life of NCI is the best it can be for all of our students.

Becoming a representative for your fellow classmates I hope will be a great experience for you and one that will add to your experience and skills, and ultimately your CV! There is a great amount to be gained by learning the skills of listening, speaking up, presenting a position and re-communicating within the context of solutions and collaborations. You will be dealing with your peers and the staff here in the College and also with your Student Union Officers. All of this experience will be useful to you in your future career, as you move to capitalise on your academic qualification and to exert your influence in the world of work.

For the College, an active Students Union and Class Representative group is really important and a measure of the health of the College. It speaks so well to our mission, vision and values, to 'change lives through education', through providing an inspiring educational experience that is innovative, responsive and enterprise focused, inclusive, community embracing, delivered with integrity, dynamism, is learner centred and aspiring to excellence. Thank you for being a part of this mission through your work as a Class Representative.

I look forward to hearing more of your work and wish you every success with your studies and your role.

Yours sincerely,

Gina Quin

President

National College of Ireland

## NCI STUDENTS' UNION STRUCTURE

### STUDENTS' UNION

- ❖ National College of Ireland Students' Union (NCISU) is the representative body of all students within the National College of Ireland (NCI) and is wholly independent of NCI.
- ❖ Every registered student in NCI is automatically a member of NCISU.
- ❖ A proportion of the Student Contribution Charge per student is allocated to NCISU on an annual basis.

### CONSTITUTION

- ❖ This is the rulebook for how the Union is run that is voted on by every student of the College in a referendum.
- ❖ The interpreter of the Constitution is the President of the Union.

### CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

- ❖ Every class in the College should have at least one Class-Representative elected by that class in accordance with the Constitution
- ❖ The Class-Representative(s) acts as the official representative of that class and is responsible for providing regular feedback between their classmates, the College and the Students' Union.

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## CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

- ❖ The highest decision and policy making body of the Union is known as the Class Representative Council (the Council)
- ❖ The Council is made up of the Executive and all the elected Class-representatives
- ❖ Class-reps receive updates from all the elected officers in the Union and hold officers accountable on their work.

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## THE EXECUTIVE

### ❖ *President*

- The President is the chief spokesperson for the Union, representing all students of the College, and is automatically a member of the College's Governing Body and Academic Council.
- Remit includes Academic involvement, i.e. Disciplinarys, Academic Assessment, Academic Queries, USI Academic Affairs, Postgraduate Working Group, National Academic Integrity Network.

### ❖ *Vice President*

- The Vice President has the remit of welfare and equality, which includes, matters on, accommodation, finance and general well-being. This may encompass physical, mental, emotional and sexual health.
- The Vice President is responsible for the provision of information, advising on matters and liaising with external bodies related to welfare and equality. This may include, campaigns, informative events or demonstrations

### ❖ *Clubs and Societies Officer*

- The C&S Officer promotes, supports and assists the running of all Clubs and Societies that are registered with the Union in all aspects of their operation.

- They are responsible for providing information to students on joining, starting, reforming, or developing a Club or Society and how to receive/apply for funding.
- The C&S Officer monitors the income/expenditure of Clubs and Societies and liaises with any relevant bodies such as the Board of Irish College Societies and Student Sport Ireland.

❖ ***Entertainments Officer***

- The Entertainments Officer organises events and other forms of activities for the students of NCI within a predetermined budget.
- They are also responsible for recruiting an ‘Entertainments Crew’ who assist in the planning, promotion and organisation of events.

❖ ***Communications Officer***

- The Communications Officer is responsible for the promotion and marketing of all Union related activities.
- They design promotional material and update the student body on Union events.
- The Communications Officer prepares a social media strategy in conjunction with the President and maintains a social media calendar of all Union communications and promotions.

**NCISU EXECUTIVE 2020/2021**



## NCI ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

### GOVERNING BODY

- ❖ The Governing Body as the highest decision making body, constitutes the Board of Directors at National College of Ireland, and is responsible for the overall management and direction of the college and its compliance with company law.
- ❖ The Governing Body establishes and monitors the college's strategic direction and policy, its financial planning, and compliance with best practice in all college activities.
- ❖ The Governing Body is comprised of a Chairperson, President of the College, President of the Students' Union, two elected staff members, nominees and external members.

### ACADEMIC COUNCIL

- ❖ The Academic Council assists the Governing Body in the planning, coordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the College, and is chaired by the President and co-chaired by the Vice President as outlined in the NCI constitution.
- ❖ The Academic Council is responsible for conferring all awards and degrees and implements the academic regulations of the College
- ❖ The Academic Council has four subcommittees - Academic Operations Committee, Learning & Teaching Committee, Research Committee and Academic Standards Committee.

### THE SCHOOLS

- ❖ School of Business
  - The Dean of the School - Colette Darcy
  - Acting Vice Dean of the School - Paul Hanly

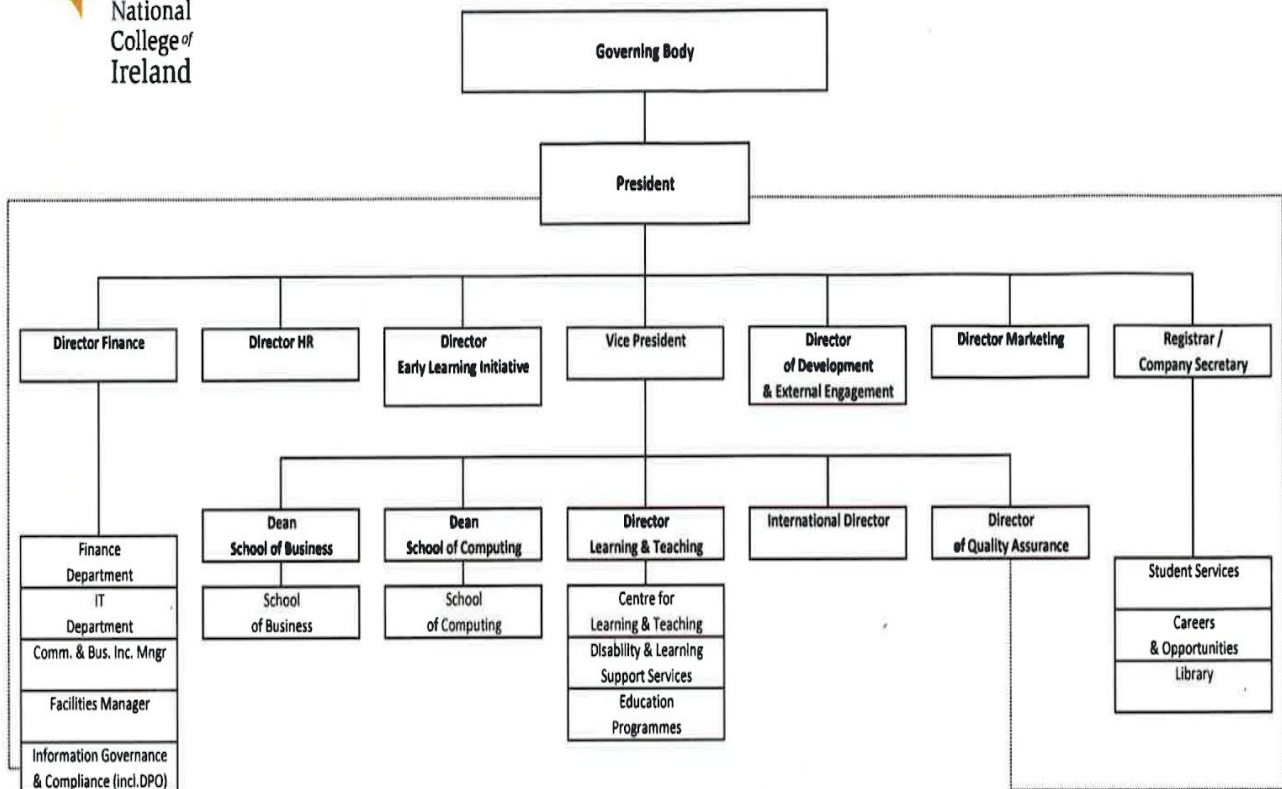


- ❖ School of Computing
  - The Dean of the School - Pramod Pathak
  - Vice Dean of the School - Paul Stynes
  
- ❖ Learning and Teaching and Lifelong Education
  - Director for Learning and Teaching - Leo Casey

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



**Governance & Organisation Structure (as at November 2019)**



## THE ROLES AND DUTIES OF THE CLASS-REPRESENTATIVES

- ❖ The Class Representative (Class-rep) is the day-to-day point of contact for you and their class. They are also the voice and elected spokesperson of the class.
- ❖ Their role involves communicating and providing feedback to the Students' Union and the College. This form of communication and engagement is vital for both organisations to enhance the student experience.
- ❖ Once all the Class-reps have been elected by the Students' Union, then a Class-Rep Council is formed. The Class-Rep Council is the highest decision making body for the Union (see further information on page ..)
- ❖ Where do Class-reps fit in the institutes? - **DAVID**

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### CORE DUTIES OF THE CLASS-REP

- ❖ **Listening** - A Class-rep is expected to be open minded, empathetic and understanding of other student concerns and opinions about class-related issues.
- ❖ **Signposting** - A Class-rep should not take on the personal issues of students but instead should know where to direct the student to the relevant department/ person or place in NCI.
- ❖ **Representing** - At department led meetings, Class-Rep Council or interactions with any person in NCI, each Class-rep is responsible for representing the views of their class members and not their personal opinions.
- ❖ **Informing** - Class-rep should consistently communicate to their class on any important information and provide feedback on the information provided from the Students' Union, department meetings or major developments in the Institute.

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## WHAT AN ACTIVE CLASS-REP LOOKS LIKE

- ? Contributing feedback to your class and to the wider NCI community
- ? Setting an example by attending classes and engaging with the lectures and staff .
- ? Building and improving on your communication and public speaking skills
- ? Developing your interpersonal skills, growing in confidence and making new friends
- ? Building and managing good working relationships with academic staff and management
- ? Being in the 'loop' regarding what's going on across the campus and in the SU
- ? Learning how to organise successful events
- ? As a result, your employability increases and your CV stands out!

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## WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE

- ❖ **1st Day on the Job** - Class-reps are required to get in touch with their lecturer and introduce themselves. SU to provide a template to all Class-reps. Where there are two elected Class-reps, they should make an attempt to get to know each other for a better flow of information between them and their class.
- ❖ **1st Week on the Job** - Class-reps are asked to discuss with their class about the best and most effective form of communication. Please see pg RE; setting up chats.. for more details
- ❖ **1st Month on the Job** - All Class-rep form a Class-rep Council of the Students' Union. All Class-reps will be formally invited to attend the Council meeting to discuss local issues, receive feedback on services, debate policies and hold Students' Union officers accountable.

- ❖ **1st Semester on the Job** - Class-reps will be invited to attend school meetings to provide feedback at programme level. These meetings take place once a semester with all teaching staff and other Class-reps in that programme.
  
- ❖ **1st Year on the Job** - Class-reps should encourage their class to complete both local (class and institute led) and National surveys (StudentSurvey.ie)
  
- ❖ **1st Year Returning to the Job** - Reflect on previous year, gather priorities of the class (1st Class-rep priority is to fit in and get settled, while final years have a thesis and final year projects to complete) and improve on communication. Returning reps could also be a point of contact for other reps that provide support and guidance

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## TIMELINE AND KEY DATES

### Semester 1

- ❖ **Week 2 - Recruitment starts**
- ❖ **Week 5 - completed class-representative list should be sent to both schools in time for school meetings.**
- ❖ **Week 6 - Induction training**
- ❖ **Week 7 - Class-Representative Council Meeting 1**
- ❖ **Week 8 - National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) Training**
- ❖ **Week 10 - Class-Representative Council Meeting 2**

### Semester 2

- ❖ **Week 2 - Refresher Training -**
- ❖ **Week 4 - Class-Representative Council Meeting 3**
- ❖ **Week 8 - Class-Representative Council Meeting 4**

\*Timeline does not take account of when school meetings will take place in each semester and additional Class-Representative Council meetings or other activities organised by the Students' Union.

## RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE & TRAINING

- ❖ Most classes have at least two Class-representatives which are elected through an Election process.
- ❖ An Officer of the Students' Union (generally the President or Vice-President) attends a core-module based class and recruits the Class-reps.
- ❖ In a situation where attendance is low, the officer will return back at a different time.
- ❖ Following an explanation and expectations of the class-representative role, students are asked to raise their hand if they would like to put themselves forward or nominate someone for the position.

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### ELECTION IN A TRADITIONAL SETTING

- Each person is asked to stand up, state their name, and reason why the class should elect them for the position. Each candidate(s) will be allowed 1 minute to speak.
- Once the candidate(s) finish, the students are asked to vote by raising their hand (while the candidate(s) are asked to face the opposite direction in order to avoid intimidation).
- In a case where the class requests a 'secret vote', each student will write their vote on a piece of paper and the names are counted.
- The two candidates who receive the most votes are deemed elected for the position of Class-representatives.
- In the event of a tie, a recount happens. If the recount is still a tie, then the two names are put into a 'hat' and the person whose name is left in the hat is deemed elected.
- The elected representatives are asked to fill out a 'Class-rep' form, which contains their contact details, signature and another classmate to second their election.

The Students' Union will use this information to communicate with the Class-reps, while passing their names and student numbers to the Course Coordinator.

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## ELECTION IN AN ONLINE SETTING

- The Schools should ‘invite’ the Union to a core module Class. The Schools should also send out an email to notify teaching staff that Union officers will be around to recruit representatives for each class.
- The Students’ Union will attend virtual classes and recruit the reps.
- Any student who is interested in running for the position must raise their virtual hand.
- Each candidate is given a minute to state their name, and reason/s why the class should elect them for the position.
- Once the candidate(s) finish, a link will be shared, via Menti, for voting to take place online. For transparency reasons, the screen should be shared to reveal the live results.
- In the event of a tie the two names are put into a ‘hat’ and the person whose name is left in the hat is deemed elected. This should be done live.
- The elected representatives are asked to fill out a ‘Class-rep’ form through a separate link, which contains their contact details, signature and another classmate to second their election. The Students’ Union will use this information to communicate with the Class-reps, while passing their names and student numbers to the Course Coordinator.

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## TRAINING

- ❖ Induction Training hosted by NCISU
  - Induction training is provided to all the Class-representatives during the first semester.
  - Topics covered include; Structure of NCI, structure of the Union, the core duties of class-reps, representation, raising concerns/issues and engaging with meetings.
- ❖ National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)
  - Partnership initiative jointly developed by the Higher Education Authority, Quality & Qualifications Ireland, and the Union of Students in Ireland.

- They run a free National training programme for Class-representatives, facilitated by external student trainers
- Students' Union hosts internal training for class-reps in Semester 1.
- All Class-representatives receive a resource pack from the Union.

❖ Professional Development Training

The Union organises personal development training for all the class-representatives. In 2021 a leadership training is being delivered by an external trainer.

❖ Email Template

- Class-reps should send all lecturers in their course an introductory email.

Dear [insert lecturers name],

My name is [insert your name], and I'm one of the Class Reps for [insert year] of [insert course] along with [insert other Class Rep] for this academic year 20XX/XX

We wanted to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves and say that we look forward to working to ensure effective communication between yourself and our class, a channel for feedback on your module and a medium for addressing any issues.

If you would like to meet informally to discuss anything in particular, we're more than happy to meet, otherwise we're excited about this opportunity to represent our peers and working with you and the school to enhance our learning experience in NCI.

On behalf of [insert course code],  
[Sign off with both names and cc other Class Rep]

## THE DO'S AND THE DON'T OF BEING A CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE

- ❖ Each Class-rep is expected to fulfil certain tasks while in their roles, but there are some common do's and don'ts which reps tend to come across in the role.
- ❖ This chapter explains these common themes in a general sense

### THE DO'S

- It's better to give no advice than the wrong advice - All reps are encouraged to signpost to relevant services and departments.
- Try to be an active member in your class, the institute and the Union - Attend classes, meetings and the Council,
- Engage - Always ask if you don't know, challenge your understanding and skills and stay organised in a busy college life
- Make yourself visible - All Class-reps should make themselves known to their class. Be active in the class group chat and circulate information you have received from the College or Students' Union.
- Make yourself available - Being approachable is beneficial for receiving feedback
- Build relationships - Class-reps should attempt to maintain a collegial relationship with the other rep in their class and members of the institute, including the Union.
- Respect - Being respectful at all times, to all staff, students and any individual you interact with during your time in NCI.
- Time keeping- Organize a specific time which you will dedicate to Class-rep work, It could be as often as once or twice a week or as rare as once a month depending on how much work or issues are brought to your attention. It is important to note that sometimes an issue is time sensitive and may need to be dealt with swiftly in which case making sure you have more time to allocate to the query/issue/concern.



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## THE DON'TS

- Class-reps should not deal with personal matters relating to students personal lives. In some cases, Class-reps may deal with individual queries, however, only if related to their educational experience.
- Don't over do it - Setting boundaries is important as you are not on duty 24/7 and don't overwhelm yourself.
- Class-reps are not there to offer assignment/study help. They should signpost students to relevant support services available in NCI.
- Don't shut others down - All opinions should be welcomed and considered, and you as a Class Rep deliver the collective views of the class

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## BENEFITS TO THE ROLE

- ❖ NCI Students' Union will be providing free training during the first semester
- ❖ Being a Class Rep enables students to develop key skills that will help them in the workplace beyond NCI. These include teamwork, negotiation, public speaking, communication and meeting skills, all of which will enhance their CV and make them a more employable graduate.
- ❖ All Class-Reps are in with a chance of being chosen as 'Class-rep of the Year' Award.
- ❖ Once elected Class Reps will get a resource Pack from their local Students' Union office on site – this will contain the Rep Handbook, useful tips and tricks and some goodies that we have sourced specifically for all Reps this year.

## EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

- ❖ All class-representatives are introduced and encouraged to use the ABCD Model to effective representation.
- ❖ A structured approach is needed to provide effective feedback to students and staff, which involves collecting opinions and perspectives from other students through the channels of communication that will be outlined below
- ❖ The best model for this structured approach is the ABCD and it goes as follows:

*A - Accurate | B - Balanced | C - Constructive | D - Depersonalised*

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### ACCURATE

- ❖ Be specific, and provide evidence to back what you say.
- ❖ Avoid sweeping generalisations or emotional language.
- ❖ Where possible include information about the scale of the issue (e.g. say that 73 percent of students have said this - is an accurate statement). There's no emotion involved and your argument is more valid and adds more weight.
- ❖ When you present that data back to your lecturer, it's now their responsibility to act upon it.

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### BALANCED

- ❖ Pass on both positive and negative feedback to staff.
  - Acknowledge where staff or the institution have attempted to address an issue, even if it was not completely successful.
  - Build in opportunities for your class to provide positive feedback when gathering views and opinions.
- ❖ Avoid being one-sided or biased in any particular direction. Show that you can appreciate problems from multiple perspectives.
- ❖ Being balanced will strengthen your argument and help build good working relationships.

- ❖ It's very easy for us to think about the negatives and concentrate on negative comments.
- ❖ It's also important for you to acknowledge some of the good works that your lecturer is doing.

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#### CONSTRUCTIVE

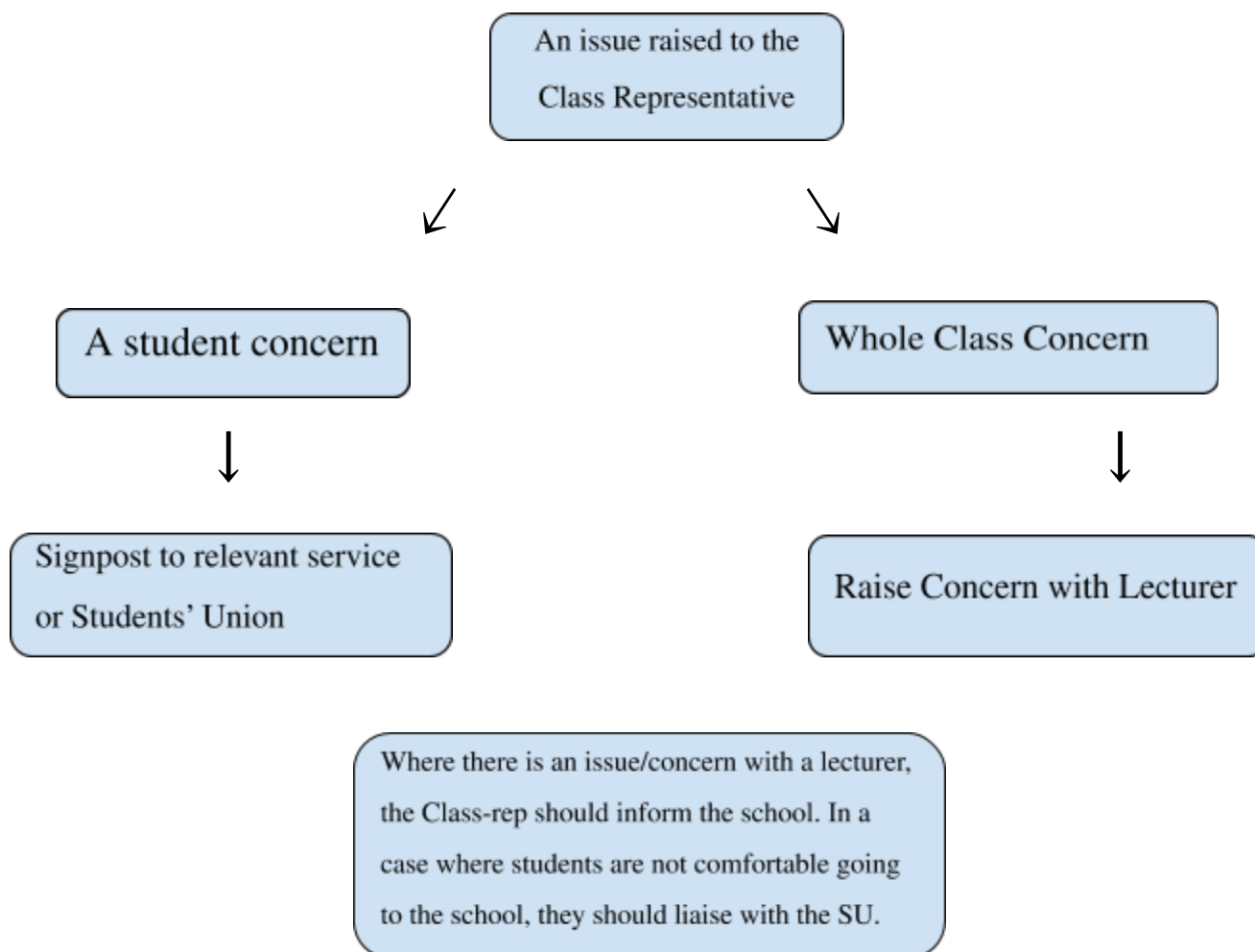
- ❖ Don't just identify the problems, help find a solution too!
  - When raising an issue, try to make a suggestion or ask for help in putting one together.
  - If an issue emerges from class feedback, ask students for suggestions for solving this before approaching staff.
- ❖ Build opportunities to create ongoing partnerships with staff to work together going forward.
- ❖ We're here not just to guess the size of the issues and concerns and problems were also here to help find a solution.
- ❖ Rather than constantly concentrating on, for example, we don't have enough material to do this assignment. Find a solution to getting more material and make some suggestions to your lecturer of a solution that your class would like to see.
- ❖ It is your job to help facilitate solutions and not just criticize them and be negative and unbalanced or inaccurate.

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#### DEPERSONALISED

- ❖ Even if the feedback you receive is mostly negative, try to present it in a way that does not come across as negative toward a particular person or their work.
- ❖ Be considerate and tactful to encourage others to work with you.
- ❖ Where possible, avoid making the problem about specific people – instead focus on the impact on students' learning experience in your class.
- ❖ Class Reps are going to have to do some things that may not be the most comfortable of situations but they should still take that personal aspect out of it.

## RAISING CONCERNS



Examples of issues/concerns you may encounter during the term include:

- **Extensions/deadlines**
- **Lecturing standards/issues**
- **Programme workloads**
- **Timetabling issues**
- **Library services**
- **Classroom facilities**
- **Printing/photocopying**
- **Getting effective feedback on continuous assessments and exams**
- **Equipment issues**
- **Health and safety**
- **Campus issues**
- **Welfare queries - problems come in all shapes and sizes.**

## APPROPRIATE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Issues raised at any meeting with the Class-representatives is recorded via a minute taker and is stored in the Students' Union and compliant with GDPR regulations.

The President makes contact with the Class-reps every 3 weeks and provides an update on developments, SU activities and any relevant information, such as academic affairs, welfare, accommodation or National projects.

It is the expectation for all Class-representative to deal with issues or concerns raised by their class in a dealing with matters relating to their role, that they do so in a respectful manner.

If issues are raised around a module or programme level, a report is sent to the relevant department. This should be formalised so that it is recognised by the schools and is the process going forward.

## NCI'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CLASS-REPRESENTATIVES

- ❖ It is recognised by the College the Class-Representative system is managed by the Students' Union in accordance with their Constitution
- ❖ The College and Students' Union seek to work collaboratively in formalising the Class-Representative system and supporting each Class-rep to perform their role in order to enhance the learning and student experience
- ❖ In any meetings between a class-rep and the lecturer/school, the Students' Union should have right of attendance to provide representation or support to the class-rep(s)
- ❖ Lecturers should get in touch with the Class-representatives to gauge how students are getting on with the class or adapting to new circumstances.
- ❖ Lecturers should take the time to understand the role of a Class-rep and respect the individuals in those positions when issues are raised to them
- ❖ Lecturers should actively encourage class-rep participation and feedback.
- ❖ Where feedback is provided, lecturer should welcome feedback and discuss this in an effective manner with the whole class and not personalise the feedback.
- ❖ They should also reach out to the class-representatives to alleviate any initial concerns and troubleshoot potential problems before they arise.
- ❖ Actively encourage the class to engage in discussions with their class-reps in a situation where a concern arises or use the class-rep as a medium to bring forward concerns.

## THE REMOVAL OF A CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE

### *An extract from the Students' Union Constitution 2021*

A proposal to remove a Class Representative shall be made to the President by not less than 25% of the students from the class from where they were elected.

Such a proposal shall be considered by the electoral Commission, where they shall investigate and speak to the Class Representative in question. The Electoral Commission (the Commission) shall regulate the operation of all elections, plebiscites, referenda, confirmation ballots or other ballots and advise on Schedule 3 relating to elections on behalf of the Union.

The President or their nominee may then convene a special meeting with the students of that class, where the Class Representative may be given an opportunity to address the meeting and respond to the contents of the proposal.

The meeting shall vote on the proposal which shall be decided by not less than two-thirds of the full class.

Any Class Representative who wishes to resign may do so by sending the President a letter to that effect, in which case the class shall be informed and a by-election held.

## TESTIMONIALS FROM THE CLASS-REPRESENTATIVE

*“The primary role of a class rep is to act as a voice on behalf of their class....it should be noted that a class rep cannot “fix” a problem as a lot of students assume is the case – after all a class rep is still only a student too. However, in a lot of situations, by providing the student’s voice in a fair and reasonable manner can result in the problem being addressed.”*

**Liam, 3rd Year Human Resource Management**

*“A class rep is a person (or multiple people) who are situated with a higher responsibility to their peers, having interests typically in the class’s voices being heard.”*

**Oisin, 1st Year Computing**

*“It is a privilege to be voted in as a class-rep and great knowledge can be taken from the role. It is a role suited to a caring individual, one willing to listen to their peers and ready to send them in the right direction when help is needed.”*

**Martin, 1st Year Accounting**

*“If an issue is to arise and a student asks for (the Class Rep) to bring up an issue at a meeting it is a class reps duty as well as privilege to bring up issues which might encourage other class reps to engage in that issue so that a solution is found.”*

**Ruben, 4th Year Computing**

*“I think it’s vital for every course to have a class rep who will engage with both the students and the lectures and make sure that both sides are working together and provide the best compromise for students and lectures.”*

**Naomi, 2nd Year Human Resource Management**

*“To bring your class together and help them to become a strong social group that forges their path through college and beyond together...I have loved my time in NCI, as a student and as a rep, and I am proud to say I attended NCI and was a Class REP there.”*

**Jim, 4th Year Computer Science**

*“I wouldn’t have been able to perform my role of Class Rep if it wasn’t for the Students’ Union, especially the President and her always being there to advice and support me throughout my time as class rep for my course”*

**Sami, 3rd Year Data Analytics**